

Commemorating Dr Eric E Williams at 100

Online news and commentary in 2011 about
the 'Father of the Nation' of Trinidad & Tobago



Compiled for online sharing by

Peter B. Jordens

plancari@cura.net

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Introduction

This booklet presents 41 articles that appeared online in 2011, containing news and commentary by several authors on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth and the 30th anniversary of the death of Dr Eric Eustace Williams (1911-1981), noted Trinbagonian and Caribbean visionary, leader, statesman, prime minister, scholar, and teacher.

The articles, reproduced here in chronological order, appeared in three Trinidad & Tobago newspapers—the *Guardian* (14), the *Express* (10), and *Newsday* (9)— and in other Caribbean newspapers, newssites or newsblogs (8). The authors are reporters, commentators, and scholars. The booklet includes five photographs, also found online, that concern the commemoration of the two Williams anniversaries in 2011.

This booklet does not include items from websites/webpages that are permanently and entirely dedicated to Dr Eric Williams, such as the website of the Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library, Archives, and Museum (which issued several press releases in 2011) or the Eric Williams page on Facebook. I wish to encourage the reader to peruse these and other online spaces as well.

The purpose of this compilation is (1) to provide some insight into the manner in which Trinidad & Tobago in particular has commemorated Dr Eric Williams in 2011 and (2) to join Trinidad & Tobago in honouring Dr Williams and reflecting upon his complex legacy as the 50th anniversary of that nation's Independence (August 31, 2012) approaches.

2011 is not the first time that the meaning of Dr Eric Williams's life and work has been the subject of reflection. Appendix 2 provides a (probably incomplete) list of the many conferences, journals, and books that have been dedicated to his life and work in previous years. The titles alone of these events and publications confirm that people still struggle to define and come to terms with the legacy of this controversial, contradictory, eccentric, and enigmatic Caribbean icon.

The present compilation of articles confirms that 'the Doctor' was a multi-faceted and puzzling figure. He inspired and energised many people around him, but also instilled fear. Although he was capable of compassion, he developed a reputation for aloofness, insensitivity, arrogance, and rudeness. He was, then, a clear example of the fact that human beings are essentially contradictory creatures — a fact that compels us to always approach each other respectfully and fairly. Unfortunately, it seems that Dr Williams was misunderstood by many, as he was both adored and despised, both deified and vilified.

A brilliant scholar who helped transform Caribbean historiography in the 20th century, Dr Williams also had vision and an inborn drive for authority, and he ended up serving and leading Trinidad & Tobago for an unequalled 25 consecutive years, from 1956 till his death in office in 1981. His life presents a fascinating case study of themes relevant to the Trinbagonian and Caribbean context, such as charismatic (male) leadership, the family, the decolonization of scholarship, inter-ethnic relations, nationalism, regionalism, independence, governance, and development policy. The peoples of the Caribbean at large are well-advised to continue studying both the well-known and the lesser-known facts of his life and his being.

As a non-Trinbagonian who came to learn about Dr Eric Williams only after his death, I hesitate to venture a full assessment of the Doctor. However, it seems safe to agree with the following three persons that, whatever one may think of him,

- “he is, unquestionably, the greatest Trinidadian of the 20th century — the person who has had the greatest influence on the affairs of the country” (Jeff Hackett, *Trinidad Express*, March 26, 1998);
- “Truly he was a rare individual not only of Trinidad & Tobago but also of the Caribbean and the entire world” (Franklin W Knight, *Jamaica Observer*, September 28, 2011);
- he “was the architect and builder of the state of Trinidad and Tobago”, and “on balance ... his performance was worthy of History’s applause” (Selwyn Ryan, *Trinidad Express*, September 24, 2011).

Peter B. Jordens

Curaçao, October 2011

Convert Old Public Library into Museum

Gail Alexander, *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*

Saturday, March 26, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2011/03/26/convert-old-public-library-museum>

Government has been urged to convert the former public library building at Knox Street, Port of Spain, into a museum to house the Eric Williams Memorial Collection. The recommendation came yesterday from Opposition Leader Keith Rowley, during the House of Representatives session. Rowley was piloting an Opposition motion calling for the Government to take tangible steps to mark the centenary of Williams' birth. PNM founder and late former Prime Minister Williams would have been 100 years old on September 25. The motion also called for Parliament to direct the Education Minister to declare 2011 "Dr Eric Williams Year" and ensure that Williams' work and life history feature prominently as part of the national school curriculum at all levels of the education system in 2011 and beyond. "I don't think it falls to me to convince anybody in this House or country that the 100th anniversary of Dr Williams is worthy of the highest celebration," Rowley said.

Calling on politicians to demonstrate that they could come together to celebrate things, Rowley added: "We've been known to come together to mourn, we can come together to celebrate and if there is one event in T&T history that warrants a celebration, it is the centenary of Eric Eustace Williams." Rowley suggested that the Eric Williams Memorial Collection at UWI be given staff and support by the Government so Williams' work could be in perpetuity available to all.

Calling for the proposed museum to be housed at the former public library at Knox Street, Rowley said: "That building across the street where Dr Williams conducted those famous lectures — while architecturally superb, it is being left to rot unattended. It should be made available to UWI to house the Eric Williams collection. It could not be a more fitting place — right next to Woodford Square. It would marry the library with Williams' history and we'd have an academic shrine in the centre of Port of Spain for persons who want to walk into the life of Eric Williams." The building next to City Hall had housed the Port of Spain Public Library until the NALIS Complex was built. NALIS officials said yesterday that the building was empty. Rowley also called for the Government to appoint a joint select committee comprising Government, Opposition and Independent members to work out an "appropriate response" to mark Williams' centenary.

Detailing Williams' life, Rowley noted that Williams had been fired in 1955 from the Caribbean Commission for bucking the status quo. He said Williams later made a speech in Woodford Square, declaring his entry into the political arena, and in 1956, the PNM was born. Rowley noted the number of international personalities who had paid tribute to Williams when he died. He detailed Williams' work in the region, and his pioneering work in education. He also cited Williams' work in cricket, saying what was taking place in cricket today "... is a Mickey Mouse thing." Rowley's reference to Williams as the "Father of the Nation" prompted People's Partnership MP, Errol McLeod, to ask: "Is the MP saying it is true Dr Williams may have said we can have one mother, but three, four fathers ...?"

Rowley: TT's First PM 'Father of the Nation'

Andre Badoo, *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*
Saturday, March 26, 2011
<http://www.newsday.co.tt/politics/0,137813.html>

Dr Eric Williams cannot "legislate from the grave," Opposition Leader Dr Keith Rowley argued yesterday as he sought to justify his call for a special recognition of Williams in the face of the expressed wish of the former PNM leader who once famously said he did not want to be honoured after his death.

Speaking during an Opposition motion calling for 2011 to be declared the year of Williams, Rowley called on the Government to establish a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee (JSC) to meet to determine in what way the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dr Eric Williams should be observed.

"Dr Williams himself had cautioned that he did not want any accolades and recognition," Rowley confessed. "But he cannot legislate from the grave." The comment provoked jokes from some on the Government benches who wondered whether Williams' influence is, in fact, one not limited by the grave.

Rowley spoke for almost two hours in a contribution which saw him link Williams to education reform, discuss his academic legacy, link Williams to the rise (but not demise) of West Indies cricket, attribute key pieces of legislation to the former prime minister and called for the old Heritage Library location at Woodford Square, Port of Spain to be turned into a memorial venue for Williams.

Rowley noted that Williams' legacy includes his academic classic *Capitalism and Slavery*, a pioneering work which argued that slavery was abolished in the British Empire because it was economically expedient to do so and not necessarily for humanitarian reasons alone. "After rigorous challenges it had stood the test of time and continues to be one of the seminal works," Rowley said.

With his former political leader and Prime Minister Patrick Manning looking on, Rowley said that Williams should be honoured as the "father of the nation". This comment prompted Labour Minister Errol McLeod to ask whether former Prime Minister Patrick Manning, who once referred to himself in similar fatherly terms, would also be honoured.

"The one hundredth anniversary of Williams is worth being celebrated," Rowley said. "I am just a voice crying in the wilderness but I hope that today it would not be a wilderness."

During his contribution Manning and Point Fortin MP Paula Gopee-Scoon paid little attention, chatting animatedly as the PNM political leader spoke.

Family Wants Special Honour for Williams

Anna Ramdass, *Trinidad Express*

Sunday, March 27, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Family_wants_special_honour_for_Williams-118752289.html

The family of former Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams said yesterday that special honour should be given to the man who led the country into independence and created political history.

A short ceremony was held at the rotunda of the Red House [seat of Parliament] yesterday, where Reginald Vidale, chairman of the Dr Eric Williams Memorial Committee, presented House Speaker Wade Mark with a portrait of Williams and a book of remembrance for members of the public to sign. Mark praised Williams, describing him as an “intellectual giant” who made an indelible contribution to the political revolution and economic development of the country.

Mark also noted Government’s intention to establish a national heroes’ day to recognise and pay tribute to those like Williams who made enormous contributions to the country. He suggested a national heroes’ park be established to honour these heroes and heroines.

Williams’s nieces —Eunice, Patricia, Claire and Margaret Gittens— were present for the ceremony. Speaking to the *Express* briefly after the event, Eunice Gittens said she had mixed feelings with respect to a national heroes’ day. “I hope when they do this, they ensure that some have to be recognised above the rest for their contribution. I’m not sure there’s anyone else. I’m not saying this because he’s family, (but) who has got the international acclaim as Eric Williams?” she asked.

Gittens said while heroes must be recognised, Williams should not be grouped — but be honoured and recognised for his service to the country.

Vidale suggested that Memorial Park or the park behind Archbishop’s House be converted to a heroes’ park. He said he has been advocating for years for Williams to be honoured, and further suggested that the first Saturday in the month of April become an annual Dr Eric Williams remembrance day. He said it would not be a holiday but a day of recognition. Vidale said in India every child knew about Mahatma Gandhi and so too in this country children must learn about the great role Williams played in shaping democracy.

Opposition MPs Nileung Hypolite and Alicia Hospedales and party General Secretary Ashton Forde were present at the event.

Dr Williams Interfaith Service Today

Trinidad and Tobago Newsday

Sunday, March 27, 2011

<http://newsday.co.tt/news/0,137869.html>

An interfaith service to commemorate the 100th birthday of this country's first Premier and Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams will be held today at Balisier House, Tranquility Street, Port of Spain.

The event will also mark the 30th anniversary of Williams' passing, said Chairman of the Dr Eric Williams Memorial Committee Reginald Vidale. Williams, who was born on September 25, 1911, died on March 29, 1981.

Vidale said that after the interfaith service, scheduled to begin at 10 am, a large portrait of Dr Williams will be taken from Balisier House through the main streets of Port of Spain and finally to the Rotunda of the Red House. "It will remain there until April 1 for citizens to visit and sign the remembrance book," he said.

Vidale said Williams, referred to as the Father of the Nation, has not been given due recognition over the years. "Dr Williams' legacy has been somewhat diminished in that the recognition once given to him is not there," he said.

Book of Remembrance for Dr Eric Williams

Lara Pickford-Gordon, *Newsday*
Monday, March 28, 2011
<http://newsday.co.tt/news/0,137921.html>

To mark the 30th anniversary of the death of T&T's first Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams, a book of remembrance has been opened at the Rotunda of the Red House [seat of Parliament] for the public to sign. It will be available from today between the hours of 8 am and 4 pm.

This was announced by Speaker of the House of Representatives Wade Mark at a portrait presentation ceremony at the Red House during which Chairman of the Dr Eric Williams Memorial Committee Reginald Vidale presented him with a portrait of Williams. Mark said the book would be available for signing until April 1.

In brief remarks, Mark said there is no doubt that in the 20th Century Williams was an "intellectual giant" and the various publications he authored told of the history, political evolution, and economic development of T&T.

Williams also served as chief minister and prime minister and took the country from independence to republicanism. At the regional level, he worked towards a federation of Caribbean countries. Mark referred to statements made at last Friday's sitting in which Government indicated an intention to have a policy to celebrate the heroes and heroines of the country. Mark hoped the Opposition would collaborate with Government on this initiative and when the country celebrated 50 years of Independence next year the policy would be "effected in a meaningful way."

In giving the thanks at the end of the event, Vidale said he has written to Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar regarding having an Eric Williams Remembrance Day in April.

Present at the signing were Williams' nieces — Patricia, Eunice, Margaret, and Kathleen Gittens. Their mother Flora Gittens was Williams' sister.

An inter-faith service took place at Balisier House yesterday prior to the portrait presentation ceremony. Other activities have been planned by the People's National Movement (PNM) to celebrate Williams. A mass takes place on Thursday evening at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Port of Spain.

Dr Eric Williams Remembrance Day

Cherisse Moe, *Trinidad & Tobago Guardian*

Monday, March 28, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2011/03/28/dr-eric-williams-remembrance-day>

Thirty years after the death of Dr Eric Eustace Williams, Chairman of the Dr Eric Williams Memorial Committee, Reginald Vidale, is calling on the Government to dedicate the first Saturday in April to the remembrance of the nation's first prime minister. Vidale said the day should be called the Dr Eric Williams Remembrance Day and while it "may not necessarily be a holiday," the observance should be put on the national calendar of events. Stating that Williams was one of the most significant leaders in the history of modern T&T, Vidale said many citizens remained unaware of his legacy and the major role he played in shaping the nation's political and social landscapes.

"In India, all the children know about Mahatma Gandhi," he said. "In our country, young people don't even know about Dr Eric Williams ... We need to do something about this lack of education. "It may be in the history books, but do they really know? I would love for a portrait of Dr Eric Williams to hang in every school." Vidale was speaking during a portrait ceremony at the Rotunda, Red House, Port of Spain, yesterday, to mark the 30th anniversary of Dr Williams' death and the 100th anniversary of his birth.

Speaker of the House Wade Mark, who described Dr Williams as an "intellectual giant," said the Government soon hoped to collaborate with the Opposition to establish a National Heroes Policy to celebrate the life of Dr Williams, as well as other national heroes. He added: "Hopefully, as T&T celebrates its 50th anniversary of our independence, that policy can take shape and be effected in a meaningful way." Stating that the Government also intended to create a National Memorial Park, Mark said the country owed a debt of gratitude to Dr Williams, who, "despite his shortcomings," left his mark on T&T.

Member of Parliament for Laventille West, NiLeung Hypolite, said the People's National Movement (PNM) would launch a number of activities in remembrance of its founder, including an inter-faith service at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Port of Spain on Thursday. Also at the ceremony were some of Dr Williams' family members, including his nieces Patricia, Margaret, Kathleen and Eunice Gittens. Earlier, at an interfaith service at Balisier House on Tranquility Street, Port of Spain, the PNM's newly-elected General Secretary, Ashton Ford, said Dr Williams was a "misunderstood" man whose statements were always taken out of context for "political reasons."

"Even in death, people are trying to downplay his greatness ... But he was, and always will be, a great leader of T&T and a great leader of the Caribbean," Ford said. A remembrance book will be made available to the public from today until Friday, from 8 am to 4 pm, at the Red House, Port of Spain.

About Eric Williams

Born on September 25, 1911, Eric Williams was educated at Queen's Royal College, won an Island Scholarship, and attended Oxford University. In 1939, Williams migrated to the United States to teach at Howard University. In 1948, he left Howard to head the Research Branch of the Caribbean Commission. He later (1955) resigned from the Commission in protest against its colonialist policies.

Williams returned to T&T and became more involved in politics. In September 1956, the PNM won the national election and he became the chief minister of the country from 1956 to 1959, premier from 1959 to 1962, and prime minister from 1962 to 1981. During his term as prime minister, Williams led T&T into the Federation of the West Indies and to independence within the Commonwealth in 1962. He died in office on March 29, 1981.

Government to Honour Williams next year

Julien Neaves, *Trinidad Express*

Monday, March 28, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Government_to_honour_Williams_next_year-118819044.html

With the 50th anniversary of independence next year, Government is planning a year of celebrations and this country's first Prime Minister Dr Eric Eustace Williams will be "duly recognised and celebrated", announced Leader of Government Business Dr Roodal Moonilal.

He was speaking in Parliament on Friday on a motion brought by Opposition Leader Dr Keith Rowley for initiatives to recognise the centennial anniversary of the birthday of the late first Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams.

He pointed out that the Education Ministry will be embarking on a consultation on the primary school curriculum and it was its intention "that the work and the legacy of Dr Eric Williams and others should be reflected further in the primary school curriculum and the secondary school curriculum."

Rowley knocked his desk in support as the measure fit with a suggestion in his motion. Moonilal also suggested that the audio visual quality of taped speeches by Williams should be restored and shown to pupils.

Bipartisan Homage to Eric Williams at 100

Commentary, *Trinidad Express*

Tuesday, March 29, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/commentaries/Bipartisan_homage_to_Eric_Williams_at_100-118821054.html

After the epoch-making moment of his death 30 years ago today, Trinidad and Tobago overcame the trauma of the passing of Eric Eustace Williams, till then its only prime minister. His had been a colossal figure that, for more than three decades, bestrode the land, but its citizens never arrived at any consensus about, nor indeed have given serious consideration to, how he is to be remembered.

Dr Williams had famously wished aloud for no posthumous memorial of himself. Such discouragement did not prevent the Port of Spain Financial Complex and the Mt Hope Medical Sciences Complex to be named after him. But for his accomplishments and his contributions, the former prime minister and internationally esteemed historian towered over other stellar notables of their time, after whom major highways have been named.

The unfinished business of adequately remembering Eric Eustace Williams came to the fore on Friday, when Opposition Leader Keith Rowley urged the Government to designate this Eric Eustace Williams Year and to make his life and works available for study in the schools.

As Dr Rowley spoke, the year was already three months old, and the Education Ministry was just about advertising a national consultation on primary school curriculum for April 5 and 6. Dr Rowley had freshly come from the 43rd Annual PNM Convention at which, rare for the party, one address had been dedicated to the memory of its founder and former leader, Dr Williams.

Still, his initiative to raise public consciousness of the life and times of this pioneer of party politics and champion of political independence (who, for the occasion, wrote a history of the people of T&T), comes late in the day. Late indeed, too, for the PNM which, in the decades since the Williams passing, can be identified with little or no effort to keep alive his memory as a leader and his teachings as a historian of slavery and colonialism, and as a nationalist statesman.

That had been left to be the lonely struggle of a rump element in the party, annually defying the general PNM indifference, and to Erica Williams-Connell, tireless organiser and advocate of the preservation of her father's works. It was on the occasion of the 1998 official opening of the UWI Eric Williams Memorial Collection, a project of Mrs Williams-Connell, that then Prime Minister Basdeo Panday announced that education would become seamlessly free from primary to secondary, in fulfilment of the aspirations of Dr Williams. Kamla Persad-Bissessar was fated to be the Education Minister to deliver on that mandate.

For the suitable observance of Eric Eustace Williams' centenary, a bipartisan accommodation and arrangement must be achieved. To this end, the PNM's proposals arrive better late than never. The country thus looks forward to hearing what, for its part, the Government has in mind.

Learn from Williams' Teachings

Sean Nero, *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*

Sunday, April 3, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2011/04/03/learn-williams-teachings>

Port of Spain Mayor Louis Lee Sing is convinced that if there was ever a time that this country needed the guidance of the late Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams, it is now. He said the racial tension stirred by controversial statements made by Police Service Commission Chairman Nizam Mohammed about an ethnic imbalance in the hierarchy of the Police Service executive just over a week ago could hurt this country's social fabric, and called on the national community to reflect and learn from the late prime minister's teachings on racial harmony. In delivering tribute to Dr Williams at the 30th anniversary wreath-laying ceremony of his passing at the military heliport in Chaguaramas, Lee Sing said: "All of us who have been following the news in the last week or two would agree that the country has taken on a divide, particularly as it relates to the statements made by the Chairman of the Police Service Commission Mr Nizam Mohammed.

"Dr Williams, throughout his life, sought to bring the races and the nation together and when he specifically spoke about 'there can be no mother India, no mother Africa', he was alluding to the fact that there could be only one mother; mother Trinidad and Tobago." He said the legacy of Dr Williams remained lasting and that his teachings required no promotion and advertising campaigns. But Reginald Vidale, chairman of the Dr Eric Williams Memorial Committee, called on the People's Partnership Government to officially declare the first Saturday of April 'Dr Eric Williams Remembrance Day' to truly preserve his legacy.

Addressing a gathering that included Dr Lincoln Douglas, Minister in the Ministry of the People and Social Development, Joan Yuille-Williams, deputy political leader of the People's National Movement, and a former Port of Spain mayor, Ethelbert Paul, and members of the Diplomatic Corps, he said it need not be a holiday, but a day to commemorate and reflect on the life of the man commonly referred to as the "Father of the Nation." Vidale expressed doubt about hosting the event in the future. He had many challenges putting on the observance annually and wanted the state to take on the responsibility of preserving Dr Williams' legacy.

"It's becoming a little more onerous to have this. The sponsorship is hard in coming by and of course there are not many people who are as committed as I am to this and there are those who are as committed as I am. "It can be bigger and if it has to be the way that I would really want it to be, it would take anything close to \$100,000. And, I'm getting older and the task is getting harder and harder, because it's getting bigger and bigger. If it can't be taken over by the state, then certainly, I'm not too sure I'll be able to continue with it because of the enormous amount (of money) which needs to be put in to having this. So, it is for that reason that I'm contemplating it," he said.

Honouring Eric Williams' legacy

Editorial, *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*

Monday, April 4, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/editorial/2011/04/04/honouring-eric-williams-legacy>

At the annual wreath-laying ceremony on Saturday in honour of the late Dr Eric Williams, the chairman of the memorial committee, Reginald Vidale, sounded some sober warnings of the state of affairs of the remembrance day. "It's becoming a little more onerous to have this," Vidale said. "The sponsorship is hard in coming by and of course there are not many people who are as committed as I am to this ...". The efforts of Vidale and his colleagues over the last 30 years should be saluted in the context of Trinidad and Tobago's challenges with preserving its history. Dr Williams was notably disinterested in such honorifics after his passing, but the man's legacy, both flawed and brilliant, is such a critical cornerstone in the architecture of Trinidad and Tobago as a nation that it deserves not just preservation, but codification and continuing analysis.

