

*Mobilizing Transnational Agency for Slavery Reparations:
The Case of Jamaica*

Claudia Rauhut

In 2014, heads of Caribbean governments within the CARICOM states (Caribbean Community and Common Market), mainly made up of the anglophone countries that were British colonies, adopted a ten point action plan titled “Reparatory Justice Framework.” This program was worked out and presented by the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC), a regional organization established in 2013 and composed of academics, lawyers, and other civil society activists from different Caribbean countries. It claims reparations for the long-term damages caused by the enslavement of dozens of millions of Africans during the transatlantic trade. The CRC particularly seeks to engage European governments as successors of former colonial European powers that actively participated in the slave trade, such as Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, in a dialogue on reparatory justice.¹

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1. The complete action plan is available at <http://caricomreparations.org/caricom/caricom-reparatory-justice-framework/>. Before the launch of the commission’s own website, it had already been published by Leigh Day, a British human rights law firm that supports the CRC by investigating the legal dimensions of reparations, as well as in CARICOM press release 53/2014, “CARICOM Leaders Accept Caribbean Reparatory Justice Programme as Basis for Further Action on Reparations,” http://caricom.org/jsp/pressreleases/press_releases_2014/pres53_14.jsp; see “CARICOM Nations Unanimously Approve 10 Point Plan for Slavery Reparations,” Leigh Day News, March 2014,

The Journal of African American History (Winter/Spring 2018) ©2018 ASALH. 1548-1867/2018/10312-0007\$10.00 All rights reserved. DOI: 10.1086/696334

This essay deals with the CRC agenda, focusing on the main arguments raised by Caribbean leaders and their transnational mobilizations on behalf of slavery reparations. Emphasizing the pivotal role of Jamaican activists in the historical and present struggle within the Caribbean region, I first reconstruct the national as well as international domain in which they actively advocate for reparations. I will further elaborate on the transnational networks of activism established between the CRC and the US-based National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC), arguing that the Caribbean claims contribute greatly to a revitalization of global reparations issues in academia and politics. Finally, I conclude by urging for transregional approaches on reparations. The observations here rely on empirical data from preliminary research in Jamaica in 2014, where I conducted interviews with four members of the Jamaican National Commission on Reparations (NCR), which is the first commission set up in the region in 2009. I further include aspects of the self-representation of the respective reparations groups based on analyses of their websites, declarations, and reports.²

While focusing here on Jamaica and hence on the CARICOM/anglophone-Caribbean approach, we need to have in mind that the issue of slavery reparations is vibrant in the entire region, in the United States, and to some extent in Europe. It has become globalized in its arguments, goals, advocacy, and politics. Also, academic research on reparations is more and more designed to address international, global, and transnational perspectives.³ By encouraging transregional approaches I would, however, insist on the need for local and microlevel empirically grounded research that would allow a more differentiated understanding of the local, regional, and national specificities among the respective groups, dynamics, and debates of reparations. The Caribbean region

<http://www.leighday.co.uk/News/2014/March-2014/CARICOM-nations-unanimously-approve-10-point-plan>.

2. I would like to express my gratitude to Verene Shepherd, Rupert Lewis, Ras Miguel Lorne, and Lord Anthony Gifford, who offered their time for an interview. They have not only shared their insights with me but have substantially inspired my approach to the topic. I thank all of them for permitting me to use quotes from the interviews. In particular, I thank Verene Shepherd for her insightful remarks on this contribution. Subsequent interviews with these as well as with other members of the NCR held during another research stay in Kingston in March 2017 could not be included in this manuscript. Also, the renaming of the Jamaican National Commission on Reparations as the National Council on Reparation happened in July 2016 after this manuscript was submitted. Herein, it is still referred to as “National Commission on Reparations” (NCR). The reflections here are part of my current research at Freie Universität Berlin on transregional entanglements within Caribbean activism for slavery reparations. I thank the Fritz Thyssen Foundation for project funding.

3. Next to this special issue, see also the new monograph of Ana Lucia Araujo, *Reparations for Slavery and the Slave Trade: A Transnational and Comparative History* (London, 2017).

itself is shaped by different forms of slavery, colonial histories, languages, cultures, political status and hence different approaches to reparations. In the Spanish-, French-, and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, for instance, existing individual and organized activism fighting the legacies of slavery might not always use the term “reparations” but nevertheless addresses similar issues, for example, fighting inequalities and racial discrimination (fig. 1).⁴

WHY REPARATIONS? TOWARD A REPARATORY JUSTICE FRAMEWORK FOR THE CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean region has experienced the longest history of chattel enslavement and colonialism worldwide. The unpaid forced labor of millions of enslaved Africans in highly efficient plantation economies in the Caribbean, and the profits gained by exporting sugar and other raw materials, became the major source of Europe’s wealth and hegemony. The former (and remaining) European colonies in Caribbean still have to confront the legacies of centuries of slavery, colonial dominance, economic exploitation, and racial-cultural categorization of its population. All of these factors have deeply ingrained the patterns of a colonial thought and reinforced social inequalities along the lines of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and religion. They were not overcome after the formal end of slavery but continue to be reproduced and transformed

4. Authors in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Latin America have emphasized the term *Afro-Reparaciones*; see Claudia Mosquera Rosero-Labbé and Luiz C. Barcelos, eds., *Afro-reparaciones: Memorias de la esclavitud y justicia reparatoria para negros, afrocolombianos y raizales* (Bogotá, Colombia, 2007). The grassroots transnational network Articulación Regional Afrodescendiente de América Latina y el Caribe (ARAAC) has discussed including the issue of slavery reparations more explicitly in their agenda. I thank in particular Cuban scholar and activist Roberto Zurbano for sharing his insights on the different organizations of *Afrodescendientes* in Cuba. In the francophone Caribbean, contrary to the anglophone Caribbean, heads of state and other politicians avoid any talks on slavery reparations and public memory discourse and leave it to associations; see the contributions in Nicola Frith and Kate Hodgson, eds., *At the Limits of Memory: Legacies of Slavery in the Francophone World* (Liverpool, UK, 2015). Suriname, member state of CARICOM and the Dutch-speaking Caribbean, established a National Reparation Commission in 2013; see <http://www.loopsuriname.com/tags/national-reparation-commission-suriname>. With regard to long-standing activism and debates on slavery reparations in Africa, Great Britain, and, more recently, in France, see Ali Mazrui, *Black Reparations in the Era of Globalization* (New York, 2002); Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann and Antonino Lombardo, *Reparations to Africa* (Philadelphia, PA, 2008); Elazar Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices* (Baltimore, MD, 2001); and Charles Forsdick, “Compensating for the Past: Debating Reparations for Slavery in Contemporary France,” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 19, no. 4 (2015): 420–29. As the prominent history of reparations struggle in the United States is extensively addressed in other contributions to this special issue, this article will highlight only some of the links between US and Caribbean groups.



Figure 1. Countries of CARICOM. Source: Metricpioneer.com.

in contemporary Caribbean societies.⁵ European governments have never addressed their colonial role in the region, their crimes and consecutive legacies, nor the remaining entangled inequalities.

