



Public Report

**LAUNCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF
SCHOLARS AND ACTIVISTS FOR AFRIKAN REPARATIONS
(INOSAAR)**

21 October 2017

We Are 336, 336 Brixton Road, London, SW9 7AA

In collaboration with the Pan-Afrikan Reparations Coalition in Europe
(PARCOE)

‘Be not arrogant because of your knowledge; take counsel with the ignorant as well as the wise. For the limits of knowledge in any field have never been set, and no one has ever reached them. Wisdom is rarer than emeralds, yet it is found among the women who gather at the grindstones’ (Quotation provided by Kweku Bonsu, taken from the *Husia: Sacred Wisdom of Ancient Egypt*, Maulana Karenga, c.a. 2500 B.C.E.)

This report has been compiled by Nicola Frith in consultation with, and with thanks to, all those who participated in the launch of the International Network of Scholars and Activists for Afrikan Reparations (INOSAAR). The report has been derived from sound and video recordings of the events that took place, all of which are freely available upon request, and aims to capture the key points and concerns made by discussants, note-takers and attendees. Over sixty people were in attendance, representing a wide variety of predominantly UK-based activists and scholars with links to the Afrikan continent, the Americas and Europe. The event consisted of four sessions, including: an introductory panel led by different representatives within the INOSAAR; four parallel workshop sessions addressing four separate reparations-related concerns; two roundtables; and a final discussion relating to the agreement of our principles of participation and future actions. The following report will detail the main content of each of those sessions.

Introductory Panel

Professor Joyce Hope Scott/JHS (Wheelock College, Boston, USA)

JHS welcomed everyone and celebrated the unification of scholars and activists through the INOSAAR. The importance of this joint, trans-Atlantic initiative to redress a cosmic wrong was underscored, the INOSAAR being presented as a reversal of that triangular ‘trade’.¹ The INOSAAR was subsequently defined according to the definitions provided in ‘Principles of Participation’ (PoP) document. This document outlines the collaborative nature of the INOSAAR project, notes the role of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in having funded this work, sets out the purpose of the INOSAAR (to create an international network dedicated to reparations and other forms of transitional justice for the enslavement and genocide of peoples of African descent, including the subsequent oppression and deformation of African identity), asserts the importance of developing research through arts and humanities, as well as the social sciences, and underscores the central role that will be played by grassroots activist groups engaged in the struggle for reparations and government-linked groups capable of influencing social change. JHS noted the importance of the Abuja Proclamation of 1993 as a key reference point for the work that we are doing, before setting out the aims and objectives of the INOSAAR relating to: the development of a more coherent research agenda for understanding reparations across disciplinary boundaries; the improvement of knowledge-production partnerships and bilateral exchange between scholars and activists working on Afrikan reparations through the establishment of a recognisable network; the need to bring global legitimacy and visibility for the question of reparations, while impacting positively upon public and political (mis)conceptions, initially through the organization of four inaugural events; and the creation of academically rigorous outputs of use to academic and non-academic audiences.

The Brixton event was heralded as the first of four events, with a remit to begin producing an internationally comprehensible definition of reparations that is respectful of different cultural and national positions, while considering ways to institute working links between academics and activists. JHS noted that this event is a celebration that demonstrates what committed people can do transnationally, the INOSAAR serving to benefit everyone by broadening our understanding of reparations and reparatory justice.

¹ Objections were raised concerning the use of the term ‘trade’ with reference to the purchasing and selling of enslaved Afrikans.

In terms of recent international efforts, JHS referenced the launching of the Centre for Reparation Research at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica (10 October 2017), as well as the committed work of the *Association pour une reparation globale de l'esclavage* (APRGE) in Benin who are assisting with the organization of the final sponsored INOSAAR event. Also noted was the organization of a pre-colloquium at the *Musée da Silva* in Porto-Novo (Benin) on 3 June 2017 (sponsored by M. Karim da Silva), which concluded with a number of resolutions, including the need for: UN recognition and member state organization to address the needs of Afrikan peoples; the free circulation of goods and Afrikan peoples within the African Union (AU); AU member states to provide citizenship, abolish passports and visas, and offer integration programmes for returnees within any Afrikan country of their choice; the transfer of technological know-how; and, finally, the setting up of committees looking into reparations in each member state. JHS also listed a number of projects that the APRGE wish to pursue, including: the erection of wall celebrating resistance against enslavement; the establishment of national committees throughout the AU; the creation of a touristic circuit linking to the 'Porte de non-retour' in Ouidah; the restitution of stolen property and goods; the financing of agriculture through renewable energies and apprenticeship centres; the need to promote the decolonization and (re)Afrikanization of knowledge; and the creation of an international institute of 'Boologie' (traditional Afrikan science).