Apart from the medical sciences complex at Mt Hope, the other environment that famously carries Williams' name is the archive of his presence in Trinidad and Tobago that's preserved at the library of the University of the West Indies as the Eric Williams Memorial Collection. At the ceremony, Reginald Vidale called for a day to be named after the late prime minister, but in 2011, the year that also marks 100 years since the birth of the PNM founder, it's worth considering and amplifying a suggestion made by PNM political leader Keith Rowley when he piloted an Opposition motion calling on the Government to mark the centenary of Williams' birth. Rowley suggested that the former public library building at Knox Street be given to UWI to house the Eric Williams Collection.

There's some merit to this suggestion, but it doesn't go nearly far enough to explore the possibilities of the resiting. There's a strong emotional and historical argument to be made for repurposing the old public library building, a robust looking artifact of this country's learning legacy and a structure that overlooks Woodford Square, the site of many of Dr Williams' most potent political interventions with the public. But 30 years after the late PNM founder's passing, there is a clear need to build out the scope of that suggestion to engage other aspects of this country's history that have also been given inadequate attention. The retrofitting of the former Public Library into something that might be called the Eric Williams Center for Research and National History might serve to broaden the scope of the structure to include the long overdue digitising and collating of the material being held in the National Archives in a space that could make use of the kind of technologically driven audio and video-based delivery systems that are part of the modern presentation of historical materials to the public.

Such a structure, situated in the heart of the foot traffic of the average citizen in downtown Port of Spain, might provide a critical revitalising of interest in the political and social history of Trinidad and Tobago from the 20th century and prior that would be at once clever and attractive enough to engage inquisitive young minds and deep and rich enough to provide the kind of material that serious researchers and future analysts would find invaluable. The Eric Williams Memorial Collection was an important effort at freezing the extant artifacts of the PNM's founder after his passing, but this was a man and a scholar who prized living knowledge that's accessible beyond glass cases and carefully curated documents.

The Eric Williams who wrote and engaged the political public in the middle of the 20th century would have admired and saluted a structure that made digital facsimiles of his documents and the papers that constitute this country's recorded history available on touch screens and accessible on the Web. In the 1950s Dr Eric Williams was a forward-looking thinker with great ambitions for this country. Any memoriam sought by the Opposition should respect the spirit of his life and embody it in a living archive that carries on the best elements of his work in this country.

Erica: Stop the Partisan Politics over 'Doc'

Sateesh Maharaj, *Trinidad Express*

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Erica_Stop_the_partisan_politics_over_Doc_-119375564.html

Erica Williams Connell, daughter of the late Dr Eric Williams and founder of the Eric Williams Memorial Collection, Research Library, Archives and Museum, said national recognition of her father and his contributions to this nation were “abysmally lacking.” Connell was speaking at the launch of the stamp issue to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Dr Williams, this country’s first prime minister.

“Today we hear about internationalising Eric Williams. This is a misnomer, for Eric Williams continues to do quite well in that arena even 30 years after his death. It is nationalising Eric Williams that is abysmally lacking.” She added, “There is talk too about honouring our hero and this is long overdue. However, no one should deny the enormous debt of gratitude that this country owes and needs to pay particularly to Eric Williams, regardless of whether or not he wished for either honour or recognition. I stand here tonight to say unabashedly and without fear of contradiction that no single individual has given as much to his homeland.”

Connell cited the situation where US President Barack Obama, a Democrat, signed the legislation creating a centennial commission commemorating former President Ronald Reagan, a Republican. She said, “It is this kind of First World mentality that we must aspire to in Trinidad and Tobago, not bound by the narrow and petty circumscriptions of partisan politics.”

“Let’s not forget,” she continued, “that with a population of ethnic diversities, by and large Williams held this country together — a feat that has not always been the case in the intervening years since his passing.”

Erica Wants More Recognition for Father

Trinidad and Tobago Guardian

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2011/04/07/erica-wants-more-recognition-father>

Whether or not he wished for honour or recognition, there is no denying that this country owes an enormous debt of gratitude that it needs to repay to Dr Eric Williams. So said Erica Williams-Connell, daughter of this country's first prime minister, as she made an impassioned appeal for the national recognition she said is "abysmally lacking" for her late father. Speaking at the Eric Williams Centenary Stamp Launch at the National Library in Port of Spain on Tuesday evening, Williams-Connell contended that no single individual had given as much to his homeland as Dr Williams did over a quarter of a century.

"If anyone in Trinidad and Tobago today has a conscience, this will not be a bone of contention. But you know, we could politicise a calabash, so the naysayers have already begun to come out of the proverbial woodwork," she said. Williams-Connell pointed out that in the United States for the recent Centennial of Ronald Reagan, events were administered by a bipartisan committee and President Barack Obama, a Democrat, signed legislation creating the Centennial Commission commemorating Reagan, a Republican. "It is this kind of 'First World' mentality that we must aspire to in Trinidad and Tobago, not bound by the narrow and petty circumscriptions of partisan politics — instead, rising to a higher plane," she said.

Williams-Connell, who said Eric Williams was more relevant than ever "by whatever parameters you choose to impose", detailed his "almost 70-year-old passionate, persistent and consistent defence of a unified, multilingual Caribbean and his significant and unstinting contributions to it." These include 137 lectures in one year at the 'University' of Woodford Square; his tour de force *Capitalism and Slavery* which re-framed the historiography of the British trans-Atlantic slave trade; the industrial development at Point Lisas which has caused T&T's economic growth to average some six per cent a year since 1994; and the fearlessness he displayed when dealing with the superpowers. She added: "And let's not forget that, with a population of diverse ethnicities and religions, by and large, Williams held this country together — a feat that has not always been the case in the intervening years since his death."

"And he did this despite sometimes tough and intemperate electioneering language — giving us all a template for tolerance, integration and sanity." Williams-Connell congratulated TTPost for being "in front of the pack" in commemorating the 100th birthday of the Father of the Nation.

T&T's First PM Gets Stamp Issue

Trinidad and Tobago Guardian

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2011/04/07/tt-s-first-pm-gets-stamp-issue>

A special stamp issue to commemorate the centenary of the birth of T&T's first prime minister, Dr Eric Williams, was launched yesterday at NALIS. Produced by T&T Postal Corporation in association with the Eric Williams Memorial Foundation, the issue captures Williams in several moods. He is seen with some of T&T's famous sons including the late CLR James, Nobel laureate Sir Vidia Naipaul, and also posing with the Beatles' Ringo Starr and the late John Lennon in Tobago.

Speaking at the launch, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities, Jacqueline Ganteaume-Farrell, said Williams' legacy was legendary and the stamp issue was a fitting tribute. "Stamp issues are used to highlight the history and culture of our country and its eminent citizens to the rest of the world," she said. "Dr Williams' legacy is legendary and therefore it is only fitting that T&T celebrate the centenary of his birth by an international launch of commemorative stamps," Ganteaume-Farrell said at the launch at NALIS, Abercromby Street, Port of Spain.

The stamp issue proposed by William's daughter, Erica Williams-Connell, consists of six stamps with denominations of \$1, \$1.50, \$2.50, \$3.75, \$4.50 and \$5.25. The images also include Williams with Michael Anthony and Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India. On the advice of Williams-Connell, a national school art competition was held to provide a painting of the late prime minister that was used on one stamp. The eventual winner was Georgia Corder of Bishop's Centenary College, Port of Spain. Part proceeds from the sale of the special stamp issue are being donated to schools for the hearing-impaired across T&T.

Dr Eric Williams: The Time Has Come

Dr Glenville Ashby, *Trinidad & Tobago Guardian*

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/node/10340>

That no man knows what tomorrow will bring is a truism played out day after day. In an unseasonably cold spring afternoon I am on the phone with Erica Williams-Connell, the daughter of Dr Eric Williams, the first prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago also referred to as the Father of the Nation. We are discussing the Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library, Archives and Museum (EWMC) at the University of the West Indies and really, the legacy of her father. I am listening and am moved by her passion and commitment to ensuring that the nation to which her father dedicated his life, will honour the centenary of his birth in a manner befitting a political and philosophical visionary. As a student of history and international affairs, it is an exchange I am embracing. I am not an unbridled defender of all of Dr Williams' policies and ideas, but the man continues to intrigue me. And the question remains: How should we as a nation celebrate Dr Williams' centennial and towering legacy?

Deciding on such a matter of national importance should not be mired in political squabbles, racial prejudices and petty jealousy among academia. The criterion for greatness is not perfection. Dr Williams' worth must be judged within the context of his political leadership between 1956 and 1981. His scholastic and political accomplishments are undeniable and well documented; and his shortcomings and even mystique will always be fodder for lively debates. His greatness, though, is measurable by the importance and relevance of his ideas in today's context. So often are the ghosts of Lincoln, Washington, Reagan, Bolivar, and others invoked by political pundits on either side of the political aisle, especially when crises emerge that require an exigent response. As figures transcending politics, they are revered. Ronald Reagan, a stalwart credited with staring down the USSR during the Cold War was celebrated by all Americans —Republicans and Democrats alike— on the centenary of his birth last month. In fact, it was a Democratic President Obama who signed into law the Bill creating the bipartisan Centennial Commission to honour Reagan, a Republican president.

Indeed, for every hero there are naysayers. But on this occasion in American history there wasn't any room for political nit-picking. My exchange with Mrs Williams-Connell ends and I revisit some documents in the Eric Williams Memorial Collection, again. It is testament to a larger-than-life figure who transcended local and regional politics. In an era where all politics is potentially global in scope and where the past, present and future are perfectly integrated, Dr Williams' brilliant theses on colonialism, imperialism, nation building, conflict resolution and geopolitics are pertinent now more than ever. Yes, in a world convulsing with religious, ethnic and tribal conflicts, what would Dr Williams say? And in a world where regional blocs are jockeying for political and economic leverage, how would he advise his Caribbean counterparts? Indeed, interesting scenarios. Dr Williams' global reach seems under-appreciated in his own country. He was approached as a successor to UN Secretary General U Thant in 1971, played a pivotal role in the independence of Belize and mediated the Venezuela-Guyana border dispute.

And there is more. He was one of only 73 world leaders asked to write messages to be placed on the moon by the Apollo 11 astronauts. Further, he was embraced as a peer by Nehru, Nasser, Churchill,

Ben Gurion, Ford, Johnson, and other global titans. Former US secretary of state, Colin Powell, states: "No one was a greater fighter for justice and equality." The Eric Williams Memorial Collection celebrates its 13th anniversary this month. It is currently housed in two small rooms at UWI with a single custodian. Despite overwhelming constraints and among other activities, it continues to facilitate symposia, book publications, conferences, regional essay competitions, an oral history project, two anti-teen pregnancy and genocide/holocaust pilot projects in secondary schools, and plans to collaborate with Oxford University to create a scholarship in Dr Williams' name. Does Dr Eric Williams' work deserve more? Sure it does. Wouldn't the unoccupied library on Knox Street, opposite Woodford Square (where he sounded his first political salvos) be a more fitting home? The point is, there is no reason why the EWMC shouldn't be tailored along the lines of US presidential libraries, housing a state-of-the-art conservation laboratory for student interns; digitisation capability; audio visual, photographic and newspaper archives; a museum; a research department and a scholars-in-residence programme. It is an undertaking well worth considering by the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Williams' Stamp on History

Sateesh Maharaj, *Trinidad Express*

April 19, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/featured-news/Williams_stamp_on_history-120182584.html

Former prime minister, the late Dr Eric Williams, has certainly made his mark on not just the history of this nation, but in shaping the Caribbean.

His endeavours were praised when a stamp issue to commemorate the anniversary of his birth was recently launched at NALIS by TTPost and the Eric Williams Memorial Collection, Research Library, Archives and Museum.

In paying homage to the life and times of Dr Williams, Sheldon Cyrus, managing director, TTPost, said he was a man of many firsts, including this country's first chief minister (1956-1959), first premier (1959-1962), and from 1962 until his death on March 29, 1981, our first prime minister.

He led this country in 1958 to the Federation of the West Indies, the political union of British Caribbean territories. He was also instrumental in this country gaining Independence in 1962 and republic status in 1976.

Cyrus said the production of a stamp issue to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of Dr Williams was envisioned by his daughter, Erica Williams-Connell.

He said her proposal included a school-based competition for one of the stamp images. It was also proposed that this stamp be valued at one dollar, but with a denomination of \$1.50 to allow for a donation to be made to schools for the hearing impaired in this country. The corporation had in November 2005 issued a souvenir sheet titled "Children against Cancer", which resulted in the donation of five dollars with every purchase going towards the Cancer Society.

Connell's request was approved by the Philatelic Committee of the TTPost board in late 2009 together with the images for consideration which most effectively commemorated the occasion. As such, this stamp issue became a part of the corporation's stamp programme for 2011.

The stamp issue comprises a dollar stamp featuring Dr Williams seen with Sir Vidia Naipaul, Michael Anthony, and Andre Deutsch. The \$1.50 stamp captures the image of Dr Williams playing cricket with Cyril Lionel Robert James and Sir Learie Constantine at the Queen's Park Savannah.

The \$2.50 stamp highlights Dr Williams and Kwame Nkrumah, first prime minister of Ghana.

The \$3.75 stamp features a painting of Dr Williams by Georgia M Cordner, of Bishops Centenary College, winner of the National Stamp Competition hosted by the Eric Williams Memorial Collection of the University of the West Indies.

The \$4.40 stamp shows Dr Williams with John Lennon and Ringo Starr of The Beatles, an image taken by Noel Norton in Tobago in 1966.

The \$5.25 stamp features Dr Williams and Jawaharlal Nehru of India, the first and to date the longest-serving prime minister of India from 1947 to 1964.

The first day cover, which encases all the stamp images in the various denominations, also includes an image from the book *Capitalism and Slavery* written by Dr Williams.

Other details of the late prime minister's life as well as the other celebrated persons featured in the stamp images are contained in a brochure that will accompany the stamp issue.

Permanent secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities, Jacqueline Ganteaume-Farrell, said that, sadly, men of the stature of Dr Williams seem all too few and far between in today's Trinidad and Tobago.

She lamented: "Sadder still is the evidence that the majority of young people in this country have little knowledge of who Dr Williams was; what he stood for and what he did for this country and meant to national development. Few of them know how they have come to enjoy the free secondary education in particular, that they take for granted."

Ganteaume-Farrell continued: "The launch of this commemorative stamp issue is but one small, though significant way of getting the message of who this most excellent personage was and the significance of his contribution and impact on this nation, towering as he did over other notables of his time and even to this day. This occasion serves to provide Trinbagonians with a focus around which, if not to rally, then of which to feel proud and renew our self-esteem amid the turbulence of today's society."

Winner of the schools' stamp design competition, Georgia Cordner, said that Dr Williams winning a scholarship to Oxford University in 1931 and graduating with a doctorate in history inspired her to work her way through school to achieve her dream career.

Tobago Marks Birth, Death of Eric Williams

Trinidad and Tobago Guardian

Wednesday, May 18, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2011/05/18/tobago-marks-birth-death-eric-williams>

Glowing tribute was paid to former Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams on the occasion of his birth 100 years ago and his death 30 years ago by religious and political leaders in Tobago on Sunday. In winding up his sermon at the St Joseph's RC Church, Monsignor Kenneth Spence described Dr Williams as a "champion and somebody with a great vision," who worked hard for the nation and sacrificed much. "Dr Williams like all of us was not a perfect human being, he had his faults," Spence said. "He had a vision for this nation and strove with all his intellect and resources to have an abiding gift to the nation."

Spence said he was not a politician and had no political persuasion, but the watchwords discipline, production, and tolerance [that] Dr Williams left still stood and were still essential to the development of people. The event was organised as a "portrait presentation ceremony of Dr Eric Williams, father of the nation" by Reginald Vidale, chairman of the Dr Eric Williams memorial committee in conjunction with the Assembly Legislature.

The church service was followed by a parade of cadets and scouts to the Assembly Chamber building where addresses were delivered by presiding officer Ann Mitchell-Gift, Chief Secretary Orville London, and Vidale. Portraits of Dr Williams were also presented to members of the Assembly. London said Dr Williams had intellectual courage and was not afraid to cross barriers and enter new territory. The Chief Secretary recalled the speedy, sensitive, and effective response of Dr Williams to the ravages of Hurricane Flora in September 1963 that formed the catalyst for him in Tobago. London asked his listeners to think about what Dr Williams did for education in Tobago because it was he who made secondary school available to poor Tobagonians to aspire. He recalled that he went to secondary school on a scholarship because his parents could not afford to pay the \$16 a term for him to do so.

He said it was under Dr Williams that the approach to education and housing changed in Tobago. He said because Dr Williams felt it was difficult for the people of Tobago and Trinidad to buy land and build houses, he decided to build and sell the units to them. He added that many Tobagonians did not take up the offer of the houses at Bon Accord, Buccoo, and Charlotteville. London said while the present community and social programmes had their genesis under Dr Williams, one of the most outstanding achievements was the establishment of the Tobago House of Assembly in 1980. "Dr Williams was an excellent team leader, he was not a perfect man but nobody can deny that he led, and you always know who is in charge," he said.

Vidale said he had been visiting Tobago regularly for the past ten years and had noticed that remembering Dr Williams was not encouraged. He said it was also felt that Dr Williams did not do enough for Tobago. "Today, 30 years after his passing, I want to take the opportunity to apologise to the people of Tobago," he said. "When one looks at the development of Tobago, it can only be indicative of the strong foundation that Tobago has built and that is why it owes a debt of gratitude to the founding father." Vidale also appealed to London to name the new Scarborough Library, which is under construction, after Dr Williams and to have a portrait of the former prime minister hung in every school in the island.

Dr Williams' integrity beyond reproach

Sasha Harrinanan, *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*
 Monday, June 20, 2011
<http://www.newsday.co.tt/news/0,142541.html>

Unlike some contemporary Caribbean political leaders, the integrity of Trinidad and Tobago's first prime minister, Dr Eric Williams, was beyond reproach. So too, his vision of regional unity and his emphasis on education remain a blueprint which the region's leaders should be guided by.

This was the message delivered by Professor Colin A Palmer at the 25th Annual Eric Williams Memorial Lecture, held at the Central Bank Auditorium on June 11.

"He did not enter the political arena for material benefit and he died a man of very modest means. If Eric Williams had been a corrupt politician, the British and the Americans would have had no compunction about publicising his misdeeds, given their antipathy to him ... Our contemporary leaders must likewise strive to maintain a public image that is beyond reproach and should also eschew appealing to people's worst instincts. Abuse of one's opponents is an awful substitute for the articulation of ideas," Palmer told a packed auditorium.

This year marks the centenary of William's birth on September 25, 1911, hence the decision to make the topic of this year's lecture: "Eric Williams and the Challenges of Caribbean Leadership". It was the first time the lecture series had ever focused on Williams himself and his leadership of T&T from a British colony to an independent nation.

Palmer, who is director of the Scholars in Residence Program at Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York, spoke of Williams' determination to avoid racial divisions and tensions as he led T&T from colonialism to independence in 1962 and a republic in 1976.

"Eric Williams fervently embraced T&T's racial diversity, seeing it as an asset and boasting about it always in front of overseas audiences. As a descendant of enslaved Africans, he rejected racist ideologies in all of their forms and was respectful of ethnic differences. There is of course some difference of opinion on Williams' record on race during his tenure in office. (However) there is no gainsaying the fact that (his) leadership saved T&T from the terrible racial conflicts that engulfed British Guyana throughout the 1960s. British Guyana and T&T possessed similar racial configurations, so Williams feared the spread of BG's racial virus to his own country, threatening its fragile societal harmony," Palmer explained.

Caribbean economic and political unity were two major goals of Williams, which Professor Palmer noted remain incomplete today.

"The Anglophone Caribbean produced several significant political leaders in the second half of the 20th century ... but none of them were as passionately convinced as Eric Williams that a better future for their respective nations resided in their being a part of an economic and political unit more vital than their own. He was willing to subordinate his country's sovereignty for that of a larger political unit. A vision, and I stress this, that remains compelling, timely and important."

Palmer urged CARICOM leaders and their cabinet ministers to follow Williams' vision of regional integration if they were really interested in improving the lives of their citizens.

"I would like, for a start, to see regular meetings of ministers of the region who own the portfolios of finance, education, agriculture, health, trade, science and technology and so on. I want to see these people meet to discuss common problems and to cross-fertilise one another.

"I should like our governments to pay greater attention to the provision of skills to our young people that would allow them to function in what is certain to be a technologically-driven twenty-first century. None of these initiatives will succeed unless the spirit ... the enthusiasm of our Caribbean people is harnessed and called into service," Palmer said.

Turning his attention to the centenary of Eric Williams' birth and his contribution to national and regional development, Palmer urged T&T to pay Williams the respect he deserves.

"In death he ceased to be identified with or claimed exclusively by any political party or ethnic group. Like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, and others, Williams should be seen as transcending narrowly constructed identities to become the property of all the peoples of this great land and by extrapolation, the region and the world."

Palmer also advised voters across the Caribbean and regional media to use Eric Williams' sense of integrity, hard work and dedication to the development of his nation, as the benchmark by which all other politicians should be graded.

"A prime minister for example, who deliberately lies to Parliament and the country should be unceremoniously shown the door ... There cannot be any compromise on corruption, bigotry, violations of the constitution and abuses of the public trust. Bad behaviour should not be rewarded with election to high office or with continuation in that office. Serving people is a privilege, not a right," Palmer declared, to loud applause.

Eric Williams' scholarly works and his political legacy will be honoured again later this year, at his alma mater, Oxford University.

Palmer said "in September, the centenary of Williams' birth, several of the world's most distinguished scholars will gather at Oxford University to discuss the life and work of Eric Williams. It is both a tribute to the man and his country and to the Caribbean region. Sponsored by Eric Williams' alma mater St Catherine's College at Oxford and by the Eric Williams Memorial Collection, this timely conference will feature papers on his scholarship and his career as a politician and statesman."

Eric Williams and the Challenge of Caribbean Leadership

Special Report, *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*

Sunday, July 3, 2011

http://www.newsday.co.tt/sunday_special_report/0,143275.html

This year, in September, marks the Centenary of the birth of Dr Eric Williams, Trinidad and Tobago's first prime minister.

As part of the 25th Annual Eric Williams Memorial Lecture series last month, the Central Bank hosted a lecture by Professor Colin A. Palmer, director of Scholars in Residence Programme at the Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, New York. Palmer dealt extensively with Williams' contribution to Trinidad and Tobago and the region.

In response to several requests for copies of this letter, we begin today serialisation of Professor Palmer's enlightening lecture.

