

**Responses to questions posed by the CERD for the 91st session  
consultations on 23 November 2016**

Name: Khitanya Petgrave  
Country: Jamaica

1. *What are the key challenges and issues of racial discrimination in your country?*

Centuries of colonialism and a plantation economy built on the backs of Africans and non-white groups in Jamaica have contributed to the following:

a. People of African descent in the island, despite being the majority, disproportionately comprise low income disenfranchised groups which have limited or inconsistent access to quality education, health services, productive lands (with little opportunity for ownership) and general economic assets.

b. Many Jamaicans, of all racial backgrounds, especially the uneducated (a sizeable number) tend to have a monolithic often negative image and misunderstanding of the African continent's past and present.

c. Outside of the realm of popular culture (arts, sports, music), there is insufficient awareness of the roles played by Africans in intellectually advancing Caribbean and global societies.

d. There is also similar ignorance of the role of plural Jamaican, Caribbean and global societies in shaping Afro-Jamaican cultures and identities.

e. Skin bleaching is not uncommon among Afro-Jamaicans from low-income backgrounds, particularly the inner-cities.

*How do I work to address them?*

In my varied occupations as a historian and project manager, I have sought to enlighten and empower groups by facilitating access to knowledge.

a. As a university lecturer, I led seminar courses in British, American and Caribbean history which analysed along the lines of race, class and gender. I also supervised various postgraduate theses on national identity.

b. I have appeared on local and international TV and radio programmes, explaining complex historical concepts and their applications to present day political circumstances.

c. As project manager I spearheaded a Language Project which bridges the gap between the people whose first language is English and those limited to vernacular languages, who cannot access external opportunities. The project equipped school teachers to identify and make use of knowledge and intelligence embedded in the pupils' vernacular as a pedagogical foundation, helping them to teach the English Language to that gourd in a more effective, innovative and inclusive way.

*2. What has been your experience, as civil society, of engaging with CERD to date?*

I am acquainted with literature put out by CERD and its various human rights projects. However, I have not engaged directly with the Committee to date.

*3. How can the CERD improve and enhance its engagement with civil society, and its work on racial discrimination for greater impact on the ground?*

I think the CERD should be more visible and involved in grassroots projects in the Caribbean. Also, its pronouncements should be more heavily publicized and accessible to the ordinary lay person.