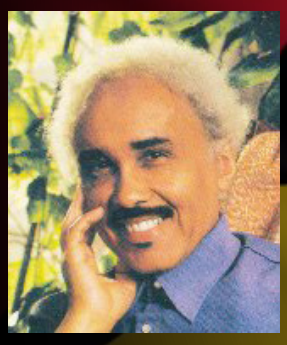
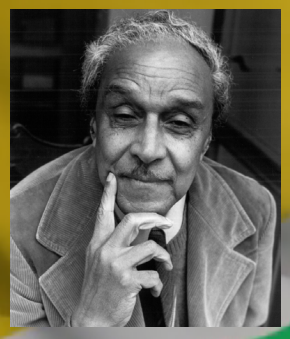
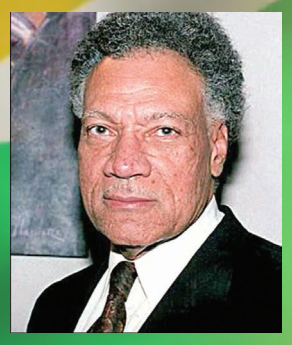


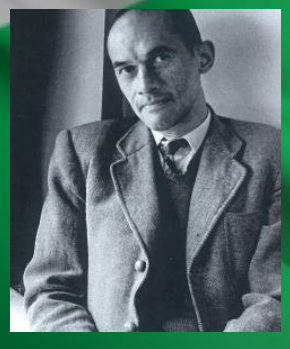
Listing of Prominent African Guyanese





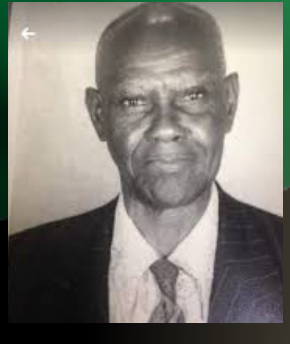


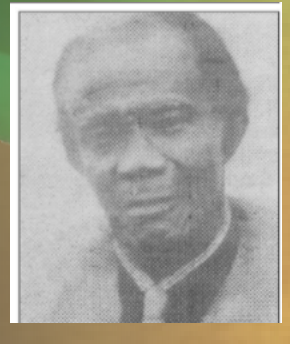
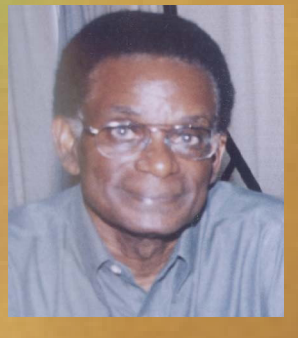










Listing of Prominent African Guyanese

The recognition, of People of African Descent, has been given prominence in the theme of the United Nation`s declared decade (2015-2024) for Peoples` of African Descent. This publication is therefore significant in highlighting the contributions made by Afro-Guyanese to humanity by which is grounded in their Guyanese being. Given ID-PADA-G`s mandate, which is derived from the community of Guyanese of African Descent. Their number is so numerous, it is only possible to provide a sample. With a few exceptions, the sample has, in the main, mentioned persons who have departed and can no longer actively contribute. This publication should however awaken all to the fact that African Guyanese are major contributors in various fields of development and should be remembered, recognized and hailed for their outstanding contributions. At a subsequent time, other samples will be showcased.



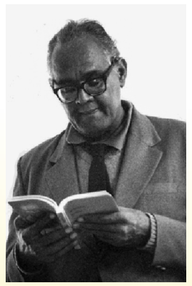
Philip Anderson Desmond Allsopp

Philip Anderson Desmond Allsopp, A.A. was born on 8 April 1926. He was the recipient of a Victory Engineering Scholarship in 1949 to study Civil Engineering at the Imperial College of Science and Technology (University of London). Mr Allsopp returned to Guyana in 1954 and served as a Construction Engineer. In his career, Allsopp chalked up several first initiatives. He authorized the "Engineering Laboratory in the Public Works Department, and the first Roads Laboratory in Guyana – 1957." Allsopp was the first engineer to "introduce scientific methods of road design in Guyana – 1954 (E.B. Road)." He was also the first Guyanese to be appointed Chief Engineer of Roads. A former Chief Works and Hydraulics Officer (1970-1974), he eventually became the Managing Partner of the firm of C.A. Liburd and Associates, Consulting Engineers and Planners. He died on 20 January 2021.



