

24th Session of the WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS ON PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

## Data for Reparation

Ahmed N. Reid

Member, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honor for me to address you on behalf of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent. We are gathered here today to begin our deliberation on the theme, *Data for Racial Justice*. Steeped within the 2030 Development Agenda is the expressed aim of “leaving no one behind.” Important as these goals and targets are, there are structural barriers that, if not fully addressed, will make the global 2030 sustainable agenda a dream and not a reality. Yesterday, I showed how racism remains the most significant barrier to the attainment of the SDGs.

Today, my focus is slightly different, yet related. I will be using the UNDP’s Human Development Index (hereafter HDI) to show the disparities that currently exist between Caribbean countries and former colonial powers of Europe. My reason for doing so is to show how the long-term legacies of enslavement and colonialism continue to harm the sustainable development prospects of the

Caribbean. Furthermore, if Caribbean states are going to enjoy their right to development as stated in UN General Assembly Resolution 41/128 (1986), and the goals and targets of the SDGs are to be met (SDG 10 reducing inequalities between countries), then we must a) reframe the discourse on development and b) eliminate some of the structural impediments to the SDGs.

It is widely known that the quality of human development across the globe reveals large deficits. As the UNDP's Human Development Index for 2018 reveals, some countries have made considerable progress, while in others, persistent deprivations and disparities continues to haunt their society.<sup>1</sup> The Caribbean, the region where I am from, face growing multi-dimensional poverty. Since gaining independence from colonial powers in the 1960s, most Caribbean countries have experienced low growth, and an erosion of human development gains. To quote George Beckford, the Caribbean region has been experiencing “persistent poverty.”<sup>2</sup> So, after decades of persistent poverty and low economic growth, human vulnerabilities have increased. This is clearly reflected in the HDI and other studies on the region. In fact, most Caribbean countries have had a negative evolution in the HDI ranking over the past decade or so. Jamaica for example, have fallen 23 places while Dominica, have fallen by 10. Haiti, which the UNDP ranking has categorized as “Low Development,” continues to rank lowest among Caribbean countries.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth highlighting as this stage that the Caribbean countries in table 1 were once world-leaders in the production of sugar, coffee and other important staples. The Caribbean is a region

Table 1: Comparative Human Development Index.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.hdr.undp.org](http://www.hdr.undp.org)

<sup>2</sup> George Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* 2nd edition (University of the West Indies Press, 1999)

<sup>3</sup> [www.hdr.undp.org](http://www.hdr.undp.org)

County	HDI Value	GNI per capita (SDG 8.5)	Country	HDI Value	GNI per capita (SDG 8.5)
(1) Norway	0.953	68,012	(54) Bahamas	0.807	26,681
(2) Switzerland	0.944	57,625	(58) Barbados	0.8	15,843
(5) Germany	0.936	46,136	(69) Trinidad and Tobago	0.784	28,622
(7) Sweden	0.933	47,766	(75) Grenada	0.712	12,864
(10) Netherlands	0.931	47,900	(90) St. Lucia	0.747	11,695
(11) Denmark	0.929	47,918	(97) Jamaica	0.732	7,846
(14) UK	0.922	39,116	(99) St. Vincent/ Grenadines	0.723	10,499
(26) France	0.901	39,254	(101) Dominica	0.715	8,344
(26) Spain	0.891	34,258	(125) Guyana	0.654	7,447
(41) Portugal	0.847	27,315	(168) Haiti	0.498	1,665

Source: Human Development Index, [www.hdr.undp.org](http://www.hdr.undp.org). The HDI measures life expectancy, expected years of schooling, and gross national income (GNI).

that has been blessed with resources, yet as is discernible, continues to face serious development challenges going into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The problems and vulnerabilities that the Caribbean is facing do not stem from the poor stewardship of post-independence leaders, despite what some people want you to believe. The relatively poor rankings, uneven development, and the income and wealth inequality are the legacies of centuries of exploitation of the region's human and natural resources. The seeds of Caribbean underdevelopment were sown long before the region gained independence in the 1960's.

