

CARIBBEAN RASTAFARI ORGANISATION

# In the Whirlwind

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Rastafari Perspectives on the Caribbean Reparatory Justice Programme Ten Point Action Plan

**CRO Executive**

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# Abstract

## Bio on Caribbean Rastafari Organisation

# DRAFT

*"If I die in Atlanta my works shall only then begin, but I shall live in the physical or spiritual to see the day of Africa's glory. ... Look for me in the whirlwind or the storm. Look for me all around you for with God's grace I shall come, and bring with me the countless millions of black slaves who have died in America and the West Indies, and the millions in Africa, to aid you in the fight for liberty, freedom, and life"* Honorable Marcus Mosiah Garvey<sup>i</sup>

RastafarI says greetings in the name of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I, earth's rightful ruler. InI say Hail to the Lord's anointed, great David's greater son. Hail. In his time appointed, his reign on earth began. He came to break downpression and to set the captives free; to take away transgression, and to rule in equality. In the cause of reparation come let us rally round the red, the gold, the black and the green.

RastafarI is the name adopted by persons who signal that their chosen way of life is established on two pillars: reverence of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile I Selassie I and Empress Menen as the incarnation of the living God in human form in this earthly dispensation; and, the expectation of a mass voluntary return of Jah people to Africa - the ancestral home from which black Africans were violently removed, transported, and transplanted into a system of brutal plantation enslavement, racism and dehumanization that has been passed on from generation to generation of African descendants. RastafarI livity is a daily practice of reclaiming and crafting InI lost African identity, while still captive in the strange land of the enslaver.

In this commentary InI speak for the poor and the needy, the have-nots and downtrodden of the region, whose cause InI defend. As Pan-Africanists acknowledge RastafarI contributions to the African renaissance InI are ready to share, embrace, encourage collective leadership to maintain and pursue inter-regional and international dialogue with governments. The RastafarI claim for reparation has legitimacy and foundation in history, thus InI require those who know that reparation time is now to come with clean hands and pure hearts to ensure equality and justice stand for all.

Reparation has been defined as “the process of repairing, restoring and healing a people injured because of their group identity, and the violation of their fundamental human rights by individuals, corporations, religions, and other institutions”<sup>ii</sup>. There are two dimensions within reparations. One is external reparations or compensation that is owed to Africans and to descendants of Africans outside of Africa as a result of the atrocities which we endured during trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery and colonialism; and the resultant demise of African power. The second aspect is internal reparations or the self-repair in which Africans and African descendants must engage in order to restore our agency and assert our right to self-determination and dignity.

“More important than any money to be received, more fundamental than any lands to be recovered, is the opportunity the reparations campaign offers us for the rehabilitation of Black people by Black people for Black people. The opportunities for the rehabilitation of our minds, our material condition, our collective reputation, our cultures, our memories, our self-respect, our religions, our political traditions and our family institutions; but first and foremost for the rehabilitation of our minds”<sup>iii</sup>.

The Caribbean Rastafari Organisation (CRO) uses selected Rastafari word sounds<sup>iv</sup> embodying the foregoing precepts, concepts, and practice in conveying InI perspectives on the Caribbean Reparatory Justice Programme Ten Point Action Plan. InI perspectives are also informed by 84 years of experience of institutionalized brutality, criminalization, discrimination, profiling, and vilification; and more recently, gross misappropriation for commercial gain of certain distinctive features of Rastafari.

## Rastafari Perspectives on the Caribbean Reparatory Justice Programme Ten Point Action Plan Full Formal Apology

In the context of reparations national governments of CARICOM have a responsibility, on their own behalf and on behalf of their people, to apologize to the Rastafari community for the acts of systemic discrimination and state violence<sup>v</sup> that have been committed against InI; and to amend this injustice by affording Rastafari demands for Redemption, Repatriation and Reparations a foremost place within the emerging framework of CARICOM's quest for reparatory justice from former slave owning nations for the genocide of native people and the enslavement of Africans.

