

Council for World Mission

Legacies of Slavery Project – Position Paper

Preamble

1. 'Move on from the painful legacy of slavery', former [Prime Minister of the UK David Cameron](#) rudely advised the Jamaican Parliament (2015). This is one example of how 'empire' finds remembering this evil of the enslavement of people and its complex legacies a threat to its ongoing domination. The amputation of memory is more convenient in the status quo's invention of historical realities. However, remembering and naming legacies is critical for both an honest reflection on the past and for relationships to evolve in constructive ways.
2. The recent case of United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development [Ben Carson's](#) historical airbrushing of the story of enslaved Africans as immigrants who came to the US at the bottom of slave ships holding dreams and aspirations to work hard for the betterment of their progeny, further problematizes how the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade is misrepresented. Carson attempts to falsify the narrative to serve political ends and unwittingly to absolve a country of its racist past and its continuing impact. Carson himself is African American and a descendant of enslaved Africans.
3. Slavery (past and present) is an open wound. It is difficult to heal. It is complex. It is a sin. Ghanaian-American novelist Yaa Gyasi in *Homegoing*, for instance, problematizes the complexity in the unflinching portrayal of west Africa's role in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The tale begins in the late 18th century in an Asante village, part of the Gold Coast which eventually became Ghana. A young girl, Effia Otcher, is sold by her father to a British slave trader named James – as a bride, not as a slave – and taken to live with him in Cape Coast Castle, a fort overlooking the sea. The enslaved are in dungeons underneath the castle, awaiting transit to the Americas and the Caribbean via the Middle Passage. We may choose to forget, or may wish to forget, yet we cannot, because – as with Marcus and Marjorie, the novel's contemporary, closing characters – slavery and its legacy continues to be a source of our confusion and discomfort, regardless of which side of the divide we descend from.

Locating our Hearings

4. Expanding European empires of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries lacked one major resource to capitalise on the profits they could make in the New World -- a work force. The desire for Imperial expansion and profit maximisation created, sustained and drove the Transatlantic Slave Trade. During the 18th century, when the slave trade accounted for the transport of a staggering 6 million Africans, Britain was responsible for the sale and servitude of almost 2.5 million. The port of London acted as home to many of the slave vessels and with ports like Bristol and Liverpool, the final destination of the goods (eg. sugar) slave labour produced. The City of London financed and capitalised the trade, however as the slave trade increase Liverpool sent out more ships than London and Bristol combined, and the British government sent out its navy to protect its shipping routes. The Industrial Revolution was funded and resourced out of slavery and its profits. All the British nations benefitted from the economic system and fruit of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It was a European trade, with Britain, France, Portugal and the Netherlands as the main competitors, with many others involved. The Dutch part in the Transatlantic Slave Trade is estimated at 5-7 percent and was one of the last countries to abolish slavery in 1863. Elmina, the Slave Castle that will provide part of the Hearings in Ghana was Dutch run, and the slave dungeons were directly situated under the Chapel. It was the oldest Christian Church in Africa outside Ethiopia. The Portuguese were the earliest enslavers and the last to abolish slavery in 1888. All this tells us that slavery was crucial to the economic, political, colonial, social and spiritual life of Europe.
5. Britain tells its history as if it's only involvement in slavery was to bring about its abolition. The work of Wilberforce, Sharp, Douglass and Equiano is not to be forgotten, indeed the legacy of their struggle is a continued struggle with the persisting legacies of slavery: racism, poverty.

objectification, criminalisation and social exclusion. Social indicators, from educational achievement to physical and mental health, from pay gaps to criminal justice statistics show continuing pressures on Diasporan African communities. London is one of the most ethnically diverse cities of the world, but it is the city where Stephen Lawrence was brutally murdered in 1993 and an “institutionally racist” police force and judicial system failed to prosecute. The fatal shooting of Marc Duggan in 2011 by police prompted rioting across the UK. And racist incidents and attacks have spiked in post-Brexit UK. Ultra-nationalist and fascist parties are achieving political success across Europe appealing to ‘white Europeans’ to reclaim their heritage and reject the globalised world the Transatlantic Slave Trade put in place. Churches in the UK remain largely segregated along race lines in a society that never formally practised segregation. ‘Historic’ Churches who sent out the Gospel to a benighted world did not and do not welcome those who embraced the ‘light’ of that Gospel. But, at the same time would see themselves in the tradition of Wilberforce, opposing slavery, and as evangelists for a Gospel which brings freedom and affirms human dignity.

