

FOSTERING A CLOSER NEXUS BETWEEN AFRICA AND ITS DIASPORA: THE ROLE OF THE CARIBBEAN

by

**Dr. The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves
Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines**



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{FORMAL GREETINGS!}

INTRODUCTION

I am deeply honoured, as Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, as a child of our Caribbean civilisation, and personally, to have been asked to speak at the concluding session of this truly historic Bicentennial Global Dialogue on the Promotion of Sustainable Dialogue between Africa and its Diaspora to Drive the Next One Hundred Years of Development. The Government of Barbados, its distinguished and visionary leader Prime Minister Owen Arthur, and the Commission for Pan-African Affairs (CPAA) are owed an immense debt of gratitude by Africa and its diaspora for spearheading and hosting this magnificent Bicentennial Global Dialogue.

This Dialogue builds upon the most productive work in recent years of “the South African, African Union, Caribbean Diaspora Conference” in Jamaica in March 2003, the numerous gatherings

and reasonings this year, far, across the world, commemorating the two hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, the enhanced state-to-state relations between Africa's nation-states and those of Latin America and the Caribbean, and civil society's encounters involving Africa and its diaspora, mainly in the Caribbean, Latin and Central America, North America, and Europe.

All these multiple activities of the most recent years have historic antecedents dating from the forced arrival of the first African slaves in the Caribbean and the Americas some four hundred years ago. Since then there has been much suffering and redemption, pain and joy, setbacks and advances. The brutality of the Atlantic slave trade and the enslavement of Africans undoubtedly constitute the most monumental crime ever for a free people to have endured. Yet, no person, no company, no nation which operated and profited handsomely from the slave trade and slavery has ever paid any or any proper recompense. Thus, the legitimate and long overdue issue of reparations has arisen. At the same time, the free people of Haiti had to pay reparations to colonial France for over 100 years for their practical embrace of revolutionary liberty, independence, and sovereignty. I shall speak more on this twin-issue of reparations and Haiti a little later.

AFRICANIST BONDING

The indissoluble nexus between Africa and its diaspora, including the Caribbean has been forged in the cauldron of struggle and through the fever of a poignant history. This Africanist bonding occasioned the emergence of first of an embryonic Pan-Africanism and subsequently a coherent and consolidated movement of immense significance. In the Caribbean, several 19th and 20th century intellectuals and political activists have been in the forefront of this unfolding Pan-Africanism, including: Edward Wilmot Blyden of the Virgin Islands; T.E.S. Scholes, Marcus Garvey, Michael Manley, and Robert Nesta Marley of Jamaica; Henry Sylvester Williams, George Padmore, C.L.R. James, and Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Touré) of Trinidad and Tobago; Franz Farron and Aimé Césaire of Martinique; Norman Cameron, Eusei Kwyana, and Walter Rodney of Guyana; Jean Bertrand Aristide of Haiti; and President Fidel Castro of Cuba.

These important historical figures from the Caribbean have been joined in this mammoth Pan-Africanist quest by the titans from Africa, including Haile Sellassie Ras Tafari, Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Amilcar Cabral, Sekou Touré Leopold Senghor, Nelson Mandela, Yoweri Museveni, and Thabo Mbeki.

In a profound sense this engagement in which we have been involved over the past few days flows inexorably from the perspective outlined by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa in his

address to the University of the West Indies in Jamaica in July 2003, thus:

“Over the past few years, we have made bold to speak about an African Renaissance. We have also spoken of the need for us Africans to ensure that the 21st century becomes an African century and what we might do together to accomplish these goals, understanding when we speak of an African Renaissance, we speak of a rebirth that must encompass all Africans, both in African and the African diaspora.”

The preparatory documents which were sent to me from by the Commission for Pan-African Affairs (CPAA) for this Bicentennial Global Dialogue emphasise one principal goal and two main objectives. Our goal, simply-stated is “to promote sustainable dialogue with Africa and its Diaspora to drive the next century of development”. The twin objectives are:

- (i) “To develop a workable formula aimed at constructively engaging the international movement for African reparations”.
- (ii) “To prepare for the 2008 African Union Summit by documenting the positions and recommendations of the Caribbean towards the following:

- Creating sustainable partnerships between the African Diaspora and the Continent through a realisable Programme of Action.
- Creating sustainable dialogue, partnerships and strengthening Pan-African solidarity for a better Africa and its Diaspora.
- Promoting South-South cooperation for the betterment of the Continent and its Diaspora”.