Justice Desiree Bernard

Justice Desiree Bernard, C.C.H. was born on March 2, 1939. She entered Bishops' High School in 1950 and on completing studies she enrolled at the University of London where she earned the LLB (Hons) in 1964. Her first job was at Cameron & Shepherd where she served as a solicitor from 1966-1967. After this brief stint, Bernard started a private practice. Subsequently, she was appointed Magistrate before she became a judge in 1980. Bernard became Chancellor of the Judiciary on 4 May 2001. Her nine awards include the Medal of Service from the Caribbean Women's Association and the Order of Roraima of Guyana, the second-highest national award of Guyana and now, the 2005 CARICOM Triennial Award for Women, as well as of the Cacique Crown of Honour (1985). It is noteworthy that Bernard was the Chairman of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1985), a Member of the Caribbean Council of Legal Education (1970-80), and a Member of the Council of the University of Guyana.



Martin Wylde Carter

Martin Wylde Carter, C.C.H. was a famous Guyanese poet who was born on 7 June 1927. Carter attended Queens College (1938-44). He has published three volumes of poetry, namely University of Hunger (2006), Selected Poems (1989), and Poems of Succession (1977). He served as a public servant (1947-1953), Information Officer of the Booker Group of Companies (1960-1967), and Minister of Information (1967-1970). This Guyanese had the privilege of serving as Poet in Residence at the University of Essex. Carter was the recipient of the Cacique Crown of Honour in 1970. He died on 13 December 1997.



President Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham

President Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was born on 20 February 1923. He attended Queen's College and was the Guiana Scholar in 1942. Burnham was a recipient of the Bachelor of Arts degree and the Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of London (1947). On his return to Guyana in 1949, he started private practice in law. Burnham served as the Minister of Education (1953), Mayor of Georgetown (1959), President of the Bar Association (1964), President of the British Guiana Labour Union (1962), and the Leader of the People's National Congress (1964). He became the Premier of British Guiana in 1964. When Guyana became Independent he remained the Prime Minister of this nation, and subsequently, Executive President of Guyana in 1980. Burnham died on 6 August 1885.



Joseph Oscar Fitz-Clarence Haynes O.R

Joseph Oscar Fitz-Clarence Haynes O.R a native of New Amsterdam was born on 18 July 1912. Haynes wanted to become a lawyer after frequenting the magistrate's court in the area. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1938 and his Bachelor of Laws degree in 1940. Haynes entered the Society of Gray's Inn in 1941. He passed his Bar Finals and was subsequently called to the Bar in England and the Bar in British Guiana in 1945. In 1974, Haynes was appointed a Judge of the Court of Appeal. He was promoted to the post of Chancellor of the Judiciary in 1976. On his retirement from the Judiciary, he joined the staff of the University of Guyana in 1980 as a Professor. Haynes was a recipient of the Order of Roraima in 1978 for sterling service in the field of the administration of justice. Professor Haynes died in 1989.



Clive Hubert Lloyd O.R

Clive Hubert Lloyd O.R is a very popular Guyanese cricketer. He was born on 31 August 1944. Initially, he participated in local cricket competitions and was then selected for the national team in 1964. During the Shell Shield competition of 1966, he demonstrated his skills in the game of cricket when he scored two centuries. He was chosen to be part of the West Indies team that travelled to India for an international competition. He became captain of the West Indian Team in 1974. His Test career came to an end in 1985. Clive Lloyd was awarded the Order of Roraima from his own country as well as the Order of Australia from the government of Australia.



