



## Compensating the Womb of Empire: A Political Economy Reading of Gender in the Revised CARICOM Reparations Manifesto

### I. Introduction: Reparations at a Global Turning Point

The struggle for reparatory justice has entered a new and consequential phase. In March 2026, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution **A/RES/80/250**, formally declaring the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans the gravest crime against humanity. PPF welcomed that resolution as a hard-won product of decades of Pan-African and Caribbean organising, not a gift bestowed by the institutions of the former colonial powers. Three months later, the High-Level Consultative Conference on the Next Steps to that resolution convened in Accra, bringing African and Caribbean states into direct dialogue on how the moral victory of the United Nations would be translated into material demands.

PPF itself has been an active participant in shaping this terrain. Our International Conference of Pan-African Progressive Forces, convened in Accra in November 2025 to mark the eightieth (80th) anniversary of the 1945 Manchester Congress, culminated in the adoption of the Special Accra Declaration on Reparatory Justice, a document that placed reparatory justice alongside African political and economic unity, youth employment and continental sovereignty as inseparable pillars of the same struggle.

It is in this context, a moment in which the reparations question has moved from the margins of academic debate into the halls of the United Nations and the Conference of Heads of Government, that the Caribbean Community's updated Ten-Point Plan for Reparations, subtitled A Manifesto for the Coming Enlightenment, must be read. Unveiled by Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley at the Accra conference on behalf of CARICOM Heads of Government, the revised manifesto strengthens the legal architecture of the original ten-point plan and introduces, for the first time in such a document, an explicit and freestanding demand for compensation for gender-based violence and assault on family.

This paper presents PPF's position on that specific gender dimension. We treat it not as an annotation to the wider reparations claim but as a text that rewards close, structural reading, because it forces the reparations movement to confront a question the liberal human rights framework habitually evades: how wealth was built, and continues to be built, through the systematic destruction and re-engineering of the reproductive lives of colonised women.



## **II. What the Manifesto Actually Changes**

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The original 2013 CARICOM ten-point plan treated the harms of enslavement in largely undifferentiated terms, as injuries done to an enslaved population without specific reference to gender. The 2026 revision breaks with this. It introduces a dedicated point, compensation for gender-based violence and assault on family, and grounds the demand in historical data: enslaved women are estimated to have made up roughly three in ten of the twenty million Africans forcibly transported across the Atlantic, and researchers cited in the document estimate that over a million enslaved women endured direct sexual violence. The manifesto further links slavery-era gender violence to the destruction of African kinship structures, since the status of the enslaved child followed the status of the mother, meaning the womb itself was converted into a site of unpaid future labour.

On compensation, the manifesto is direct in placing gender-based violence on the same legal footing as the other grave harms it lists, alongside loss of life, uncompensated labour, loss of liberty and personal injury, as demands to be met by enslaving nations, monarchies, churches, corporations and enslaving families. Prime Minister Mottley has argued publicly that this demand is no different in principle from reparations already paid to Japanese American internees or to Holocaust survivors, a comparison intended to strip the Caribbean claim of any charge of exceptionalism or radicalism.

## **III. Reading the Womb: Gender, Reproduction and the Political Economy of Enslavement**

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PPF regards this development as analytically significant, and we situate it within a long tradition of left and feminist political economy that has examined what scholars call social reproduction, the unpaid or coerced labour of bearing, raising and sustaining a workforce, and its role in building wealth for those who control it. Chattel slavery was not simply a system of labour extraction in the plantations or the household. It was a system in which the biological reproduction of the enslaved population was itself seen as a productive force. Because the child of an enslaved woman inherited her status, the enslaver acquired a direct economic interest in controlling, and frequently in violently exploiting, the reproductive capacity of enslaved women. Sexual violence under slavery, therefore, functioned, in significant part, as a mechanism of wealth creation, generating unpaid future labour without the cost or risk of importation.

This is why the manifesto's demand cannot be read merely as an extension of individual tort, a claim for personal injury alongside other injuries. It names a structural feature of the economic system enslavement built, one in which fortunes were accumulated as much through the seizure and control of women's bodies as through the seizure of land and the theft of labour.

