



Timothy Miller and Joan Hyde (Photo: Phillip Lemonte)



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We'll miss our Rex

Childhood friends, theatrical colleagues remember late cultural icon

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BUNKER'S HILL, Trelawny—

Dr Timothy Miller and his sister, Joan Hyde, a retired teacher, yesterday remembered the late Professor Rex Nettleford as the childhood friend who inspired them to take nation building seriously.

"Actually I met Rex in Cayman Island when he came to perform and I knew he was from Bunker's Hill where I am from. He recruited me to work at the UWI as estate manager. During that time I was building a university and he donated some books to the library. He established the Rex Nettleford library here," Miller, a resident of Nettleford's Bunker's Hill hometown, told the **Observer West**.

"The man has been such an influence in my life. He was then one who encouraged me to come back to Jamaica to rebuild the nation," he added.

Miller thinks he may have been the last person here to whom the late cultural icon spoke before departing the island for the United States of America to participate in a fund-raising gala for the University of the West Indies.

"I was talking to him while he was at the airport and he was saying, 'listen, I have to go now because I have to board the plane and I have to turn off my cellphone... so I am really in mourning,'" Miller noted.

Hyde, who went to Unity Primary, almost 10

years after Nettleford left for Cornwall College in Montego Bay, was equally distressed.

"We all have to die but I thought he would come back out of the coma. I went to the same primary school as he did—that is Unity. He was very quiet... doesn't talk above a whisper. Also very kind. His schoolmates always talk about how kind he was as he shared whatever he had. He was not rich but he was a little better off," she said.

She added: "He was a humble person; we all knew he was brilliant, but he was not a show-off with it. When he left (Cornwall College) and we would make much of him he would just smile and say thank you. I really miss him."

Montego Bay-based actor and publisher Lloyd B Smith said Nettleford will be difficult to replace.

"He was one of a kind. I think it is going to take maybe decades before another person of his magnitude, his intellectual capacity and such a cultural icon to come back on the scene," said Smith.

Director/actor Douglas Prout took solace in the late cultural icon's rich legacy.

"It is an unspeakable loss. The only good is that he has left behind an invaluable body of work and a legacy that will live on."

Nettleford died in the George Washington University Intensive Care Unit Tuesday, six days after he collapsed in his hotel room in Washington.

He suffered a massive heart attack, was admitted to the hospital's intensive care unit and placed on life support. He never regained consciousness and was disconnected at 8:00 pm.