6. The Transatlantic Slave Trade forcibly removed up to 15 million people from Africa over 400 years. It is now estimated that in the period from 1500 to 1900, the population of Africa remained stagnant or declined. This extraction of human resources had a major effect on the growth of the population in Africa and consequent economic production, political, social and ethnic life and prosperity. The thesis of the late Walter Rodney on *How Europe Under-developed Africa* (1972) is irrefutable. The human and natural resources that were taken from Africa contributed not to the capitalist development and wealth of African nations, but to European and North American nations. There is also evidence that slavery was present in some parts of Africa prior to the Transatlantic Slave Trade, but not on the ‘industrial’ scale the Europeans developed. People were made slaves on small scale because of tribal warfare, and not because of a racist vision of ethnic identity and destiny. The Transatlantic Slave Trade prompted tribes to prey on others to obtain captives in exchange for European firearms, believing unless they had such weapons they themselves would be captured for slaves. Europeans had firearms and the price for them was slaves. By the mid-17th century the European demand for captives, particularly for the sugar plantations in the Americas, became so great that Europeans began initiating slave raiding and warfare to increase the supply. There were attempts to resist the slavers. In 1526, King Afonso of Kongo, complained to the king of Portugal that Portuguese slave traders were kidnapping his subjects and depopulating his kingdom. In 1630, Queen Njingha Mbandi of Ndongo (in modern Angola) attempted to drive the Portuguese out of her realm, but was finally forced to compromise with them. In 1720, King Agaja Trudo of Dahomey not only opposed the trade, but even went as far as to attack the forts that the European powers had constructed on the coast. But his need for firearms forced him to reach an agreement with the European slave traders.
7. Africa was the only continent to be affected in this way, and this loss of population and potential population was a major factor leading to its economic underdevelopment. The Transatlantic Slave Trade also created the conditions for the subsequent colonial conquest of Africa by the European powers, the enslavement of Africans in Africa, and the unequal relationship that still exist between Africa and the world's big powers today. The unequal relationship that was gradually created because of the enslavement of Africans was justified by the ideology of racism - the notion that Africans were naturally inferior to Europeans. This ideology, which was also perpetuated by colonialism, is one of the most significant legacies of this period of history. Franz Fanon wrote in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) that ‘The wealth of the Imperial countries is our wealth too ... For in a very concrete way Europe is puffed up inordinately with the gold and raw materials of the colonial countries: Latin America, China, Africa, [the Caribbean]. From all these continents, in front of which Europe today displays its opulent tower, diamonds, oil, silk and cotton, wood and exotic products have been taken for centuries to that same Europe. Europe is the creation of the Third World!’ Colonisation continues to shape Africa’s life even after de-colonisation from the borders the European nations drew in Africa, to the enslavement and impoverishment via Debt repayments. The new version of colonisation at hand in Neoliberal Globalisation or in Chinese economic

expansion continue to exploit and endanger the people, resources, land and waters of Africa. This builds on the 400-year model of the Transatlantic Slave Trade that Africa and Africans are there to be exploited and used.

8. The island of Jamaica, with its fertile soil and fresh water was first colonized by the Spanish in 1494 upon the arrival of Christopher Columbus and Spanish explorers. The indigenous people of the island were initially forced to work the plantations that were established in the colonies. As the indigenous population dwindled due to hard labour and the diseases brought into the Caribbean by the Europeans, there was a necessity for a labour force that could provide the free labour required to maximize the profits that were garnered by the colonists. The British conquered the Spanish in 1655 and gained control of the island. Under British rule the importation of Africans escalated to match the demands for the products from the island. Jamaica's cane fields were the source of sugar and rum, which proved to be more lucrative than the growth of tobacco and cotton. The plantations of Jamaica were places where cruelty was a part of the life of enslaved people. Upon Emancipation in 1834 in the colonies, the British compensated the owners of African people with £200,000,000 for their loss of property. No compensation was given to the emancipated people. Jamaica is only one example of the story of how Britain got richer through the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the enslavement of African peoples and the Plantation system throughout the English-speaking Caribbean.
9. The United States of America was itself a colony that became new homelands for Europeans. The arrival of Europeans in the Americas brought about adverse conditions for the indigenous peoples of the land. Among the earliest settlers were the Dutch; later came the British, the Spanish and other Europeans who were eager to acquire much of the land across the vast territories. The documentation of African presence in what became the United States of America, dates back well before the Early European explores arrived. As with the Caribbean, the increasing need for labour to meet the demands for food production and increase the profit margin. From New York north into New England, there was documentation of slavery. However, it was the southern part of the US that became more associated with the enslavement of Africans and the production of cotton, tobacco and other crops that were labour intensive. The African population far outnumbered that of the Europeans. To maintain control of the African population, excessive force was wielded. The cruelty and poor treatment of enslaved people across the colonies of the United States was the underpinning for a system that was created to ensure that African people and their descendants would understand themselves as inferior to their European oppressors. These discriminatory practices and breach of human dignity continue to be manifested in a variety of ways.

