

## **Carolle Charles: 2013 Gordon K. and Sybille Lewis Award. St George, Grenada, June 06, 2013.**



The Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) is pleased to announce the 2013 Gordon K. and Sybil Lewis Award, which carries with it a monetary prize of \$1000, thanks to the generous Lewis Family donation and its continuing support of the CSA. The Award commemorates not one but these two distinguished Caribbeanists. One of the most important contributions of Gordon Lewis in particular, was the ways in which his work was trans-Caribbean. To quote a former CSA president, Holger Henke, a non-native like Lewis of the Caribbean Region, “what is most admirable in the intellect and integrity of this master Caribbeanist, is the fact that Gordon Lewis did not content himself with a facile comprehension of the Caribbean only as as a racial and [I would add] linguistic space.

For the past five years CSA has given the prize for the best book published in the past three years in a field of Caribbean Studies. Interestingly, this year we received around 35 manuscripts with about half of them studying Cuba and Haiti. Although these two countries seemed to dominate the scholarly field, the diversity and the depth of the studies made this year a real novelty. The reviews and recommendations made were based on some definite objective criteria. We look among others, at the importance of the theoretical contribution to our understanding of historical and/or contemporary issues within a discipline of the broader field of Caribbean Studies. We gave attention to the rigueur of the publication, like the use of primary source data, the use of new methodology, the development of new paradigm.

It is thus with great pleasure, that we announce that instead of one winner, this year we are delighted to have two authors sharing the prize for the 2013 Gordon K. & Sybil Lewis Award. The two winners are **Erica Caple James and Malik W. Ghachem**. Both authors are Haitianist scholars and are really worthy of the Gordon K and Sybil Lewis Award. Both books are well written, broadly interdisciplinary and make important contributions to the field of Caribbean Studies. **Congratulations to Erica Caple James and Malik W. Ghachem.**

**Two other books received a special mention. They are:**

**Melina Pappademos Black Political Activism and the Cuban Republic. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.**

**Lillian Guerra, Visions of Power in Cuba; Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959--1971 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.**

## CITATIONS

**Erica James. *Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti*.**

**Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, 384 pages.**

“Supported by a rich cultural heritage, the Haitian people retain a capacity for hope, faith, and resilience that remains a tremendous resource for any efforts to rehabilitate the nation and its people” (p. xxiv) writes Erica James in the preface to her book, *Democratic insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti*. This statement should accompany the reader through the book’s seven chapters.

Erica Caple James’ book, *Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention n Haiti* is an extraordinary text on the problem of military intervention in Haiti. It is a well written ethnography, highly engaging text on a crucial topic in contemporary Caribbean studies which are humanitarian and developmental assistance to a society with the conditions of Haiti. The author explores topics that are pertinent well beyond Haitian or Caribbean studies. She considers problems and issues of foreign assistance, local institutions, governance, violence, trauma, ethics, human suffering, institution building and democratic aspirations in this troubled context.

A keen observer with a trans disciplinary outlook and a profound knowledge of Haitian society, the author connects history and everyday life in her examination of trauma and its relational elements such as gender, sexuality, and rape. Her description of the ways in which Haitian society confronts the problems associated with weak government and foreign intervention is brilliant.

**Malick W. GHACHEM. *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution*. Cambridge University Press. 2012. 330 pages.**

*The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution* was published in March 2012 by Cambridge University Press. Authors and history scholars are calling the book a major contribution to our understanding of the emergence of modern-day Haiti and of the history of slavery. The book spans the period from 1685 to 1804, when Haitians became the first formerly enslaved people to overthrow a colonial power and it covers six chapters.

Well-written, well-documented and well contextualized analysis that sheds a new light on the slavery and post-slavery period in Saint-Domingue (the future Haiti). The innovative approach of the book lies in the brilliant demonstration of the link between colonial law (and especially the heritage of the Code Noir) and revolutionary developments that eventually led to emancipation.

The analysis goes beyond – and to a certain extent contradicts – the common belief in many academic circles of a fundamental historical rupture between the colonial era and the Revolutionary period that has led to view the Haitian Revolution as a historically and geographically decontextualized singularity. Instead, not only have connections between the Haitian Revolution and the French one been intimate (as shown in other works) but, the author argues, Old Regime legislation has directly inspired revolutionary administrators and lawmakers in the pursuit of their objectives of equal rights and stability.