

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **P.J. Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy creating library on Africa and the Caribbean**

The P.J. Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy, which was launched two years ago and is located on the Mona campus of The University of the West Indies (The UWI), is creating a library on Africa and the Caribbean. The library received a boost recently with donation of major historical texts from Professor Franklin Knight, noted Caribbean historian and professor emeritus of history at Johns Hopkins University in the United States and former director of the university's Centre for Africana Studies.

The publications included the seven-volume *UNESCO General History of Africa*, six volumes of *The Dictionary of Caribbean, African and Latin American Biography*, and the six-volume *Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History*. The announcement of the donation was one of the Patterson Centre's activities to mark Africa Day, which is celebrated worldwide on May 25 in recognition of the achievements of the countries and people of the continent, and in memory of the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles for Africa's freedom.

Stateman in Residence at the Centre, the Most Hon. P.J. Patterson, former Prime Minister of Jamaica and Ambassador Richard Bernal, Research Fellow at the Centre, received the donation on May 18, 2022. Mr. Patterson said the library would be accessible to students and researchers.

"Access to information is a vital part of the advocacy to which the Centre is committed. It is our firm belief that the democratisation of information can be a powerful impulse and catalyst for social and economic development," Mr. Patterson said.

He added that Professor Knight is a member of the Patterson Centre's network of distinguished scholars and that the Centre is encouraging more reading and research on Africa, the Caribbean and the global African and Caribbean diaspora. As part its work programme, he noted, the Patterson Centre's website ([www.cafricara.com](http://www.cafricara.com)), will include links to various valuable sources of information on Africa and the Caribbean.

"An important part of our mission is to become a repository of knowledge about the Caribbean and Africa and about the technical processes and commitments required to advance the sustainable development of our countries and people. We are engaging the full range of academics and pertinent research at The UWI and elsewhere in the production of a strategic framework for Africa-Caribbean co-operation and development action," Mr. Patterson noted.

He said the Centre was doing its part in building bridges linking Africa, the Caribbean and Africans and Caribbean people in the diaspora, through academic exchanges and collaborations with institutions around economic and trade policy, cultural interaction, governance, climate change and other critical areas.

“We are forging new relationships and advancing existing ties with Africa at the levels of governments, international organisations, universities, businesses, sports, community institutions and other people to people contact. In doing so, we are drawing on expertise from all over the world,” Mr. Patterson explained.

Professor Knight, who spoke at the event via Zoom, said he was honoured to be associated with the centre and its work. He encouraged the expansion of the collection of books and other materials for the library through appeals to graduates of The UWI and publishers. He also suggested the creation of an endowment fund to finance work for the digitisation of the library’s collection and to host talks and seminars by scholars and leaders from Africa and the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, Mr. Patterson has outlined the role of the Caribbean over many years of the struggle for African liberation, pointing out that Jamaica’s Marcus Garvey and Trinidadian pan-Africanist George Padmore were among the foremost proponents of the political liberation of Africa and the mental emancipation of its people.

“Marcus Garvey’s universal message of Black pride and equality influenced the thinking of giants of African decolonisation including Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Namdi Azikwe of Nigeria and Nelson Mandela of South Africa,” Mr. Patterson said.

He recounted that several Caribbean nations were among the first countries in the world to impose trade embargos against racist South Africa, taking their cue from then Jamaican Premier Norman Manley. Mr. Patterson said that the Jamaican Nation Hero, while he was head of the government, boldly decided to assert the Caribbean region’s collective abhorrence of racism, racial segregation and institutional oppression even before they were independent nations. Some Caribbean countries he recalled, provided passports for global travel to icons of the anti-apartheid movement such as Oliver Tambo, while they were in exile.

The region’s cricketers and musicians led by Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff and Peter Tosh, he added, also took firm stands against apartheid and inspired African freedom fighters in Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa and elsewhere.

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