

10 July 2020

Your Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of England

Your Majesty, we write to appeal respectfully to you to join us, and what we believe to be the overwhelming majority of British people, in taking a stand for truth and justice by lending your voice to help heal the wrongs of the past and dismantle the racism of the present.

We make this appeal with the full support of the Pan-African social movement, *Africans Rising for Justice, Peace and Dignity*, which seeks to unite Africans on the continent and our brothers and sisters in the diaspora. While we do not seek to speak for our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean, Asia, the Americas, the Middle East or the Pacific that have suffered under slavery and colonialism, we recognise that this tragedy has not been experienced by Africans alone.

Over the recent months, the unbroken thread of pain, injustice and suffering, emanating from the legacy of slavery and colonialism, has been plain to see. The brutal death of George Floyd – sadly, a far from isolated tragedy – stems from the deep-seated systemic racism that is the legacy of slavery and colonialism.

As Africans, we take some comfort in knowing that the scars of slavery and colonialism are being unearthed, and that racial equality is being strongly supported by ordinary citizens across Britain and the world at large. This support has been manifested through the embracing of #Black Lives Matter and the multiple allied movements of citizens calling for, racial justice, climate justice, gender justice and economic equality. These movements collectively, together with others, are showing us how we can cross boundaries, irrespective of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender and even class. This support comes despite the most complicit governments being *out of step* with their own citizens' desire for justice, *out of step* with the undeniable historical reality of the injustice and brutality of slavery and colonialism; and, *out of step* with the necessary systemic changes that are urgently required.

As the largest former coloniser in Africa and across the globe and as a central player in the slave trade, the British government has a particular responsibility to address the injustices of the past. Consequently, we appeal for the following actions, in the hope of seeking acknowledgement, justice, healing and reconciliation for both the former colonised and the former colonisers.

1) *An honest acknowledgement of the harm and human cost of slavery and colonialism*

Only an honest acknowledgement of the harm and human cost of slavery and colonialism can begin the process of healing. If the British government should provide a heartfelt and genuine apology that

honestly recognises the truth of its injustices, then true healing could possibly follow.

Actions taken during the colonial period are tantamount to the most gross violations of human rights in world history. Honest acknowledgment means Britain looking, without flinching, at the nature and scale of the harm done to Africans and other former colonised peoples, so that we can all move on together in a spirit of peace and reconciliation based on justice.

2) A Truth and Healing Commission

We are appealing for an expeditious truth and healing process that allows for full acknowledgement of the crimes of slavery, colonialism and ongoing systemic racism. Such a process would create a space for all Africans to express sorrow and allow for a just peace to emerge, which can form the foundation for healing and reconciliation. This process need not be drawn out, as much of this history is well documented in archives and museums. We are encouraged to see that the Belgian parliament has set a precedent on a Truth and Reconciliation Commission with regard to its colonial crimes, which at the minimum the UK government should emulate; and recently the Belgian King has offered his 'deepest regrets'.

3) Reparations

We want to note that Africa is not a poor continent; instead, it has been impoverished by slavery, colonialism and corruption. This impoverishment continues to burden our continent today, in part because of the British government's ongoing economic policies that put profit before people, discriminate against Black people and other people of colour, support unfair trade policies that maintain 'global-economic Apartheid', and much more. It is time to right these wrongs.

We need to have an honest conversation about reparations. We recognise this is a complex and challenging issue. However, in the immediate short term, we ask that the British government write off debts owed by all African countries, given that the ongoing economic challenges have been made even more devastating by the Covid-19 pandemic.

On the broader question of reparations, the advice of British MP Bell Riberio-Addy is a good starting point. In her maiden speech to the House of Commons in January 2020, she said, *"Not only will [my] country... not apologise... it has not once offered a form of reparations. Now people see reparations as handing over large sums of money. But why could we not start with simple things like fairer trade, simple things like returning items that do not belong to us, and simple things like cancelling debts that we have paid over and over again. I believe the reason for [not apologising], is because we only apologise to our equals...How can I be equal to every other Member in this house, when this is how this House treats people that look just like me?"*

Notwithstanding what might be the prevailing attitude in the British House of Commons at this time, we want to believe that you consider us as equals, and as equals we make this appeal to you. Undoubtedly, there can be no adequate reparations for crimes of this magnitude, but exploring through public debate the many acts of reparations that are open, if there is political intent, will be a good start.

We recognise that this is a mountain to climb, but as Mandela declared, "It always seems impossible until it is done". Your voice at this time is one that can help turn the arc of world history.

Your Majesty, we hope you will join us in a search for global peace, justice and equality, on a planet that we may handover to our children in good health.

Respectfully yours,

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