



SIDE EVENT

REPARATIONS IN A WORLD IN CRISIS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE VOICES OF BLACK WOMEN

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 from 6pm

Organized by:

- Association of Afro-Colombian Women - AMUAFROC (Colombia)
- Institute of Peoples, Territories and Pedagogies for Peace - IPTP (Canada/Colombia)
- Ife Cultural Library (Colombia)
- Teaching Artists Institute (USA)
- Dalhousie University (Canada)

Context

In recent years, Afro-descendant and African peoples' movements have achieved ever greater influence on the international reparations agenda, highlighting the disproportionate impacts of social, political, environmental, technological, spiritual, and economic crises in our territories as legacies of colonialism and enslavement, and demanding genuine participation in decision-making to overcome these injustices through policies and concrete action for reparations.

Black women play a crucial role in the global reparations agenda as leaders and agents of change through our community work, in academia, and through advocacy. Among others, we are leading pedagogy and mobilization processes through our territorial dynamics, we are carrying out fundamental academic and grassroots research on the enduring harms of colonialism and enslavement in our communities, and we advocating in national and international spaces to promote the adoption of laws and policies for reparations.

Likewise, Black women are often on the front lines of defending our territories and movements, and in this sense, our participation in decision-making is fundamental to ensuring that reparations processes respond to the reality of our peoples.

But our struggles for historical reparations take on a new meaning and urgency within the context of the current crises facing the world. The deepening of the colonial project through imperialism, militarism, and fascism, as well as the environmental crisis, have a particularly serious impact on our peoples and territories, threatening our very survival. In this context, reparations cannot only address the enduring harms of enslavement, but must aim at the real transformation of the very colonial structures and power relations that persist.

The recent adoption of General Assembly Resolution A/80/L.48 on the Declaration of the Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and Racialized Chattel Enslavement of Africans as the Gravest Crime against Humanity presents a historic moment and opportunity to re-examine our strategies and visions for reparations and to build collective agendas that unite the voices and experiences of Afro-descendant and African women from our diverse realities.

With this in mind, this event aimed to strengthen the voices of Afro-descendant and African women in the global discourse and agenda on reparations and provide recommendations led by Afro-descendant and African women on reparations processes that respond to the realities faced by our peoples in the context of the global crisis.

The event was moderated by **Dr Esther Ojulari** of the Institute of Peoples, Territories and Pedagogies for Peace and the Ife Cultural Library in Colombia. Invited speakers included:

- **Bell Riberio-Addy MP (UK)** Labour Member of Parliament for Clapham & Brixton Hill and Convenor of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Reparations for Africans
- **Barbara Reynolds (Guyana)** -Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent
- **Shari García (Colombia)** - Economist and political participation expert - AMUAFROC
- **Kim Poole (USA)** - Teaching Artists Institute (virtual)
- **Mariama Williams (USA/Jamaica)** - Global Afro-Descendant Climate Justice Collaborative
- **Keisha St Louis-McBurnie (Canada)** - University of Toronto (virtual)
- **Ruth Ogbewekon (Ghana)** - Focal Point for Research and Publications at the Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU) (virtual)

As leading voices in the global struggle for reparations, panelists were asked to share their personal stories of their experiences, inspirations and visions for their work in reparations in relation to their specific areas of work and contexts including concrete reparations actions in their countries and regions, institutional mechanisms and spaces for reparations, visions for political and transformative reparations, the role of arts and culture in reparations, the relationship between reparations and environmental justice, land and territorial rights and restitution, and international law and the adoption of the UNGA Resolution A/80/L.48.

Barbara Renolds of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent spoke of her early experience of observing and understanding issues of racism and discrimination in Guyana, her move towards activism work and the cost and risks that speaking out against oppression can have for black women. She highlighted the importance of land ownership and economic empowerment and spoke of the need for representation and participation within our countries. She also asserted the importance of fixing the laws, policies and programs in our countries which are often a legacy of colonialism. She addressed imposed divide between Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples generated through colonial rule, and the need to become aware of our shared history. Ms Renolds asserted how the history of Afro-descendants has been eclipsed and the narratives are being lost as we lose our elders, and that there has been a concerted effort to erase history and many of our archives including documents, audio records are held outside of our counties. So documenting history is a key part of reparations.

