

Friday, 16th December, 2005

H. M. Queen Elizabeth II
Buckingham Palace
London,
England.



Your Majesty,

I am taking the unusual step of submitting this petition to Your Most Gracious Majesty through His Excellency the Governor General of Barbados as I humbly formally request Your Majesty's help on the behalf of more than 5,000,000 million Evangelical Christians in a matter we conceive to be of very grave import in your realms of the Caribbean.

In very recent years the former enslavement of Your Majesty's subjects in the islands of the Caribbean has been undergoing very serious and widespread discussion. It is commonly believed that this enslavement has led to serious social dysfunctions within the British Commonwealth Caribbean in particular, and the Caribbean in general.

Even after emancipation was achieved, the Caribbean plantation society systematically discriminated against the freed slaves to ensure that they were marginalised as much as possible. This was supported strongly by the policies of the then Colonial Office in London¹.

As we struggled with these issues within the Church in the Caribbean, we concluded that the Church's primary role was in the spiritual realm and that the time had come for a public act of repentance. This was held on November 21, 1998 when several hundred Evangelical Christians gathered in Trafalgar Square, now renamed National Heroes' Square, in Bridgetown in Your Majesty's Realm of Barbados to participate in a Pray for the Nation Rally. Trafalgar Square was chosen as the west end of the square is said to be the site of the old slave market. There was first a period of worship, followed by a period of repentance while hundreds of us knelt in the square with our faces to the ground. Prayers of repentance were led by four men of differing racial backgrounds. After the extended time of repentance there were periods of spiritual warfare and intercession for the nation.

In November 1999 I was asked to preach the sermon during the Service marking the Anniversary of Barbados' independence. I felt strongly impressed in my spirit, as a descendant of ancestors who came from Cornwall in the 1690's, to offer an act of repentance in the spirit of the Old Testament prophet Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:6; 9:1-2). A copy of that sermon is enclosed.

Earlier this year, 2005, a group of Evangelical Christians from Your Majesty's realm of England and from the Cameroon visited Barbados and participated in what they called "prophetic acts of repentance."

It is our understanding that restitution comes after repentance.

Research has revealed that on the abolition of slavery the British Government paid £20,000,000.00

sterling to the plantation owners in Jamaica, British Guiana (now Guyana), Barbados, Trinidad, Grenada, St. Vincent, Antigua, St. Lucia, St. Kitts, Dominica, Tobago, Nevis, Bahamas, Montserrat, British Honduras (now Belize), the Virgin Islands, and Bermudaⁱⁱ. The amount paid to the plantation owners in Barbados was £1,719,980.00 sterlingⁱⁱⁱ. A local chartered accountant has calculated that £1,719,980.00 paid to plantation owners in Barbados prior to 1840 would be conservatively worth in today's currency in excess of £5 billion sterling.

Nothing was ever paid to the slaves as compensation for their having been forcibly removed from their homeland, transported across the Atlantic Ocean to another land, and forced – often in a most brutal manner – to work the sugar cane plantations.

This issue has therefore for us become a theological as well as a justice issue. It is theological because we believe the Christian faith teaches that restitution comes after repentance. It is a justice issue for us because it seems totally unjust that the plantation owners should be paid compensation for the loss of their slaves at emancipation but the slaves themselves, or their descendants, have never received compensation for having been enslaved.

We, your humble subjects, therefore beseech Your Most Gracious Majesty's assistance and succour in this matter in utilising Your Majesty's vast influence to suggest to Your Majesty's United Kingdom Government that the time has come for the Government of the United Kingdom in consort with other European Governments who supported and promoted the enslavement of Your Majesty's African subjects to rectify the injustices of the past and pay to the descendants of those enslaved on the sugar plantations of Your Majesty's realms of The Caribbean and Africa an amount at least equal in value as that paid to the plantation owners in the early Nineteenth Century.

