

Motion 5: Jointly prepared by the Labour and Green Group

Atonement and Reparations for the United Kingdom's Transatlantic Traffic in Enslaved Africans

Council notes that:

- The United Kingdom played a major role in the Transatlantic Traffic in Enslaved Africans (TTEA) which saw at least 15 million Africans forcibly trafficked to the Western Hemisphere with many thousands losing their lives during the crossing from Africa to the Americas on British Ships.
- A great deal of the wealth of the United Kingdom was founded on this vile crime against humanity, and the legacies of chattel, colonial and neocolonial forms of enslavement are still prevalent in our society today.
- We deplore a situation where the beneficiaries of the genocide and ecocide of African people and their environments, including many institutions and families in the UK, continue to benefit but have not made reparations, while the descendants of the victims continue to suffer racism, discrimination and inequality.
- One of the most visible and enduring legacies of African enslavement, colonisation and neocolonialism is systematic racism that exists within Western societies, which the Pan-African Liberation Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the International Decade for People of African Descent Coalition UK and other organisations within Black communities are campaigning to eliminate. The systematic racism that is ingrained in our society manifests itself in inequality in education, housing, health, employment and the criminal justice system.
- The legacy of slavery is responsible for ingraining racial inequality within Western society, that manifests itself both in overt acts of violent racism, such as the death of George Floyd at the hands of American police, Black deaths in police, prison, psychiatric custody and immigration detention in the UK, or in institutional failings to provide sufficient support and care for Black communities, such as the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Black people in the UK.
- Whilst the United Kingdom abolished slavery in 1833, it did so only after 200 years of profiting from it. When abolishing slavery it paid £20 million, the equivalent of £17 billion today, to 'compensate' enslavers, whilst those which were enslaved were not compensated at all. Further that this was not paid off until 2015.
- Lambeth has one of the largest populations of people of African descent in the country.

Council further notes that:

- The United Nations 'Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to A Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law' provides a framework for a comprehensive reparatory justice process.

- The International Decade for People of African Descent, proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 68/237 and to be observed from 2015 to 2024, provides an opportunity for the United Nations, Member States, civil society and all other relevant actors to join together with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the programme of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development.
- The work of Dr Nicola Frith, Professor Joyce-Hope-Scott, the Pan-Afrikan Reparations Coalition in Europe (PARCOE), the International Network of Scholars & Activists For Afrikan Reparations (INOSAAR) and their Principles of Participation which have been endorsed by the International Social Movement for Afrikan Reparations (ISMAR) and a global process of engagement in the UK, the US, Africa and the Caribbean.
- The CARICOM Reparation Commission has worked on a path to reconciliation, truth, and justice for the victims of slavery and their descendants. Further to this, it campaigns on the moral, ethical and legal case for the payment of reparations by the Governments of all former colonial powers and relevant institutions of those countries to the nations and people of the Caribbean Community for the Crimes against Humanity of Native Genocide, the TTEA and a racialised system of chattel Slavery.
- In 1993 Bernie Grant, MP tabled Early Day Motion (EDM) #1987 in the House of Commons welcoming the Abuja Proclamation after the first Pan-African Conference on Reparations sponsored by the Organisation of African Unity urging all countries who were enriched by enslavement and colonisation to review the case for reparations for “Africa and to Africans in the Diaspora”.
- In 2003 the Lambeth based Black Quest for Justice Campaign (BQJC) initiated a class action for Pan-African Reparations for Global Justice against Queen Elizabeth II and agents of the Crown as Head of State and Head of the British Commonwealth calling for the establishment of a Reparations Commission of Inquiry. This action was denied on the grounds that the Crown could not be prosecuted, and these crimes could not be enforced prior to the enactment of the International Criminal Courts Act in 2001.
- In 2004 the Rastafarian movement were denied their appeal for reparation because the UK government felt it could not be held responsible for events of past centuries.
- Since 2015, the Stop the Maangamizi Campaign (The Maangamizi is the African Holocaust of chattel, colonial and neocolonial forms of enslavement) in association with the Afrikan Emancipation Day Reparations March Committee have been organising the annual Afrikan Emancipation Day Reparations March. The campaign presented the Stop the Maangamizi Petition to the Office of the UK Prime Minister calling for the establishment an All-Party Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry for Truth and Reparatory Justice.
- It is institutions such as the Black Cultural Archives and the International Museum of Slavery which effectively teach people about the history of the TTEA and its legacy, not statues of enslavers like Edward Colston or Robert Clayton.
- The national curriculum fails to educate our nation’s children and young people about the history of slavery and its repercussions.

Council welcomes:

- The announcement that Lambeth is conducting an audit of all Lambeth's public landmarks, statues roads names and works of art in the borough for any links with slavery by Cllr Sonia Winifred, and the consultation which will follow on the results of the audit.
- The celebration of Windrush Day 2020 on 22nd June, and the contribution of Cllr Sonia Winifred, Lambeth Council, and organisations in Lambeth such as the Black Cultural Archives in campaigning for justice for the Windrush generation, and for a permanent Windrush memorial in Windrush Square.

Council resolves:

- To call on the UK government to establish a commission to study the impact of the United Kingdom's Transatlantic Traffic in Enslaved Africans on social, political and economic life within the UK and the rest of the world in order to begin understanding the legacy of slavery on the society we live in and to start conversations on how to address it, which go further than a symbolic apology.
- Write to the Speaker of Parliament, Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee and Chair of the Home Affairs Committee to request that they establish, and seek UK Government support for, an All-Party Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry for Truth and Reparatory Justice and call on the Government to commit to holistic reparations taking into consideration various proposals for reparations in accordance with the United Nations Framework on Reparations.
- To support the innovative work which has been carried out by the Runnymede Trust, the Black Curriculum and others to engage young people and teachers with more expansive, representative and inclusive histories of Britain, and to overhaul the curriculum to better educate about the United Kingdom's role in slavery.