Bell Riberio-Addy MP, convenor of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Reparations for Africans, spoke of her early experience of political education and participation in the National Black Students Campaign which introduced her to issues of reparations. She uplifted the inspiration that she received as a young person from another black woman in parliament as well as the support she herself received through an affirmative action scheme to promote black young people going to university. She spoke about her engagement with the Aid sector, how it had long positioned black women as a problem to be fixed, and the need to shift that discourse. We, she asserted, are our own solution and she recognized the role and contributions of Black women as an inspiration and emphasized the importance of Black women in decision-making spaces and at the forefront of change. If we were not doing it then it was not true liberation. As she stated, “we are the people who will dictate the terms of reconciliation.” She discussed in the British context, the importance of truthful teaching of history and the role of former colonial powers. She argued that understanding the root causes of issues makes us realize that the only way for things to change is through reparations. She spoke about the All Party Parliamentary Group on Reparations and the backlash it has received for putting the issue of reparations on the table. The Group uplifts the moral argument for reparations and how states cannot preach about equity and justice around the world if they do not implement it themselves.

Shari Garcia of AMUAFROC spoke about what should be done from the perspective of institutions and the importance of representation in decision-making spaces. She noted how the lack of representation by Black women in these spaces creates a need to repair this injustice. She also highlighted the need for a recognition of the history of the political movement, and who opened the journey towards reparations. That is also part of the historical remembrance.

Kim Poole, director of Teaching Artist Institute spoke about her work in reparations, which began with her own journey of self repair through a reconnection with Africa. She discussed how much of the cultural and arts work that she and her organization have been doing was not always called “reparations” work, although in practice it could be understood through a lens of repair. This included work connecting artists with decision-making spaces, intergenerational dialogue, and understating the different ways of learning and sharing knowledge that inform decision-making.

She spoke about working from the grassroots, how language should also be community-informed, and emphasised the importance of connecting the different “languages” that make the movement, thinking about how we create language outside of policy spaces. She noted how different populations talk about reparations in their lives and how people connect to each other in their daily lives, in their own times and ways. She discussed the cultural reparations framework that TAI has developed over years of work and the notion of cooperative repair and how their approach to reparations is about moving from “justice to joy.” Finally, she celebrated the south-to-south relationships being built but also emphasised the need for Africans in the global North to be part of that global African membership and belonging.

Keisha St. Louis-McBurnie, is committed to understanding and co-creating solutions that address the racial, socioeconomic, and spatial inequities that persist across Black Canadian communities through her work providing planning capacity and support to Canada's growing movement of Black leaders and by serving community land trusts focused on achieving land and housing justice through collective and cooperative economics. Recently, her focus has been on the experiences of folks of African Nova Scotian descent, often acting on behalf of a state that has been central to genocide, violent land dispossession, and the continued entrenchment of socio-spatial inequities for people of African descent. She believes much work remains to be done in Canada in order to unpack and reframe the myth of Canadian multiculturalism, pointing out important historical issues such as the experiences of African Nova Scotian communities and the history of early Black settlers and contemporary issues such as racist land value appraisals, water contamination issues, environmental racism, and expropriation for municipal infrastructure. The community land trust movement in Canada has led to a number of policy improvements at the municipal and provincial government levels, indicating a recognition of cultural redress. This work seems to be coalescing as non-profit CLT (community land trust) organizations bring the conversation back up with new generations of folks in leadership positions. She strongly recommends continued connection with other African and diasporic organizations around the world.

Ruth Ogbewekon spoke about the process of drafting and adopting of the UN GA Resolution. She discussed how the legal team had to identify the gaps in existing international law by drawing from multiple fields (history, law, etc) to justify the need for this new instrument. History was important for emphasizing African peoples historical fights against slavery and to resist; international law should draw from what has already happened. She discussed the need to build infrastructure with intentionality, including Black people in the diaspora and the global North. She addressed some of the key legal and moral debates around the drafting and adoption including the use of the word “gravest,” *jus cogens* and the retrospectivity of law. She discussed how that the process and the study of legal and historical documents and archives had opened the door for historic recognition by the international community that slavery was not legal at the time as has long been upheld by former colonising states.

Mariama Williams of the Global Afro-Descendant Climate Justice Collaborative spoke of the relationship between environmental justice and reparations. She discussed the importance of territorial and land rights and restitution, and the return of authority over land and resources. Williams sees climate change as the ecological expression of historical injustice; Afro-descendants in territories that are exposed to climate impact have the least resources to respond to it. She points out that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its last report recognized colonialism as a driver of climate change and recommends expanding reparation beyond compensation to include ecological repair, restoration of land and livelihood, and rebuilding of the care systems and common systems that existed in many African tradition and that we still see among Afro-descendants in the Caribbean and in Latin America.