I want you to know that I am deeply honoured by your invitation to give this lecture on the occasion of its twenty-fifth anniversary. This is the first time, I am told, that Eric Williams will be its focus. This is entirely appropriate since this year marks the centenary of Williams's birth. It provides us with an opportunity to assess his contribution to the making of Trinidad and Tobago and the larger Caribbean as well.

The last time that I addressed a largely Caribbean audience in Toronto, I was asked whether I had political ambitions in Jamaica. Since the answer remains in the negative, I shall not be constrained in what I plan to say to you this evening. I ask you, however, to suspend partisanship as we reflect on the life and work of this outstanding West Indian. Those of you of a certain generation will remember the excitement that greeted Eric Williams's return to Trinidad and Tobago in 1955, and the speech he gave on that occasion. In the immediate aftermath of his dismissal from the Caribbean Commission, he told the 20,000 people who gathered in Port of Spain to hear him that "I was born here, and here I stay with the people of Trinidad." He vowed "to lay down my bucket where I am. Now, right here with you in the British West Indies." I am renaming this vow tonight. I am calling it the Declaration of Port of Spain because it would have such enormous consequences for his nation in formation and for the Caribbean as a whole.

Nor can anyone easily forget Williams's electrifying speeches at the University of Woodford Square, his oratorical and intellectual brilliance, and his demonstration of a political pugnacity that belied his small stature. His lectures at Woodford Square were enormously important in raising the consciousness of a people thirsty for knowledge about themselves and their history, thirsty for the kind of knowledge that would empower them to command their future. He never spoke down to his enraptured listeners; he elevated his brothers and sisters, making their common history accessible and understood. The celebrated Barbadian writer, George Lamming, said it well:

He turned history, the history of the Caribbean into gossip, so that the story of a people's predicament seemed no longer the infinite, barren tract of documents, dates, and texts. Everything became news; slavery, colonialism, the forgivable deception of metropolitan rule,

the sad and inevitable unawareness of native production ... his lectures retained always the character of whisper which everyone was allowed to hear, a rumour which experience had established as truth.

Jamaicans, Barbadians, Grenadians, and others listened enviously as the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago boasted about the Doctor when he became chief minister and eventually prime minister and when he contested the might of the United States of America over the Chaguaramas lease. Williams was not only an inspirational leader at home but he commanded enormous respect, if not affection, from his overseas colleagues. British officials were in awe of his brilliance. Prime Minister Harold Wilson chose him to be a part of a team of Commonwealth Prime Ministers to mediate the conflict in Vietnam. There was even some talk of his succeeding U Thant as the Secretary General of the United Nations. When he made his extended official tour of Africa in 1964 along with Kamaluddin Mohammed and others, he did his nation proudly. The British High Commissioner in Sierra Leone called him “an impressive emissary” of Trinidad and Tobago. His counterpart in Ethiopia called Williams’s visit “a success” describing him somewhat condescendingly as a “mature product of the British colonial system.” Norman Costar, the British High Commissioner in Trinidad who followed the trip rather closely, reported that if Trinidadians thought about the trip at all, they saw it as more “bigness” for the nation and “a feather in the cap of the tough little terrier at the top.”

Many will recall the widespread hope and expectancy that followed the “tough little terrier’s” election in 1956. The delirious joy that it unleashed among some people has not really been repeated in the Caribbean. Barack Obama’s election in the United States two years ago generated a similar unabashedly enthusiastic reaction around the world. So it is well, this evening, that we recapture that special moment in September 1956 —and its aftermath too— because a people who have never exercised power often have short memories, often denigrate their historical personages and tend to expect them to work miracles overnight in order to solve problems that had been accumulating for years. There is to be sure, no need to engage in hagiography, but there is a compelling imperative to celebrate those whose vision, persistence, and hard work brought a nation into being and contributed much to its construction. I shall focus, given the brief time that I have this evening, on Eric Williams’s imagination of a new Trinidad and Tobago and a new Caribbean and the leadership he provided. I shall also address the continuing relevance of his vision in our contemporary societies. It is, after all, true that one of the obligations of leadership is the conceptualisation of a new and different reality and to work to achieve a better tomorrow for one’s people. Not even his severest critics can deny that Williams was a bold thinker, an intellectual and leader whose vision was not circumscribed by myopia and parochialism of thought.

Eric Eustace Williams came of age when all of the islands of the Anglophone Caribbean were still colonies. There were rising nationalist sentiments in Africa and Asia, but they were much weaker in the Caribbean colonies. By any measure, however, Williams must be regarded as one of the most significant international advocates of self-determination and political independence for all peoples. Scholars can point to Nkrumah of Ghana, Azikiwe of Nigeria, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Gandhi and Nehru of India as stalwarts in the struggles for political freedom. The Latin Americans can point to Simon Bolivar and Grau San Martin, the Haitians to Toussaint Louverture, the Americans to George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and the Anglophone Caribbean to George Padmore, Norman Manley, Cheddi Jagan, and Eric Williams. I situate Williams in this illustrious group and it can hardly be contested. The struggle for political liberation took different forms in different societies, passive resistance as in India, guerrilla warfare as in Kenya, and military conflict as in the United States. The Anglophone islands in the Caribbean did not have to pursue these strategies and with the possible exception of British Guiana – later Guyana – the demand for independence was neither passionate nor urgent.

There is no question, however, that Eric Williams provided the most aggressive intellectual leadership in the 1950s and the 1960s for the cause of independence in the Caribbean. His preparation for this role began in earnest at Oxford University where he read widely in the history of colonialism. Williams's doctoral dissertation, which subsequently became his classic book *Capitalism and Slavery*, transformed the historiography of slavery. His thesis that the profits from the slave trade and slavery played a significant role in the rise of British capitalism was brilliantly conceptualised and argued. Based upon his findings, Williams maintained that the colonies in the Caribbean had a legitimate claim on the British treasury since they had contributed so much to the growth of the mother country's economy. This was a crucial part of his arsenal of criticism of colonialism. The imperial powers had benefitted from the sweat of the colonised, but had contributed little to them in return. Alone among those who led the British colonies to political independence, Eric Williams rejected the "golden handshake" or parting gift that the British government gave to the former colonies. Outraged by the paltry sum that the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago were offered, the author of *Capitalism and Slavery* declared rather ostentatiously that "the offer is quite unacceptable and we would prefer not to have it." He observed that, "The West Indies are in the position of an orange. The British have sucked it dry and their sole concern today is that they should not slip and get damaged on the peel."

Eric Williams's prolonged and acrimonious dispute with the Americans for the return of Chaguaramas to the people of Trinidad and Tobago constituted a part of the larger struggle against colonialism. The people of the two sister islands were never consulted when a part of their territory was leased to the Americans in 1941. Williams sought a redress of this mistreatment, earning the opposition of many of his people, the British, and the Americans. The American Counsel General in Port of Spain even recommended to the State Department that it begin planning to remove him from office.

The British were also prepared to falsify documents to prove that Trinidadian representatives had assented to the lease, thereby undermining Williams's claim that the transfer of Trinidadian soil to the Americans was illegal.

Williams understood that the struggle to break the chains of psychological colonialism posed a greater challenge than that of severing those that were political. In March 1961 he delivered his "Massa Day Done" speech at the University of Woodford Square. "Massa Day Done," he proclaimed, "Sahib Day Done, yes suh Boss Day Done." He regretted that Massa still "had his stooges who prefer to crawl on their bellies to Massa, absentee or resident, Massa this, Massa that, Massa the other, instead of holding their heads up high and erect." This speech remains in the historical record as one of the most devastating attacks on the deleterious psychological impact of colonialism on its victims.

The imperative to liberate his people from the psychological chains of colonialism and to prepare them for life in a modern world led Williams to devote his energies to rethinking the nature of the educational system, its structure, content, and objectives. He proposed in his book, *Education in the West Indies*, the creation of a British West Indian University that would reflect and "take into account the social and economic needs of the islands." He argued that "an independent university will give to the people of the British West Indies a confidence in themselves, their roots, and their potentialities." When Williams became Pro Chancellor of the University of the West Indies in the 1960s he was instrumental in redesigning its curriculum to meet the changing needs of the societies it served.

He was, for example, responsible for the government of India endorsing an academic chair in "Indian Culture and Civilisation" at the Trinidad and Tobago campus. The Draft Plan for the Educational Development of Trinidad and Tobago that Williams introduced in 1968 gave practical expression to his conviction that the educational system needed to break with old verities and help shape a different future for the citizens of his country. It is an awful commentary on the intellectual bankruptcy in many of our societies that the curricula of the schools are still out of step with their needs.

Eric Williams, more than any other Anglophone Caribbean leader of his time, was committed to the economic and political integration of the region. As early as May, 1940, he endorsed the idea of the federation of the islands. In 1941 he predicted that “with time, democracy, and internal self-government, these British islands could set about abolishing the present absurdity of a congeries of tiny isolated governments duplicating each other at tremendous cost. ... Some form of a federation is demanded at least by common sense.” He also advocated “an economic federation of all the Caribbean areas.” Williams’s Caribbean consisted of all the Anglophone colonies, as well as the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and at various times Cuba, and Puerto Rico. It was a very elastic definition but it reflected his conviction that the destinies of these mini states and colonies were inextricably bound.

The political federation that he supported so vigorously and consistently came into being in 1958. Trinidad won the federal capital much to the chagrin of the Jamaicans. This was not a promising start and insurmountable difficulties with Jamaica soon emerged. Alexander Bustamante, who was never an ardent federalist, led the opposition to the Union. Williams who strongly supported early independence for the West Indies Federation and advocated a strong federal centre was willing, however, to make concessions to keep it alive. He compromised on such crucial questions as the allocation of seats in the Federal Parliament and on the power to be exercised by it. Williams was not always politically sensitive in asserting his positions, but the notion that he was largely responsible for the federation’s failure is fallacious.

The Doctor’s advocacy of a strong federal centre as the sine qua non for the viability of a union of the ten disparate and geographically far flung islands was judicious. The ferocious insularity of the federated units was a major obstacle in the path of an effective union. Only a strong federal government could forge the kind of unity that the federation required for its success. There were other problems as well. Grantley Adams, the prime minister, was a vacillating and ineffective leader, quite unsuitable for the position that he held. Norman Manley, with Bustamante snapping at his heels, was ambivalent in his embrace of the union. Alexander Bustamante was unable to look beyond Jamaica’s narrow domestic interests and his myopia eventually prevailed. The referendum that he forced Manley to call gave the federation its deathblow, leading Eric Williams to proclaim that “one from ten leaves nought” as he led his country out of the collapsing union.

Williams never abandoned his faith in the efficacy of the political and economic integration of the Caribbean. His attempt to create a federation of the Eastern Caribbean islands under his nation’s leadership did not materialise.

The union with Grenada that he tried to promote failed in part because of its potential long term cost to Trinidad and Tobago and Britain’s unwillingness to provide the requisite financial assistance.

Williams was disappointed but undaunted by the demise of the federation and the failure of the initiatives I just mentioned. The Prime Minister soon turned his energies to the creation of a Caribbean Economic Community. He even proposed a loose federation of the islands patterned after the Organisation of African Unity and including Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Having just led the fight against the federation, Jamaica’s Alexander Bustamante’s JLP government had no stomach for such ventures. Williams’s proposal for periodic meetings of the heads of government of the independent and self-governing countries was accepted, however. The first such meeting of the leaders of Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados, and British Guiana took place in Port of Spain in 1963. Williams welcomed the creation of the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) in 1968 and the larger CARICOM a few years later. The centralised planning that he wanted for the Caribbean, and worked to achieve, remains as we speak, largely unrealised.

Eric Williams was the son of a society where the spectre of race was always present. The Caribbean societies were constructed on the basis of racial difference, enshrining the superiority of white over black and brown. Williams fervently embraced Trinidad and Tobago's racial diversity, seeing it as an asset and boasting about it to overseas audiences. As a descendant of enslaved Africans, he rejected racist ideologies in all of their forms and was respectful of ethnic differences. His writings, speeches, and personal interactions clearly substantiate this assertion.

There is, of course, some difference of opinion on Williams's record on race during his tenure in office. A fair assessment is made more difficult because of the exigencies of partisan politics and because racial questions invite so many complex emotions. There is no gainsaying the fact that Eric Williams's leadership saved Trinidad and Tobago from the terrible racial conflicts that engulfed British Guiana throughout the 1960s. British Guiana and Trinidad and Tobago possessed similar racial configurations so Williams feared the spread of British Guiana's racial virus to his own country, threatening its fragile societal harmony. Some persons in this audience will probably recall that in 1964 alone, 166 persons died as a result of racial conflicts in British Guiana, over 800 were wounded, numerous cane fields were set ablaze, and about 1400 buildings, principally private homes, were destroyed. Nothing like this happened in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, in 1964 Cheddi Jagan invited Eric Williams to mediate British Guiana's racially inspired conflicts. This was an expression of enormous confidence in his judgment and reputation for racial balance. The exercise was a failure and Williams harshly condemned the colony's leaders —Jagan, Forbes Burnham, and Peter D'Aguiar— for putting partisan politics ahead of the interests of the common weal.

Williams was acutely aware that he had to forge a vibrant nationalism in his country that transcended ethnic particularities. This did not mean that he opposed the simultaneous existence of ethnically based differences. As early as 1955 he argued that ethnic autonomy could exist within national unity. However, he emphasised repeatedly that an ethnically based loyalty had to take second place to a larger national identity. Many will recall his denunciation of "the opposition which seeks to divide our interracial community and to substitute a new colonialism based on the aristocracy of race for the old colonialism based on the aristocracy of the skin." Williams was also emphatic in his rejection of the "opposition which looks to Mother England, or Father India, or Grandmother Africa." The new nation-state that was in the process of formation was to command the loyalty of all of its citizens over and above all other competing ones.

Williams's founding of The People's National Movement in January 1956 gave institutional expression to his vision of a nonracial nationalism for his country. The party's charter promoted the principle of interracial solidarity and cultural diversity. He explained that the PNM's animating ideology stressed "political liberty, social equality, racial fraternity."

These were important and commendable principles but the road to their achievement was sometimes quite rocky. Angered by the opposition of some Indians to the formation of the West Indies Federation and their support for the opposition party in the federal election of 1958, Williams denounced these dissenters as "a hostile and recalcitrant minority." This intemperate outburst was only directed at the Chief Minister's opponents but in its telling and retelling it came to mean for many people a signifier of his racial ideology and practice. It was a rhetorical misstep but given Williams's record, any racially abusive comment would have meant a repudiation of all that he had stood for throughout his life. His words represented a harsh indictment of those with whom he disagreed, not an indictment of an entire ethnic group. After all, many Indians supported the federal idea and the designated leader of the opposition in the Federal Parliament was Ashford Sinanan, a prominent and distinguished Trinidadian of Indian descent.

Williams did not retract his criticism; he was too arrogant to do that. Nor did he reveal to the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago that the Indian Commissioner to his country had been recalled for stimulating anti-federal sentiments, complicating the challenge of forging a multiracial nationalism. It was further complicated by the intersection of race and politics. His critics interpreted some ostensibly defensible, politically inspired decisions in racial or ethnic terms. British officials in Trinidad and Tobago, however, were able to rise above the rough and tumble of local politics to provide balanced assessments of Eric Williams's performance on racial matters. Saddened by the racially inspired violence in British Guiana, Commonwealth Secretary Duncan Sandys compared Cheddi Jagan unfavorably to Williams. "The trouble with Jagan," Sandys wrote to Williams, "is that he has failed to show your statesmanship in dealing with racial matters and merely pays lip service spasmodically to your example." A year later, British High Commissioner, Norman Costar, noted that there was some discrimination in the "handing out of jobs" in the country, but that "it is not very serious ... and is more anti-white than anti-Indian." Costar's successor, Roland Hunt, reported in 1971 that Williams's "principal, most noteworthy achievement has been to show himself evenhanded racially." Another High Commissioner, C E Diggines, stressed that "one of Dr. Williams's strongest points ... has always been his firm and genuine opposition to race as the determining factor in Trinidad politics."

Williams, to be sure, did not leave Trinidad and Tobago a colour blind or ethnically neutral society. But he did immunise his young nation from the kind of irrational racial violence that wracked British Guiana, maiming its soul. He left his successors a model for the management of racial issues that they would do well to adopt and improve upon in light of the demands of a changing society and changing times.

Time does not allow me to address adequately Williams's leadership of the economy which saw economic booms in the 1950s, much of the 1960s and the second half of the 1970s. He paid special attention to industrial development although agriculture was not neglected. In agriculture, he emphasised diversification. Williams also promoted community development and in 1963 he inaugurated his "meet the people" tour, designed as an exercise in direct democracy. He used the revenue earned from the oil boom of the 1970s to finance a variety of social programmes to improve the people's quality of life.

Eric Williams a man of many talents

Special Report, *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*

Sunday, July 10, 2011

http://www.newsday.co.tt/sunday_special_report/0,143626.html

We continue this week serialisation of Professor Colin A Palmer's enlightening 25th Annual Eric Williams Memorial Lecture.

I want at this point to discuss Williams in the context of the history of Trinidad and Tobago and the larger Caribbean, and to call attention to some of the challenges that bedevil our contemporary leaders.

The Anglophone Caribbean has produced several significant political leaders, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. They included Alexander Bustamante, Norman and Michael Manley of Jamaica, Grantley Adams of Barbados, Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago and Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham of Guyana. With the exception of Michael Manley, all of these men played important roles in their country's transition from colony to nation but none of them was as passionately convinced as Eric Williams that a better future for their respective nations resided in their being a part of an economic and political unit more viable than their own. He was willing to subordinate his nation's sovereignty to that of a larger federal unit, a vision that remains compelling, timely, and important.

In 1993, the European nations recognised that it was to their collective advantage to create an economic and political union. Today, the European Union has a population of about 500 million people, 27 member states, and a per capita income of \$35,000. Its motto is "unity in diversity" and it boasts a single market, enacts legislation in a number of areas and provides for the free movement of people, capital, goods, and services.

The Anglophone Caribbean, on the other hand, has a combined population of less than seven million people struggling to survive in a world where size matters ... and not doing a good job of it. Generally speaking, Caribbean nations have per capita incomes ¼ or less of some of the member states of the European Union. While we understand the imperatives behind Anguilla's demand for independence, for example, we must remember that it is an island of 35 square miles and 13,600 persons, with an annual recurrent expenditure of \$40 million. Independence for this island and others like it will only be viable within the framework of a larger economic and political unit. We are also reminded this evening that the Caribbean community, CARICOM, now in its fourth decade, has not achieved its promise, lacking the centralised planning that the region deserves. The unwillingness of some of the territories to give it more teeth is a function of the debilitating insularity and petty nationalism that is still pervasive in the region.

The time has come to revisit the question of a meaningful and effective political and economic integration of these nations, as Williams advocated so strenuously and consistently years ago. The times call for bold and farsighted leadership of the territories where, in several cases, mediocrity is the most important qualification for political office. This is essentially the case in the United States as well. Where are our political stalwarts, the people who inspire, the people who speak to the better angels in our societies, the people who can make others achieve more than they ever thought possible? These

leaders do exist, but do our political systems and cultures suffocate and kill them early? Are the problems we confront so enormous that they dwarf all those who would lead? Do we have a tendency to elect people who have more charisma than vision or brains?

Eric Williams was the consummate scholar/politician. He even conducted research and wrote books while he carried the burdens of high political office. He was one of the few intellectuals (of whom I am aware) who engaged successfully in politics. Intellectuals and scholars have a special obligation to place their training and talents at the service of their nation. Perhaps I am misinformed, but I believe the members of the faculties of our universities can and should play a larger and more aggressive role in the generation of ideas to address the common problems of the region in science, agriculture, economic development, medicine, urban issues, and so on. This means that these academics should be provided with the requisite time and resources to research and write, the time to sift and winnow and to make their universities the vibrant market place of ideas that they ought to be in our developing nations.

None of us can take comfort from the fact that the extreme poverty of so many of our people is one of the defining characteristics of the region. The slums of Kingston, Port of Spain, Port au Prince and elsewhere should offend our moral sensibilities. Our leaders must be seen to be doing something about them, and must be seen to be concerned about the welfare of the least among us. In Jamaica, the infamous Dudus or the Prezi filled the vacuum and provided the dispossessed people of Western Kingston with the social services that the government failed to do, but at a terrible societal and moral price.

This unacceptable situation is a harsh commentary on the quality of leadership in that nation, and cannot and should not be rationalised away. The systemic obstacles in the path of economic growth and development are enormous and resilient, to be sure, but we need fresh and bold thinking and the will to design effective programmes to uplift all of our people. The educational system almost everywhere has not moved with the times, still possessing a lingering affection for intellectually anachronistic curricula. There are many complex factors that explain academic performance but an interesting curriculum and one that is relevant to the students' realities and societal needs must rank at the very top.

There are also serious socio-economic problems that demand attention and solution. We are all too familiar with the ubiquitous presence of drugs, the unacceptably high rate of teenage pregnancies, the problems created by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the alarming incidence of crime, violence and murders, unemployment rates that hover between twelve and fifteen percent, the invisibility of male students in some of the halls of higher learning and so on. There is also the obscenity of corruption in high political places and in at least one country there is an offensively close relationship between prominent drug lords and political leaders.

Unlike some of our contemporary leaders, Eric Williams's integrity was beyond reproach although one or two of his cabinet members reportedly had unclean hands. He did not enter the political arena for his material benefit and he died a man of very modest means. His detractors should now put to rest the cruel lies about his probity. If Eric William had been a corrupt politician, the British and the Americans would have had no compunction about publicising his misdeeds, given their antipathy to him.

One British High Commissioner, in fact, noted that Williams' honesty was beyond question. Our contemporary leaders must likewise strive to maintain a public image that is beyond reproach, and should also eschew appealing to the people's worst instincts — abuse of one's opponents is often a substitute for the articulation of ideas. Similarly, the politics of race should have absolutely no place in

any of our societies. Our politicians, civic leaders, and religious leaders too should take the lead in creating that socially just and beloved community that Martin Luther King spoke about and worked so hard to bring into being in the United States. For peoples who have been mistreated on the altars of prejudice and racism, we can ill afford to recreate and perpetuate these travesties in our new nations.

The hate and violence that fertilise homophobia in all of our countries must be condemned because bigotry should not exist in civilised society. Nor can there be compromises with discrimination based on gender, phenotype, and class background. The apostles of bigotry in all of its manifestations must receive our collective condemnation always.

