



# AFRICA REPARATIONS MOVEMENT (UK)

Information Sheet  
No. 3

## “Reparations or Bust!”

Bernie Grant MP.

*In 1993, the Rt. Hon. Bernie Grant MP, Chair of the Africa Reparations Movement (UK), embarked upon a tour of cities around Britain, speaking on the issue of Reparations. The following is an edited version of a speech he gave in Birmingham on the 11th April, which was attended by well over 300 people.*

I want to say to you that I have been going around the country speaking about this question of Reparations. I have, over the past week been to Sheffield, I have spoken in Leeds, I have spoken in Manchester and I am speaking in Birmingham tonight and next week I will be speaking in London - Brixton. That is the first half. During the second half of the tour I will be going to Liverpool, Leicester, North London and other places. The reason that we embarked on this speaking tour is because we were concerned at the whole way in which the questions that I raised had been distorted by the press and the media, including the Black press. We were concerned especially about the way in which this issue was jumped on by those who should have known better, not least by the condemnation of certain people within the so-called Anti-Racist Movement. So we thought - what better than to go around the Country, to meet with people of African origin face to face to explain to them what we are saying, and to try and enlist the support of everyone. (APPLAUSE)

Now I have to say, that so far, we have had absolute support and this is the one thing has made this sort of campaign different from every other. We have had support from young people, young people who have come in off the street to give support. We have had support from women, and men, older people and people from all walks of life. Most important however is that support from young people and I think that that is very, very significant.

We come to talk with you this evening and we know that Birmingham is an important place as far as the United Kingdom is concerned, and we want to ensure that you play your full part in the discussions that are going on.

I want to start off by putting Reparations in it's proper context. I want to start off with the world situation. I have seen over the past few years a deteriorating situation in the world, in which African countries and Caribbean countries are in a state of crisis, and in a state of near collapse, in many cases. Almost every day we are hearing of another war that has started. We have heard of position in Angola, in Liberia, and in Sierra Leone - there is almost a war starting in Kenya, and look at what is happening in Somalia. Now we see Burundi has exploded. Zaire has also got problems. It is quite clear that what is happening is whole new and different ball game throughout the world.



Now I am a Member of Parliament, and as well as representing constituents, I have special interests, like every other MP. I make it my business to observe what is happening to Black people in Britain and around the world. I move around Britain, I go to the Caribbean and I go to Africa. I speak with leaders, I speak with Opposition Parties in particular. I have just come back recently from a trip to Zimbabwe and Malawi where I spoke to people there. When you get to those countries you begin to see the dependency that has arisen, the dependency on countries in the North. You begin to see the whole way in which the Governments of Europe, and other Colonial countries have been manipulating over the years to their own ends.

If you take the question of Third World debt - in 1990, three year ago, and the position has worsened, Africa owed the Banks of the Northern Countries a total of 271 billion Pounds, 271 with nine noughts attached to it! Now they can work as hard as they like over the next few years but they will never be able to repay even the interest on the loan. We know that in the 1970s when money was loaned, these countries were encouraged to do all sorts of things. They were encouraged to embark on fantastic projects and were lent money very low interest. When interest rates rose however these countries found themselves in real trouble. They now have debts which they can never repay and are facing restrictions placed on them by the IMF which make life for ordinary people more and more impossible.

One of the reasons that they are struggling of course is the whole way in which the commodity market is controlled by the people in the Northern Countries. They tell me in Kenya that the price that they are getting for coffee today, is the same as the price that they were getting 15 and 20 years ago, despite the fact that petrol prices have risen umpteen percent, despite the fact that fertilisers have risen umpteen percent, and despite the fact that the retail prices of the goods we buy from these countries have risen to by umpteen per cent. On top of that, these countries like Britain, France, Germany for example, are now growing crops that really they should not be growing. You go to Sainsbury you buy rice from Italy. What right has Italy got to be producing rice, when rice can be produced in Third World Countries? You go around the country, you see all these yellow fields, full of rape to make rapeseed oil. They have decided to substitute their own produce for the agricultural exports which African and Caribbean countries depended on for their survival. Another example is the growing of sugar beet, displacing the need for sugar cane on which so many countries depended for their economic survival. On top of that we have 500 multi-national companies who are going and controlling the whole world. So that we can begin to see the pressure that is beginning to emerge on those countries in Africa and the Caribbean.