To come to terms with these legacies by a framework of reparatory justice is the primary purpose of the current CARICOM reparations claims against Europe. Reparatory justice appeals in a broader sense to the “righting of a wrong”

5. Reparations advocates argue that many of the social and economic problems in the region caused by low education, lack of land rights, diseases, unstable family situations, and so on, can be traced back to slavery; see Hilary M. Beckles and Verene Shepherd, eds., *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy: A Student Reader* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1991). In particular, slavery's impact on medical, emotional, psychological, and environmental health in the American South and the Caribbean is shown in Stephen C. Kenny, “Slavery, Health, and Medicine: Health Histories of Enslaved Peoples in the Atlantic World,” *Oxford Bibliographies Online* (2015), <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199730414/obo-9780199730414-0256.xml>; and Maurits S. Hassankhan et al., *Legacy of Slavery and Indentured Labour: Historical and Contem-*

by implementing measures of compensation at different levels in order to address the living legacies of the crimes committed against indigenous populations and enslaved Africans and their descendants. In particular, by its ten point action plan the CRC calls on European states to recognize slavery as crime against humanity, to apologize officially, and to undertake measures to repair its long-term damage. As a key issue, it links present fundamental development problems in Caribbean societies to the long-term patterns of inequality caused by slavery, colonial exploitation, ongoing resource extraction, and the colonial-racialized social orders that persisted long after the end of slavery. In sum, it is argued that the European colonial powers have left the Caribbean countries underdeveloped and economically and technologically ill equipped. Instead of facilitating proper national development, Caribbean countries were systematically driven to a “debt trap.” This is why the CRC action program stresses especially, though not exclusively, the economic dimension of reparations and urges in its last point for a debt cancellation:

Caribbean governments that emerged from slavery and colonialism have inherited the massive crisis of community poverty and institutional unpreparedness for development. . . . The pressure of development has driven governments to carry the burden of public employment and social policies designed to confront colonial legacies. This process has resulted in states accumulating unsustainable levels of public debt that now constitute their fiscal entrapment. This debt cycle properly belongs to the imperial governments who have made no sustained attempt to deal with debilitating colonial legacies. Support for the payment of domestic debt and cancellation of international debt are necessary reparatory actions.⁶

Consequently, reparations are envisioned not as individual but rather as collective and structural measures for the whole society, as the legacies of slavery have led to persistent structural damage. In order to fight the social and economic disadvantage and racial discrimination of the Afro-Caribbean popula-

porary Issues in Suriname and the Caribbean (New York, 2016). In the case of Jamaica, numerous studies further emphasize the historical roots of persistent social and economic inequalities after ending slavery in 1838 and colonial rule in 1962, focusing on interrelations between poverty, unemployment, poor education, lack of social mobility, race and gender inequalities, and high incidence of crime and violence; see Derek Gordon, *Class, Status and Social Mobility in Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1987); Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832–1938* (Baltimore, MD, 1992); Horace Levy and Barry Chevannes, *They Cry ‘Respect!’: Urban Violence and Poverty in Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1996); and Deborah A. Thomas, *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica* (Durham, NC, 2011).

6. See <http://caricomreparations.org/caricom/caricoms-10-point-reparation-plan/>.

tion, the measures should further contain dimensions of education, health, culture, and general investment in infrastructure.

CARIBBEAN ACTIVISTS AND SCHOLARS ADVOCATE FOR REPARATIONS

The current Caribbean claims strongly rely on previous long-standing reparations struggle across the entire region, involving different people in different periods. Calls for reparations were included in the multiple forms of resistance against slavery and colonial domination, reaching from demands for compensation by enslaved Africans at courts, the maroon rebellions to early Pan-Africanism at the beginning of twentieth century, the Black Power movement in the United States and the Caribbean since the 1960s or the repeated calls for repatriation to Africa by Jamaican Rastafarians.

Benefiting from historical forerunners of reparations, the recent CARICOM call has reached a quite new level of public and political recognition, as it is supported for the first time not only by community activists, Rastafarians, human rights advocates, or academics, but also by national governments and international organizations. The agenda was signed by the prime ministers of nearly all CARICOM member states as well as by the governments of Cuba and Venezuela and regional associations like CELAC and ALBA.⁷ It further has spread globally through a tremendous media presence and its reception by other international reparations groups. A considerable degree of this success is due to Sir Hilary Beckles, who has chaired the CRC since 2013 and to Verene Shepherd, one of the vice-chairs at the CRC, chair of the NCR in Jamaica from 2012 to 2016, and co-chair since July 2016. Shepherd is professor of social history and director of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at University of the West Indies, Mona.⁸ Both work closely together as historians and advocates for reparations. They are known for their important works about the history of slavery, abolition, and emancipation in the Caribbean and about the resistance against colonization and enslavement by indigenous and enslaved people. Both are frequently requested by national and international media, civil and state organizations and universities around the Caribbean, the United States, and Europe to give lectures and interviews on the Caribbean case for reparations.

7. Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC), "Declaración especial sobre la cuestión de las reparaciones por la esclavitud y el genocidio de las poblaciones nativas," www.celac.cancilleria.gob.ec; see also Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA), www.portalalba.org.

8. Shepherd was appointed director of the new Centre for Reparation Research at the University of the West Indies in July 2017; <http://www.open.uwi.edu/uwi-establishes-centre-reparations-research>.

Hilary McD. Beckles has taught economic history at the University of the West Indies in Barbados and is currently vice-chancellor of the UWI. In his widely quoted book *Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide* (2013), he offers an overview of the global reparations movement, focusing on Caribbean protagonists in a historical perspective. Beckles's book immediately became a sort of guidebook and political manifesto for the current CARICOM claims. Based on a variety of empirical data, he reconstructs in detail the self-enrichment of British royal families, churches, merchants, and intellectual elites through the system of slavery and further offers an overview of the global movement for reparations and the particular Caribbean cases. He fundamentally relies on Trinidadian historian Eric Williams's thesis of intrinsic interrelation between the European industrialization, the slave trade and slavery in the Caribbean.⁹ He therefore pays especial tribute to Williams and many other scholars and activist who time and again have spread the reparations spirit (fig. 2).

In particular, Caribbean intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century inspired by Marxism such as C.L.R. James, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Walter Rodney have appealed to Europe to come to terms with the colonial guilt in relation to colonized people by emphasizing the constitutive interrelations between colonized and colonizing societies. At the same time, they have written and advocated against the negation, devaluation, and inferiorization of African practices by colonial hegemonic values and discourses. Especially Fanon was deeply engaged in anticolonial liberation struggles in Africa and analyzed the deep patterns of development and underdevelopment as a result of colonialism. Consequently, in his main oeuvre *Les damnés de la terre* (1961; translated into English in 1963), he has raised arguments of reparations: "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from the under-developed peoples. . . . So when we hear the head of a European state declare with his hand on his heart that he must come to the help of the poor under-developed peoples, we do not tremble with gratitude. Quite the contrary; we say to ourselves: 'It is a just reparation which will be paid to us.'"¹⁰

In a similar way Walter Rodney claims that Europe would never have been able to develop to such an extent without the unpaid and forced labor by Africans.¹¹ Rodney's thesis has further been elaborated by Nigerian economist and historian Joseph Inikori who stressed the fatal impact of export slave trade

9. Hilary M. Beckles, *Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide* (Kingston, Jamaica, 2013), 4.

10. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1963), 102.

11. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London, 1972).

BRITAIN'S BLACK DEBT

Hilary McD Beckles

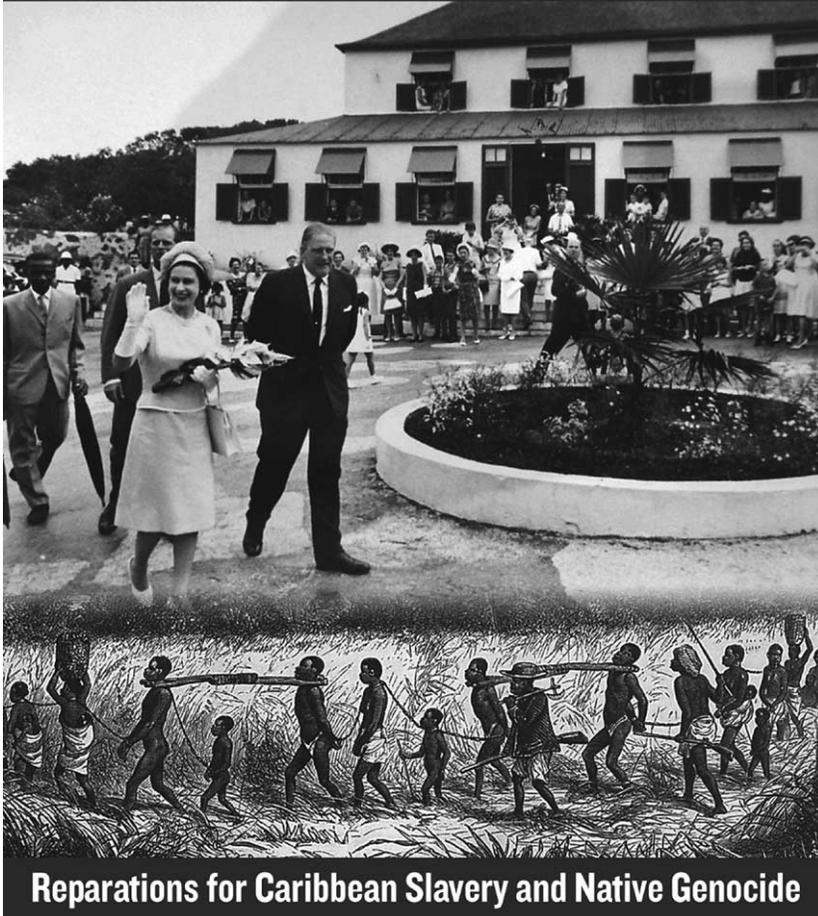


Figure 2. Hilary McD. Beckles, *Britain's Black Debt* (2013). Source: University of the West Indies Press, www.uwipress.com/es/books/britain's-black-debt.

on West African societies in terms of suppressing development.¹² All these pioneering works of Caribbean radical thought that have inspired generations of scholars are still central to the reparations approach.

