

# Re-thinking Césaire



## A Symposium in honor of the centenary of Aimé Césaire's birth

Friday May 30, 2014  
Lobero Room, University Center  
University of California, Santa Barbara

Aimé Césaire was one of the great poet-statesmen of the twentieth century. Co-founder of the Négritude movement and ardent anti-colonialist, he also authored some of the most powerful poetry in the French language, including the *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, which has become a classic of world literature. He served as mayor of Fort-de-France for 56 years and Deputy to the French national assembly for 48 years. He is a beloved figure in his native Martinique, where he is commonly referred to as Papa Césaire. But his legacy has not been without controversy. Notably, his theory of Négritude has been criticized as essentialist, and his role as the principal architect of the 1946 law on the "Departmentalization" of France's colonies has made him a target for independentists who believe that it exacerbated the neocolonial domination of the French Overseas Departments. This conference seeks to celebrate Césaire's multi-faceted legacy by paying it that most meaningful of tributes: a critical re-evaluation of his many accomplishments in light of their shifting meanings over time.

### Program

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| 9:30        | Coffee & welcome  |
| 10-10:45    | <b>Christopher Miller</b> (Yale) -- 'Eternity Changes Him': Posthumous Reinventions of Césaire  |
| 10:45-11:30 | <b>Jennifer Wilks</b> (U. of Texas) -- Resurgent Dissident: The Re-emergence of Suzanne Césaire as Négritude Theorist                     |
| 11:30-12:15 | <b>Nick Nesbitt</b> (Princeton) -- Césaire 1960: Decolonization and the Problem of the State  |
| 12:30-2     | Lunch   |
| 2-2:45      | <b>Richard Watts</b> (U. of Washington) -- Césaire and 'Nature' after Surrealism  |
| 2:45-3:30   | <b>Souleymane Bachir Diagne</b> (Columbia) -- Rethinking Négritude  |
| 3:30-3:45   | Coffee Break  |
| 3:45-5      | <b>Closing Roundtable</b> -- Césaire Today (with the participation of UC Caribbeanists Carrie Noland, Roberto Strongman, and Eric Prieto) |

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