

Kitabu

The bi-monthly newsletter of the African School Mobile Library
"African Studies by bicycle"

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Dear Reader, welcome to Kitabu.

The Veteran and the Gift

If you could meet anyone in the Land of Books, who would you meet? If on the warmest of days, you could sit between the roots of a fig tree, back against the trunk, shaded by its branches and converse with the one of your choice - about publishing, a book store and a library – who would you choose to talk with? I would choose Richard Moore. As Barbados celebrates its Independence, let's celebrate one of the great bibliophiles, who donated his collection to the University of the West Indies: to the Barbados campus of his homeland. He was part of that early 20th century migration from the Caribbean to the States, which included figures such as Hubert Harrison (St. Croix) – another great bibliophile and activist – Marcus Garvey (Jamaica), and Hodge Kirnon (Montserrat). These men amongst others, from the Caribbean and America, were the journalistic/activist element of the New Negro Movement and its most celebrated manifestation, the Harlem Renaissance.

Amongst his many instigations and co-foundings, was the setting up of the Pathway Press, which published a commemorative edition of the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. A hero of Moore's, the famous abolitionist and orator gave his name to the Harlem book store – Frederick Douglass Book Center - that Moore ran for thirty years. I would have loved to have browsed in there; I would have been a weekly visitor for sure, whether I had money in my pocket or not! Just to be amongst the treasures there and to speak with the guardian of the gems.

Although he has become a forgotten soldier, to me he is a highly-decorated combatant, standing tall in the Education Brigade; the evidence is there, of his long-time campaign in the conquering of ignorance. As a veteran, he returned home from distant trenches and before he went to meet Frederick Douglass and to be reunited with his beloved wife and ally, Lodie, he left a gift for the benefit of all, of fifteen thousand books and pamphlets; a monumental gift from a monumental man, for whoever walks onto the Cave Hill Campus, of the University of West Indies: in Barbados the land of his birth.

'Moore has not received the full scholarly attention that he richly deserves. In part, this is due to the fact that he stood outside of the walls of academia...and his scholarship and teaching toward the elevation of a sense of Black pride and dignity among the grassroots Black community are not fully appreciated.' **Richard B. Moore, Radical Politics and the Afro-American History Movement: The Formation Of A Revolutionary Tradition In African American Intellectual Culture.** John M. McClendon

'The initial stock was basically Moore's personal collection. He opened the book center at 141 West 125th Street from 1942 until 1968, when all the buildings in the block were demolished for the construction of a new building by the state of New York.

Moore's interest and knowledge of Africa and his unique collection of books on Africa attracted many African students. His stock became enriched with African art objects obtained mostly from students who augmented their income by selling or trading articles from home...

The placement of the Moore Collection at the Centre for Multi-Racial Studies at Cave Hill, Barbados, is the result of a deliberate decision on the part of Mr Moore. Protection and use were the key factors. He wanted assurance that his collection which represented so many years of effort and sacrifice would be properly used and protected. He also wanted to be sure that students would have full access without danger of censorship or restriction. He feared this might not be the case if his collection fell under the control of a "pro-imperialist" or pro-capitalist" institution such as one of the major predominantly "white" universities. He concluded that his collection could go only to an African university, a Caribbean country, the University of the West Indies, or one of the predominantly Afro-American colleges in the United States...The housing of the library at the Centre at Cave Hill seemed to offer the best of all solutions to the Barbadian expatriate and political radical who had worked so long for Caribbean independence.' **Richard B. Moore, Caribbean Militant In Harlem: Collected Writings 1920-1972.** Edited by W. Burghardt Turner and Joyce Moore Turner.

"...one of the greatest sons of our nation and one of the critical architects of our nationhood and Independence...a key political thinker, activist, researcher, organizer, historian, lecturer, scholar and bibliophile...imperishable example of a life of a committed struggle and activist on behalf of his beloved Barbados." Davis A. Comissiong. **Richard B. Moore: Bibliophile, Activist Son of Barbados.** Joyce Moore Turner

Mr Moore lived in Brooklyn. In his bookstore on Lennox Avenue, there was hardly any room to move between the shelves. In his home, there was no room, either. Books, books and more books. **Richard B. Moore: "Dogs and slaves are named by their masters, free people name themselves!"** Norman Otis Richmond aka Jalal.

In the ASML there is **Richard Moore, Caribbean Militant in Harlem: Collected Writings 1920-1972.** Edited by W. Burghardt Turner and Joyce Moore Turner and **Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance** by Joyce Moore Turner with the assistance of W. Burghardt Turner.

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