THE JAMAICAN REPARATIONS MOVEMENT IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Jamaicans have played a key role in the history of the regional and global struggle for reparations. The government's establishment of a National Commission on Reparations (NCR) in 2009 was unprecedented in the region. But long before the government became involved, there had been a long-standing activism in civil society. This section summarizes its history basically by referring to the chronology and perspective given in the Report of NCR from 2013 (unpublished) as well as on the personal accounts of the activists and diverse academic publications.

On Rastafarians' Contribution as Forerunners of Reparations Struggle

Jamaican Rastafarians view themselves as continuing the time-honored tradition of resistance against slavery and colonial domination exemplified by the maroon rebellions since the seventeenth century. The maroons (runaway slaves who escaped from the plantations and mines) in the Caribbean and other parts of the continent successfully resisted the Europeans during colonial period and traditionally survived in the mountains. Today, in Jamaica (and in other Caribbean nations), many communities declare themselves to be descendants of maroons. In Jamaica in the 1930s, some of these self-declared descendants were the first people of African descent to ask the Jamaican government to be compensated for the violence and dislocation they experienced during slavery. Specifically, they asked for land where they could settle their communities.¹³ Under leader Leonard Howell (fig. 3), the Rastafarians founded their

12. J. E. Inikori, *Forced Migration. The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies* (London, 1982).

13. Blake Hannah and Barbara Makeda, "Reparations: Rastafari Pathway to World Peace," in *Rastafari: A Universal Philosophy in the Third Millennium*, 1st ed., ed. Werner Zips (Kingston, Jamaica, 2006), 122. For the extensive literature on *maroonage* and many other practices of resistance in the Americas, see also Emmanuel K. Agorsah, *Maroon Heritage: Archaeological, Ethnographic, and Historical Perspectives* (Bridgetown, Barbados, 1994); Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas* (Kingston, Jamaica, 2006); Werner Zips, *Black Rebels. African Caribbean Freedom Fighters in Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1999); Agustín Lao-Montes, "Cartografías del campo político afrodescendiente en América Latina," in *El Nuevo África en América*, ed. Casa de las Américas (Havana, Cuba, 2011), 16–38; Stephan Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition* (Durham, NC, 2002).



Figure 3. Leonard P. Howell (1898–1981), founder of Rastafari.

group in the early 1930s as a particular cultural-religious community in Pinnacle, a rural village 20 miles away from Kingston. Their practice of “reasoning” (talking together and exchanging ideas in a nonhierarchical way, often accompanied by spiritual drumming and smoking ganja) contains narratives of anticolonial struggle, resisting mental slavery, and rejecting the colonizing of their thought. Furthermore, the use of proper language, clothes, religion, crafts, and forms of education and production as well as the revaluation of African practices are considered to be decolonizing practices that are supposed “to replace those of the Western world system, labeled ‘Babylon.’”¹⁴

The Rastafarians have always pointed to the need to talk about slavery through the lens of reparatory justice. Since the 1950s some Rastafarian elders have repeatedly petitioned the British queen to facilitate their repatriation to Africa as a form of reparations.¹⁵ The current CARICOM call for reparations

14. Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (New York, 1994); Adisa Andwele, “The Contribution of Rastafarianism to the Decolonization of the Caribbean,” in Zips, *Rastafari*, 7–20.

15. In fact, since the queen and the British government ignored the petition, it was the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie I who provided land for Jamaicans and other descendants of Africans in the diaspora who wished to return to Africa. Since the 1960s Rastafarians from Jamaica, the

pays tribute to the pivotal role of Rastafarians by including repatriation (for those who desire it) as the second point in their ten point action plan. Representatives of the Rastafarian Millennium Council, an umbrella organization for Jamaican and international Rastafarians founded in 2007, participated actively in all CARICOM reparations conferences of the region. Also, Rastafarians have maintained a strong presence in the Jamaican NCR, not only through official member Jalaani Niaah but also through the many associates who articulated their different perspectives in commission meetings and those who worked on the Report of 2013.¹⁶ Generally, there is a clear consensus about the early and constant contribution of Rastafarians, as Rupert Lewis, political scientist and reparations activist since the 1980s, opined:

I would say that the Rastafarian movement across the Caribbean as well as elsewhere in Africa provides the main impulse and energy for keeping that issue on the agenda. Because they embody a certain approach to our history which recognizes the transatlantic slave trade as a defining moment in the separation of millions of Africans from the continent. So with the embodiment of that particular moment they challenge the national mythology, the mythology of the nation as being developed or constructed . . . that has got to include, well, how come all these people were brought to this part of this world? And they were raising a fundamental issue of how do we historicize our presence in this part of the world and the relationship between that presence and the systems of labor that enabled Europe to enrich itself?¹⁷

Lewis further relates the notion that Europe's industrialization and wealth are rooted in slavery and colonial exploitation already elaborated by Williams,

Caribbean, the United States, and Europe have been settling in flourishing communities in Sashamane/Ethiopia. According to Jalahni Niaah, the Rastafarians themselves currently estimate about one thousand repatriated settlers living in Sashamane, Addis Ababa, and other parts of Ethiopia; see Jalahni Niaah, "The Rastafari Presence in Ethiopia: A Contemporary Perspective," in *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*, ed. Michael Barnett (New York, 2012), 83. For further reflections on repatriation, see Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (New York, 1994); and Rex M. Nettleford, *Mirror, Mirror: Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1970).

16. "Report of the Work of the National Commission on Reparations. May 2009–October 2013" (unpublished report, Kingston, Jamaica, 2013), 2; hereafter, NCR, "Report." Among other basically unpublished documents, the Rastafarian Millennium Council (<http://rastafarimillenniumcouncil.webs.com>) has prepared a report on Rastafarian contribution at the first regional meeting of CARICOM in St. Vincent and Grenadines in September 2013; see <https://de.scribd.com/document/180484370/the-rastafari-millennium-council-report-on-the-caribbean-regional-conference-on-reparations-st-vincent-grenada-pdf>.

17. Interview with Rupert Lewis, 10 March 2014, Kingston, Jamaica.

Fanon, or Rodney but particularly appreciates the Rastafarian contribution to raising these thoughts. Pointing consequently to the approach that “there is no modernity without slavery,” Lewis urges for a stronger historical awareness of slavery-based entanglements in the self-conception of national narratives of postcolonial nation-states in the Caribbean as well as in Europe. In the 1990s, Jamaican Rastafarian leaders started to work on a broader and more organized reparations agenda that went beyond the issue of repatriation. In 1990, the first committee for reparations founded by George Nelson (Ras Makonnen) participated at the first World Conference on Reparations in Lagos, Nigeria. Nelson subsequently planned to host an international conference on reparations in Jamaica but passed away suddenly in 1992.¹⁸

From Abuja to Durban—the Central Role of Caribbean Reparationists in Pan-African Conferences

In 1993, Abuja, Nigeria, was the site for the first Pan-African Conference on Reparations for African Enslavement, Colonisation, and Neo-colonisation. It was mainly convened by Nigerian businessmen, reparations activists, and later president Chief Abiola, member of a “Group of Eminent Persons on Reparations to African and Africans in the Diaspora” set up in 1990 by the Organization of African Union (OAU), which organized the event. Other members were Jamaica’s diplomatic representative to Africa and long-standing Pan-Africanist Dudley Thompson; the founder of the reparations movement in Britain and Member of Parliament Bernie Grant; professors Ali Mazrui of Kenya and Ade Ajayi of Nigeria; and Lord Anthony Gifford. Gifford—British attorney, expert on international law, and reparation advocate—presented the paper “The Legal Basis of the Claim for Reparation: Facts on Reparation, the Abuja Declaration.” Therein he stated, as defined by the Permanent Court of International Justice, predecessor of the International Court of Justice, that “international law recognises that those who commit crimes against humanity must make reparation” and further that “there is no legal barrier to prevent those who still suffer the consequences of crimes against humanity from claiming reparations, even though the crimes were committed against their ancestors.”¹⁹ Gifford lives and works part-time in Jamaica, has been a member of the Jamaican NCR since 2009, and continues, together with other lawyers and scholars, to research and focus on how to deal with slavery reparations in international law.