Leaders Must Fix Region's Woes

Special Report, *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*

Sunday, July 17, 2011

http://www.newsday.co.tt/crime_and_court/0,143968.html

Today we bring you the conclusion of Professor Palmer's enlightening 25th Annual Eric Williams Memorial Lecture weeks ago.

Although we can identify our common problems and challenges in the region, they do not lend themselves to easy solutions. I would like, for a start, to see regular meetings of ministers of the region who hold the portfolios of Finance, Education, Agriculture, Health, Trade, Science and Technology, and so on to discuss common problems and to cross-fertilize one another.

I should like our governments to pay greater attention to the provision of skills to our young people that will allow them to function in what is certain to be a technologically driven twenty-first century. The engine of development in this century will be propelled by an educated and technically trained citizenry as it has in Singapore. Our governments need to focus attention creatively on programmes for community development to harness the energies of our people at the local level to ensure, among other things, that our youth, particularly our boys, are not derailed at an early age. Some of our societies need to focus a great deal more on preventative medicine, rural development, the provision of clean water, and so on.

None of these initiatives will succeed unless the spirit, the elan, the enthusiasm of our people are harnessed and called into service. Many years ago, Eric Williams gave his celebrated School Bags speech to the children of Trinidad and Tobago. He told them that the future of their nation was in their school bags. Eloquent and rich in imagery, the speech enjoined the students to embrace excellence, to study hard and to use their talents in the service of their nation. It was not a call to accept low standards and to come to terms with mediocrity. In view of the unsatisfactory performance of many of our students in the region, this speech and its sentiments are as relevant today as they were a half a century ago. We need leaders at all levels to constantly remind our people that their collective destinies reside in their own hands, in the creative use of their energies, and in the disciplined execution of their responsibilities as citizens.

The great Jamaican intellectual Rex Nettleford once noted that "the part of the world from which Williams hailed savages its leaders without necessarily assassinating them." Nettleford observed that Williams "was to suffer attacks for rigid authoritarianism, susceptibility to the flattery of sycophants, vulnerability in the face of big business blandishments, and corruption." The author of *Capitalism and Slavery* was subjected to the most scathing abuse from the advocates of Black Power in 1970, describing him as the agent of imperialism and big business. Young calypsonians such as Chalkdust, Lord Relator and Delamo attacked and derided him mercilessly. That was their right in a democracy. But the "old terrier" could give as good as he got. He had the formidable power of his rhetoric, sending his critics and opponents scurrying away after unleashing on them a torrent of verbal abuse. The terrier was tough on those who did not meet his expectations, he did not suffer fools gladly, and could sever his relations with colleagues who displeased him without a backward glance. But the enigmatic leader had

a deliciously softer side; he was a doting father, a charming host, a passionate sportsman, and a connoisseur of fine rum.

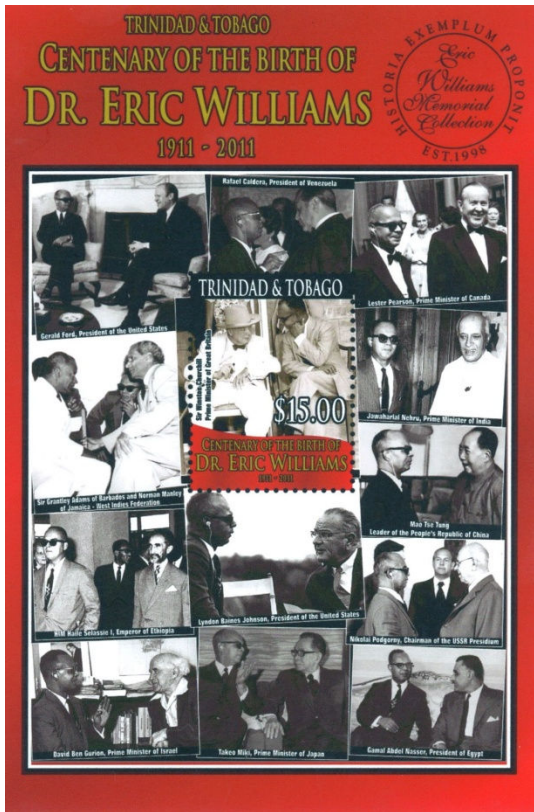
Let me conclude by emphasising that the Caribbean region has no paucity of talent in all fields. But as I have stressed, the region continues to demand bold, courageous, innovative, and farsighted leaders, men and women capable of marshalling the energies of their people to work for a better tomorrow as did Eric Williams and Norman and Michael Manley, at various times in their political careers. The recent news that CARICOM's single economy project has been placed "on pause" by the region's leaders is yet another example of a failure of leadership and an inability to imagine, construct and command a better future for our people. I may be painting with too broad a brush and there are a few exceptions to my indictment, but we should demand more from those who would exercise power. An informed and politically engaged electorate, and a vigilant, probing, and balanced press are indispensable ingredients for the improvement of the quality of leadership in these infant democracies. A prime minister, for example, who deliberately lies to parliament and the country should be unceremoniously shown the door. We must be cognizant of the fact that the precedents that are set in the very early years of these nations' self governing history will guide their future behaviour and pathways. To put it simply, there cannot be any compromises with corruption, bigotry, violations of the constitution, and abuses of the public trust; bad behaviour should not be rewarded with election to high office or with continuation in that office. Serving the people is a privilege, not a right.

In September of this year, the centenary of Williams's birth, several of the world's most distinguished scholars will gather at Oxford University to discuss the life and work of Eric Williams. This is both a tribute to the man, to his country, and the Caribbean region. Sponsored by Williams's alma mater, St Catherine's College, Oxford, and the Eric Williams Memorial Collection, this timely conference will feature papers on his scholarship and his career as a politician and statesman. As we reflect on Williams's life and work on the occasion of his centenary, however, let us remember that when he died in office in 1981, his life and legacy became the inheritance of all the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. In death, he ceased to be identified with, or claimed exclusively by any political party or ethnic group. Like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, and others, Williams should be seen as transcending narrowly constructed identities to become the property of all the peoples of this great land and by extrapolation the region and the world. Similarly, the rich holdings of the Eric Williams Memorial Collection and the treasures they contain are national treasures, priceless and timeless.

The Doctor is with us this evening and his hearing aid is on. I suspect that he is somewhat pleased with the challenges his successors in the Caribbean have met but probably critical of much of the quality of contemporary leadership, the prevailing lack of vision and the enormity of the unmet challenges everywhere. Eric Williams was an indefatigable worker, a visionary, a Trinidadian and West Indian colossus, but possessing some personal weaknesses that limited his overall successes. We commemorate and celebrate his life and work this evening, and I have no hesitation in declaring him Trinidad and Tobago's most outstanding personage of the twentieth century. We inherit his legacy and we are compelled to honour it as much as we are required to keep faith with his animating visions and to build on them too. Massa day may be done but Eric Williams day not done yet.



NALIS Executive Director Annette Wallace, left, presents Erica Williams-Connell, daughter of the country's first Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams, with first-day covers at the launch of the commemorative stamp issue in honour of Dr Williams on Tuesday, April 5, 2011 at the NALIS Building, Abercromby Street, Port of Spain.



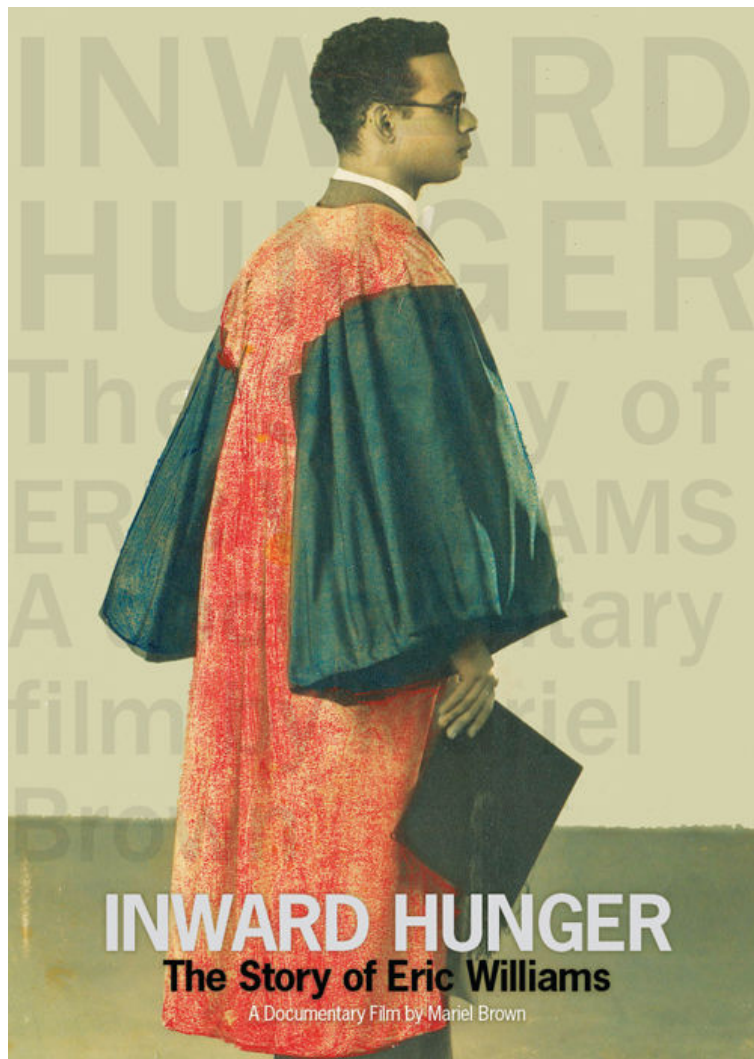
Eric Williams Commemorative Stamp issue



Eric Williams Commemorative Stamp issue



Professor Colin A Palmer delivering the 25th Annual Eric Williams Memorial Lecture at the Central Bank, Port of Spain, June 11, 2011



Poster of *Inward Hunger: The Story of Eric Williams*, a documentary directed by Mariel Brown of Savant Ltd., released on September 24, 2011 on GISL Channel 4

Eric Williams: Local Legend

Michael Delblond, *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*

Sunday, August 28, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/columnist/2011/08/28/eric-williams-local-legend>

Even as Dr Eric Eustace Williams approaches the centenary of his birth, he continues to be “good copy,” as journalists say and may be the very stuff that local legends are made of. His strengths, weaknesses, frailties and idiosyncrasies are still fodder for those interested in the evolution of our politics since Williams’s meteoric 1956 entrance on the scene. To be fair, whereas he arrived with seemingly impeccable credentials, there became a time that one got the uneasy feeling that he had “flattered, only to deceive.” Truth be told, Williams was accepted by a wider society than his home base as “a messiah in the making, a victim of colonial malfeasance, and a local champion who could match strides with the best of them.”

Among his obvious gifts was that indefinable quality called “charisma,” so it was not surprising that there was already a constituency awaiting such a figure, whatever his shortcomings. He attracted a degree of fanatic following that had to be seen to be believed. That, decades after his death, he still casts a larger than life shadow on the political landscape and, like “Banquo’s ghost,” simply won’t go away, remains as much as a mystery as “the manner of man that he was” or “the manner of man that he was supposed to be.”

Some years ago, a symposium mounted by the Institute of Social and Economic Research at UWI’s St Augustine campus brought together scholars, researchers, politicians, public servants, attorneys, and businessmen who all had their tales to tell. By strange, ironical twist, the recognisable PNM defenders of the late Eric Williams and his legacy appeared to have been marginalised to the extent of being placed in the position of having to defend the faith, virtually outside the fort. A new PNM “elite” had apparently replaced the “old believers.” It was suggested that “an understanding of our great men and women was indispensable to forging a sense of nationhood.”

There was also reference to “interesting disclosures” made by Williams’s advisers “which exposed how inadequate and at times downright inaccurate was much of the information which formed the basis for making many “profound” judgments about Eric Williams. For whatever it’s worth, it is my own humble view that now is the time for all those who interfaced with Williams or have some special insights to have their firsthand knowledge or views documented for the possible benefit of others who come after. An authentic understanding of Williams would in my view require that, before his generation goes to its final rest.

How many, for example, would be surprised to learn that as a schoolboy Eric did not always have his head buried in a book but was captain of his football team at Queen’s Royal College, as well as a member of the school’s cricket team. Besides this, he was voted as a model student or such like by both fellow students and teachers at QRC. That is not, of course, to suggest that a mere collection of anecdotal material, however irrelevant, would do. Neither is it suggested that the darker corners of the mind or shadier aspects of the personality should be off limits, if they throw some significant light on larger issues of “great pith and moment.”

My own feeling is that any significant biographical effort should make allowance for political or personal axes to grind. In my view, Williams has to be located within the context of the maximum charismatic leader of the society which spawned him. It sometimes amazes me how little of substance is revealed by Williams watchers, supposed authorities on Williams, and even some who were in quite personal contact with him. That, perhaps, should not be surprising as complex political and charismatic personalities seem to have the facility to dissemble and dissimulate, to instinctively reveal or conceal aspects of their personality as they deem expedient for their particular purpose.

The dominant question, to my mind, is not whether Williams was “good, bad or ugly” but whether anyone was wise enough to be entrusted with the effective power that Williams wielded and the influence that he exercised for such a protracted period. Whenever there is such a concentration of unbridled power in a single pair of hands, one is reminded of Lord Acton’s dictum that “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” In Williams’s case, we may assume that constraints as his being mindful of his international image and his own academic and political legacy would come into play.

Now while a prime minister can’t go do everything, there’s no reason to doubt that he/she can set the tone, style and climate of the administration. Dr Williams’s impact and influence were very strong indeed. They permeated the society (for good or ill) and may well be with us for some time yet. His mesmeric influence tended to undermine the wit and will of the society, including servile dependence on him.

[Scholarly] Events to Commemorate the Centenary of Eric Williams' Birth

Lisa Paravisini, *RepeatingIslands*

Friday, September 2, 2011

<http://repeatingislands.com/2011/09/02/events-to-commemorate-the-centenary-of-eric-williams%e2%80%99-birth>

Our thanks to Peter Jordens for preparing this report on events organized to mark the forthcoming centenary of Eric Williams's birth.

September 25, 2011 marks the centenary of the birth of Dr Eric E Williams (1911-1981), noted Caribbean statesman, visionary, historian, philosopher, intellectual, scholar, and teacher, the first prime minister of Trinidad & Tobago, also referred to as the Father of the Nation, and author of the seminal *Capitalism & Slavery* (1944) as well as several other classics such as *The Negro in the Caribbean* (1940), *Massa Day Done* (1961) and *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean* (1970).

Here are a few of this year's scholarly events of commemoration already held or soon to be held.

Already held

June 11, 2011. Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago

25th Annual Eric Williams Memorial Lecture, "Eric Williams and the Challenge of Caribbean Leadership," by Professor Colin A. Palmer. See newspaper article in *Newsday* (T&T), June 20, 2011, at <http://www.newsday.co.tt/news/0,142541.html>. The memorial lecture (pdf) can be downloaded at <http://www.normangirvan.info/palmer-eric-williams-memorial>. Prof. Palmer (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York) is author of the biography *Eric Williams and the Making of the Modern Caribbean* (2008).

Upcoming

September 24-25, 2011. Oxford, England, UK

International Conference: "New Perspectives on the Life and Work of Eric Williams"

Organized by *St Catherine's College at Oxford University, the WEB Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University (USA), and the Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library, Archives & Museum at the University of the West Indies at St Augustine (T&T)*

Website <http://www.mainlib.uwi.tt/divisions/wi/collsp/ericwilliams/ericwilliams.htm>

Contact farrellewmc@gmail.com or ewmc@ewmc-tt.org

Note: St Catherine's, Oxford, is Dr. Williams's alma mater (History, 1938).

Conference presenters include: Selwyn R Cudjoe, William A Darity, Ronald Findlay, Knick Harley, Joseph Inikori, Franklin W Knight, Lydia Lindsey, Rafael Marques, Nathan Nunn, Colin Palmer, Arnold Rampersad, Selwyn Ryan, David Beck Ryden, Brinsley Samaroo, and Dale Tomich.

September 27, 2011. London, England, UK

Symposium: "Independence and After: Dr Eric Williams and the Making of Trinidad & Tobago"

Organized by *the Institute for the Study of the Americas of the University of London (UK) and the Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library, Archives & Museum at the University of the West Indies at St Augustine (T&T)*

Website <http://americas.sas.ac.uk/events/eventdetails.html?id=9421>

Contact olga.jimenez@sas.ac.uk or Kate.Quinn@sas.ac.uk

Presenters include: Matthew Bishop, Colin Clarke, Humberto Garcia Muniz, Jacqueline Nunes, Colin Palmer, Raoul Pantin, Selwyn Ryan, Brinsley Samaroo, Raffique Shah, Paul Sutton, and Teruyuki Tsuji.

October 12-14, 2011. La Habana, Cuba

Memorial Conference on Eric Williams' Centennial

Casa de Altos Estudios Don Fernando Ortiz, Faculty of Philosophy and History, Univ. of Havana

Contact Eduardo Torres Cuevas at tcuevas@ffh.uh.cu or Graciela Chailloux Laffita at

gchailloux@cubarte.cult.cu

For more information online

- Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library, Archives & Museum (EWMC) at UWI - St Augustine, <http://www.mainlib.uwi.tt/divisions/wi/collsp/ericwilliams/ericwilliams.htm>.
- Eric Eustace Williams on Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Williams.
- On Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/DrEricWilliams>.
- Several documents of/on Eric Williams are available online at the Digital Library of the Caribbean, <http://www.dloc.com>.
- Newspaper columns in the T&T *Guardian* this year, by Glenville Ashby (April 6, <http://www.guardian.co.tt/node/10340>) and Michael Delblond (August 28, <http://www.guardian.co.tt/columnist/2011/08/28/eric-williams-local-legend>).

New Documentary Series Reveals the Many Sides of Dr Eric Williams

Trinidad Express

Monday, September 12, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/featured-news/The_many_sides_of_Dr_Eric_Williams-129701078.html

Dr Eric Eustace Williams is a complex and controversial Caribbean figure best known for leading Trinidad and Tobago to Independence in 1962. This year, the 100th anniversary of his birth, comes a new documentary series that explores the fascinating personal and political history of the country's first prime minister. *Inward Hunger: The Story of Eric Williams* is a production of Savant Ltd, creators of *The Solitary Alchemist* and *The Insatiable Season*. This ground-breaking documentary series was directed by Mariel Brown.

A private screening takes place tomorrow at Central Bank Auditorium, Eric Williams Plaza, Port of Spain, from 7.30 pm. On Republic Day, September 24 at 3 pm, GISL Channel 4 airs this three-part series on the compelling and contradictory life of an iconic Caribbean leader.

Eric Williams was a man of contradictions. From a family that felt disenfranchised because of their class and colour, but who were in many ways privileged compared to the working class in the then British colony of Trinidad and Tobago, he was a man respected for reaching the pinnacle of British education, yet he dedicated his life to ending colonial rule. A lifelong scholar who was often unwilling to admit his mistakes. A politician who used even his disabilities as tools of power.

Calling for ethnic unity in party and country, yet not above using race to win elections. A passionate, loving husband to one wife, a cold and bitter wind to another, and party to a third, secret marriage. A man driven by hard-work and discipline, who allowed corruption and intrigue to flourish around him.

He was seen as a man of the people, and at the same time he saw himself as intellectually superior to others; a visionary who expected his decisions to be followed without opposition.

He sought after mentors, then pushed away even those closest to him. One of the first advocates of West Indian Federation, yet unwilling to drive the union after Jamaica's withdrawal.

Anti-colonial, yet not willing to depart radically from British systems of governance. A prime minister who transformed the lives of many in Trinidad and Tobago through education, political mobilisation and economic development, yet did not go far enough, some say, to undo the ongoing hierarchies of a post-colonial society.

A devoted father to his last daughter Erica, he could not in the end, despite her advice, leave the politics that had come to define his life. He died unexpectedly under disturbing circumstances in office after 25 years of leading Trinidad and Tobago. Still, Eric Williams's power, personality and politics continue to define the nation.

Inward Hunger: The Story of Eric Williams is a three-part documentary series on the life of Dr Eric Eustace Williams, the first prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago. This ground-breaking documentary

was produced in recognition of the 100th anniversary of Williams's birth on September 25, 2011. It consists of three episodes, each running for approximately 1 hour.

Episode 1, *Great Expectations*, follows Williams from his birth in the British West Indies in 1911 to his dramatic entry into politics in 1955 as he "let down his bucket" in Woodford Square, Trinidad. Episode 2, *Movement of the People*, begins with the emergence of Williams and the PNM as a political force, and the roller-coaster of events that formed part of the West Indies's struggle for independence, which came to a head for Trinidad and Tobago in 1962.

Episode 3, *Power*, covers Williams's public and private life as the leader of a young nation full of expectations, divisions and upheavals, leading up to the dramatic circumstances surrounding his death.

The series explores both the political and personal life of Eric Williams in order to understand the multiple sides of his complex and enigmatic character. It is the first documentary series to delve into the character and life of Williams in such depth and from a variety of perspectives.

The documentary goes beyond "Williams as Prime Minister" to examine the diverse facets of Williams's personality, ideas, and behaviour as eldest son in a large family, student, historian, writer and educator, husband and father, friend, professor, international civil servant, and party leader.

This portrait of Williams reveals the aspects of his family and school life that shaped his personality and perspectives from childhood; his understanding of colonial society and his uneasy place in it, having won access to an elite colonial education, yet facing financial hardship throughout his youth, and a pervasive sense of discrimination; his charisma and public persona as a father-figure, a saviour, a domineering and eventually distant leader; his privacy and intensity in close/intimate relationships; his mentors and the sometimes traumatic breaks with them; his career as an educator in the classroom and in the public sphere; his fight with the Caribbean Commission and entry into politics; his dominating leadership style and charismatic, yet changeable political personality; his vision for an independent society — his reforms and social transformation, hesitancy to change the status quo; the deep loyalty and strong opposition he engendered from within the party he created and the wider society.

Williams is a highly controversial figure in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean — revered in some quarters, vilified in others.

This series attempts an honest exploration of both his strengths and weaknesses, his successes and failures, his private and public lives. The documentary draws on a wealth of written and audio-visual material on and by Dr Eric Williams, including rarely seen archival footage of Trinidad and Tobago in the 1950s and 60s.

