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DOES THE 14TH OF
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DAVID COMISSIONG

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WHAT, TO THE REPUBLIC OF BARBADOS, DOES THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF 14TH MAY 1625 MEAN?

A question that many Barbadians will be repeatedly asking themselves and each other over the next twelve months is:- “What, to the Republic of Barbados, does the 400th Anniversary of 14th May 1625 mean?”

Well, way back in November 1905 – some 119 years ago – the colonial government and the local Anglophile social elite of Barbados purported to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the “discovery” of Barbados. These celebrations consisted of a state procession to the Garrison Savannah, a regatta in Holetown Bay, and the erection of



Holetown Tercentenary Monument

tercentenary monuments at Holetown and Bridgetown.

I regret to have to record that they were all wrong and misguided in their actions – for two very different reasons.

First of all, they had miscalculated the 300th anniversary of the first landing of the English in Barbados. They had been misled into believing that this historic event had taken place in July 1605, when, in fact, it had occurred some 20 years later!



Olive Blossom Stamp

You see, it was actually on Wednesday the 14th of May 1625 that the **Olive Blossom**, a ship of the London merchant Sir William Courteen, under the command of Captain John Powell, landed at a site on the west coast of Barbados known as “the Hole” and claimed the island for King James I of

England. Thus, this upcoming Wednesday 14th May 2025 will be the 400th anniversary of that historic first landing.

The second reason why the Barbadian elite were wrong and misguided is because the **Olive Blossom** landing of 1625 could by no stretch of the imagination be described as the “discovery” of Barbados!

The reality is that the island that the English took upon themselves to christen “Barbados” had been home to a multiplicity of generations of indigenous or native people stretching way back to the period of circa 1650 Before Christ (BC)!

The archaeologists tell us that our indigenous predecessors migrated into the Caribbean from the northern coast of South America, and commenced their settlement and occupation of the beautiful 166 square mile coral island that they named “Ichirouganaim” (Red Land with White Teeth) in or about the year 1650 BC.

Over the centuries, Ichirouganaim experienced several waves of culturally related “Amerindian” migrants – people of the Saladoid–Barrancoid, Troumassoid and Suarzoid related cultures, and finally the Lokono or Arawak people.

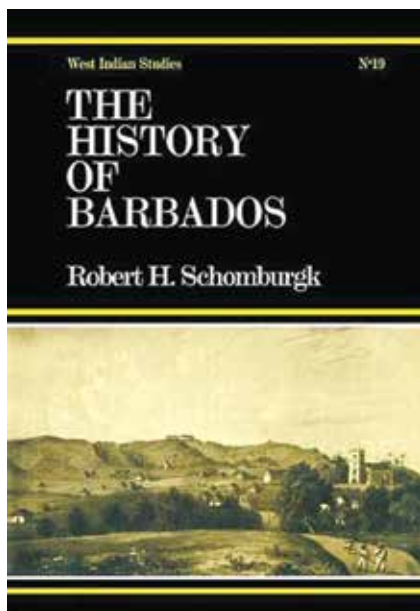


Native People Of Ichirouganaim

BARBADOS AND NATIVE GENOCIDE

So how is it, you may ask, that the first party of English visitors to the island – Captain Powell and his company of seamen – were able to report that the island they stumbled upon in 1625 while they were making their way back to England from Dutch territory in what is now modern-day Brazil, was totally devoid of human inhabitants?

Well, the sad but largely unacknowledged truth is that our island nation began the modern phase of its history with an act of genocide against its indigenous or native people.



Sir Robert Schomburgk's
"The History Of Barbados"

Indeed, we can find solid historical documentation of this genocide in the pages of Sir Robert Schomburgk's classic 19th century history text titled **The History of Barbados** as follows:-

"Barbados was known to the Spaniards as early as the commencement of the sixteenth century, and apparently supplied slaves for the mines in Espanola.... indeed, the instructions of the Licentiate Figueroa (a Spanish official) prove that it (the island of Barbados)

was resorted to by the Spaniards for the purpose of enslaving Indians."

Thus, the island of Barbados/Ichirouganaim was systematically stripped of its 10,000 strong indigenous population during the course of the 16th century by virtue of an orchestrated campaign in which Spanish conquistadors periodically descended upon the island; kidnapped and enslaved its inhabitants; and shipped them off to labour and die as slaves in the mines of Hispaniola and other Spanish colonies.

But, to get back to the story of Captain Powell and the first English landing in Barbados.

Schomburgk informs us that:-

“The crew, finding it (the island) destitute of inhabitants, took possession of the country by erecting a cross upon the spot where Jamestown (subsequently named “Holetown”) was built, and cut upon the bark of a tree which stood near, “James K. of E. and this island,” that is, James, King of England and this island. They then followed the shore, until their progress was stopped by the river, which afterwards received the name of the Indian River, where the explorers performed a similar ceremony of taking occupation of the island: they did not however commence any settlement, and only stayed to refresh themselves.”

But, even though the events of 14th May 1625 cannot be given the grandiloquent title of a “discovery”, yet, they constituted a critical and seminal moment in the birth of modernity – the birth of the modern world!

Indeed, the Olive Blossom’s accidental encounter with the island of Ichirouganaim set in train such a profound social, economic and political transformation of the world of the 17th century, that we, the 21st century citizens of the Republic of Barbados, are compelled to commemorate the 400th anniversary of 14th May 1625, even if not to celebrate it!

BARBADOS AND THE BIRTH OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

First of all, by claiming the island for the national sovereign of England – King James I – Captain Powell and his fellow travellers were helping to establish the “imperialist mission” of the newly consolidated European nation states.

You see, during the 15th and 16th centuries, the feudal barons of Europe had been reduced in power and had been placed under the control of powerful national Kings and Queens and subordinated to the power of the new city-based bourgeoisie. And this gave rise to the consolidation of powerful “nation states” on the territory of Europe – a totally new phenomenon. But here now was Captain Powell serving as a conduit for the power of that English nation state to embark upon a new mission of overseas expansion and imperialism in the Caribbean.

Tragically, from small beginnings in Virginia (1607), St. Kitts (1623) and, most importantly, Barbados (1625), there eventually emerged the massive, earth-spanning criminal enterprise known as the British Empire – a mechanism of imperialist oppression and looting on which “the sun never set”. And as the English historian, Tristram Hunt, explained in his “**Ten Cities that Made an Empire**”, Barbados, and its capital city of Bridgetown, played a key role in the establishment of the super predatory British Empire.

BARBADOS AND THE BIRTH OF CAPITALISM

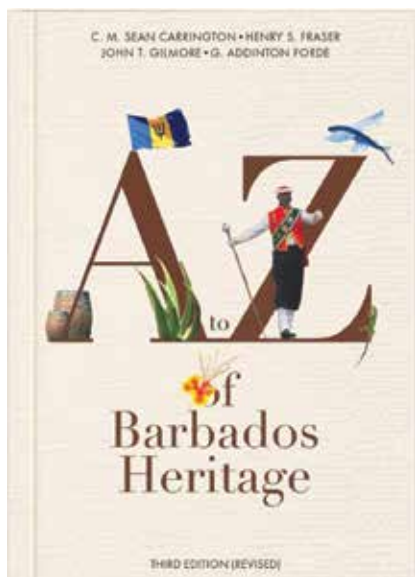
In addition, the rise of the European nation state went hand in hand with the birth and early development of the highly exploitative economic/political system of Capitalism, and here too, the small island of Barbados played a crucial role in that process as well!