REPARATIONS

The case for reparations is unanswerably strong. This has been so accepted by the African Union, the Caribbean Community and a wide range of civil society groupings internationally. At the United Nations' General Assembly, dozens of countries have resolved that there ought to be an appropriate recompense for the nations and peoples who have suffered from the slave trade and slavery from those nations which profited so immensely.

In my own speech at the 61st session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, on September 21, 2006, I stated:

“The trade in, and enslavement of, Africans was a monstrous crime against humanity and an exercise in genocide unmatched in the history of the western world. European

nations and their North American cousins have failed and/or refused to acknowledge this sufficiently or at all. There has been no apology for this crime against humanity and genocide, conducted over a prolonged period. There has been no practical recompense in the form of reparations to the affected nations and peoples in Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas. Surely, this issue must be put squarely on the agenda of the United Nations for speedy resolution.

“Without in any way diluting the force of this representation, indeed in bolstering it, it is necessary and desirable, to link it in our region with the genocide of indigenous peoples, including the Callinago and Garifuna of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the wholly wrong and inhumane exploitation by colonialism and imperialism of indentured labour from Africa, Madeira, India, and China after the abolition of African slavery in the Caribbean. Europe has much to answer for on these matters and should be made to answer properly, appropriately. Historic wrongs not righted remain scars in the soul of the oppressor and oppressed alike which continue to haunt over the ages; it is a hateful burden which must be lifted. The dark night must give way to a brightened day.”

The critical tasks now are to articulate more widely the case for reparations and to elaborate efficacious proposals or formulae for practical implementation.

We ought to be aware that the demand for reparations by Africa and its diaspora is being sharply resisted by European nations. Indeed, Europe's resistance is bolstered by the arrogance, folly, and ignorance of fifth-columnists in Africa and its diaspora, including the Caribbean, who insist on trotting out the absurd position that the trade in African slaves was facilitated by some African collaborators, and thus African countries should pay reparations, too. This fallacious argument immediately falls, upon the realisation that although some African agents participated in the slave trade, there are no African states which pursued the Atlantic slave trade as a public policy. In any event, the slave trade and the enslavement of Africans in the so-called "New World" were extensions of an aggressive mercantilist capitalism which massively enriched Europe and its companies and nationals. Africa, instead, was led down, in the process, onto a path of underdevelopment, away from an autochthonous or home-grown developmental thrust.

Haiti's historical circumstances and current condition scream loudly in favour of reparations. I feel sure that President Aristide's espousal, and practical pursuit, of reparations in the French Law Courts contributed in no small measure to American and French complicity in his involuntary removal from Haiti prior to the lawful termination of his Presidency.

In his most recent book entitled An Unbroken Agony: Haiti, From Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President, the indefatigable fighter for justice, Randall Robinson, accurately stated thus:

“As punishment for creating the first free republic in the Americas (when 13 per cent of the people living in the United States were slaves), the new Republic of Haiti was met with a global economic embargo imposed by the United States and Europe. The embargo was strengthened by a further demand from France for financial reparations of roughly US\$21 billion (2004 dollars) as compensation from the newly freed slaves for denying France the further benefit of owning them. It would be the first time in history that reparations would be imposed by a defeated nation on the nation that defeated it.

“American sanctions against Haiti would not end until the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, nearly sixty years after the founding of the free Haitian republic.”

The facts of this outrage in Haiti are not as well-known as they ought to be: In 1825, twenty-two years after the death of the great Haitian Liberator, Toussaint L'Ouverture, imperial France moved unconscionably against a weakened Haitian state system. France, in threatening to re-enslave Haitians, imposed an ordinance requiring from Haiti a payment of 150 million gold francs and a 50 per cent tariff reduction for all ships entering Haiti. There was decreed to be a first payment of a lump sum of 30 million francs which Haiti was virtually compelled to borrow from a private French bank.