I have read with interest, the arguments put forward by the various agencies and development experts about current state of underdevelopment and multi-dimensional poverty that exist in the Caribbean. However, as Professor, Sir Hilary Beckles points out, “*These arguments reject any historical perspective and locate development shortfalls and frustrations squarely at the feet of the regions’ political leadership*” There is no acknowledgement in development discourse of how colonialism underdeveloped the Caribbean and continues to be a drag on its development prospects. There is no acknowledgement that the lack of social and economic growth that confront the Caribbean, and which are so visible in the HDI, are structurally linked to the region’s colonial past. An acknowledgement of this, coupled with a pledge to repair the harm done, should be the first point of reference in any serious and meaningful discussion on confronting the challenges the Caribbean face in this long 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is no other way to say this: Exploitation of the region’s resources have damaged the Caribbean’s development prospects.

The European countries highlighted in table 1, Spain, England, France, Portugal, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany (Brandenburg-Prussia) actively participated, invested financially, and benefitted from the violent uprooting, trafficking, and exploitation of enslaved Africans. Together, these countries were responsible for the trafficking of over 15 million Africans to the Americas. They created sites of exploitation in the Americas (oftentimes referred to as colonies), and they conceptualized and then used enslaved African labor as its principal mode of production. Trinidadian scholar, Lloyd Best, sums it up well: “metropolitan interest is not so much in land as a productive asset, as in the organization of people to facilitate the redistribution and transfer of wealth”.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lloyd Best, “Outline of a Model of Pure Plantation Economy,” *Social and Economic Studies* 17 (3), 1968.

The granting of royal charters was the scaffold on which the trafficking in enslaved Africans was built. Exclusive licenses were granted to state-sponsored companies such as England's Royal African Company (RAC), Denmark-Norway's Royal chartered Danish West India & Guinea Company and Portugal's Pernambuco Company (just to name a few). This lucrative and highly profitable venture attracted some of Europe's most notable monarchs such as Louis XVI of France, King George I of the United Kingdom, King Christian IV of Denmark and King Gustav of Sweden, all of whom invested in, and profited from the trade.

Entire industries such as shipbuilding, insurance, warehousing, metallurgy, and banking emerged in these European countries. It was the late Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Eric Williams, who argued in *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), that it was the exploitation of black bodies that provided the impetus for Europe's industrial advancement. And there is copious evidence linking Britain's rise as an industrial superpower to the exploitation of enslaved Africans and the creation of an Atlantic trading system that channeled mind-numbing wealth to their society. The benefits of this system of trade and exploitation are significant; vast amounts of wealth generated from enslavement was invested and reinvested in railroads, shipbuilding, insurance, the financial sector, the arts, the physical landscape, shop keeping, and just about every conceivable facet of society.<sup>5</sup> No such industries emerged in the Caribbean.

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<sup>5</sup> See also, Joseph Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

While Europe developed through colonial exploitation, the plantation system that they created defined the social and economic outcomes of Caribbean people. In plantation societies, race and class determined one's growth prospect. Case in point: from the post emancipation period onward, the developing peasantry and newly freed people were thwarted by a colonial system that supported and facilitated land consolidation by the socially and politically connected white elites. Not given access to land, social and economic growth was difficult to attain by the citizenry. Caribbean people, especially those of African descent, were denied the opportunity to show their creativity in the productive sphere and to enjoy the growth benefits associated with it. Resources, sadly, remained in the hands of a few. The edifice that colonialism erected did not facilitate the development of the region's human and social capital. After all, that was not the intention.

Poor imperial governance and the lack of imperial investment in the region's human capital is reflected in the educational attainment of Caribbean people at independence. At this Juncture, the illiteracy rate throughout the region was almost 60%. According to UNESCO, Jamaica's illiteracy rate among adults in 1970 (8 years after gaining independence) was 50%.<sup>6</sup> Peter Espeut, **Gleaner**, August 3, stated that "At Independence, we had only 41 (quite small) traditional high schools, largely in the hands of churches and trusts; six "senior schools (grades 1-9), which was where the vast majority of colonial Jamaicans began and ended their school careers. What we inherited on August 6, 1962, according to Espeut was a "semi-literate population, and an apartheid education system". Professor Errol Miller, in a paper on educational reform in Independent Jamaica, stated "prior to independence the numbers enrolled (in early childhood education) were relatively small and catered mainly to the more privileged". Secondary schooling fared no better. Before Independence, he stated that roughly 5% of the population received secondary schooling.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://uil.unesco.org/document/featuring-caribbean-snapshot-adult-learning-and-education-jamaica>

The lack of access to education and widespread illiteracy subverted the development efforts of Jamaica which continues to be a drag upon social and economic advancement. Think for a minute about the SDGs, and the cross-cutting nature of the goals. Think how a lack of education impacts SDG1 (poverty), SDG 2 (hunger), SDG 8 (decent employment) and SDG 10 (inequality). Ladies and gentlemen, the current vulnerabilities are structural and have deep historical roots.