18. NCR, “Report,” 24.

19. Anthony Gifford, *The Passionate Advocate* (Kingston, Jamaica, 2007), 243–49.

The final Abuja proclamation called for a stronger exchange within the global reparations struggle between Africa and the diaspora and appealed to the “Heads of States and Governments in Africa and the diaspora itself to set up National Committees for the purpose of studying the damage experienced, disseminating information and encouraging educational courses on the impact of enslavement, colonisation and neo-colonialism on present-day Africa and its Diaspora.”²⁰ Today, as a center of the African Diaspora, the Caribbean is the only region in the world where national commissions for reparations have been founded with the support of governments. The Pan-African Conference of Abuja, however, did not result in global publicity and support for the reparations agenda—it has been overshadowed instead by the arrest of President Abiola and his removal from power by a military coup in Nigeria in 1994.²¹

Nevertheless, the Abuja conference is conceived as a cornerstone for discussing reparations at the level of international organizations and finally provided the ground for the UN-sponsored World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which took place in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. The final declaration condemned slavery as a crime against humanity and called on the former European colonizing countries for an official acknowledgment and an apology. It was recognized for the first time at the global level of international organizations like the UN that slavery has caused structural marginalization and racial discrimination that persists to this day and directly affects the lives of Africans and people of African descent.²²

According to participants Gifford and Beckles, the presence of the Caribbean delegations (including Jamaican representatives Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah and Ambassador Stafford Neil from the permanent mission of Jamaica to the United Nations) meant that the topic of reparations was intensely debated and supported by many delegates, even if not in the substantive way they would have desired. Beckles argues that no consensus was achieved among African and European governmental representatives, particularly with regard to point 1 of the final declaration, which says, “We . . . acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade are crimes against humanity and *should* always have been so.” Beckles clearly rejects the word *should*, as it implies the notion that slavery was *not* a crime in that time.²³

20. Abuja Proclamation of 1993, <http://www.shaka.mistral.co.uk/abujaProclamation.htm>.

21. Gifford, *Passionate Advocate*, 253; Beckles, *Britains's Black Debt*, 179.

22. The final declaration is available at <http://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf>.

23. Beckles, *Britain's Black Debt*, 191; see also www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf.

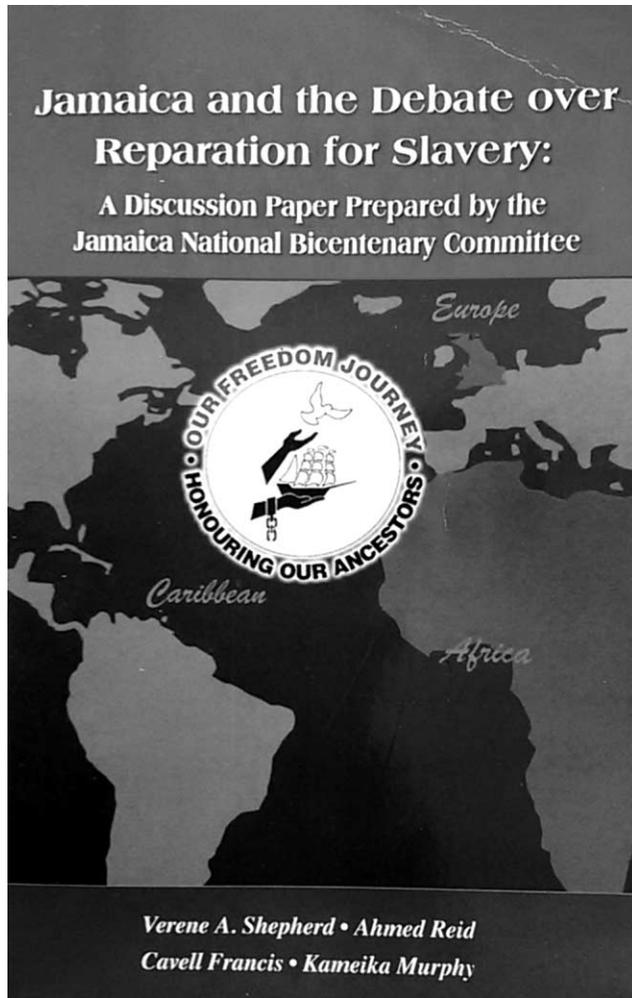


Figure 4. Verene A. Shepherd et al., *Jamaica and the Debate over Reparation for Slavery* (2012). Photo courtesy of the author.

The Jamaican reparations activists share this opinion and underline their disappointment that the “Western European bloc has mobilized its finest minds at Durban to immobilize the reparation issue” (fig. 4).²⁴ Gifford, however, states that despite the conflicting interests, “there was a successful attempt to face up to the connection between the horrors of the past and the racism and poverty of today. . . . Much more was said on the subject of rep-

24. Verene A. Shepherd et al., *Jamaica and the Debate over Reparation for Slavery: A Discussion Paper Prepared by the Jamaica National Bicentenary Committee* (Kingston, Jamaica, 2012), 61.

aration than the former slave-owning states would have liked.”²⁵ In conclusion, the Durban conference is considered to have been a pathbreaking step that laid the groundwork for strengthening the current Caribbean reparations movement. Academics, human rights activists, national governments, and international organizations became more involved, making the long tradition of activism in civil society their common cause.²⁶ The present initiative of the CRC renews and amplifies the Durban agenda by a stronger emphasis on the aspect of reparatory justice and, in particular, by encouraging national governments of the Caribbean region to address European governments.

In the case of Jamaica, after returning from the Durban conference, Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah officially founded the Jamaican reparation movement in 2002 and prepared the “Jamaica Reparation Document” in 2003 (unpublished). Presented to several ministers of the Jamaican government, it called for “a Jamaican education curriculum related to the interconnections of the effects of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, slavery and colonialism, the resulting negative social and economic manifestations on all aspects of life in Jamaica and the need for Reparations nationally, regionally and internationally to correct these negative manifestations.”²⁷

Reparations Debates within the Bicentenary of Abolition of the Slave Trade

The activities of the Jamaican reparation movement finally resulted in governmental support for the formation of the Jamaica National Bicentenary Committee (JNBC), launched in December 2005 and chaired by Verene Shepherd.

The JNBC has raised considerable public awareness through public meetings, lectures, debates, commemoration ceremonies, and the erection of two monuments, one that honors the heroes and heroines of the final emancipation war in Jamaica (1831–32) and the other the victims of the Zong massacre of 1781.²⁸ Those activities were part of Jamaica’s effort to present a Caribbean perspective on the commemorations of the bicentenary in 2007 that took place throughout the region as well as in Great Britain. Contrary to the British

25. Gifford, *Passionate Advocate*, 64.

26. Beckles, *Britain’s Black Debt*, 214; NCR “Report,” 66. For more arguments and conflicts with regard to reparations debated or ignored in Durban, see also M. K. O. Abiola, “Why Reparations?,” *West Africa*, no. 1–7 (1992), 910–11; Ali A. Mazrui, *Black Reparations in the Era of Globalization* (New York, 2002); and Howard-Hassmann and Lombardo, *Reparations to Africa* (Philadelphia, PA, 2008), which deals in particular with an African perspective on reparations.