Rastafari started a process of internal reparation at the very time that King George was being promoted as a king for Black people. Rastafari declared a Black God and King and began to make progressive adjustments designed to repair the damage done to our psyche. InI began to change names, diet, and livity - whatever was imposed upon enslaved Africans during the plantation era. Atrocities were/are inflicted on Rastafari due to InI anti colonial stance because political leaders are yet to make that quantum leap of rejecting colonialism. There is a lot of distrust between the Rastafari community, different religious communities, and governments of

the day. Yet if Africans and African Descendants are to obtain reparations from the Europeans the grass-roots people must be fully involved in the whole process of dialogue and negotiation. There is need for a reconciliatory process within the CARICOM for building trust among us as a people to forge a united approach to achieve compensation from the colonial masters. RastafarI supports the CARICOM call for a formal apology from former enslavers and colonizers only in so far as post-Independent Caribbean governments are prepared to offer an apology, of the same caliber being demanded, to the RastafarI community.

### Repatriation

The often heralded RastafarI slogan “Repatriation is a must” is inspired by Biblical prophecy that a remnant shall return<sup>vi</sup> as “...Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God”<sup>vii</sup>. Contemporarily the principle of the “right of return” drawn from Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and from the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights is intended to enable people to return to, and re-enter, their country of origin. There are precedents where people have been repatriated to their country of origin<sup>viii</sup>. International law gives to each country the right to decide for itself to whom it will grant citizenship<sup>ix</sup>.

The demand of Repatriation with Reparations is inseparable for RastafarI. InI cherish the ideal that since Africa suffered a brain drain when her human resources were forcefully removed, her brain gain must be replenished through the repatriation of the descendants of Africans who were taken away. RastafarI is gratified by the proposal contained in the Programme of Action of the 2001 World conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which includes at paragraph 158 “Facilitation of welcomed return and resettlement of the descendants of enslaved Africans.” .

Settlement on the African continent has been a longstanding goal of individuals and groups throughout the Americas during the period of the heinous Trans-Atlantic trade in Africans and subsequent to the abolition slavery. During the early 1900s the despair and disillusionment that dominated African Diaspora populations motivated the Back to Africa campaigns of Marcus Garvey. A few Garveyites immigrated independently to Liberia<sup>x</sup>.

Since its inception the African Diaspora community of Rastafari has been at the forefront of the movement towards settlement in Africa<sup>xi</sup> and remains forever committed to this endeavour. Settlement in Africa has in fact been achieved by some members of the worldwide Rastafarian community and it is anticipated that this settlement will have increased momentum with reparations. Rastafari foresees that in the near future settlement on the African continent will be desired by diverse dispersed Africans - particularly successful individuals from all spheres of life, highly motivated, skilled and with an affinity for Africa. African economies are growing, business opportunities prevail, skilled individuals are in high demand, cultural and economic linkages between the African continent and the Americas are being developed. These factors are together supporting and motivating settlement planning. The “mind-set” is that the African continent is an attractive destination to reside and positively contribute to its future by adding to its human resource base.

In expectation of such a trend the CRO is ready to be the catalyst and forum for discussion between CARICOM and AU regions to help to facilitate the process of Africans from the Diaspora settling on the African continent, as well as to examine at a governmental level, trade and investment opportunities, travel and tourism exchanges, agricultural cooperation, among other areas, to promote business development between the Caribbean and Africa.

The CRO has designed the Reparations for Settlement in Africa Project (RSAP) which proposes the use of Reparations to enable beneficiaries, who so desire, to settle on the African continent. The RSAP seeks to facilitate transportation to Africa, access to land, housing, business pursuit, and personal development. RSAP targets all beneficiaries of reparations who intend to settle on the African continent.