JHS noted that the ensuing events (Birmingham, 17 March 2018; Paris, 16-17 May 2018²; Porto-Novo, September 2018) are designed to impact positively on activist and academic working relations and lay the groundwork for future collective activity. She concluded by stating that 'what we are proud of today is that we are a network of scholars and activists, and we embrace each other for the common cause of pushing forward an agenda that we know will be fruitful in that there will be a positive outcome as a result of all of the work that has come before us, which we acknowledge, from Abuja, through Durban, through the Centre for Reparation Research in the Caribbean, and now today our network here, and finally ending up on the Afrikan continent'.

Esther Stanford-Xosei/ESX (Pan-Afrikan Reparations Coalition in Europe, PARCOE)

ESX began by honouring the presence of her mother in the audience, as well as her younger brother, noting that this is a historic day. Also honoured were the many generations, kidnapped from the shores of Afrika, who have always been knowledge producers in their struggles of resistance against the *Maangamizi*. It was noted that today's event represents an important bringing together of different knowledge producers around the quest to effect, secure and take reparatory justice, her comments being geared towards activists and researchers through the perspective of Afrikan communities of reparatory justice interest (meaning all Afrikan communities, whether they self-define as Afrikan or not). ESX presented the network as a huge and significant opportunity, as well as a victory that had been battled for, significantly, from below, by those who are often excluded from so-called academic spaces. It was noted that establishment academia and academic conferences are not necessarily conducive to the way grassroots communities organize and feel comfortable. Conversely, she noted that the event today had been carefully considered to create an environment that would enable and welcome Afrikan community participation. Part of the work is therefore to challenge establishment academia, not simply by critiquing, but by being part of the change and its solution, and by putting forward suggestions that represent grassroots academia. ESX noted that, in addition to studying within establishment academia, her own knowledge comes from grassroots resistance and action learning, which is precisely what the event sets out to encourage and elevate in the recognition that everyone is a knowledge producer. The space fought for and subsequently created is therefore one that needs to be defended according to community interest. ESX called

² Note that this event is no longer going ahead. Instead, the INOSAAR will be sending a small delegation of members to Senegal to participate in a commemorative march and symposium being organized by the Mouvement International pour les Réparations (MIR) in April 2018.

communities to make themselves relevant through their own advocacy, learning, study and application.

As co-vice chair of PARCOE, ESX expressed her gratitude to Professor Joyce Hope Scott and Dr Nicola Frith for taking up this challenge with PARCOE. She referenced the Edinburgh Conference (5–7 November 2017) that had resulted in the publication of an open letter to appeal for cognitive justice in academic discourse on reparation and the need to create a space that is meaningful for Afrikan heritage communities when discussing the subject of reparations. ESX noted that the conference organizers had responded positively to this appeal, leading to the participation of many grassroots activists at the Edinburgh event, after which the organizers had contacted PARCOE to follow-up on the conference outcomes and listen to their suggestions. ESX noted the importance of this journey as an example for those working in establishment academia.

The importance of recognizing that there is an ethics to reparatory justice was underscored, since it concerns people who continue to live with the consequences of the genocidal *Maangamizi*. This means that academics have a special responsibility to not do further harm, particularly in terms of ‘epistemicide’, or the death of Afrikan knowledge systems. This also means recognizing the pluriversality of the knowledge that is carried within communities, as well as the need to avoid elitism by ensuring that we remain accountable to Afrikan heritage communities.