As late as 1915, 111 years after the Haitian Revolution, 80 per cent of Haitian government's resources were being paid out in debt service to French and American banks which had loaned monies to the government to pay off the enforced reparations debt to France. Indeed in 1922, seven years into a 19-year American military occupation of Haiti that resulted in nearly 20,000 Haitian deaths, the United States imposed a US\$16 million loan to the Haitian government to pay off the final installments of the reparations debt to France. That loan was finally repaid in 1947. In other words, it took Haiti 122 years effectively to repay the dastardly oppressive and unjust reparations debt to France. And people who preach European justice and values to me, want to tell me that reparations for the slave trade and the enslavement of Africans is an unrealistic pipe-dream!

An apology from Europeans and their American cousins must go hand-in-hand with reparations. Reparations are the outward sign of an inward apologetic grace. We who are charged with the responsibility of leadership in nation-states, universities, research institutions, companies, the media, professional associations, and civil society organisations, are obliged to establish the necessary structures to give effect to the mandate on reparations and achieve tangible, substantial results.

Prime Minister Own Arthur of Barbados has sketched an instructive framework on the matter of reparations in his William Wilberforce Memorial Lecture at the Holy Trinity Church in Hull, England, on

March 25, 2007, on the occasion of the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. The Barbadian Prime Minister eloquently submitted that:

“The effects of 500 years of chattel slavery are still shaping the realities of black people the world over. The principle of reparations should be upheld, advocated and promoted through the establishment of a fund to facilitate material compensation to countries which were victimised, and by the pursuit of national and international policies to confront and eradicate the legacies of slavery.

“For I conceive of reparations as a national and international responsibility. Indeed, the Government of Barbados, from the inception of universal adult suffrage in 1950, and especially since independence in 1966, has accepted its duty to making national reparations through a wide variety of successive policies and programmes.

“It is now time that in the specific case of Britain and the Caribbean this historical injustice should be redressed. But it should be done, not in anger, but in a spirit of reconciliation, healing and social justice.”

Accordingly, Prime Minister Arthur proposed the establishment of a William Wilberforce Educational Fund to commemorate the

bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. He identified four purposes for such a fund namely:

1. To finance by means of scholarships and concessionary conditions, the education of dozens of students from CARICOM at British Universities on an annual basis.
2. To finance visiting British lectureships at the campuses of the University of the West Indies.
3. To finance student and teacher exchanges between African universities and the University of the West Indies.
4. To fund the establishment of a joint British-Caribbean Centre for multi-racial studies and Policy Development at the University of the West Indies.

It ought to be emphasised that this specific Arthur proposal has a limited goal: The commemoration of the bicentennial. It is not a comprehensive proposal for reparations which is more far-reaching and substantial. And that has been tacitly acknowledged in his speech. But Prime Minister Arthur's broad approach to reparations is sensible, practical, and realisable. It thus instructs and guides. We must therefore build upon it.

It ought to take little intellectual effort to rubbish the proposition by some Europeans that their grants and other forms of aid amount, in practical terms, to reparations. The answer, swiftly, resides in the following:

1. Aid is discretionary. Reparations constitute a right which Europe is obliged to meet and thereby satisfy its consequential demands. This European obligation is grounded in morality, justice, and politics, even if unenforceable in law.
2. Aid is conditional upon the performance of certain acts or pledges. Reparations possess no pre-conditions; they reflect the reality of slave trade, slavery, and the attendant consequences.
3. Aid, in any event, is stingy. Reparations are a substantial and substantive matter.
4. Aid is procedurally lengthy and cumbersome in delivery. Reparations, once agreed upon, must be swift in disbursement.
5. Aid invariably assists the donor; reparations must be for the exclusive benefit of the recipient or claimant nation.

THE AFRICAN CONDITION: HISTORY, REALITY AND DREAM

In order to establish the precise context for the consolidation and enhancement of the nexus between Africa and its diaspora, especially that in the Caribbean, it is necessary and desirable to explore the history, reality and dream of the African condition.

In his classic entitled *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, the Caribbean scholar and activist Walter Rodney, elaborated the thesis that Africa's underdevelopment is directly connected to the dominant role played by external monopoly capitalism and colonialism in wrenching Africa from an autonomous, home-grown, sustainable political economy and placing it on a path of a dependency relationship to an exploitative overseas capital wrapped in the incubus of colonial, racist over-rule.

