



Rex Nettleford

Ralston Milton "Rex" Nettleford (February 3, 1933 - February 2, 2010) was a Jamaican scholar, social critic, choreographer, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, and most recently, he was a professor of Extra Mural Studies at the University of the West Indies and also head of the Trade Union Education Institution. He was born in Falmouth, Trelawney (Jamaica).

He graduated from the University of the West Indies with honors in History and was a recipient of the 1957 Rhodes Scholarship to Oriel College at Oxford University where he completed postgraduate studies in Politics, and then returned to Jamaica in the early 1960s to take up a position at the University of the West Indies (UWI). At the UWI he first came to attention as a co-author (with M.G. Smith and Roy Augier) of a groundbreaking study of the Rastafari movement in 1961.

In 1963 he was the founder, artistic director and principal choreographer of the internationally acclaimed National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica which incorporates traditional Jamaican music and dance into a formal balletic repertoire. He was a brilliant dancer and outstanding organizer of the company, and has left his mark of excellence on the cultural life of the Caribbean.

For over twenty years, Nettleford was also the artistic director for the University Singers of the University of the West Indies, Mona campus in Jamaica, and with his work as artistic director and with the work of Noel Dexter as musical director, the University Singers seen the creation of what is referred to as "choral theatre".

He was the cultural adviser to the Prime Minister, member of the Inter-American Committee on Culture, founding governor of the Canada-based International Development Research Centre, and had acted as expert/consultant to the government of Ghana, the Second World African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC), the Caribbean Festival of Creative Arts (CARIFESTA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). And notwithstanding, Nettleford was also a radio and television commentator and had lectured in many countries including India, the Phillipines and Israel.

In 1968, he took over direction of the School for Continuing Studies at the UWI and then of the Extra-Mural Department. Nettleford had a wide international reputation and has been honored at home and abroad. His 1969 essays “*Mirror Mirror*” provided a special insight into growing up and coming into full consciousness in Jamaica in the sixties, and with his editing and compiling of the speeches and writings of Norman Manley, *Manley and the New Jamaica* in 1971, he established himself as a serious public historian and social critic. He was also the author of “the African Connexion”, and “In Our Heritage”, and his latest published book “Caribbean Cultural Identity, the case of Jamaica”.

In 1975, the Jamaican state recognized his cultural and scholarly achievements by awarding him the Order of Merit. He was also the recipient of the gold Musgrave Medal, the Pelican Award from the University of the West Indies guild of graduates, an honorary doctor of Humane letters from the University of Hartford and the Living Legend Award from the Atlantic Black Arts Festival, and the Zora Neal Hurston/Paul Robeson Award from the National Council for Black Studies, among many others. In 1996, he became Vice-Chancellor of the UWI, and held that office until 2004, when he was succeeded by E. Nigel Harris. And that same year, The Rhodes Trust, in celebration of its centenary in 2004, established the Rex Nettleford Prize in Cultural Studies, tenable at the University of the West Indies – a fitting and lasting accolade which will ensure that his name and work will live on in perpetuity.