27. Shepherd et al., *Jamaica and the Debate*, 68.

28. NCR, “Report,” 28.

abolition narrative in the UK that honored personalities such as William Wilberforce and their role in ending the slave trade, the JNBC explicitly pointed to the active role of the enslaved people themselves in fighting slavery across the Americas. It further has criticized the UK's abolitionist focus as a selective way of remembering that might erase the preceding 300 years of enrichment by means of a brutal system of exploitation of Africans from the public memory.²⁹ The JNBC finally took the opportunity to urge the British government to apologize for its role in the slave trade and slavery. But, repeatedly, the former British prime minister Tony Blair only issued a statement of regret, admitting "how profoundly shameful the slave trade was . . . and to express our deep sorrow that it ever happened."³⁰

The Jamaican National Commission on Reparations (NCR)

The Bicentenary Committee continued to mobilize for a stronger national debate on reparations and lobbied for the establishment of a National Commission on Reparations, which was finally set up by the Jamaican government in 2009. It was first chaired by sociologist and anthropologist Barry Chevannes, author of various books about Rastafarian culture in the Caribbean, and since 2012 Verene Shepherd has led it. Due to Shepherd's broad engagement as a scholar, activist, and public voice in local, national, and transnational arenas, the case for reparations has gained much attention and public interest in Jamaica and also globally. Together with a coalition of other academics, lawyers, human-rights activists, and representatives of Rastafarian groups within the NCR, Shepherd has systematically worked on the issue. Not only has she prepared, together with her team a large report for the government, she has also brought the topic to national and international institutions and media and has strongly advocated for governmental support. All the same, in our interview she and other interlocutors mentioned that the case for reparations is still not sufficiently known within the Jamaican population. They state that most people are aware of the injustices committed by slavery, but productive knowledge and discussion of the matter have been systematically unattended

29. For similar critiques of the bicentenary commemorations, see also Marcus Wood, "Significant Silence: Where Was Slave Agency in the Popular Imagery of 2007," in *Imagining Transatlantic Slavery*, ed. Cora Kaplan and J. R. Oldfield (New York, 2010), 162–90.

30. Shepherd et al., *Jamaica and the Debate*, xv. Blair's statement from 26 November 2006, repeated in March 2007, was extensively circulated in national and international press at that time, such as *The Guardian*, BBC, *The London Times*, *The Jamaica Gleaner*, *Jamaica Observer*, *New Nation*, and so on. See also <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/32322>. On the ongoing criticism of the British government's rejection of any reparation talk, see the section "States Talking to States" in this contribution.

in the educational system and public discourse, where for a long time nearly no attention was paid to the memory of slavery. For this reason, the NCR is campaigning all over the country in order to raise greater awareness of the reparations agenda and, in particular, to reach people outside of academic and activist circles. For instance, they have produced a radio jingle, organized several public lectures in Emancipation Park in Kingston, arranged workshops in schools and colleges as well as in work centers, and convened various youth forums on reparations in cooperation with the African Caribbean Heritage Institute of Jamaica/Jamaica Memory Bank (fig. 5). Education and the spread of knowledge about the case for slavery reparations are therefore a central focus within the current activities and have already achieved considerable resonance with the Jamaican population.

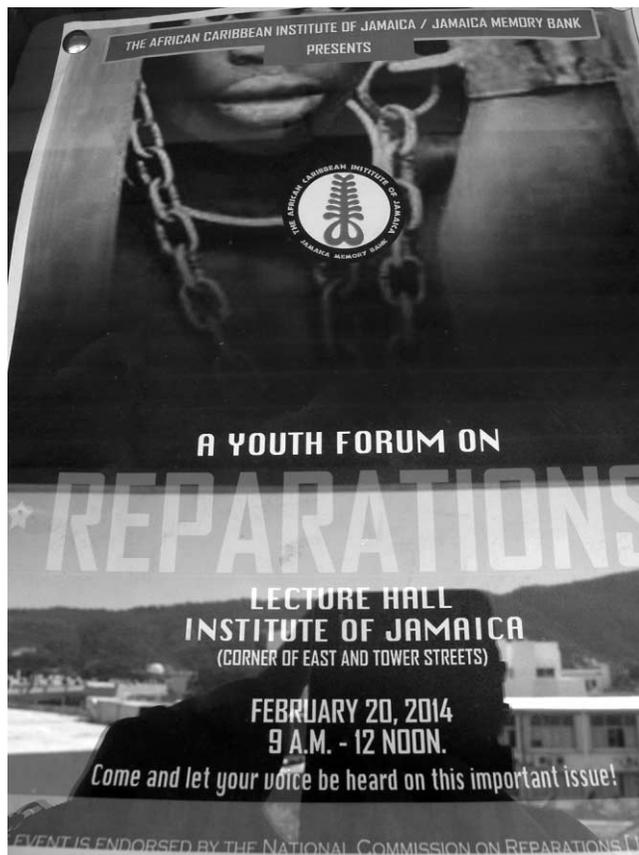


Figure 5. Youth Forum on Reparations at Institute of Jamaica. Photo courtesy of the author.

ON THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASPECTS OF REPARATIONS

Drawing on empirical sources, the following observations highlight the many dimensions of slavery reparations that encompass a whole epistemological project that fundamentally includes dimensions of reeducation, the rewriting of history, and the production and circulation of a decolonized knowledge. These dimensions are obviously not separable from the material, political, legal, and economic aspects. We will see why the Caribbean reparations claims are raised at the level of nation-states and international organizations.

Rewriting of History of Slavery and Its Legacies

Rastafarian activist and attorney Ras Miguel Lorne, involved in the struggle since the 1980s and collaborating with the NCR, points out the need to confront racist colonial legacies in Jamaican society as a primary concern of reparations:

The reparations [demands] are not taught in schools, the history of slavery isn't nearly touched upon, history is not even compulsory in schools, and in an environment like ours, history should be compulsory to give us a sense of pride, of culture, of achievement! . . . In other words, the hangover and the strength of the colonial system are still so strong. As a lawyer, I can testify that our court system is probably more conservative and colonial than Britain! In areas of British law, that Britain has become progressive, we are still far behind, our prison structure and all these things. . . . So we need a radical thought process to bring us up to date and therefore . . . all of this is connected, because if you get reparations in an atmosphere of backwardness, then the colonial enemies will find a way that all of that compensation goes back to them and will benefit their economy more than it will benefit us! . . . We see the fight for reparation as a fight to restore the dignity of black people, to re-connect us with Africa, to eliminate racism.³¹

Ras Miguel Lorne reflects on the existing colonial structures and orders in Jamaican society especially reproduced through a system of education that leads people into the stated miseducation. On these grounds, as he argues, the idea and real politics of possible future reparations would rather reproduce the existing inequalities than reduce them. Therefore, the first step toward reparations is, according to Lorne, the need for education and raising consciousness not only about the history of slavery but also about a reevaluation of African practices. By a similar argument the ten point program of the

31. Interview with Ras Miguel Lorne, 3 March 2014, Kingston, Jamaica.

CRC claims investment in school reforms to build up cultural institutions, museums, and research centers in order to investigate and show the history of slavery in a nonhegemonic way. But the program also claims the installation of an African knowledge program enabling cultural and religious exchanges with Africa.³² Reparations include a whole dimension of reevaluation and revitalization of African Caribbean practices that have been marginalized, and their adherents criminalized, for centuries by colonial orders and prejudices in nearly all parts of the Americas. Reparationists therefore mobilize for a rewriting of national and even global history that prominently recognizes the history of slavery in relation to persistent inequalities and racial discrimination—a history that includes the narratives of African people, their social, cultural, and religious practices and their agency of resistance. Closely related to the notion of reeducation and rewriting of history is, therefore, the need to spread a knowledge that would challenge Eurocentric master narratives. While colonizers and their colonial heritage in the Caribbean for a long time imposed to a great extent what should be remembered as part of history, the reparations activists reinforce the production of a knowledge that would recover the silenced narratives and break with idealized hegemonic national histories.