Now if I can give you one last example an Economist from Jamaica told me the other day that out of every dollar the Jamaican Government makes it pays back 85 cents in debt to these countries of the North. 85 cents of every dollar - which means there are only 15 cents left of every dollar that Jamaica makes, to be spent on roads, schools and everything else.(APPLAUSE) And you know, Jamaica is one of the middle range countries, Jamaica is not a poor country according to the United Nations. So that you can understand that for those in the bottom range, there is little chance.

**Now** as a Black person, and as an M.P., going around talking to people about what is happening, it has become quite obvious to me that there is a need for Black people around the world to focus on this situation. And I put it to you - some people are getting on well in Britain, thank you very much, but what are we to do as African people in Britain, in Birmingham and elsewhere? What are we to do? Are we to sit back and say "Well I'm alright Jack, I am not going to worry about my black brothers and sisters they can look after themselves"? Is that the position that we want to take? Are we going to turn our backs and say "Well, I'm O.K. and the rest of them can go to hell"? Well, that is not my position, (APPLAUSE), and I believe that is not the position of the majority of people of African origin in this country.



We have to begin to do something about the desperation of these countries, which is driving our black brothers and sisters to take increasingly desperate steps. Already we have a situation where people are trying to swim or go by boat from Morocco into Spain. They are being intercepted on the high seas by Spanish Coast Guards, and shot, and their bodies are being washed up on the beaches in Spain riddled with bullets. Or are we going to have a situation where people are going to be hiding in the trucks and lorries in order to escape the famine and the poverty that is taking place in Africa. Now I don't think that we can accept this, and we cannot sit back and do nothing.

**What** has happened of course is that the New World Order has arrived. There used to be a Cold War between the Soviet Union and the countries in the North, and in this Cold War there was never a shot fired in anger between them. What happened of course is that the Americans on the one hand had their surrogates in Africa and around the world, the Soviet Union had their surrogates. Instead of the Soviet Union and America fighting it out between them, they had the people in Somalia fighting it out, and the people in the North of Somalia fought the people in the South. That was carried on throughout Africa and elsewhere, and untold quantities of arms were sold in the process.

Now that the Cold War is over however, no-one is interested in Africa or the Caribbean any more because they have no strategic significance. Africa and the Caribbean are left to pick up the pieces. Having sowed the seeds of division and conflict, they have walked out, leaving their hardware behind like so many toys for people to play with. The Cold War was very hot in Africa, and will continue to be so for years to come. And then they tell us that we should stop fighting each other, that it is our own fault that Africa is scarred with scores of regional conflicts!

At the same time, a whole new scheme of things is shaping up in the world, in the form of giant new trading blocs. We see the North American free trade area, being established right now, with America, Canada and Mexico. We also see the block in the East emerging, with China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia and so on. Even the Australians and the Americans on the Pacific Coast of America are trying to get in on that economic block, which will probably be the richest block in the future. Then we've got the European Community, with the ex-Soviet countries, and the Mediterranean countries queuing up to join.

Eventually we'll have a grossly enlarged Europe which will be a massive economic and political block in its own right. And you know, it will be the white countries they will allow to join Europe. They'll let in Czechoslovakia, Poland and so on, they'll let in Russia, and Georgia, but not Azerbaijan, or the places where non-whites live.

In the future, these three trading blocks will trade amongst themselves, and anybody else who is outside of those blocks is going to be squeezed to death. It's already happening, whether you like it or not. The terms of trade are already being changed to the disadvantage of black countries, and already aid money which used to go to those countries is being diverted to Eastern Europe. Countries in Africa, and countries in the Caribbean are going to have to get their act together, and we have to get our act together on their behalf. This is the first deteriorating situation.

