

**THE UNESCO REGIONAL SEMINAR ON CONVENTION
FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE
CULTURAL HERITAGE**

INTRODUCTION OF PROFESSOR THE HON REX NETTLEFORD, O.M; F.I.J

BY JULIAN N JOHNSON

THURSDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2005

MR CHAIRMAN, THE PRESIDENT OF DOMINICA, HIS EXCELLENCY NICHOLAS J.O LIVERPOOL AND MRS LIVERPOOL, THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AFFAIRS, SPORTS & HUMAN RESOUC E DEVELOPMENT, HONOURABLE VINCE HENDERSON, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF UNESCO, HIS EXCELLENCY KOICHIRO MATSUURA, OTHER DISTINGUISED GUESTS,LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

WELL-KNOWN CARIBBEAN SCHOLOR, TRADE UNION EDUCATOR, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORIAN, “LEADING CARIBBEAN INTELLECTUAL VISONARY AND RENAISSANCE FIGURE”, REX NETTLEFORD WAS BORN IN THE RURAL TOWN OF FALMOUTH, JAMAICA ON FEBRUARY 3RD 1933.

AS MOST BUDDING SCHOLARS OF HIS GENERATION, REX NETTLEFORD WAS EDUCATED IN THE LOCAL APPENDAGES OF THE BRITISH COLONIAL INTELLIGENTIA. TRAINED FIRST AT THE CORNWALL COLLEGE IN MONTEGO BAY, HE WENT ON TO TAKE AN UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE IN HISTORY AT THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE WEST INDIES (U.C. AS THE U.W.I. WAS THEN CALLED) (LONDON UNIVERSITY). HE MOVED ON TO POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN POLITICS AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY AS A RHODES SCHOLAR. AND RETURNED HOME.

REFERRING TO REX NETTLEFORD AS A “THIRD WORLD” SCHOLAR BUT OPERATING FROM HOME ARE COMMENTATOR HAD THIS TO SAY: “ALTHOUGH HIGHLY EDUCATED, AND VERSED IN THE SOCIAL MORES AND LANGUAGE OF THE BRITISH IMPERIAL CROWN, NETTLEFORD NEVER LOST SITE OF HIS COMMITMENT TO HIS NATIVE HOME AND THE PROMOTION OF ITS NATIONAL VERNACULAR CULTURE. AT A TIME WHEN THE COUNTRY’S MOST TALENTED AND EDUCATED PEOPLES WERE BEING SIPHONED OFF TO FILL THE IVORY TOWERS AND CORPORATE OFFICES IN THE METROPOLIS, NETTLEFORD RETURNED TO HIS ISLAND HOME AND LAUNCHED A PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL AND ARTISTIC CAREER WHOSE EFFECTS REVERBERATED THROUGHOUT THE CARIBBEAN BASIN AND ITS DIASPORIC COMMUNITIES.”

PROFESSOR NETTLEFORD IS THE FOUNDER, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND PRINCIPAL CHOREOGRAPHER OF THE INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED NATIONAL DANCE THEATRE COMPANY OF JAMAICA (NDTC). AS A FORMER PROFESSOR OF EXTRAMURAL STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES MONA, JAMAICA, NETTLEFORD DIRECTED THE UNIVERSITY'S ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME, WHICH AFFORDED THOUSANDS OF MEN, AND WOMEN THROUGHOUT THE COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION. AS FOUNDER OF THE TRADE UNION EDUCATION INSTITUTE, THROUGH WHICH FACTORY AND ESTATE WORKERS INTERFACE WITH SCHOLARS AT THE HIGHEST SEAT OF LEARNING, NETTLEFORD AIMED TO BRIDGE THE DIVIDE BETWEEN THE CLASSES AND BRING THEORY IN CLOSER PROXIMITY TO PRAXIS.