With reference to the need to sustain the INOSAAR beyond the four funded events, ESX emphasized the importance of decolonial educational repairs and the need to battle for resources going forward. It was acknowledged that this battle may give rise to disagreements (because reparatory justice is a contested terrain), but this battle of ideas is of central importance, as is the need to defend the right to define reparations according to Afrikan community interests, in opposition to Euro-centric definitions that tend to emphasize commodification and monetary demands. ESX appealed to the need to fight for cognitive justice and decolonize our own minds by performing ‘Sankofa’: returning and taking the best of our past to guide us into the future.

The importance of the UK reparations movement was also noted, particularly in terms of its consistently global perspective and international focus, rooted in pan-Afrikan perspectives that recognizes that all the victims of the British Empire. She emphasized that this approach harmonizes many different journeys, stating that ‘what happens here has ripples around the world’. The Jamaicans have a phrase, ESX noted: ‘Nah underestimate wi, wi likkle but wi tallawah’ (meaning to be strong and fearless), which is what this event is about. ‘We have a special duty and responsibility’, she said, ‘because we recognize all of our respective family throughout the world and we ought not to get bogged down in the different areas where we were marooned and trafficked to and allow that to define our vision and our epistemologies around what the repair should be and what it should look like’.

ESX underlined the importance of the PoP relating to shared values, mutual respect and reciprocity, collaboration, cognitive justice and a politics of resourcefulness, as well as the need to recognize the existence of a social movement that requires participatory ethics and builds from a more ancient and sacred movement. She made the key point that we need to recognize the power dynamics between different network members and that battles will likely emerge, which can be handled through the principles outlined in the PoP. Importantly, all strategies and tactics must be submitted to scrutiny, so that we have ‘the humility to be students again, to recognize where we have fallen short on our vision, because who are we leaving it for? We need to remember that Afrikan and indigenous principle that whatever we do for today, we have to think at least seven generations down the line, so that they are not having to clean up the mess that we failed to clean up today’.

Nick Draper/ND (University College London/UCL)

ND’s intervention began with a quotation by the late cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, that ‘Difference is both necessary and dangerous’. With reference to this, he noted that the concept of race was made during the imperial period by Europeans, meaning that there is an ethics of principle which is raised

immediately by the presence of Europeans in the exploration of the history of slavery. While recognizing the importance of (cultural) difference, he warned against slipping into essentialist viewpoints where a (singular/hegemonic) African perspective is pitted against a (singular/hegemonic) European perspective, and called for the need to contest certain assumptions about each other.

ND introduced the work being conducted at UCL into the 'Legacies of British Slave Ownership', noting that the majority of employees/doctoral students have been of European descent. Questions have rightly been asked, he commented, about why time has been spent working on the enslavers (and not the enslaved). ND provided a justification for this, stating that it is 'the slave owners carried the consequences and fruits of slavery back into Britain through the wealth that the slave owners redeployed in Britain, and if we can identify this universe (British men and women) who owned enslaved people, if we can capture that universe and work out what they did in Britain, we can show beyond doubt that a portion of modern Britain comes from the wealth generated in slavery'. The purpose of this is to 'make it impossible for "establishment historians" to overlook and exclude the history of slavery from the history of Britain'.

He noted that, over the past decade, there has been a perceptible shift in terms of historical recognition within Britain that has succeeded in pushing beyond the abolitionist narrative inculcated in previous generations. The work at UCL shows, through the history of slave ownership, that the intertwined stories of black and white are fundamental to the making of white power privilege. Showing that modern Britain owes part of existence to slavery and to the expropriation of the labour of enslaved people means showing that Britain belongs to a wider group of people than has historically been assumed. UCL's online database/archive is also linked to the idea of compensation, which is intimately connected with the question of reparations today. He continued by asking what it means for us today that Britain compensated the wrong people, before going on to outline four responses to that question.