In addition, the series draws on extensive research on Williams published by scholars such as Prof Colin Palmer, Prof Selwyn Ryan, and Prof Ken Boodhoo. The narration is carried by the powerful voice of Nigel Scott, while Williams's voice and the voices of other characters in the series are brought to life by renowned actor Albert Laveau and emerging talent Catherine Emmanuel.

Calypsoes craft a musical storyline, offering an everyday man's commentary on Williams at each step of his journey in public office. And Francesco Emmanuel's original score weaves through the series connecting music, voice and image.

For more information on Dr Eric Williams, contact the Eric Williams Memorial Collection and Museum at the Alma Jordan Library, the University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus.

Inward Hunger: The Story of Eric Williams

Trinidad and Tobago Newsday

Monday, September 19, 2011

<http://www.newsday.co.tt/features/0,147513.html>

A new documentary series, exploring the life of Dr Eric Williams and depicting him as, among other things, a tragic figure and a prime minister who turned a blind eye to corruption in his Cabinet, was launched last Wednesday night by the director Mariel Brown.

Brown said she has a strong belief that an audience will be interested in “a fuller picture of the man we know as the father of the nation.”

“A few years ago I was talking with my father Wayne Brown,” she told the audience gathered for a private screening of *Inward Hunger: The Story of Eric Williams* at the Central Bank Auditorium, Port of Spain. “He said he thought that in the end Williams’ life was a tragic one.” Brown said her series, which airs at 3 pm on Saturday (Republic Day) on Government Information Services Limited Channel 4, aims to depict the country’s first prime minister “as a human being rather than a politician.”

“He was deified and despised. He was imperious and intellectually arrogant,” she said of Williams in an address before the screening of part one of the series.

“As he grew older, he became increasingly paranoid and withdrawn until he became a virtual recluse. He was a man who cared little for wealth and material possessions. Yet, he was known to turn a blind eye to corruption running rampant in his Cabinet.”

“Many saw Williams as a kind of messiah: a man who could save them. Yet some argue that this has led to an entrenchment of a culture of dependency in our society,” Brown, the director of *The Solitary Alchemist*, said. “He was a fearless man. He believed in celebration, he believed in Caribbean integration and unity: he was a man of many contradictions.”

The documentary series, which was initially approved under the GISL under the PNM but also later endorsed under the new management of the company, was also funded through support from the Trinidad and Tobago Film Company Limited and First Citizens Bank.

Speaking at the launch, GISL chairman Andy Johnson noted that Williams was a figure who provoked extreme reactions, but few could remain indifferent to him. The documentary series is divided into three parts.

Episode 1: “Great Expectations” follows Williams from his birth in 1911, and covers his parents and childhood days, his difficulties at Oxford, his first two marriages, and then his entry into politics.

Brown uses photographs, archive and file footage to build an impression of the times. There are interviews with historians and academics, as well as Williams’ daughter, Erica Williams-Connell. An actor — Albert Laveau in a bravura performance — renders the voice of Williams, breathing life into some of his speeches and letters.

The script, written and researched by Alake Pilgrim, has a literary sensibility: making profound observations in understated ways. There is an interesting score by Francesco Emmanuel which fuses different local musical traditions into a sombre and potent mix. Even with this gathering material, however, the sense of who Williams actually was remains elusive; a few bits of information are also, perhaps deliberately, not clarified.

There are hints of the influence of key figures such as C L R James on Williams, but the first 55-minute episode ends by asking the question: did we really know Eric Williams? This is a question which strikes at the heart of the ambition of the series.

Episode 2: "Movement of the People" deals with Williams and the PNM's emergence and the events that led to independence.

Episode 3: "Power" deals with the interaction between Williams' public and private life and the dramatic circumstances surrounding his death.

Inward Hunger: The Story of Eric Williams

Holly Bynoe, *Women of Power*

Monday, September 19, 2011

<http://www.womenofpowerbvi.com/?p=1438>

ARC Magazine

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

<http://arcthemagazine.com/arc/2011/09/inward-hunger-the-story-of-eric-williams>

Inward Hunger: The Story of Eric Williams is a pioneering documentary series that reveals Eric Williams in unprecedented breadth and depth, in the context of the history, society, region and world that shaped him; the forces to which he at times succumbed, and those he fought to change. Dr Eric Eustace Williams is a complex and controversial Caribbean figure best known for leading Trinidad and Tobago to Independence in 1962. This year, the 100th anniversary of his birth, comes a new documentary series that explores the fascinating personal and political history of the country's first prime minister. *Inward Hunger: The Story of Eric Williams* is a production of Savant Ltd, creators of *The Solitary Alchemist* and *The Insatiable Season*. This groundbreaking documentary series was directed by Mariel Brown.

On Republic Day, September 24th, at 3:00 pm, GISL Channel 4 airs this 3-part series on the compelling and contradictory life of an iconic Caribbean leader. Hero and anti-hero, nemesis and father-figure, Eric Williams means different things to different people. Over more than 25 years as political leader, he came to symbolize both the hopes and disappointments of many West Indians. Yet in many ways Williams was an enigma — a public figure who remained virtually unknown; an intensely private man.

Inward Hunger: The Story of Eric Williams is a comprehensive and groundbreaking documentary series that takes us into the life of Eric Williams from his family and upbringing, to his experiences as a top student in the British colonial education system. We follow his career as a professor at Howard University and as an international civil servant with the Caribbean Commission — revealing the ambitions and conflicts that drove him into politics. We assess Williams' role in the rise and fall of West Indian Federation; feel the charisma and leadership that inspired a national movement, and the accomplishments and challenges of holding political office.

After Independence, we see how Williams dealt with challenges from the wider society, like the Black Power Movement of 1970, and rumblings within the People's National Movement, the party he helped create. We track the wealth, development, and corruption of the oil-boom years, followed by Williams' increasing withdrawal, private illness, and disturbing death.

This historic documentary series takes an unflinching look at Williams' strengths and weaknesses, his dramatic showdowns, and political mood swings. It also shows a perhaps unexpected side of Williams: as a man of great humour, devoted friendships, intense loves, and private heartbreak — a man of loneliness and longing, a fellow human being.

Inward Hunger: The Story of Eric Williams is an honest and revealing portrait of a politician, but also of the people, society, world and history that shaped him and that he fought to change. The series

includes rare archival footage, as well as interviews with his daughter, Erica Williams-Connell, and other family members, Williams' former political colleagues such as Kamaluddin Mohammed and Ferdie Ferreira, and scholars such as Prof Selwyn Ryan, Prof Colin Palmer, Prof Brinsley Samaroo, and others.

Inward Hunger is a production of Savant Ltd, directed by Mariel Brown; a project of First Citizens, in partnership with the Government Information Services Limited (GISL), with additional financial assistance from the Trinidad and Tobago Film Company (TTFC). Email Mariel Brown at mariel@savantmedia.tv for more information, or call 222 0913.

Flashback: Lyrics Man as Prime Minister

Lennox Grant, *Trinidad Express*

Saturday, September 24, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/commentaries/Flashback_Lyrics_man_as_Prime_Minister-130513718.html

The pangs of some “inward hunger” must have tormented some people sharing the physical and mental environment in which I grew up. Somehow, the most famous claimant to such “hunger”, whose birth centenary is today, little inspired fellow feeling.

The term “role model” was yet to come in vogue. Eric Eustace Williams kept his distance, and I for one was, in real time, little touched by, and even turned off from, the Great Man who bestrode the narrow world of Trinidad and Tobago.

Eric E Williams became eventually an acquired taste. By my own UWI days, when I reread his *Inward Hunger* and diligently force-fed myself his *Capitalism and Slavery*, my own politics were hostile to his.

I had bought a first edition of *Inward Hunger* at Fogarty’s in Port of Spain, apparently for \$11.50. Inside the frayed and torn paper wrap over the hardcover, the publishers advertised “42s net, UK only.”

Under the influence of Williams’ reflections on colonial disadvantages, I suspect it had cost the young Trinidadian journalist in 1969 much more in real terms than a British counterpart would have paid. Dr Williams was an earlier source of the teaching, later popularised by Walter Rodney: colonialism was a one-armed bandit; there was no “on the one hand and on the other hand.”

This Caribbean historical canon is up for reaffirmation today. People who never experienced, little remember, or remain under-informed about the real thing, assume that, compared with what's going today, colonialism couldn’t be all that bad.

Colonialism, it is true, did produce the one and only Dr Eric Williams. In those terms, the historian who became prime minister merits introduction by, say, a Sprangalang, presenting a performer capable of electrifying his audience.

By my arrival at UWI and at the Tapia House Group in the early 1970s, “The Doctor” was an established sobriquet for the Oxford PhD and uncrowned king of Caribbean history writing. “Doctor” characterised a home-grown brand of politics, highlighted by the Williams kind of leadership.

“If you don’t like it, get to hell outa here.” Words to that effect, pronounced by Dr Williams even at the 1962 Queen’s Hall constitution conference, famously bespoke the doctor-leader’s style of asserting unanswerable authority.

The Tapia mission was to reverse the hold of, and to inject the antidote to, “doctor politics.” It even became a fun thing: everybody in Tapia-UWI circles called everybody “Doctor.”

Most people never knew the Doctor in any capacity other than prime minister. Calypsonians, finding the style attractive, also recognised him as what today would be called a “lyrics man.”

It’s for his being a resourceful “lyrics man”, and a prolific communicator, that at his centenary I revisit the Eric E Williams life and times. He decided independent T&T needed an “adequate” history of its own. The Prime Minister wrote one himself — in four weeks.

Chapter One of *Inward Hunger* presents a vivid, wide-angle snapshot of the “colonial society” that was Trinidad 100 years ago. In those days, “Be British” could be heard as an admonishment to those seen to fall short.

The flashback to 1911 recalls the crown colony condition that subordinated everything local to the British model. British firms dominated the economy; a British governor simply ruled everything and everyone. British and French creoles filled all the high positions in the administration and in business.

It all comes rivetingly to life in a freewheeling epigrammatic style, as loaded with data and information as a Tom Wolfe piece. Reporting on Trinidad in 1911, however, his attack was that of the polemical historian, not the “new journalism” exemplar.

At times, it’s hard to tell the difference: “For two out of every three adults in Trinidad in 1911, their orbit was the plantation, the kitchen, the washtub, the shop counter, the sewing machine, the corner pavement, the roads or the tradeshop.”

Living tax-free, the rich were wasteful, but not filthy. Grand Port of Spain houses afforded 2,000-gallon “plunge baths.” The water ran non-stop “so that it should always be fresh.”

At the other end of town, poor people lived in overcrowded barrack rooms where “The cesspit was the rule, the water closet the exception.”

In 1911, Dr Williams reports, Indians, indentured and Trinidad-born, were the poorest of the poor and the most illiterate, though some Indians appeared to run retail shops, like the Chinese and Portuguese, while Syrians were still “pedlars.”

The 1911 “hot spots” would have been in areas populated by Indian cane cutters. “The cutlass”, the historian observed, “was useful not only for cutting cane but also for slicing its owner’s loaf or slitting his wife’s lover’s throat.”

Indians who came to Port of Spain flocked into a “ghetto” called “Coolie Town.” Now called St James, it was in 1911 already a tourist attraction, showcasing “oriental primitiveness.”

The “immorality” seen by the author engulfed all resident races. The historian’s depiction expressed a zesty, tabloid sense of wonder: “Port of Spain was the city of the gay caballero, the bachelor girl, and the merry widow.” Racial variety, he noted, “added to the spice of life”, as Chinese, Portuguese and “Negro” happily hooked up.

The Prime Minister was also forward-looking. In 1911 too the first commercial export moved from Trinidad.

Dr Eric Williams to Be Honoured in New York

Trinidad and Tobago Guardian

Saturday, September 24, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/sport/2011/09/24/dr-eric-williams-be-honoured-new-york>

The premier New York area celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birthday of the late Dr Eric Williams, first prime minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, will take place today from 6 pm to 11 pm at Brooklyn Children's Museum, New York. CW Productions, which over the past four years has produced a number of events in honour of Dr Williams, has taken the lead in organising this centennial event. Dr Williams was a quintessential Renaissance man: author, scholar, politician, and revolutionary leader. Armed with a doctorate from Oxford University in England, he taught at Howard University and among his many writings, his seminal work *Capitalism and Slavery* remains required reading for all students of slavery and of colonial and Caribbean history. He was, however, not without contradictions and the evening's programme provides ample opportunity to explore the breadth and depth of this celebrated and gifted man.

Today's programme will include a photo exhibition, a screening of the film *Historia Exemplum Proponit —Chronicles of the Life of Dr Eric Williams*, narrated by media personality Rennie Bishop, and an address by Dr Nigel Westmaas, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at Hamilton College, as well as a live performance of *God Bless our Nation* by Lord Baker. T&T Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who was originally scheduled to deliver the feature address, will be represented by Dr Surujrattan Rambachan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Dr Neil Parsan, Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago to the United States.

The Brooklyn Children's Museum is located at 145 Brooklyn Avenue in Brooklyn and is accessible by both bus and subway. The museum's telephone number is (718) 735-4400.

See

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.280298151994016.76208.148033388553827&type=1#!/media/set/?set=a.280298151994016.76208.148033388553827&type=1> for photos of the tribute paid to Dr Eric Williams by the Brooklyn Children's Museum on his 100th Birthday.

Remembering Eric Williams

Raffique Shah, *Trinidad Express*

Saturday, September 24, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/commentaries/Remembering_Eric_Williams-130513713.html

Thirty-five years ago yesterday, I became an MP in the first Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It was an historic moment in many ways. I affirmed, meaning I did not take an oath using one of the holy books, which was not a first. But when I raised a clenched fist, symbol of the Black Power movement, as Clerk of the House, Emmanuel Carter, administered the affirmation, I glanced at Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams.

He was not looking in my direction: I imagined then that he did not want to witness the unthinkable.

Young and daring, I had gone to the House to make a statement, to ruffle conservative feathers. I wore a kakhi, militant-looking outfit, short sleeves, complete with epaulettes. I also wore my old army combat boots. Williams had never anticipated that moment — the arrival of Black Power in Parliament (Winston Murray of Tobago also affirmed with the clenched fist). His worst nightmare, an unrepentant mutineer taking a seat in what they saw as an august chamber, was playing out live before him.

As if to rub salt in Williams' wound, the following day the *Express* chose that image to adorn its front page. At a time when there was no television coverage of parliamentary sittings, no cellphones-cum-cameras, no YouTube, newspapers were the main source of information for the public and the world.

People who disliked Williams and the People's National Movement (PNM) in the wake of 1970 applauded my defiance. Others, Williams' supporters —and they were many— were appalled at my stance, my breaking the conventions of the Westminster model of government. I should add that for the five years I remained an MP, I maintained my own dress code. And in the 41 years since 1970, I have never worn a tie or a suit.

This column is not about me, though. It is about Dr Williams, who, had he lived, would have marked his 100th birthday today. I know there are some functions to celebrate the occasion. But for a minor personal problem, I would have been in England (along with Raoul Pantin, Selwyn Ryan, and Brinsley Samaroo), preparing for a one-day conference at the University of London on Tuesday on the life and legacies of Dr Williams. Today, a number of academics are at Oxford University winding up a two-day discourse on Williams' contribution to history and to academia.

The centenary of the birth of a man who, as an individual, has had the greatest impact on the destiny of our nation, should have sparked much more interest than what we are not seeing. This is one of the tragedies of our time, of our country. We have no sense of history. We have succumbed to the fast-paced world of modern technology in which yesterday is history, last week never happened, and last year is not even a memory.

I am not suggesting that people come together to sing hallelujahs to Williams. Cuss him if you will for his sins of neglect of the "PNM constituency" —Laventille, Morvant, East Dry River— that wallows in

misery 50-odd years after he first held the reins of government. Damn him for leaving us an incomplete education system that today churns out sub-standard material. Blame him for our crime woes, for not diversifying the economy, for leaving the country in a mess after 25 years as prime minister.

But recognise the man as one of the great leaders of his time, and possibly of all times, given that today, political pygmies crowd the global political stage. His contemporaries were giants like Norman Manley, Fidel Castro, and Grantley Adams of the Caribbean, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Nasser, Kwame Nkrumah, Ahmed Ben Bella of newly-independent ex-colonies, and Winston Churchill, Charles de Gaulle, Nikita Khrushchev, Willy Brandt, and John Kennedy of the developed world. He knew most of these men. There was mutual respect among them.

Their names may mean nothing to today's generations. In fact, even our politicians may not know of them, which is an indicator of our sense of history, or absence thereof.

Eric Williams was no saint. His arrogance knew no bounds. Last week, during a panel discussion on radio, Ferdie Ferreira, a foundation member of the PNM, described him as "unforgiving." I saw him as a walking contradiction, someone who recognised the savagery of slavery, indentureship, and colonialism, but who easily sacrificed the lofty ideals of liberation of his people on the altar of opportunism.

In other words, whatever it took to retain power, he did it. But isn't that true of just about every politician? Only fools hold on to principles, which is why they never come close to the corridors of power.

Williams introduced an intellectual dimension to local politics at a time when running for office meant bad-mouthing one's opponents and making promises one could never keep. He built the PNM on a strong foundation of party discipline, something that was absent in all the opposition parties.

Initially, he promoted development planning for the country, as distinct from governing "by vaps." He would later eschew this, alienating the bright public servants who were architects of central planning.

He introduced free education at selected secondary schools in 1959, which took a tremendous burden off parents of poor but bright students. I was among the thousands of students who benefitted from that.

Whatever one may think of Dr Williams, what is indisputable is that he was a foundation pillar of modern Trinidad and Tobago. No one can deny him that place of pride in the nation's history.

Williams in the Balance

Selwyn Ryan, *Trinidad Express*

Saturday, September 24, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/commentaries/Williams_in_the_balance-130513723.html

The year 2011 marks the centenary of Dr Williams's birth. And several events are being held to mark the event. The most noteworthy of them will be held today at St Catherine's College, Oxford University, the college which Dr Williams attended while at Oxford. The star-studded conference is being jointly sponsored by St Catherine, the WEB DuBois Institute of Harvard University, and the Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library Archives and Museum at the University of the West Indies. Another symposium will be held at London University.

Several Williams scholars will be in attendance at both, their aim being to assess or reassess Williams' legacy as a scholar and political practitioner. There will be disagreement on much by many, but few would disagree that Williams was the architect and builder of the state of Trinidad and Tobago.

More than anyone else, he was responsible for building the ministerial system and the other bureaucratic structures and policies of the post-colonial state.

Williams must also be given a great deal of credit for the manner in which he handled the colonial office and the Chaguaramas crisis at a time when the Americans and the British were disinclined to negotiate with a state as insignificant as Trinidad and Tobago.

Of great and paramount importance was Williams's handling of public dissent, the judiciary and the media. In Trinidad and Tobago, unlike what obtained in many newly independent countries, few people were preventively detained outside the context of the events of 1970, and the media was never systematically muzzled. He also helped craft a liberal democratic tradition that has been substantially maintained, even though he was not averse to bending the rules when necessary.

Williams deserves credit too for his pioneering efforts in giving women a central role in the political process at the executive level and his revolutionary efforts in opening up the educational system to all, notwithstanding the incompleteness and downsides of the transformation that he sought to put in place.

On the credit side of the ledger one also has to place the heroic achievement of Point Lisas and the national energy sector. His vision and will were largely responsible for the fact that Trinidad and Tobago could boast that brown sugar gave way to iron, steel, urea, methanol, and other petrochemicals.

On the negative side, my judgement is that Williams mishandled the federal negotiations, even though he was not primarily responsible for the collapse of the experiment. Perhaps everyone underestimated how difficult the task was.

He was also not sufficiently inclusive in his handling of independence. On this issue there could and should have been far more consultation with the national community's ethnic minorities.

His approach to governance and the parliamentary opposition was also much too unilateral, monopolistic and arrogant. He was the “boss”, having won election after election, and thus licensed to govern. There was no need to share power, only to explain to his supporters why he chose this or that option. He expected no dog to bark once he had spoken.

His assimilationist approach to the Indian question was also flawed, even though it was perhaps understandable. Williams did not appreciate that Indians were a people with deeply embedded traditions that they wished to maintain. Thus his unfortunate outburst following the federal elections of 1958.

Williams’s handling of the non-energy sector of the economy and the labour movement was less than successful, but as we have seen, many systemic factors were beyond his control. One was the nature of Trinidad creole society, which, given its excessive individualism, its rebelliousness and its lackadaisical disposition, was not easy to militarise as was possible in Singapore and South Korea.

Williams attempted to impose a measure of discipline in 1965 with the passage of the Industrial Stabilisation Act; that discipline was not sustained.

The problem was to determine how much compulsion was proper within the basic framework of freedom and the extent to which post-colonial leadership should give in to the demands for egalitarianism and social welfare that were stimulated during the independence movement but that were beyond the state’s economic resources ... Williams met a society that was dependence-oriented and left that society largely as he found it — as one in which the people looked to the state for rewards and “payoffs” rather than one in which the payoff came as a result of individual or family entrepreneurship. In the long run, the Afro-Trinidadian population, which was the most favoured recipient of state patronage, suffered most. The culture of dependence that had developed on the plantation remained deeply entrenched.

One must also put on the negative side the fact that Williams’s People’s National Movement (PNM) failed to create a society in which morality and probity in public life prevailed.

In these areas, there was no positive development. To be sure, compared to Africa, Asia, and Latin America, there was not a great deal of corruption, but there was enough of it to indicate that Williams had not succeeded in immunising his party and government from the virus that consumed society, especially in the 1970s when capitalism, both in the private and the state sector, went mad, and “money was no longer the problem.” Williams was, if anything, too relaxed about the problem, preferring to keep his party intact rather than purge delinquents. He knew what was going on, but chose to evade the issue. His explanation was that his supporters had betrayed him but that he would forgive their sins. Many gave him the benefit of the doubt, but a hard core insisted that if one were to connect the dots without blinkers, the evidence that Williams was not a passive victim is too compelling to ignore or overlook.

Williams was extremely competent as a protest politician. He had the capacity to energise people for the tasks associated with winning self-government and independence. It was however more difficult for him to change gears and to manage the society over which he gained control. Numerous examples illustrate that while Williams was gifted as a conceptualiser and populariser of ideas, he was a poor manager of men and institutions.

Because of his inability to delegate real responsibility and an extravagant belief in his own rectitude and competence, decision-making was centralised either in his person or in institutions that fettered the hands of subordinates. Regulatory bodies also paralysed initiative at the very top.