I will spend the next few minutes of my presentation on Haiti and Jamaica (two countries with low Human Development).

Table 2 A Historical Overview of Reparation

<b>D at e</b>	<b>Paid By</b>	<b>Paid To</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Notes</b>
18 25	Haiti	France	150M gold franc	Haiti had to borrow 1 <sup>st</sup> installment from French bank; amount reduced to 90M; paid this off by 1947
18 34	Britain	Enslavers	£20M	40% of public expenditure. Money was reinvested in railroad and other leading industries in England
19 52	Germany	Israel, World Jewish Congress	\$65.2 B	For atrocities committed during the Holocaust and for the resettlement of Jews
19 88	US	Japanese- Americans	\$1.2 B	Payments of \$20,000 to Japanese-Americans interned in camps during World War II

1995	Government of New Zealand	Maoris	\$ 170 M	Money paid in compensation for the theft of land by settlers in 1863
2008	Italy	Libya	\$5B	Italy's colonial occupation of Libya
2009	Obama Admin/USA	American Indians	\$1.4B	Land claim; to a group of American Indians who said the government mismanaged a century-old system of Indian land trusts
2012	Britain	Mau Mau, Kenya	£19.9 M	For colonial atrocities committed against the Mau Mau in their fight for liberation

It is worth highlighting that independent Haiti, the first black republic created by formerly enslaved Africans, was not welcomed into the community of nations in 1804. This was the beginning of years of international isolation that crippled the fledgling nation. To end years of isolation, the Haitian government, under an 1825 agreement, was forced to pay 150 million francs (reduced to 90 million) - about US \$ 21 billion in today's money, according to deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide - to France in exchange for recognizing it as a sovereign nation, thereby ending the 21 - year isolation from the international community it had faced for its audacity in taking its freedom. To pay this money, Haiti had to borrow from the French money market at extortionate rates and use close to 97% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to honor the annual payments. Haiti finished paying the sum in 1947 (122 years later), but at a high, if not detrimental socio-economic



cost. Money that could have been used to develop the country, to put it on a path to sustainable development had to be exported, thus leaving the country with a heavy economic burden that it has been unable to shed.

## Jamaica

In 1833, the British Parliament had the opportunity to make amends to the enslaved peoples throughout the Caribbean. However, enslavers (over 100 of whom were members of the House of Commons) argued that the freeing of enslaved people by British legislation was a violation of their property rights and they demanded compensation. Subsequently, enslavers received £20 million sterling or £17 billion in today's money from the British government as compensation for the loss of their "property". Another sweetener given to British enslavers was the granting of Apprenticeship (where the period of enforced labor was extended for a fix term of 6 years and estimated to cost a further £27 million sterling). This money was reinvested throughout Britain and the empire. Such legacies are traceable to families and institutions in Britain today. Among those who have benefited are the ancestors of the former UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, former minister Douglas Hogg, authors Graham Greene and George Orwell, poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Other prominent names which feature in the records include scions of one of the nation's oldest banking families, the Barings, and the second Earl of Harewood, Henry Lascelles, an ancestor of the Queen of England's cousin.

50% of the £20 million compensation money stayed in the UK and was distributed among 3,000 people. The other 50% was distributed among planters in the colonies. Indeed, 16, 114 claims were filed for enslaved people in Jamaica by enslavers in the USA, UK and throughout the Atlantic World, totalling approximately £10.98 million pounds. A parish by parish breakdown of the compensation claims shows that in two parishes that at varying times have been labelled the