First, he noted, it means that there is a need for self-criticism, particular for those in positions of privilege. ND defined this as reflecting on the historical archive being used, the fact that it treats people as numbers and commodities, and that the work at UCL therefore risks reproducing that process of dehumanization. What they hoped to do (and have done) was record different transactions in order to make that data available. In the case of their current work into wills and the transmission of enslaved persons, he noted their obligation to record the names as they were written, while also recognizing that those names are signifiers for human beings whose experience is not captured by those names. Concluding this first ethical obligation, ND stated that, 'We say that this history is reparative, but we need to be clear about what that means both to ourselves and to you. We are not restoring the history of enslaved people or the African diaspora; what we are trying to do is repair British imperial history and to ensure that slavery gets back into, and has its rightful place as an important component of that history'.

Second, he asserted the need to be transparent and share the data captured in a way that can be used by other parties, while his third point related to the need to be responsive and listen. In particular, he recognized that the questions that UCL has asked so far have been *their* questions, whereas there is a need to listen to the perspectives and questions of others, and find out how they respond to UCL's work in order to shape the future research agenda and ensure its utility.

ND listed as a fourth and final point the need to be truthful and get the facts right. He rejected relativist views relating to many truths, preferring evidence-based historical fact that can be asserted and documented as truth. He noted that the debate on reparations and slave ownership had given rise to many short-hand versions that are not consistent with the evidence, giving the example of the Tate Gallery. Since Henry Tate was 13 years old when slavery ended, it is not possible to construe him as a slave owner, even if the estates from which he drew his sugar, and the market that he sold into, were established during the period of enslavement. But, he added, since the labour practices of Tate & Lyle continued to exploit labour after slavery, those too should be on the table for discussion, since it is the legacy of slavery as a system that is absolutely relevant to Henry Tate. Continuing with truths, ND commented on the need to confront uncomfortable truths. He listed, in particular: first, that while the majority of 'slave owners' were white, a minority of people of colour

were also 'slave owners'; second, that while it is clear that West African society was absolutely transformed by the arrival of Europeans, slavery was not an institution brought to West Africa by Europeans themselves (noting that this does not undermine issues of responsibility).

ND concluded with issues concerning accountability, including towards the descendants of enslaved people and the importance of co-producing knowledge. The key issue for his own work, however, is to continue asserting the centrality of slavery in the formation of modern Britain.

Questions and comments arising

The introductory presentations provoked a number of questions and comments from assembled participants. These included questions and comments directed at individuals, as well as more general questions and comments to consider going forward. A summary of the key points raised follows below.

1. The (mis)use of language. Issues with using particular terms were raised, notably the phrases 'slave trade' and 'slave' were rejected. The 'trade' suggests a two-way exchange, which belies historical fact. The noun 'slave' obliterates the history of resistance embedded within the process of enslavement and fails to mark all individuals concerned as persons and victims who were en-slaved against their will (IA; KB). Phrases such as 'slave owner' were thus understood to be problematic, despite the fact that this expression was resisted by the enslavers, who preferred titles such as 'proprietors' or 'land owners' (ND).
2. The existence of 'slavery' in Afrika prior to the arrival of Europeans. Objections were raised concerning the comparisons drawn between the systems of servitude and imprisonment in West Afrika prior to the arrival of Europeans, and the European system of enslavement (KB). It was noted that the system of European-led enslavement was devised and organized to profit the Europeans, and that nothing equivalent existed prior to their arrival. On this point, it was recommended that people consult Walter Rodney's pamphlet, 'West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade'. Further, it was noted that the system of enslavement was not limited to West Afrika, but had affected the continent as a whole (CG).
3. The development of a shared vision of reparations. Questions were raised about the need to have a vision of what reparations will look like at different levels (psychological, cultural, social), noting that this vision cannot mirror Western/American culture, nor can it be the Africa that exists today (GM). The devastating effects of menticide were underscored, a priority being the need to re-Africanize and liberate the self in order to move forward. This also means recognizing the ancestors and creating (memorial) spaces in which to honour them (JHS). It was noted that few organizations have succeeded in articulating a post-reparation's world, or even identifying starting points for achieving such a world vision. The emergence of recent 10-point plans, put forward by CARICOM (2014) and N'Cobra (2015), is predated by the UK's Black Quest for Justice (BQJ) campaign, which included in its vision the need for community-based repairs to address a lost sense of communal belonging. This vision was recently updated by the Global Afrikan Peoples Parliament (2015), but again emphasized the need for communities to engage in acts of self-repair (ESX).
4. The non-existence of support for Afrikan communities within establishment academia. Questions were raised as to whether academia does, or does not, value the input of Afrikan-centric perspectives. Connected to this is the question of funding for doctoral students and the need to demand spaces and opportunities to explore issues of relevance and use to Afrikan communities (IA). In one response, establishment academia was considered to be a Euro-centric (white supremacist) creation for globalizing European perspectives, which has, in turn, damaged (and excluded) non-European peoples, meaning such institutions have very severe limitations and are incapable of delivering adequate responses. It was recommended that action be taken to build alternatives from below and to guard against thinking that repair can occur by simply creating spaces within existing establishments/institutions that do