**The** second deteriorating situation is in Europe and we have seen in Europe the most shocking events over the past few years. We have seen what has happened in Bosnia, where other European countries have sat on their hands and allowed the Muslims to be ethnically cleansed. I tell you something - you had better beware as African people about what this is all about. If people in Europe



could sit back and see Muslims exterminated, who are White Muslims, who are no different looking from the Croats and from the Serbs, you had better believe that if you are Black then you are going to not get the protection that you expect to get. This is a clear possibility, and I think you will agree with me that what has happened in Bosnia is an absolute and thorough disgrace. (APPLAUSE)

**What** we have also seen in Europe, is a tightening of fortress Europe. We have seen that the French Government of Monsieur Baladour for example, is beginning to ring the changes. They are have set up expulsion squads, they are going around rounding up people that think are illegal immigrants, *en masse*. It is coming into Britain. We have a new Immigration and Asylum Bill on the Statute Books. We are having people in London picked up, Black youth - ordinary African youth are being picked up by Police and being asked to prove that they are British on the street and to produce their birth certificates etc. We have seen the whole way in which the Immigration situation is changing, and when the Inquiry into Joy Gardner's death comes out - and let me say that I have little faith in any Inquiry carried out by the Police - but even that Inquiry, I understand, is going to show the disgraceful way in which the Immigration Service is operating in this country.

We have seen an increase in racist attacks and racial harassment around Europe. We have seen an increase in political parties on the far right, and they are gaining more and more electoral support. We have seen the election of the British National Party candidate in Tower Hamlets, and I believe that we are going to see more. And all these people who say, well the people in Tower Hamlets are misguided, just misguided, I don't accept that. They are racist and that is the end of it and I am making no excuses for them. -(APPLAUSE) - They are racist (APPLAUSE) and that is part of the struggle that we have to contend with.

And the reason why these fascists are getting elected is that the major political parties have refused to do anything about racism. (APPLAUSE) We have seen all over Europe how political parties are accommodating racism, and we will not be surprised to see the same happen here too.

**Now** we are at the crossroads I believe. We have got the situation in Britain where the fascists are on the rise. When we came in the 1950s and 1960s we fought against the Teddy Boys, we fought against the Mods and the Rockers, we fought against the Skin Heads, and then the National Front. Then we thought - well that is it - we had a good sorting out and that was the end of it. And then we decided that we needed to change the emphasis of the struggle in Britain and we needed to get people into political positions. So we sent black people to be Councillors and out of that came 4 or 5 M.P.s of African and Asian origin. We fought institutionalised racism, we had all sorts of affirmative action programmes and we had this programme, that programme and the other programme and the Government worked against us. The Government cut back a lot of the funding for Groups. They cut back the Urban Programme, Urban Aid - you name it - Inner City this, Inner City that - they cut it all back and said that we had to sort ourselves out. In effect, we are in the position where we have to go back it seems and fight on the streets again.

You know there are some that say that we have to go back to the methods of the 1960s, and we have to go back and confront this racist person and this right wing group and that fascist group. Well of course we have got to do it, but surely there must be something else that we can do. Why are we always anti-this anti-that - we need to be pro-something for a change. (APPLAUSE) Yes, we have to take part into the Anti-Racist struggle, yes we will do that but that cannot be the be-all and end-all of our existence here. We cannot say that is the pinnacle of our struggle and we have got a responsibility to set a Black Agenda for the future. (APPLAUSE) Our agenda cannot simply be that we are going and confronting the British National Party in Handsworth or in Tower Hamlets or anywhere else. We have to set a different agenda.



