

## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

### **Between Three Continents: Rethinking Equatorial Guinea on the Fortieth Anniversary of Its Independence from Spain**

Hofstra University, Hempstead (New York)

Thursday April 2—Saturday April 4, 2009

### **Between Three Continents: Rethinking Equatorial Guinea on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its Independence from Spain**

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I want to personally thank Professor Benita Sampedro Vizcaya and the font of energy and enthusiasm that have made it possible for her to bring together so many important diplomats, artists, scholars, writers and thinkers – not that the foregoing aren't all thinkers. Even a cursory perusal of the program demonstrates the breadth of inquiry and interest in Equatorial Guinea at a propitious moment in its history. This conference promises to make this an important moment in world history as well, as one of the goals is to encourage a reconsideration of the past in a view to shaping the future.

In Professor Sampedro's insightful piece of scholarship, entitled "Rethinking the Archive and the Colonial Library," and recently published in the *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, archival efforts to establish a history of Equatorial Guinea, as is the case for the history of so many former colonies in Africa and elsewhere, is too often an exercise in nostalgia and revisionism. As Derrida points out, the association between memory and forgetting is too tempting, too easy, and we must be vigilant to insist on the nature of the archive that is being established and that will represent Equatorial Guinea in the future. Rather than a "locus for covering the economic and psychological trauma and contributing to the formation of a public imperial imaginary,"<sup>1</sup> rather than "an insignia of colonial authority and a signifier of colonial discipline,"<sup>2</sup> rather than perpetuating a repository of memories of a past that some refuse to relinquish,<sup>3</sup> the present

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<sup>1</sup> Sampedro

<sup>2</sup> Homi Bhabha

<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.raimonland.net/>>

conference promises to offer possibilities for rethinking and reshaping conceptions of Equatorial Guinea.

The papers that will be presented at Hofstra for the next 3 days touch on many significant components of substance for the future of Equatorial Guinea and other emerging nation states. History, anthropology, economics, literature, plastic and performing arts, ethnicity and identity, gender matters, biodiversity, traditions and languages; as well as larger post-colonial and post-imperial debates. Dr. Benita Sampedro and the team of colleagues at the collaborating institutions have fashioned one of the most important conferences that Hofstra has hosted in recent times and surely one of the most important in global terms.

I am honored to welcome all of you to Hofstra University for this meaningful exchange of ideas. And I am grateful to my colleague Benita Sampedro for heroically marshalling the cooperation of so many distinguished people and institutions to make this conference a reality.

Thank you.

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