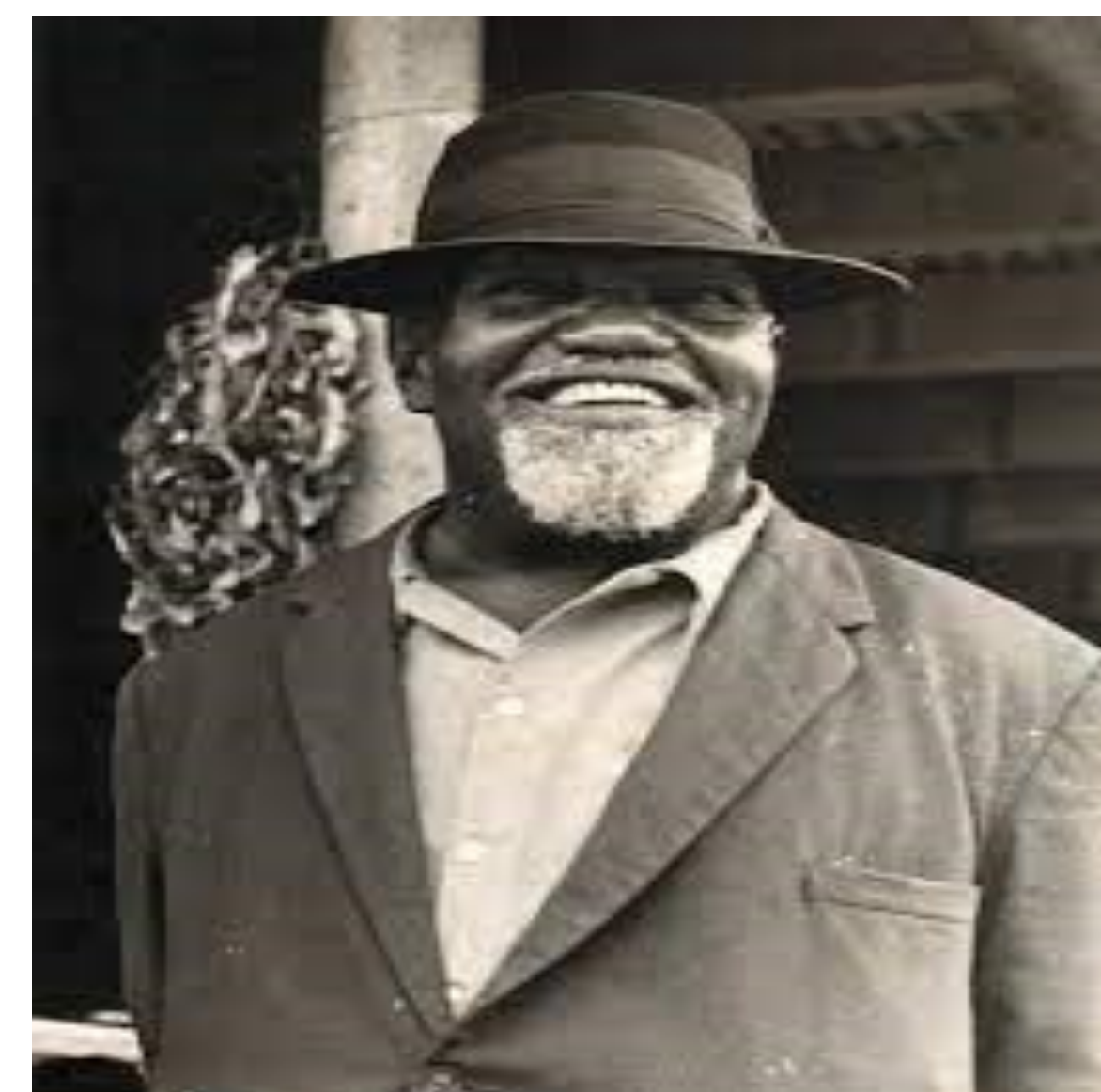


LABOUR DAY

Labour Day celebrations in Trinidad and Tobago was declared an annual national holiday in 1973. Celebrated on June 19th, it is the anniversary of the day of the Butler Oilfield Riots which took place in 1937. Prior to this time there were ongoing tensions between workers and employers in many sectors of society. These were characterized by situations of worker abuse, underpayment for labour, racism, economic depression and a considerable fall in the living standards of the working class. **Between 1934 and 1937 workers became more influenced by a need for change resulting in strikes and riots on the sugar plantations and in the oil fields** and in **September 1937, the Oilfield Workers Trade Union (OWTU) also became the first registered trade union in the country representing the rights of those in the petroleum industry.** This social unrest then extended throughout the Caribbean and gave rise to several prominent **labour leaders** in Trinidad and Tobago such as Tubal Uriah “Buzz” Butler, Captain Andrew Arthur Cipriani, George Weekes, Albert Maria Gomes, Adrian Cola Rienzi, Elma Francois, and C.L.R James.

