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3rd Annual Walter Rodney Speakers Series (2015)

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The 3rd Annual Walter Rodney Speaker’s Series
January - May, 2015
Thursdays, 5:30-6:45pm at the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library

OVERVIEW

The Walter Rodney Speaker’s Series (WRSS) is a groundbreaking public lecture series that explores the life and work of Dr. Walter Rodney and his core contributions to Pan-Africanism, development theory, emancipatory pedagogy, and theories of race and class in the Caribbean, Africa and the rest of the world. The WRSS is conducted by Dr. Jesse Benjamin, and supported by the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library (AUC RWWL), the Walter Rodney Foundation (WRF), and Kennesaw State University (KSU), as well as many other partners listed on the poster (below).

Dr. Walter Rodney was a leading historian and scholar in the Pan-African tradition, with significant ties to the Atlanta area, but whose life was tragically cut short in 1980 when he was assassinated in his homeland, Georgetown, Guyana. Despite his death, Rodney’s works are a living history and this lecture series seeks to keep his stories, his scholarship, and his perspectives in contemporary discourse; to introduce and re-introduce a cross-section of the public to this great man; and to explore how his legacy changed the path of others and remains very relevant today.

The public lectures were held at the AUC RWWL, from January 22nd - April 23rd, on almost every Thursday night from 5:30 - 7:00pm. The Series was widely publicized in Atlanta, via print and social media, and attended by a broad cross-section of the public, as well as students from the AUC, KSU and neighboring schools. Two sessions were held off-site this year; one at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, and the other at Project South. During the week of the 12th Annual Walter Rodney Symposium, the WRSS promoted and was embedded in the Annual Symposium. As you will see below, WRSS speakers were extremely relevant and professionally distinguished in their various fields, ranging from High School activists in the YCAP program at Project South, to scholars sitting on United Nations committees, local professors and engaged community leaders, hip hop artists, and internationally recognized intellectual trailblazers. Discussions were always very deep and engaging, and the participation of the students and community was exceptional.

Community sponsorship grew this year to include 15 regional, continental, and global organizations, which led to an extremely diverse line-up of speakers from traditional and nontraditional academic spaces. Bringing together top international scholars, together with UN officials, Consul Generals, and internationally engaged local activists and community leaders is itself an accomplishment. Adapted from the late and truly great Vincent Harding (a former WRF Advisory Council Member), who pioneered this pedagogical model at the AUC around the life and work of his friend Martin Luther King, the WRSS continues to connects students from the greater Atlanta region with the complexity of Atlanta and the broader Pan-African world of scholars, thinkers, activists, leaders, and students.
Poster for the 2015 Walter Rodney Speakers Series.
Click the image for more information.
Seated, facing forward, from L to R: Stephanie Guilloud, Jaequan Allison, Ash-lee Henderson, Shekinah King, and Ashe Helm-Hernandez of Project South discuss “Sanford to Ferguson and All Points in Between: Organizing Against State Violence.”

Cynthia Enloe speaks to a packed house on the gendered politics of sneakers.

Babacar M’bow, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, gave a powerful overview lecture, “Art in the African Diaspora,” at the National Center for Civil & Human Rights.

Professors from Kennesaw State University, Akanmu Adebayo and Ryan Ronnenberg discuss aspects of Rodney’s influence on the African continent.

Longtime comrade Bocafloja informs students, activists, and community members on the current situation of youth and violence in Mexico.

Verene Shepherd, from the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, calls for reparatory justice in the Caribbean.
Students from the Walter Rodney Speakers Series class participate in the Walter Rodney Symposium.

Bocafloja passionately speaks on the situation in Ayotzinapa, Mexico, where 43 students were disappeared.

Firoze Manji speaks during the AADS Student Conference at KSU as an extension of the Speakers Series.

Jesus “Chucho” Garcia, Consul General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in New Orleans, keeps the audience up to date on Venezuela.

Community leaders, activists, students, and organizers. From L to R: (back row) Tiana Ferrell, Jesse Benjamin, Les Etienne, Ash-Lee Henderson, Jordan Knight, Bocafloja, and Thomas Pettaway; (front row) Ashe Helm-Hernandez, Asia Rodney, Asha T. Rodney, Patricia Rodney, Nautica Jenkins, Shekinah King, Malika Benoit, Nicholas Enos and Stephanie Guilloud, as The Walter Rodney Foundation, Project South, QuilomboArte, and Atlanta Free Speech came together.