**What** I am saying to you, is that as a part of that agenda, we have to look to the worldwide situation confronting people of African origin. We have to look at what is happening in Africa. We have to look for example to April of next year when there will be ANC Government with Nelson Mandela as President in South Africa. We have other emerging countries in Africa, a lot of corrupt leadership in Africa is beginning to fall by the wayside, people like Mobutu is on the run in Zaire. We have got all those other criminals, like Hastings Banda is almost dead - thank God. We have to see where we are going for the future and I am saying, and I want anyone to get up and challenge this - that the future of Black people here depends on the future of Black people there, and around the world. (APPLAUSE).

When people see us on T.V., they see people starving and they see people fighting, they see people killing each other, they walk down the street, and they see me or they see Linda Bellos, immediately those images are transported into their mind and they think of black people in that way. So what are we going to do about it? Well, I would respectfully suggest to you that one of things that we consider most seriously is the whole question of Reparations and I want to turn to the question of Reparations right now.

**I** am saying that we need Reparations but I am not going to start from enslavement, I am going to start from before that. I am going to say to you that Black people have a rich history and culture and tradition. (APPLAUSE) Our history has been distorted, so as to deny our achievements. For example, we had people coming along and smashing the noses of the Sphinx, and the Pharaohs, because they knew that the nose identified the makers of those things as Black, Bantu, African people - so they smashed the noses.

We had a civilisation long before anybody else. The Greeks copied the style of our palaces and other architecture. The Greeks learnt mathematics from the Egyptians and the Egyptians were Black people. The Arabs came later. (APPLAUSE) We practised sophisticated medicine in Africa centuries ago. We had the knowledge to perform operations on people - open heart surgery where people were able to sit and see themselves being operated on fully conscious and without pain. All that was happening in Africa long before the white man set foot there.

We had the Benin Age when they were producing metals of all kinds bronze, silver, gold, iron, all these things - when people in this country were running around in caves covered in bearskin. (APPLAUSE) That is the true history - those are the facts. (APPLAUSE) Our history has been wiped out, and re-written to suit the white world. As a matter of fact, the first human beings were Black and they came from Africa. (APPLAUSE) The anthropologists now know that Black people and human life started in Africa. So all this nonsense about white Adam and Eve and all this kind of foolishness, you know we have to take that with a pinch of salt. So that is where we start from.

I repeat, we have a rich culture, tradition and civilisation that has been distorted. It was distorted for one reason only, and that was to justify the exploitation of Africa by the white world. We needed to be seen as sub-human, unintelligent drones without feeling or wit, otherwise the enslavement of millions of black people by European countries could not have been rationalised. Slavery was of course an economic necessity for the British and for other European countries in an age of expansionism and competition. Without it the Industrial Revolution could not have taken place. They needed our raw materials, our cotton, our sugar, and other produce, but the production of these were labour intensive.

**There** is no doubt that the economic development of Britain and Europe took place on the backs of enslaved and exploited black people in Africa and the Caribbean. Just read up on your black history.



Up to this day there are Companies who from the time of enslavement have been there and have been using our people for all of that time. When we talk about enslavement, don't let's just talk as though its over and done with, its not. Let's talk about what happened. 26 million people died in middle passage.

I went to Goree Island last year as a part of my going around the world. Goree Island is off Senegal and was one of the major ports for shipping slaves from the west coast of Africa. They showed us what happened. They took us to the slave houses. They showed us the ramps that they used to chase the slaves up and they showed us the sea which looked nice and calm but at that time it was covered in blood because of those slaves who were rebellious were thrown into the sea and the sharks came and ate them. They showed us where they kept the women and showed us the trap doors where the slavers would come in at night and take the women out and rape them and do all sorts of things to them. I saw big men crying in Goree Island when they saw what they had done to our people. I went to Elmina Castle in Ghana on the Cape Coast - I saw the slave castles, and dungeons which were used and smelt the sweat of the slaves still there- you can still smell it.