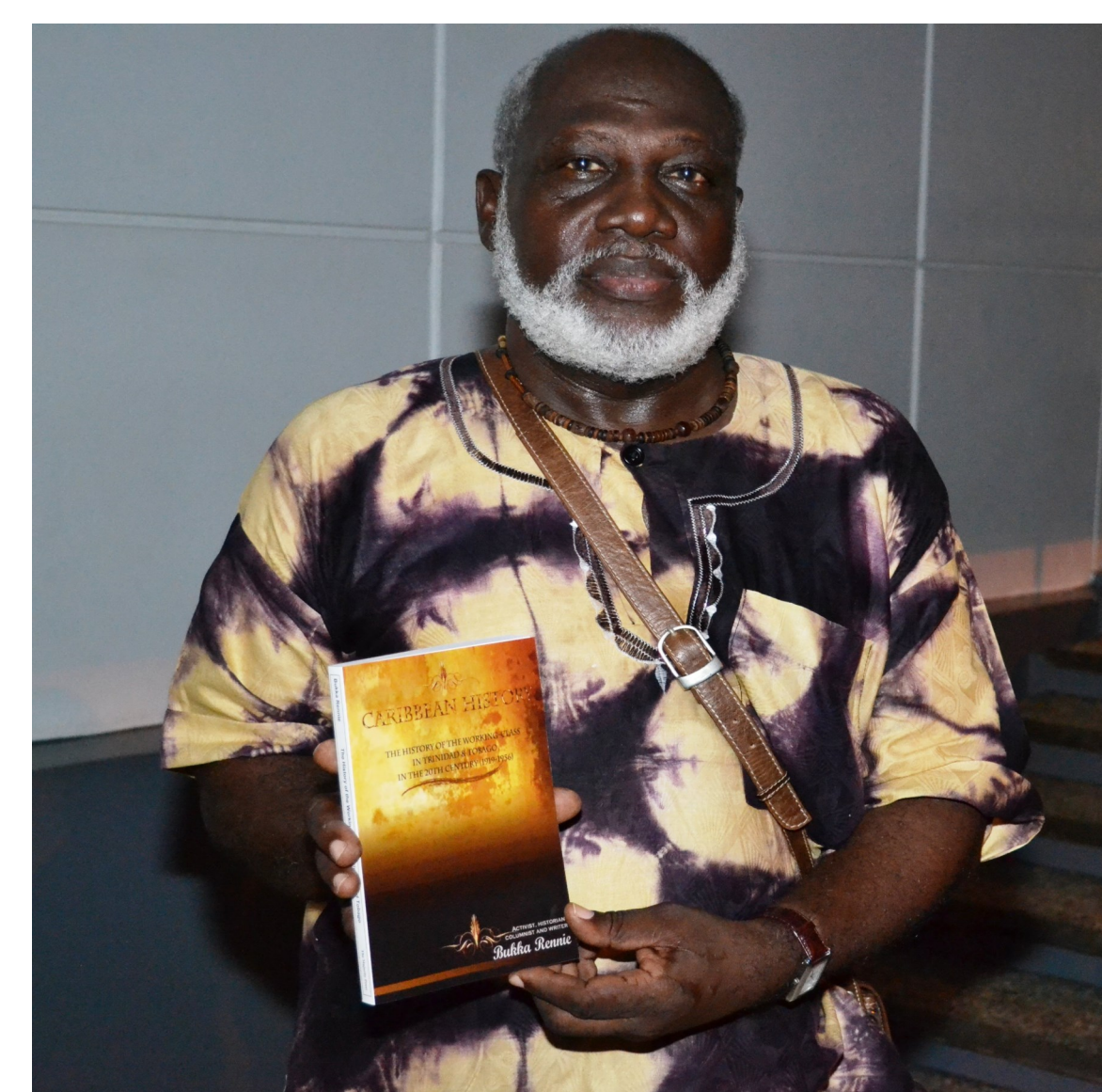
During a labour dispute on the Port-of-Spain wharves in November 1919, Captain Andrew Arthur Cipriani called on the workers to withhold their labour, and this resulted in their first important industrial strike in Trinidad. George Weekes, another well known Trade Unionist, possessed a powerful political leadership style which moved people toward a confidence to stand for what was just and right. He gave them a vision that planted seeds of liberation to move beyond salaries and working conditions – along the road of self, world view, economics and government. Albert Maria Gomes became a City Councilor and Legislator who fought for social and political justice for the people of Trinidad. He was also a supporter of the literary and visual arts; in 1931 he founded a magazine “The Beacon” which provided a forum for well known figures such as C.L.R. James and which led to the recognition of excellent literary works in later years from writers such as Earl Lovelace, Merle Hodge and many others from Trinidad and Tobago. **Adrian Cola Rienzi served as the mayor of San Fernando in November 1939 and administered the borough for three consecutive terms, until November 1942.** He was a member of the franchise committee which was appointed in 1941, and strongly advocated universal adult suffrage. St. Vincent born Elma Francois became a founding member of the National Unemployed Movement and its more radical successor, the Negro Welfare, Cultural and Social Association, to which she devoted the rest of her life. Regarded as one of the most celebrated thinkers of Trinidad and Tobago, and the whole Commonwealth Caribbean, **C.L.R James was against colonialism and against racial prejudice in all its forms and he began to formulate his thoughts on the just and classless society.** Apart from his contributions to politics, his passion for poetry and literature reward him with the nation’s highest decoration, the Trinity Cross. **Tubal Uriah “Buzz” Butler, a Grenadian immigrant who worked in the oilfield, was instrumental in the development of the labour union movement which emphasized the importance of collective unionism in treating worker discontent and the abuses they faced by their employers.** Butler was awarded the nation’s highest honor, the Trinity Cross, and the country’s main highway has been re-named in his honor. Today, a statue of Butler stands at the Fyzabad junction also known as the Charlie King Junction, the place where police attempted to arrest him on June 19th, the day of the historic riots 1937.



