

News

Jamaica Seeking \$10.6 Billion in Slave Trade Reparations from Great Britain

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Jamaica has put a price tag on slavery and is sending the British government the bill. State officials of the Caribbean nation said they are asking Great Britain to pay \$10.6 billion (USD) in reparations. The former British col-

ony served as the center of the slave trade, where Africans were kidnapped, enslaved, and forced to work on sugar cane, bananas, and other plantations. That free and inhumane labor greatly enriched the slave owners. “We are hoping for reparatory justice in all forms that one would expect if they are to really ensure that we get justice

from injustices to repair the damages that our ancestors experienced,” Olivia Grange, Minister of Sports, Youth, and Culture, told the Reuters news service. “Our African ancestors were forcibly removed from their home and suffered unparalleled atrocities in Africa to carry out forced labor to the benefit of the British Empire. Redress is well



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overdue.” In the U.S., Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee has pushed H.R. 40, a bill to form a commission to study reparations for African American victims of the transatlantic slave trade. “Has anyone addressed the question of slavery and its comprehensive impact on Black Americans in this country? This is what H.R. 40 will do,” Jackson Lee remarked. While H.R. 40 doesn’t think that we can find common ground to pass this legislation,” Congresswoman Jackson Lee pronounced. In Jamaica, officials displayed shackles, coffles, slave collars, cotton screws, bear traps, branding irons, and other items used to control slaves as stirring evidence for the case for reparations. “We need a sense of outrage directed at those who could do such things to other human beings,” Verene Shepherd, a Jamaican resident, wrote in a petition on the Facebook page of the country’s National Council on Reparations. “Reparations now,” Shepherd declared. According to the National Library of Jamaica, about 600,000 Africans landed in Jamaica during the slave trade. “Seized from Spain by the English in 1655, Jamaica was a British colony until it became independent in 1962,” the Reuters report noted. “The West Indian country of almost three million people is part of the Commonwealth, and the British monarch remains head of state.” Britain prohibited trade in slaves in its empire in 1807 but did not formally abolish the practice of slavery until 1834. To compensate slave owners, the British government took out a 20-million-pound loan – or \$27.7 million U.S. – and only finished paying off the subsequent interest payments in 2015. Slaves and their descendants have never received compensation. “I am asking for the same amount of money to be paid to the slaves that were paid to the slave owners,” Mike Henry, a member of the ruling Jamaica Labour Party, told Reuters. “I am doing this because I have fought against this all my life, against chattel slavery, which has dehumanized human life.”

place a specific monetary value on reparations, it does focus on investigating and presenting the facts and truth about the unprecedented centuries of brutal enslavement of African people, racial healing, and transformation. The bill would fund a commission to study and develop proposals for providing reparations to African Americans. The commission’s mission includes identifying the role of federal and state governments in supporting the institution of slavery, forms of discrimination in public and private sectors against freed slaves and their descendants, and lingering adverse effects of slavery on living African Americans and society. Congresswoman Jackson Lee, who sits on numerous House committees, including the Judiciary, Budget, and Homeland Security, has made the reparations legislation her top priority during the 117th Congress. “I think if people begin to associate this legislation with what happened to the descendants of enslaved Africans as a human rights violation, the sordid past that violated the human rights of all of us who are descendants of enslaved Africans, I



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