AFTER SERVING UWI FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS NETTLEFORD'S SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENTS CULMINATED WITH HIS 1998 APPOINTMENT AS CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES. HE RETIRED FROM THIS OFFICE IN SEPTEMBER 2004 AND THE TITLE OF VICE CHANCILLOR EMERITUS WAS CONFERRED ON HIM BY THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL.

OUTSIDE OF THE CARIBBEAN HE HAS SERVED ON SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL BODIES HAVING TO DO WITH DEVELOPMENT AND INTERCULTURAL LEARNING. HE WAS A FOUNDING GOVERNOR OF THE

CANADA-BASED INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTER (IDRC), AND INTERNATIONAL TRUSTEE OF THE AFS INTERCULTURAL BASED IN THE USA AND FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMONWEALTH ARTS ORGANISATION. HE IS DIRECTOR OF THE LONDON-BASED NEWS CONCERN AND A FORMER MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNESCO. HE SERVED AS ONE OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS (ILO) MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SANCTIONS AND OTHER ACTIONS AGAINST APARTHEID AND AS MEMBER OF THE WEST INDIAN COMMISSION. HE IS A MEMBER OF THE CASTLES AND FORT TRUST FUND – GHANA (CENTRAL REGION).

HE HAS SERVED AS A CONSULTANT ON CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT TO UNESCO AND OAS AND CULTURAL ADVISOR TO THE GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA AND IS RAPPATEUR OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE OF UNESCO'S SLAVE ROUTE PROJECT AS WELL AS REGIONAL COORDINATOR FOR THE CARIBBEAN. AS AN AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL DYNAMICS, HE HAS LECTURED IN MANY COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD INCLUDING THE USA, CANADA, UK, INDIA, ISRAEL AND SOUTH AFRICA. HE HEADED THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION AND HAS SERVED ON NUMEROUS OTHER COMMISSIONS IN JAMAICA.

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL HONOURS

PROFESSOR REX NETTLEFORD HAS RECEIVED MANY HONOURS AND AWARDS FOR HIS WORK. IN 1975 HE WAS THE RECIPIENT OF THE HIGH NATIONAL HONOUR OF ORDER OF MERIT (O.M.). HE IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE GOLD MUSGRAVE MEDAL FROM THE INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA, THE LIVING LEGEND AWARD FOR THE BLACK ARTS FESTIVAL, ATLANTA U.S.A. THE INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA NAMED HIM A FELLOW IN 1991, THE FOURTH TIME IT HAS AWARDED THIS HONOR IN ITS MORE THAN 100-YEAR HISTORY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES HAS RECOGNISED HIS EXTRAORDINARY TALENT BY PRESENTING HIM WITH THE COVETED PELICAN AWARD. IN 1994, HE RECEIVED THE ZORA NEALE HURSTON-PAUL ROBESON AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENT FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BLACK STUDIES, U.S.A.

PUBLISHED WORKS – THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF CARIBBEAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

HE IS EDITOR OF CARIBBEAN QUARTERLY AND THE AUTHOR OF MANY BOOKS.

HE EDITED IN 1992 A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS ENTITLED “JAMAICA IN INDEPENDENCE: THE EARLY YEARS” AND HAS CO-EDITED (WITH VERA

HYATT) “RACE, DISCOURSE AND THE ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAS” A PUBLICATION FOR THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION. HE HAS NUMEROUS ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN SCHOLARLY JOURNALS AND IS ALSO THE AUTHOR OF MAJOR NATIONAL REPORTS ON CULTURAL POLICY, WORKER PARTICIPATION, REFORM OF GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE IN JAMAICA AND NATIONAL SYMBOLS AND NATIONAL OBSERVANCES.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF CARIBBEAN PEOPLES AND THEIR STRUGGLES FOR INTELLECTUAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE HAS REMAINED PIVOTAL TO NETTLEFORD’S INTELLECTUAL AND ARTISTIC ENGAGEMENTS OVER THE PAST THIRTY YEARS. THE SEEDS OF HIS FUTURE ARTICULATIONS ON CARIBBEAN CULTURAL IDENTITY WERE, HOWEVER, SOWED IN HIS FIRST ACCLAIMED PUBLICATION, “MIRROR, MIRROR: RACE, IDENTITY AND PROTECT IN JAMAICA” (1970).

