

## De-Briefing on preparatory Conference on African Reparations

The Birmingham Preparatory Conference confirms that we can organise as a people once we seize the opportunity and work diligently. The Conference reflected the fact that the desire for change, and the willingness to effect it burns deep in all our hearts.

At least one hundred people attended the conference, but it was disappointing to note that there was no one from Cardiff, Bristol or Liverpool. To that extent the conference did not quite achieve it's purpose.

It was also a rather low key affair, held as it was in the Council Chamber at Birmingham. It did not generate the enthusiasm and energy that previous meetings had and this was in part due to the setting.

It is clear that much action is need to create and generate momentum if reparations are to be won, and to this extent it is clear that the role of the Steering Committee must be more action orientated with less emphasis on talking.

We need to be more professional and dynamic, more pro-active than we have previously been, we must set the agenda and not merely follow someone else's. It must be acknowledged that the sub-committees have not all functioned and that to rely upon this mechanism is to inhibit the ability of the organisation to develop. As a matter of urgency we need a constitution so that we have a formal basis to conduct our business.

Letters of interest continue to pour into Bernie's office, phone calls requesting speakers etc, and we need to act on these as

well as the ideas that came from the conference. Amongst the things that need to be done is a concretising of the ideas that have been expressed by the Steering Committee, for example to draw in Sports and Entertainment personalities for both money and support, people like Lennox Lewis and Viv Richards. That means that someone has to volunteer to do this.

There is also a need to offer a newsletter to the Movement so that people feel in touch with what is happening. And we need to make things happen. For example publicity stunts such as a picket of the British Museum, a series of Press Briefings so that the issue of reparations is carried by a variety of news media. If we do this and make sure that our address is placed in the text we will recruit more interested African people.

We also need to pursue our ideas about getting our message across in schools and colleges by a concerted campaign.

The offer of office accommodation from chief Abiola is still being pursued, although we are aware that he has his own difficulties at the moment, but it is clear that Bernie's office will not be able to contain the expanding work that will need to be done if we are to make reparations happen.

We therefore need an office and we need volunteers to staff it, this would be more realistic than hoping for paid staff, with all of the attendant management issues. A rota of volunteers would be a more democratic and inclusive way of using the support and enthusiasm of African people.