

Caribbean Literature Day – July 12, 2020

EDITOR’S NOTE: Following is the full statement calling for Caribbean Literature Day to be celebrated on July 12, 2020 throughout the Caribbean region and beyond, issued by House of Nehesi Publishers (HNP), at the St. Martin Book Fair Closing Ceremony on June 6, 2020. Lasana M. Sekou, writer and projects director at HNP, read from the statement during the live broadcast of the literature festival on Facebook.

Statement at the Closing Ceremony of the St. Martin Book Fair, June 6, 2020

The House of Nehesi Publishers, on the occasion of the 18th annual St. Martin Book Fair, is hereby inviting all writers, aspiring writers, literary festivals, book clubs, journals, creative writing programs, and all creative artists, institutions, and media of the Caribbean region; all Caribbean peoples; and all lovers of Caribbean writings, authors, and books, from everywhere in the world, to join us in celebrating:

July 12 as Caribbean Literature Day.

We envision this day as the first pan-Caribbean literature day, celebrating the roots, range, and excellence of writings and books across the language zones of our region.

Celebrate the day by reading the works of your favorite Caribbean authors; buying Caribbean books, published in the Caribbean and beyond, and by Caribbean authors; and presenting Caribbean books as gifts.

Celebrate the day with books, recitals, and with discussions about books, of poetry, fiction, drama, art, music, and all the other genres by Caribbean writers.

458 years ago, on July 12, 1562, the Spanish Franciscan priest and bishop of Yucatán, Diego de Landa, with soldiers and colonial authorities in attendance, burned the sacred books of the Maya people.

As July 12 marked the destruction of the first known books and library containing knowledge spanning millennia in the widest space of this region, we are inviting all of you to grace this day with the attributes of the Maya Itzamna’s creative force of writing, of Legba, the opener of the gates of languages, of a brilliant phoenix, and **now** celebrate Caribbean literature, one of the world’s youngest and most resilient literatures, which continues to flourish within the same region that had at its most ancient recorded foundation, encoded and written in books, the orature and literature of a great people.

Have a happy Caribbean Literature Day, to everyone in every Caribbean country and territory, to everyone in what George Lamming called the Caribbean’s “external frontiers” and around the world.

Long live Caribbean Literature!