

**REMARKS**

**BY**

**THE MOST HON. P.J. PATTERSON**

**AT**

**‘THREE LEGENDS” :**

**Three Perspectives, One Conversation**

**Reparations & Beyond**

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**BARBADOS**

Moderator

Colleagues

Friends

Let me begin by congratulating Prime Minister Mottley and all those who helped to organize this timely and topical conversation on Reparations and Beyond.

Much as we all would have preferred my physical presence, the advances and usage of modern technology permit me to share fully my perspectives based on my years of political engagement and my present role as Statesman-In-Residence of the Africa Caribbean Institute for Advocacy established at the University of the West Indies.

Mia, you may be assured that at the earliest mutually convenient moment, I look forward to a face to face discussion with you and avail myself of the warm and generous hospitality which you and your country have always extended to me.

I join in extending a warm fraternal welcome to my brother Olesugun Obasanjo, whose passion for the cause of equitable global development and the intrinsic collective value of the 6 Regions of Africa has been manifest over several decades. I am happy that he has chosen to visit the 6<sup>th</sup> Region, despite the pressures of a heavy schedule, which even younger persons, might find intolerable, as he helps to resolve numerous internal conflicts within Africa and remaining a strong voice for peace, human rights and social development in numerous internal fora.

What do I need to say about my friend and colleague Ralph, who by his countless years of student and political leadership, has now become the unquestioned Dean of Caribbean Heads? Nuff respect for your opening innings in this conversation – which I hope our West Indian batsmen will watch and emulate on the cricket field.

This Roundtable Discussion occurs during a very special period for me, because it was in 1997 we restored Emancipation Day on August morning as one to commemorate the atrocities which our ancestors suffered and fixed August 6 separately to celebrate our freedom from Colonial rule. The result is to create a special period, now known as Emancipence Week to reflect on our psychic inheritance, re-awaken the consciousness of independence and seek to release the creative potential of our people.

As Marcus Garvey reminds us – **“A people without knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.”** This causes me to proceed in my contribution to the dialogue today by emphasizing the inextricable links in our common heritage and the historic significance of our liberation from slavery and the freedom from imperial rule.

## **Reparations**

The compelling case for Reparative Justice, based on the research for brilliant scholarship started by Dr. Eric Williams is gradually gaining universal acceptance.

Belgium and the Netherlands have offered apologies – but no money. The government of the United Kingdom, primary progenitors of the Slave Trade and rulers of the Empire, persist in a stubborn denial, despite what the intellectual research of their most venerable Universities has revealed.

Reparation is overdue to redress the wrong we have suffered. International law recognizes that nations or individuals who have wronged other nations or individuals should render reparation to wipe out all the consequences of the illegal act and restore the situation which would, in all probability, have existed if the act had not been committed.

Both the common law and the civil law dictate that 'wherever there is a wrong, there must be a remedy'.

We ask no more and we will accept no less than the right to obtain the same redress that was obtained by the Jews for the ethnic atrocities of Hitler's gas chambers.

We the Caribbean nations, expect that Mother Africa which also suffered tremendous loss of human capital, will join us to create one single phalanx, in the campaign to secure redress and monetary compensation for another heinous crime against humanity.

The British found the money to pay the perpetrators of the atrocities by such a substantial loan, then that the last payment for it was not made until 2018 – but not a penny for the slaves, who had to work in the apprenticeship systems for years as their forced contribution to obtain their eventual liberty.

We dare not forget that their illicit retention of the estate lands by the plantocracy has left a huge handicap in our efforts to establish an equitable system of land distribution for the shelter and productive use of our people.

It is now for the Caricom Reparations Committee, which you Chair, Mia, to obtain authoritative legal opinion of Senior Counsel as to the most competent Judicial Body for its adjudication as to the liability of European Nations and the damages we are entitled to receive.

As we assiduously explore as well all the available diplomatic channels simultaneously, I am reminded of the success we achieved with the European Union when we forged a single, indivisible partnership, equipped with the technical expertise to obtain the satisfactory outcome reflected in the Lome Treaty and successive Agreements.

But to obtain reparative justice in full, we cannot rely on prayers alone or expressions of piety. Unity of purpose and the execution of a single pursuit by Africa and Caribbean Nations to eradicate the inequities and imbalances in every available forum and institution to which we belong is the only way forward.