Jane Phillips Gay

Jane Phillips Gay was born on 2nd November 1913. This Christian young woman preached her first sermon when she was just 16 years at the St. Stephen's Church of Scotland. She subsequently became a preacher and established her own church. She entered politics and became a clerk in the Guyana Industrial Workers' Union. In 1949 she was appointed Secretary of the Guyana Industrial Workers' Union (GIWU). Mrs. Gay was one of the founders of the Women's Progressive Organization in 1953. A Women's Auxiliary was formed on 5 October 1957 and Jane Phillips-Gay became the Chairman of this body. She was also Vice-President of the British Guiana General Domestic and Workers Union. She died on 21 February 1994.



Winifred Gaskin CCH

Winifred Gaskin CCH was born on 10 May 1916. She pursued a course in Journalism with the Express Syndication and Times, London. She was a former President of the British Guiana Press Association, Chairman of the People's National Congress (PNC), and Editor of the Booker News. Gaskin was one of the founder members of the Women's Auxiliary of the PNC. She became the Minister of Education, Youth Work, Race relations and Social Development in 1964. Gaskin was the first Guyanese to be given the post of High Commissioner to the Commonwealth Caribbean and the Eastern Caribbean States. In 1974 she received the Cacique's Crown of Honour. On her return to Guyana, Gaskin was given the position of Head of Foreign Affairs and Economic Desk at the PNC Headquarters. She died on 5 March 1977.



Philip Alfonso Moore AA

Philip Alfonso Moore AA (1921-2012). Mr. Moore attended the Church of Scotland school, where he learnt the art of drawing and watercolour painting. He is a self-taught sculptor of wood. His most famous piece of art is the 1763 monument in the Square of the Revolution in D'Urban Park, Vlissengen Road, Guyana. He was a tutor in wood carving at the Guyana Technical Institute (1955-1956), pattern maker for the government pottery factory, programme assistant for the Department of Culture in painting and sculpture, head of the sculpture department, Burrowes School of Art, Georgetown (1979-1983), and director of the Cottage Studio & Museum for Functional Art (1984-1991). He is a recipient of the Arrow of Achievement for his celebrated 1763 monument.



Celeste Marguerite Dolphin, C.C.H.

Celeste Marguerite Dolphin, C.C.H. was a former Director of Broadcasting at the Ministry of Education, Georgetown. She produced the Broadcast to School programme which was regularly aired on radio. In fact, Dolphin was the first School Broadcast Organizer when the Broadcast to Schools Unit was established in 1954. Dolphin was the recipient of the Cacique Crown of Honour. She died on 17 November 2000. She was the sister of Lynette Dolphin, who was an outstanding Guyanese classical musician.



Magda Lois Muriel Pollard

Magda Lois Muriel Pollard was born on 29 March 1931. She attended Bishops High School and in 1954 she entered Queen's College, Glasgow where she earned a Teacher's diploma after three years of study. Pollard served as an Instructor at Carnegie School of Home Economics (1957), and Acting Home Economics Teacher, Bishops' High School (1960). She became the Principal of Carnegie School of Home Economics (1962) and then, Nutritionist, Caribbean Community Secretariat (1978). Pollard earned the Academic Post-Graduate Certificate in Home Economics relating to Community Development from the University of London. She was responsible for Food Service and Hospitality for many international conferences and meetings which were held in Guyana in the 1970s. Pollard was a member of the Guyana Home Economics Association and the Caribbean Association of Home Economics. She died on 9 May 2019.



Valerie Muriel Rodway, C.C. H.

Valerie Muriel Rodway, C.C. H. was a famous musical composer and teacher. She was born on 12 February 1919. She was a student of accomplished musicians such as Winifred and Vida McDavid, Edna Elcock, Ruby Megregor and Eleanor Kerry. Rodway attained the status of Licentiate of the Royal College of Music. Rodway composed most of her musical pieces in the 1960s. She is renowned for composing music for national poetry e.g. Arise Guyana, Kanaima, Independence Poem, Let Freedom Awaken, Hymn for Guyana's Children, and Guyana the Free. In the post Independence era, her songs were taught to the school children of Guyana. She died in August 1970. Rodway has received posthumously the Cacique Crown of Honour in 2019 and the Wordsworth McAndrew Award in 2002.