You see, the **Olive Blossom** belonged to and was operated by Sir William Courteen of the Anglo–Dutch Courteen merchant company, the prototype of a new breed of capitalist businessman – the wealthy transnational merchant prince with connections across the globe and a merchant fleet to link them all together under his control.

And so it was, that in less than two years from the 14th May 1625 landing, Sir William Courteen assumed the autocratic role of sole “Lord Proprietor” of Barbados, and fitted out an expedition under Captain Henry Powell – brother of John Powell – to establish a permanent settlement on Barbados.



The “William And John”
Arriving In 1627



The A To Z Of Barbadian Heritage

According to that veritable-Barbadian encyclopedia, **The A to Z of Barbadian Heritage**, on the 17th of February 1627 the **William and John** – a ship piloted by Captain Henry Powell – landed on the west coast of Barbados at the same site of “the Hole” and commenced the permanent English settlement of Barbados. They named the place James Town and went on to establish the town that is currently named “Hole-town”.

(Editor’s note: For many years Hometown comprised just two streets, First and Second Street, and the original landing site – “the Hole” – is located **north** of First and Second Street. Thus, it is false to claim that the current site of the Hometown Civic Centre is the

location of “the Hole”, the site of the first British landings of 1625 and 1627)

SLAVERY IN BARBADOS

Arriving in Barbados on that 1627 expedition were eighty English settlers and ten enslaved Africans who had been forcibly captured from a Portuguese slave ship that the **William and John** had encountered during the voyage to Barbados. All ninety members of this human cargo were intended for deployment by the Courteen company in the establishment of a company-sponsored, agro-industrial colony to produce products for the European and wider international market.

It may be usefully noted here that even though Sir William Courteen commenced the settlement of Barbados he did not get to complete the task, for in the said year of 1627, King Charles I - the son and successor of King James I - granted a Patent over the island of Barbados to the Earl of Carlisle, who, with considerable effort, inclusive of armed conflict between two opposing groups of settlers, eventually supplanted Courteen and took over the mission of fully “settling” Barbados.

However, the grant of the Royal Patent to the Earl of Carlisle did not significantly change the trajectory of the path of the new colony, for Carlisle promptly gave a lease of 10,000 acres of Barbados to a consortium of London merchants who, in turn, sent out a group of settlers to Barbados under a Governor (Charles Wolverton) selected by them and appointed by Carlisle, and a Lieutenant Governor (John Swann) appointed by them.

It is fair to say, however, that Sir William Courteen's initial 1627 settlement initiative contained the seeds of all of the elements that would combine together to produce in the little island of Barbados a number of precedent-setting developments that would significantly impact and shape the evolution of the modern world.

Perhaps, most significant of all was the presence of the ten enslaved Africans at the very commencement of the project of "settling" Barbados. Thus, from its very inception, the early capitalist "Barbados project" was based on the establishment of a slave-based society, permeated with the evil notion of the commodification of human beings.

BARBADOS-ING OF WHITE LABOUR

It should be noted however, that the first major labour supply of the newly established agro-industrial tobacco, cotton and indigo-dye producing colony was not enslaved Africans, but rather, white, European indentured servants.

Poor destitute working class white English people were persuaded (or cajoled) to sign contracts to serve employers (settlers) in Barbados as "servants" for periods of up to seven years, in return for a free passage to the island and a promise of subsistence living conditions and modest income.

Needless to say, the system of indenture was open to several abuses, one of which was the encouragement it gave to kidnapping and enticing people on false pretences to go to Barbados and other West Indian colonies. Indeed, kidnapping became a major problem, particularly in the city of Bristol.

Besides the white indentured servants, convicts and malefactors provided a second, and closely associated, source of white labour. A system emerged, centred on the commutation of sentences involving death or imprisonment to transportation and servitude in Barbados and other colonies for a term of years.

In addition, the religious and political disturbances which engulfed England in the seventeenth century afforded yet another source of white labour, with captured rebels and religious nonconformists being deported to Barbados. In fact, so widespread and notorious did this practice of transporting convicts, rebels and nonconformists to Barbados become, that the word “Barbados” was transformed into a verb, and many whites transported to the little eastern Caribbean colony were described as having been “barbadosed”!

Indeed, the seventeenth century English writer, Henry Whistler, in a fit of inhuman elitism, described Barbados as “the dunghill whereon England cast forth its rubbish, its rogues and its prostitutes.” And, in light of that level of social contempt and callousness, it is not surprising that a petition sent to the British Parliament in 1659 described the system at work in Barbados as follows:-

“Grinding at the mills and attending the furnaces, or digging in this scorching island; having nothing to feed on (notwithstanding their hard labour) but potato roots, nor to drink, but water with such roots washed in it, besides the bread and tears of their own afflictions.....being whipt at the whipping post (as rogues) for their masters’ pleasure, and sleeping in sties worst than hogs in England.”



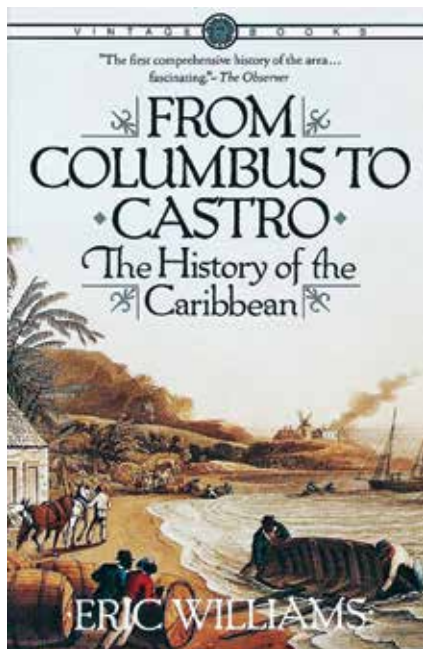
Descendants Of White
Indentured Servants, Circa 1900

To be clear, the white indentured servants were not slaves – they were not reduced to the status of property – but the treatment that they were subjected to in Barbados at the hands of the local white elite constituted an ominous exercise in degradation and dehumanisation of labour – a portent of

what was to come with the development in Barbados of the world's first black slave society.

Indeed, the eminent Caribbean historian, Dr. Eric Williams, captured the significance of the white indentured servant interlude in the History of Barbados in his classic

book **From Columbus to Castro** as follows:-



Dr. Eric Williams
From Columbus To Castro

“It marked a further stage in the degradation of labour in the Caribbean. The lack of squeamishness shown in the forced labour of whites was a good training for the forced labour of blacks. The transportation of white servants established a precedent for the transportation of Negro slaves. The practice developed and tolerated in the kidnapping of whites laid the foundation for the kid-

napping of Negroes. Bristol, Honfleur and other ports turned without difficulty from the servant trade to the slave trade. Barbados, a word of terror to the white servant, became to the Negro, as a slave trader wrote in 1693, 'a more dreadful apprehension than we can have of hell.'

Oh yes, the process that Captain John Powell had set in train when he landed at Holetown in 1625 was destined, by the 1640s, to produce, not just the “Sugar Revolution”, but also literally “hell on earth” – the world’s very first out-and-out slave society.

Having failed at tobacco, cotton and indigo production, the Barbadian planter class settled, in the 1640s, on the production of sugar – a proto-industrial exercise that required not only massive sums of capital, but also a massive input of labour. And so, they turned to Africa as a source of an unlimited supply of slave labour.

