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## “OUR IDENTITY – WHY IT IS IMPORTANT”

We, the Lost-Found **Nation of Islam**, have spent close to seventeen years at the United Nations. During these years, our fight has been to establish an identity. The identity we have chosen for ourselves is not just for us here in America, but also for Blacks from many nations. Following the prophecies of the Holy Quran and Bible, God said He would gather His people out of every nation where they are scattered. We, the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, were instrumental in accomplishing that. We have gathered together the scattered children of former slaves in the entire Slavery Diaspora: North America, Central America, South America and the Islands. We had progressed to the point that we had the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights supporting us. For an entire week in Chincha, Peru, during a November 2005 UN regional seminar, all you could hear from every UN official speaking, and every nation, was the term Afrodescendants.

That was just one seminar - the culmination, or some say the birth, of Afrodescendants. There were several seminars, and each time we had a seminar there were some countries that did not show up. But we, the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, have always been there at every seminar. We saw all of those who came and went. We made a substantial donation towards the expenses of the seminar in Chincha, Peru, and we were sponsors for smaller countries who attended that seminar; all for the purpose of establishing a global identity – not reparations, but an identity. While reparation is one of our plights, we were not in Peru to gain reparations. We were in Peru to gain an identity. What identity? Afrodescendants. The UN has the name, Afrodescendants, on their records.

Chief Osiris Akkebala, in his intervention at the United Nations, said we want reparations, we demand reparations; we demand that you pay us reparations. After he spoke, we waited for a little while and said, "We understand that you, the UN, cannot pay us reparations." Our point to the officers of the UN and to Chief Osiris was that the UN does not pay reparations. People do not come to the UN to get reparations. The UN does not pay reparations. We went to the UN to be reinstated into the human families of the earth because the UN, prior to then, did not recognize us. We did not have human rights. The UN had grouped us with the English, Spanish and Portuguese speaking Caucasians in the countries in which we live. We were subsumed in the Americas, and we sought to bring a wedge between us and Caucasians; to let the world know we are not Caucasian and that we have a different identity from them. But, what is that identity?

We are no longer Africans only. Because of the Mediterranean and trans-Atlantic slave trades, we are, today, scattered into many lands and cultures. Our ancestors, stolen from their homeland, Africa, were forcibly bred and raped and severed from their original identity until we, the descendants, no longer viewed ourselves as Africans only. Neither are we viewed as Africans by continental Africans, who themselves suffered colonization. So, we were a people lost, a question mark – until we self-identified as Afrodescendants. We did that. The Lost-Found Nation of Islam, Haiti, Cuba, Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Canada and all. All nations where we have been scattered should have

been there; they were welcomed there. The major nations in which we are scattered were present. We verbally gave name to ourselves under the umbrella and protection of the United Nations, which is what we first went to the UN to do. We asked for a forum.

In the first oral statement to the UN, in 1998, we asked the UN to do that: to recognize us as a people separate from the countries in which we live, and the UN has done this. From 2001 to 2006, the UN allowed and helped us to self-identify and then began calling us by our new, self-chosen name. There were seminars in Honduras, Canada, Switzerland, South Africa, Peru, and Chile. While we were in Durban, South Africa, to take part in the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) (and we did take part in the WCAR), we had a separate seminar with Professors José Bengoa and Asbjorn Eide. It was in Santiago, Chile where the term, Afrodescendants, was first heard and Ajani Mukarram, President of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, was present – before 2001 and before Durban.

With that said, we offer to the various groups, or organizations, among us the following: for accounting and global census purposes, will you, brethren (Pan Africanists, Nationalists, Bi-racials, Blacks, Americans, Africans, African-Americans, Bilalians, New Africans and other self-declared nations among our people), step forward to the global identity, Afrodescendant, as did the Lost-Found Nation of Islam and our brothers and sisters in Brazil. Most Latin American countries had already accepted the global identity, Afrodescendant, when the Lost-Found Nation of Islam was objecting to it.

During the UN sponsored regional seminar in La Ceiba, Honduras, the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, for a second time, objected to this new global identity, Afrodescendants. During the seminar, a representative from Brazil, who has the largest Afrodescendant population in the Slavery Diaspora, stated that they, too, did not agree with the name, Afrodescendants, that was already in use by Latin Americans but acquiesced to establish unity with the many Blacks already using the term. We were proposing *Lost-Found People*. Professor José Bengoa arranged for a special meeting between Cuba and the Lost-Found Nation of Islam. After hearing the Brazilian delegate's comments, and being asked to meet with Cuba, we began to think about the term, Afrodescendant.

