

Walter Rodney, 1940-1980

A Brief Biographical Sketch

Dr. Walter Rodney was a graduate of the University of the West Indies and the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, where in 1966 he was awarded the Ph.D. degree at the age of twenty six.

He taught at the University College, Tanzania and the University of West Indies.

His publications include *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800*, (Clarendon Press), *The Groundings With My Brothers* (Boyle, L'Ouverture) and *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, published in 1972. He has also authored several articles in academic journals and working class publications.

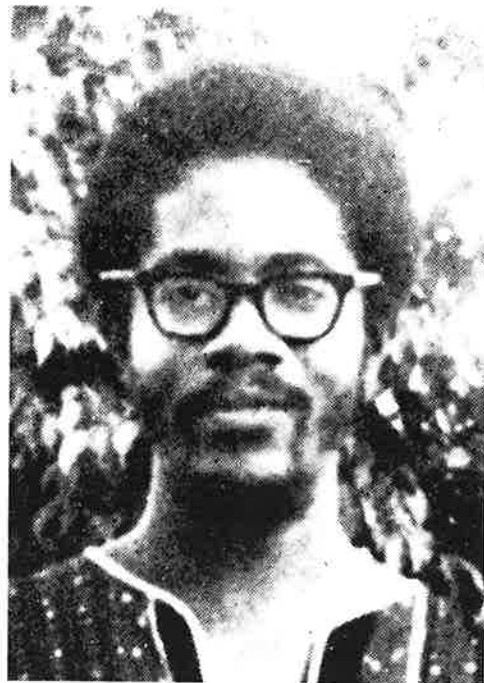
At his death he was leader of the Working Peoples' Alliance (WPA) formed in 1974. This Party brought together four diverse political and cultural groups in Guyana committed to social change. These were (1) The Association For Cultural Relations With Independent Africa (ASCRIA), (2) The Working Peoples' Vanguard Party (WPVP), (3) The Indian Peoples' Revolution Association (IPRA) and RATOON.

Rodney's involvement with the WPA often involved great personal risk. On July 11, 1979 for example, eight political activists including Rodney were arrested in their homes three hours after a bomb explosion destroyed the offices of the Ministry of National Development and the Guyana Sugar Corp.

Not only in Guyana but in Tanzania and Jamaica as well he was known for his grass roots organizational work among the working class. This was the principle reason he was barred from re-entering Jamaica in October 1968 and was refused a position at the University of Guyana in 1971 after the University had initially confirmed the appointment.

Rodney's lecture tours took him to Europe, Africa, North America and the Caribbean. His intellectual dedication and the meticulous research style have earned him great respect among "Third World" intellectuals and has made him the mentor of many energetic young Caribbean scholars at home and abroad.

But the ultimate source of his appeal lay in his capacity to combine rigorous scholarship with intensely committed political activism. Thus he managed to command the admiration of both the working class on one hand, and that of the academic community on the other.



Rodney's brief but invaluable career ended abruptly on June 13, 1980 while riding in his brother's car in Georgetown, Guayana. He was killed by an exploding bomb. The Caribbean and the world revolutionary movement has lost a great scholar and politician. Left to mourn his death are his wife, Patricia, their three children, Shaka, Kanini, and Asha, and all those with and for whom he has struggled.

A campaign is being organized to convince Amnesty International to sponsor an international inquiry into the murder of Walter Rodney and other political murders in the last year. We urge you to lend your support to this effort by writing to:

Amnesty International
Sec. General, Martin Ennals
10 Southampton St.
London, ENGLAND WC2E 7HF