

**Speaking Notes for Most Hon. P.J. Patterson**  
**Handing Over of Books on Africa by Prof. Franklin Knight**  
**Wednesday, May 18, 2022**

**Africa Day**

Tuesday 25 May, African governments and people of African descent commemorate what is known as "Africa Day". The day was formerly known as African Liberation Day is the annual commemoration of the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on 5 May 1963.

Africa Day is a necessary reminder of the experience of the struggle for liberation from slavery, colonialism and imperialism.

The legacy of exploitation and persistent poverty are in large part due to the continued disadvantages of that experience which still hindering the social and economic development of Africa and the global African diaspora.

Africa Day is not only for reflection of the past but a call for resolute internationally coordinated action by Africans at home and abroad to complete the liberation process by playing a leading role in creating a just international order.

## Caribbean's Role in African Liberation

- The Caribbean played a proud and leading role in the fight for the decolonisation of Africa and in the continent's long and arduous liberation struggle.
- Marcus Garvey's universal message of Black pride and equality kindled the spirit and fanned the flames of political and mental liberation not just in the Caribbean, the United States, Central America and Britain, but importantly in Africa. He influenced the thinking of giants of African decolonisation including Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Namdi Azikwe of Nigeria.
- As I have said in the campaign for the exoneration of Marcus Garvey, no one has devoted more of his life to the fight for freedom from the scourge of racism, or written with greater clarity to inspire those who seek no more than the right for the dignity of each and every human-being, despite the colour of one's skin, than the Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey.
- Trinidadian Pan-Africanist and anti-imperial activist George Padmore had a profound and consistent impact on the African struggle for decolonisation. His advocacy provided inspiration and support to the Independence freedom fighters of Western Africa .

- Our West Indian cricketers were not to be outdone in taking a bold stance against apartheid and no one can be in any doubt about their principled stance against racism in sports and their unwavering support for equality and the dignity of all humans regardless of race, colour, religion or nationality.
  
- Caribbean musicians led by Reggae icon Bob Marley devoted considerable time and talent to preaching the message of African liberation. These sounds have reverberated across the countries of Africa for decades. The reggae and Calypso tunes of freedom, redemption, liberation and equality echoed among guerilla fighters even as they powerfully galvanized urban youth in the fight for the liberation of Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa.
  
- In the Caribbean leadership of the ACP, the Group of 77 and relentless advocacy in the halls of the United Nations and the platforms of the Non-Aligned Movement, the cause of the liberation of Southern Africa and the ending of the pernicious system of apartheid in South Africa, was championed by the brave leaders of our region.
  
- The role various Caribbean countries went beyond advocacy and passive support to include the provision of passports for global travel to icons of the anti-apartheid movement such as Thabo Mbeki, while they were in exile.

- Several Caribbean nations were among the first countries in the world to impose trade embargos against racist South Africa, taking their cue from Norman Manley, who boldly decided to assert our region's collective abhorrence of racism, racial segregation and institutional oppression even before we were independent nations.
- The Caribbean's defence of the right to self-determination and the sanctity of national sovereignty without interference, which we have consistently waged for decades, are principles that are eternal. They were correct in the past and remain right and relevant now in every part of the globe. As a Caribbean people, we remain convinced that those who defy and disregard these sacred tenets of human dignity, decency and co-existence, will forever find themselves on the wrong side of history.

### **The PJ Patterson Centre**

- Two years ago, on June 26, the PJ Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy was launched to coordinate public policy and advocacy in fostering development relations between the Caribbean and Africa.
- We are forging new relationships and advancing old ties with ancestral Africa at the levels of Governments, international organisations, universities, businesses, sports, community institutions and other people to people contact. In doing so, we are drawing on expertise from all over the world.

- The Centre is doing its part in building bridges between Africa and the Caribbean through academic exchanges and collaborations with institutions around economic and trade policy, cultural interaction and governance, climate change and other critical areas.
- In all of this, the role of Africans and Caribbean people in the Diaspora is critical.

## **The Library**

- The Centre is also encouraging more reading and research on Africa, the Caribbean and the global African and Caribbean diaspora. We are coordinating a network of distinguished scholars and pulling together a vast trove of valuable published and unpublished works that already exist in these areas.
- A collection of materials such as those which constitutes a library is essential for improving knowledge of our history and the contemporary world.
- It is against this background that the centre is establishing a library on African and Caribbean issues and advocacy, that will be available to assist students, researchers and policy makers now and in the future.

- Reading literature by African and Caribbean people, about the African continent, the Caribbean archipelago and mainlands, and about the world in which we live, is essential to understanding our history and for providing insights about the dynamics of the modern globalised world.
- Access to information is a vital part of the advocacy to which the Centre is committed. It is our firm belief that the democratisation of information can be a powerful impulse and catalyst for social and economic development.
- An important part of our mission is to become a repository of knowledge about the Caribbean and Africa and about the technical processes and commitments required to advance the sustainable development of our countries and people.
- It is part of our work programme to make available on the Centre's website ([www.cafricara.com](http://www.cafricara.com)), links to various valuable sources of information on Africa and the Caribbean for the benefit of all.
- We are engaging the full range of academics and pertinent research at The UWI and elsewhere in the production of a strategic framework for Africa-Caribbean co-operation and development action.

## **The Donation**

- Today we are receiving these important volumes on African History and Culture from a proud Caribbean person and a product of The University College of the West Indies, who has distinguished himself in academia

globally. Professor Franklin W. Knight is a historian of Latin America and the Caribbean, who is emeritus professor at Johns Hopkins University in the United States, where he was the Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Professor of History and Director of the Centre for Africana Studies.

The PJ Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy is pleased to be receiving this important gift of seminal publications on African History and Culture on the cusp of the observance of African Liberation Day 2022 on May 25.

Professor Emeritus Franklin Knight is one of the world's foremost scholars of History, who has done pioneering work in the history of Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas.

As an academic of international repute, he holds a special place in having over many decades, chronicled the background to, and events of, African colonisation, trans-Atlantic slavery, the African liberation struggle, Caribbean societies and the continuing symbiotic relationship between the Caribbean and the African continent.

- The Centre is indebted to Professor Knight for his generous gift.
- This is a welcome start on which we intend to build.
- Marcus Garvey famously wrote: **“A people without knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.”**
- May the roots of African and Caribbean advocacy flourish and grow strong, watered by the knowledge gained from these publications and nurtured by our self of self as people of Africa and the Caribbean, confident of our rightful place in history and in the world.