Clearly, an African rebirth demands an alternative political economy which releases the people's creative enterprise and spirit, which utilises Africa's abundant natural resources for the African people themselves, which promotes an integrative economic framework regionally and continent-wide, and which evolves an appropriately-designed popular, participatory democratic form of governance. Indeed, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which has been fashioned by the African Union under the leadership of President Mbeki, is the critical vehicle in this quest for renaissance. NEPAD summons all Africa to take its destiny into its own hands, to assume responsibility for its failings, to enhance its

possibilities, and reduce, as far as is humanly possible, its limitations. But the challenges in this transformative process are immense.

In the last 25 years, Africa is the only continent world-wide which has grown poorer. Its share of world trade has halved in a generation, and it receives less than one per cent of direct foreign investment, globally. If fundamental alterations in Africa's political economy do not occur, that is to say, if business continues as usual, Africa will miss the central targets for reducing poverty by more than 100 years. If the current conditions persist, it has been assessed that free primary education for all would not be provided until the year 2130, some 115 years after the target set by the United Nations in the Millennium Development Goals (MDCs).

Across Africa, the trade patterns of the colonial era persist despite some efforts to alter them through the creation or elaboration of regional trading blocs in the northern, southern, eastern and western areas of Africa. Currently, according to the Economic Commission for Africa, trade among African countries accounts for only 10 per cent of their total exports and imports.

Poor and expensive transport across Africa hinders increased intra-African trade. For example, shipping a car from Japan to Abidjan in the Ivory Coast costs US\$1,500.00 but the shipping of the same car from Addis Ababa in Ethiopia to Abidjan cost US\$5,000.00.

Most of all, Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, is ravaged by HIV/AIDS to an extent which no other continent or region experiences. Even the relatively prosperous Botswana, an upper middle income country, is saddled with a rate of HIV infection of some one-third of its population.

Of the 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, only five have been put in the category of an "Upper middle-income country (UMC)" by the World Bank. A UMC has an annual Gross National Income (GNI) per head in 2002 of between US\$2,936 and US\$9,075. In sub-Saharan Africa, there are four "Lower middle-income countries" (LMC) with a GNI per capita annually of between US\$736.00 and US\$2,935.00. But there are 39 sub-Saharan African countries in the "Low-income country" (LIC) grouping with GNI per head per year of US\$735.00 or less.

A huge, oil-rich country like Nigeria is in the "low-income country" category. Forty years ago, Nigeria was much richer than South Korea, a country with roughly the same population. Nigeria's oil wealth was squandered while South Korea invested in its people and targeted vital export industries in the western world. Today, South Korea is a leading export nation which has a per capita income 20 times larger than Nigeria's.

Meanwhile, by comparison of the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, three are "high-income countries" (HIC) with a GNI per head of US\$9,076.00 or more. Fourteen of the Latin American

and Caribbean countries are in the UMC category; 14 are also in the LMC category; and only two — Haiti and Nicaragua — are in the LIC grouping.

Within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), three of its member-states are in the HIC category; five are in the UMC grouping; five are in the LMC group; and only one — Haiti — is a LIC.

In 2003, Richard Dowden, the Director of the Royal Society in the United Kingdom, wrote that “despite huge natural resources and talented people, most of Africa’s economies have not taken off.” He correctly observed that:

“Since colonial times, Africa’s economies have been designed to suit the wants of outsiders, not the needs of the African people.”

Once this is accepted, an appropriate re-design of Africa’s economies comes forcefully on the agenda.

To be sure, aspects of Africa’s physical environment are problematic and challenging. For example, old soils and irregular weather patterns (including droughts) pose challenges. And people do die comparatively younger in Africa because of diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS.

These issues, and others, are connected to the nature and character of Africa’s political economy historically and currently, the

international economic system and its unfair trading arrangements, and the efficacy of the political apparatuses of the individual nation-states across Africa. It is surely generally accepted that the failure in Africa to establish effective, democratic nation-states has been not only a political question, but also and economic one of the first order.

