



The United Church Calls for Reparatory Justice

Another Emancipation Day, August 1, 2020, dawned on us in a time when there is an upsurge globally of consciousness as to the historical damage done to black identity and lives in the world. Recent protests point globally to greater acceptance that the centuries of enslavement of Africans and their use for free labour has been one of, if not the greatest, atrocities to ever thread the quilt of human history.

Slavery not only enriched families, family-owned businesses and nations, but it enriched some churches of that time as well. Enslavement of African people and the native genocide was orchestrated and perpetrated over centuries in which colonizers were the beneficiaries. Rather than compensating the formerly enslaved at the declared Emancipation, it was the slave owners who were compensated in the amount of some 20 million pounds sterling, which constituted 40% of Britain's national budget in 1833. The period of four years of the Apprenticeship System served as a further method of enriching the former enslavers.

In Jamaica and the wider Caribbean, the Church was often complicit in a system propagating and profiting from the enslavement of Africans. The dominant theologies undergirded the sinful ideologies of the day. The Colonial Church Union existed in the 19th Century as a means of quelling any and all forms of slave resistance or uprising.

We thank God for the witness of those Christians who, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, proclaimed liberty to the captives in word and deed. The gospel message of liberation inspired the enslaved and freed people to throw off the yoke of bondage.

Our Church, over the years, through its process of renewal and transformation, has sought to come to grips with the challenge to reflect on its complicity in past sins, and the perpetuation of mental slavery. In its quest for true emancipation and social justice for the captives, the Church has made its own call to former colonial masters to compensate formerly enslaved people for the horrible atrocities of the past and the lingering legacies that stifle the development of our people. Not only do we, the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, firmly support the call for reparations from relevant state authorities, but have sought through our global network to set an example of introspection, repentance and restitution.

Many wounds of the past may be healed, if in a spirit of genuine reparatory justice, tangible and intangible restitution were made towards our society's development. We join the call on former enslavers to heed the call for justice.

Pay reparations now!

- Prepared by: The Church and Society Sub-Committee of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