The process is open to all of the beneficiaries of Reparations for Trans-Atlantic Slavery and all member nations of the African Union (AU). Governments throughout the Caribbean and the Americas, the African Diaspora populations of these territories, the African Union, African Governments, African communities, and any existing organizations, based inside or outside of Africa, involved in settlement programmes will be fully engaged and mobilized by the RSAP process. Achievement of the objectives of RSAP is predicated upon successful negotiation among entities such as the CARICOM Reparations Commission, Africa Union, relevant governments, RastafarI, and Civil Society Organizations.

RSAP's objectives are broad-ranged and encompass several functions notably: administration, research, diplomatic, liaison, information technology, e-communication, networking, data processing, forum for dialogue, capital management. Implementation of RSAP will require quantification of an amount to be allocated under reparations and disbursed to facilitate "welcome return and settlement" to the continent by Diasporic Africans. A determination of the costs of necessary goods and services that should be provided by African nations to facilitate planned "welcomed return and settlement" within their territories by returning Africans of the Diaspora will be included in the calculation, as well as the costs associated with migration to African countries. Success of RSAP will hinge on receiving the commitment of specific African

nations, via the AU, to the process within their territories of planned “welcome return and settlement” of Diasporic Africans.

RSAP will rely on a process for verifying who are the definitive beneficiaries of reparations for Trans-Atlantic Slavery and a method of registering Africans in the Diaspora who are desirous of settling within specific countries of Africa. RSAP will have to create database of job skills, work experiences, and proposed business investments or work programmes of registered potential repatriates and match their needs to identified investment opportunities for entrepreneurship in micro, small and medium sized enterprises within individual African nations. Potential areas of economic cooperation between Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora on an individual or and business basis will also be mapped. RSAP envisions the creation of a financial institution to manage capital advances for entrepreneurial pursuit by individuals whose “welcomed return and settlement” in the African continent it has facilitated.

The work-plan for RSAP would include key milestones. One such is completion of a multi-language website for the sharing of information, promotion of the project, registration of individuals, and creation of job-skills database, collation of data. The domain name [reparationsforsettlement.net](http://reparationsforsettlement.net) is already held. A related milestone would be completion of research with entities engaged in settlement and other programmes in Africa so as to draw on the benefits of their experiences of building relationships in Africa. Such groups include the Ethiopia Africa Diaspora Union Millennium Council of Jamaica, Afrika Hall Inc., Twelve Tribes of Israel (worldwide), the Ethiopian World Federation Incorporated, RastafarI and African community alliances worldwide. Research would be conducted through the use of emails, Skype, and personal visits where possible. CRO anticipates that discussions will help to build registration to

the website, create linkages and identify areas of cooperation between diverse groups, as well as lead to group coalitions that can strengthen the lobbying process in the reparations debate. The research information gathered will be further assessed to inform orientation sessions intended to mentally prepare potential settlers for life in Africa.

A priority milestone is the establishment of communication channels and timelines for achieving project objectives. The RSAP document has already been shared, for discussions, with the Barbados Task Force on Reparations. Copies will be made available for a similar purpose to the CARICOM Reparations Commission and other National Reparations Commissions as necessary, as well as with private individuals to identify areas for financial assistance in building the website, conducting project research, travelling, preparation of update reports.

In sum the goals of RSAP are to settle African Diaspora individuals within specific nations on the African continent through the use of capital provided by way of Reparations, and, to create a financial institution to manage access to capital by settlers toward business financing and employment creation in Africa. The key preparatory aspects of the RSAP are: construction of a multi-language website for the settlement programme; individual registration on the website listing skills, work experience and business plans; research with Rastafari Mansions, Government agencies, CARICOM, Africa Union, African communities, religious and spiritual bodies; and determination of the costs of settlement programmes. Successful negotiations for reparations capital and creation of the financial institution are critical deciding factors. The task of CRO therefore is to initiate discussion with all appropriate bodies, obtain funding for the website and commence construction to convey information and begin registration.