BARBADOS AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

But let us focus first of all on Barbados’ seminal contribution to the very birth of the British and wider European **Industrial Revolution**.

Barbados became the home of a critical technological innovation that turned out to be the very foundation of Europe’s Industrial Revolution: namely, the integrated sugar plantation – the extensive fields in which to grow the cane-stalks; the Mill, driven by ox or wind power, to grind the cane-stalks to produce cane-juice; and finally, the sugar factory or boiling house, to put the cane-juice through various heating and chemical processes to produce molasses, sugar and rum.



Barbados Sugar Mill At Work

This 1640s innovation, established in Barbados by such elite planters as Sir James Drax and Colonel James Holdip, constituted the birth of Britain's "Industrial Revolution". You

see, back in the 1640s there were no factories in England! Indeed, if you wanted to see a factory in operation, you would have to make your way to England's Caribbean colony of Barbados. And the important point to grasp is that the whole enterprise was based on African physical and intellectual labour!

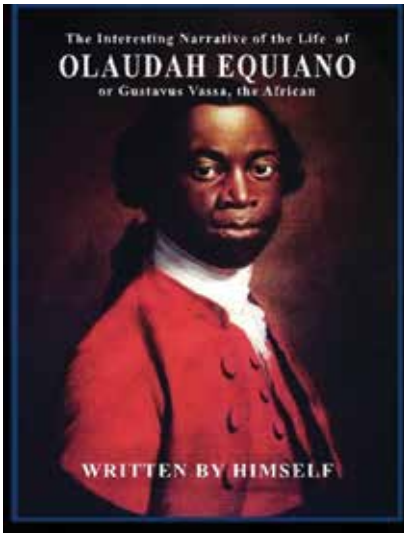
At the very commencement of the "Sugar Revolution" in Barbados, planters of the ilk of James Drax quickly concluded that the supply of white indentured servants was inadequate, and that only enslaved black labour from Africa would do.

Having begun with a mere ten enslaved Africans in 1627, by the mid-1640s, at the outset of sugar production in Barbados, the island housed some 5,600 of our enslaved African ancestors. By 1680 that number had risen to 38,000, and with an average of 1,300 arrivals a year, it reached 54,000 by the year 1700.

Perhaps the most famous and moving account of the arrival of our enslaved African ancestors in Barba-



A Coffle From Inland Africa To The Coast



Interesting Narrative Of The Life Of
Olaudah Equiano

dos is the testimony that the ex-slave turned Abolitionist, Olaudah Equiano, published in his book entitled **The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano:-**

“At last we came in sight of the island of Barbados, at which the whites on board gave a great shout, and made many signs of joy to us....and we soon anchored....at Bridge Town.... After we were landed....We

were conducted immediately to the merchant’s yard, where we were pent up altogether like so many sheep in a fold, without regard to sex or age....We were not many days in the merchant’s custody before we were sold after their usual manner....On a signal given, (as the beat of a drum) the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined, and make a choice of that parcel they like best....In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again.

I remember in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men’s apartment, there were several brothers, who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion to see and hear their cries at parting.....”

And so, it was black/African labour that constructed the world's first capitalistic, super-profitable enterprise – the Barbados sugar industry. The planters referred to them as “slaves”, but if you delved beyond that generic term in the plantation records you would see – carpenter, mason, cooper, blacksmith, boiler. It was black labour, manual as well as technical, that ran the world's first proto-industrial enterprise!

BARBADOS AND THE TRIANGULAR TRADE

This then – to be clear – was the birth in Barbados, of not only Europe's “industrial civilization”, but also of Britain's system of Capitalism!



Interior Of A Sugar Boiling House

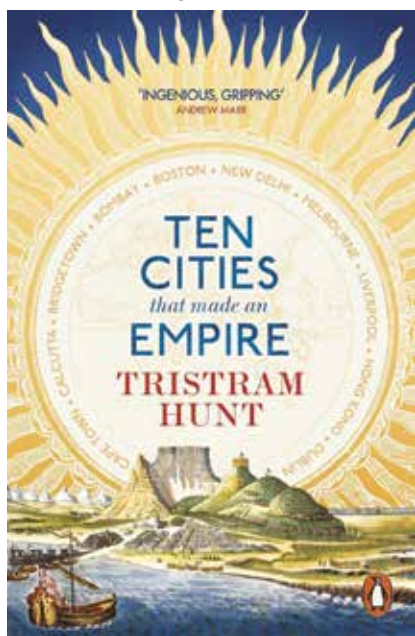
Karl Marx highlighted the process of “primitive accumulation” – the initial influx of capital, from a super-productive colony like Barbados, that allowed the nations of Western Europe to kick-start their industrial civilization. Indeed, Dr. Eric Williams explained in his **From Columbus to Castro** just how critical Barbados' contribution turned out to be: -

“Barbados was the most important single colony in the British Empire, worth almost as much, in its total trade, as the two tobacco colonies of Virginia and Maryland combined...The tiny sugar island was more valuable to Britain than Carolina, New England, New York and Pennsylvania together.”

And so, Barbados was central to the whole process through which Britain and Europe developed their industrialized economies. First, there was the tremendous wealth generated for Britain by the sugar colony of Barbados. And second, there was the critical role that Barbados played as a central cog in the systemic, industry-propelling “**Triangular Trade**” between Europe, Africa and the Caribbean / Americas. As Tristram Hunt notes in **Ten**



Triangular Trade



Ten Cities That Made An Empire

Cities that Made an Empire:-

“Profits from the slave trade fertilized the entire production system of Great Britain. The Welsh slate industry, Manchester textile production, Glaswegian, Bristol and Liverpool banking, ship-building and heavy engineering were all endowed by foreign funds drawn from the plantation system. ‘It was the capital accumulation from the West Indies trade that financed James Watts and the steam engine’, wrote (Eric) WilliamsThe Atlantic trade was the dynamo for British industrial development.... It was not only investment in new technologies but also vital infrastructure of ports,

new docks(most notably in London and Liver-

pool), canals, harbours and agricultural improvements which were made possible by the colonial tribute pouring in from the West Indies.”

BARBADOS AND THE BIRTH OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Little Barbados therefore played a gigantic role in helping to establish in the European “mother-country” the massive factories and industries that generated so much wealth for Europe over the centuries. And tragically, these turned out to be factories and industries that also produced the greenhouse gases that have precipitated the **Climate Crisis** that the world is facing today – the said climate crisis that Barbados now finds itself on the frontline of!

We need to be very clear about this. Multiple generations of enslaved black or African Barbadians were put to work on the sugar plantations of Barbados by slave-masters to generate enormous volumes of wealth that they – the black Barbadians – never got to enjoy or appropriate for themselves. Rather, all of this wealth was siphoned off to British families and institutions, and ultimately to the government of Britain and to that country’s great cities. And this was wealth that was ultimately deployed in constructing and developing Britain’s industrial capacity.

Yet another source of Barbadian wealth that flowed into British industry, was the wealth derived from the “pernicious” 4 ½ per cent tax that the British Monarchy / Government imposed on every single thing produced in and shipped from Barbados between the year 1663 and the year 1838 – a period of 175 years! This tax, which Britain’s Lord Brougham, described as “the most injurious ... in the history of taxation” generated millions of pounds for the British establishment over the years. In fact, when the tax

was finally abolished in 1838, it was said to have generated a sum of money that was equivalent to more than three times the value of all of the real estate in Barbados!

