

**Introduction of The Three Griots**  
by Dr. Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill  
First James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies

Good Day Everyone. Welcome.

As first appointee to the **James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies**, I am particularly pleased to greet and welcome you to this singular Event, **A Reading by Three Canadian Griots**.

Before proceeding, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and acknowledge the presence among us of Dalhousie's Vice-President of Academic and Research, Dr. Deborah Hobson.

James Robinson Johnston was the first member of Nova Scotia's Black Community to graduate in Law from Dalhousie University. The year was 1898; and after his untimely death in 1915, the Black Community of Nova Scotia had to wait another fifty (50) years— half a century!— for another African Nova Scotian lawyer to graduate.

The mandate and stated mission of the **James Robinson Johnston Chair**, to bring into the Academy Black culture, reality, perspectives, experiences and concerns, forms a fitting backdrop for today's **Readings by Three Canadian Griots**.

But, what exactly is a *Griot*? A *griot* is a recorder, a historian, a cultural formalist of society.

In African tradition, oral tradition or *orature*, was preserved and passed on by the griots, the storytellers, those keepers of history who would speak history and culture, recalling the names, deeds and exploits of great ones.

Today, we here at Dalhousie draw on this rich slice of African Heritage and proudly present to you Three Canadian Griots: Austin Clarke, Cecil Foster & Mairuth Sarsfield.