

GuyFolkFest.org

Celebrating Our Cultural Heritage

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Guyana Cultural Association, New York Inc. promoters of the Guyana Folk Festival

August 10, 2007

Mr. E. R. Braithwaite:

Congratulations, On behalf of the Guyana Folk Festival, we are honored to tell you that you have been selected as the recipient of the 2007 Guyana Cultural Association Exemplary Award for your work as an educator, a diplomat and an author. We trust that you will accept it as a small expression of our immeasurable esteem for you. Your autobiographical novel "To Sir, With Love" has been an inspiration for many through your example of personal dignity, perseverance and scholarship. Guyanese everywhere glow with pride at the elements of refinement you displayed in trying circumstances as depicted in the movie "To Sir, With Love".

Please accept our invitation to attend the award ceremony on August 29, 2007 at the Rotunda of the Brooklyn Borough Hall, New York. On this occasion, we will also present our Lifetime Achievement Award and the Folk Festival Awards to other Guyanese. Kindly note that we will acknowledge your exceptional contributions on our website <http://www.guyfolkfest.org>.

The Guyana Cultural Association Folk Festival Award ceremony is our annual recognition of individuals and organizations. Each year there is a Festival theme and in 2007, it is "Oii" – Origins, Identity and Influence. This year we extend the theme to draw on the bicentennial of the abolition of the trade in African captives (the Atlantic Slave Trade) and the later political independence of Guyana from Britain in 1966.

Awardees are selected through an open call for nominations. A selection committee evaluates each nomination considering seven attributes in our published criteria: originality, scope, impact / influence, integration, pioneering spirit, challenges and achievements. The finalists represent exemplary models on their accomplishments in Guyana's cultural development. Your status as an international exemplar epitomizes the ideals of the Exemplary Award.

Again, congratulations on the Award.

Sincerely

Ronald H. Lammy, Tangerine Clarke
Co-Chairs, Selection Committee

Upcoming Events

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NOVELIST E.R. BRAITHWAITE HONORED WITH PROCLAMATION FROM NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

BY TANGERINE CLARKE



E.R. with members of GCA

Famed novelist, Edward Ricardo Braithwaite, was honored with a proclamation from New York City Councilwoman Lithia James, during an appearance at the Classic Stage and Screen Series, readings and panel discussions, that celebrated the vision, and artistry of early Caribbean writers, whose novels made it to the big screen.

The Friday April 20, event, that was hosted by the Caribbean Arts Theatre, and the Guyana Cultural Association - Folk Festival, at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, paid tribute to this extraordinary individual, whose prominence spans over fifty years.

Braithwaite accepted the award from the President of GCA, Malcolm Hall, after viewing ***"To Sir With Love"*** - a screen adaptation of his 1959 novel, with the same name, that depicted his experience as a schoolteacher, in the East End of London.



E. WAYNE MCDONALD ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE

The movie, that starred Academy Award winning actor, Sidney Poitier, Braithwaite said, made him famous, but according to him. "I am not too impressed with being famous, because you are only famous for a moment."

Stating, that the stage adaptation of *To Sir With Love* will premier this autumn, at a West End playhouse, in London, the mild-mannered Braithwaite said, "My contribution has been made. I wrote this book, and various types of venues have decided to use it for one reason, or another."

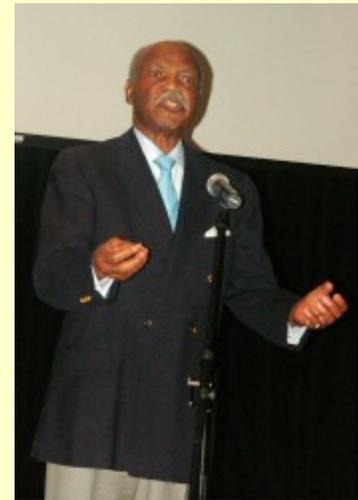
That is why he said, whenever you write something, you should write it well. "I wrote an experience, and a lot of people found that experience engaging enough, that they wanted to read about it, and then they wanted to do something else with it."

My response to people, who say they have stories to tell, is, tell them, but take your time and write them well.

"I am nothing special, Braithwaite mused, and people shouldn't imagine that I have this special genius. I write because I enjoy putting words together, and composing them in such a way, that readers feel the excitement I feel, he said.

"I feel fortunate that this piece of work I did 50 years ago is still well and alive. I have some assurance that this little book will out live me, and the interest of others for years to come, he added.

Recalling his years as a novice teacher, Braithwaite said, after leaving his classroom each day, he went home and reviewed the day's work, and studied ways on how he could improve upon teaching. This, he said, helped him with his teaching.



E.R. Braithwaite

"When I needed help in the classroom, I co-opted the students into the system. I got them to talk to me about themselves, and then I used what I knew about them, and put it into the idea of teaching.

Answering a question put to him, about discipline in the American school system, Braithwaite said. "Something is seriously wrong with our schools today."

"When you go into any schoolhouse throughout the U.S., you quickly discover the lack of courtesy, and respect, from a child to teacher, and vice versa. We must recognize that discipline is a two way street he said. Adding, "If we expect youngsters to be courteous, and respectful to us, then we too must demonstrate this in our lives and attitudes."

Braithwaite, who took up teaching because could not find work in his field of engineering back then, said that, the moment he began to treat his British students with respect, in spite, of their initial resentment and resistance, it worked. They too were ready and willing to listen respectfully, he said.

This outstanding gentleman, who often times wrote of difficulties of being an educated man, and a black teacher working under inhumane conditions, continued to write short stories, and best selling books, such as, *A Kind of Homecoming*, *Choices of Straws*, *Reluctant Neighbors*, and *Honorary White*.

Braithwaite, once again wrote from experience to publish *Paid Servant*, after working as a social worker with the London County Council to provide foster care for black children.

His long and exemplary career took him to UNESCO, as an educational consultant and lecturer, and later as a professor of English, at New York University. In 2002 he held the position of Writer in Residence at Howard University in Washington DC.

An alumnus of Queens College, Braithwaite excelled at City University of New York, from where he went on to earn a Ph. D in Physics from the University of Cambridge.

And even though Braithwaite had served in the Royal Air Force as a pilot, and fought alongside his British counterparts, he later talked about how he was discriminated against because of his ethnicity.

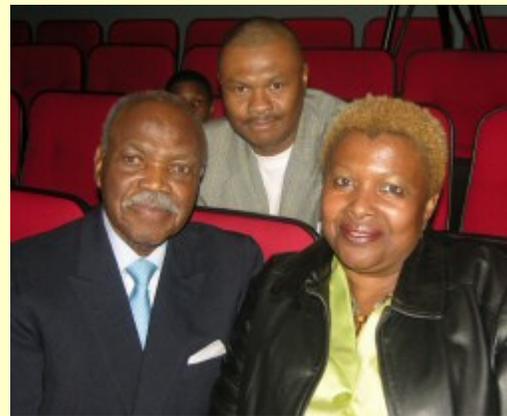
Dr. Braithwaite served his native country well. Becoming the first Ambassador to the United Nations after Guyana became an Independent nation. He was later appointed Ambassador, to Venezuela, where he successfully forged a peace agreement between the two countries.



FROM LEFT: CHARLES MONAH, COUNCILMEMBER KENDELL STEWART, CLAIRE A. GORING, MAURICE BRAITHWAITE AND WRICKFORD DALGETTY



GCA President Malcolm Hall
handing over proclamation



E.R. AND FRIENDS

GUYANA FOLK FEST

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