Instead of pursuing deregulation and reform, Williams attempted bypass surgery to circumvent government's blocked arteries. He created parallel structures to short-circuit the offending ones. These bodies became in effect a substitute for structural bureaucratic reform.

Whatever the lens through which analysts choose to view him —whether straight, prismatic or crooked— Williams left indelible footprints on our landscape. The “hero” had many visions, but could not complete all the tasks he assigned himself. Williams was not Plato's unblemished philosopher king. He was challenged in many ways. On balance, however, his performance was worthy of History's applause.

Part II of this column on Dr Eric Williams next Sunday.

Anniversaries, Eric Williams, and multiculturalism

Marion O'Callaghan, Trinidad and Tobago Newsday
 Monday, September 26, 2011
<http://www.newsday.co.tt/commentary/0,147874.html>

This September marks the 100th anniversary of Eric Williams' birth. It also marks the centenary of Dom Basil Matthew's birth. Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of our Independence. We are not particularly good at anniversaries. We did not mark the anniversary of universal adult suffrage. And yet the emergence of party politics and of racial political mobilisation cannot be understood outside of what was happening at that time, not only in Trinidad and Tobago but also in India and in Britain.

We have barely and reluctantly marked the anniversary of the ending of the British slave trade. And yet not only did this affect nearly every group within the country, not only is nearly every myth of racial exclusivity within that ending — it also marks the repositioning of Britain vis-à-vis France and vis-à-vis the United States.

These anniversaries are not just birthdays. They remind us of events which changed the course of history, or at least symbolised and sharpened a change which was already taking place. Nor is our discomfort before the historical past without consequences. Values held in common are values that have been tested and which have sometimes emerged in a historical experience we have shared. It is in this sense that we look this September at Eric Williams and at Dom Basil, keeping in mind the Independence movements as well as change, conflict, and continuity in Vatican II.

Shadow Boxing

Dom Basil was a tragic figure. That for another time. This article will be principally about the state and Eric Williams. I have been prompted in this by the realisation that the political battles we fight today are often in reality shadow boxing with Williams' ghost. It is Williams to whom the political opposition to the PNM, whether in government or outside of it, direct their criticisms. That this ghost is an external presence is perhaps the greatest tribute to Eric Williams. I know of no political figure anywhere who has remained so central to their country's political debate. Or, if you like, so central to the avoidance of political debate.

This has in part been "managed" by constructing an Eric Williams who, in spite of leading the country to Independence, is made to remain the leader of only a portion of the population. This portion follows racial lines. Williams, so the story goes, is a Black leader who excludes Indians. He also implicitly excludes whites and high browns or reds with his "Massa Day Done".

These narratives eliminate political traditions and philosophies to present a strictly racial interpretation of the society. The narratives are also selective. The Wood Commission and the process by which Bhadase Maraj forms a Hindu Party, is put aside. The long conflict with the Chamber of Commerce over adult suffrage is forgotten.

Racial Interpretation

This racial interpretation of the society is not only that of many Indians and whites. It is increasingly shared by some blacks, including some within the People's National Movement. At best the state

becomes something which is “shared” between racial groups. Since we are a little uncomfortable with the word “race,” this “sharing” becomes “multiculturalism.”

This poses a number of problems. It is taken for granted that the country consists of a number of easily defined and separate “cultures” and that these cultures are synonymous with race as well as with separate histories and heroes. Where then do we place the French-Creole Cipriani? He is, after all, one of our Greats. Or Cola Rienzi? Is he a labour leader or a Hindu nationalist?

The problem is not only our own. It is there in any sharply divided society. Fintan O’Toole, in the *Irish Times*, writes: “There are two very different ways of being inclusive. One is the official paradigm of ‘two traditions’ that must be granted ‘parity of respect.’ ... This leads to ... fair and balanced ... doling out of tribal sugar plums. Here’s the Battle of the Somme for the Prods and the 1916 Rising for the Taigs. And we’ll all agree to respect each other’s pieties ...”

For Fintan O’Toole “... this would be worse than amnesia.” O’Toole is speaking about Protestant and Catholic in Ireland. I would have added that it is also intensely boring. There is, however, for O’Toole, an alternative “... which starts with the notion that there are not two histories, but one history with many strands ...” These strands are not separate but intertwined. Because they are, they have to be understood together or they won’t be understood at all.

This is true of the anniversaries before us. We all lose Eric Williams if he is only a black hero. We refuse to understand the complexity of our history if we eliminate that road to adult suffrage. We underestimate the strength and beauty of our culture when it becomes only something “kept apart”.

Eric Williams, 100 Years Later

Editorial, *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*

Tuesday, September 27, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/editorial/2011/09/27/eric-williams-100-years-later>

On September 25, 1911, the child Eric Williams was born to middle-class parents in Port of Spain. His father, Henry, was a civil servant, his mother, Elisa, an unmonied descendant of the wealthy De Boissiere family. The family was large, their circumstances financially tight. The young Williams boy was smart, however, and attended Queen's Royal College, where he was torn between his love of football and an aptitude for academics. The young student's only chance for furthering his education was with a scholarship, and he had to work hard at it, finally winning an opportunity to study at Oxford. While there, he found himself a lesser subject of the British Empire, and the slights he suffered might have provided the engine for his specific focus on the history of the Caribbean, his appetite for understanding whetted by the circumstances he found himself in. He worked hard at continuing his studies at a level that would justify continued scholarship money and finally published his doctoral thesis, *The Economic Aspects of the Abolition of the Slave Trade and West Indian Slavery*, a work that stood in stark contrast to the prevailing wisdom that slavery had been abolished on humanitarian instead of on economic grounds.

This theory was later fully expanded in his seminal work *Capitalism and Slavery*, a book so outrageous to British sensibilities that it would not be published in the UK until 1964. This work, and indeed Williams' entire career as a scholar and politician, would be challenged and re-examined by later scholars, a practice that continues to this day. This is unsurprising. There is so much about modern Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean that found its genesis in the ideas, political career, and modus operandi of Dr Eric Williams that such dissection continues to be rewarding 30 years after his death. It's notable that after his squabbles with the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission, his employers from 1944 through 1955, his first move was not into politics but into public education as he proceeded to give a series of public lectures at Woodford Square, which he colourfully christened a "university," on a wide range of scholarly subjects. These talks and a famous public debate with Catholic monk and noted intellectual Dom Basil Matthews sparked an enthusiasm and ambition to craft the histories of the future through political intervention.

Any evaluation of the sweep of Eric Williams' work as a politician would exceed the space and there are expansive manuscripts and publications on the subject that explore that phase of his life with admirable thoroughness. Worthy of note, however, are two key elements of his decades-long tenure as prime minister of T&T and the political leader of the party he founded, the PNM. The first was his response to the boldest challenge to his authority as prime minister, the Black Power Revolution of 1970, which Williams first quelled with firmness of hand and then co-opted into his political agenda with deftness of thought. The other was the introduction of the Development and Environmental Works Division, an attempt at creating make-work employment for the angry, violent young men who had begun to incite gang violence in the steelband movement.

That programme would find echoes throughout this country's political history, in LIDP, URP, and now in Cepep, all of which advertised their positive effect while glossing over the troubling and unresolved underpinnings implicit in their existence. It's impossible to summarise Williams' quarter-century-long

ownership of the post of first premier and then prime minister with even two notable examples and in this year, which would have marked his 100th birthday, there are several projects and celebrations which seek to bring new understanding to his life, his triumphs, and his failures. Joining the remarkable Eric Williams Collection at UWI and scholarly works by many distinguished authors, including Dr Kirk Meighoo and Dr Selwyn Ryan, is a new documentary on Williams by Mariel Brown, *Inward Hunger* (the title of Williams' own evaluation of his youth), which seeks to tell the often tragic story of the man, who, for better and for worse, made post-Independence T&T.

Celebrating the Centenary of Dr. Williams' Birth

Dr Selwyn R Cudjoe, *Trinidad and Tobago News Blog*

Wednesday, September 28, 2011

<http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/blog/?p=5719>

Dr Selwyn R Cudjoe, *TnT Mirror*

Friday, September 30, 2011

<http://www.tntmirror.com/2011/09/30/celebrating-the-centenary-of-dr-williams-birth>

Perhaps it is one of those crazy though explicable Trinbagonian things. Dr Eric Williams is undoubtedly one of the most distinguished citizens ever to have bestridden our country over the last two-hundred years. Yet, there was not one official ceremony in Trinidad and Tobago to celebrate the centenary of his birth. I say "one of the most distinguished citizens" because over its long history there have been many distinguished Trinbagonian men and women such as J J Thomas, Maxwell Philip, Captain Arthur Cipriani, Colon Adrian Renzi, Lionel Sukeran, Audrey Jeffers, Mother Gerald, and Mac Donald Bailey. Sadly none of these names ever come to mind when we think of our achievements, assess our social and cultural capital, and determine are our civic and spiritual values.

Given such a history, all of the men and women who strut upon our stage today with such an air of self-importance will be forgotten and consigned to irrelevance a year after they have left office and forgotten completely in ten years after they have died. Our Hindu compatriots may return at a higher level of existence, but our Christian and Muslim brothers will lay in some unforgotten grave or have their ashes strewn upon the earth to fertilize the next generation of citizens. This will be the destiny of our best scholars, our best sportsmen, our best everything.

Anybody remember Bertie Marshall????

As a society we do not remember or cultivate national memory. We remain averse to honouring our own. So we strut and fret; say nonsensical things no one remembers; and exit the stage of life as though we never existed; having done next to nothing, contributed little, trying as hard as we can to pull down anyone who seeks to do something. We privilege the here and the now and dance our dance of death oblivious of tomorrow and damned with the curse of amnesia. We say nothing or no one can be any good. This has been the fate of Dr Williams in our country.

Just read Lenox Grant in Sunday's *Guardian* (September 25) and one realizes what nonsense personified sounds like. Read Raffique Shah in the Sunday *Express* (September 25) and one sees a man who, in spite of his misgivings, is trying to come to terms with his present as well as his past, trying to understand Dr Williams, warts and all, and seeking to situate himself and his actions vis-à-vis the mindlessness of much of what calls itself T&T.

So it is in keeping with our state of national amnesia that no significant function was held in Trinidad and Tobago, by the present government, the People's National Movement (PNM) he founded, the University of West Indies (UWI, Trinidad) of which he was Pro Vice Chancellor, or the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), to honour Dr Williams' contribution to the country and the world. I don't

know why I thought that one of the functions of UTT, UWI (and even the PNM) is to preserve and promulgate knowledge of things Trinidad and Tobago.

While we did little to remember that Dr Williams gave his life to this society, distinguished international scholars (included several Trinidadian and Tobagonian scholars) gathered at St Catherine's College, Oxford University, to honour and to celebrate his contributions to capitalism, slavery, and statesmanship. Necessarily, there was a bit of nostalgia (and perhaps reverence) since St Catherine was responsible in large part for Dr. Williams' intellectual formation and the place where he wrote his doctoral dissertation about the slave trade, slavery, and their impact on the development the Industrial Revolution.

In recognizing the importance of *Capitalism and Slavery*, the product of his dissertation, in shaping Caribbean historiography, Professor Franklin Knight of Johns Hopkins University remarked: "Dr Williams became the first [scholar] to fundamentally change the observation point of Caribbean history and to bring an entirely different set of cultural values to bear on his work."

In contextualizing his scholarship, Professor Knight noted that "Dr Williams was a typical product of his times — times that produced several distinguished individuals from many fields in the Caribbean ... [he] may be compared to Christopher Columbus who brought the Americas into the intellectual and political consciousness of Europe ... Columbus certainly catalyzed exploration in the way that Williams catalyzed Caribbean historical scholarship."

Necessarily, international scholars were more interested in *Capitalism and Slavery* and its impact on Caribbean and international scholarship, whereas a few of us, building up the rear, examined the statesmanship dimension of Dr Williams' career. *Capitalism and Slavery* signalled a watershed moment in Dr Williams' career, the half-way point between the academic Williams and the political Williams, an international Williams and a Trinidad and Tobago Williams, the dispassionate scholar and intellectual as opposed to the polemical and political Williams that we know.

Since scholars make their living examining the substance as well as the minutiae of a scholar's intellectual output (much of it irrelevant sometimes), they tend to be more respectful of the facts. On the other hand many times the layman is guided by gossip and mauvais langue. They are willing to take fragments of conversation, generalize therefrom, and arrive at absurd conclusions.

For example, one such absurdity has it come down to us as unvarnished truth that Dr Williams called the Indian community a recalcitrant minority which proves unequivocally that he was a racist and hated the Indians. This is why UWI, UTT, and the government refused to celebrate his centenary. It does not matter that this falsehood continues to inform the consciousness of many East Indians which determines their attitudes towards him and most Africans in the society. The Grants of the society certainly have their reasons for their ill-will towards the man.

One day Trinibagonians will raise their heads and their hearts and acknowledge Dr Williams' greatness. When we do we will have begun the tortuous journey of nationhood, hurling ourselves out of oblivion, and locate ourselves in history as a people. Meanwhile we should thank Erica Williams, St Catherine's College, and the WEB DuBois Institute of Harvard University for making this memory and evaluation of Dr Williams possible.

Celebrating Eric Williams at 100

Franklin W Knight, *Jamaica Observer*

Wednesday, September 28, 2011

http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/Celebrating-Eric-Williams-at-100_9796985

Franklin W Knight, *Trinidad Express*

Friday, September 30, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/commentaries/Celebrating_Eric_Williams_at_100-130894903.html

Eric Williams, the distinguished scholar, statesman, and long-serving prime minister of Trinidad & Tobago would have been 100 years old this year.

A number of conferences commemorating the date are being held in many places. St Catherine's, his old Oxford University college, held a fittingly impressive affair that coincided with his birthday on September 25. At the same time Trinidad held a similar event. The following day the University of London staged an event. Cuban scholars will also hold a major commemorative event later in the year.

The Oxford conference, with scholars from the United Kingdom, Trinidad & Tobago, the United States, Puerto Rico, and Brazil, devoted two full days to the life, temper, temperament, politics, and scholarly works of Eric Williams. As may be expected, several sessions returned to the economic debate over the controversial study, *Capitalism and Slavery*, that first appeared in 1944.

Colin Palmer and Selwyn Ryan, who have produced recent hefty biographies of Williams, discussed his developmental policies and his attempts at Caribbean integration. Other scholars examined his early association with George Padmore, C L R James, and Arthur Lewis (later Sir Arthur) in the 1930s, his diverse reading, and unpublished manuscripts left in the prestigious Eric Williams Memorial Collection on the campus of the University of the West Indies at St Augustine.

Williams had many interesting facets to his life. His significant role in the development of the modern Caribbean historiography rivals his political accomplishments. Before he was a leading Trinidad politician, Eric Williams was an outstanding scholar, finishing first in his history honours class at Oxford in 1935, and completing a doctoral dissertation in 1938 that still manages after all these years to generate considerable heat in intellectual circles.

In many ways Eric Williams was a typical product of his times although he was more competent and successful than most of his contemporaries. In this regard Eric Williams may be compared to Christopher Columbus who brought the Americas into the intellectual and political consciousness of Europe. Columbus possessed no unique navigational skills and had he not "discovered" the Caribbean in 1492, it is quite possible that some other explorer would have done so within a few years. But Columbus catalysed exploration in the way that Williams catalysed Caribbean historical scholarship.

In the thesis of his major work, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Williams connected in a more direct and sophisticated way than previously the relationship between imperialism, slavery, and the rise of industrial capitalism. Despite the extensive controversy surrounding the thesis, no historian has been able to demolish the basic argument set forth by Williams in 1944.

Williams did not couch his language narrowly in simple profit accrual and reinvestment but rather in a complex, catalytically inducing process in which the employment of slaves represented market capital with the additional capacity to produce more capital. Slaves were a marketable commodity that directly produced other marketable commodities in a system that stimulated forward and backward economic linkages. The sugar business, after all, ranks among the earliest proto-industrial and capitalist forms of factory production in the modern age.

Equally important, Williams demonstrated that in the absence of an international banking system the slave complexes facilitated the transition from bullionism (or the use of gold and silver to estimate national and individual wealth) to mercantilism (the attempt to restrict imperial trade to national carriers within imperial borders) to free trade where participants need not be connected at all except by capital involvement. Capitalism opened the marketplace for private participants to operate with a minimum of governmental controls and government regulations.

Williams saw the imperial activities of Europeans as driven by the urge to promote capitalism via non-restricting market-driven mechanisms — an idea that goes back to the eighteenth century and to Adam Smith and the Abbe Raynal. This touched a metaphorical nerve because it countered the conventional British conviction that a religiously-based humanitarianism was at the forefront of British slave abolition.

Yet an economic focus was not solely the focus of Williams' thinking. Rather it was the fundamental reorientation of European historical thought relating to the Caribbean. As B W Higman has pointed out, "Williams ... set out to unsettle and destroy the pillars of the old colonial order, not the least of all in its intellectual aspect. For him history was a battleground on which imperialist politics struggles against nationalist politics."

Eric Williams had a deep conviction shared by many others of his generation that Caribbean peoples had a history no less worthy than that of peoples from other parts of the globe, especially from Europe.

His writings gave dynamic agency to the people of the Caribbean in the same way as C L R James' *Black Jacobins* gave agency to the rebellious slaves in that unfortunate French colony in 1791. This agency on the part of the enslaved may also be found in most modern histories of the Caribbean beginning with Elsa Goveia's path breaking *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands*.

Another aspect found in Williams' works is a conscious attempt to look at the Caribbean regionally rather than as isolated peripheral subdivisions of European activities and empires. This is especially evident in his *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean, 1492-1969*. But Williams indicated this regional conception in his earlier short study, *The Negro in the Caribbean*, published in 1945.

Finally, in his writings and his speeches Williams conveyed a strong conviction more commonly found among Caribbean artists and writers that the people of the region needed to understand their history better. Only by understanding that history better could they control their affairs more efficaciously in the modern world. That conviction remains more hope than reality but it was a hope that remained as long as Eric Williams lived. Truly he was a rare individual not only of Trinidad & Tobago but also of the Caribbean and the entire world.

Lee Sing: Statue of Williams to Grace Woodford Square

Trinidad and Tobago Guardian

Friday, September 30, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2011/09/30/lee-sing-statue-williams-grace-woodford-square>

A statue of Dr Eric Williams soon will be among the scenery at Woodford Square, Port of Spain. Mayor Louis Lee Sing made the announcement during yesterday's monthly statutory meeting at City Hall, Port of Spain. Lee Sing said that was in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Williams who was born on September 25, 1911. He added: "He took the PNM into government in 1956. He was a key figure in party politics and provided free education. The Prime Minister was a visionary who took the country forward. There are people who came into life in recent years who know so little about yesterday. I am speaking about 1956, 1970 and 1990. I believe as a council we need to establish a link. So people who are coming to Port of Spain will understand his contribution."

He said a statue of Dr Williams, with the appropriate panel, would be placed so people would understand his brilliance. "Were it not for Dr Williams, the democracy of today would not have been," Lee Sing said. He said before Dr Williams there was no Foreshore Road, Lady Young Road, Beetham Highway, or Solomon Hochoy Highway. He added: "It was a dirt track to Diego Martin. It was not a developed society and we still are not a developed society. It was Dr Williams' dream and brilliance that created Pt Lisas."

He said he would like to have the statue on site before the celebration of Williams' 101st birthday. "I have to get someone to volunteer the statue and then we have to consult with the family to get the best possible statue with what they have in mind," he added.

State Capitalism and Development

Part II of last week's column: Williams in the Balance

Selwyn Ryan, *Trinidad Express*

Sunday, October 2, 2011

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/commentaries/State_capitalism_and_development-130928068.html

The centenary of Dr Williams' birth was marked by two symposia which were held last weekend at Oxford and London Universities. The PNM also marked the event. In this column, I continue to share with readers excerpts from the assessment which I made of Dr Williams at Oxford and London Universities.

Dr Williams was the subject of great controversy, whether as a scholar or a political leader, and it was often difficult to determine which was the real Eric Williams. He was a man of many moods and some would say many moons. Williams is loved and hero-worshipped by some, vilified and demonised by others. Some see him as the author of all our past ills and our present discontents in respect of young underachieving black males. He however sought at times to nurture other attitudes.

Whatever is said about Williams, few seriously disagree that he is largely responsible for laying the foundation for Trinidad's modern industrial state. Having written *Capitalism and Slavery*, one could well understand why, when provided with an opportunity and the requisite resources to follow the path taken by Britain in the age of the industrial revolution, Williams would seek to imitate his former colonial masters. Williams believed that steel symbolised modernity and that the sugar plantation symbolised slavery, indenture, and colonialism. The one provided the mechanism for true economic emancipation while the other constituted the basis for persistent poverty and subordination.

Frank Barsotti, Williams's permanent secretary from 1975 to his death, tells us that he had an emotional kind of attachment to replacing sugar with steel. "This was one of the things operating at the back of his mind. He wanted to wipe out the sugar industry, get it away from him, and the way to do that was through technology, through natural gas as a fuel and as an intermediate product."

The start of construction on the iron and steel complex at Point Lisas on October 18, 1977 provided an opportunity for Williams to share his vision of the future economic landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. What was being initiated on that day in Williams's mind "marked a decisive reversal" of Trinidad and Tobago's economic development strategy from that which obtained in the colonial era. That pattern was characterised by the mercantilist formula, which emphasised the export of primary commodities such as "brown sugar" to the metropole, where value was added downstream and upstream.

Williams told Trinidadians that the world economy was witnessing a new strategic conjuncture in which sugar production was no longer a preserve of the non-white colonial world; neither were certain kinds of resources confined to the developed world. The once colonial world had now developed their mineral and energy resources and one was thus able to reverse the old patterns. "Point Lisas is the symbol of this fundamental reorientation in the national economy. Here at Point Lisas, sugar cane gives way to wire rods."

Williams was of the view that steel “possibly of all man-made products will continue to be a benchmark for industrial development and any form of serious industrialisation. For many years (steel production) has been monopolised by a larger and more developed nations. That era was now over.”

