23 November 2026

The Right Honourable Rhun ap Iorwerth MS
First Minister of Wales
Welsh Government
Crown Buildings
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Subject: A Formal Call for an Unreserved Apology and Meaningful Reparatory Action from the Welsh Government

Dear First Minister Rhun ap Iorwerth,

On behalf of Reparatory Justice Cymru, we formally call upon the Welsh Government to issue a full, formal and unreserved public apology for Wales's historical connections to, involvement in and benefits derived from the enslavement, exploitation and forced transportation of African people through the transatlantic slave trade.

The wealth and prosperity generated through the forced labour, exploitation and dispossession of African people contributed significantly to the development of Britain, including Wales. This history is neither distant nor disconnected from the development of Welsh estates, industries, infrastructure and economic prosperity. It is a history that must be acknowledged honestly, openly and without reservation.

Wales has several significant historical landmarks that demonstrate the connections between Welsh families, institutions, industrial development and the wealth generated through the enslavement of African people and the exploitation of Caribbean plantations. These connections extend beyond direct slave ownership to include merchants, industrialists, shipping networks and families whose wealth and influence were built, in part, upon the exploitation of enslaved Africans.

One particularly significant example is Penrhyn Castle, near Bangor, and the history of the Pennant family. The family's considerable wealth was derived from Jamaican sugar plantations worked by enslaved Africans. By 1805, Richard Pennant owned nearly 1,000 enslaved people across four Jamaican plantations. The wealth generated through this exploitation helped finance Penrhyn Castle, Penrhyn Slate Quarry, roads, railways and wider

local development. Richard Pennant was also a prominent opponent of abolition. This history illustrates how the suffering and forced labour of African people contributed directly to the accumulation of wealth and the development of Wales.

Closely connected to this history are Penrhyn Slate Quarry and Port Penrhyn, where industrial expansion was supported by wealth originating from Jamaican plantations. These developments provide an important example of how the proceeds of enslavement helped finance Welsh industrialisation, infrastructure and economic growth.

In Carmarthen, the Picton Monument commemorates Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Picton, who served as Governor of Trinidad. His governorship was associated with plantation slavery, colonial oppression and notorious abuses. The monument has consequently attracted criticism and calls for reconsideration of how individuals associated with colonial exploitation are publicly commemorated. This raises important questions about whose histories are celebrated, whose suffering is overlooked and how Wales should approach its public heritage.

In Pembrokeshire, Slebech Park provides another significant example. Nathaniel Phillips purchased the estate in 1793 after accumulating wealth through four Jamaican sugar plantations worked by more than 700 enslaved Africans. He also opposed the abolition of the slave trade. The history of Slebech demonstrates how plantation wealth was transferred into Welsh estates and helped establish the social and economic standing of wealthy families.

In Swansea, Hafod Copperworks illustrates the relationship between Welsh industrial production and the wider system of enslavement and colonial exploitation. Swansea became a major centre of copper smelting, with Welsh copper supplied for use in the African trade, including the manufacture of goods exchanged in the trade in enslaved people. Copper and associated industrial products also supported plantation economies in the Caribbean. This industrial history must be understood within the wider economic systems that connected Welsh manufacturing to the exploitation of African people.

Similarly, Cardiff Bay and Butetown hold an important place in Wales's Black history, maritime heritage and migration story. The development of Cardiff's docks and imperial shipping networks helped establish the conditions through which African and Caribbean communities became part of the city's social, cultural and economic life. While the docks should not be inaccurately described as a major slave trading port, their history demonstrates the wider colonial and maritime connections through which Black communities became established in Wales.

Taken together, these landmarks provide compelling evidence that the history of enslavement is embedded within Wales's built heritage, industrial development, economic prosperity and national story. They also demonstrate why historical recognition must extend beyond individual buildings and monuments to include the families, institutions, industries and economic structures that benefited.

However, our concern extends beyond historical recognition. The consequences of enslavement and colonial exploitation continue to be reflected in the social, economic and health inequalities experienced by African and Caribbean communities today. These are not simply historical matters; they are present day injustices requiring acknowledgement,

accountability and meaningful action.

We particularly wish to draw your attention to three interconnected areas of concern.

1. Persistent health inequalities

African and Caribbean communities continue to experience inequalities in health and wellbeing, including concerns about access to appropriate healthcare, recognition of health needs, quality of treatment and the wider social determinants of health.

We are particularly concerned that, despite growing evidence of differences in health outcomes and healthcare needs, African and Caribbean people continue to be assessed, diagnosed and treated using European models and measures that do not always adequately reflect their biological, cultural and individual circumstances.

This can contribute to misdiagnosis, delayed diagnosis, inappropriate treatment and poorer health outcomes. There must be greater recognition of the need for equitable, evidence based and culturally responsive healthcare.

We therefore call for these disparities to be properly investigated and addressed through equitable healthcare provision, targeted investment, improved research and meaningful engagement with African and Caribbean communities in the development of health policies and services.