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – Digging More

10. Around 12.5 million Africans were forcibly transported across the Atlantic to the Americas and the Caribbean Islands by European slavers between 1562 and 1807. In this lucrative commodification of bodies and people, at least 1 million are thought to have perished on the journey, some dying of disease and deplorable conditions, others being thrown overboard or choosing to take their own lives. The Triangle (route of the trade) as it was known, was brutal and dehumanising. And it was profitable for Britain and other European countries - providing a market for manufactured goods from Britain, stimulating the Industrial Revolution and offering a ready market for produce from the Caribbean and America – sugar, rum, molasses, tobacco, and cotton. The guides in famous tourist 'great houses' in the UK often fail to note that many of the Georgian doors found in the 'great houses', furniture, and wood panelling in England used Mahogany from the Caribbean.
11. The huge profit from the slave trade helped to grow the wealth of Britain and its European neighbours. By 1800 two thirds of the British economy was directly or indirectly related to the slave trade. Slave owners and shareholders in plantations, as well as ship builders and slave trading included politicians, royalty, the aristocracy, the Church and many in the middle classes. The records of the Slave Compensation Commission examined by University College London present a complete

picture of British slavery as it was on 1st August 1834. They show that there were 46,000 individual owners of slaves who claimed compensation under the Act of Emancipation.

12. Under the terms of the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 the British Government set aside £20 million to cover claims from owners of slaves in compensation for the loss of their assets. This sum is estimated today to be between £16 billion and £17 billion (*The Observer*, 12 July 2015). Of greater significance is that the Act gave no compensation to the people it set free. Instead, the Act required the former enslaved people to give 45 hours a week of free labour to their former owners for a period of four years so that they were contributing to the cost of their own emancipation while being given no compensation for the suffering of their years under slavery. Also benefiting from the Trade were many thousands more ordinary citizens who owned small shares in the slave ships. The fact is, many were involved in slavery if only as consumers. Because so many were involved in and benefited from the commodification of African people, it took nearly another 30 years after the abolition of the slave trade for slavery itself to be abolished!
13. The brutal and profitable enterprise of the Slave Trade, largely premised on a racial dominance of black people by white people became institutionalised in British society, and continued in colonial administration throughout the British Empire long after 1833. It was a feature of British administration right up to the post-World War II period and the granting of independence to colonial nations from the Empire leading to the formation of the British Commonwealth. For the Africans themselves in the Caribbean the slave ships established the relationship between black and white. It was a brutal experience designed to condition them to the savagery of plantation life where the white man was in total control. This relationship was institutionalised by colonial law which is well documented in thousands of records listing the value of each individual African on the estates even to very young babies – for each human life there was a monetary value: they were ‘property’, enslaved chattels, and they were totally at the disposal of their masters who could sell them to another estate, physically beat them to death or sexually abuse them.
14. Among the legacies is the historical amnesia related to Britain’s role, and the role of other countries. Until recently, this history was excluded from history books and from schools’ curriculum. Such is the state of affairs, that when British people think about slavery, America comes to mind. Whether films or books or discourse, slavery is associated with the cotton plantations of the Southern States of the USA, it’s never the sugar plantations of Caribbean, or what happened in Ghana. The result of this selective history is a legacy of incredible ignorance in the British public of what happened in the British colonies during the centuries of slavery. It must be asked: why is it that the records of the Slave Compensation Commission were left undisturbed until UCL began to look at them in 2010.