The RSAP needs the cooperation of national governments, CARICOM Reparations Commission, and the AU in order to achieve its stated objectives. CRO has to rely on the auspices of national governments to engage in negotiation with the AU. Commitment to RastafarI in respect of the RSAP would be a genuine indicator that the much touted commendation of RastafarI as front runners and foot soldiers of reparations is more than window dressing. It would be the basis for building trust and for a major integration of the grass-roots into the quest for Reparations.

This detailed explication of the project is being made with the conviction that global publicity for RSAP can attract business oriented individuals and groups that will use proceeds of reparations for settlement in Africa. RSAP can be the tool used globally to connect existing and future groups that desire to and are working towards achieving settlement in Africa. In proposing the RSAP the historic leadership of RastafarI in agitating for Repatriation with Reparation continues. It is the duty of RastafarI to coordinate and mobilize the efforts needed to determine and allocate a proportion of reparations capital towards “welcomed return and settlement” of displaced Africans to the continent of Africa. The RSAP initiative seeks to fulfill InI aspiration that reparations to the descendants of Africans who endured Trans-Atlantic Slavery must provide sustainable benefits to these descendents, their future generations, and the continent of Africa.

#### Indigenous People’s Development Programme

We know that former slave owning and colonial governments committed genocide against the indigenous populations. CRO recommends that the recognized leaders of those original indigenous communities of CARICOM be consulted on their preferences towards the rehabilitation and development of their communities.. We don’t plan for them but we plan with them. This is another opportunity for CARICOM to integrate the reparations movement from the

grassroots up so that every single person in the region can actually know what reparations is all about, and understand their role in organizing a united a plan to achieve it.

### Cultural Institutions

Cultural institutions are traditions, practices, systems that are not necessarily displayed in a building but lives daily in the ways that people behave. Culture is linked to every sphere of life. The culture and tradition of any people are the tested and tried foundation of their nation and society. Culture is everything we do. It includes science, both western science and local science. There are several different cultures co-existing in the Caribbean space hence the ways in which they complement or clash is also a science. Indigenous and African healing systems are cultural institutions that were eroded and dismantled during enslavement and colonization. Bush or herbal medicines appear to be resurgent. The susu, by whatever name it is called in the region, is a cultural institution that appears to be in jeopardy.

Rastafari has always promoted respect for Africa, things African and a black identity. InI wish to recommend that the many estates and plantations now lying idle could be reassigned as “African Spaces” and converted into areas where a multiplicity of activities associated with African traditions and culture could be carried out. Similar facilities with focus on indigenous populations of the Caribbean are also necessary. Projects having to do with indigenous cultural heritage tourism can be conceptualized and executed. The Caribbean Caucus had recommended, in Durban South Africa 2001, that the [then] multi-Cultural Center at UWI Cave Hill Campus be the starting point for collecting and displaying local and regional material. Cultural institutions should be integrated into the living space of communities so that it is serves the purpose of affirming and re-affirming their sense of self. CRO recommends closer cooperation and

collaboration between CARICOM and the Africa Union as a means of enhancing the cultural institutions to be established.

### Public Health Crisis

Rastafari is well known as being forever motivated by good dietary and healthy life practices: organic farming, herbal medicines, consumption of freshly prepared food and drinks; low salt intake, minimum usage of sugars, avoidance of foods containing artificial sweeteners, chemicals and preservatives; and regular physical exercise. The Caribbean Rastafari Organisation promotes health and education campaigns throughout CARICOM to reduce occurrences of non-communicable diseases.

The public health crisis of today was engineered by dismantling the shamanistic or herbalist healers' role during slavery and this caused a breaking away from healthy body, mind and soul African livity. In conditions of overwork, brutality and poor nutrition Africans were forced to merely survive. Africans in the Caribbean lost consciousness of their birthright which included of all the ancient arts of yoga, chi gong, prayer and affirmations.