Dialogue and comments

The members of the Permanent Forum gave comments and feedback on the interventions throughout the event

Pastor Murrillo welcomed and celebrated the event and the space and made a special call on the group to attend the upcoming permanent Forum in Addis.

Former member of the Permanent Forum, **Epsy Campbell**, emphasized how a reparations process without women would reproduce the exclusion of Black and Afro-descendant women, highlighting the history violences and injustices that Black women's bodies have suffered.

June Soomer spoke about her personal journey as a child towards her own awareness of racism and eventually working on racial justice issues. She spoke of how women have always been at the forefront of the reparations struggle and of Black women's history of oppression, of Black women as the "women of capitalism."

Ana McCall recognized the debt that women have with other women, girls and young people and the need to support and empower them.

Other participants in the audience asked questions about the UNGA Resolution; the need for alliances to strengthen educational and teaching spaces; repairs to our identity, our right to be and to exist and to economic reparations. They also highlighted valuing ancestrality as a mechanism for social and political transformation. How do we restore damaged relationships?

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Reparations must involve the recovering our lost and hidden histories whether it be the stories of our cultures and pasts before colonialism and enslavement, the reality of the violences and injustices suffered, or our own powerful process of resistance and emancipation, our new generations must be able to access and learn about our histories through education, truth and remembrance processes.

2. As discussed during this 5th Forum Session, restitution of cultural property is part of essential spiritual, cultural and dignity healing for Africans and Afro-descent peoples. Restitution processes must also include the recovering our of own histories and narratives that are often held as archives and documents in archiving institutions and museums in former colonising powers.
3. The reparations movement and wider actors must uplift the diverse healing, cultural and spiritual processes that grassroots organizations are carrying out, which is often reparations work even if by another name. In this sense they must also embrace the languages and concepts that movements are developing to describe the reparations work they are doing from their own lived realities and experiences.
4. Integrate a culture reparations framework as proposed and developed by the Teaching Artist Institute into the existing 5-point reparations framework of restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition. Culture provides an innovative lens rooted in ancestral wisdom and practice through which to understand processes of repair and healing.
5. Climate justice must be a key component of reparations processes, understanding the disproportionate and grave impacts of the climate and wider environmental crisis in African and Afro-descendant territories and communities as a legacy of colonialism, enslavement and the extractivist model that colonial expansion imposed as well as ongoing environmental racism and discriminatory policies. Afro-descendants and Africans must be at the forefront of the solutions to the environmental crisis through ancestral and traditional environmental knowledge and practices which have historically enabled us to live in harmony with our environments. Climate reparations and financing must be made accessible to African and Afro-descendant organizations on the frontline of the environmental struggle.
6. The Reconnection between Africa and the Diaspora is a fundamental base for reparations work for both the continent and her children. Bringing together Africans and Afro-descendants through arts, culture, identity, spiritual, political and economic exchange from a people-to-people perspective, mutual learning, birth rights journeys and cooperative repair, reparations can begin to heal the wounds of the historic rupture.
7. The historic adoption of UNGA Resolution A/80/L.48 on the Declaration of the Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and Racialized Chattel Enslavement of Africans as the Gravest Crime against Humanity must be used as a mobilizing instrument for the reparations movement. Both its content and drafting process must be widely shared and publicized and integrated into community education processes and reparations literature as an historic recognition by the international community of what the reparations movement has long asserted and fought for.

8. The Permanent Forum should recommend the creation of working group of Black women on reparations that brings together black women from throughout the diaspora, uplifting and joining the voices of black women from Latin America with those from movements in the Caribbean, North America and the Continent to exchange experiences and good practices and to ensure concrete actions in terms of political influence from a territorial perspective, as was done in the March of Black Women in Brazil 2025
9. The reparations agenda must be explored from multiple dimensions, bearing in mind differential and territorial ethnic racial recognition, must recognize the plurality of the movement(s), and should include a “relationship repair” approach in its framing, particularly with regard to Africa and its diasporas.
10. The Permanent Forum should provide recommendations to states for the development of affirmative action measures that guarantee a minimum percentage of participation of Afro-descendant women in high-level and popularly elected public offices, as a measure of reparation.