



# PROFESSOR RUPERT CHARLES LEWIS

## TEACHER, ACTIVIST AND SCHOLAR

**Rupert** Lewis exhibited early promise of his scholarship and activism which would lead to international recognition as a political historian and scholar.

He was Deputy Head boy of Calabar High School (1964), and was awarded the Jamaica Independence Scholarship (1965) for his performance in the A Level examinations. These accomplishments were the genesis of a stellar career of academic leadership and excellence.



Off to  
Calabar  
High

Lewis's scholarship has been acknowledged with several awards:

- The New York Garvey Centennial Committee Award (1988)
- Fulbright Award for Senior Scholars (1990)
- Visiting Scholar in the Africana Studies Research Centre at Cornell University (1993)
- Best Research Publication: Edited Collection by the UWI, Mona for Communicating Pan-Africanism: Caribbean Leadership and Global Impact. (2013) with co-editor, Professor Hopeton Dunn

His doctoral dissertation, **Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought** (1995) has been published by university presses in the United States and the Caribbean.



ABOVE: Visiting Scholar, Cornell University, 1993  
RIGHT: Addressing an anti-Apartheid rally in Kingston



In 1964, when Marcus Garvey's body was repatriated, Rupert's article "Marcus Garvey, He Opened the Minds of Negroes" was published in his school magazine. The paper exhibited insightful analysis of the contributions of a man who Lewis described as, "...one of the architects of our new Jamaica". Lewis concluded that "Marcus Garvey stands as a symbol to young Jamaicans and to our future heroes who struggle for the right of the oppressed".

The symbolism offered by Marcus Garvey, as advocated by the young Lewis, was pride in self and empowerment through individual effort. This was Lewis's first piece of scholarship on themes which have been his career interest, Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism.



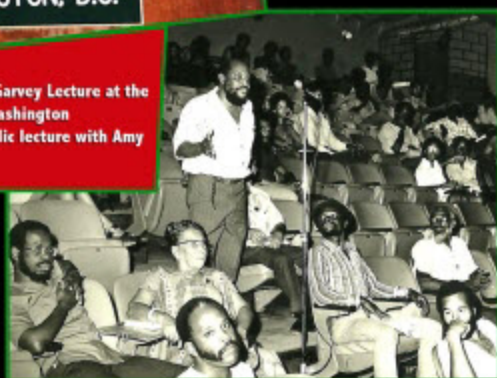
Accepting academic  
award from Principal  
Kenneth Hall

# GARVEY SCHOLAR

*"Where is the Black man's government? Where is his King and his Kingdom? Where is his President, his country, and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?" Unable to find any, he offered a succinct solution: "I will help to make them." (Tony Martin, Biography 26).*



**ABOVE:** Delivering the Garvey Lecture at the Jamaican Embassy in Washington  
**RIGHT:** Attending a public lecture with Amy Jacques Garvey



**It** is as a result of his captivation with the study of this man, Marcus Garvey, that Rupert Lewis, eminent and erudite Garvey scholar, is defined as an intellectual of excellence with works that embody the tensions and conundrums of post-colonialism, Pan-Africanism and the dialectic discourses of those periods.

In his exploration of Garvey's metaphysical thinking, Lewis maintained that Garvey focused as much on the quality of human relationships as on struggles for the liberation of black people. For Jamaica now, more so than in the immediate post-colonial era, this distinction is important as an historical legacy of resilience, strength and innovation and is important for self-actualisation and self-realisation. In an editorial in *The Jamaica Observer* dated June 10, 2010, Lewis urged the teaching of Garvey's philosophy in Jamaican schools and public life as he felt it was "a necessary precondition for the transformation of Jamaica's mental and material circumstances." In 2011, Barbara Gloudon questioned the non-resolution of this important step and its non-implementation while she lauded the inclusion of programmes on Garvey and Garveyism at the UWI, attributed to Professors Lewis, Robert Hill, and others. It is important to acknowledge Professor Lewis's discharge of his responsibility through his pedagogy, advocacy, activism, mentorship, and scholarly works.

Martin Henry on his assessment of Garvey noted, "It is not to agree and worship but learn and understand the Man" and to Professor Rupert Lewis an identical sentiment is ascribed.