The shamanist natural healing legacy that existed before drugs were imposed must be restored. CRO also recognizes the need for new, better equipped health care facilities and medications accessible for the foreseeable future at nominal costs to the beneficiaries of reparations. CRO also recommends sustainable educational programmes on public sanitation, waste recycling, water quality, and food and nutrition sovereignty as they relate to the upkeep of public health. This is the holistic approach that reflects the reality of Redemption, Repatriation and Reparation.

### Illiteracy Eradication

The methods of teaching literacy need to be updated, upgraded and innovated in the Caribbean context where the official material is not the everyday language of communication.

### African Knowledge Programme

CRO recommends strengthening of Caribbean history syllabuses at every level of the education system and inclusion of content that recognize a global African presence before enslavement and colonialism. The African Knowledge Programme must aim to uplift African people in the Diaspora and on the continent of Africa. At least two African languages should be taught in primary schools throughout CARICOM. The introduction of African languages on curricula in primary schools will foster relations with Africans and increase interest in trading opportunities on the continent of Africa, as well as lessen existing feelings of separation from Africa among Africans of the Diaspora. Outside of the school system CARICOM can promote regular and direct newsfeeds out of Africa on all aspects of daily life – business, finance, economics, politics, culture, agriculture, social development .

An African Knowledge Programme is importance of because many African descendants deny any association with Africa due to the pain and shame of slavery. Some even deny its legacies. The popular view of Africa is of a backward country or continent which people fear, a sentiment that has increased with the portrayal of Ebola as an African disease. This outlook can deter reparations and derail the whole repatriation project. CRO endorses many of the suggestions made in the CARICOM Plan to increase knowledge programmes.

A better knowledge of Africa could mediate some of society's interactions with RastafarI. CRO recommends retraining of public officers in the judiciary, law enforcement, and mental health

institutions in order to reduce and avoid “racial profiling” of RastafarI. A review of the entire education system is required in order to provide real education on the interrelated dynamics of religion, politics, economies and development.

### Psychological Rehabilitation

The current generation of African descendants carries the scars of the slavery experience in both our social and mental lives. This condition has been termed “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome” and is reinforced by the damage inculcated by religious and academic institutions, among others, from colonial times to the present. Rehabilitation must treat with issues of self-confidence, self-esteem, love of oneself and black skin, community relationships, cooperative endeavour, wealth creation, productivity and leadership.

The Afro-centric orientation of RastafarI allows InI to cherish the African heritage which can be manifested in InI hair styles, apparel, music, skills, and livelihood pursuits and to fully embrace spiritual strength and guidance from the mother continent of Africa. In the context of reparations, which starts with self, it has been necessary to express InI selves as RastafarI: able to direct and inspire each other to become the best that they could be. RastafarI found it necessary to return to the ancient practices that created the mindset and ability to control thoughts and actions towards creating nirvana right here on earth. RastafarI thinks of God both as somebody to adore and in serving one another, recognizing all of humanity as creation of the Most High.

There is a dichotomy between what some persons are asking for, or thinking of, as reparation and how RastafarI has perceived it. The primacy of RastafarI in giving prominence to some African oriented issues has been indicated but one must delve deeply into the message of RastafarI. Look

fully into all the aspects of repatriation - not only as a return to the motherland, but a return to ancient African humanistic development of society; the concept of the village with the shaman as the head, a return to our ancient ways of healing and livity and avoid the pharmaceutical western, so called, medicine. Otherwise, acknowledgment of RastafarI is indeed window dressing.

### Technology Transfer

RastafarI is of the view that the education system must be revamped to ensure that available technology is being used for innovation and advancement rather than as a past time and puerile entertainment. The reality of climate change should prompt the Caribbean and Africa to set an agenda for developing their own technological competence – beginning with the use of alternative sources of environmentally clean energy, to satellite communications, to military defenses. The Declaration of the Global African Diaspora Summit, at section: II Economic Cooperation, D. Science and Technology, committed to cooperating with Africans in the Diaspora to develop institutions dedicated to innovation and invention.

