



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Outstanding Tribute rendered to Sir Hilary Beckles

The UWI Regional Headquarters, Jamaica W.I. Tuesday, December 19, 2023—In one of the most comprehensive scholarly works of its kind within the region, Vice-Chancellor of The University of the West Indies (The UWI) Professor Sir Hilary Beckles has been honoured for his distinguished contributions to academia and as a social justice advocate and administrator.

Dozens of academics including fellow historians from across the globe have contributed 41 articles to the near 1150-page festschrift, a commemorative volume of writings by various authors and presented to the scholar as a tribute.

The tome entitled *Interrogating Injustices: Essays in honour of Hilary McD. Beckles* was launched on December 15, 2023, at The UWI Cave Hill campus. The event brought the curtains down on yearlong celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of The UWI and the 60th anniversary of Cave Hill.

The unprecedented volume was edited by Professor Verene Shepherd, Dr. Henderson D. Carter and Dr. Ahmed N. Reid and published by Caribbean-operated Ian Randle Publishers.

Professor Shepherd, Director of The Centre for Reparations and Research at The UWI, said she was inspired by Sir Hilary and, like many others, had to unlearn inherited colonial history. A contributing author herself, she said a systematic approach was taken to the expansive scholarly project.

“We had to turn away a few articles...but we tried to accommodate as many people as possible. The whole project was meant to almost pattern the 10-point plan of the CARICOM Reparations Commission...It was a big project for a big intellectual and it took [a lot] of hours.”

Dr. Carter, Head of the Department of History and Philosophy at Cave Hill, authored three of the published articles. He said the writings were a celebration of the long and distinguished journey of Sir Hilary, whom he met in 1985, and described as a teacher, fellow cricketer, and friend.

The idea to compile scholarly works in honour of the academic was first conceptualized in 2013 but stalled, according to the Cave Hill historian. He said it was revived and reimaged in 2019 by Professor Shepherd.

“This book is our way of saying ‘thank you for your inspirational teaching, your inspirational supervision, your leadership in research, your foresight in creating heritage assets’...I’m proud to have been one of your students, proud to have been one of your cricketing friends.”

Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the Cave Hill campus, Professor R. Clive Landis, who hosted the event, contributed a chapter to the book entitled *The Triple Threat to the Caribbean* with reference to chronic diseases, climate change and COVID-19. He said the festschrift was fitting for one of the greatest intellects in the Caribbean.

Barbados’ Ambassador to CARICOM David Comissiong expressed similar sentiments in his reflections on Sir Hilary, whom he said was important to Caribbean civilization.

“Your contribution has made a tremendous difference to our society. Our society is so much richer by the fact that you ... chose to come back here and to place your intelligence and your intellect, your energy and your services at our disposal and we would forever be grateful to you.”

Tribute was given in song by Barbados’ cultural ambassador Dr. The Most Honourable Anthony ‘Mighty Gabby’ Carter, a longtime friend of Sir Hilary.

A visibly emotional Sir Hilary, who received a standing ovation from the scores of friends, family, diplomats, and members of the academic community in attendance, said he was overwhelmed and thoroughly appreciated the honour.

In his remarks, he gave insight into some of his experiences and explained what kept him motivated over the decades, as he referenced advice rendered by his late father.

“You just do what’s in front of you. You get on with it and do your best and help out and that was always my perspective especially since, as an administrator of higher education, I could promote and assist in something that I believe in, which is making university education available to all who are willing and able. It breaks my heart even now, to know that in the English-speaking [Caribbean], we have the lowest enrollment in higher education in the entire hemisphere.”

Copies of *Interrogating Injustices: Essays in honour of Hilary McD. Beckles* are currently available through Ian Randle Publishers as well as the UWI Cave Hill campus Bookshop.

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Photo Captions:

- 0R2A9204: Editors of the 1150-page festschrift, Professor Verene Shepherd (centre) and Dr. Henderson D. Carter (right), present a copy to Professor Sir Hilary Beckles.
- 0R2A9438: Host of the book launch, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the Cave Hill campus, Professor R. Clive Landis shares a moment on stage with Professor Sir Hilary Beckles. Moderator of the proceedings, Dr. Donley Carrington is at the podium.
- 0R2A9283: Distinguished academic, administrator and social justice advocate, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, makes a point as he delivers his remarks.

About The University of the West Indies

The UWI has been and continues to be a pivotal force in every aspect of Caribbean development; residing at the centre of all efforts to improve the well-being of people across the region for the past 75 years.

From a university college of London in Jamaica with 33 medical students in 1948, The UWI is today an internationally respected, global university with near **50,000** students and **five campuses**: **Mona** in **Jamaica**, **St. Augustine** in **Trinidad and Tobago**, **Cave Hill** in **Barbados**, **Five Islands** in **Antigua and Barbuda** and its **Global Campus**, and **global centres** in partnership with universities in **North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe**.

The UWI offers over **800** certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate degree options in **Culture, Creative and Performing Arts, Food and Agriculture, Engineering, Humanities and Education, Law, Medical Sciences, Science and Technology, Social Sciences, and Sport**. As the Caribbean's leading university, it possesses the largest pool of Caribbean intellect and expertise committed to confronting the critical issues of our region and wider world.

The UWI has been consistently ranked among the top universities globally by the most reputable ranking agency, **Times Higher Education (THE)**. The UWI is the only Caribbean-based university to make the prestigious lists since its debut in the rankings in 2018. In addition to its leading position in the Caribbean in the **World University Rankings**, it is also in the top 25 for **Latin America and the Caribbean** and the top 100 global **Golden Age** universities (between 50 and 80 years old). The UWI is also featured among the leading universities on THE's **Impact Rankings** for its response to the world's biggest concerns, outlined in the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Good Health and Wellbeing; Gender Equality and Climate Action.

2023 marks [The UWI's 75th anniversary](#). The Diamond jubilee milestone themed "UWI at 75. Rooted. Ready. Rising." features initiatives purposely designed and aligned to reflect on the past, confront the present, and articulate plans for the future of the regional University.

Learn more at www.uwi.edu