Reframing the Development Discourse as Reparations

Since reparations addresses present structural problems in Caribbean societies as a result—not in a monocausal and unidirectional way—of the consequences of slavery, it urges Europe to recognize its central role in it. By appealing to European governments to seriously engage in fighting poverty and underdevelopment and recognizing their deep historical roots, the reparation activists reframe the development discourse as an obligation to repair historical injustices, and no longer as charity. The systematic refusal to address those issues has occurred for various reasons, as Shepherd argues, in a tense relationship between the former “Motherland” and the former colonies. “We cannot continue like this. Our relationship with Europe is really, really bad. One reason is that people cannot forget the past. There is some awareness in society, through history education, of what European colonialism was like. The often expressed view is that what happened under colonialism was not right, that an apology is due; that an apology should be followed by some kind of settlement to Caribbean people, as, even with independence, the Caribbean was left undeveloped.”³³

32. CARICOM Press release 285/2013, points 5 and 7.

33. Interview with Verene Shepherd, 27 February 2014, Kingston, Jamaica; hereafter “Interview with Shepherd.”

This quote is especially relevant with regard to two central dimensions of reparations: Shepherd first reveals the evocation of historical memory and narratives of the people as justification of reparations. Second, she prominently links the reparation struggle to the discourse of development and thereby counters dominant modernist development discourses. It must take into consideration that Britain left Jamaica—after the formal end of slavery in 1838 and colonialism in 1962—with fundamental economic, social, and educational development problems, including high rates of illiteracy, chronic diseases, inadequate employment and living conditions, and persistent severe poverty.³⁴ Consequently, she argues that British development aid for the Caribbean can no longer be framed in terms of morality or charity, but rather as reparations for historical injustice. In a similar way, David Scott, anthropologist and expert on the Caribbean at Columbia University in New York, has recently in a very brief statement advocated for the CARICOM agenda precisely because it challenges common concepts and discourses of developmentalist models of the modern nation-states. While refusing to recognize historical injustices and to fight its consequences within a framework of reparatory justice, European nation-states continue to reproduce the dominant dependency structures. Thus, Scott rigorously highlights the key concern:

One of the things that the reparations argument *potentially* does is to re-describe the past's relation to the present in such a way as to foreground the sense in which Caribbean debt is the other side of European *theft*—that the “persistent poverty” of the Caribbean has been a constituting condition for *ill-gotten* European prosperity? The two—the debt and the theft—are internally, not accidentally, connected. The point is that this is not the story of a mere episode in a marginal history; it is the integrated story of the making of the modern world *itself*. What the Caribbean politics of reparations seeks, therefore, is not economic aid (with all its disciplining technologies and moral hubris), not help in the subservient sense of a mendicant seeking assistance, but what is *owed* to the Caribbean by former slave-trading and slave-owning nations as a matter of the justice of redress.³⁵

Using Historical-Empirical Research for Economic and Legal Arguments for Reparations

With regard to Shepherd's aforementioned awareness of injustices in history within the Jamaican population, it might be necessary to briefly refer to a

34. See n. 5.

35. David Scott, “Preface: Debt, Redress,” *Small Axe* 18, no. 1 (2014), x.

particular historical account: Shepherd has made use of the findings of an interdisciplinary and international research team at University College, London that investigates the long-term enrichment of slaveholders and companies involved in the trade exemplified by a particular account. As a “prize” for emancipation, slave owners in the British colonies of the Caribbean received 20 million pounds at that time from the British Parliament in compensation for the “loss of property.”³⁶ In contrast, the formerly enslaved persons entered freedom without possessing capital, land, or full citizenship. The reparations activists consider this historical work as particularly relevant because it can counter arguments against reparations for two reasons. First, by investigating the money and where that money has gone in terms of subsequent development, they present a research base that shows the long-term implications of these unequal conditions. Second, they thereby underline the reparations claim by empirical work of real calculations in order to deconstruct the widespread skepticism that reparations can only be symbolic or even illusionary. These results, again, are being systematically elaborated on in relation to research on historical injustices in international law, especially as it immediately became necessary to disprove the strong counterarguments against reparations not only from moral, historical, and economic perspectives, but specifically from a juridical point of view. Interdisciplinary research, in particular the close collaboration with legal scholars and lawyers, is therefore considered extremely important in order to prepare and defend legal arguments in case the topic has to be discussed at the level of international law and international courts of justice.³⁷ Not exclusively, but particularly for the strengthening of the legal dimension, the activists further mobilize for governmental support in order to deal with reparations at the level of nation-states as well as at the international level.

States Talking to States

The Jamaican government’s support through providing the resources to build a national commission in 2009 is considered by my interlocutors as an ex-

36. An important source in the form of an online research database on the topic is provided by the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slave-ownership at University College, London. Drawing from examples of Britain, Jamaica, Barbados, and Grenada, it traces the trajectories of British slave owners who were compensated at the end of slavery and thereby contributes to explanations of how British history is shaped by commercial, political, cultural, social, intellectual, physical, and imperial legacies of slavery. See <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>; see also the volume of Catherine Hall et al., *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, UK, 2014).

37. Interview with Shepherd; interview with Lord Anthony Gifford, 28 February 2014, Kingston, Jamaica.

tremely important achievement for two major reasons. First, they feel that their voices were heard and that their claims were seriously discussed among the broader public and in politics. This wider dialogue also helped the movement to grow outside the Rastafarian and academic contexts. Second, the support of the national government meant that the matter can be discussed between states. More than merely a bilateral or unilateral approach (e.g., Jamaica only addressing Great Britain), Shepherd and her colleagues at the CRC envision a regional approach. The CRC is therefore working to encourage the establishment of other national commissions across the region and to facilitate dialog and exchange among them. Shepherd and the chairs of the ten to twelve existing national commissions regularly meet in order to investigate the particular cases for reparations in each country and to advance a common agenda on how to appeal to European governments: “So we are happy that CARICOM is on board, because this fight is going to require the support of heads of government. States talking to states, right? This approach is critical because all of the strategies we were using in the past have not worked. So, here is another chance. Let’s see where it goes.”³⁸ Shepherd indirectly refers here to the long-standing initiatives from Rastafarians, community activists, human rights advocates, and academics that have never been echoed by either the Jamaican or the British governments. Thus, while the call for reparations is not entirely new, the fact that the call is now coming from a broader coalition of civil society and is finally supported by the Caribbean states is truly a watershed. For activists, it means obtaining political backing and recognition of their claims within their local and national contexts. It also opens new perspectives to negotiate on the matter with new actors and within new global networks and arenas. Indeed, it is widely due to the pioneering work of the CRC that many prime ministers of Caribbean states finally signed the action plan in 2014 and thereby signaled their governmental support for the case for reparations.

As to what parties will be addressed, both the NCR and the CRC are quite clear. In the report of the NCR, for instance, it is argued that, rather than private persons, banks, insurances, or companies, the most appropriate institutions to pursue are the governments themselves. They are viewed as the successor states of those colonial governments that have created the legal, political, economic, and cultural-racial framework in which the organized crime of the slave trade was made possible: “[Transatlantic Trade in Africans] was a state-sponsored enterprise, made legal in the colonies by the British colonial regime.”³⁹ Shepherd also underlines the state’s role, remarking that “our position is that African enslave-

38. Interview with Shepherd.

39. NCR, “Report,” 58.

ment was a state-sponsored system and so our claim must be against the state. If other companies or churches wish to apologize, (and some have), that's fine, but our case is against the state."⁴⁰ Therefore, instead of individual compensation for the descendants of the victims of the slave trade, as has been repeatedly claimed, for instance, by some US reparations groups, the CRC envisions collective measures at the national level, as the effects of slavery are conceived, in terms of inequalities, as something systemic, affecting the whole society. It calls therefore for investment in infrastructure in the areas of education, health, work, and culture and further requires a transfer of technology and knowledge as well as debt cancellation.⁴¹ The priority to fight structural problems in development is related to the aforementioned view that slavery, its persistent legacies, and centuries of colonial exploitation significantly affected the economic, social, and cultural developments of many Caribbean countries. Reparations are clearly envisioned as collective measures for coming to terms with the still-unresolved history of slavery. The CRC therefore encourages dialogue between the Caribbean and European states and motivates the regional governments to bring cases against European governments ("states against states")—above all against Britain, the strongest former colonial power in the region.