# INSTITUTION BUILDER

**Professor** Lewis has been one of the pioneers in the resurgence of interest in Garveyism and a leader of a national crusade for its inclusion in the school curriculum. The revival of Liberty Hall is a symbol of his lifelong dedication to promoting Marcus Garvey's life and work. As Chair of the Friends of Liberty Hall, Professor Lewis has overseen the restoration of Liberty Hall and raised funds to strengthen its work and resources. His perseverance has helped in the creation of the Marcus Mosiah Garvey Multimedia Museum, the first museum on Marcus Garvey. Under his leadership, Liberty Hall has been publishing **76 King Street - Journal of Liberty Hall: The Legacy of Marcus Garvey**, dedicated to the study of Garvey's life, work, philosophy and the history, culture and current affairs of Africa and the African Diaspora.

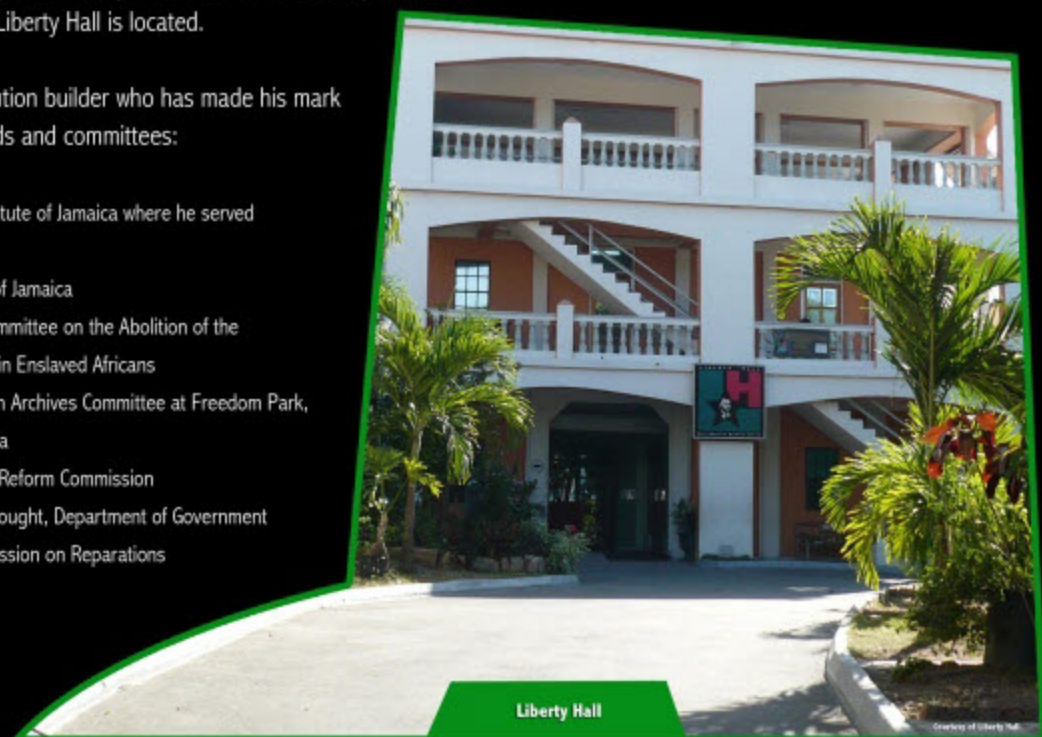
Professor Rupert Lewis and his colleagues have forged a comprehensive partnership that has woven together a critical mass of resources and strategies to strengthen families and the neighbourhood of Craig Town where Liberty Hall is located.

He is a unique institution builder who has made his mark on a number of boards and committees:

- African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica where he served as chairman
- Council of the Institute of Jamaica
- Jamaica Bicentenary Committee on the Abolition of the Transatlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans
- International Pan-African Archives Committee at Freedom Park, Pretoria, South Africa
- Jamaican Constitutional Reform Commission
- Centre for Caribbean Thought, Department of Government
- Jamaica National Commission on Reparations



ABOVE: Musgrave Medal Award ceremony at the Institute of Jamaica  
LEFT: Speaking at Liberty Hall



Liberty Hall

© Friends of Liberty Hall

# POLITICAL ACTIVIST



On the national level the following publications benefited from his editorial skills:

- Workers Monthly (1971-72)
- Socialism (1974-80)
- Struggle (1974-82)