Undressing and Connecting - LMS, CWM and Transatlantic Slave Trade

15. The London Missionary Society (LMS) came into being in 1795, 12 years before the slave trade was abolished in 1807 in the British Empire, but in the midst of the abolitionist movements in the UK. LMS however was officially silent on the issue of slavery until 1832, a year before slavery was abolished, when it finally agreed that missionaries and officers of LMS could not hold slaves. This was a result of the pressure of individual missionaries, missionary societies and the abolitionist movement. The new stance of LMS led to the resignation of WA Hankey who was the Treasurer of LMS and owned slaves in the Caribbean. At its founding LMS expressed an a-political perspective, committing itself to evangelism which it defined as ‘introducing the Gospel and its ordinances to heathen and other unenlightened countries’. The LMS has a complex story regarding slavery, it subscribed to a quietist position on political matters like most of the evangelical movement of the time, and acted in deference to colonial powers. However, when it’s spiritual mandate was challenged then some elements became defiant, especially over the right to evangelise slaves. Missionaries like Smith in Guyana began their abolitionist work because slave owners resisted giving their slaves time off for attending church and categorically refused to allow education of their slaves. In this respect, the contested issue was not slavery but LMS’s freedom to evangelise slaves. Had slave owners been more amenable one wonders if the missionaries would have been as vocal.

16. LMS missionaries lived and worked in slave trading contexts, either in Africa or the Caribbean and the US. There is evidence that after the loss of their ship, the Duff, LMS missionaries travelled on slave ships, as well as Convict ships, probably on their passage to collect enslaved Africans. However, after 1802 the LMS used the Sierra Leone Trading Company for transporting missionaries. This was set up by Granville Sharp to help re-patriate freed slaves from the Americas. There seems to be no evidence that LMS owned slaves or plantations in its own name, unlike the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches for example. Its income was by voluntary subscription and not investment portfolio. However, the funds raised may have come via slave owning or invested supporters. LMS was popular amongst chapels of the emerging Industrial class, who drew either resources or profits from a system mired in slavery.
17. The Evangelism and educational outreach of LMS began to foster new communities and relationships that political and slave authorities began to criticise and resist. One of LMS' earliest mission stations Bethelsdorp in South Africa was created to be an alternative to the colonial system and slavery was banned. There is evidence that within four weeks of her manumission and baptism that a woman called Lena sat down with four British dragoon guards to read the Bible with Brothers Read and Van der Kemp. The vivid descriptions of the missionaries and the hero like status of individuals like Livingstone fed a world view that was racist, and privileged white people in the human and divine economies. Africans were depicted as brutish and savage until their conversion and there was a sincere belief that Christianity would make Africans and others more docile to the Imperial project. LMS was largely complicit in the Imperial project, even as, on occasion, it countered it. LMS work raising funds and sending missionaries colluded with the 'Civilise and Christianise' vision of the era, justifying empire religiously and politically in the hearts, minds and faith of the sending churches.
18. But, what are the implications then for CWM as a post-colonial life affirming movement which seeks to articulate mission in the context of Empire? Clearly CWM's earliest roots in LMS are inextricably linked to the European Colonizing and Christianizing vision of mission: a vision that led to the deliberate expansion and imposition of a political, economic, cultural and religious order that claimed to save those it subjugated. This vision was reinvented with political de-colonization via a development model, that even though it sought change for the 'Third World' remained paternalistically in the hands of European staff and funds. In the 70's and 80's CWM's vision of mission threw this off and, full of a de-colonizing spirit, dismantled the idea of European churches patronizing mission through the rest of the world. Instead CWM built a fresh vision of multi-directional mission amongst a family of churches characterized by partnership and mutuality. This led to the dismantling of the persisting remnants of the earlier colonizing system and mind of the largely British Empire and brought about a liberating vision deepened CWM's dignity and authenticity as churches God has called into mission. In this way CWM began to partially emerge as a post-colonial movement during the most complicit and complex of histories and movements.
19. This recent heritage of decolonizing work prefigures CWM's current urgent calling, which invites CWM to become a fully post-colonial movement. In conversation with ecumenical partners, and the prophets of pain and rage around the world CWM seeks to name and dismantle Imperial and colonizing forces today. As CWM has set out: 'Because we are participants in God's mission we are called to live in opposition to Empire. If we are to be true to the mission of God, as expressed through God's incarnation in Jesus, then we have no option but to follow his model of resistance to the imperial forces of his time ... This prophetic understanding of mission is to transform the present to bring release to the captives, and to proclaim that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppression'.
20. The legacies of slavery are underlining the need for further effort in unmasking Empire and giving narrative and action to the counter-imperial mandate of God's mission. These legacies do so because they speak of a past that is a part of CWM and a present CWM and the Church must face. It would be a necessary task if all of this was about the Empire then, but it is also about the Empire now. The political, economic, cultural and religious order that claimed to save those it subjugated

then, still claims it now, and this is the time to raise protest and hope in response and to partner with those who can bring about liberation for all. This project brings CWM to the intersection of unjust forces, systems and histories. It points to an overarching metanarrative of oppression that is simultaneously Empire and Patriarchy. The racist language of slavery alerts the Church to all the attitudes that allow Christians to construe a world of 'them' and 'us', that apparently sends Christians into mission from a supremacist point of view.