The reality of Africa is not one-sided: It consists not only of failures, weaknesses and limitations; it contains also successes, strengths and possibilities. Often the difficulties, problems and limitations engender, particularly in academics, evangelists and so-called “mainstream” journalists, a learned helplessness which recites the problems not as a basis for solutions but as an exercise in abstractions and even folly. Africa's enormous material resources — tapped and untapped — its people, its rich vibrant culture, its knowledge and wisdom, its history and spirit, its new leadership, and more, are part and parcel of its many-sided reality.

The African reality necessarily gives rise to a quest, a dream. Some sleep to dream; others dream to change themselves and the world for the better. This dream, this quest, demands a notion of Africanness which provides a transition from a shared experience to a conscious expression grounded in collective solidarity and supported by practical actions arising from the people themselves.

This notion of Africanness is at the core of the African civilisation which has spawned the concept and programme of Pan-Africanism and which fashioned itself first as the Organisation of African Unity

(OAU) and then, in July 2002, its formidable successor, the African Union. This is the continental vehicle for Africa's renaissance — both reality and dream; it constitutes the hope for an African century in the 21st century. Our Caribbean civilisation, which in its creolised wholeness is part African, has a vital role to play in Africa's rebirth and development. Indeed, we have been doing so in ways ranging from elemental political and social cooperation to the shedding of blood as the selfless Cubans did in the battle for Cuito Cuanavale in their defeat of the mighty apartheid army of South Africa. It was this defeat of racism and imperialism which sustained Angola's independence and helped to open the cell doors of the imprisoned revolutionary, Nelson Mandela. The time has come for a marriage of true minds between the African and Caribbean civilisations. This ought to be a central focus of our public policy.

AN AGENDA FOR CLOSER COLLABORATION

How can the African and Caribbean civilisations collaborate closely in pursuance of their joint and several interests in an era of enhanced concentration of finance capital, advanced scientific knowledge, trade liberalisation and an increasingly unipolar political hegemony backed by military might and cultural imperialism?

The formulation of an appropriate strategy requires extraordinary care and skill. Its implementation calls for enormous flexibility, discipline and patience. There can be no quick fix. This is one for the long haul and a profound commitment on both sides, Africa

and the Caribbean. Moreover, while the immediate locus of action will be at the political level, failure is likely to result if the strategic action plan stays only at that plane. The strategy must connect with practical areas in the economy, transportation, education and training, health, the environment, culture and sports.

Further, Africa and the Caribbean must establish strategic partnerships with other nations to advance their joint and several interests.

Accordingly, I propose the following agenda for closer collaboration between the African and Caribbean civilisations.

(A) **POLITICAL**

- (i) Following-through practically on the granting of the African Union observer status at CARICOM and the granting of CARICOM observer status at the African Union as first steps to a greater bonding between these two entities and leading towards a permanent, inter-governmental African-Caribbean Commission to spearhead the collaborative efforts.
- (ii) Establishment of bilateral, or joint, diplomatic relations extensively between African and the Caribbean States.

- (iii) Cooperation, on an agreed programme, at international organisations or inter-governmental bodies such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Health Organisation, the Food and Agricultural Organisation, the International Criminal Court, the Group of 77, the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) group, and the Commonwealth of Nations. This is most vital work of a detailed, pain-staking, on-going kind around clear principles and focused objectives.
- (iv) Building together very close links with the emerging economic power-houses, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China (the so-called BRIC countries). Brazil has the largest African population outside of Africa.
- (v) Strengthening, on an agreed programme, our relations with the USA, Canada, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Sometimes Africa can be the bridge; other times the Caribbean; oft-times, both.
- (vi) Encouraging travel facilitation, including the signing of agreements requiring no visas for travel between African and Caribbean counties. For example, St.

Vincent and the Grenadines has already signed a “no visa” agreement between itself and Ethiopia.

- (vii) Elaborating practical proposals or formulae to advance the cause of reparations.