So anyone who tells me that it is a long time ago and we can forget it , I want to take them to Elmina Castle (APPLAUSE) and let them see it for themselves. (APPLAUSE) Go and see it for yourselves, and then you come back and tell me that we are not owed anything by these people! The historians and anthropologists have written about these things. It is all there if you want to find out what happened. They used to send the soldiers into the villages and the soldiers in order to prove that they killed people so that they could get paid, they would cut off the hands of the victims and they would tie them together like bunches of bananas. They would emerge holding bunches of children's hands, women's hands and demonstrate them as a trophy. When they transported the slaves, that's when they took our best brains and brawn from Africa . The most prized person was a 15 year old nubile girl. They never took old people, and if you had bad teeth, or if you could not hear too well, they left you behind. When they took slaves and transported them to the Caribbean they transported them in one square foot of space for weeks on end.

You know you travel to the Caribbean today, you spend 8 hours on the jet plane, you get there - your neck is hurting you, your foot, your back in hurting you etc. These people spent weeks in one square foot of space that they had to be transported in, packed together like sardines in a tin. You know they culled us, the bad ones that they just disposed of. If you were sick you were thrown overboard etc. That is why 26 million people died in that middle passage. So we know what enslavement was all about and then we had Colonisation and the super exploitation of our people and the super exploitation of raw materials and resources.

**Well,** we are saying today that there are certain historic truths. There are certain things that happened in the past and those things cannot be swept under the carpet any longer. We have not been in a position before in Britain where we have people like me, Members of Parliament who can raise matters in Parliament, who can get reported in the newspapers. Well it is about time that we put some of these people to the test - because if you are a person of African origin, knowing the situation and you sit in the House of Commons and do nothing and do not raise these issues, you are doing a historic disservice to your people. (APPLAUSE)

So all those people who say "Oh Bernie Grant is having a go again, foot in his mouth etc", and all these kinds of insults that people heap on me - the more they heap them, the more I am going to talk. So they had better believe it, I will not be silenced by anybody.

**Now** we are saying that we want Reparations. What sort of Reparations do we need? Why do we



need them? Are we entitled to it? People ask all these questions. Let me run through a few of them for you.

**First** of all, we are saying that we want an apology and an acknowledgement from the British Government because this is the country that was at the centre of the slave trade. (APPLAUSE) The British were the main shippers of slaves. (APPLAUSE) The old slave shipping routes went from Africa to Britain to the Americas. Even nowadays, if you want to get from America to Africa - you have to come to Britain because the planes fly over the same slave routes. So we want first of all an acknowledgement and an apology for enslavement. (APPLAUSE) We want it from the very top people, from the British Government and we want it from the Queen because she is the Head of State. We want it from her.

Why do we want it? Why do we need it? Well we need it because people are still suffering today as a result of enslavement and colonisation. Racial discrimination grew out of them. As a matter of fact, racial discrimination came about in order for them to justify enslavement and colonisation. They had to justify the cruelty they inflicted on our people, to reconcile what they were doing with their conscience and their religion. They did it by making out we were uncivilised and inferior brutes, and that they were doing us a favour by constantly subjugating us black people from Africa.

And you know what they did of course, they sent along the soldiers first and then they sent along the missionaries - to upset our brains and to turn our brains to jelly. (APPLAUSE) I was talking to Archbishop Desmond TuTu, recently. He said to me "when the missionaries came we had the land and they had the Bible, now we have the Bible and they have the damn land!" (APPLAUSE)

So what they did was to enslave us and enslave our minds. They took away our culture, our history, our languages etc. It is no wonder that these days our young people do not know where they are going and get involved in all kinds of nonsense. Of course they have nothing to fall back on, they don't know their roots, they don't know that they are people who are the descendants of people who were the top people in the world - no one has told them this. Their history has been denied them. So that we need this because we are today still suffering mentally from slavery here, and physically from slavery in the Third World. (APPLAUSE) So we need for that to be recognised.