21. This issue sits at the heart of CWM's small partnership of churches, in history and in the present. There is the historic matter of restorative justice and reparations for the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the issues of which remain forcibly present in the many forms of racism being resisted by such movements as Black Lives Matter. There are the intersected stories of occupation, violence, exploitation and servitude done to indigenous peoples all around our globe, from the Americas to the Pacific. There is an economic legacy of slavery in the impoverishment of the nations whose people were traded and exploited, or whose countries they became. There is also the current issue of slavery persisting in the form of Human Trafficking, a trade whose attitude to profit and people is entirely the same as the slave traders of the European Empires. In these areas, like the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the same exploitative attitudes to Race and Gender and a vision of economy that services the rich elite are observed. And, like the Transatlantic Slave Trade these attitudes have theological roots and values churches still need to overthrow.

Empires Past and Present – The Connections and Motivation for Legacies

22. Mindful of both the complexities and the legacies of slavery, there has been a call (over the years) from the Black communities of the Caribbean, the Americas, the United Kingdom, and other parts of the world for the legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to be acknowledged and addressed. The United Nations recognized this need with the declaration of 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent and the March 2015 unveiling of the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade at the United Nations in New York City.
23. Hence, this undertaking by CWM is a part of its self-interrogation around what it means to be a postcolonial organisation. This project will also help CWM and its member churches deepen their sensitivity to the issues of mission in the context of Empire and show fresh connection with the issue of Empire now in its many forms - from how Black people and Black communities are treated to the invisibility of indigenous people displaced by colonialism and issues of Human Trafficking.
24. CWM's 2016 Assembly theme *Healing: Hope in Action* gives a missiological and theological direction that can empower the pain of the past into a vision for change and future rooted in justice. CWM and the Church has a history, a theology, a context and a moment which all converge in this issue. However, it requires finding and facing the stories of slavery, honouring the righteous pain and purpose of reparations movements, and calls for commitment to a shared journey of witness and challenge that looks to restore with Christ, fullness for all, created in the image of God.
25. Our faith with its Biblical and theological underpinnings motivates this undertaking. People of faith, need to recognize that God's creation, God's care, and God's presence encompass all of creation, and that this reality calls people of faith to a theology, presence and engagement with all that affirms God's intention through Christ for abundant life for all.
26. Slavery and its consequences are a perverse sin that cuts to the core of the gospel message. At the core of slavery is sin and idolatry which negates God's 'fullness of life' promised for all. Further, the dehumanization of any person denies the image of the Divine in all, based on categories of hierarchies. In effect, this practice calls into question the nature of God and God's creative purposes. Love and justice is at the heart God, pointing us to walk in the power of God's love. Justice is not an optional extra in God's vision for this world that God loves so much that God took on human form to affirm life in all its fullness. God created humankind in God's image. Love and Justice is at the heart of this God. And the good news – we are called to follow and manifest is characterized by the power of love as against the love of power. We need to let the power of love help us reconstruct

power systems that are more broad based and inclusive. Shaping the present in the light of God's desire for righteousness and justice is more than essential: it is our calling. The reality is: even though the institution of slavery has been abolished, its legacies are evident in many of the current injustices and the people who feel the greatest impact.

