



**The UN Day in Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition – Remarks
and introduction of the Feature Speaker delivered by
Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean, Tonni
Brodber**

I want to start with a poem of Maya Angelou's, done for the celebration of the United Nations 50th birthday many years ago.

When we come to it

We, this people, on this wayward, floating body

Created on this earth, of this earth

Have the power to fashion for this earth

A climate where every man and every woman

Can live freely without sanctimonious piety

Without crippling fear

When we come to it

We must confess that we are the possible

We are the miraculous, the true wonder of this world

That is when, and only when

We come to it.

We remember, because without remembering we will not come to it. That is why at UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO, PAHO all of our colleagues, we felt it important to collaborate with the Prime Minister's Office on this important event and to ensure that the fantastic Dr. Epsy Campbell is here today.

Because when we remember, we remember that before the slave trade, we were, we came from people, we came from culture. What this experience led to unfortunately is a forgetting, a forgetting of our relationship with our land which has led to the food insecurity issues that we see, our food and nutrition issues that we see. We forgot the relationships that we have with one another. We let things like language become barriers that we feel we cannot climb. When a Trinidadian and a Jamaican end up in Costa Rica and their descendants speak Spanish, do we still see our sister in their descendant? And we have forgotten our relationship with ourselves.

bell hooks noted that all marginalized groups in this society who suffer grave injustices, who are victimized by institutionalized systems of domination based on race, based on class, based on gender are faced with the peculiar dilemma of developing strategies that draw attention to the plight that has been experienced in such a way that will merit regard and consideration without reinscribing a paradigm of victimisation.

She noted a renewed organised struggle for black self-determination is needed to shift the focus from a framework of victimisation to one of accountability and that is where the conversation is going. That accountability is also in our calling on one another to remember ourselves and our connections to each other. What that means is that rather than organising black families around the principle of authoritarian rule, of the strong over the weak, we should organise

our understanding of family around anti-authoritarian models that posit love as the central guiding principle. Recognizing love as the effort we make to create a context of growth, emotional, spiritual and intellectual - women and men equally creating families based on love.

DR EPSY CAMPBELL BARR

We will hear from Dr. Epsy Campbell Barr, that descendant of Trinidadians and Jamaicans who made their way to Costa Rica. She is the President of the Permanent Forum on people of Afro-descendant people for the United Nations, President of the High-Level Commission on Mental Health and COVID-19 of PAHO, Member of the Jury of the Human Fraternity Award, and the former Vice President of the Republic of Costa Rica (2018-2022), the first Afro-descendant woman to occupy this high position in the Americas. She is a two-time Congresswoman and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship.

She is one of the main proponent of the Global Coalition Against Systemic Racism and for Reparations.

She has an Honorary Doctor of Humanities of Humanities from Brenau University. She graduated as an economist and holds two master's degrees: one in International Development Cooperation and the other in Advanced Management and Policy Decision Techniques.

She is a Lecturer and international researcher on issues of Social Inclusion, Human Development and Welfare, Antiracism, Women, and Human Rights, among others, in different universities and has contributed to seminars across intergovernmental and multilateral organizations.

She has been recognized by the Most Influential People of African Descent (MIPAD) as one of the most important women of African descent in the world, in addition to receiving the "Lifetime Achievement Award" from Justice in recognition of her work for the rights of people of African descent, received recognition from Forbes Magazine as one of the most powerful women in Latin America and the Caribbean (2019), by Estrategia y Negocios Magazine as one of the most influential women in the region (2019), by the African Renaissance and Diaspora Network as one of the most relevant Afro-descendant leaders in our region (2019).

She was the coordinator of the Network of Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean Women; coordinator of the Women's Forum for Central American Integration; Member and Founder of the Center of Afro-Costa Rican Women, Founder of the Black Parliament of the Americas and Founder of the Women's Forum for Central American Integration.

She was a proponent in Costa Rica of the approval of the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance (2016); a member of the Committee that prepared the "Regional Human Development Report (IRDH) for Latin America and the Caribbean: Multidimensional Progress" (2016) coordinated by UNDP.

She is not only a director of more than fifteen international research and author of 20 publications on social inclusion. She is also a wonderful human being and dedicated to ensuring that we never forget. I invite you to welcome Dr. Epsy Campbell Barr to the stage.