not have Afrikan interests at their centre (KK). An alternative view was expressed that criticized the blanket condemnation of academics working in establishment academia, noting that it was impossible to judge someone based on their institution or condemn all work as feeding into existing power structures. It was also noted that many Black rights and reparations activists, such as Walter Rodney, are/were academics, and that there is work ongoing within institutions to implement Afrikan-centric pedagogical models (for example, the work of Molefi Kete Asante, Temple University) (JHS). It was suggested that one of the barriers to creating such funding projects and programmes in the UK was the lack of racial diversity within Higher Education (ND); a situation which is worsening as younger generations are being put off from studying subjects, such as history, because of economic factors (ESX).

5. The need to support youth and student development. The importance of getting the message of reparations out to university campuses by setting up projects and targeting students was emphasized, along with the need to use technologies, such as social media, to encourage young people to engage. It was noted that the youth is the future, and there are many young Afrikans studying in UK universities and institutions who know little about their own histories and backgrounds, since these are not taught in schools. This too needs to be addressed (LA).
6. The *Maangamazi* as a continuing crime: Importantly, it was noted that we need a legal team to support INOSAAR initiatives and to ensure that our work does not become another talking shop. It was also stated that the *Maangamazi* continues today as Afrika is still being looted by colonizing powers (AA).

Workshop Reports

During the workshop sessions, each group was asked to examine the following three questions:

1. What do we recognize to be the main purpose of this workshop in relation to building the INOSAAR?
2. What are our mainly divergent as well as convergent perspectives on the topic that have been expressed in this workshop?
3. What are our five topmost recommendations for action on the topic in contribution to successfully building the INOSAAR?

Brief reports were then provided by note-takers to the assembled participants.

Workshop 1: Activists and Scholars Facing Challenges of Collaboration on Afrikan Reparations

Chair: Joanna Burch-Brown

Discussants: Kofi Mawuli Klu, Cecil Gutzmore and Katarina Schwartz

Note taker: Lord Apetsi

The purpose of this workshop was to explore the challenges between those who are primarily activists and those who are primarily scholars in their attempts to work together collaboratively upon matters of Afrikan Reparations. It set out to examine critically any problematic differences, tensions and synergies, and consider how best to work through them in mutual respect and beneficial cooperation. Its aim was to find ways of engaging ethically in collaborative pursuits of knowledge and action, and examine how the INOSAAR could meaningfully and productively tackle such challenges in the best interests of all concerned and for the cause of Afrikan reparations itself.

A number of issues were raised. The first related to the underlying purpose of western educational institutions and their history of usurping Afrikan cultural institutions and education, meaning that attempts to bring grassroots activists into establishment academia is often fraught with difficulties. There is a need to bring about cultural change by consciously relocating ourselves within grassroots academia, while developing links to friends and allies operating within the existing system,

with a view to creating a 'global academic commons'. The second related to the use of definitions and terminologies that are problematic within academia. Words such as racism and discrimination ought to be redefined because, it was noted, much has changed. Connected to this, was the point that the focus is often on history (the past) and its non-repetition; a view that falsifies the fact that we are looking at a history of succession. What is needed is to end the praxis of systemic, organized oppression. A third issue related to the limitations of doctoral students working on issues of relevance to Afrikan reparations, for example, who are not always able to undertake the kinds of research they would wish to due to funding/supervisory constraints. A final issue related to the need for youth training to be able to confidently represent one's community, and the need to find ways to package the reparations message so that it is made relevant for young people.

