



## **The Centre for Reparation Research University of the West Indies**

The Centre for Reparation Research (<http://www.reparationresearch.org>) was approved in 2016 and established in February 2017. Its establishment was prompted by the UWI (University of the West Indies) Vice Chancellor's engagement with the Heads of Government of Caribbean Community (CARICOM), an organization of fifteen Caribbean nations and dependencies whose main objective is to promote economic integration and cooperation among its members, to ensure that the benefits of integration are equitably shared, and to coordinate foreign policy, established in 1973. CARICOM, especially after Heads agreed in 2013 to join the long-standing movement for reparatory justice, pioneered by enslaved African people and sustained by Rastafari and civil society, and to request that the UWI supported the research agenda of the movement. Thus, the Centre, directed by historian Verene A. Shepherd, seeks to build awareness and conduct research that will advance the claim for reparation for native genocide, the enslavement of African people, deceptive indenture, colonialism and its legacies, in support of the CARICOM and the Global Reparatory Justice Movement.

### **Origins**

At that July 2013 meeting, Heads also agreed to establish a CARICOM Reparation Commission (CRC) and National Committees on Reparation in each country to establish the moral, ethical and legal case for the claim for reparation from the former colonial European countries, for the nations and people of the Caribbean Community for native genocide, the transatlantic trade in enslaved African people and a radicalized system of chattel enslavement, and Asian indentureship.

The expectation was that the CRC would comprise the Chairs of the National Committees and a representative of the UWI; and that it would report directly to a Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on Reparation, chaired by the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Hon. Freundel Stuart.

To date, all directives of CARICOM have been carried out. There are approximately 12 National Reparation Committees/Commissions/Councils whose Chairs/co-Chairs (in the case of Jamaica) are members of the CRC; and the CRC is chaired by Vice Chancellor of the UWI, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles. The three Vice Chairs of the CRC are Professor Verene Shepherd (Jamaica), Mr Jomo Thomas Chambers (St Vincent & the Grenadines) and Dr Armand Zunder (Suriname). The CRC hosts Conferences and Seminars; and recently launched a Regional Relay and Youth Rally. The National Committees have all been engaged in a range of activities designed to build public awareness of the issue of reparatory justice. This Centre, for which a core budget for operations exists, began operation in March 2017.

### **Objectives of the CRR:**

In addition to supporting the pursuit and implementation of CARICOM's Reparatory Justice Programme, the CRR is primarily motivated by two other interlocking objectives: to broadly foster awareness around the lasting and adverse consequences of colonialism in the Caribbean and offer practical solutions to halting and reversing them. Both these objectives grow out of an understanding that many of the injustices and adverse effects of colonialism in the Caribbean did not end with formal independence and still need to be addressed and repaired.

### **Focus/Strategy**

The focus of the Centre is threefold: to promote research on (a) the legacies of colonialism, native genocide, enslavement and indentureship in the Caribbean, and (b) how to bring justice and positive transformation to these legacies. The research at the CRR will point to how history continues to reverberate in the present and how it has been influenced by the past. The research will also bear in mind the practical ends of defining problems that are affected by a history of colonialism and where possible recommend solutions to them. So the research focus of the Centre is the rigorous study of colonial legacies and their possible solutions; to promote education at the UWI and across Caribbean school systems on the legacies of colonialism, enslavement and native genocide and the need for justice and repair, especially as the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination History syllabus now contains a theme on reparation; and to promote advocacy for reparatory justice by building a capacity for (a) consultancy to CARICOM, Caribbean states, the UN and other relevant institutions (b) public awareness raising, and (c) supporting activism for reparatory and de-colonial justice from grassroots to governments. The capacity of the Centre to promote advocacy should be seen as integral to the practical, solution-oriented and extroverted focus of the CRR. Therefore, the Centre takes very seriously its capacity to act as a consultant, consciousness raiser and even activist on matters of colonial legacies and decolonization.