Williams had a clear view as to why that monopoly had to be broken. He noted that attempts had been made to persuade him to take an easier, more conventional and consumerist route to development. He found that option unattractive for all sorts of ideological and other reasons. As he explained, “blessed as we are with hydrocarbon resources, we had a choice to make. There have been attempts to persuade us that the simplest and easiest thing to do would be to sit back, export our oil, export our gas, do nothing else and just receive the revenues derived for such exports and, as it were, lead a life of luxury — at least for some limited period. This, the Government has completely rejected, for it amounts to putting the entire nation on the dole. Instead, we have taken what may be the more difficult road and that is accepting the challenge of entering the world of steel, aluminium, methanol, fertiliser, petrochemicals, in spite of our smallness and in spite of our existing level of technology.”

Williams spoke with passion about his vision for Trinidad and Tobago to a graduation ceremony for young employees of the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Corporation in 1980. Williams told the award-ees that he had much to say and that his decision to say it to them on that particular occasion was “deliberate.” He was speaking to them as the youth of the nation who were employed in the field of energy. In his view, the story of Trinidad and Tobago in the 1980s would be the story of “youth and energy.”

Williams told his audience that the responsibility for realising this vision lay with them, the sons and daughters of those who were enslaved or indentured and who toiled on the sugar plantation.”The eighties must surely belong to you. I urge you to accept that role, that challenge with the same determination, the same sense of discipline, with the same attitude towards productive hard work that your parents and indeed your grandparents had in the 50s, 60s, and the decade before that. Where our ancestors toiled in the field producing sugar under conditions of slavery or under conditions of indentured labour, you will have an opportunity to produce steel of the highest quality to generate electricity to your parents, your grandparents, and their parents.”

Williams disdained those whom he said were still living in the shadow of the plantation. “Many of our population are still of the mentality of the brown sugar economy asking querulously why do we need steel ... We of the PNM have always been the threat to this mentality of the brown sugar economy ... We stand today as the only cohesive force in the society against this mentality an in vigorous prosecution of our own nationalist economic identity.”

Williams was criticised by some groups for the various industrial policies which he put in place. It was said that he did not do enough to foster small and medium enterprises in general or black capitalism in particular. It was also said that he squandered the oil windfall and was leaving the country in debt and the country had become afflicted with the “Dutch disease.” Williams’ Point Lisas strategy was also blamed for Trinidad and Tobago’s large carbon footprint and the high level of air and sea pollution which obtains in south-western Trinidad.

Williams was likewise blamed for some of the social consequences that have been associated with his development strategies. It is said that he contributed greatly to the entitlement mentality which currently obtains, and which was a by product of policies which were put in place after 1970 which pampered blacks with patronage and various make-work activities which undermined the incentive to work.

Much continues to be said about Williams' various industrial policies. There was certainly much waste, corruption, and social dislocation, but on balance, his contribution was huge. He was indeed the master architect and builder of Trinidad's modern political and industrial state. It is true that he left much toxic exhaust in the wake of the process with which the country is still trying to grapple, but he left a template on which others were able to construct much that was positive. Today, Point Lisas has been the economic mainstay and economic showpiece of Trinidad and Tobago. The Point Lisas model is in fact being monitored and followed by other energy-based states.

Eric Williams: The Enigma

Dr Hamid Ghany, *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*

Sunday, October 2, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/columnist/2011/10/02/eric-williams-enigma>

As the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Eric Williams was celebrated last Sunday there was an opportunity to reflect on the man and his ideas. Two early dominant anti-colonial political thinkers on Caribbean issues were Eric Williams and C L R James. To a large extent, their anti-colonial thought had a Marxist foundation, even though it would be easier to classify James a Marxist than Williams. The writings of C L R James bear out this tendency as seen in *World Revolution 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Third International* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd, 1935) and *Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the St Domingue Revolution* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd, 1938) which best capture the essential strains of his political thought.

In *World Revolution*, James criticised Stalin's leadership of the Soviet state while simultaneously making a case for Trotsky's leadership under a new International. Three years later, he published *Black Jacobins* in which he took the view that the French bourgeoisie who led the fight for the advancement of political rights in France were ambivalent about the fate of the slaves in the colony of St Domingue because of their economic interests. James had clearly established his Marxist credentials in both books and his methodology was clearly based on an appreciation of the impact of economic forces on political movements.

Eric Williams was also very strong in his anti-colonial sentiment which was expressed in his famous book *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944) which was an expansion of his earlier doctoral thesis at Oxford University. In the book Williams expressed the view that the British government abolished slavery and the slave trade in the nineteenth century on economic, rather than humanitarian grounds. In making this point, he was not far away from James who established an economic connection between the French bourgeoisie and their ambivalence on the colonial question because of their economic involvement in slavery.

However, despite his intellectual challenge to the underlying arguments against British trusteeship in the West Indies as expressed in *Capitalism and Slavery*, Williams would reveal a fundamental contradiction that would be expressed in his constitutional thought that was absolutely inconsistent with his views on the British Constitution and its suitability for Trinidad and Tobago just over a decade after he published *Capitalism and Slavery*.

On July 19, 1955, in a speech delivered in Woodford Square, Port of Spain, Williams would say: "The Colonial Office does not need to examine its second-hand colonial constitutions. It has a constitution at hand which it can apply immediately to Trinidad and Tobago. That is the British Constitution. Ladies and Gentlemen, I suggest to you that the time has come when the British Constitution, suitably modified, can be applied to Trinidad and Tobago. After all, if the British Constitution is good enough for Great Britain, it should be good enough for Trinidad and Tobago." (Williams, *Constitution Reform in Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad: Public Affairs Pamphlet No 2, Teachers' Educational and Cultural Association, 1955*), p 30.

This point of view represented an inconsistency on the part of Williams in respect of his world view on the influence of Great Britain on Trinidad and Tobago which was at variance with his position stated in *Capitalism and Slavery*. His rejection of the intellectual underpinnings of British trusteeship in the region cannot be reconciled with his desire for constitutional mimicry. It is important to recognise this as it explains a fundamental embrace of the Westminster-Whitehall model of constitutional design in Trinidad and Tobago against a backdrop of anti-colonial sentiment.

When faced with the opportunity to make constitutional change in 1976, Williams rejected the Wooding Commission Report that included substantial anti-Westminster reforms. Indeed, he refused to depart from the Westminster-Whitehall model despite the change from a monarchical to a republican system for which he had the requisite votes in the Parliament. The retention of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as the final court of appeal for Trinidad and Tobago was a major contradiction alongside his advocacy of enhanced nationalism as espoused in *The Chaguaramas Declaration: The People's Charter Revised* which was approved at a special convention of the PNM in November 1970.

This was Williams' philosophical answer to the social unrest of 1970 in which he staved off an army mutiny and the Black Power struggle that involved many PNM supporters who had turned against him and had taken to the streets to express their anger. The abolition of the Privy Council was avoided by Williams at a time when a change could have been made. He recognised the social ambivalence on the subject at the time and did not force the issue. Thirty-five years later the change has not been made and there is still some measure of social ambivalence about it. The great enigma that was Eric Williams will be studied by many for years to come as we try to understand the nationalist and anti-colonialist who delivered our Westminster-Whitehall constitutional foundation in 1962 and maintained it in 1976.

Honouring the 'Invisible Conductor'

Dr Glenville Ashby, *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*

Monday, October 3, 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/entertainment/2011/10/03/honouring-invisible-conductor>

Colin Williams might as well be a blood relative of Dr Eric Williams. He is not though. But no father can ask for more devotion from a child. Colin Williams has shown that much, and more. Republic Day's gala event to mark the centennial anniversary of Dr Eric Williams' birth was a culmination of Colin Williams' detailed study of the life of a man widely known as the Father of the Nation. The event was Williams' crowning achievement — really to crown a man whom he called “an international hero.” The thirst to honour Dr Williams was born out of what Williams called the incredulous disrespect for the T&T national anthem he experienced at a football game in Trinidad.

“I couldn't believe that even a police officer was not standing at attention,” he told me days before the event. A later encounter with a relative convinced him that a nationalistic fervour had evaporated from the Trinbagonian. “I went into his room and I saw pictures of Bob Marley and Marcus Garvey but not one of Dr Williams. In fact, my nephew couldn't tell me who Dr Eric Williams was. I was devastated.” His crusade you could say began there. It was a learning process, for Williams needed to learn more, and quickly, if he were to enlighten others to support his view that Dr Williams needed to be celebrated. The journey took him to the Trinidad Consulate where he was asked, “Why are you doing this?” and to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

“It is about time that we recognise the worth of Dr Williams,” he said. “You don't associate Abraham Lincoln or George Washington with the Democratic or Republican Party. You look at their contribution to American history and the ideals they advanced.” As Williams planned the centennial event he was wary of it being deemed a PNM-backed function. “This was never a PNM thing. Dr Williams is bigger than a single party, bigger than the country ... even the region. He was really an international figure.” He cautioned against “misinterpretation.” “I am well aware that Dr Williams had his faults. He was a man, but after exploring his life —the good, bad, and indifferent— I must say that he trumps all comers. I mean, what he has accomplished is phenomenal. He has raised the bar so high in terms of achievements that the people we refer today as our heroes are a distant second.”

And of these many “firsts,” Williams cited the transparency of the democratic process in T&T from 1956 to 1981 when Dr Williams was at the helm. He also recalled Dr Williams' ability to “rid the country of an American base without a single shot being fired.” September 24, the day of marking Dr Eric Williams' centennial anniversary has arrived. The Brooklyn Children's Museum is turned into a dome of political reflection that transcends partisanship of every kind. I am amid restored and enlarged photos of Dr Williams' engagements with political luminaries — Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Indira Gandhi, Gamal Nasser, William Tubman, Chou En Lia, and U Thant. Colin Williams' views on Dr Williams are also well endorsed throughout the spacious and trendy setting.

“We tend to forget our values and our struggle but in learning more about Dr Williams, I have a renewed interest in my country,” remarks Dana Lezama. Renee Collymore views Dr Williams as a “great philosopher and magnificent contributor to the world, and more than a Trinidadian.” Desmond Chase calls him, “an astute politician,” with the “maturity and savvy that could have tempered the

current political divide in Washington.” And attorney Frank Wharton reflects on Dr Williams’ vision for a West Indian Federation. “At this point, the real test has to do with his vision for the Federation as a way forward economically and politically.” It is a subject that resurfaces when Wharton addresses the audience.

A slew of distinguished speakers then follow, including the Trinidad and Tobago Ambassador to the United States and Mexico, Dr Neil Parsan, and George Lamming. It is an evening punctuated with a video address by Erica Williams-Connell, film excerpts, discussions, and musical selections. An evening précised by the evocative words of Dr Parsan: “We are here to pay tribute to one of the most robust figures to ever grace Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean ... A gentleman who is the invisible conductor of an orchestra, and a presence that we still feel today ...”

Celebrating Dr Eric Williams' 100th B-day

Claudette J. Spence, Caribbean Life News

October 3, 2011

http://www.caribbeanlifeneews.com/stories/2011/9/2011_09_27_gopie_tt_alliance.html

The brainchild of J Lystra Collis, congressional liaison to Congresswoman Yvette D Clarke (D-NY), the commemoration of the 100th birthday of the late Dr Eric Eustace Williams came to life in Brooklyn recently under the auspices of Trinidad and Tobago Alliance NA, Inc.

Williams, who led the twin-island nation into Independence in 1962, served as its first prime minister and was heralded then and now as the "Father of the Nation." At the Mahalia Jackson School in Brooklyn, New York, nationals and ex-patriots and friends gathered to remember their beloved leader who passed from this life in 1981.

Sterling Williams, President of the Trinidad & Tobago Alliance welcomed the audience in remembering "The Independent Republicanism of Dr Eric Eustace Williams" and then turned the stage over to a wide variety of talented vocalists whose singing was of world-class caliber. Samuel Clarke, Esther Sebro, Curt Willis, Gerard Placide, and Hilton Samuel who crooned "He Did It His Way" to Frank Sinatra's "I Did It My Way," left the audience appreciative of the tributes paid to their beloved leader. The Mildred Forde Dancers offered their well-choreographed talents between vocal selections to the appreciative audience.

A reflection on William's life and contribution was delivered by Jean Leon, retired SVP, Kings County Hospital Center, and Angela Cooper read an abbreviated version of his biography.

There were several people in the audience who had campaigned with and for the former twin-island republic's revered Prime Minister, including Ena Ryan who worked as a civil servant and remembers campaigning with George Chambers for Williams.

Chambers became the nation's second prime minister. She recalls Williams encouraging them to travel to learn more of the world outside of Trinidad and Tobago. Rudolph Roberts, a retired corporal in the nation's military and who worked security detail for the Prime Minister, said of Williams, "He was the greatest prime minister. He was generous and respectful to all."

Roland Lashley, who is 97 years old and worked as a technical officer in Works and Hydrolics, recalls meeting Williams in the barber shop where they would "talk man-talk." Participants remembered Williams for the declaration of "Massa Day Done," for educational opportunities he provided them, his use of big words, and his penchant to turn off his hearing piece when he deemed people were talking nonsense.

Williams is known as one of the great leaders in the Caribbean (1960s-1980s) who championed self-governance for the island nations, integration among the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, and whose work *Capitalism and Slavery* remains widely read by those seeking a different perspective on the trans-Atlantic slave trade that populated the Americas with Africans.

Dr Williams as a Man of Culture

Dr Selwyn R Cudjoe, *Trinidad and Tobago News Blog*

October 6, 2011

<http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/blog/?p=5749>

If I turn into earth, water, grass,
Flower or fruit — if it comes to pass
I return to Earth in the animal class,
Why in the world should I care?
In the limitless bond wherever I pass,
A kinship is ever there.

— Rabindranath Tagore, *Of Myself*

A few things before I start.* First, although my original paper is 27 pages long in conformity with the instructions given, I have had to cut my paper down to fifteen pages, so that you will forgive me if there are gaps in my presentation. Second, the title of my paper is taken from an essay that Dr Williams offered at the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists that was held in Rome from March 26 to April 1, 1959, titled “The Political Leader Considered as a Man of Culture.” Third, although my original paper examines the former article and “Four Poets of the Greater Antilles,” I will look at Dr William’s relationship to literature and his essays on Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Rabindranth Tagore with an emphasis upon the latter. In the process, I would like to expand upon Professor Rampersad’s observation that Dr Williams, a man of letters, was “comfortable with literature, capable of invoking the words of Shakespeare and Dante and showing a greater familiarity with their works and the work of other eminent writers than one finds using the index to Bartlett’s Quotations.” In the process I also hope to put a dent into the silly allegation that Dr Williams was a racist who did not like people of Indian descent.

Dr Williams, one of the most brilliant scholars of colonial reality, did not only feel comfortable with literature, he also used literature and the arts to organize and express his truths. Moreover, when we turn to the major religious/philosophical influences on Dr Williams’ life, one ought to look no further than his exposition on the works of Rabindranath Tagore, the great Bengali poet and author, to get a better sense of who Dr Williams was — an entrée into his philosophical and religious thinking. This fact is lost upon many who see only the outer dimension of the man rather than his resilience, his beliefs, and his understanding of the world.

Dr Williams’s admiration of Tagore came from his deep appreciation of literature and art “as sources for the understanding and appraisal of historical development” as he observed in *Inward Hunger*, his autobiography. He subscribed fully to Tagore’s conviction: “In a literary work the author’s purer being reveals itself unconsciously; the work thereby is a purer thing. That is why I go to poetry and drama for evidence.” He loved Tagore, primarily a poet, who on his seventieth birthday could say of his vocation: “Now I have followed this long orbit of life I can take a look at the circle in its entirety at the hour of farewell, and I understand that I have only one identity, and it is this: I am simply a poet.” It is this love and appreciation of Tagore’s work that Dr Williams sought to express when he delivered his lecture on Tagore at Queen’s Hall, Port of Spain, Trinidad, on May 6, 1961, at the invitation of India’s high commissioner.

The Political Leader as a Man of Culture

In April 1959, Dr Williams used the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists to expand upon his views about the role of culture in the liberation process. In "The Political Leader Considered as a Man of Culture," Dr Williams elaborated upon an observation that Alioune Diop, editor of *Presence Africaine*, made at the First International Congress of Negro Writers and Artists held in Paris in 1956 when he said: "There is no people without culture. But we often lose sight of the natural bond ... between politics and culture. It is the state that guarantees a culture, the memory of its traditions, and a sense of its personality. A community deprived of political liberty has great difficulty in creating the image of its past." Although Dr Williams drew upon the Ancient Greeks to set up his argument, he was convinced that Diop was only "seeking to translate to the African struggle what has already been established on the Indian field of battle. For it is modern India which most clearly demonstrates the natural tie between politics and culture as symbolized by Gandhi and Nehru." He noted that Gandhi, in his struggle to free India from colonial rule, emphasized the importance of a national culture when Gandhi said, "I must cling to my mother-tongue as to my mother's breast, in spite of its shortcomings. It alone can give me the life-giving milk. I love the English tongue in its own place, but I am its inveterate opponent, if it usurps a place which does not belong to it." This does not mean that the movement towards the adoption of a national culture was made any easier by the several languages that were spoken in India. It only means that one could not cultivate a national culture if one did not give precedence to the language of one's people.

If European colonization implied a displacement of local languages and cultures, independence demanded its reversal: that is, an emphasis on local languages and culture. In this context, Dr Williams also quoted Kwame Nkrumah, Prime Minister of Ghana, who observed:

We must work a greater glory and majesty, greater than the civilization of our grandfathers, the civilization of Ghana, the civilization of the Mali Empire and the civilization of the Songhay Empire. Long before the slave trade, long before imperialist rivalries in Africa began, civilizations of the Ghana Empire were in existence. And here, you even discover that at one time, at the great University of Timbuctoo, Africans versed in the science of and learning were studying their works translated [from Latin] in Greek and Hebrew, and at the same time exchanging professors with the University of Cordoba in Spain. These were the brains, and today they come and tell us that we cannot do it.

Culture, as Dr Williams observed, and the Congress emphasized, was not an embellishment. It was a way of thinking about one's society and an integral part of the nationalist struggle for independence.

Dr Williams believed culture had an important role to play in welding the society together. This could not be achieved if the people's culture was not at the vanguard of the nationalist movement and the educational system was not rooted in the national culture. This is why he affirmed that "the struggle for the national culture today is not only a part of the struggle for political independence but also the struggle for building a new social order as well." Therefore, when the people of Trinidad and Tobago started their quest for national independence, Dr Williams saw the practice of culture as integral to the construction of the new society. He offered his analysis against a background of the tendency of the colonizing powers to privilege their culture and languages over local languages and culture which led leaders of newly independent states, both in India and Africa, to insist on the revitalization of their indigenous cultures and languages as central ingredients in the construction of these new states. This still remains the challenge of postcolonial nationhood.

Gandhi & Nehru

Dr Williams' lecture on Gandhi in October 1959 allowed him another opportunity to elaborate on the role that culture plays in developing societies and to continue the discussion he began in *Presence*

Africaine. Even before Dr Williams' conference paper, Gandhi was venerated by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Both C L R James and Beatrice Greg, an English woman living in Trinidad, had alerted the public to Gandhi's accomplishments in the *Beacon* in 1931 and 1932. Dr Williams reminded his listeners that Gandhi, "one of the most gifted human beings who has ever lived," centered his work around the Indian peasant "by whose progress and emancipation from misery and poverty the standard of Indian civilization was to be judged" (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 46). He emphasized Gandhi's role in education and the social sciences and noted: "The history of Indian national awakening combined with a living appreciation of India's struggle for social, political, and economic freedom should prepare the pupils to bear their share of the burden joyfully and to stand the strain and stress of the period of transition" (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 48).

Dr Williams also pointed out the lessons that Gandhi's life had for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. He noted: "The traditions against which he fought in South Africa and developed his capacities were in some respects very similar to those which existed in the Trinidad of the time. Gandhi's relations with the Indians and the Africans in South Africa should form a chapter of his history which should not only be of interest but of profit to all of us at this particular time." (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 51) He ended his lecture by highlighting Gandhi's method of passive resistance and "the highly spiritual quality of his personal life ... To acquaint ourselves with it [his life], to whatever degree, can only lead to the enrichment of our own." (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 52-3)

Dr Williams felt closer to Nehru politically than he did to Gandhi in spite of Gandhi's spiritual qualities and the tremendous contribution he made to revolutionary theory and practice in the twentieth century. While Gandhi played down the importance of academic learning and attempted to spiritualize poverty, Nehru was more politically inclined and was determined to reduce poverty through scientific methods. Tagore also "thought little of Gandhi's alternative economics, and found reason to celebrate, with a few qualifications, the liberating role of modern technology in reducing human drudgery as well as poverty." It helped that Nehru, an amateur historian, was the leader of a nationalist movement who had a close attachment to his people. Like Dr Williams, he became "alive before a large audience; his speeches, whether in Hindi or English, were always clear, direct, easily understood if somewhat lecturing. The communists' nickname for him was 'the Professor.'" Trinbagonians called Dr Williams fondly "the doc." Although Dr Williams compared Gandhi's accomplishments with those of Marx and others "in the sense that he discovered and invented a new method of political struggle, carried it through successfully over a vast area of human activities and has left it as a heritage which has been studied and followed in areas as far apart as Ghana and Montgomery, Alabama" (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 52), Williams' ideas and ideals of national independence were closer to those of Nehru than they were to Gandhi's.

As a historian, Dr Williams appreciated Nehru's "analysis on Britain's imperialism in India" (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 13). One may remember that Dr Williams did a similar thing for British capitalism in the Caribbean. He also restated Nehru's contention that British imperialism led to "the total destruction of Indian community life and community values" (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 14) which led, subsequently, to the pauperism of Indian peasants that sent millions of them to Burma, Malaya, to Sri Lanka, Kenya, South Africa, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. This exploitation led to the "demoralization and sapping of the spirit of the people" (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 18-19); hence the goal of the independence movement was to restore that dignity to the Indian people.

Dr Williams appreciated Nehru's masterful writing of history. *Glimpses of World History*, written while Nehru was in prison, revealed Nehru's "vision of human progress, advancing through periods of inhumanity and suffering but teleologically moving onward towards better lives for the world's ordinary people. ... There is great praise for the Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (in particular the Bhagavad Gita), but as works of literature rather than as sacred texts." Dr Williams calls

Glimpses of World History “a classic in the literature of intellectual decolonization” that places “the history of India in true perspective” (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 20-22) and his description of the Dravidian civilization one of the finest chapters of his work. India’s cultural unity comes in for special praise even as its caste system, “the enemy of every kind of progress” (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 24), is condemned. No progressive leader — Tagore, Gandhi, or Nehru— could be silent about its debilitating effect on the progress of India.