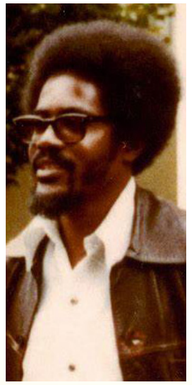
Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow

Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow was born on 18 December 1884. He was a veteran trade unionist who established the British Guiana Labour Union in 1919. This union included all kinds of workers e.g waterfront workers and factory workers. Specialist unions started by other leaders developed later. Critchlow organized the first Caribbean Trade Union Conference in 1926. He was nominated to sit on the Legislative Council as the Labour Representative in 1943. He was also nominated to serve on the Executive Council in 1944. Before his death on 14 May 1958, Critchlow had opened branches across the country. He also attempted to unionize the mineworkers in Mackenzie. He obtained some important gains for the workers e.g. the Rent Restriction Ordinance of 1922. A statue stands in the compound of the Parliament Building as a tribute to this great trade union leader.



Valarie Ann Amos

Valarie Ann Amos was born on 13 March 1954 in British Guiana. Her family migrated to Britain where she received her education. Baroness Amos was the first woman of African descent to serve in the British cabinet. Baroness Amos has held many important posts including Head, Equal Opportunities Commission (1989-1994), Member of the House of Lords where she speaks Inter alia on women's issues, International Development Secretary (2003), Leader of the House of Lords (2003-2007), British High Commissioner to Australia (2009-2010), Head, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2010-2015), Director, School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London (2015).



Walter Anthony Rodney

Walter Anthony Rodney was a Guyanese Historian who was born on 23 Mach 1942. Rodney's academic record is filled with awards, open scholarships and honours. He attended Queen's College, the top male high school in Guyana, and in 1960 graduated first in his class, winning an open scholarship to the University of the West Indies (UWI). He attended the University of London where he earned his doctorate at the age of 24. Dr Rodney taught History at the University College of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania (1966) and the University of the West Indies, Mona campus (1968). In 1974 Rodney joined the newly formed political group, the Working People's Alliance. He has written six books that have increased "knowledge of the history of Africa and the Caribbean…" He was assassinated on 13 June 1980



Eusi Kwayana (ne Sydney King)

Eusi Kwayana (ne Sydney King) was born on 4 April 1925. He was a scholar, writer and politician. He served as a cabinet minister in the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) elected in 1953 and was gaoled by the British Army in 1954. He founded the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA). According to St. Pierre, the forerunner of this organization was the African Society for Racial Equality which was also founded by Kwayana in 1961. By this time Kwayana was the Secretary of the People's National Congress. ASCRIA joined the Working People's Alliance in 1974. Kwayana was a well-known speaker at political events at the University of Guyana. He has written several books.



Eddy Grant

Eddy Grant was born on 5 March 1948 in British Guiana. In 1960 Grant and his brothers migrated to England where he enrolled at Ackland Burley Secondary School. Musically gifted, he played the trumpet, piano and guitar at secondary school. In 1965 Grant formed his first band named The Equals 1965 which produced a highly successful song 'Baby Come Back' in 1967. Grant left The Equals after suffering a heart attack when he was just 23 years old. Subsequently, he established his recording studio. His music is unique as it is a blend of West Indian music and other kinds of contemporary music. As a musician, he has been listed among the top twenty in the UK. Eddy Grant "established his label' Ice Record' and he is known as a "promoter through the socio-political commentary of the culture and achievements of contemporary black people." Grant later migrated to Barbados in 1980 where he established his recording complex, 'the Blue Wave'. He is internationally recognized as an astute businessman, President of his company, and a recording artist.



Carmen Jarvis, A.A.

