Highlights from the National/International Reparations Summit that was organized by the Institute of the Black World 21st Century, April 9-11, 2015 in New York, New York[1]

April 9, 2015

We did not attend the opening evening rally.

April 10, 2015

The day mainly featured CARICOM (the Caribbean Community of Nations) Reparations Commission members sharing information concerning their work since CARICOM's 10-Point Reparations Plan was announced just a year-or-so ago. Representatives from 11 CARICOM nations were present. Sir Hillary Beckles, the Chairman of the Commission, performed outstandingly as he conveyed information concerning how the CARICOM plan unfolded, and he discussed what issues CARICOM is likely to face going forward. His emphasis, and that of other commission members, was that the Reparations effort would benefit greatly from greater internationalization.

Most appointed members of the National African American Reparation Commission (NAARC) were present. Members of NAARC mainly discussed the history of the Reparations movement in the US. Interestingly, Professors Ray Winbush and Conrad Worrill presented a printed chronology of Reparations in the US—citing key historical players. Notably, Prof. Julianne Malveaux and Minister Akbar Muhammad made insightful presentations on Reparations for US African descendants.

In our view, the Summit proceeded well. However, we were concerned that the focus was too much on the "here and now" and "what may be" with respect to Reparations, and not enough attention was given to how Reparations should fit into a long-term over-arching strategy for US African descendants. For example, Sir Hillary Beckles, in a speech during an evening event to honor of US Congressional Rep. John Conyers, talked about how CARICOM leadership negotiated for independence from European colonial masters over the past 50 years. However, that leadership failed to seek Reparations at that time. Now that leadership is having to call those former colonial masters back to the table to negotiate Reparations—because those former masters left a very messy condition in the Caribbean, which they are responsible for cleaning up. This chain of events reflects an error in strategy.

Our concern is that US African descendants will negotiate and receive Reparations, but fail to account for important issues; i.e., commit our own error in strategy. The problem is that, once negotiated, it will not be possible to renegotiate Reparations. If negotiated Reparations do not fit neatly into an overarching strategy, then it could prove to be an overall failure. In other words, in our opinion, we first need a long-term strategic plan, and then a Reparations Plan that fits into that overall strategic plan.

[1]The entire program for the Summit is available at the following link: http://www.BlackEconomics.org/BEFuture/REPSUMPROG.pdf.

A related problem is that it is difficult to develop a strategic plan for US African descendants because there are three-or-four US African descendant groups: The super-rich, the want-to-be-rich, the very poor, and new immigrants.

April 11, 2015

The second full day of the Reparations Summit was rather uneventful. During the morning session, representatives of non-governmental organizations and other groups (including BlackEconomics.org) were given an opportunity to address the Summit—mainly to explain efforts that had been undertaken with respect to Reparations in their country or region. (Hear our brief intervention.)

During lunch, a movie was shown concerning the 2001 Durbin Conference on Racism and Reparations. It is our understanding that the Durbin Conference, which featured a US and Canadian Walk-Out, sparked a high level of interest in Reparations around the world. The momentum for Reparations was thwarted, however, by the events of 9/11. It is only now that the push for Reparations is resuming in earnest.

During the Summit's final session in the afternoon, representatives of the CARICOM Reparations Commission and NAARC collaborated on finalizing a set of resolutions that represent the outcome of the Summit. This set of resolutions is presented below.

Overall, we believe that, given available resources, the Summit was entertaining and a well-organized gathering. However, it did not feature enough hands-on working efforts to craft Reparations strategies—particularly for US African descendants. The Summit did give proponents of Reparations from around the country, the Caribbean, and Europe an opportunity to come and voice their opinions, if ever so briefly, on the topic.

We did not attend the evening closing rally.

The Summit's Resolutions, Pronouncements and Action Items:[2]

- Agreed to consolidate and expand the growing African global reparations movement by calling on civil society organizations and governments in countries where there is a legacy of enslavement to establish national reparations commissions or committees. Such commissions and committees should place a particular priority on educating, mobilizing and organizing young people. In that regard, the Summit agreed to connect with and engage the #Black Live Matter Movement in the United States and globally.
- Agreed that the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC), which is demanding compensation/restitution from the former European colonialists for Native Genocide and African enslavement, will support the National African-American Reparations Commission (NAARC) by encouraging and facilitating Caribbean political leaders, artists, civil society activists and scholars to participate in various NAARC educational and mobilizing/organizing initiatives in the months and years ahead.

[2]These resolutions, pronouncements, and action items can be found on the IBW 21st Century Internet website: http://ibw21.org/promotion/final-communique-click-here-to-read/.

