

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Twelfth Session

15-19 July 2019

Item 9: Future work of the Expert Mechanism, including focus of future thematic study.

Statement of Edfu Foundation an indigenous people's organization.

Delivered by Sheldon Williams, Managing Director of Edfu Foundation and a member of the Yamasee tribe.

Mr. Chairman,

- We are appreciative for the work of the Human Rights Council and the EMRIP for conducting this study on. As the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states: "Recognizing that the situation of indigenous peoples varies from region to region and from country to country and that the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical and cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration." We recommend a study on Recognition, reparation and reconciliation with a particular focus on the over 100 million descendants of indigenous Africans displaced due to forced migration and kidnapping. This topic is long due to be discussed. Especially in this the decade of people of African descent and the year of return; the 400 years since the beginning of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade. When indigenous Africans were kidnapped and forcibly migrated to the Americas as well as Europe. which incidentally also lead to the enslavement of indigenous Americans and theft of numerous lands.

Edfu Foundation supports the UN Agenda 2030 and works towards the betterment of humanity. Science confirms all humans come from Africa and all humans have melanin in varying degrees meaning all humans are brown. The term African American will be used to clearly distinguish who I am referring to and not a classification. We at Edfu Foundation firmly stand on the tenant that there is only one human race.

There are over 100 million people of African descent in the Americas; of these people a significant portion of them identify as indigenous peoples. With varying languages and traditions, they have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live and have done so despite the kidnapping, forced migration, forced assimilation and violence started by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and continued through systematic inequalities which continue to the present.

Since the Doctrine of Discovery, the global economy has benefited from indigenous resources and labor. The enlightenment and circumstances that brought an end to the transatlantic slave trade and subsequent release of those kidnapped and displaced indigenous peoples did not correct the evil. It morphed it into a more sophisticated system of inequality and structural violence. Which allowed the dominant society to continue to benefit while not compensating the victims of this crime against humanity. More must be done to make the victims whole. because

the decedents of those kidnapped, displaced and violated indigenous peoples still reel from the effects of this crime against humanity centuries later. Just as the global economy still benefits from their resources and labor.

Currently there are a growing number of indigenous Africans in the Americas calling for Reparations for these victims, with which Edfu Foundation agrees. Bills such as HR40 in the United States of America and the work of organizations like The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA) are doing great work. However, internationally we need the United Nations to weigh in and this study is a start. However, any study should not focus on reparations alone. We also need to focus on recognition and reconciliation as well. Studies have shown that the effects of trauma can reverberate down the generations through epigenetics.

Speaking as an indigenous person I am well aware of how this continued pattern of structural violence and systemic terror, xenophobia, genocide and imperialism results in intergenerational trauma, and Post Traumatic Stress. This structural violence is a serious public health issue that affects all people and needs to be addressed, given greater attention and finally resolved.

Intergenerational trauma is the transmission of historical oppression and its negative consequences across generations. Centuries of genocide, forced enslavement, and assimilation followed by systemic and structural violence, racism and oppression have resulted in intergenerational maladaptive behaviors, which originated as survival strategies. {However, the syndrome continues because children whose parents suffer from intergenerational trauma are often indoctrinated into the same behaviors, long after the behaviors have lost their contextual effectiveness.}

This is a major public health issue and as such should be included in any study on Recognition, reparation and reconciliation. In order to truly bring about reconciliation and make communities whole we need to address this study in a wholistic manner. First recognizing that mental health issues are growing at an alarming rate. The study should note that Indigenous peoples' conceptualization of "health" and wellbeing is generally broader and more holistic than that of mainstream society, with health frequently viewed by indigenous peoples as both an individual and collective right, strongly determined by community, land and the natural environment. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has noted that the right to health "materializes through the well-being of an individual as well as the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural well-being of the whole community" (E/C.19/2013/L.2, para 3). Indigenous concepts of health often incorporate spiritual, emotional, cultural and social dimensions in addition to physical health.

By addressing this issue in a holistic manner, you gain a clearer path to the desired goal of Recognition, reparation and reconciliation.

Thank you