

REMARKS BY
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AT THE
PAN AFRICAN ENTERPRISE RESEARCH COUNCIL (PAERC)
CONFERENCE
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It gives me great pleasure to address your Tenth Anniversary Conference as the Pan African Enterprise Research Council on *Transition and Trajectories in Pan African Development*.

A century ago, Marcus Mosiah Garvey traversed several of the islands of the Caribbean and Central America in forming units of the UNIA.

The UNIA committed itself to the improvement of the lives of people of African descent in the Americas and the Caribbean. It was committed to ‘empowerment’, a word that we find used very frequently in the literature today.

Garvey, like the other far-sighted Pan Africanists at the time, conceived of the empowerment of African people across all of the African space.

He concluded correctly that empowerment could only be achieved ultimately when both sides of the Atlantic were inextricably linked.

Garvey conceived that meaningful improvement in our conditions was best pursued by organizing trade and economic cooperation across our African space. Hence his motivation for establishing the Black Star Line to deal with shipping goods across the Atlantic. It was about securing agency over our lives and our living.

It is a bit humbling to admit that we are still in an incipient stage on the programme enunciated by Garvey one hundred years ago. But better late than never. It is that admission which led the University of the West Indies to establish the PJ Patterson Institute for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy.

Our mandate is to coordinate public policy and advocacy in promoting ties between the Caribbean and Africa.

I have chosen today to focus on three of our main objectives which converge neatly with the theme of this Conference. As a Council engaging in research, I want to emphasise its importance in bringing to the fore what is absolutely necessary in the advocacy role of the Institute.

It is the research undertaken by the doyen of economic history of the Caribbean – Eric Williams – and followed in minute detail by Sir Hilary Beckles, and Professor Verene Shepherd, among other distinguished scholars, that provide the compelling evidence for the case of Reparations.

Our demands can no longer be resisted with a stiff upper lip by the beneficiaries of slavery in England.

But we cannot ignore that the Government in the United Kingdom is still stubbornly refusing in admitting to the rape of Africa, and their benefits from the pernicious slave trade. They had to borrow money to pay their slave owners, but not a penny to those enslaved.

The winds of change are blowing, but we cannot become complacent.

But yet in the United States there is still a strong resistance to confront the past even to the point of renouncing well documented history. Indeed, reparations have been reduced to “woke”. Instead, in Florida they are now trying to teach the

**glorious benefits of the most heinous crime against mankind.
How despicable...!!!**

The research and documentation conducted by our historians have given us the information and the data that are incontrovertible and stand up to the test no differently to what Jews have been able to secure in compensation for Hitler's anti-semitic holocaust.

We must be relentless in advocacy for reparative justice and to fight racism and discrimination in order to obtain economic empowerment for people of colour everywhere.

The present inequitable and oppressive World Order was not designed by us or for us. The 68 Countries of African and the Caribbean are no longer colonies. We are all sovereign nations who have the right and entitlement to speak for ourselves.

We must insist on a brand new design for the United Nations and the multilateral agencies.

We demand that Africans and its descendants must become engaged and involved in the operations of an equitable and development oriented economic system.

Our Institute seeks to assist governments, regional organisations, international institutions, the private sector and civil society to understand and advance existing schemes of regionalism in Africa and the Caribbean; to promote studies, exchanges intergovernmental and institutional groupings for the development of economic and human resources within the Continent, the Caribbean and the wider Diaspora.

This is quite a mouthful, I am sure you would agree. But it is also about our developing agency in respect of our own development today.

In the Lome negotiations of the 70's, I had the opportunity of working with leaders of Governments in other countries in advancing our collective interest in a post-colonial world. This was, the raison d'etre of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific grouping in negotiation with Europe.

Whatever positive movement was made in commodity trade and economic co-operation was entirely due to the cohesion within the ACP.

Europe then was not ready for any conversation on reparations. But that urgent conversation can no longer be delayed. Time is now of the essence.

The first Summit of African and Caribbean Leaders has set the stage. We must now promote people to people contact and in particular, entrepreneurs and investors creating markets and engaging in commerce and development in our African space.

It covers what Arthur Lewis, one of our foremost luminaries in the last century, envisaged as south-south trade, by which he meant the people of the south engaging in east-west trade between themselves.