As we look beyond, there is from my vantage point in the pavilion, a ray of light. For the very first time, the countries in Africa and the Caribbean met 2 virtually years ago in a historic summit.

That Summit established the framework and outlined a clear roadmap towards the integration of continental Africa and the Caribbean as a single family, pursuing selective progressive goals which are beneficial to our communities and people alike. The wide spheres of cooperation on which they agreed constitute memorable stepping stones to lay a foundation for achieving a historic breakthrough.

The Calypsonian Black Stalin urged us to “run the head” to integrate the Caribbean. We have to continue that propulsion to integrate Africa and the Caribbean as one holistic whole for developing ourselves as a combined powerhouse.



## **Beyond**

From my seat in the pavilion, and given the constraints of time, I will cull from their comprehensive agenda, a few items which should command priority attention.

In my view, the first and most compelling is a total reform of the existing global architecture, which was designed at the end of World War II by the victorious allies when we were all still colonies.

The 68 Sovereign nations of Africa and the Caribbean constitute one third of the membership of the United Nations must insist on the rights of Africa to obtain a Permanent Seat.

With the demise of the Non Aligned - Together we must initiate alliances commencing with the Group of Latin America & the Caribbean – Ralph it is time to trigger your proposal for a special engagement with Brazil, particularly as the country in this Hemisphere with the largest population of persons from African descent.

Flowing from that and contemporaneously, we need a recalibration of the Bretton Woods Institutions.

We must intensify the lobby for the international financial institutions to restructure the criteria which eliminate middle income countries from concessional loans and exclude them from debt relief immediately, and mobilize universal support for the Barbados initiative proposed by Prime Minister Mottley.

The compelling lesson from Covid 19 Pandemic highlights the incapacity within the global system for a response where public health systems are fragile and poverty exposes the vulnerability of our populations.

Africa and the Caribbean must marshal all its expertise, through institutional dialogue to deploy strategies for effective intervention. We should recognize the wealth of therapeutic knowledge within our borders and the benefits from the use of plants for complementary medicine.

Let us find that formula through a proactive approach to ensure our own central interests.

The issue of Food security, particularly with the conflict in Ukraine, demands our most urgent attention and expertise. I was delighted to hear the Head of the African Eximbank, as we gather on the eve of its Caribbean Headquarters opening, emphasize it as a principal concern for their operation.

Food insecurity has risen sharply in sub-saharan Africa, where more than one in 5 persons suffer hunger and starvation. With 60% of the world's arable lands, Africa is importing more than 60% of its food and agricultural inputs. Within the Caribbean, a few countries import more than 80% of the food they consume.

We need coordinated action to stimulate agriculture; to provide the necessary inputs of food for our people and even some more to cater for the tourism industry sector which is increasingly becoming a dominant sector for economic growth.

Increasingly, Africa with its burgeoning youth is seen as the continent of the future. As we emphasize the potential and the power of Global Africa, that by definition includes the Caribbean as its 6<sup>th</sup> Region.

This is the background for the technological revolution which we must lead, but that begins with the integration of Science & Technology in every phase of our education system.

We must be in the forefront as we spawn digital technology to open exciting channels through which we can relate, transact business across the pond and command our own **space in the global village.**

We can only overcome the deficit and legal bequests of slavery and colonization we both have suffered by recognizing the imperative to work together with unity of purpose and action. The people of Africa, the Caribbean and the African Diaspora constitute a mighty force. We must display an invincible spirit to fight as one single army in the struggle for peace, justice and progress.

The immortal words of the legend Peter Tosh remind us –  
Without Peace, there can be no justice

The global crises, the flagrant discrimination we face, impel us to be decisive and determined to confront boldly the iniquity and inequities we have suffered for far too long. If not now, when will it end?

The concepts of emancipation and independence are empty of content without meaningful freedom and agency. Knowing my colleague participants as I do, we all readily accept that development means more than the accumulation of monetary assets – it has to provide access to healthy, creative and fulfilling lives.

Africa and the Caribbean must build that lasting bridge to create a platform on which our umbilical ties will promote for all our people the satisfaction and value of converting our resilience into the triumph of our own enlightened civilization which brings peace, dignity and pride to all mankind.