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THE LEGACY CONTINUES

JESSICA AND ERIC IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Jessica and Eric entered the year 2000 aged 72 and 70 respectively. Officially in the UK this is beyond retirement age. However, the pair continued to lead and support a number of projects. Their involvement in community and political activities did not decrease with the advancing of age. They seemed to be re-inspired and re-energised. There were many achievements to celebrate as well as the beginning of public recognition of their work in the new century.

The Huntleys continued their interests in community development as active members of groups such as the Caribbean Parents Group in Ealing. The group developed a Credit Union and worked with Ealing Council to contribute to education in schools in the borough. This led to Eric becoming a school governor and Jessica providing advice on the coordination of the local authority's Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant. This was a grant set up for local authorities to "narrow achievement gaps for pupils from those minority ethnic groups who are at risk of underachieving and to help meet the particular needs of bilingual pupils".

In 2000 the Caribbean Teachers Association honoured Jessica, who had supported the Association from its early beginnings; she had been an advisor and both she and Eric were speakers at their events. Their daughter Accabre had led workshops and read poetry at the Association's events. That same year Jessica became an Honorary Doctor of Literature, for her major contribution to literature at local, national and international levels. She was awarded the DLitt by London South Bank University, on which occasion Professor Harry Goulbourne gave a tribute.

In December 2000 Jessica and Eric celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Earlier that year there was a disaster in Mozambique. Five weeks of heavy rainfall resulted in the banks of the Limpopo River overflowing, making thousands of people homeless. In celebrating their golden wedding anniversary, with the support of family and friends, the Huntleys organised a gala event that included an auction to raise funds for the people of Mozambique who had been made homeless. They received a generous response to their letters requesting donations of items for an auction instead of wedding anniversary presents. Valuable original paintings and sculptures, with one-off pieces of jewellery and new household goods were donated. At the gala event, a message from Eusi Kwayana in Guyana was read. The prominent Black British actor Rudolph Walker was the auctioneer who helped to raise money for the appeal. The event was held at Ealing Town Hall with performances by poets

and musicians, including Black Voices, Keith Waithe and the Macusi Players, among others. A Guyanese folk group performed and sang que-que songs. A variety of Caribbean food was served that included traditional Guyanese dishes such as pepperpot, lo mein, curry channa and pholourie. The beautifully decorated anniversary cake was the well-known Guyanese Black Cake.

Eric was able to continue his interests in the Caribbean region. He edited Caribbean Environment Watch, a quarterly magazine he founded in 1995, which was mainly sold in the UK. The magazine encouraged the British Caribbean community to take action against the destruction of their environment. Over the years the environment in the Caribbean region had been deteriorating due to deforestation, seashore and coral erosion, reduction in the fish stock as a result of overfishing, pollution and waste disposal. He encouraged readers to help identify themes for the publication. They provided environmental stories from newspaper clippings and wrote about personal experiences of visiting the Caribbean. The magazine was financed through subscriptions in the early stages but later issues relied on advertisements. Eric toured the Caribbean attending conferences on conservation and observing strategies to protect the environment, which he reported in Caribbean Environment Watch. The places he visited included Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, St Lucia, St Vincent and Trinidad and Tobago.

Throughout their adult lives, the Huntleys kept records of significant events, correspondence, books, photographs and literature from personal and professional activities. By 2000 they became concerned about protecting the materials they had collected over a lifetime. They used to store their archives in a loft at the Keskidee Centre, the UK's first arts centre for the Black community, which had been started in the early 1970s by a friend of theirs, Guyanese architect Oscar Abrams (who died in 1996); named after a bird native to Guyana, Keskidee was located in Gifford Street, near King's Cross in Islington. After a fire at the Centre, the Huntleys moved their papers to their home into a purpose-built annexe at the end of their garden. Unfortunately, the archives were damaged following a burst water pipe and Eric and Jessica threw away some of these prized possessions, unaware of the kinds of technology that were available to retrieve water-damaged literature at the time.

In 2002 the Huntleys decided to set up a Bogle-L'Ouverture Archiving Project to preserve their collection and consider how to make it more widely accessible. Together with Maureen Roberts and Harry Goulbourne, they formed a group that explored the possibility of making their archives available to the public by opening a centre in Ealing. When this proved unachievable they contacted Yinnon Ezra, a friend and senior manager at Hampshire County Council, who suggested they

approach the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA). After making contact with LMA, several meetings took place to discuss the process of depositing the archives. Jessica and Eric were impressed with the respect with which their works were treated and the attention given to their concerns by the LMA director, Deborah Jenkins, her senior officer Richard Wiltshire and manager Charlotte Shaw. The LMA team recognised the importance of the Huntleys' "rich and powerful collection of materials covering fifty years of Black History in London". Following negotiations and an exchange of contracts, the Huntley archives were deposited at LMA in 2005. Fittingly, LMA named its largest meeting room "The Huntley Room".