European governments until now have systematically refused to enter into any dialogue on reparatory justice. Britain's rejection of reparations became evident again during the celebrations of the bicentenary of abolition of the slave trade in 2007, when Tony Blair and the queen refused any form of recognition and apology to the descendants of the victims. The no-apology strategy, even after the strong national and international backing for the CRC call, was clearly demonstrated again during David Cameron's visit to Jamaica in September 2015 when he disrespectfully responded to the Jamaican reparations claims with the words "Let's move on from painful legacy of slavery." Cameron's position, similar to Blair's position eight years before, was perceived as an affront not only by the advocates for reparations in the Caribbean as well as in Great Britain but also by some politicians; and national and international media too expressed their disagreement.⁴² The British government's insistent hardline position of rejecting any talk about the slavery past and re-

40. Interview with Shepherd.

41. CARICOM Press release 285/2013, point 10.

42. See Rowena Mason, "Jamaica Calls for Britain to Pay Billions of Pounds in Reparations for Slavery," *Guardian*, 29 September 2015; Dan Bilefsky, "David Cameron Grapples with Issues of Slavery Reparations in Jamaica," *New York Times*, 30 September 2015; "David Cameron Rules out Slavery Reparation during Jamaica Visit," BBC, 30 September 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34401412>. On the criticism about the British Government's no-apology position in Durban 2001 and within the bicentenary of 2007, see the chapter "British Policy: No Apology, No Reparations," in Beckles, *Britain's Black Debt*, 194–229.

fusing to apologize finally serves for the activists as another reason to take the reparations issue to the international arena.

Negotiating Reparations in the International Arena

One possible way to challenge the strong opposition of Great Britain and other European states might be the mobilization within international organizations such as the United Nations, which are considered an important global arena. The activists strategically consult with them, or they are themselves active in the UN because it results in visible international support. Verene Shepherd is highly engaged on that level. As a former chair (2009–12) and member (until 2015) of the UN-Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, she actively mobilized to place reparations on the agenda of the UN “Decade for People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development.”⁴³ Over the course of this decade (2015–24), the UN will provide funding for educational and social programs and measures directed to improve the living conditions of people of African descent across the continent and to fight the racism and structural inequalities they face on different levels. According to Shepherd, it was only after lengthy and complicated negotiations, especially with regard to the inclusion of reparations for slavery, that the UN decade finally began in 2015:

There is some resistance to some aspects of the program of action, articulated for instance by the EU. The call for reparations is a part of it [of the resistance]. But I don’t see how we can eliminate reparations as part of it [the program of action] because it’s really the movement for the 21st century. So we will have to see. There is a draft program of action, but it hasn’t been implemented. The implementation has to start at the level of states. But in terms of the working group, the theme that we are proposing for the decade is recognition, justice, and development, right?⁴⁴

Shepherd underlines that the UN decade’s programmatic outline of recognition and justice is unthinkable without addressing the issue of reparations. In order to raise this topic, she has constantly leveraged her simultaneous engagement as a delegate in the CRC and as member of the UN working group. The program of activities for the decade delivered on 1 December 2014 still

43. The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent was established by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner in 2002 with a mandate to study and report on racial discrimination faced by people of African descent and to propose measures for its elimination; see <http://ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/WGAfricanDescent/Pages/WGEPADIndex.aspx>.

44. Interview with Shepherd.

remains quite vague, however. It is noticeably defensive with regard to options that might be pursued in favor of reparations. Hence, it only insists in a very general way that the nation-states apologize for the crimes of slavery and, further, that the states in question “find some way to contribute to the restoration of the dignity of victims.” Finally, it appeals to international and regional organizations to “use the decade as an opportunity to engage with people of African descent on appropriate and effective measures to halt and reverse the lasting consequences of slavery.”⁴⁵ At the UN level, UNESCO officials have begun to focus more on the topic of reparations. In 2015, they convened an international conference in St. Kitts and Nevis on the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the UNESCO International Scientific Slave Route Project. By appointing Beckles as the current vice president of the international task force and designating him the key note speaker, the UNESCO Slave Route Project sent a clear signal that it will explore the issue of reparations within its international work on the memory of slavery and the remembering of its victims.⁴⁶

Beckles further links the Caribbean case to other historical injustices in order to emphasize the global relevance of reparations, as well as its possibility and legitimacy.⁴⁷ In his speech in the House of Commons on 16 July 2014, he declared that “this 21st century will be the century of global reparatory justice.”⁴⁸ Since its first announcement in 2013, the Caribbean reparations agenda has gained much public and political attention in the national and international media; among civil society groups and universities around the Caribbean, the United States, and Europe; and at the level of the United Nations. The way through the institutions and procedures of international organizations may very well be difficult and exhausting. However, the international arena and the level of nation-states are considered indispensable for obtaining official recognition, eliciting global awareness, and applying a certain amount of political pressure in relation to the issue of reparations. The question of how arguments, people, resources, and indeed the very social dynamics of activism

45. Program of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, 1 December 2014, p.7, p. 12, §§(d) and (i), http://www.un.org/en/events/african-descentdecade/pdf/A.RES.69.16_IDPAD.pdf.

46. See <http://today.caricom.org/2015/07/14/unesco-conference-explores-reparations/>.

47. However problematic comparisons are in terms of scales, outcome, claimant-defender-relations, and so on, Beckles (*Britain's Black Debt*, 12) refers to the reparation programs for the Holocaust, for colonial crimes against the Maori in 1995 (Maori Waikato Raupatu Claims Settlement Bill 1863), and the Mau Mau independence fighters in Kenya of the 1950s in 2012.

48. “Chairman of CARICOM Reparations Commission Addresses British House of Commons,” CARICOM Press Release 188/2014, http://www.caricom.org/jsp/pressreleases/press_releases_2014/pres188_14.jsp.

and representation (i.e., between community activists and the leading figures of the Caribbean movement) might change and even be conflictive within the process of their local, national, and international negotiations is another important aspect that cannot be elaborated on here.

THE IMPACT OF THE CARIBBEAN REPARATIONS AGENDA
ON UNITED STATES REPARATIONS GROUPS

The CARICOM agenda has been enthusiastically received not only by regional governments and international organizations, but also by numerous civil society organizations throughout the Americas and Europe. In particular, it has been strongly echoed by activist groups and scholars in the United States—a country with a long history of struggle and intense debate over reparations.⁴⁹ The extent to which twentieth-century activism in the United States was influenced by activists and debates from the Caribbean (and vice versa) would require further investigations in detail.⁵⁰ We could, however, assume that already within the historical struggle for reparations there have been multiple interconnections across the nations—similar to the works of Bogues, Lewis, and Quinn, who have convincingly emphasized the long overlooked transnational networks between the leaders and ideas of Pan-Africanism and the Black Power movement in the United States and the anglophone Caribbean.⁵¹

49. The complexity of different activists, claims, lawsuits, and debates in relation to slavery reparations in the United States is discussed more in detail in other contributions in this special issue. A good overview of activism in the long twentieth century, including a collection of numerous original manifestos from organizations such as the United Negro Improvement Association of the 1920s, the Civil Rights Congress of the 1950s, the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA) in 1987 and individual initiatives such as the the Black Manifesto issued by James Forman in 1969 and Congressmen John Conyers's HR 40 Reparation study bill, is provided by Michael T. Martin et al., eds., *Redress for Historical Injustices in the United States: On Reparations for Slavery, Jim Crow, and Their Legacies* (Durham, NC, 2007). Other academic readings engaging in favor of reparations are V. P. Franklin, ed., "African Americans and Movements for Reparations: Past, Present, and Future," special issue, *Journal of African American History* 97 (Winter-Spring 2012); Charles Ogletree "Repairing the Past: New Efforts in the Reparations Debate in America," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 38 (2003): 279-320; Clarence J. Munford, *Race and Reparations: A Black Perspective for the 21st Century* (Trenton, NJ, 1996); and William Darity "Forty Acres and a Mule in the 21st Century," *Social Science Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (2008): 656-64.

50. Within my research project I elaborate more on the interconnectedness of discourses and strategies enacted by different reparations activists between the Caribbean and the United States. I got an inkling of the complexity and particularity of the reparations debate in the US while interacting with scholars during my research stay at Duke University in November-December 2015. I'm deeply grateful to Lorand Matory, who hosted me in the Department of Anthropology, and to him and his wife Bunmi Matory for sharing wonderful moments in Durham.