Carmen Jarvis, A.A. was a respected educator in Guyana who taught at Smith's Congregational School and Queen's College. She attended Bishops' High School. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of London. In 1954 she earned the Post Graduate Certificate in Education from the Institute of Education in London. She was subsequently promoted to the position of Senior Mistress, Deputy Headmistress and Headmistress of the Bishops' High School (1971). Before this, Mrs Jarvis went to Britain in 1949 to study Girl Guiding. She was the first Guyanese woman to earn a Girl Guide Trainer's Diploma. On retiring from Bishops' High School in 1977, Mrs Jarvis became the Deputy Chief Education officer within the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture. In 1979 she was appointed to the position of Secretary-General of the Unesco Office in Guyana. Jarvis was the recipient of the Arrow of Achievement in 1981. She died on 29 March 2017.



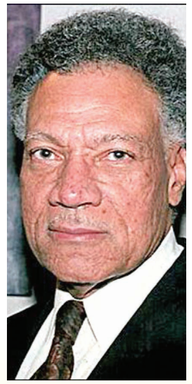
Dr Enid Denbow

Dr Enid Denbow was born on 3 August 1921. Educated at St. Joseph High School, she joined the staff of the Georgetown Public Hospital as a pupil nurse. In 1948 Denbow enrolled at Howard University, Washington D.C. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Zoology and a Medical degree from Women's College (Medical Institute), Philadelphia in 1955. In 1973 Dr Denbow was offered a USAID fellowship to study cardiology at the Pacific Medical Centre at the John Hopkins University. In 1972 she was appointed the Principal Physician, and in 1982, the Medical Superintendent to the Georgetown Hospital. In 1985 she became the Chief Medical Officer in Guyana. Dr Enid Denbow was a member of the Royal College of Physicians as well as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, England. She died in 2017.



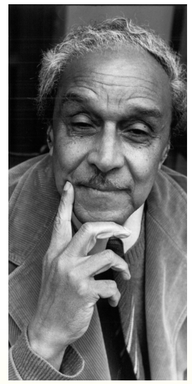
Professor Clive Thomas, C.C.H.

Professor Clive Thomas, C.C.H., renowned African Guyanese academic, received his Bachelor of Science degree in Economics from the University of London in 1961. Subsequently, he earned his doctorate from the same institution in 1964. He has taught at the Department of Economics, UWI, Mona Campus (1964-1969),(1998-1999), the University of Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania (1972-1973), the Consortium Graduate School for the Social Sciences (1988-1989), Colgate University (1995-1996) as well as the University of Guyana where he served as a Professor in the Department of Economics. Professor Thomas is a prolific writer who has written and co-authored many books and research monographs. He was the Director of the Institute of Development Studies, the University of Guyana for many years. Professor Thomas was the recipient of the Cacique Crown of Honour in 1993.



Ivan Gladstone Van Sertima

Ivan Gladstone Van Sertima was born on 26 January 1935 in British Guiana. He studied African languages and culture at London University. On his return to British Guiana, Van Sertima was employed as a Press and Broadcasting Officer of the Government Information Services (1957-1959). Subsequently, he was recruited to work at the BBC in London. While he was with that organization, Van Sertima published poetry and produced some critical writing. He published River and the Wall, a volume of verse circa 1958. While visiting the United States in 1970, Van Sertima read Lee Weinar's Africa and the Discovery of America. This book and the giant Olmec heads with 'negroid features' which were discovered in South America motivated Van Sertima to write his most famous book: They Came Before Columbus. It was published in 1977. In this book, Van Sertima contends that Africans reached the Americas before Christopher Columbus. This publication was made Book of the Month in May 1977 by Random House. He died on 25 May 2009.



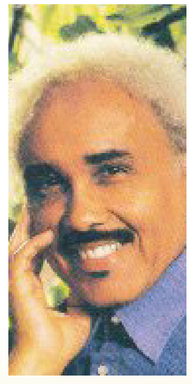
Wilson Harris

Wilson Harris was born on 24 March 1921 in British Guiana. He attended Queen's College. Wilson Harris served as a Government surveyor in British Guiana from 1942-1958. He has lectured around the world and served as writer-in-residence in Australia, New York, Texas, Toronto, and Cuba. Wilson Harris has written many novels of fiction some of which were set in Guyana. The Palace of the Peacocks is one of his more popular novels and was published along with the Far Journey of Oudin (1961), The Whole Armour (1962), and The Secret Ladder (1963) as a whole volume entitled The Guyana Quartet. He was the recipient of many awards, for example, the Arts Council Grant in 1968. He served as a Visiting Lecturer at the State University of New York, Buffalo, 1970; Writer-in-residence at University of Toronto; Visiting lecturer, University of the West Indies, Mona campus; Commonwealth Fellow in Caribbean Literature, Leeds University, United Kingdom; Visiting Professor at of Ethnic Studies and English at University of Texas at Austin (1971). He died on 8 March 2018 in England.