Dr Williams was inspired by Nehru’s internationalist perspective. Speaking of the new creative spirit that was being reborn in India, Dr Williams says of Nehru: “[He was] internationalist because he was nationalist, just as he was the champion of all colonial peoples because he was an Indian colonial, Nehru, with the universal vision of a Walt Whitman or a Victor Hugo” (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 27). In 1932, as Nehru compared India’s struggle for freedom against Europe’s dominance and authoritarianism, he could declare in confidence: “So while we struggle for the freedom of India, we must remember the great aim in human freedom, which includes the freedom of our people as well as other peoples” (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 27). Dr Williams could invoke Whitman to demonstrate how these literary personalities assisted in the construction of his vision.

From these essays one gets the impression that Dr Williams felt a certain anxiety about his role as historian and nationalist leader, trying as he did, to locate himself and his activities within the decolonizing process and seeking to understand his place as a colonial intellectual and historian with the larger international process. In Nehru, Dr Williams saw “a man who was at one and the same time a national symbol, a philosopher of anti-colonialism and a student of world history” (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 42) whose task it was to build up “that inner strength of the people that we were after, knowing that the rest would inevitably follow. We had to wipe out some generations of shameful subservience and timid submission to an arrogant alien authority.” (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 28) Dr Williams might have uttered these words. He said as much when he declared in his time and space: “Massa Day Done.” Each man believed that greatness was thrust upon him.

Dr Williams identified with Nehru’s legacy in a meaningful way. He concluded his lecture in the following manner: “India today would not be what it is, if India had not achieved independence and if Nehru had not been there for forty years to learn and to teach, to guide and be guided, to inspire and be inspired, to aspire and to achieve. He stands out as one of the greatest champions of freedom for all times” (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 43). Interestingly enough, the national motto, “Together we aspire; together we achieve,” is inscribed on the Coat of Arms of Trinidad and Tobago. It is tempting to think that Nehru’s influence might have been essential in the coining of the national motto of Trinidad and Tobago.

Rabindranath Tagore

Dr Williams admired Gandhi and was inspired by Nehru’s political achievements, but it was Tagore in whom he found a measure of spiritual guidance and a canvas upon which to reflect upon his humanity. Unlike Gandhi and Nehru, Tagore was still in vogue during Dr Williams’ adolescent years, having been awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913, and a towering international figure during the first twenty-five years of the twentieth century. It helped also that Tagore’s “outlook was persistently nonsectarian, and his writings — some two hundred books — show the influence of different parts of the Indian cultural background as well as that of the rest of the world.” He was committed also to the humanitarian ideal. “As early as 1908, he put his position succinctly in a letter replying to the criticism of Abala Bose, the wife of a great Indian scientist, Jagadish Chandra Bose: ‘Patriotism cannot be our final spiritual shelter; my refuge is humanity. I will not buy glass for the price of diamonds, and I will never allow patriotism to triumph over humanity as long as I live.’”

Although Tagore, Gandhi, and Nehru knew each other, worked together, and were committed to India's independence, the Amritsar Massacre of 1919 brought them together in common cause and "made Indians out of millions of people who had not thought consciously of their political identity before that grim Sunday. It turned loyalists into nationalists and constitutionalists into agitators [and] led the Nobel Prize-winning poet Rabindranath Tagore to return his knighthood to the king and a host of Indian appointees to British offices to turn in their commissions." The Trinidad awakening and the Bandung conference had a similar impact upon Dr Williams. Caught up in the intensity of a rising nationalist movement in Trinidad and Tobago, and anxious about his role as a historian/intellectual in the movement, Dr Williams regarded the philosophical reflections of Tagore as guides to his behaviour. He admired Tagore's aesthetic sensibilities, his participation in India's nationalist movement, the breadth of his internationalist concerns, and what Amartya Sen called his "reasoned understanding of the world around us, ... his wholehearted support for scientific education ... [and] his cultural evaluations."

Tagore's epistemic approach to his work and his concern for the common people appealed to Dr Williams. His belief in the "freedom of mind," the expansion of education as "central to social progress," the importance of science in understanding the world, and the use of modern technology to develop India must have impressed Dr Williams. Amartya Sen puts it this way: "The poet who was famous in the West only as a romantic and a spiritualist was in fact persistently guided in his writings by the necessity of critical reasoning and the importance of human freedom." Most of all, Tagore believed that "Truth is realized through men." Like Tagore, Williams believed that if you gave people the information (in Williams' case, historical and political information) they required, they would be able to make intelligent choices about where they wanted to go as a people. His association with C L R James during the early phases of the nationalist movement tended to reinforce this position.

According to Dr Williams, Tagore represented "one of the best examples that we can ever hope to find of the role of the intellectual in the nationalist movement in colonial countries." (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 57). It may have helped if Dr Williams had emphasized that although Tagore fought for the independence of India, he "was critical of the display of excessive nationalism in India, despite his persistent criticism of British imperialism. And notwithstanding his great admiration for Japanese culture and history, he would chastise Japan late in his life for its extreme nationalism and its mistreatment of China and east and south-east Asia." Yet it remains true that it was a role that Williams tried to emulate as he gave himself more and more to his nationalist movement.

As an intellectual at the head of a nationalist movement, Dr Williams drew on Tagore's inspiration to assist him in understanding the demands of our nationalist movement and his own humanity. Although he never articulated his religious beliefs, his conception of the Godhead was closer to that of Tagore who prayed that "he may never lose the bliss of the touch of the One in the play of the many" (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 68). In his final submission to oneness of the world, Tagore declared: "I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish — no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears. Oh dip my emptied life into the ocean, plunge it into the deepest fullness. Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch in the allness of the universe" (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 68-9). It was this magnanimous, all-embracing spirit that Whitman, whom Tagore also admired, tried to capture in his poetical rendering of the world. It was a vision of the world that Dr Williams also shared.

Dr Williams never wanted any monuments built to commemorate his achievements or to perpetuate his glory or his memory. He wanted to be cremated and have his ashes thrown into the Gulf of Paria to merge once more with the great confluence of nature out of which he had come. Eternity rather than the passing moments of time mattered to him. This is why he quoted Tagore so approvingly when he said: "There, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white

radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor color and never a word" (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 68).

Tagore was also fascinated by the play between life and death. Dr Williams writes: "His principal concern was death" (*The Birth of Dr Williams*, 68). In Phalguni, a celebration of spring, Tagore captured this pas-de-deux between life and death when he observed, "those who fear death do not know life; they embrace decay and exist in a living death, cut off from the life-rich universe." Men and women, as Tagore said, yearned to experience life in a fuller and truer manner leading him to believe that "The life that is continually in blossom in the journey of human civilization, is so by continually conquering death." It is in this conflict between "death and life, might and love, self-interest and welfare, this struggle of opposites to which only man's religious instinct can glimpse a true solution — a solution that is supreme peace, supreme good, and supreme unity."

In their introduction to Tagore's autobiographical essays, Devadatta Joardar and Joe Winter say of Tagore: "If literature was a focus for his inner energies, the village of Santiniketan was where Tagore's practical life sought an ideal. In the deepest of ways he lived for his people. From 1901, when he started his school there, to his death, he worked continuously to let the creative currents of the society find their freedom." From the moment he entered politics in 1956 until his death in 1981, Dr Williams strove continuously to let the creative currents of our people find their freedom in an understanding of their sensuous activities. In committing his life to re-searching and serving his people, he was aware as Thucydides who wrote that the essence of historical inquiry was "to correct and eliminate legends, false beliefs, [and] mistakes" without which a people could not understand themselves. This is what he sought to do throughout his life.

Eric Williams read widely and drew his inspiration from the best that was said and thought in the world, a concession he might have made to Matthew Arnold who would have understood him perfectly. He was committed to "freedom of mind," freedom of the press, and an open democracy. His sympathies knew no racial barriers as he embraced us all. He understood Cicero's injunction that "to be ignorant of what happened before you were born is to remain a child forever," which is why he believed that a study of history and literature holds the keys to understanding who we are. He would have been sympathetic to the imperative that we ought not to be trapped by our past. The least we can do is to come to terms with his teachings and the interracial message that he left us seeking to find kinship everywhere we pass and perhaps, proclaiming as Tagore did in *Gitanjali*:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken into fragments by narrow domestic walls; ...
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit; ...
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

* Paper presented at the Centenary Conference: New Perspectives on the Life and Work of Eric Williams, St Catherine's College, Oxford University, September 24-25, 2011. The full paper with footnotes is available at <http://www.trinicenter.com/Cudjoe/2011/0610.htm>.

The Legend of Eric Williams

Kaye Whiteman, *Business Day*

Thursday, October 6, 2011

<http://www.businessdayonline.com/NG/index.php/analysis/columnists/28174-the-legend-of-eric-williams>

What is the fascination of Dr Eric Williams? A small, balding authoritarian figure, prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago from independence in 1962 to his death in 1981, he does not automatically seem the stuff of which legends are made. And yet, a conference to mark the centenary of his birth by the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in the Senate House of London University showed me that he is now perceived as a political and intellectual giant, not just in the political history of the Caribbean, but in a wider world.

What struck me first of all was the curious way in which in the years after his death, he was forgotten in his home country. It was as if the Williams phenomenon was almost too difficult to digest and analyse, both intellectually. In 1994 a major conference was organised in Port of Spain to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Williams' seminal book *Capitalism and Slavery*. This had remained a controversial work which dared to put forward the powerful thesis that the motivating force in ending the slave trade in the early 19th century came from the way Britain's industrial revolution changed the country's economic balance of power. The mercantilism of the 18th century, typified by the triangular trade of slaves and sugar, which had laid the basis of capital generating the industrial revolution, was no longer the dominating force. Though slavery's vested interests remained, Britain no longer needed it.

Arguments about the slave trade surfaced in 2007, with the bicentenary of the abolition, when there was some distress that Wilberforce's famous campaign may not have been the deciding factor. One cannot ignore its importance to British politics, but the truth of Williams' arguments still resonates in discourse beyond mere academic circles, a reflection of the way the shadow of the slave trade still lingers.

What was remarkable was the impact of the 1994 conference, and the assessment of his work, on his reputation, with the growing awareness in public opinion that the country had nurtured an international titan, a natural 'father of the nation.' People recalled his election slogan from 1956, 'Massa Day Done' (the day of the colonial masters is finished), which made a huge contribution to the ideology of independence, not just in Trinidad but in all the Caribbean and beyond. His vision extended to Cuba, Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Puerto Rico.

Some of the academic contributions to the centenary, part of wider celebrations in Europe and the Americas, noted Williams' special position as scholar-statesman or Platonic philosopher-king. Like others in that category, he had difficulty relating his vision to the practical political situations in which he found himself. He had ridden the nationalist tide to a narrow but revolutionary electoral victory in 1956, there at the heart of his myth. He became profoundly depressed by having to handle the 'black power' insurgency in Trinidad in 1970, and even wanted to resign three years later.

His own electoral power base had been mainly 'Creole' (in Trinidad and Tobago this was the African-Caribbean population). He was, however, constantly looking for ways to encompass the complex racial

mix of the two islands, rooted in the vagaries of colonial history. He also had to live down a remark, taken, it seems, out of context, referring to the East Indian population as “a hostile and recalcitrant minority.” One speaker stressed the amount that he did to reach out to the Indians, themselves divided into Hindus and Muslims.

One of the most interesting speakers was Selwyn Ryan, author of a massive biography of ‘de doctor’, who has attempted a psychological profile, linking Williams’ contentiousness to a revolt against his white French Creole background. Another factor was his annoyance at being refused a fellowship at All Souls in Oxford, and his later sacking by the Caribbean Commission. Without these two ruptures he might never have gone into politics. He also had a special personality cult, such as driving in his official car with the light on, so all could see him, and notoriously switching off his hearing aid if a conversation disinterested him. One speaker observed that writing his autobiography before going into politics indicated the size of his ego.

He was also notorious for his life-long grudges, and used fear of his acerbic tongue to dominate his colleagues, even as part of the loneliness of power. I often wondered if the dark glasses and strange aura were meant to conjure up the vodoun deity Baron Samedi (rather in the manner of Duvalier in Haiti). The speculation about whether his death was voluntary suicide has added to the mysterious myth. “The people want him back,” one participant told me. I added that maybe some think he never died. As with that other intellectual in politics, Leopold Senghor, his people were intensely proud of his intellect and his writings. They form part of a legend that can only grow with time and history.

Recuerdan en La Habana centenario de Eric Williams

Universidad de La Habana

Jueves, 13 de octubre de 2011

<http://www.uh.cu/noticia?id=584>

Entre el 12 y el 16 de octubre actual tuvo lugar en la Universidad de La Habana una Jornada en conmemoración del centenario del historiador caribeño, Eric Eustace Williams, que fue inaugurada este miércoles en el Aula Magna de la Colina con una conferencia a cargo del Profesor Humberto García Muñiz, del Instituto de Estudios Caribeños de la Universidad de Puerto Rico - Recinto de Río Piedras.

En la Ceremonia Inaugural intervino el Profesor de Mérito Juan Niury, vice presidente de la Casa de Altos Estudios Don Fernando Ortiz.

Este evento que organiza la Casa de Altos Estudios Don Fernando Ortiz de la Facultad de Filosofía e Historia de la UH reconoce la trascendencia de la actividad política y académica de Williams, quien ocupó el cargo de Primer Ministro en Trinidad y Tobago durante casi 20 años.

En 1975 le fue conferido el título de Doctor Honoris Causa en Ciencias Históricas de la Universidad de La Habana, convirtiéndolo en el primer estadista y académico caribeño en ser embestido con tan alto honor.

Político e historiador de Trinidad y Tobago, Williams, fundó el Movimiento Nacional del Pueblo (1955), ocupó la cartera de Finanzas (1956-1981) y la jefatura del Gobierno desde 1959 hasta 1962 cuando luego de la independencia de Trinidad y Tobago, pasó a ser su Primer Ministro.

En sucesivos comicios trinitarios Williams fue reelecto como jefe del estado hasta su muerte en 1981.

Se le reconoce la autoría de varios trabajos que estudian el problema de la esclavitud en las Antillas: *El negro en el Caribe* (1942), *Historia del pueblo de Trinidad y Tobago* (1962) y *De Colón a Castro* (1970). Fue el director de la revista *Caribbean Historical Review*.

Eric Eustace Williams nació el 10 de noviembre de 1911 [sic] y falleció en marzo de 1981.

Translation from Spanish into English, by Peter Jordens:

Eric Williams Centenary Celebrated in Havana

University of Havana

Thursday, October 13, 2011

<http://www.uh.cu/noticia?id=584>

From October 12 to 16 a conference is taking place at the University of Havana (UH) in commemoration of the centenary of the Caribbean historian, Eric Eustace Williams. The conference began this Wednesday in the Assembly Hall with an address by Professor Humberto García Muñiz from the Institute of Caribbean Studies of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus.

Honorary Professor Juan Niury, Vice President of the Don Fernando Ortiz Centre of Advanced Studies, also presented during the opening ceremony.

This event, which is being organized by the Don Fernando Ortiz Centre of Advanced Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy and History of UH, recognizes the importance of the political and scholarly career of Williams, who occupied the office of prime minister in Trinidad & Tobago for almost 20 years.

In 1975 he was conferred the title of Doctor Honoris Causa in the Historical Sciences by UH, which made him the first Caribbean statesman and scholar to be bestowed with such a high honour.

Politician and historian of Trinidad and Tobago, Williams founded the People's National Movement (1955), held the portfolio of Finance (1956-1981), headed the government between 1959 and 1962, and after Trinidad and Tobago's Independence became its prime minister. Williams was re-elected as head of government in successive Trinidadian elections until his death in 1981.

He is recognized for authoring several publications that deal with the matter of slavery in the Caribbean: *The Negro in the Caribbean* (1942), *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (1962), and *From Columbus to Castro* (1970). He was the editor of the journal *Caribbean Historical Review*.

Eric Eustace Williams was born on November 10 [sic], 1911 and died in March 1981.

Appendix 1

Biography

Born on September 25, 1911, Eric Eustace Williams was the son of Thomas Henry Williams, a minor Post Office official in Trinidad and Tobago, and Eliza Williams, a homemaker, a poor relative of the De Boissières, a French creole family in Trinidad. Eric was the eldest of twelve children. A bright child, he studied at Queen's Royal College in Port of Spain and won an Island Scholarship to Oxford University in England. At Oxford, he placed first in his History honours class in 1935 and received his Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1938. In his doctoral thesis, *The Economic Aspects of the Abolition of the Slave Trade and West Indian Slavery*, Williams established the economic contribution of enslavement to Britain's industrial development and emphasised the economic rather than humanitarian reasons for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery.

Despite his extraordinary academic success at Oxford, Dr Williams was denied any opportunity to pursue a career in the United Kingdom. In 1939 he migrated to the United States of America to teach at Howard University. He became an assistant professor of social and political sciences. While in the United States, he wrote *The Negro in the Caribbean* (1942), *Education in the British West Indies* (1950), and his masterpiece, *Capitalism and Slavery* (University of North Carolina Press, 1944), which was based on his D.Phil dissertation. During World War II and while still teaching full-time at Howard, he began to work as a consultant to the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission, an organisation established by the USA, Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands to study the future of the region after the War. In 1948, Dr Williams left Howard to work in Trinidad as deputy chairman of the Commission's Research Council, leaving behind his wife Elsie Ribiero and children Alistair and Pamela in the USA. After some time in Trinidad, he met Soy Suilan Moyou, a typist at the Commission. They travelled to Reno, Nevada, USA, where he divorced his first wife Elsie and married Soy. Shortly after, Soy gave birth to his youngest daughter, Erica (1951). However, before their daughter's third birthday, Soy fell ill and died suddenly. Williams married for a third time in 1959, in secret, to Trinidadian dentist Mayleen Mook Sang, but this marriage did not last long.

Increasingly dissatisfied with the Caribbean Commission and opposed to what he saw as its foreign-dominated interests, Williams resigned from the Commission in 1955 and launched himself into island politics. One of his most unusual and successful tactics was what he called 'the University of Woodford Square': an educational campaign of speeches and lectures that he delivered in one of Port of Spain's main public squares. This tradition continued from 1955 into the 1960s and was a means for Williams to communicate directly with the public, explaining his vision of an independent and prosperous Trinidad & Tobago.

In 1956 the People's National Movement (PNM) was formed and Williams was made the party's first political leader. In September 1956 the PNM won the national elections and he became the Chief Minister of the country from 1956 to 1959. With the achievement of internal self-government in 1959, he served as Premier (1959-1962). In 1962, after Jamaica withdrew from the West Indian Federation (a political grouping of almost all the British islands in the Caribbean), Williams declared "one from ten leaves nought", withdrew Trinidad and Tobago from the Federation and led the nation to independence from Britain on August 31, 1962. He made the country a republic in 1976.

Under Williams's leadership the Chaguaramas peninsula, which had been used as a USA naval base since the 1940s, was returned to Trinidad & Tobago control in 1963. In 1973 it became the place

where the Treaty of Chaguaramas was signed which established CARICOM, the Caribbean Community and Common Market.

While in public office, Williams somehow managed to continue carrying out historical research and to write; his later works included: *Massa Day Done* (1961), *History of the People of Trinidad & Tobago* (1962), *British Historians and the West Indies* (1964), *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969* (1970) and his autobiography *Inward Hunger: The Education of a Prime Minister* (1969).

In 1970 Williams faced one of his main challenges as Prime Minister: the Black Power Revolution together with industrial conflict and a mutiny in the army.

As Prime Minister, Williams practiced a so-called “third way” between capitalism and socialism which stressed social services, improved education, and economic development through the cautious attraction of foreign investment. In 1973, Trinidad & Tobago began benefitting from the international rise in oil prices, which ushered in an oil boom that enabled him to implement several economic reforms: a “national reconstruction” programme that included a lucrative steel, gas, and petrochemical industry with significant state ownership, including the construction of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. Trinidad and Tobago became the wealthiest Commonwealth Caribbean nation in the late 1970s. However, the oil boom also brought criticism from some quarters for the rapid industrial development of the country, as well as allegations of corruption against certain PNM ministers. By the end of the 1970s, with the oil boom ending, there was increasing labour unrest.

Williams was successively reelected and served as Prime Minister until his death. Toward the end of his life, he appeared to be a rather lonely figure, disappointed by his people’s materialism and greed. Williams withdrew increasingly from the public eye. On his last day in Parliament, he left the Chamber early because of illness. That weekend, he grew rapidly more ill. And on Sunday March 29, 1981, Eric Williams died in office as the country’s first Prime Minister. It was later revealed that he was diabetic and had died in a diabetic coma.

Often called the “Father of the Nation,” Dr Williams remains a defining leader in the history of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean. On August 31, 2002, Dr Williams was posthumously awarded his country’s highest honour, the Trinity Cross.

Compiler’s note

This biography was found at <http://arcthemagazine.com/arc/2011/09/inward-hunger-the-story-of-eric-williams> and has been modified with elements from <http://dloc.com/eew>, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/644344/Eric-Williams>, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Williams and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaguaramas,_Trinidad, as well as from *Caribbean Companion: The A to Z Reference* by Brian Dyde (Macmillan Caribbean, 1992, pp.173-174) and *Makers of the Caribbean* by James Ferguson (Ian Randle Publishers, 2005, pp. 61-62).

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Commemorating Dr Eric E Williams at 100

Dr Eric E Williams (1911-1981) was the first prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, dominated this country's politics for 25 years, and left a consequential mark on the young Caribbean nation after leading it to independence from Britain in 1962. The *Caribbean Companion: The A to Z Reference* (by Bryan Dade, London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1992, p.174) states: "In intellect and political acumen he was head and shoulders above any other politician from the Commonwealth Caribbean." At the same time, "He deserves to be remembered as ... a first-class, path-breaking historian" as he was also a brilliant scholar, authoring numerous impactful works including the classic *Capitalism and Slavery*.



2011 marked both the 30th anniversary of Dr Williams's death and the 100th anniversary of his birth. By reproducing 41 online articles with news and commentary about these two anniversaries, this booklet seeks (1) to illustrate how Trinidad & Tobago in particular has commemorated 'the Doctor' in 2011 and, thereby (2) to join that nation in honouring the complex legacy of this controversial, contradictory, eccentric, and enigmatic Caribbean icon.

The compiler of this booklet, Peter B. Jordens (1966), is a Curaçaoan consultant and writer and a pan-Caribbeanist.