### Debt Cancellation

It is illogical that after such a huge proportion of the human productivity and mineral resources of Africans were used to achieve the development of European countries<sup>xii</sup>, and no reparations have ever been paid, Africa and the Caribbean would be indebted to Europe. It is even more pernicious to suggest that development aid has been expended primarily for the benefit of Africans and African Descendants, or that in some way is comparable to reparations.

RastafarI has advocated that in addition to CARICOM debt cancellation should include Africa. It is important that this be done so that the African children in the Diaspora contribution tangibly to the wellbeing of the mother land. Debt cancellation should free up capital resources to assist host

countries to finance the infrastructure that will be required to facilitate “welcomed return and settlement ” of African from the Diaspora to Africa.

Conclusions: to be written after corrections/inputs from Bongo Wisely and other ones.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.black-king.net/library%20marcus%20garvey.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> An Information Sheet. <http://ncobra.org/resources/pdf/Information%20Sheet%20Master%20-%20NCOBRA.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Professor Chinweizu. Reparations and a New Global Order: A Comparative Overview. A paper read at the second plenary session at the First Pan-African Conference on Reparations, Abuja, Nigeria, April 27, 1993  
<http://ncobra.org/resources/pdf/Chinweizu-ReparationsandANewGlobalOrderI.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> For practitioners of the faith the term “RastafarI” is the more respectful and accurate rendering of the livity than Rastafarian. The “I” in RastafarI has special esoteric significance to the faithful and carries multiple layers of meaning. One of these is the oneness with His Imperial Majesty and Empress Menen, and through this oneness, the oneness of all who are called to RastafarI. The “I” also differentiates RastafarI from “ism”. “InI” replaces the English pronoun “we” to signify that each RastafarI is indivisible from another RastafarI and from His and Her Imperial Majesties. “Livity” is the daily practice of RastafarI. This is not accurately described by the term “lifestyle”.

“Word sounds” convey the RastafarI concept that one’s utterances are imputed with the creative power of sound. Conventional English terms are sometimes inadequate to express such meaning.

<sup>v</sup> The most documented are the group incidents inclusive of: Jamaica, police final destruction of Pinnacle commune 1954, and the Bad Friday Coral Gardens Massacre April 1963; Dominica, Dread Act 1974 outlawing of RastafarI and sanctioning their being shot on sight; St. Lucia, Mount Gimie 1977 police raids; Grenada, 1980-81 brutalities meted out to RastafarI who had been pivotal to the bloodless Revolution; Guyana, Canvas City 1980s hog-tying and dragging of RastafarI through the streets. The numerous personal experiences of brutality and exclusion are not as well documented.

<sup>vi</sup> Isaiah 10: 20-23; Nehemiah 7-10. King James Version

<sup>vii</sup> Psalm 68:31. King James Version

<sup>viii</sup> In the covert Operation Moses (1984–85), the Israelis rescued nearly 7,000 Jews from the camps and brought them to refuge in Israel. <http://forward.com/articles/181857/the-last-jews-of-ethiopia/?p=all#ixzz3RX9nOcxH>

<sup>ix</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right\\_of\\_return](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_of_return)

<sup>x</sup> Robert Hill <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-garvey.html>

<sup>xi</sup> “In 1948 Hon. Prince Emmanuel[ RastafarI elder] began lobbying the heads of the Jamaican and British governments for free transportation to repatriate African slave children of the Jamaica and the western world back to Africa” <http://www.darcfoundation.org/prince-emmanuel.html>

Filmore Alvaranga, Mortimer Planno, and Douglas Mack are 3 RastafarI who participated in the 1961 Jamaica Government sponsored “Back to Africa” Mission to 5 African countries to determine their receptivity to repatriation of African Descendants. <http://www.rastafarifoundation.com/>

Nora Whitman. 2013. Slavery Reparations: Time is Now. Chapter 1 note 29

<sup>xii</sup> Walter Rodney. How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. (London and Tanzania: Bogle-L’Ouverture Publications; United States: Howard University Press 1972, 1974, 1981).