Edgar Mittelholzer

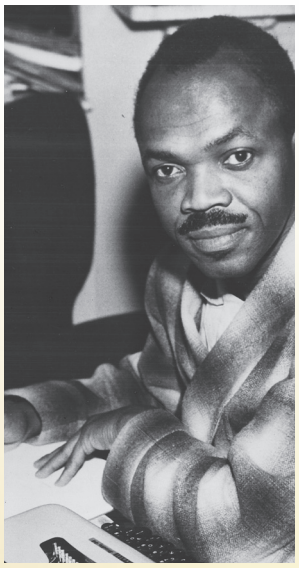
Edgar Mittelholzer was born in 1909 in British Guiana. He was a novelist, playwright and poet. At an early age, he decided to become a full-time writer but many of his novels were rejected by publishers. The first novel that was published was Corentyne Thunder. This was followed by Morning at the Office which was set in Trinidad. He also wrote My Bones and My Flute, a thriller that was turned into a radio play in Guyana. His most famous work may have been the Kaywana Trilogy which traces the history of a Dutch family from 1611 to 1953. Mittelholzer also wrote radio plays, plays for television, short stories and his autobiography Swarthy Boy. Mittelholzer was a recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship for Creative Arts, Latin America and the Caribbean in 1952. He died on 6 May 1965.



Roy Aubrey Kelvin Heath

Roy Aubrey Kelvin Heath was born on 13 August 1926 in British Guiana. He studied Modern languages at the London University in England. He also read Law in England and was called to the Bar in London in 1964. He did not practice Law but focused on careers in teaching and writing in London and was headteacher of a primary school. He has written several books including, A Man Come Home (1974), The Murderer (1978), From the Heath of the Day (1979), One Generation (1980), Genetha (1981). Heath wrote four more novels as well as Shadows Round the Moon which is a work of non-fiction. He received the Guardian Fiction Prize for The Murderer and the Guyana Theatre Guild Award for his play Inez Combray. He died on 14 May 2008.

This feature is sponsored by the International Decade of People of African Descent Assembly Guyana in honor of the many contributions of Afro Guyanese to this nation.



Edward Ricardo Braithwaite, C.C.H.

Edward Ricardo Braithwaite, C.C.H. was born in British Guiana on 27 June 1912. He was a celebrated novelist. He attended Queen's College then travelled to America where he earned his Bachelor of Science at City College, New York (1940) and Master of Science in Physics (1949). Braithwaite also studied at the London University. While in London, Braithwaite served as a schoolteacher for many years (1950-1957) and as a London County Council Welfare Office (1958-1960). In Paris, Braithwaite served as a Human Rights Officer in the Veterans' Foundation (1960-1963), and as a Lecturer and Education Officer at UNESCO (1963-1966). Years later Braithwaite represented Guyana as its Ambassador to Venezuela (1968). His most famous book, To Sir With Love, received the Anisfield-Wolf Award in 1960. It was later turned into a movie. He also wrote Paid Servant (1962), A Kind of Homecoming (1962), Choice of Straws (1965), Reluctant Neighbors (1972), Honorary White (1975), Billingsly (2014). In 2012, he was a recipient of the Cacique Crown of Honour. Braithwaite died on 12 December 2016.