Read this way, the gender provisions of the manifesto align with, rather than depart from, a structural account of slavery. They insist that the family destroyed by the auction block and the plantation was not an incidental casualty of an otherwise ordinary economic arrangement, but a deliberate target of it, because the fracturing of kinship networks deepened the oppression and exploitation of the enslaved population and severed the intergenerational transmission of resistance. Compensation for assault on





family is, in this light, compensation for an act of economic sabotage carried out by the enslaver against the reproductive and social infrastructure of the enslaved community.

PPF also welcomes the manifesto's refusal to treat this history as closed. Its own framing situates present-day patterns of gender-based violence against women of African descent as intergenerational continuations of the same structure, a formulation consistent with a long-standing understanding by Progressives on how the social relations forged under slavery and colonialism persist, transformed but not abolished, into the political economy of the postcolonial and neocolonial architecture.

#### **IV. Pan-African Progressive Front Position on the Manifesto.**

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PPF's task is not only to affirm the manifesto but to press it further, in the spirit of constructive engagement.

First, we welcome the manifesto's grounding of the gender demand in quantifiable historical data and its explicit legal argument that crimes against humanity carry no statute of limitations. This closes off the standard Western objection that reparations claims are unquantifiable sentiment rather than actionable legal demand.

Second, we note that the manifesto's own drafting language extends its concern beyond women narrowly defined to all who were subjected to gendered violence under the system of enslavement, a framing PPF considers appropriate to the historical record.

Third, and this is the central limitation PPF wishes to name, the manifesto's comparison of its demand to reparations paid to Japanese American internees or Holocaust survivors, while rhetorically useful in disarming bad faith objections, risks framing reparatory justice as a matter of individualised historical compensation rather than of structural transformation. A cheque paid to a state treasury by a former colonial power, however large, does not by itself dismantle the CFA franc system, the debt architecture in Africa, or the extractive trade relationships through which the value of African and Caribbean labour continues to be siphoned northward today. PPF's position is that the gender-based violence claim must be linked explicitly to the wider demand for economic sovereignty, debt cancellation and the dismantling of neocolonial financial structures. Compensation for the historical rape of enslaved women that is not accompanied by the material liberation of their descendants from present-day structural violence, including the economic violence of extractive trade regimes and militarised destabilisation across the Sahel and the wider African world, would risk becoming a symbolic settlement rather than an act of reparatory justice.

Fourth, PPF observes that the manifesto's demand for psychological rehabilitation, treated in the document as a distinct point alongside the gender-based violence provision, should be read together with, and not separately from, the material compensation demand. The reparations movement must resist any settlement in which trauma is acknowledged rhetorically while the underlying economic relations of dispossession remain intact.



## V. Our Demands

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PPF affirms the following:

1. The gender-based violence provision of the revised CARICOM manifesto represents a substantive advance in the global reparations movement and should be taken up explicitly by African Union member states and progressive civil society formations as they develop their own reparations frameworks.
2. Compensation for gender-based violence and assault on family must be understood, and demanded, as compensation for a structural mechanism of wealth accumulation, not as an isolated tort claim.
3. Any settlement of the reparations question that offers monetary compensation for historical gender-based violence while leaving intact the contemporary financial and military architecture of neocolonial extraction, including currency arrangements such as the CFA franc and continued foreign military presence across Africa, falls short of reparatory justice as PPF understands it.
4. PPF calls on the CARICOM Reparations Commission and the African Union to coordinate the gender provisions of their respective reparations frameworks with the demands of movements across the continent, so that the reparations agenda strengthens rather than substitutes for the broader struggle for African and Caribbean economic and political sovereignty.

## Conclusion

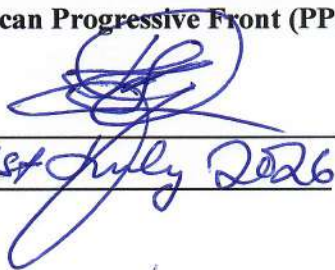
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The revised CARICOM manifesto's treatment of gender and reparations gives the movement a sharper and more historically honest vocabulary. PPF's task, as ever, is to insist that this vocabulary be placed in service of structural transformation and not allowed to settle for the language of apology and cheque. We will continue this analysis in forthcoming publications on pp-front.com, including our ongoing coverage of the reparatory justice agenda emerging from Accra and the Sahel.

**For and on behalf of the Pan-African Progressive Front (PPF)**

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Signature: 

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Accra, Ghana