51. Anthony Bogues, "Black Power, Decolonization, and Caribbean Politics: Walter Rodney and the Politics of the *Groundings with My Brothers*," *boundary 2*, no. 36 (2009); Rupert Lewis,

In April 2015, Beckles, Shepherd, and other leaders from the Caribbean and from North, Central, and South America and Europe were invited to the National/International Reparations Summit in New York. It was convened by Ron Daniels, director of the Institute of the Black World, 21st Century (IBW), and by the newly formed National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC) that views itself as an umbrella organization for leaders from several civil society organizations in the United States (see the photo on the cover of this issue).⁵² The main objective was to provide a forum for global exchange, to revive the already existing activism in the United States and, finally, to rework and reintroduce the Reparations Study Bill HR-40 that John Conyers has brought before the US Congress since 1989. The NAARC considers this bill to be the strongest initiative to date because it already suggested establishing a Congressional commission to study reparations at the national level. The final communiqué of the New York summit hailed John Conyers “as a champion of the reparations movement” (point 2) and announced a “Decade for Reparations and in that context, applauded the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Declaration of 2015–24 as the Decade for People of African descent which should advance the demand for reparations” (point 8); the communiqué further declared that the “CRC . . . will support the National African-American Reparations Commission (NAARC) by encouraging and facilitating Caribbean political leaders, artists, civil society activists and scholars to participate in various NAARC educational and mobilizing/organizing initiatives” (point 2).

Inspired by the CRC, the NAARC calls for the establishment of a national commission in the United States similar to the CRC in order to have a national conversation on reparations appealing to their own government in the United States. It further proposes developing a reparations program like the Reparatory Justice Framework presented in the CRC’s ten point action plan (fig. 6).⁵³ Ultimately, the Caribbean and US activists affirmed that the summit was a “tremendous success” and “will provide a huge momentum to the growing global reparations movement.”⁵⁴

“Jamaican Black Power in the 1960s,” in *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn (Gainesville, FL, 2014), 53–75.

52. The IBW is a proactive institution that mainly supports the issue of reparations by circulating related audio materials, speeches, maps, academic readings, and announcements on its website, where the speeches and materials of the reparations summit are also available; see <http://ibw21.org/reparations/>.

53. See cover of photo of summit meeting; <https://ibw21.org/initiative-posts/naarc-posts/naarc-rolls-out-preliminary-10-point-reparations-plan/>.

54. As reported on the *Jamaica Observer* website, quoting Don Rojas, director of communications and international relations at the IBW and currently senior advisor for communications to the vice-chancellor of UWI, Sir Hilary Beckles; see http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Int-1-reparations-conference-ends-on-high-note_18754992.



Figure 6. Congressman John Conyers of Detroit, honorary host of the CBC's Reparations Braintrust and author of HR40, welcomes members of the NAARC and chairman of the CARICOM Reparations Commission Hilary Beckles. Source: Institute of the Black World 21st Century, <https://ibw21.org/initiative-posts/naarc-posts/naarc-rolls-out-preliminary-10-point-reparations-plan/>.

The CARICOM reparations agenda and its leaders have clearly spurred the revitalization of the US reparations movement at the organizational level and the articulation of precise claims toward the states in question, as well as fortified the transregional networks of activism. The manifold activities in the local, national, and global contexts described in this article highlight the Caribbean as a center for current activism for reparations. As Shepherd observed, “we are planning a huge global conference in the Caribbean, because right now most of the conversation on reparations is taking place in the Caribbean. Other people now are looking to us, while before the United States was leading.”⁵⁵

Shifting attention toward Caribbean leadership, as Shepherd suggests, might not just affect the arguments and organizational dynamics of different agendas across the region, including the United States—I would argue that it might also open up new approaches in wider public and academic debates, which for a long time tended to overemphasize or singularize the case for reparations in the United States. The respective discourses were thus homogenized through the lens of the particular experiences and dynamics within

55. Interview with Shepherd.

the United States—not because other regional experiences and activists did not exist but rather because their voices have been overlooked to a great extent. It is only recently that the pivotal historical and present role of Caribbean leaders and experiences in this struggle has become more visible academically, publicly, and politically.

The Caribbean case offers a new approach to the issue of reparations in terms of the actors involved, potential beneficiaries and targeted institutions, the sites of negotiation, and the orientation of concrete collective goals. In terms of future political and academic dialogue, the topic of reparations might therefore be discussed beyond the lens of experience in the United States and expanded through alternative innovative and complementary approaches. Highlighting the Caribbean activists, their agenda and impact might finally contribute to overcoming the marginalization of the Caribbean in terms of political activism. Also, the Western social sciences might no longer look at the Caribbean as a faraway “periphery.” Paying more attention to the region and its impact on critical knowledge production might inspire both global activism and academic research on reparatory justice.

TOWARD TRANSREGIONAL APPROACHES TO SLAVERY REPARATIONS

Although this essay has limited its reflections to the Jamaican and, hence, anglophone Caribbean context of CARICOM, the call for reparations has to be considered as part of a much broader and long-standing struggle across the whole region, where border-crossing networks of people, practices, and ideas selectively influence each other. Anthropologist Faye Harrison has precisely advised that there is “no need for comparative research on Caribbean issues that draw boundaries that include or exclude on the basis of shared language and common colonial masters rather than on the basis of factors that may actually be more significant for understanding the workings of cultural, economic, and political development.”⁵⁶ Relying on Harrison’s argument, the current activism for slavery reparations in the Caribbean region and beyond should therefore be empirically investigated and analyzed not as a singular national phenomenon but rather from the standpoint of transregional entanglements. It must take into account the different historical, social, and political conditions within the Caribbean itself and in the context of the region’s transatlantic interrelations to reparations discourses and activists in the United States, Europe, and Africa. Even if they do not always transcend barriers in communication, mobility, and different political systems (which, again, can be interpreted as the result

56. Faye V. Harrison, *Outsider Within: Reworking Anthropology in the Global Age* (Champaign, IL, 2008), 206.

of the colonial divide and consecutive problems after official ending of colonialism in the region), reparations activists in their concrete localities deliberately establish transnational connections to other activists and debates in order to strengthen their respective claims. Of course, they do not have a common or uniform agenda and might even enact conflicting interests. However, activists are motivated by the shared concern of confronting the legacies of slavery and colonial exploitation through a framework of reparatory justice.

Even much more than being only a regional matter, Shepherd has repeatedly stated that reparations for slavery is a global issue that needs to be discussed at the global level. “So we hope to become a global movement—we are also hoping that it is not only African descendants who will join the movement but also human rights activists of whatever ethnicity who see that it is about social justice. We hope that also other countries that have somewhat [benefited] from colonialism will join.”⁵⁷ Shepherd addresses in particular the former colonizing countries of Europe to engage in a dialogue on reparatory justice instead of neglecting the colonial histories of their own nations. This perspective is extremely relevant, both politically and academically, as it emphasizes the approach of transregional entanglements or, in the words of Sebastian Conrad and Shalini Randeria, with regard to other regional contexts, the “shared and divided histories” between Europe and its colonies.⁵⁸ It appeals to European countries to recognize the role they played in their colonies’ history but also the role that slavery had in their own history and how the slave trade was actually the essential precondition of their own development.

The Caribbean reparations claims inevitably challenge Europe to reflect on its own history in relation to the history of its colonies. It offers a perspective of how injustices of the past can be restored in the present and how to think about historical global entanglements of inequalities in a more inclusive way—in the academy as well as in politics. A serious and straightforward consideration of the current Caribbean claims would certainly contribute to a stronger awareness of the still relevant consequences of slavery, not as a non-European experience, but as an intrinsic part of European history and responsibility, as a result of entangled histories, and as part of our shared present. In this sense, reparations claims finally urge for an overdue reexamination of colonialism and slavery within a framework of reparatory justice not only in the Caribbean but in Europe itself.

57. Interview with Shepherd.

58. Sebastian Conrad and Shalini Randeria, “Einleitung: Geteilte Geschichten—Europa in einer postkolonialen Welt,” in *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus: Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt, Germany, 2013), 39.