The point that is being made is that the British establishment exploited and plundered Barbados and Barbadians for centuries in order to accumulate the capital that was deployed to construct Britain's industrial economy – an industrial economy that went on to produce enormous additional wealth for Britain over the centuries, but that, in so doing, also generated the green-house gases that caused the “climate crisis” that is currently imposing such damages and losses on Barbados and Barbadians!

Thus, in a very real sense, Barbados and Barbadians have been twice victimized and “punished” by this historical process of exploitation.

And it was all based on the degradation, dehumanisation and super-exploitation of black or African humanity.

BARBADOS – THE ORIGINAL SLAVE SOCIETY

The Barbados that Sir John Powell had claimed for King James I in May of 1625 became the world's very first “**slave society**” – not merely a society that possessed slaves or of which slavery was a feature, but rather, a socio-economic formation that had a slave majority population, and that was also entirely dependent on slavery for all of its operations, its dominant ideology and defining functions, including its very means of sustainability. Never before, in the entirety of human history, had such a society ever existed!



Cane-Hoeing

The 17th Century English writer, Richard Ligon, explained in his **A True and Exact History of Barbados** in 1657 that in order to make the new Barbados system work, the slave masters had to keep the Blacks in a state of

“shock and awe” by the fearsomeness, power and brutality of the slavery regime.

Indeed the French missionary, Pere Labat, noted as follows about 17th century Barbados:-

“The English do not look after their slaves wellThe overseers get every ounce of work out of them, beat them without mercy for the least fault, and appear to care less for the life of a negro than for a horse the negroes are regarded more like the beasts to whom all licence is permitted.”

He further noted that if the enslaved African tried to resist his enslavement, the planters’ savagery knew no bounds: -

“The slaves who are captured are sent to prison and condemned to be passed through a cane mill, or be burnt alive, or be put into iron cages that prevent any movement and in which they are hung up to branches of trees and left to die of hunger and despair.”



A Brutal Whipping

The Barbados slave plantation of the 17th century was therefore designed as a type of “concentration camp” – a place of concentrated and truly horrific anti-black brutality and terrorism.

Thus, if one wishes to locate the world’s very first concentration camps, one cannot start with 1930’s Nazi-era Germany. Rather, one has to go way back to the Barbados slave plantations of the 17th century!

BARBADOS AND THE BOGUS LEGALIZATION OF SLAVERY

Furthermore, in order to justify and rationalize this level of depravity, brutality and oppression, the Barbados slave-master controlled House of Assembly (established in 1639) was forced to literally “invent” the philosophically fraudulent and absurd notion that Africans were not human beings!

They began this process with their 1661 **Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes**.

This bogus piece of colonial legislation and its subsequent iterations was deemed by the Barbadian Sugar Barons to be necessary because they had imposed slavery on African labourers brought to the island against the background of slavery having been abolished in their mother-country of England since the 12th century!

You see, by the time Barbados came to be settled as an English colony, not only was slavery illegal in England, but the English criminal law had developed to the point where acts of kidnapping, enslavement, mutilation, rape, assault and battery committed against human beings were designated as “crimes”.

So, the planter and slave-master dominated Barbados House of Assembly was faced with a dilemma: namely, how to rationalize, justify, and ultimately “legalize” the practice that they had already embarked upon of enslaving African human beings?

Well, the “solution” that they hit upon was to pass several pieces of colonial legislation that designated Africans initially as wild and barbaric creatures and ultimately as pieces of chattel property - essentially as “non-human beings” - and to get the British Monarch to approve these legislative Acts! Thus was born the famous Barbados 1661 **Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes** - the commencement of this legislative process.

So, let us elucidate this by quoting an extract of the text of the Preamble of this initial **Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes:-**

“Whereas, heretofore, many good laws and ordinances have been made for the governing and regulating and ordering the negroes, slaves in this island, and sundry punishments appointed to many of their misdemeanors, crimes and offenses. And these formal laws being in many clauses imperfect and not fully comprehending the true constitution of this government in relation of their slaves, their negros, an heathenish brutish and an uncertain, dangerous kind of people.....to whom....

we may extend the legislative power given us of provisionary laws for the benefit and good of this plantation, not being contradictory to the laws of England, there being in all the body of that law no track to guide us where to walk, nor any rules set us how to govern such slaves.....yet we well know by the right rule of reason and order we are.....to protect them as we do many other goods and chattels.....”

The Act, having admitted that there were no laws in the entire body of English law that pertained to slavery, then went on to outline a number of barbaric measures designed to regiment the enslaved African population of Barbados, and stipulated a number of horrific punishments to be applied to said enslaved Africans in the event that they infringed or failed to adhere to the said regulations. And all of this was justified on the legislative characterization of Africans as “heathenish, brutish, uncertain and dangerous”.

In the years that followed, the Barbadians sought to improve upon the perfidy that they had launched in 1661 by passing additional pieces of legislation that purported to legislatively perfect their innovative “legalization” of slavery. One such Act was the 1688 **Act for the Governing of Negroes**.

The Preamble of that dehumanising and barbaric 1688 iteration of the Barbados Slavery Code provided as follows:-

“Whereas, the plantations and estates of this island cannot be fully managed and brought into use without the labor and service of great numbers of negros, and other slaves. And for as much

as the said negros, and other slaves brought onto the people of this island for that purpose are of barbarous, wild and savage natures and such renders them wholly unqualified to be governed by the laws, customs, and practices of our nations, it therefore becomes absolutely necessary that such other constitutions, laws and orders should be in this island framed and enacted for the good regulating and ordering of them as may restrain the disorders rapines and inhumanities to which they are naturally prone and inclined”.

So, the whole basis of the idea that 17th century racialized chattel slavery was somehow legal, is based on the notion – invented by the Barbados House of Assembly – that Africans were not human!

The members of the 17th century Barbados House of Assembly arrogated to themselves the right to determine that Africans were not human beings, and therefore that they – the members of the House of Assembly – had the right to treat them as something other than human beings to whom the accepted and standard English law could not be applied, and to impose upon them their newly invented, barbaric, punitive laws and regulations.

But, of course, no legislative body had the power – back in the 17th century or even today – to transform a human being into something other than a human being! Indeed, it was and is an absurdity, and it is a general principle of law that legislative Acts that are factually absurd are null and void.

BARBADOS AND THE SPREAD OF THE SLAVERY SYSTEM

Tragically, the jurisprudentially bogus Barbados Slavery Code was used as the model piece of legislation to establish the British slavery regime all across the West Indies and the British colonies of North America.

Having become fabulously wealthy by the 1650s from the production of sugar, the Barbadian Sugar Barons craved additional and larger territories to take their super profit-generating system to. They initially set their sights on the then Spanish islands of Hispaniola and Jamaica, and were the driving-force behind the 1655 English expedition – led by Admiral William Penn and Colonel Venables – to capture these two islands for the British Empire.

The story is well told in Schomburgk's **History of Barbados** as follows:-

“A strong squadron under Admiral William Penn and Colonel Venables, consisting of thirty sail, and manned by three thousand men, arrived in 1655 in Barbados, where they were reinforced by a troop of horse raised in the island at the expense of the inhabitants, and three thousand five hundred volunteers.

