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Overview of the Nita Barrow Collection

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Abstract

The information in this article is an overview of the vision, coordinating, planning, negotiating, and final establishment of the Nita Barrow Collection in the Cave Hill library at the University of the West Indies, under the leadership of Head of the Centre, Dr. Eudine Barriteau¹. All the information was gathered from the Centre for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit² and includes internal documents such as letters, departmental reports, project proposals, and other relevant documents.

¹ Dr. Eudine Barriteau is head of the Centre since its establishment in 1993. She subsequently received her professorship in 2004.

² The Centre for Gender and Development Studies, Cave Hill Unit, was renamed The Centre for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit on November 15, 2006.

Introduction

Since as a historian I recognize the importance of documenting the events and activities of a people for posterity, it is my heartfelt desire that the general history of the Centre for Gender and Development (CGDS) should be documented and published as another contribution not only to academia but to the future men and women who will be leading Caribbean society. Academic interactions such as these, it is my hope, will create necessary motivation for such scholarly undertaking.

Overview

The Nita Barrow Specialist Collection is part of the Research Project, Caribbean Women Catalysts for Change (CWCC), which was conceptualized in 1993/1994. The other two aspects of the CWCC research project is the distinguished lecture series which was inaugurated in 1995 and a continuous documentation work that researches, documents, and disseminates information on the public life and contributions of outstanding Caribbean women in six selected areas which represent six phases.

Caribbean Women Catalysts for Change Lecture Series

The lecture series was inaugurated in 1995 by Dame Eugenia Charles of Dominica, and in 1996 was dedicated to honouring the memory of Dame Nita Barrow, Governor General of Barbados, 1990–1995. The lecture series is now in its thirteenth year. Twelve of the thirteen lectures planned were delivered (see lecture no. 3 in table). Several of the lectures have been published in the Working Paper Series³.

Research project on outstanding Caribbean women

The CWCC has six research phases and one continuous documentation phase. These research phases are as follows:

- Regional and international development
- Politics and political participation
- Women organizing and the women's movement
- Trade unionism
- Education
- Agricultural and food production

So far, phases one and two have been successfully completed. Phase one documented and analyzed the contributions of Ruth Nita Barrow to regional and international development. CGDS published the book, *Stronger, Surer, Bolder: Ruth Nita Barrow — Social Change and International Development*, edited by Eudine Barriteau and Alan Cobley and published by the University of the West Indies Press in 2001.

Phase two, which began in December of 2001, was devoted to “Women, Power and Politics”. During this phase, the contributions made by Dame Eugenia Charles⁴ to

³ Lectures Nos. 5, 6, 8, 9 and 13 have been published in the Centre's Working Paper Series, as Working Papers No. 3, 7, 12, 13, and 14.

⁴ Dame Eugenia Charles, sadly, died on September 6, 2005, before the book was published.

Dominica and to the Commonwealth Caribbean were documented and analyzed. CGDS published the book, *Enjoying Power: Eugenia Charles and Political Leadership in the Commonwealth Caribbean*, edited by Eudine Barriteau, and Alan Cobley, and published by the University of the West Indies Press in 2006.

Madame Justice Desiree Bernard of the Caribbean Court of Justice has been selected and agrees to be the subject of phase three of the Caribbean Women Catalysts for Change Project.

Establishing of The Dame Nita Barrow Women in Development Specialist Collection

After the CWCC project had begun, the other goal of the project was to implement the establishment of the specialist collection with one of its main objectives being as follows:

To have the Cave Hill Campus as a repository for the papers and documents of outstanding Caribbean Women so that wherever researchers are in the world, if they want to study the lives of these women, they would have to come here (Barriteau September 9, 2002).⁵

What follows are the nine objectives that the CGDS, Cave Hill unit, set out to achieve.

- To document and analyze the national, regional and international contributions of outstanding Caribbean women who have acted as catalysts for social and economic change in the Caribbean
- To conserve, preserve and make available for future generations the papers of outstanding Caribbean women, beginning with the documents of Dame Nita Barrow
- To ensure the preservation of the private, public and documentary records of outstanding Caribbean women as a means of contributing to the preservation of the documentary heritage of Caribbean peoples
- To provide enduring access to these records for regional and international scholars and people
- To contribute to the body of material available for teaching in the areas of Gender and Development Studies, Management Studies and other related disciplines
- To strengthen, enhance and build the institutional capacity of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies to undertake ongoing research on or about women, to benefit all women in particular and Caribbean society in general
- To continue to make an impact on teaching, policy formulation, research and outreach in the region

⁵ Overview by Dr. Eudine Barriteau on the Official Handing over of the Nita Barrow Papers. Cave Hill campus, Barbados, September 19, 2002:2.

- To continue to develop the Cave Hill library as a regional repository for important papers of outstanding Caribbean women
- To continue to develop the University of the West Indies as the primary centre of excellence for research on outstanding Caribbean women.

The process

In January 1996, CGDS, at Cave Hill, submitted to the Academic Board a number of proposals to honour the memory and public life of Dame Nita Barrow. One of these proposals was that the University should establish a Dame Nita Barrow Women in the Caribbean Collection. The Academic Board accepted the proposals.⁶

The handing over

Based on correspondence reviewed, the official handing over of the Dame Nita Papers took place on September 19, 2002 at 11 a.m. on the Cave Hill campus. It is of significance that the culmination of this part of the process happened on the tenth anniversary of the Centre. On that same date, as part of the official handing over, Dame Eugenia Charles presented to the Principal of the Cave Hill campus, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles,⁷ a Deed of Gift donating her papers to the University.