We believe this to be just because it was Your Majesty's United Kingdom Government which paid the plantation owners in the nineteenth century and neglected to compensate the slaves themselves, victims of one of the most brutal forms of slavery ever practiced. We also believe this to be a just request in that the United Kingdom profited significantly from the sugar plantations of the Caribbean.

Dr. Eric Williams has laid out the immense profits made by English traders through the slave trade. Williams states, "Britain was not only the foremost slave trading country in the world; she had become, in Ramsey's phrase, the 'honourable slave carriers' of her rivals^{iv}."

Sir Dalby Thomas is quoted by Williams, citing a reference to **An Introduction to the History of Slavery as a Commodity** (published in 1905), as saying, "The pleasure, glory, and grandeur of England have been advanced more by sugar than by any other commodity, wool not accepted^v."

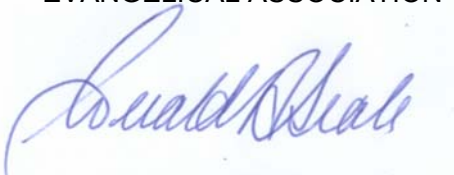
Lord Anthony Gifford, QC, has already published a legal opinion on the claim for reparations that the descendants of the slaves have against the descendants of their ancestors' masters. In summary, Lord Gifford establishes the basis for reparations on the following fundamental principles:

1. The enslavement of Africans was a crime against humanity.
2. International law recognises that those who commit crimes against humanity must make reparations.

3. There is no legal barrier to prevent those who will still suffer the consequences of crimes against humanity from claiming reparations, even though the crimes were committed against their ancestors.
4. The claim could be brought on behalf of all Africans, in Africa and the Diaspora, who suffer the consequences of the crime, through the agency of an appropriate representative body.
5. The claim would be brought against the governments of those countries which promoted and were enriched by the African slave trade and the institution of slavery.
6. The amount of the claim would be assessed by experts in each aspect of life, and in each region, affected by the institution of slavery.
7. The claim, if not settled by agreement, would ultimately be determined by a special international tribunal recognised by all parties^{vi}.

We believe that as an important Christian leader in today's world Your Majesty will be as concerned about this issue as we are and look forward to Your Majesty's succour and advice.

I have the honour to be, with the highest consideration, Your Majesty's obedient servant,
EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE CARIBBEAN



The Rev. Gerald A. Seale, D.D.,
General Secretary and CEO

cc: *H. E. Sir Clifford Husbands, Governor General of Barbados*
Rt. Hon. Owen S. Arthur, Prime Minister of Barbados

ENDNOTES:

i. **The Story of the Jamaican People**, Philip Sherlock and Hazel Bennet, published by Ian Randle Publishers, 1998, chap. 20-22

ii. **A History of Barbados From Amerindian Settlement to Nation State**, Hilary Beckles, published by Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 93

iii. Ibid.

iv. **Capitalism and Slavery**, Eric Williams, published by André Deutsch Limited, 1964, p. 34.

v. Ibid. p. 55

vi. **Let's Save the Children**, Liqa Maemiram Zacharias and Dr. Ruth E. McAfee, published by E. O. C. Press, 1998, pp. 127-144.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

9th February, 2006

Dear Mr. Seale,

The Queen has asked me to thank you for your letter and enclosures of 16th December, forwarded to the Private Secretary from the office of the Governor General of Barbados.

Her Majesty has taken careful note of your comments regarding the compensation awarded to plantation owners on the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean. You were, of course, quite correct to write to the Governor General's Office. I must tell you, however, that this is not a matter in which The Queen would intervene or comment.

As a constitutional Sovereign, Her Majesty acts on the advice of her Ministers, and I have, therefore, been instructed to forward your letter to the Right Honourable Jack Straw MP, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, so that your approach to The Queen may be known and consideration given to the points you raise.

Thank you for taking the time and trouble to write as you did.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Sonia Bonici
Senior Correspondence Officer

The Reverend Gerald Seale.