In terms of recommendations, suggestions included: the creation of an accessible archival/portal to allow people access to key resources to support their activism and research; the formation of regional networks to come together and look for solutions to common problems; the establishment of university student groups to lobby institutions; and the creation of Afrikan knowledge programmes within institutions to support Afrikan students.

Workshop 2: United Kingdom in the Glocal Approach to Afrikan Reparations

Chair: Adotey Bing

Discussants: Alex Akoman, Simeon Stanford and Paul Basu

Note taker: Daniel Soloman

This workshop sought to identify the main ground-breaking contributions made in Britain in terms of global thinking for local action (a 'glocal approach') for advancing Afrikan reparatory justice today. It set out to compare these actions to alternative approaches, such as the initiatives being led by CARICOM and N'Cobra, or the demands to restore kingdoms/chiefdoms and other indigenous ethnic polities from the pre-colonial era in Afrika. It questioned what pan-Afrikan Reparations would mean worldwide to 'Communities of Reparations Interest' (CORIs), as well as to academia in all its forms, with regard to properly recognizing, consolidating and progressing the wealth of intellectual heritage within the 'International Social Movement for Afrikan Reparations' (ISMAR).

The issues and suggestions raised in this workshop included the need to investigate ways to decolonize public institutions, such as universities and museums, with the recommendation to work with universities/museums to host (decolonizing) Afrikan cultural events, while also being mindful of the specific challenges faced by the Afrikan Diaspora in terms of their complex relationship to these spaces. Discussions were also held over the question of terminological clarity and distinction between the history of slavery and so-called 'modern-day slavery', while another view questioned the differences between what was happening 400 years ago and what is happening today, given the continuation of systems of white supremacy. As such, it was felt that the INOSAAR ought to think about how to confront the continual looting of the Afrikan continent, while also looking into ways of holding banks who profited from slavery to account in the present. The need to foreground community self-healing (unlike some identified as the more financially-orientated CARICOM approach) was also emphasized, which linked to initiatives such as 'buying Afrikan', returning to an Afrikan lifestyle, educating children about Afrika in schools and ensuring youth involvement at all levels. As such, it was recommended that we explore existing assets available within Afrikan communities and document the research and work of activist organizations, while identifying additional requirements (including access to PR companies for promotional purposes, collaboration with trade unions and finding financial support through Afrika-based/linked organizations). Further recommendations for the INOSAAR included a desire to develop strong links with Afrika-based communities and tap into existing networks on the continent, while also contacting embassies to locate communities in the Diaspora, and campaign for western and Afrikan governments to recognize officially the 'First Holocaust'.

Workshop 3: Arts and Humanities through Education/Edutainment for Afrikan Reparations

Chair: Yemi Araromi

Discussants: Tina Yaa Gyamfuag and Simon Murray

Note taker: Bunmi Olafisoye

This workshop was about how best to contribute to building the INOSAAR and its advancement of the Afrikan Reparatory Justice through the Arts and Humanities and education, and specifically the grassroots concept of 'edutainment'. It set out to examine critically the use and misuse of the arts and humanities. As such, discussions focused on ways in which the arts and humanities can be used to promote a creative and emancipatory educational programme that serves to dignify Afrika, while also looking at the deep-rooted problems associated with racist and Afriphobic miseducation that reinforces 'mental enslavement' and the killing of minds, or 'menticide'. To address these issues, it was suggested that this workshop seek to identify the best Sankofa practices and efforts within and beyond the ISMAR and the related Peoples' Reparations International Movement (PRIM), notably those that promote (self-)empowerment, consciousness raising, (self-)emancipation and creativity.

The discussions questioned the meaning of reparations as rooted in concepts of repair and rebuilding, with reference to both psychological and socio-economic repairs, leading to emancipation and empowerment. One of the suggestions was to find another word for 'reparations' that captures this meaning more accurately and more fully than the English version. The importance of cultural development was also underscored, noting that there is no development without culture, so understanding Afrikan culture is of paramount importance to self-repair. A second issue that was raised pertained to the use of the term 'scholar'. A scholar was defined as both a holder of knowledge and/or someone who is trained in an area of expertise, noting that there are differences between Euro-centric and Afrikan definitions of this same term. It was therefore stated that the INOSAAR needs to work on closing that gap by reconsidering what we understand the scholar to be and working against terminological polarizations to ensure fruitful collaborations.