The expedition sailed from Carlisle Bay on the 31st of March, with the object of reducing Hispaniola, in which they completely failed. The fleet then sailed for Jamaica, where they were more successful; they took possession of the island, and forced the Spaniards to evacuate it. The new conquest opened a wide field for English enterprise, and many opu-

lent planters from Barbados and other islands settled in Jamaica.”

The conquest of Jamaica was to a significant extent a Barbadian conquest! Indeed, it was the major Sugar Barons of Barbados who immediately took control of Jamaica, led by one of the wealthiest Barbadian Sugar Barons of them all – Thomas Modyford - who became one of the earliest Governors of Jamaica.

The Barbadian sugar planters transposed many of their operations to that much larger West Indian island. Of course, these operations included their sugar plantations, their enslaved Africans, and the slavery-based system of production that they had worked out for themselves and that had proved to be so profitable. And, ultimately underpinning it all was the famous 1661 Barbadian Slavery Code which was very successfully transplanted in Jamaica!

One of the elite Barbadian sugar-plantation families that expanded into Jamaica was the Drax family.

Sir James Drax, one of the “settlers” who came to Barbados on the **William and John** in 1627, turned out to be the key architect of both the system of sugar production and of African enslavement in Barbados, and by the commencement of the decade of the 1650s he had become the wealthiest member of the Barbadian plantocracy. Drax established a massive 700 acre sugar-plantation named “Drax Hall” – in addition to such other Drax owned plantations as Drax Hope and Mount Estate - and, in a gesture designed to put an exclamation mark on his elite status, he constructed the famous Drax Hall Plantation great-house in 1653.



Drax Hall Great House

Needless to say, Sir James Drax was one of the key players in the Barbados instigated colonisation of Jamaica, and in the 1670s the Drax family transferred some of their operations from Barbados to Jamaica, with William Drax - nephew of Sir

James – establishing a Drax Hall plantation at St Ann's on the north coast of Jamaica, and constructing thereon an exact replica of the famous Drax Hall great-house of Barbados.

Indeed, so great was the Barbadians' commercial success in Jamaica- and so insatiable was their appetite for profits – that by the 1680s they were searching for even larger pastures – a search that took them to the state of South Carolina on mainland America. Here, once again, with the help of a succession of Barbadian Governors of South Carolina, they transplanted not only their well-oiled plantation production system, but also the famous Barbados Slavery Code.

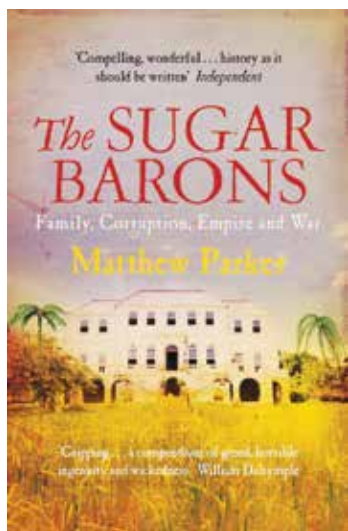
And from there, it was just a matter of time before the Barbadian Slavery Code made its way across all of the British American colonies.

So, yet another of the ultimate crimes of the “14th of May 1625 project” was the jurisprudential and philosophical “dehumanization” of Black or African humanity – not only in Barbados, but throughout the Caribbean, the United States of America (USA), and Canada!

BARBADOS AND THE IDEOLOGY OF WHITE SUPREMACY

Needless to say, underpinning these descending steps into the most profound depravity and inhumanity, was the invention – yet again in Barbados – of the very notion of “**whiteness**” and the ideology of “**white supremacy**”.

The historian, Matthew Parker, writing about Barbados in his classic text titled **The Sugar Barons**, explains as follows: -



Matthew Parker's
“The Sugar Barons”

“In 1661, just as the balance of numbers tipped towards the blacks, the government in Barbados passed laws to govern treatment of (white) indentured servants and (black) slaves. These laws codified what had already been established, while shaping the future for both categories. The aim was to persuade the poor whites to ally themselves with the planter class, in effect to choose race over class as their defining characteristic.

In the “Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes”, the Africans were described as a “heathenish, brutish and an uncertaine, dangerous kinde of people”.... The white servants, though still heavily policed in their behaviour, were carefully given better rights than the blacks – to food, clothing, general treatment and legal protection. Slaves who assaulted a white per-

son of whatever status were to be whipped, then, on a second offence whipped some more and have their nose slit and forehead branded....

This racism was a new departure, as planters, who had recently lumped together African slaves and “dissolute English, Scotch and (particularly) Irish”, came to realize the usefulness to their security of “whiteness”.

*A pamphleteer writing at that time felt it necessary to explain to his readers in England that “white” was “the general name for Europeans”. And just as the 1661 Acts were copied throughout the English West Indies and in South Carolina, so this new ideology of **whiteness** was spread from Barbados and carried around the Empire.”*

It is therefore sad to have to acknowledge that the genesis of the diseased “Make America White Again” philosophy that is currently causing so much pain and turmoil is to be found in the project that was set in train in Barbados by the seminal event of 14th May 1625!

WHAT DO WE MAKE OF THIS ANNIVERSARY ?

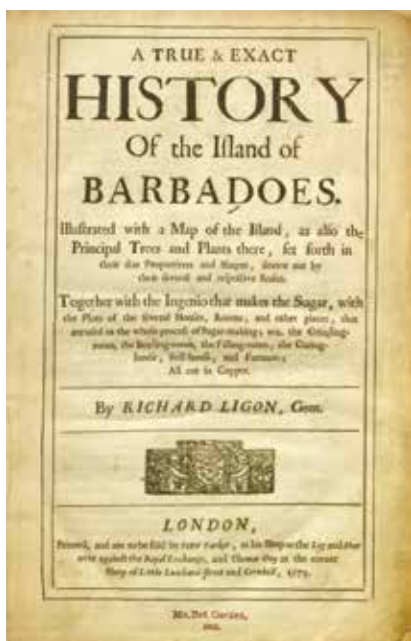
So, how should we, the citizens of the 21st century Republic of Barbados, respond to the 400th anniversary of the 14th May 1625 British landing “**on**” Barbados?

Clearly, it would be inappropriate to celebrate the anniversary, for to do so would be to do an injustice to all of the victims – black and white – of the many wrongs, inhumanities and crimes that the events of 14th May 1625 set in motion. And yet, we surely must commemorate it, and use the commemoration to try to understand the essence of our 400 year history on this small but seminal island and the sacred “mission” that this history has bequeathed to us in the 21st century.

The 14th of May 1625 Barbados project, it should be well noted, was devoted to creating a system for the generating of super-abundant profits for an exclusive imperial and domestic social elite, based on the dehumanisation and super-exploitation of labour. But at every turn, that ungodly enterprise was resisted by the “people from down below” – the exploited masses – initially white and European, but

eventually overwhelmingly black and African. And it was resisted both physically/militarily and culturally/spiritually!