**Some** people say "Oh well it was a long time ago, slavery was abolished 150 something years ago - really we should live and let live and forget and all that old nonsense". Other people have not forgiven them, or forgotten. Six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust in Germany. They get reparations. Germany writes out a cheque every year as reparations for what they did to Jewish people during the War. The Japanese pay reparations to the Koreans for what they did during the Second World War. Now the Korean women who were used as prostitutes etc. have put in a separate claim, because they want reparations and restitution. The United Nations say that Saddam Hussain has to pay reparations to the Kuwaitis for what he did during the war. Mr John Major himself, the Prime Minister of Britain, recently came back from a tour of Japan in the summer, where he went cap in hand to the Japanese Prime Minister, begging him to give reparations to Britain's Prisoners of War who were kept in the Prison Camps by the Japanese. At the end of the War they gave them £50 each or something, and that was not enough, so Major himself went to the Japanese to ask for more. Boris Yeltsin went to Japan the other day and apologised to them for taking some of the Japanese Islands near to Russia, and they are negotiating giving them back.

In Australia, the Aborigines are demanding an apology from the Australian Government for stealing their land. It seems like a matter of time before they get will get some compensation. The Enuit, who used to be called the Eskimos, in Alaska, get reparations because the Americans have sold their land and all the oil that is underneath the ground in Alaska. In Canada, and in America, the native



Americans, are getting reparations because of the hurt that was done to them.

**Nobody** has given us a penny in reparation for slavery, which was worse than all these put together. Not a single penny. As a matter of fact they added insult to injury in 1838, when they released the slaves in the Caribbean, they gave £20 million to the slave owners in compensation. (APPLAUSE) They gave us nothing! They gave the slave owners compensation for the release of the slaves!

They talk about Wilberforce and other heroic people who abolished slavery - it is a load of rubbish - the slaves freed themselves ! (APPLAUSE) I come from Guyana, I know there was a slave named Cutty who led his people and fought against the British. Now he was a real hero ! My own family fought and they gave us a piece of land and they call it Hopetown, where all the rebellious slaves got a bit of land from the British to keep us off their backs. And then there were heroes like Toussaint L'Overture, another rebel who fought like hell against subjugation. When they talk about how they set us free, you know, we ought to take that with a pinch of salt.

So we are entitled to reparations, and do not let anybody tell you that you are not entitled to it. We need it - people are still suffering from it and our countries are still suffering from Colonisation - so we need it and we need it now.

**What** forms should these reparations take? Well, this is a matter that we need to talk about, but I think that one of the things that we have to insist on is that sacred, religious, historic artefacts are returned to their countries of origin. (APPLAUSE) I made one suggestion at a meeting in Leeds recently, I told them we wanted some of the Crown Jewels back. Subsequently, the newspapers have been asking me about this - I even had a call from Johannesburg to say that they want to know what is going on.

Well let me tell you about this - I'm talking about some of the Crown Jewels, not all of them. I'm talking in fact about the best of the Crown Jewels. The Stars of Africa - that is what they are called - the Cullinan Diamonds. This diamond was found in 1905 by an African worker for the Premier Mining Company. Of course history denies us his name, and we don't know anything about him. He gave it to the management. They found out that it was the biggest diamond that anybody had ever seen in the whole world at any time. In 1907, two years later, the Transvaal Government bought the diamond for £150,000 and they wanted to give it to Edward VII as a present on his 66th birthday. The Liberal Government at the time said, they didn't think they should accept it, but Winston Churchill, who was the Colonial Under Secretary at the time, persuaded them that they should have it.

They sent the diamond to a man in Amsterdam to cut it up because it was too big, and polish it up. When the man saw the diamond he fainted straight away because he had never seen anything like it. Anyhow, he cut it up into 9 major diamonds and into 96 smaller diamonds.

The 9 major diamonds are called the First Star of Africa, the Second Star of Africa, Third and Fourth Star of Africa all the way down to Ninth Star of Africa. Those diamonds were first of all given to Edward VII, and others were given to Queen Mary by the South African Ambassador in London, at Marlborough House and so on and so forth. The First Star of Africa is the biggest diamond in the world. The Second Star of Africa is the third biggest diamond in the world. The First Star of Africa is in the sceptre of the Crown Jewels that the Queen has. Number Two is on the orb or some other part of the Crown Jewels, I believe. The rest of the nine are set in the Queen's personal Jewels, her broaches, her rings, necklaces etc.