Unearthing legacies and minding re-births – post emancipation

27. Tackling the legacy of slavery begins with a determination to face truth. Walter Rodney's point (1972) that the Transatlantic Slave Trade was carried out by Europeans to markets controlled by Europeans must be borne in mind as these legacies of slavery are tackled. The trade of humans was in the interest of European capitalism and nothing else. Arguments that Europeans 'helped' through the building of colonial schools, hospitals, roads and police stations must recognize its own flaw. Colonial taxation—taxes imposed by Europeans on African and Caribbean peoples for instance—paid for these 'advancements'. Huge monetary profits aside, Europe experienced serious non-monetary profits such as financed scientific research into industry, increased employment opportunities in Europe as more raw materials were imported and new business opportunities opened-up, leading to increases in the skill levels of the European workforce (Rodney 1972). Colonialism and slavery may have ended but their legacies endure in a defining way: through structural dependencies; the persistent cultural dominance of neo-colonial powers (eg. the high levels of foreign influence); the use of colonial languages; the continued legacy of corporate power, for example, in the 'land grab' phenomenon following the 2008 'global financial crash' and the land policies of countries which directly favour foreign over domestic investment.
28. Slavery has been grounded into the faith, soul and psyche of African descendant people. Its effects can be seen in family life where discipline is still harsh, occasionally even violent, which is a throwback to the 'backra', the slave owner or slave driver who carried out the brutal beatings on the estates which the slaves were forced to witness. Social values of today have their origins in slavery from which comes the attitude that white is good and black is bad that is reflected in the colour code where lighter skin is accorded higher social status. This social value can lead to a sense of self-loathing and internalized oppression which can lead to black-on-black violence and systems of oppression and stratification within Black communities. These manifestations of the legacies of slavery have led some psychiatrists to identify a phenomenon called "post-traumatic slave syndrome".
29. Another social value is the failure of our educational system to meet the needs of African Caribbean children which results in under-achievement, an above-average level of exclusions and reduction of employment and life chances. The media emphasis upon modern slavery, in contrast to the few programmes dealing with historic colonial slavery by some, is seen as part of a continuing conspiracy of silence. At best, it is unhelpful and so too is media coverage of racial issues in the USA and in other countries which too often show black violence and rarely tell the whole story of racism and oppression. Personal values as well as social values reflect the legacy of slavery. Many African Caribbeans have a fear of animals, especially dogs, which can be directly traced to plantation slavery. There is also a widespread fear of water which arguably goes back to the notorious middle passage of the slave trade. Mental health problems also reflect a legacy of slavery particularly in terms of the significantly higher incidence of schizophrenia among African Caribbeans than in the white population, both in Britain and in Jamaica.
30. It is in family life that the legacy of slavery is most vividly reflected. Since the 1980s statistics have regularly shown a significantly higher level of single families in the African Caribbean communities in Britain than among white families in the same areas. The absence of paternal participation in family life is prevalent and has clear links to the past. In the Caribbean islands after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 when the planters were unable to replenish their African slave labour via purchase, they intentionally bred slaves to increase the population of enslaved people. They used the strongest African males to sire as many babies as possible. There were many cases of slave owners and White overseers raping the enslaved woman which also afforded population increase

and perpetuated the absence of male participation, and in the case of White men any ownership of their progeny produced by enslaved women. The law stipulate absence of fathers named for the children of enslaved women. The older women who were too weak to be pressed into the field gangs were used in caring for the babies and children. These factors established the matriarchal institution of the family and the fecklessness of fathers which results in many boys and young men having no stable male role model in their lives.

31. The legacy of slavery among white British people is ignorance: but what of the legacy among the Africans in the Caribbean or here among the West Indian Diaspora? The de-Africanisation of the African descendant population in the Caribbean islands was a deliberate policy of enforcing white supremacy in line with the de-humanising of the enslaved workers. Their African roots were destroyed along with their language, their customs, their culture, their history, their identity and their freedom. This lack of historic cultural roots is a major destabilising factor in the legacy of slavery today. Many young people are unable to look back at their African roots with pride: instead, the education system and history books narrate a history of African people that begins with their enslavement and all its negative connotations.

Faith and Faithfulness – Poetics of Lament and Call to Action

32. Lament and lamentation is a powerful act: one that Christians desperately need to reclaim as an essential, subversive and liturgical act that reorients and transforms the body of Christ. Lament is uncensored communion with the Divine and each other where we learn to be honest, intimate and humble. It is an opportunity to acknowledge that things are not as they ought to be and beckon to God to intervene with righteousness and justice.
33. When Christians lament, there is confession of humanity and affirmation of partnership with the Divine to 'take on' the reach of Empire. Lamentation is a declaration that God has the power to truly mend the world's pain and brokenness. This is relevant to engagement with the legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade that the Church and Christianity are still grappling with today.
34. Like so much more in ecclesial and theological life, along the way, Christians have lament wrong. This important act is mistaken as optional instead of a required practice/habit of Christian faith and faithfulness. The shape of calling and that which underscore the process/hearings take courage and draw assurance from words such as those of the writer of Lamentations: "When all the prisoners of the land are crushed under foot, when human rights are perverted in the presence of the Most High, when one's case is subverted — does the Lord not see it?" (3: 35-36) So, what then, does God require of us?