Richard Ligon, the author of the earliest history book about Barbados – the 1657 **A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados** – testifies to a major episode of physical/military resistance on the part of the white indentured servants in the year 1649 as follows:-

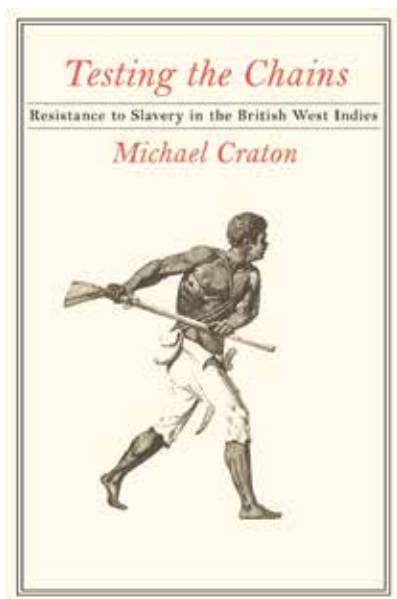


True And Exact History
Of The Island Of Barbados

“A little before I came from thence, there was such a combination amongst them, as the like was never seen there before. Their sufferings being-grown to a great height and their daily complainings to one another (of the intolerable burdens they laboured under) being spread throughout the island; at the last, some amongst them, whose spirits were not able to endure such slavery, resolved to break through it, or die in the act and those of this persuasion were the greatest numbers of servants in the Island. So that a day was appointed to fall upon their masters, and cut all their throats, and by that means, to make themselves not only freemen, but masters of the Island....”

Unfortunately, this elaborate revolutionary conspiracy was sold out by one of the white indentured servants, leading to the mass arrest of the conspirators and the execution of eighteen of the principal leaders.

And what about our African ancestors? Well, the eminent British – Canadian historian, Michael Craton, writing in his magisterial **Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies**, makes the point that the earliest manifestation of African resistance in Barbados took the form of marronage:-

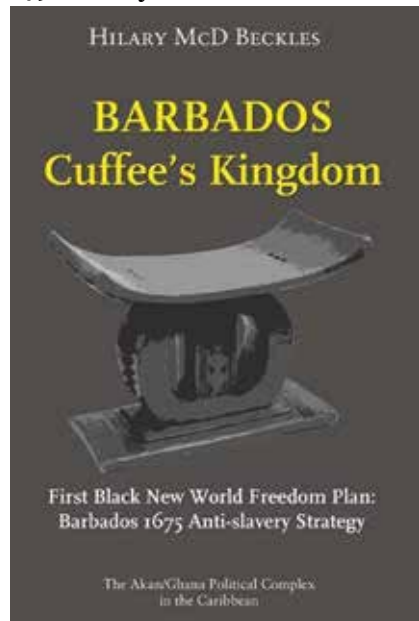


Michael Craton
Testing The Chains

“In the earliest years of a large-scale trade in Africans, before the primeval woods of Barbados had been cut down to make sugar plantations, Barbadian slave owners found runaways more troublesome than actual plots. A visitor with the lordly name of Beauchamp Plantagenet reckoned in 1648 that hundreds of runaway – Africans were subsisting in the woods, and Richard Ligon referred to them in discussing the usefulness of dogs... “Liam Hounds to guide us to the runaway negroes, who.... harbour themselves in woods and caves, living on pillage for many months together.”

But it did not take long before marronage was joined by conspiracies to destroy the white slave-master class and create a regime of black freedom. Indeed, Ligon records that the earliest such African attempt at outright rebellion occurred in the said year of 1649 – the year of the white indentured servant rebellion – and was a relatively modest attempt that was confined to only one plantation.

By the year 1675 however, the enslaved Africans of Barbados were crafting – in the words of Barbadian historian Sir Hilary Beckles - the **“First Black New World Freedom Plan”** – an island wide conspiracy led by so-called “Coromantees” from the Gold Coast (modern day Ghana), that was designed to completely



Barbados- Cuffy's Kingdom
by Hilary Beckles

overthrow the slavery regime and replace it with an African-style state under the rulership of a “King Cuffy”.

Unfortunately, this conspiracy, like the white indentured servant conspiracy of 1649, was also sold out and resulted in dozens of horrific executions. Michael Craton recorded the hoary details as follows:-

“Seventeen slaves were straightway found guilty, of whom six were burned alive and eleven beheaded. The bodies of the latter were dragged through the streets of Speight’s Town, thought to be the center of the plot, then also publicly burnedanother twenty-five were subsequently executed. Five committed suicide in jail, while the remaining seventy were either deported or sent back to their owners after a savage flogging.”

It was against this background of utter horror and barbarity that the shining imperishable heroism of an African-Barbadian revolutionary hero known simply as ‘Tony’ emerged!

Tony, described by his captors as “a sturdy rogue, a Jew’s Negro,” was in the presence of another condemned rebel who was being prepared for death by burning. The ‘Provost Marshall’ or superintendent of security was in attendance, and he proceeded to urge this unfortunate man to confess and to name others before he died. The obviously terrorised black man responded by calling for water – a sign that he was prepared to speak and to divulge information.

Thereupon, Tony immediately spoke up and admonished him as follows: “Thou Fool, are there not enough of our Countrymen killed already? Art thou minded to kill them

all?” This rebuke caused the condemned man to remain silent. And, in obvious resentment, one of the white spectators shouted to Tony: “Tony, Sirrah, we shall see you fry bravely by and by!”

Tony’s response to this threat of the most horrible death imaginable was to declare proudly and defiantly: “If you roast me today, you cannot roast me tomorrow!” and to tacitly bid the executioner to proceed.

Tony was burnt to death, one of forty-two heroes who were executed for having the audacity to claim their freedom and dignity. But by speaking up as he did, who knows how many lives Tony saved?

Tony’s example, and his immortal cry of courage and defiance: “If you roast me today, you cannot roast me tomorrow!” should be remembered, honoured and cherished by every generation of Barbadians! What magnificent and exemplary courage, dignity, brotherhood and solidarity!

But no amount of barbaric punishments could quench the “freedom-spirit” or stop the “freedom-impulse” of the African–Barbadian people. Indeed, in the decades after 1675 the Barbadian record of slave revolt is as follows:-

- 1683:** a conspiracy involving mainly enslaved Blacks born in Africa
- 1686:** another major plot involving hundreds of mainly Africa born Blacks
- 1692:** an Afro-creole plot led by Barbados born enslaved Blacks known as Ben, Sambo, Hammon and Sampson – all elite artisans and once again betrayed by a slave informant.

- 1701:** another major Afro-creole plot involving hundreds of conspirators
- 1816:** the **Bussa Rebellion** which was centered in St. Philip parish but which engulfed half the island and produced such heroes as Nanny Grigg, Jacky, Cain Davis, Joseph Pitt Washington Franklin, and of course General Bussa.

Needless to say, these and other acts of rebellion produced outstanding and legendary examples of black Barbadian courage and determination.

The truth is that the black people of Barbados had to face a military challenge that was more severe and formidable than that faced by any other group of enslaved people.

You see, not only did Barbados possess a very sizeable white population, but Barbados was Britain's "mother colony" in the Caribbean – a veritable island-fortress, saturated with military forts and slave plantations that stretched right across its flat landscape, and fortified with every possible type of military force - plantation militia tenants, parish militias, a central militia made up of infantry and cavalry, and the ferocious professional soldiers of the British imperial army stationed at St. Ann's Fort, Britain's major military installation in the southern Caribbean.

To wage armed rebellion in the face of such overwhelming military power was a feat of tremendous courage, inspired by a commitment to the attainment of freedom "by any means necessary".

And then there was the cultural/spiritual resistance.

Our African ancestors had been brought across the Middle Passage and deposited in the most evil and barbaric slave society, and were subjected to conditions that were designed to break their spirit and strip them of their humanity. To their credit, not only did they succeed in preserving their precious and deeply rooted sense of humanity, but they also succeeded in carving out for themselves a meaningful social existence. Indeed, they gradually humanized the “location of barbarism” into which they had been deposited.