Tubal Uriah “Buzz” Butler



Arthur Andrew Cipriani



George Weekes



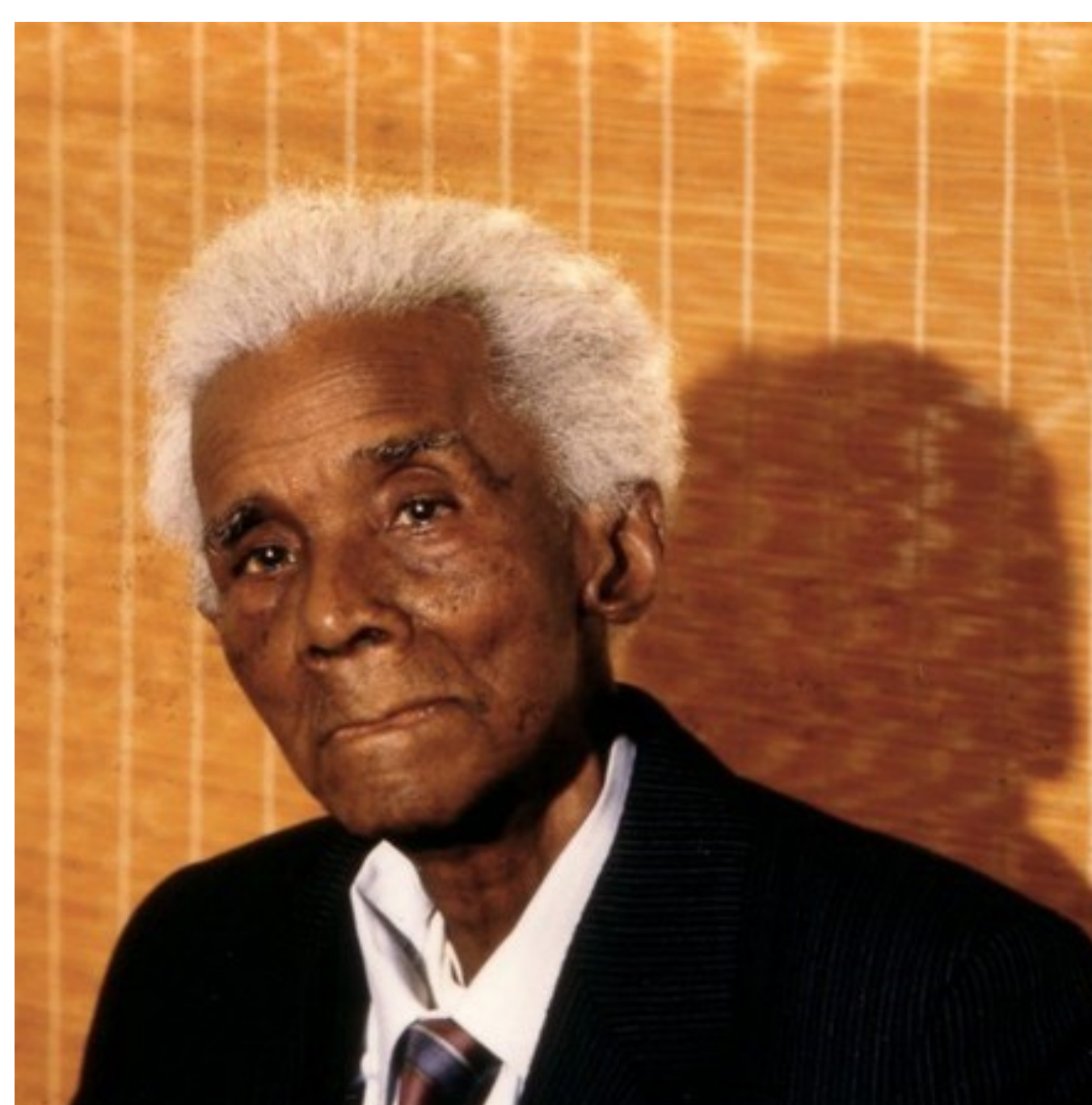
Albert Maria Gomes



Adrian Cola Rienzi



Elma Francois



C.L.R. James