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Rodney's Legacy Matters, Beyond Guyana

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Justice for Walter Rodney Committee

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Rodney's Legacy Matters, Beyond Guyana

Anne Braithwaite

Guyana's President Granger has refused a mere two more weeks for the Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry (WRCOI) to unearth the truth — after 34 years of evasion. The commissioners have been ordered by the Granger government to submit a report by 30 November 2015.

The assassination of Guyana's pre-eminent historian, scholar-activist and author of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Dr. Walter Rodney in 1980 remains Guyana's most traumatising political murder. A proper investigation was assiduously evaded by both Forbes Burnham's African dominated PNC — now rebranded as APNU — and the Indian dominated PPP governments. That was until 2014, under his Excellency President Donald Ramotar, when the formal Commission (WRCOI) finally started its work.

The Justice for Walter Rodney Campaign is reminding the Guyana government that Rodney's legacy matters, beyond Guyana.

In an effort to garner support in the current Guyana/Venezuela dispute, President Granger touts Guyana's "progressive" record at the UN in New York and among African leaders.

But at home he is quietly trying to expunge from Guyana's history the record of Guyana's most respected international progressive, Walter Rodney. These are precisely the tactics used by Granger's late predecessor, President Forbes Burnham, the alleged author of Rodney's 1980 assassination.

Granger's APNU/AFC coalition came to power in May 2015 with a narrow cross-racial win over the discredited PPP government, promising national reconciliation. Yet within days of their win, they were undermining the WRCOI, in a short-sighted campaign to disparage and denigrate the Commission's work.

The new Guyana government, right now, continues to efface the work of the Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry (WRCOI) into Rodney's assassination by denying the two more weeks it requested to properly complete its work. They seek to frustrate the proper completion of this — or any real inquiry, while more key witnesses die, records disappear, evidence degrades. And we forget.

Is PNC leader Granger continuing to punish Rodneyism for exposing Burnhamism?

Rodney's renowned legacy in Guyana endured sufficiently to curb racial voting for the first time in 50 years, thus enabling Granger's win. Rodney's political teaching had exposed the exploitative nature of Guyana's historic ethnic Indian/African conflicts, which stymied its post-colonial development. But Rodney was seen as a racial traitor to some of the African middle class

and a direct threat to Forbes Burnham's power.

A new dispensation for the Commission could resolve previous abuses, which were not of the Commission's making. However new ministers, Attorney General Basil Williams — who represented the PNC at the WRCOI — and Governance Minister Rafael Trotman simply asserted that the two-week extension was disallowed to save taxpayers' money and, more ominously, "further embarrassment."

We urge Guyana's government to reverse this vengeful decision to wreck the Inquiry. This plea is supported by all three commissioners; the lawyers representing Rodney's party, the very depleted Working People's Alliance — now part of Granger's APNU; Rodney's brother Donald, who survived the fatal bombing that killed Walter Rodney in his car; and the rest of Rodney's family.

The Rodney Family deserves the completion of the investigation and of the full mandate and missions of the COI. Guyana needs and deserves a proper inquiry into this atrocity to promote its healing and reconciliation.

Justice for Walter Rodney Campaign
22nd October 2015

Link to the petition mentioned in the article:
<http://bit.ly/RodneyCOIPetition>