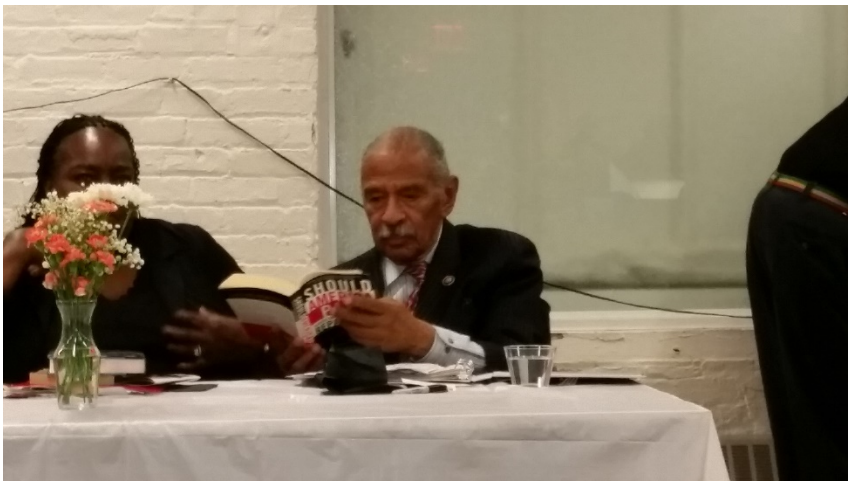
- NAARC recognized the extraordinary value of the vision/mission of CARICOM in establishing the Reparations Commission and pledged to support the Commission in its milestone programmatic and mobilizing/organizing work in whatever ways feasible moving forward.
- Agreed to welcome the establishment Reparations Commissions in Europe, Britain and Canada that share the mission and values of the CRC and NAARC, and to seek to meet with such Commissions in the near future.
- Agreed to convene a Global Summit in Europe at the earliest practical date to take CARICOM'S demand for reparations for Native Genocide and African enslavement into the home of the offending nations. In addition, it was agreed that a Global Summit of Reparations Commissions and aspiring bodies be convened in the Caribbean in 2017.
- Called upon the CARICOM Heads of government to proceed urgently with the recommendation that the slave-owning and slave-trading European nations be invited to attend an inter-governmental reparatory justice summit in 2015.
- Recognized U.S. Cong. John Conyers, Jr., as a champion of the reparations movement and as the consistent sponsor of HR-40, the reparations study bill in the US Congress, and urged the Congressional Black Caucus, major civil and human rights, faith, labor and civic organizations in the USA to support the global reparations movement.
- Declared a Decade for Reparations and in that context, applauded the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Declaration of 2015-2024 as the Decade for People of African descent which should advance the demand for reparations. The Summit expressed strong support for the Decade's program of activities. It also called on member states of the U.N. to officially launch the Decade. The Summit further applauded UNESCO for its continued support of the 'Slave Routes Project' and the 'General History of Africa Project'.
- Applauded the government of Brazil for declaring mandatory the study of African history and culture at all levels of the educational system in that country and called on all countries with African-descended populations to do likewise and also to recognize the validity of traditional African spiritual and religious systems.
- Called on the global reparations movement to develop sustainable funding strategies and called on the international community to work towards a 21st Century new moral order for sustainable development in which reparatory justice is an integral component.

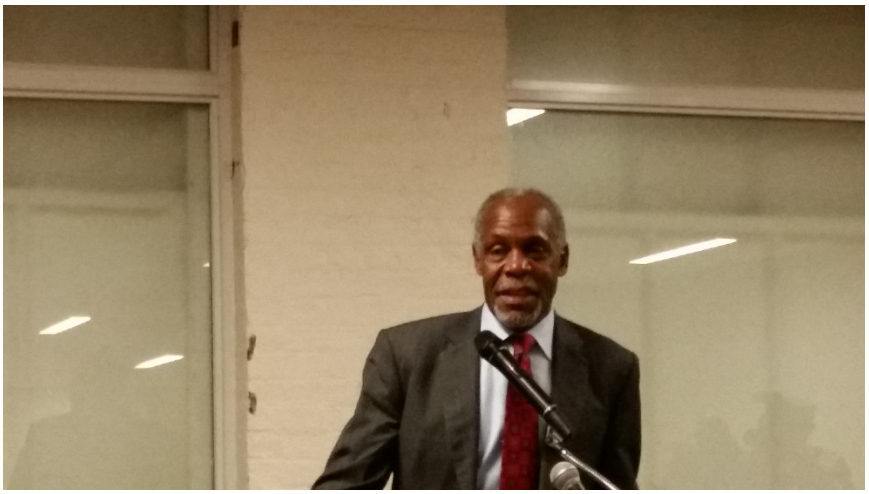
Selected Summit Photographs

Summit Group (04/11/15)

Sir Hilary Beckles speaking during Summit (04/10/15)

Nation of Islam International Representative, Min. Akbar Muhammad, speaks during Summit (04/10/15)


US Cong. John Conyers (D-MI) during tribute (04/10/15)



Actor Danny Glover speaking during Conyers' tribute (04/10/15)

Activist Mireille Fanon-Mendes-France speaking during Summit; daughter of Frantz Fanon (04/11/15)