NETTLEFORD’S SUBSEQUENT WORK ON CARIBBEAN CULTURE INCLUDES “CARIBBEAN CULTURAL IDENTITY” (1978) AND HIS 1995 COLLECTION OF ESSAYS, “INWARD STRETCH, OUTWARD REACH: A VOICE FROM THE CARIBBEAN”. BOTH OF THESE WORKS BEGIN WITH THE PREMISE THAT CULTURE CONSTRUCTED FROM THE LIVED EXPERIENCES AND REALITIES OF CARIBBEAN PEOPLES ARE TO SERVE AS THE PRINCIPLE MEANS OF

CONSTRUCTING A COHESIVE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL IDENTITY AND ALSO THE PRIME VEHICLE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

HONARY DEGREES

1994	D.Litt.	ST JOHN'S UNIVERSITY
1995	LHD	UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD
	PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL	BROOKLYN COLLEGE
1996	LHD	CITY UNIVERSITY OF NY, JOHN JAY COLLEGE
1997	D.Litt.	UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
	LLD	ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
1998	HONORARY FELLOW	ORIEL COLLEGE (OXFORD)
1999	LLD	QUEENS UNIVERSITY, CANADA
2000	LHD	EMORY UNIVERSITY
	D.Litt.	GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
	D.Litt.	SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY, UK
2001	LLD	UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
2003	DCL	OXFORD UNIVERSITY

CARIBBEAN INTELLECTUAL – PAR EXCELLENCE

A WRITER ON REX NETTLEFORD HAS ELOQUENTLY COMMENTED ON HIS FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT. HE SAID "... HIS CREATIVE

IMAGINATION WAS FOSTERED BY AN IMMERSION IN THE DAILY RHYTHMS OF COUNTRY LIFE, AND INVESTED HIM WITH A KEEN APPRECIATION FOR THE DYNAMIC PROCESS OF CREOLISATION AS WITNESSED IN DIVERSE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, ECLECTIC MUSIC TRADITIONS AND RESISTANT SPEECH PATTERS. THESE “HOMEGROWN” ARTICULATIONS OF JAMAICAN IDENTITY WERE CONSTRUCTED OUT OF THE MEETING OF AFRICA AND EUROPE ON CARIBBEAN SOIL AND STAND AS TESTAMENT TO THE INNOVATIVE CULTURAL VITALITY OF THE REGION. IT IS THIS QUALITY OF CULTURAL TENACITY ON THE PART OF THE AFRO-CREOLISED POPULATIONS THAT NETTLEFORD HOLDS IN GREAT ESTEEM AND WHICH SERVES AS THE NODAL POINT THROUGH WHICH HE FORMULATES HIS IDEAS CONCERNING CARIBBEAN IDENTITY IN THE POSTCOLONIAL MILIEU.”

HAVING SAID ALL THIS AND QUITE APART FROM HIS OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO CARIBBEAN LIFE, THOUGHT AND SCHOLORSHIP, WHAT HAS IMPRESSED ME GREATLY ABOUT PROFESSOR NETTLEFORD THROUGHOUT THE 30 ODD YEARS THAT I HAVE KNOWN HIM HAS BEEN HIS HUMILITY AND UNSELFFISHNESS IN PUTTING UWI ABOVE PERSONAL ACCOLADES AND HIS UNABASHED FORTHRIGHTNESS!

MR CHAIRMAN, YOUR EXCELLENCIES, HONOURABLE MINISTERS,
DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, NO BETTER CHOICE COULD
HAVE BEEN MADE AND WE ARE ALSO VERY PRIVILEGED AND HONOURED
TO HAVE PROFESSOR REX NETTLEFORD DELIVER THE OPENING ADDRESS
AT THE SEMINAR ON THE UNESCO “CONVENTION FOR THE
SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE”.