He was attached to the editorial council of the **World Marxist Review** in Prague, Czechoslovakia, an international publication of communist and workers' parties. In the late 1980s to early 1990s, he was Chair of the Jamaica Anti-Apartheid Movement. He has been instrumental in organizing several regional and international conferences:

- The first International Seminar on Garvey, sponsored by the African Studies Association of the West Indies (ASAWI) (1973)
- Chair, organizing committee of the conference to mark Garvey's centenary at UWI Mona. (1987)
- Member, organizing committee for the Conference on Caribbean Culture in honour of Rex Nettleford (1996)
- Member, organizing committee for the UNESCO/UWI Slave Route conference (1997)

More recently he has worked with Professors Brian Meeks and Anthony Bogue of the Centre for Caribbean Thought, to organize annual conferences held to assess the contribution of outstanding Caribbean intellectuals and scholars.

**Professor Lewis** epitomizes the politically engaged intellectual, whose activism included editing several political magazines and newspapers, spearheading the organization of scholarly conferences and mentoring the next generation of academics and activists.

On campus he served as the Director of the Guild Press (1966-67) and edited the Guild's publication, **Scope** (1967-68), **Impact** (1965-68) **Social Scientist** (1967) and **Bongo Man** (1968-70).

As left wing politics became more organized in the wider society, he was involved in the Abeng movement and served as co-editor of the landmark political newspaper **Abeng** (1969).



LEFT: In Czechoslovakia with the late Elean Thomas  
BELOW: At ASAWI Conference 1973



# MENTOR

**Professor** Lewis's students are unanimous in their respect and praise for his care and nurturing.

**Senator the Honourable Floyd Morris**, President of the Senate  
He went beyond the call of duty as my Supervisor . . . . He was a reservoir of knowledge who enhanced my academic work. To him I am eternally grateful and the world is a better place to live because of individuals like Professor Rupert Lewis.

**Kemal Brown** states:

My respect for this individual is complete and I consider this brief testimonial an honor. In short, he has inspired me, and I'm thankful that our paths have crossed. Our exchanges have altered the optics through which I view life and my notion of identity.

**Dr Maziki Thame's** testimonial is no less fulsome:

I personally feel grateful that our paths have crossed . . . . As my doctoral thesis supervisor, he truly gave me space to grow. He encouraged me to be confident about my work.

**Merrick Watson**, Attorney-at Law, said:

You often think men of superior intellect would have an aura of arrogance but he is warm and always open to making time for his students.

**Suzette Wittingham's** testimonial states:

Prof Lewis is one of those prolific writers and scholars who maintains an enviable calm and humility about his work and his life.

**Dr Tracy-Ann Johnson-Myers** wrote:

He is an inspirational lecturer who recognised my strengths and gave me the necessary guidance to propel me forward in my academic pursuits. Overall, what I believe makes Professor Lewis unique is the time, attention and encouragement that he so selflessly gives everyone.

**Vivienne Williams Thompson:**

His knowledge and commitment to the understanding of Marcus Garvey's legacy is unmatched. He is compassionate and extremely supportive. In his quiet and calm approach to life, he has shown me the importance of respecting and valuing the views of others and the importance of exploring alternative opinions to arrive at an objective conclusion.



# FAMILY MAN



At his wedding



Rupert and Maureen  
with Yewande



Professors Lewis with  
Dr Yewande Fokum and  
Jide Lewis

**Professor** Rupert Lewis is the son of a Baptist minister, the late Rev Fergus Lewis, and the late Mrs. Lettice Lewis, née Monteith, a teacher of Music and Home Economics. Rev. Lewis was a graduate of Calabar Theological College and Chairman of the Jamaica Baptist Union in the early 1950s. The influence of this background is evident in Professor Lewis's humble and caring disposition which manifests itself in his relations with his students and colleagues.

Rupert is married to Professor Maureen Warner-Lewis, a distinguished author and scholar in African-Caribbean linguistics, social history and literature and his collaborator in several publications and projects.

They are the parents of Dr. Yewande Fokum who teaches in the School of Education, UWI and Mr. Jide Lewis who is a senior economist at the Bank of Jamaica.

Rupert's devotion to family was evident in his excitement over becoming a grandfather when the first of his three grandchildren was born.

With granddaughter

