

# Celebrating Haiti's Bicentenary

By **TANYA BATSON-SAVAGE**, Staff Reporter

**MUSIC, DANCE, AND words were used to celebrate Haiti and mark the arrival of the bicentenary of the Haitian Revolution. The University of the West Indies, Mona, St. Andrew campus, presented a 'Tribute to the Ancestors' early this month, on what is traditionally Forefathers' Day in Haiti.**

The event took place at the Undercroft of the Senate Building on the campus. Though school was not yet back in session, and so very few students were in attendance, a fair audience turned out for the important event to mark Haiti's significance in the face of its current hardships.

The event featured a marriage of powerful words through poetry and song and the potency of the drum. There were performances by Ibo Cooper and Friends, who performed in both French Creole and English. The songs pointed to the importance of the Haitian- Jamaican connection in the revolution, a theme which was often repeated throughout the night.

The revolution had begun with the Bois caïman ceremony, which had been orchestrated by the Jamaican Bookman. Mutabaruka, who hosted the event, noted with dismay that enough scholarly attention had not been paid to Bookman, and should that be continued, Bookman may be reduced to fiction.

## **Performances**

The present state of Haiti was also dealt with during the night, which also featured performances by Dr. Velma Pollard, Amina Blackwood Meeks, L'Acadco, M'Bala, Professor Barry Chevannes, the Akwaaba drummers, Jean Small and Arthur Newland.

The celebrations of the revolution's bicentenary will extend beyond the campus and Jamaica. This month, there will be an exhibition on the revolution at the university's main library followed by an exhibition on Haiti in the same venue in February. There will also be conferences locally, in Havana, Cuba; and Atlanta in the United States. The folklife festival at the Smithsonian Institute will also be a part of this year's celebrations.

The Marcus Garvey Movement will also play its part. The group begins its activities in February with the annual 'Black History Month' lecture on Haiti and the Haitian Revolution on February 26, 2004. In March the movement will host a weekly film festival. In May the All African Student's Association conference will be held under the theme 'The Bicentenary of the Haitian Revolution: Prospects, Possibilities and Perspectives'.

When he addressed the audience, Alwyn Bully, a specialist for Culture with UNESCO, argued that the year of activities would allow the country to rectify the widespread ignorance of the revolution and the Jamaica's relationship to it.