The feel and weight of the term, Afrodescendant, in the atmosphere among the Latin delegates was so great, that we, the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, decided to concur and use the term like the Brazilians had done. We quickly sketched out a rough definition of Afrodescendants within the fifteen-minute time frame we had before the meeting with Cuba was to get started. A representative from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights translated the meeting between us. The representative of Cuba asked us, in Spanish, if we had anything to say to her. After her statement was translated, we replied with a definition for Afrodescendants, showing our agreement, to which the representative showed surprise, or so it seemed from her countenance. So, we offer to you, African-Americans, a just people, the global identity, Afrodescendant. The term, African American, is not favored by Latin countries. The measurement of us all is some 250 million Afrodescendants in the Slavery Diaspora. In no way does your national identity change, unless you change it. We are speaking of **global** identity.

In Durban, South Africa in 2001, we were still working on our identity; we were not working to define it yet. We did not have a clear-cut identity although the term, Afrodescendant, was in the air. We had not decided, collectively, on an identity. In Durban, the December 12th Movement, headed by Roger Wareham, was attending meetings in one room while we, the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, were in another room. The December 12th Movement, Harry Belafonte, Danny Glover and many others were campaigning for reparations. It is reported that some 400 Black attendees were present along with the December 12th Movement, including Jessie Jackson. The transatlantic slave trade and reparations was the language spoken in that room in Durban at the WCAR, which caused, we believe, the US Government to boycott this conference. The World Conference Against Racism was about racism. We cannot knock what Roger Wareham is doing, because the Lost-Found Nation of Islam will benefit from the results of the reparations advocates' language, too. And, while they were in that room and we were in another room, we did come in contact with one another. But, we well know that the UN cannot pay us reparations.

We well know that we were not recognized in 2001 by the UN as a people – we were just hollering, making noise. The UN did not recognize us. We had no voice, no human rights. Our fight in the UN has been to be re-established (reconnected) to the human families of the earth and be recognized by the UN. Once the UN recognizes us, then we can call upon the UN for assistance, as like any other nation can call upon the UN when the human rights of their citizens are trespassed upon. But, first, we needed recognition. In order to gain recognition, we needed an identity. In order to gain an identity, we gathered the scattered children from every nation and self-identified ourselves. We asked for recognition of our human rights – which is our own culture, language, religion and so on. While we asked for that, simultaneously, members of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam were functioning as a just government (in its early stages) for Black people; a government that we invite and encourage all Afrodescendants to become a part of or an ally with.

Governments of nations that are members of the UN have to sign on to, and ratify, the covenant or law for which they wish to be held liable. If they do not wish to be liable for it, they do not sign it and they do not ratify it. Thus, if a violation comes up, they are not held responsible. In Durban, at the WCAR, the committee that made up the final draft of the Declaration and Program of Action of the 2001 WCAR did say that the transatlantic slave trade should be considered a crime against humanity. There is a law in the UN about crimes against humanity. It is referred to as the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity. That is already a law in the UN. But the US has refused to sign and ratify it. So, even if this committee that wrote the final document said transatlantic slave trade was a crime against humanity and should have always been so, it is just language in the conference documents. It is not law. It is not mandated by any official body of the UN. It has not been haggled over for 12 months, or 4 years, or 10 years. In one week, they make a decision that this, the transatlantic slave trade, was a crime against humanity – in their hearts. But the UN law on the non-applicability of statutory limitations to crimes against humanity is not binding on the US because the US did not sign and ratify it. Thus, they cannot be held liable for it.

We understand and know that the UN does not pay reparations out of its treasury, but we also know that the UN, in all of its glory, can be asked to be an adjudicator. The only way to bring

the US to justice is to turn world pressure against it. Going to an impartial adjudicator, the UN, for justice – to be awarded compensation – instead of going to the one who injured us, is accomplishing that. This is the reason why we went to the UN. However, we found that we did not exist as a people in the UN, and an identity had to be established before we could ask for justice.

Our point is that our fight is for reparations. But part of this fight is our fight for an identity – to be recognized by the UN as belonging to the human families of the earth again (ethnogenesis). We did speak on identity in Durban at the WCAR before the plenary, which was the entire body of government representatives. Our message was about identity. Reparation is on the back of our minds, but we know (because we have a legal background, too), that the US did not sign that document and cannot be held liable for that document. UN officials were under the illusion, when they heard Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. saying that white children and Black children will walk hand in hand, that we were all the same. They apparently concluded that we were happy with our plight and satisfied that we were being identified as Caucasian, since no Black persons had penetrated the wall put up by the US in the UN until the Lost-Found Nation of Islam came and told the UN otherwise. Other Blacks had gone to the UN, but none had penetrated this veneer. They thought we were happy and satisfied here in America, based upon Martin Luther King's dream.

The Afrodescendant government should approach the UN on reparations. For when a government speaks, it has more power. It would have more weight than an individual speaking. It could galvanize world pressure. The government of Afrodescendants could declare a national emergency. The efforts of an individual are just futile. The UN hears you, but they cannot do anything about it because you are not a government entity. About eleven years ago, we established a government. So, we would say that when our government stops dragging its feet and takes care of the people's needs and business, then it would be heard.