March 2015

2nd Annual Walter Rodney Speakers Series (2014)
The 2nd Annual Walter Rodney Speaker’s Series January - May, 2014
Thursdays, 5-7pm at the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library

OVERVIEW

The Walter Rodney Speaker 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, Coordinator, African and African Diaspora Studies and Director, Global South Research Consortium and supported by the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library (AUC RWWL), the Walter Rodney Foundation (WRF), and Kennesaw State University (KSU).

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 or re-introduce a cross-section of the public to this great man; and to explore how his legacy changed the path of others.

The public lectures were held at the AUC RWWL, from January 23rd – April 24th, on almost every Thursday night from 5:30 – 7:00pm, with students enrolled for credit at Clark Atlanta University (CAU), Morehouse College or KSU. The Series was widely publicized in Atlanta, via radio, print and social media, and attended by a broad cross-section of the public, as well as students from the AUC and neighboring schools. One session, during Spring Break at the AUC, was held off-site, at the Auburn Avenue Research Library. During the week of the 11th Annual Walter Rodney Symposium, the WRSS promoted and was embedded in the Annual Symposium. WRSS speakers were extremely relevant and professionally distinguished in their various fields, discussions were always very deep and engaging, and the participation of the students was exceptional.

There was continued growth and support in the resource base for the WRSS in 2014 that made the 2nd Annual Speakers Series possible. The Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities at KSU generously renewed his support; the AUC RWWL renewed and increased theirs, to include both honoraria and in-kind resource support; and the WRF continued and expanded its supportive role in numerous capacities. New alliances with Project South and Universidad Sin Fronteras, provided additional in-kind support and sponsorship that included promotion, connection with constituencies and the involvement of high school students. On average, attendees varied from 50-100 per week.
Poster for the 2014 Walter Rodney Speakers Series. Click the image for more information.
Asha T. Rodney, Esq., Ajamu Baraka, Bill Fletcher, Jr., Dr. Makungu Akinyela, Dr. Hashim Gibrill, and Dr. Brandon Lundy during the book launch for Claim No Easy Victories: The Legacy of Amilcar Cabral.

The audience watches as Tanya Washington, Esq., delivers her wisdom on Legal Theory and Colonialism.

Dr. Derrick White discusses race, class and Walter Rodney in the 1970s. Dr. Geoffroy de Laforcade passionately presents "Liberation by Labyrinth: Walter Rodney's Pedagogy of Caribbean History."

The class portion meets with the inclusion of Dr. Geoffroy de Laforcade (after the public lecture).

Posing outside of the hip hop show that follows the Walter Rodney Symposium, an extension of the class. [from L to R] Kilifeu (of Keur-Gui), Vox Sambou, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Thiat (of Keur-Gui), DJ Gath (of Keur-Gui), Dr. Jesse Benjamin, and Dr. Chap Kusimba.
The class discusses a lecture in conjunction with the required readings. A blend of community activists and students watch a lecture.

The audience engages with Tanya Washington's presentation.

During her presentation, Sue Ross shared photos from Dr. Rodney's time at the IBW in Atlanta. On the left is Sue Ross herself, and on the right is Dr. Walter Rodney (c. 1974).