The Nine Stars of Africa - I say - we want them back. (APPLAUSE) We want them back in Africa. (APPLAUSE)

The reason that we want them back - first of all is that the Transvaal Government was an illegal government and they had no right to give it to anybody anyway, because it did not belong to them - they stole it. Anything that is stolen, if you buy it or if you are given it as a present, you have to hand it back - and they should be handed back to us.

I am going to write to the Queen, because I know that she is a very reasonable woman. I will make the suggestion to her that when in March of next of year South Africa has its first newly democratically elected Government with Nelson Mandela as President, she should make a symbolic gesture. She should hand over the Stars of Africa to Nelson Mandela! (APPLAUSE)

**What** else do we want by way of reparations? I think that we want a cancellation of Third World debt. (APPLAUSE). The fact of the matter is that we don't owe them anything. They owe us. (APPLAUSE). -

Time is running short tonight, but we also want substantial investment in the infrastructure of the African and Caribbean countries, by way of reparations. We want clean new technology, because we don't want to ruin the environment, as white people have done. We want proper training as well. I am saying that with this kind of agenda, Black people who want to go to those countries, either permanently or temporarily, should be assisted as a part of a Reparations package. Our young people who come out with degrees and so on will be able to go somewhere and to work, to build up these countries, in Africa and the Caribbean. They need the opportunity, and Africa and the Caribbean needs them. We need among other things to reverse the brain drain from these countries which has occurred in recent decades.

**So** that is what I am saying. I am saying that we need to work on developing this Reparations Movement. Now, we have been contacted by all sorts of people, I just want to mention how this thing has taken off. We are getting calls, letters, everything as a result of this. We have been contacted by the Ethiopian World Federation, The Nia Bingi Co-ordinating Committee, the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the Nation of Islam, the All African Peoples' Liberation Front, the Pan African Movement, and large numbers of individual people as well, who are excited by what they have heard, and want to play their part in making this movement grow. All of those people who for years have been arguing for reparations are coming under the umbrella of the Africa Reparations Movement, which is the organisation that we have set up.

I was in Abuja the new capital of Nigeria in April of this year to attend a Conference sponsored by the Organisation of African Unity on Reparations. The Abuja Conference was called to develop ideas worked out at a previous conference in Lagos in 1990, which I also attended. The Conference lasted about a week. All the Governments of Africa were represented there, including the Arab States. The Arabs acknowledge the part that they played as slave traders during slavery. And they said "Yes, we have to talk about it". We talked about the fact that Africans themselves were involved - African Chiefs, capturing people and selling them as slaves etc. We talked about that.

We had representatives from all over Africa and the Caribbean, from Cuba, from Jamaica, from Brazil, from all over the Diaspora. We agreed that we would each set up an Africa Reparations Movement in our country. When I got back I put out a call, and we had about a hundred people turn up to a meeting in the House of Commons. We elected an initial committee, and have been meeting



regularly to get this movement off the ground. So, we are trying - and over the next period we will work together as people of African origin in order to sort ourselves out, both in this country and around the world.

I want to return to the theme that I mentioned earlier - that I am not prepared to be part of the "I'm Alright Jack' scenario . I am not involved in that and I suspect that you will see in this movement a chance to show that you don't want to be either. I think that we will get a lot of support.

This question of mental enslavement is very, very important. Bob Marley talked about it. That is a major issue. So Sisters and Brothers, we have been trying for years to get an issue that will unite all people of African origin. I believe in this movement for Reparations we have the way forward. I believe that it begins to set the agenda, the Black agenda for the next ten years and for the millennium. I believe that we have to do it historically, and I know that you will support us in this.  
(APPLAUSE)

Thank you very much. (APPLAUSE)