“Dame Eugenia is honouring a commitment she made in 1997 when she agreed to be the woman whose public contributions we would analyse in Phase II” (Barriteau September 19, 2002:3).

CGDS and Main Library, Cave Hill campus, open collection

From the acceptance by the Academic Board in 1996, to the official handing over of the papers of Dame Nita, and the Gift of Deed by Dame Eugenia Charles in 2002, it took ten years to achieve the goal of having the Cave Hill campus as a repository for the papers and documents of outstanding Caribbean Women. The process was successfully completed on November 15, 2006, with the official opening of the Specialist Collection, the Nita Barrow Collection, by Dr. Jeannine Comma, niece of Dame Nita Barrow. On this same occasion, CGDS, Cave Hill Unit, was renamed The Centre for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit (CGDS: NBU).

The papers of Dame Nita Barrow, Governor General of Barbados, 1990–1995, form the core of the Collection, which includes the papers of Dame Eugenia Charles, Prime Minister of Dominica, 1980–1995.

The collection includes monographs, periodicals and newspapers, minutes of meetings, correspondence, memoranda, conference papers, reports, press releases, interviews, programs, journal articles, memorabilia, newspaper and other clippings, speeches, photographs, video and sound tapes.

⁶ Overview by Dr. Eudine Barriteau on the Official Handing over of the Nita Barrow Papers. Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, September 19, 2002:2.

⁷ He received an honorary knighthood in 2007.

A searchable database of the items in the collection is available in the Nita Barrow Reading Room. Documents are made available only to fulfill specific research needs. The Collection also includes some documents to which access is restricted.

Users

The collection is open to local, regional, national, and international researchers, historians, and students interested in early post-Independence Commonwealth Caribbean political history and American foreign policy in the region around the time of the Grenada invasion.

To conclude, I will join the librarian, Mrs. Jenipher Carnegie, responsible at the time for the managing of the collection in saying “This is really a tremendous resource” (Barbados Advocate 2005, 15).⁸

⁸ *The Barbados Advocate*. “Two Dames’ papers in special collection”. Wednesday February 2, 2005, 15.

LECTURES AND PRESENTERS LECTURE SERIES

Lecture No. 14. Women Leadership in Our Global Society. Professor Elsa Tamez, Professor Emeritus, Latin American Biblical University, San Jose, Costa Rica. November 14, 2008.

Lecture No. 13. Gender, Generation and Memory: Remembering a Future Caribbean. Dr. Alissa Trotz. November 16, 2007.

Lecture No. 12. Economics, Power and Politics: How to Make Accountability for Human Rights and Gender Equality Part of the Picture. Dr. Yassine Fall. November 17, 2006.

Lecture No. 11. The Promotion and Enforcement of Women's Human Rights Within the Judicial System of the Caribbean. The Honorable Madame Justice Desiree Bernard, O.R., C.C.H. First Female Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice. November 18, 2005.

Lecture No. 10. A Woman's Place in the 21st Century Movement: Reflections on the Quest for Sovereignty and Unity. Ms Selma James, Author, Activist and Widow of C.L.R. James, November 12, 2004.

Lecture No. 9. Men and Masculinities in the Contemporary Caribbean. Dr Linden Lewis, Professor of Sociology, Bucknell University, Pennsylvania, USA, November 14, 2003.

Lecture No. 8. Women and Islam in Africa in the Twenty first Century. Dr. Fatou Sow, Senior Lecturer, Cheik Anta Diop University, Dakar, Senegal, November 15, 2002.

Lecture No. 7. Traveling Mercies. Lorna Goodison, Poet, Author and Artist, University of Toronto and Jamaica. November 16, 2001.

Lecture No. 6. The Debate on Gender and Development: An African Feminist Perspective. Dr Patricia McFadden, Senior Program Officer, Gender Division of the South African Institute for Policy Studies, Zimbabwe, November 17, 2000.

Lecture No. 5. Globalization, Women's Poverty and Sustainable Development. Devaki Jain, Founder the International Network, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, DAWN, Bangalore, India. November 12, 1999.

Lecture No. 4. UWI—A Progressive University for Women? Dr Marlene Hamilton, Pro Vice Chancellor for Administration and Special Initiatives, University of the West Indies. December 4, 1998.

Lecture No. 3. Women and Political Leadership in the Commonwealth Caribbean. The Honorable Portia Simpson. Minister of Labor, Social Security and Sport, Government of Jamaica. Scheduled for November 14, 1997. Please note this lecture was canceled one week before the date. The Minister called to say general elections had just been declared and no ministers could travel. It was too late to reschedule. It had already been advertised.

Lecture No. 2. A Vision of Health and Development for the Twenty First Century. Dr. Karen Sealy. Caribbean Regional Coordinator, Pan American Health Organization. November 15, 1996.

Lecture No. 1. The Experiences of the First Female Prime Minister in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Dame Eugenia Charles, Prime Minister of Dominica, 1980–1995. November 3, 1995.