It is here the work of your Council has to be directed. We have to chart our own course from here, mindful of Garvey's exhortation - "Up you mighty race - you can accomplish what you will."

As an organization within the network, seeking to foster Africa-Caribbean Collaboration, find your special niche. Look in the mirror from time to time and record how well you are doing on your own programme of self actualization and agency in our total development. In effect, we need to return to the test that Garvey set for us.

Are we engaged in the empowerment in-place where we reside and as well in the empowerment across our collective space across the Atlantic pond?

Failure to monitor ourselves in that regard would allow others to keep us locked into systems of trade and economic relations in which we continue to receive the crumbs, while others continue to exploit our resources in our space and reap most of the profit from what there is to extract.

The P.J.Patterson Institute in its role of advocacy engagement is obliged to issue this clarion call to your highly relevant and timely deliberations. “The time has come to restore our people to our rightful place among humankind: to reclaim the honour of Black lives lost in the Middle Passage and redemption for

generations who perished during the slave trade and colonial savagery.”

We need to secure victory by bonding ourselves as a people, fired by the notion of a collective glorious possibility in overcoming the challenges of today and tomorrow, in a world that we must be equal partners in shaping, rather than being continued to be shaped into what others have decided for us, around us and over us.

The PJ Patterson Institute today issues a clarion call. We must mobilise Africans in giving body and soul to our all-of-Africa enterprise. We will not be locked in any kind of under-development that Walter Rodney documented as our experience of the last millennium.

Bob Marley warned us to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery. Refusing to link ourselves across the pond means that we are still chaining ourselves to the past pattern of trade which has kept us riveted to the North, and to the countries that enslaved us. We must engage them as equals and exercise choice in how we do so.

The Calypsonian, Black Stalin admonished us to “run the head” in integrating the Caribbean. We have to continue that work and integrate the Caribbean and Africa developing ourselves together.

Our ancestral ties, the umbilical connection and our rich cultural heritage are the pillars on which we must build an edifice for democracy and development to win the struggle of our forebears.

In the fiercely competitive but volatile global space, we must seek “to build inclusive societies,” anchored by equal rights and

justice for all, an encompassing social, economic and environmental progress.

Put plainly, the freedom from the ravages of slavery and the inequities of the plantation system oblige us to create a new paradigm ourselves which provide our people with an acceptable quality of life that accords with social values within a sustainable environment.

Undoubtedly, the challenges are many and formidable - global warming, military conflicts, nuclear proliferation, food insecurity.

The post pandemic era and the impotence of the Security Council, when a Permanent Member is involved, provide compelling evidence of the irrefutable need for a different configuration of global power and the international economic structure.

But there are glimmering signs of hope – an awakening to the imperative for the 6 Regions of Africa to speak with one voice on our rights to reparative justice and our insistence at being present at the table which determines the path of all mankind in the single planet to which we belong.

The Africa Caricom Summit of 2020 was an important step on which we must build.

The Ministerial Conferences on Trade held in Barbados and on Tourism in Jamaica must be followed with meaningful collaboration to remove the impediments and encourage the investments which will increase our market share in goods, services and the hospitality sector. Afrieximbank is due to open its Caribbean Headquarters in Barbados next week.

In the early conceptual stage, is the development of a business supply chain network of an African Caribbean enterprise which would be able to target Europe and the Americas. We desperately need bold initiatives of this kind.

Looking ahead, we have to recognize that the digital revolution shapes more than our intercourse in communication. It shapes every facet of our lives. Global Africa cannot be left behind.

We have to spawn digital technology that opens new, exciting channels through which we can relate, transact business and command our own space in this era of globalization.

This will allow us to design and develop the synergies of a partnership between governments, institutions of learning, in health, for corporate enterprises and civil society to make our own digital footprints in the shifting sands of digital technology.

For such a bold and daring initiative we should be prepared to draw on technical expertise and digital competence on both sides of the pond.

In the Diaspora, there is an array of innovative talent which can provide the human capital to accelerate our progress.

If Africa, the cradle of human civilization is to fulfil its destiny as the continent with the greatest potential for the future, each of its six regions must be impelled to promote that digital transformation which will secure our rightful place as a global economic superpower.

Together, let us build that bridge which enables us to realize our true destiny of vision, solidarity and fulfilment.

One Aim, One Victory, One Love..!