(B) **ECONOMIC**

- (i) Collaborating in the delivery of information technology services between, and within, Africa and the Caribbean;
- (ii) Building links to harness genetic and biological research in both Africa and in the Caribbean. Cuba is already a growing biotechnology centre. There are other research poles in Africa and the Caribbean in this area and the connected field of pharmaceutical development. Both the Caribbean and Africa are rich in materials for research of these kinds.
- (iii) Establishing viable air and sea links between both Africa and the Caribbean. In this regard, Brazil and Venezuela are critical allies.
- (iv) Facilitating and promoting investment by Africa in the Caribbean and vice versa not only through special

incentive-regimes but through the formation of appropriately designed Africa-Caribbean Business Council.

- (v) Pooling skills for transference to Africa and the Caribbean. We can call this the Pan-African Skills Project.
- (vi) Developing a joint approach to energy. Africa and the Caribbean possess five central energy sources: geothermal energy, hydro-electric power (the Congo holds more than 20 per cent of the World's potential supply), hydro carbons, hydrogen fuel cell, and solar energy.

(C) **EDUCATION AND HEALTH**

- (i) Facilitating and promoting exchanges of students and faculty members between universities and research facilities in Africa and the Caribbean.
- (ii) Cooperating fully on an African-Caribbean basis, and through international bodies, to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis at every level. This is a priority in view of the fact that Africa has the biggest HIV/AIDS problem world-wide; and in the Caribbean there are

10 of the top 15 countries outside Africa most affected by HIV/AIDS.

(D) **SPORTS AND CULTURE**

- (i) Collaborating in myriad ways in sports especially in football, athletics, boxing, cricket, basketball, and lawn-tennis.
- (ii) Facilitating and promoting exchanges of students and workers in the field of culture, the arts and works of the creative imagination, generally.

CONCLUSION

I see many young persons in this audience. I want to talk to you specifically as I conclude. Among other things, permit me to say a few things personal for your guidance. I am now 61 years of age. I am not far from the commencement of my autumnal years. Next year, I will mark 40 years of political struggle against underdevelopment colonialism and imperialism, and their handmaidens of poverty, oppression and exploitation. It was on October 16, 1968, as a student leader at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica that I led a massive demonstration, which unfortunately turned ugly against the then government for its action in banning Walter Rodney from returning to Jamaica as a University lecturer.

During those 40 years, there have been triumphs and defeats, pain, sadness, and joy; setbacks and advances.

Some battles which you believe have been securely won have to be fought again, sometimes against enemies in new or different clothing. I have never been weary; you cannot afford to be weary; and you cannot allow yourself to grow old even when “father time” begins to take its toll. Close, and outstanding, comrades too often die, sometimes too young before they have completed their life work. From my generation in this Caribbean, there is too large a roll call in this regard: Walter Rodney, Maurice Bishop, Rosie Douglas, Tim Hector, Alfie Roberts, George Odlum, and others. You and I have to do their work, and ours, too. And you the young must soar like eagles with your wings unclipped; and in lifting up yourself, raise up, too, your brothers and sisters and be in communion with them always, in solidarity, for humanity’s further ennoblement, especially in the seascape and landscape which you occupy.

Among other things, I want you to read and study. To be sure, enjoy yourself fully in all of life’s joyous pursuits but know always who you truly are, from whence you have come, and where you are going, in communion with others. Keep your focus; be committed to noble ideals. To grasp fully what has been happening at this Bicentennial Global Dialogue, I want you to read, and study a few books, including [The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey](#), the selected writings or speeches of José Martí; Simon Bolivar, Michael Manley, Errol Barrow, Maurice Bishop, Tim Hector, Kwame Nkrumah,

Amilcar Cabral, and Nelson Mandela, C.L.R. James' Black Jacobins, Eric Williams' Capitalism and Slavery, and Walter Rodney's How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.

Read the poem, too, of the master Caribbean poet from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Ellsworth "Shake" Keane, entitled "Private Prayer" (available in his posthumous collection Angel Horn) which was written for Walter Rodney in April 1973 on the occasion of the publication of How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. Listen to Shake Keane:

"To understand

How the whole thing run

I have to ask my parents

And even my daughter and son

"To understand the form

Of compromise I am

I must in my own voice ask

How the whole thing run

"To ask

Why I don't dream

**In the same language I live in
I must rise up
Among syllables of my parents
In the land which I am
And form
A whole daughter a whole son
Out of the compromise
Which I am**

**“To understand history
I have to come home.”**

Thank you!