And, of course, they did so primarily through their cultural and artistic creativity and their deep spirituality. The truth is that virtually everything that is authentic, creative and culturally empowering about Barbadian society is the creation of the overwhelmingly black “people from down below” – our music, dance, folklore, nation language, craftwork, religious/spiritual expression, poetry, proverbs (wise sayings), visual arts, and cooperative social mechanisms and institutions.

Here, for example, is Richard Ligon’s description in his 1657 publication, **A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados**, of the African-Barbadian’s creativity in the field of music:-

“In the afternoons on Sundays, they have their music, which is of kettle drums, and those of several sizes; upon the smallest the best musician plays, and the others come in as Chorales: the drum all men know, has but one tone; and therefore variety of tunes have little to do in this music; and yet so strangely they vary their time, as it is a pleasure to the most curious ears, and it was to me one of the strangest noises that I ever heard made of one

tone; and if they had the variety of tune, which gives the greater scope in music, as they have of time, they would do wonders in that Art."

Yes, all-in-all, the African-Barbadian people have a resistance heritage and tradition that is second to none!

Indeed, it should be noted that the Bussa Rebellion of 1816, the first of the "great" 19th century slave rebellions in the British West Indies, sent such a forceful message of uncompromising hostility to slavery that in 1819, a full three years after the rebellion, the Governor of Barbados, Lord Combermere, was still writing to the English colonial office warning them that "the public mind (in white Barbadian society) is ever tremblingly alive to the dangers of insurrection."

This oppressive and formidable fear of a climactic Black rebellion gripped Barbados and the rest of the British West Indies. In fact, Dr. Eric Williams explained in his **From Columbus To Castro** that "a Negro revolt in the British West Indies in the early 19th century, designed to abolish slavery from below, was widely apprehended, both in the West Indies and in Britain...In the British West Indies, it was no longer a question of slave rebellions if, but slave rebellions unless emancipation was decreed."

It is not surprising therefore that when Earl Stanley, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, came to introduce the **Emancipation Act** in the British Parliament in 1833, he expressed the view that the British government was "compelled to act; for they felt that take what course they might, it could not be attended with greater evil than any attempt to uphold the existing state of things."

Thus, it was really our enslaved ancestors themselves who, in the final analysis, were primarily responsible for the abolition of slavery. The critical factor was their relentless and implacable resistance!

CONCLUSION

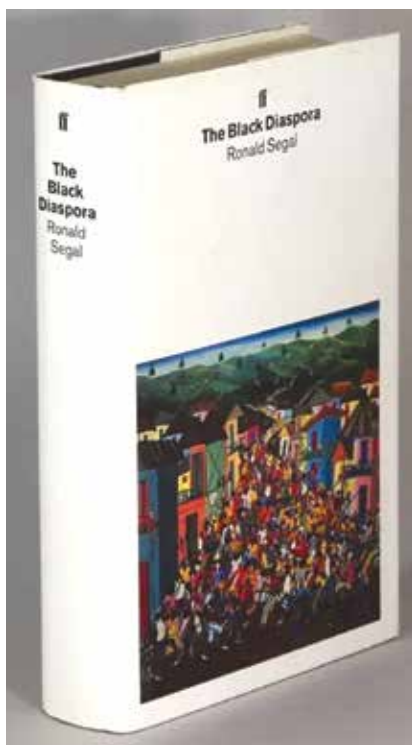
This then is an outline of the fundamental essence of the world history-making “Barbados Project” that was set in motion some 400 years ago – on 14th May 1625.

And when we ponder on these momentous events – this unique and distinctive Barbadian historical experience – we must conclude that there has to be some underlying meaning, some redeeming force or transcendent principle embedded in this arduous 400 year history.

Well surely, that transcendent force or principle has to be the very concept of “freedom” itself! And I say so because it was in slavery that the entity that we know as Barbados was born, together with a longing and a struggle for freedom on the part of the masses of the Barbadian people.

Admittedly, that Barbadian “Freedom Project” has not yet been fully consummated! Indeed, Barbados still has to fully free itself from the many shackles of its colonial and slavery-based past. In the words of the great South African scholar/activist, Ronald Segal, recorded in his magisterial work titled **The Black Diaspora:-**

“To do so, it has to accept its past, as a source not of degradation, but of dignity; to assume its proper identity, as one of victimization and suffering but also one of courage and resilience and creativity; and, above all, to recognise here a heritage which



“The Black Diaspora” by Ronald Segal

belongs to all its people and asserts for each of them an equal claim to freedom.”

But, if we Barbadians are to truly do justice to that awesome and painful history that had such profound consequences for the modern world, we cannot simply be focused on our own “freedom”, but rather, we must take unto ourselves a vocation for the universal principle of freedom – freedom, in its many dimensions, for all men and women.

Indeed, we must embrace and commit ourselves to a national mission that actively sets out to undo the many still existing structures of oppression that have their roots in the “Barbados Project of 1625”, and play our rightful role in helping to secure freedom for all men and women.

And so, this is how we must use the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the events of 14th May 1625 – to commit ourselves to actively pursuing a mission of transforming structures and mechanisms of oppression and exploitation, and helping to usher in a new world of justice, equity and development for all people, but especially for the people of Africa and of African descent.

The good news is that this is not some new mission that we now need to invent for ourselves! Rather, we simply need to recommit ourselves and intensify our efforts to foster and bring to fruition the several critical emancipatory and developmental initiatives that our new Republic of Barbados is already deeply engaged with.

I refer to such projects as:-

- **CARICOM Reparatory Justice Campaign**

Barbados has lead responsibility for CARICOM's Reparatory Justice Initiative, and seeks to guide that effort towards achieving, inter alia:- a major contribution to the sacred mission of eradicating anti-Black racism; the attainment of a "Developmental Compact" along the lines of the CARICOM 10 Point Plan for all nations that were subjected to enslavement; decolonization and national dignity and sovereignty for our Caribbean brothers and sisters who are still reduced to a colonial existence; a revamping and fundamental restructuring of the international economic/political order and its institutions; and a deconstruction of the evil doctrine of white or European supremacy and the false historical narrative that underpins it.



Caricom Reparatory Justice Initiative

We must commit to our CARICOM Reparations Campaign, and play our part to make the world free of anti-Black racism and of the negative legacies of 400 years of enslavement, colonialism and neo-colonialism!

- **Bridgetown Initiative**

The Republic of Barbados launched its **Bridgetown Initiative** flagship international project in August 2022, with a determination to contribute to the international effort to keep the rise in the world's temperature to no more than 1.5 degrees and to thereby help save the world from the worst ravages of the climate crisis; to secure “climate justice” for developing countries that did not significantly contribute to global warming; and to engineer a realistic and practical path towards the achieving of the UN's “Sustainable Development Goals” for the benefit of the deprived and suffering masses of the Developing World. And, in furtherance of this noble initiative, Barbados has assumed chairmanship of the 70 nation “Climate Vulnerable Forum”.

We must therefore undertake a vanguard role in securing the environmental sustainability of Planet Earth, and in helping to lift the burden of crushing poverty and lack of opportunity from the shoulders



Bridgetown Initiative

of those who Frantz Fanon sympathetically referred to as “the wretched of the earth!”

