

## W. Arthur Lewis and the Birth of Development Economics

By Robert L. Tignor



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W. Arthur Lewis was one of the foremost intellectuals, economists, and political activists of the twentieth century. In this book, the first intellectual biography of Lewis, Robert Tignor traces Lewis's life from its beginnings on the small island of St. Lucia to Lewis's arrival at Princeton University in the early 1960s. A chronicle of Lewis's unflinching efforts to promote racial justice and decolonization, it provides a history of development economics as seen through the life of one of its most important founders.

If there were a record for the number of "firsts" achieved by one man during his lifetime, Lewis would be a contender. He was the first black professor in a British university and also at Princeton University and the first person of African descent to win a Nobel Prize in a field other than literature or peace. His writings, which included his book *The Theory of Economic Growth*, were among the first to describe the field of development economics.

Quickly gaining the attention of the leadership of colonized territories, he helped develop blueprints for the changing relationship between the former colonies and their former rulers. He made significant contributions to Ghana's quest for economic growth and the West Indies' desire to create a first-class institution of higher learning serving all of the Anglophone territories in the Caribbean.

This book, based on Lewis's personal papers, provides a new view of this renowned economist and his impact on economic growth in the twentieth century. It will intrigue not only students of development economics but also anyone interested in colonialism and decolonization, and justice for the poor in third-world countries.



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Tignor's book is one for enthusiasts of development, of social science research and of African history. It is long, closely written, tightly researched and scrupulously comprehensive."--**Lawrence Haddad, *Times Higher Education Supplement***

"This book can be read on two levels. On the human level, it is the story of triumph against adversity. . . . [A]t the level of the contribution made by a professional economist to economic development, this book reads as a story of intellectual failure in the face of political reality. . . . Each of these chapters is thoroughly researched, judiciously blending discussions of Lewis's personal life and of the changes taking place in the world."--**Ranald Michie, *Business History Review***

"In this splendid intellectual biography, Robert L. Tignor examines Lewis's career and thought, giving particular emphasis to his experiences in Africa. . . . This is an important biography, and one that will benefit scholars seeking to understand the enormous gap between economic aspirations and achievements in much of the developing world, as well as the struggle for racial justice. For students of post-independence Africa the book has special relevance."--**Alfred E. Eckes, *International History Review***

"Robert Tignor has produced an impressive intellectual biography of the remarkable economist, policy advisor, and educator, Sir W. Arthur Lewis."--**James B. Stewart, *Journal of African American History***

#### From the Back Cover

"This is a splendid book about a great man. It is full of lessons for all of us as we continue to struggle worldwide with issues of race and of the role of intellectuals as policy advisors. Few human beings have ever had the intelligence, the courage, and the grace of Arthur Lewis; for that reason, Arthur's disappointments in trying to improve life in Ghana and the West Indies are sobering indeed."--**William G. Bowen, President Emeritus, Princeton University, and President, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**

"Robert Tignor's book tells the story of a fascinating man in fascinating times. It is a story that gets the reader into one of the most important dramas of the past half century: the attempt to build free and prosperous nations out of impoverished colonies."--**Fred Cooper, New York University**

"More than a mere biography of this remarkable man, this book is an eminently readable study of several important matters. It lays out the origins of development theory as a significant branch of economic analysis. It helps us to understand why so many developing countries have failed to make economic progress. It offers insights into the structure of racial discrimination. And it tells the fascinating story of a very wise man and his role inside and outside the academy."--**William Baumol, New York University**

"Bob Tignor's fine intellectual biography of his friend Sir Arthur Lewis, traces the development of one of the most important and enigmatic economists of the twentieth century. Tignor's book has much to tell us about the brutal conflict between development economics and politics in post-colonial Africa, a conflict that still casts its shadow over the least-developed continent of the world."--**Angus Deaton, Princeton University**

"Tignor provides an exciting epic of economist-as-engaged-public-figure. His many gifts as a historian are

especially evident in the multi-faceted and definitive accounts of Lewis's role as principled United Nations advisor and as a fighter for supranational Caribbean institutions."--**Mark Gersovitz, The Johns Hopkins University**

#### About the Author

Robert L. Tignor is Rosengarten Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Princeton University. He teaches courses on modern African history and world history and publishes on the same subjects.

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