Table 3: Breakdown of Compensation for Jamaica

Parish	Claims	Enslaved Claimed	Compensation (£)
Kingston	2,960	15,063	294,017
St Elizabeth	1,282	36,322	715,546
St Ann	1,186	43,351	878,163
St James	1,043	42,772	837,688
Westmoreland	1,024	39,128	723,495
Trelawney	936	44,805	910,171
St Catherine	852	13,296	246,539
St Thomas-in-the-East	786	48,993	943,755
Hanover	748	35,271	671,076
St Mary	745	51,247	929,845
St Andrew	710	22,356	459,557
Manchester	668	32,079	625,039
Clarendon	641	35,616	680,348
St George	520	18,949	348,848
St Thomas-in-the-Vale	429	19,181	364,056
Portland	362	12,529	224,064
St John	360	9,787	181,134

Port Royal	275	9,959	199,706
Vere	212	15,285	314,688
St David	203	13,900	275,345
St Dorothy	172	8,158	165,431
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16,114</b>	<b>56,8047</b>	<b>10,988,511</b>

Source: Legacies of British Slave-Ownership Project, University College London. [www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs); Calculations taken from <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>. Estimates are based on 2017 income value.

poorest parishes in Jamaica, St Mary and St Thomas (East), had some of the wealthiest planters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, representing 8.5% and 8.6% respectively of the total compensation package. Think what difference that money could have made to these two parishes.

When converted to modern equivalences, the £929,845 paid to enslavers who filed claims for enslaved people in St. Mary would amount to a mind-boggling sum of £711 million. For St. Thomas, enslavers filed 786 claims for 48,993 enslaved Africans and received a largesse of £943,755 or £721 million in today's money. Of the sums mentioned above, we know that enslavers invested in cultural institutions, built palatial country houses across Britain, invested in the railroad industry among other commercial ventures, and invested throughout the Empire. Britain, and the descendants of those enslavers continue to benefit today from those investments. And what did enslaved people from St. Mary and St. Thomas get? What kind of investments did they make to realize their hopes and expectations of freedom, and more importantly, to secure a future for their offspring? We all know the answers to these rhetorical questions; and this is why the reparatory justice movement is framed within the discourse of development. Having enriched British planters who prospered on the backs of their ancestors, St Mary and St Thomas (former St Thomas in the

East) surely need an injection of capital to improve the conditions of their long-suffering citizens, and Britain has an obligation to live up to her responsibilities.

In tables four and five below are breakdowns of compensation paid to men and women enslavers who filed claims for enslaved Africans in the Caribbean. This is traceable to families and institutions in Britain today.

Table 4 Select Compensation Claims for the Caribbean (Male), Ranked from Highest to Lowest, showing Modern Equivalent

Name	No of Claims	Enslaved Claimed	Compensation	Modern Equivalent in Millions (£)
George Rainy	30	2,585	145,695	181.1
Charles McGarel	14	2,827	135,076	168
Charles Stewart Parker	16	2,176	114,663	143
John Gladstone	11	2,912	112,716	140.1
Rowland Mitchell	30		98,944	123
James Patrick McInroy	9	1,741	91,334	114
James Blair	1	1,598	83,530	104
Andrew Colville	19		70,786	88
Charles Porcher Lang	9	1,438	66,605	83
George Hibbert	19		63,050	78.4
Total	158	15,277	869,796	1,081

Source: Legacies of British Slave-Ownership Project, University College London. [www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs); Calculations from <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>. Estimates are based on 2017 income value.

Table 5 Select Compensation Claims for the Caribbean (Female), Ranked from Highest to Lowest, showing Modern Equivalent

Name	No. Claims	Enslaved Claimed	Compensation (£)	Modern Equivalent in millions (£)
Maria Lang	5	1,176	59,514	74
Harriet Fraser Lucas	4	1,121	57,970	72
Caroline Robley	10	1,651	34,298	43
Dame Catherine-Haughton Clarke	6	1,481	27,515	34.1
Harriet Trevelyan	6	1,004	26,989	34
Elizabeth Winter	2	508	25,934	32
Janet Higgins	2	647	24,328	30.2
Lady Marjory Saltoun	3	1,002	24,178	30
Jane Thornton	2	840	20,861	26
Elizabeth Brooke	4	840	18,675	23.2
Total	44	10,270	301,587	375

Source: Legacies of British Slave-Ownership Project, University College London. [www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs); Calculations taken from <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>. Estimates are based on 2017 income value.

Conclusion

The low economic growth and the resulting poverty trap that the Caribbean is in, are structural with deep historical roots which are traceable to the period of colonization. This must be acknowledged, and the continuing harm of colonialism must be fully addressed if Caribbean people are to enjoy their right to development.