- **Diplomacy of Peace**

When Barbados attained its national independence in 1966, our then Prime Minister – Rt. Excellent Errol Walton Barrow – went before the United Nations General Assembly and declared that Barbados would adhere to the foreign policy principle of “Friends of all: Satellites of

none”. Barbados also subsequently promulgated the doctrine of the Caribbean being a Zone of Peace. Thus, in these current times of Cold War resurgence and illicit



Diplomacy Of Peace

threats to the sovereignty of small nations, Barbados must stand tall and speak truth to power, and defend the principles of non-alignment, respect for universal human rights, respect for the national sovereignty of all states, and respect for International Law and Multilateralism. Barbados must also be a champion of the value of Peace, and be in the vanguard of efforts devoted to peace making, peace keeping and peace promoting.

We Barbadian and Caribbean people must be the proverbial “adults” in the room of international affairs – refusing to be drawn into taking sides in anybody’s “Cold War”; insisting that our world is big enough for the economic aspirations of all nations; defending the principle of multi-lateralism; and standing firm on the side of international law and justice!

- **Caribbean Community**

Barbados is an integral member of the family of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) nations, and has always been a leader in the Caribbean integration movement.



Caribbean Community

We are proponents of the concept of a Caribbean Civilization – one that is de-colonised, free and independent. We are also guided by the notion that true freedom and independence for the nations of CARICOM must be based on a solid foundation of economic/industrial strength and self-reliance and on securing for all CARICOM citizens an acceptable minimum standard of living. Thus, as the country with lead responsibility for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), Barbados seeks to lead the way in achieving the full implementation of the CSME, built around such concrete initiatives as the full Freedom of Movement Regime, the “25 x 25 Agricultural Production and Food Security” project, and the new thrust to develop a CARICOM industrial policy to underpin the development of regional industrial production.

We must be the guardians of the principle that the people of the Caribbean Community are to be freed from the separations, restrictions and inhibitions of the colonial era, and facilitated to experience their region as an arena in which to freely pursue their dreams and aspirations!

- **Outreach to Africa**

The European forces that orchestrated the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans, the oppression and victimization of the sons and daughters of Africa on Caribbean plantations, and the invasion and colonization of Africa, intended, by so doing, to keep African people separated and weak. Barbados therefore seeks to play a vanguard role in reaching out to the continent of Africa and reversing those negative pro-



Outreach To Africa

cesses. Thus, we Barbadian people must rally behind and support such initiatives as the establishment of the African Export-Import Bank's Trade Centre in Barbados; the 2nd UN International Decade for People of African Descent; the crafting of an institutional link between CARICOM and the African Union (AU); the relationship-building programmes of the various Barbados embassies in Africa; and the establishment of direct and regular communication links between Barbados and the continent of Africa.

We Barbadian and Caribbean people must commit to being the keepers of the flame of Pan-Africanism, and must forever pursue the sacred goal of the liberation, unification and development of the scattered sons and daughters of Africa!

- **Barbados' Model of People Empowerment**



Barbados: A People - Centred Nation

Of course, the Barbados freedom project is based – first and foremost – on what we Barbadian people have done for and with ourselves, and the emancipatory, nurturing and empowering society we have created for ourselves.

We must therefore be ever conscious of our **“Barbados Model”**, comprised of our Social Democratic consensus and its systems of free education and health care and welfare provision for those in need; our national embrace of the Trade Union movement; our widespread independent Church organisation; our national

commitment to human and civil rights, social equality, electoral democracy, participatory governance, currency stability, gender equality, economic enfranchisement, Caribbean integration, and environmental stewardship; our centering of Arts and Culture at the core of nation-building; our national focus on protecting and nurturing our youth; our deeply rooted Cricket culture; and our commitment to knowing, understanding and coming to terms with our history.

But even while we prize and celebrate these admirable national traits and achievements, we must also have the maturity, humility and level-headedness to acknowledge that there are several areas of our national life that are crying out for rectification, improvement and higher standards. And, of course there is the very troubling current issue of gun violence and associated homicides.

It is not surprising therefore that in the midst of our third anniversary of the Republic celebrations our inspirational Prime Minister- Hon. Mia Amor Mottley - challenged the entire nation to embrace and work on achieving the following five self-improvement goals or **Beacons of Renewal for Barbados** : namely, citizen accountability; national cleanliness; respect and empathy for our fellow citizens; cultivation of a solution-oriented mind-set; and commitment to an ideal of becoming outstanding global citizens imbued with deep Bajan roots and a pride-filled Bajan identity. These, then, must now become new features of our **Barbados Model**.

We must commit ourselves to protecting our Barbados Model ; working to further develop it in the interest and for the benefit of all our people; and sharing it with other nations and peoples.

Let us now conclude by acknowledging that what we have termed “the Barbados project of 14th May 1625” brought into the world or helped to foster much that was negative, evil and oppressive, and that over the centuries there has been a multiplicity of victims of that project.

Indeed, foremost among the victims have been us, the people of Barbados – initially the poor white, “indentured servant”, segment of our population, and then, much more profoundly, our black or African-Barbadian population.

But it is precisely because we – the people of Barbados – from the first ten enslaved Africans who arrived on the shores of our country in 1627, down the ages to Right Excellent General Bussa and Nanny Grigg, and thereafter to all our other acknowledged and unacknowledged heroes and “sheroes” and “righteous ancestors”, resisted and ultimately transcended the worst effects of the “14th of May 1625 project”, that we are perhaps best equipped to lead an effort to contend with and dismantle the negative, contemporary structures and practices that have their roots in those past centuries of enslavement and colonisation.

It is with that understanding and spirit that our new Republic of Barbados must now embark on its commemoration of the 400th anniversary of that awesome day of 14th May 1625 with a positive, proactive agenda of activism, nation-building and regional and international outreach.



DAVID COMISSIONG

The son of a travelling Methodist Minister of Religion, David Comissiong was born in the Caribbean island of St. Vincent, and received his primary education at Tranquility Primary School in Trinidad, before attending Harrison College and the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Barbados.

He won a Barbados Exhibition in 1979 and the 'Sir Fred Phillips' academic prize at the Faculty of Law, University of the West Indies in 1981 and has been a practicing Attorney-at-Law since 1984.

David Comissiong is a former Senator in the government of Barbados, and is currently Barbados' Ambassador to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and to the Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

He is also a founder-member of the Caribbean Pan-African Network (CPAN), the Clement Payne Movement of Barbados, the Caribbean Chapter of the International Network in Defence of Humanity, and the Global Afrikan Congress

(GAC), and was an architect and the first Director of the Barbados Government's Commission for Pan-African Affairs (CPAA).

He represented the Caribbean region at the 7th Pan-African Congress in Uganda (1994), played a key role in the United Nations' World Conference Against Racism in South Africa (2001), and has represented the Diaspora on the African Union's Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC).

Since the year 2012 Mr. Comissiong has served as a member of Barbados' National Task Force on Reparations.

In the year 2017 David was awarded the "Medal of Friendship" by the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba.

He is the author of *The Wide Streets of Tomorrow: Essays and Speeches*; *It's the Healing of the Nation: The Case for Reparations*; *The Pan-African Love Story of Arnold and Mignon Ford*; and *Time To Do Our Best Work*.

What, To The Republic Of Barbados,
Does The 400th Anniversary Of 14th May 1625 Mean?

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The Future Is Boundless For The Republic Of Barbados!