Specific recommendations included: the creation of a platform or forum for artists that is ongoing and where information can be collated and shared, while offering mutual support; the establishment of 'Rep the Rose' ('Rep' here meaning to repair and represent) or a joint collaboration with people in the creative industries; the creation of cards with information showing people who have aided Afrikan development; and the establishment of 'RepTheatre'.

Workshop 4: Reflecting on *Little Afeni and the Cause for Reparations*: Children's Educational Resources on Afrikan Reparations

Chair and note taker: Althea Gordon-Davidson

Audio/video recording introduced by Nora Wittman

Including a workshop for children, parents and carers: 'Children Reading and Reflecting on Afeni and The Cause of Reparations'

This was a special workshop for children and their parents/carers, and for others working with and/or interested in working with children. It focused on appropriate educational materials and resources, and other sources of knowledge relating to Afrikan reparations, with a view to exploring critically what is best for teaching children in accordance with the ethics of Afrikan reparations and the expected standards of academia. To that end, the workshop focused on engaging children and their parents, guardians, families and communities creatively on the subject of Afrikan Reparations.

Discussants agreed that the book itself was not an ideal resource, highlighting the need to think carefully about how to communicate the concept of reparations to children, parents and carers of children. Discussions centred on two different approaches and advocated for Afrikans in their communities to take charge of teaching people about the meaning of reparations, contrary to state-run institutions. It was felt that existing models within the Afrikan grassroots movements should be

highlighted and should be responsible for this work, complementing state-run education through extant Afrikan study classes. Connected to this, a need to educate more widely on issues relating to 'being Afrikan' and taking control of issues that identify Afrikan peoples was discussed. The idea of 'being Afrikated' was defined as people who use their acquired skills for the collective betterment of Afrikan communities. Part of this process is also about valorising Afrikan history and the contribution of Afrika to world history and science. Suggestions to help with communication included the creation of an app with a child-friendly reparatory justice timeline, and the commissioning of cartoons and/or animations in different languages (Yoruba, Swahili, Zulu etc.). The overall aim would be to build an Afrikan holistic, 'womb to tomb' curriculum that caters for everybody and is inspired by the Chinwezu definition; in other words, a curriculum driven by a desire for knowledge, and not knowledge as a commodity. Two further suggestions included having a delegation of children at all future INOSAAR events and the need to set up a mentorship scheme where elders are involved in training the youth for the future health of the movement.

Roundtable Reports

Roundtable 1: Youth and Student Afrikan Reparations Roundtable to Explore the Idea of Building a Youth and Student Auxiliary Fellowship of the INOSAAR

Report by Tina Yaa Gyamfuag and Lord Apetsi

During this roundtable, it was decided to set up a youth-led auxiliary fellowship of the INOSAAR, popularly named in short as RepAfrika. This group considered different initiatives to take forward. These included initiatives to engage young people, such as the creation of reparation-themed playing cards and other games; setting up group chat forums (initially through WhatsApp) to discuss issues affecting Black peoples, such as racism, and to offer support; projects to get young people involved, such as email lists, podcasts/YouTube video and campaign events in universities; the development of mentor-mentorship relations to empower through education/employment/networking platforms; alternative ideas about how to use Black History Month as a platform for activists to come into schools/educational sites and act as role models to educate children and youth people about Black history; and a project to create a cultural platform/forum to showcase youth work/creative activities.