2. Unequal distribution of resources and opportunities

Despite Wales's stated commitment to equality, inclusion and social justice, African and Caribbean communities continue to encounter barriers in education, employment, housing, business development and wider economic advancement.

We are concerned about the unequal distribution of resources, investment and opportunities within Wales's increasingly multiethnic communities. Historical exclusion and disadvantage cannot be separated from the structural inequalities that continue to influence access to wealth, services, representation and economic participation.

Equality must mean more than policy statements and expressions of good intention. It must be demonstrated through fair access to public resources, education, employment, housing, business support, services and opportunities for economic prosperity.

We therefore urge the Welsh Government to examine how public funding, investment and opportunities are distributed and to ensure that African and Caribbean communities are not left behind in Wales's social and economic development.

3. Addressing the continuing legacy through reparatory action

The abolition of enslavement did not compensate the victims or their descendants for generations of stolen labour, lost wealth, dispossession and denied opportunities. The benefits of exploitation continued to flow through institutions, families and economies, while those who suffered were left to rebuild their lives without the wealth their ancestors had created.

The historical landmarks across Wales demonstrate that the benefits of enslavement were not confined to the Caribbean or other colonial territories. They were transferred into Welsh estates, industrial enterprises, infrastructure and economic development.

It is therefore essential that Wales acknowledges not only its historical connections but also the continuing consequences of the economic and social advantages accumulated through this exploitation.

We believe reparatory justice must involve practical and measurable measures to address these inherited disadvantages, strengthen African and Caribbean communities, improve health outcomes, support economic empowerment and ensure equal participation in Welsh society.

Reparatory justice must move beyond expressions of regret and symbolic recognition. It must be reflected in policies, investment, institutional accountability and tangible improvements in the lives of those communities affected by the continuing legacy of historical injustice.

Our formal requests to the Welsh Government

In light of the historical evidence and the continuing inequalities outlined above, Reparatory Justice Cymru formally requests that the Welsh Government:

1. Issue an unequivocal, full and unreserved public apology for Wales's historical connections to, involvement in and benefits derived from the enslavement and exploitation of African people.
2. Formally acknowledge the historical contribution of enslaved African people to Welsh prosperity, including the wealth accumulated through Jamaican plantations, Welsh estates, industrial development, manufacturing and associated economic activity.
3. Recognise and address the continuing consequences of this history, particularly persistent health inequalities, economic disadvantage, structural barriers and unequal access to public resources and opportunities.
4. Commit to practical and meaningful reparatory measures, supported by appropriate investment and action that directly benefit African and Caribbean communities throughout Wales.
5. Address persistent health inequalities through culturally responsive healthcare, improved research, appropriate diagnostic approaches, equitable treatment and meaningful community involvement in health policy and decision making.
6. Promote economic empowerment and fair access to opportunities in education, employment, housing, business development, public procurement and wider economic participation.
7. Ensure the equitable distribution of public resources and investment, so that equality, fairness and social justice are reflected in Welsh Government policies, funding decisions and public services.

8 Support the honest recognition and interpretation of Wales's historical heritage, including the examination, preservation and public presentation of landmarks connected to enslavement, plantation wealth and colonial exploitation. This should include meaningful involvement of African and Caribbean communities in shaping how this history is researched, taught and commemorated.

First Minister, reparatory justice is not about assigning personal blame to present generations. It is about acknowledging historical injustice, recognising the benefits that flowed from it, accepting the responsibility to address its continuing consequences and building a fairer society for future generations.

An unreserved apology would represent an important step towards truth, recognition and accountability. However, an apology alone cannot address the inequalities that have endured across generations. It must be accompanied by a clear programme of meaningful reparatory action, with defined commitments, appropriate resources, measurable outcomes and ongoing engagement with the communities concerned.

We therefore respectfully request a formal meeting with you and the relevant Welsh Government ministers and representatives to discuss these matters and seek a clear commitment to an official apology and meaningful reparatory action.

Wales has an opportunity to demonstrate genuine leadership by moving beyond words and taking meaningful action. The historical evidence exists within our communities, our institutions, our industries and our national heritage. It is time for that history to be acknowledged fully and for its continuing consequences to be addressed.

Our ancestors deserve recognition. Their descendants deserve equality, fairness and the opportunity to prosper. Future generations deserve a Wales in which historical inequalities are not allowed to determine their opportunities, health, economic circumstances or quality of life.

We urge the Welsh Government to acknowledge, apologise and act.

We look forward to your formal response and hope that this letter will mark the beginning of a constructive and meaningful dialogue towards reparatory justice in Wales.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Uzo Iwobi CBE

Mzee Cliff DePass

Professor Olivette Otele

Dr Gaynor Legall CBE

Pastor Hadassah Radway

For and on behalf of **Reparatory Justice Cymru**