President Hugh Desmond Hoyte

President Hugh Desmond Hoyte was born on 9 March 1929 in Guyana. Before proceeding overseas to study law, Hoyte taught at high schools in Guyana and Grenada. In 1950 he received the Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of London. Subsequently, Hoyte went to London where he earned the Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of London in 1959. On his return to Guyana in 1960, Hoyte started a private practice. He held several positions including Secretary, Guyana Bar Association, Chairman of the Legal Practitioners' Committee (1964), Chairman of the Customs tariff Tribunal 1966-1968), chairman of the Timber Grants Wages Council (1968), Vice-president of the Guyana Bar Association, and Senior Counsel (1970). President Hoyte was appointed to several posts in the People's National Congress. He served as Minister of Home Affairs (1969-1970), Minister of Finance (1970-1972), Minister of Works and Communication (1972-1974) and Minister of Economic Development (1974-1980). In 1980 he was appointed Vice President. In 1984 he served as Prime Minister and First Vice-President. On the death of Executive President L.F.S. Burnham was appointed President of Guyana on 6 August 1985. Hoyte remained President until 1992. He died on 22 December 2002.



Professor Joycelynne Loncke, A.A. and C.C.H.

Professor Joycelynne Loncke, A.A. and C.C.H. is a lecturer at the University of Guyana. She grew up in a famous musical family and all her siblings are accomplished musicians. She received a Guyana scholarship to study French at the University of the West Indies, Mona campus. However, she simultaneously pursued private music lessons. She was offered a French government scholarship to pursue studies at the Sorbonne at the University of Paris. Professor Loncke then pursued postgraduate studies at Somerville College, Oxford leading to a doctoral degree. Her dissertation was on the subject of music in French literature. Professor Loncke received several awards including the Arrow of Achievement in 1980 and the Cacique Crown of Honour in 1987. The French Government made her a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1974.



Dr Frank Williams

Dr Frank Williams was born on 28 December 1916 at Den Amstel, British Guiana. He attended Queen's College. He received his tertiary education at the London Hospital and Edinburgh University. Dr Williams earned the M.B., and B.S. degrees from the University of London in 1949, and the MRCP degree from Edinburgh University in 1954. On returning to British Guiana, he joined the staff of the Georgetown Hospital. He became a senior physician at that institution. Dr Frank Williams was a founding member of the Medical Arts Centre and the Theatre Guild in Georgetown. Dr Williams died at the age of 98 in 2015.



Joseph Holder, A.A.

Joseph Holder, A.A. is renowned in Guyana for bridging the Demerara River. He was the project manager whose responsibility was to build the Demerara Harbour Bridge. It is the world's longest floating bridge. The construction of this bridge gave him recognition as an engineer. Joseph Holder received a scholarship in 1955 to study Physics. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Physics, Pure Mathematics, and Applied Mathematics. He also attended the universities of Birmingham, Toronto, Guyana and Pittsburg. When he returned to British Guiana in 1960, he was appointed Assistant Engineer in the Public Works Department. Since then he has supervised the construction of the Abary bridge (1961), the Mahaica to Rosignol road (1965), and the Mahaica and Mahaicony bridges. While he was Chief of Works, he spearheaded the construction of the Soesdyke- Linden highway and the Essequibo road. In the 1980s he was appointed Permanent Secretary of Works Ministry and worked on the Linden/ Lethem road and the Takutu Bridge projects. Holder was the recipient of the Golden Arrow of Achievement in 1980.



Frederick Rudolph Wills

Frederick Rudolph Wills was a popular Guyanese statesman and lawyer. He was the Guiana Scholar in 1947. He read Law at the King's College, London where he was a recipient of the Jelf Medal for his sterling performance as a law graduate. He was also a Queen's Counsel in England. On his return to Guyana, he proved to be a brilliant lawyer. Wills was appointed Justice Minister and subsequently Minister of Foreign Affairs. He "presided over the United Nations Security Council" and had the opportunity to address the General Assembly on two occasions in the 1970s. In 1978 Wills migrated to the United States and was appointed Professor at Rutgers University, New Jersey. He was one of the founders of the Schiller Institute USA, in 1984. Wills was the captain of the Demerara Cricket Club in Guyana and served as a radio announcer at cricket games. He died in the USA in 1992.