Roundtable 2: 'We run tings, State nuh run We': Roundtable on the State and Pan-Afrikan Reparatory Justice

Report by Kofi Klu

This roundtable explored the kind of relationship that should be developed between the ISMAR in terms of the movement from below and state institutions, taking into account what happened with the Abuja initiative and now the CARICOM proposal. Concerns were raised about the prioritization of initiatives led by state institutions and the lack of serious interest in grassroots initiatives, which makes it difficult for Afrikan peoples on the continent and in the Diaspora to embrace reparations because of government corruption and squandering. The recommendation was for the creation of a space within the INOSAAR for critical engagement and discussions between grassroots activists and state representatives. It was noted that the ways in which state power is administered in both the Caribbean and Afrika results in the exclusion of 'our people'. The INOSAAR would therefore work towards inclusion, while questioning whether those in power are using and abusing their positions, the recommendation being that the INOSAAR be viewed as a vehicle for facilitating such a dialogue. Linked to this is the need for community representatives to develop and articulate their own perspectives on reparatory justice, rather than being subject to exclusionary state-led initiatives with no direct benefit to the vast majority of Afrikan people.

Several further points were raised. First, it was suggested that Afrikan states should have no part in reparations. Governments are interested in little more than symbolism, so it should be the communities leading this movement (CD). A concrete example of this was provided with the recent events in Namibia where the government had committed to allowing affected communities a proper seat at the table and to act as mediator, but then went back on their word. It was noted that throughout this process, it had become clear that the Namibian government's interest lay in capital gain, not in the suffering of the Herero and Namaqua/Nama people (KH/GOT).

Second, the 'insurmountables' identified by the legal team at Leigh Day need to be challenged. With reference to the so-called 'legality' of enslavement, there needs to be widespread recognition that Afrikan enslavement was never legal. With reference to the question of the statute of limitations, work needs to be done on retracing ancestry back to enslavement. With reference to the extinction of particular institutions, research is needed to demonstrate that the institutions of today are the same (or are operating in the same fashion) as those of yesterday (CG).

Third, it was stated that being serious about reparations means taking into account the role that churches play in our communities, specifically in terms of the need to perform Sankofa and go back to read seminal texts, notably the Husia (see the epigraph that introduces this report) (KB).

Recommendations

1. Youth support: To ensure that the youth and student auxiliary of the INOSAAR feels supported in their work and their personal and career development, specifically through the creation of a mentorship programme to support young people.
2. Language and definitions: To work on a collective definition of reparations that works against the corruption of its true meaning (notably in terms of reparations being a financial transaction) by state-led initiatives and the media, and to develop a mini-lexicon that feeds into our ground rules to avoid offensive terminologies.
3. Supporting the INOSAAR: To create an INOSAAR that actively support those in establishment academia who are venturing to work in more equitable ways, while recognizing the challenges that they face. To collaborate with interested bodies, such as the trade unions, who are involved in reparations movements.
4. Organizing the INOSAAR: To establish regional bodies of the INOSAAR across the UK.
5. Sharing assets: To list our collective assets, which are willing to share amongst ourselves, in terms of our skills, capabilities, access to resources, creativities etc.
6. The centrality of art and creativity: To recognize that art is also a form of knowledge and that art and creativity can play a central role in reparative justice programmes.
7. Educational repairs: To focus on the need for, and support the development of, a 'reparative curriculum' that seeks to restore the missing cultures, customs, traditions, languages, objects and names that are central to creating a self-determined, forward-thinking productive people who are on a par with the rest of the world.
8. The ancestors: To ensure that respect is paid to the ancestors at the beginning of each INOSAAR event.
9. Sustainability: To ensure that that food served at INOSAAR is, where possible, culturally appropriate and we remain mindful of our environmental footprint.

Final Words

'This is not something that we can do by ourselves. [...] More than anything, you have given us your support and your trust and your confidence and faith, and that is so rare. So, I appreciate it. But we're a family. We're are committed. We have a commitment to something greater than ourselves, to something sacred and timely. And we will be successful. [...] This is a first step, but we're going to keep moving' (JHS).

'Remember that this is a network that requires your participation. Please stay close. Let us implement your suggestions' (ESX).

List of abbreviated names

AA: Alex Akoman

CG: Cecil Gutzmore

ChG: Chief Gege

ESX: Esther Stanford-Xosei

GM: Grace Myahalaleel

GOT: General Owets Tjongarero

IA: Isis Amlak

JHS: Joyce Hope Scott

KB: Kweku Bonsu

KH: Komoomutijua Hangero

KK: Kofi Klu

LA: Lord Apetsi

SM: Sai Murray