

Testimony Delivered to the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent Session 1

And Side Event Follow Up
“HBCUs Leading The Way – Global to Local” and
“UN PFPAD: Black Women Advancing Reparations in Geneva”

(Statement delivered as Civil Society consultation during the 12/7 PFPAD plenary)

Thank you. I am Dr. Vickie Casanova-Willis, Intl Civil Society Working Group for the Forum, International Coalition of People of African Descent, IHRAAM, and OHBCUD-Office of HBCU Development and International Cooperation, daughter of Africa, born and living in the US. Appreciating the intervention regarding older people of African descent, who are marginalized and vulnerable. I pay tribute today to my beloved, terminally ill husband whose side I have very reluctantly left, at the invitation of the OHCHR to participate in this historic convening. Honoring this civil to human rights legal warrior who FIRST demonstrated for us in the U.S. one aspect of what a human rights city could look like, - I speak the name of Atty Standish E Willis, who transformed the trajectory in the Chicago Police Torture conspiracy using human rights law and organizing. Significant today as it demonstrated to his fellow legal strategists, analysts, litigators and grassroots activists that it IS possible to apply UN Declarations, procedures and mechanisms to bring “international human rights” home.

Inspired by CERD Chair, Dr. Gay McDougall’s, guidance on developing this Declaration and her call for “Broad Consultation,” and “Tree/Roots” analogy, I have 2 process recommendations – Words Matter! Our ancestors were never “slaves”. They were kidnapped, trafficked, tortured, terrorized, raped, bred, bought, sold, and **enslaved** to enrich whites and their descendants into perpetuity. For the right to voice, justice and reparations – consider going to our ancestral roots by actually listening to the voices of our enslaved ancestors via the WPA “Slave Narratives” – and a new digital archive and database that documents the life stories and history of descendants of the GU272 who have a connection to Southern University, the only historically black college and university system in the United States. These are direct descendants of the roughly 272 enslaved ancestors sold downriver into sugarcane plantation brutality and death, by the Jesuits... to financially save Georgetown Univ. As with the religious institutions who must be held accountable...similarly with these academic institutions which are complicit in sustaining and benefitting from the MAAFA—the holocaust of African enslavement.

Listening to these experiences in the first voice, respects the right and necessity of telling and preserving our own histories, and the importance of Black spaces like a Southern Univ. (HBCU)

that care enough to prioritize such painful local history, being rooted in the community that is still suffering the generational impact of the sugar cane plantation horrors also mentioned earlier today by the honorable representative from Barbados. In a continuation of the crimes against humanity, the Southern Louisiana area's neo-colonial post enslavement legacy has left African descendants of the sugar cane plantation era to inherit disenfranchised and polluted communities in what is now widely known as cancer alley...environmental racism at play by the oil baron devastation on the very footprint of the old plantation alley.

Recommendations:

- 1) Initiate an inquiry and initiative to protect elders of African descent / ancestry. Aging and infirm in prison, struggling with dementias, and no health care or social services, etc., targeted and manipulated by predatory housing theft and more.
- 2) Utilize the correct terminology "enslaved Africans" versus "slaves" in all UNPFAD communication and encourage all UN bodies, member states, and civil society to do the same. This is a part of full **reparation**, as it is a critical **acknowledgement** of the accurate identity of those humans victimized by their captors, enslavers, torturers, rapists, etc. who perpetuated this crime against humanity and its legacy.
- 3) We (ICSWG and OHBCUD) invite your delegation to tour this ground Zero for Climate change offenses, where you can also visit Angola penitentiary, literally a reincarnation of the previous Angola plantation. It is a heinous reminder that Slavery is still legal in the U.S. at the close of 2022, thus,
- 4) We further urge all Federal and State governments to eliminate the clauses in their constitutions that legalize slavery for incarcerated persons--majority of them of African ancestry. This affects countless U.S. based men, women, and children trafficked and held captive in the lucrative prison industrial complex. The U.S. has not ratified the Treaties on the Rights of the Child (Recommendation #5), nor on Women (Recommendation #6) so just imagine the horrors that persist in these modern-day slave dungeons.
- 5) See above
- 6) See above
- 7) ICSWG invites the PFPAD members to a fact-finding mission - visit southern Louisiana for a fact-finding human rights tour with us; see, hear, and decide for yourselves. Meet GU272 descendants at Southern University's historic HBCU campus, speak with French creole Louisiana residents of African ancestry and others to hear their ideas on improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods from Baton Rouge to New Orleans and throughout the deep South (U.S.)

<https://www.usagainstalzheimer.org/>

<https://www.naacpldf.org/13th-amendment-emancipation/>

<https://undark.org/2022/10/25/epa-cites-environmental-racism-in-louisianas-cancer-alley/>
<https://www.laclu.org/en/press-releases/aclu-report-finds-incarcerated-workers-earn-between-002-and-040-hour-louisiana>
http://7008.sydneyplus.com/final/Portal/SouthernUniversity.aspx?lang=en-US&p_AAAH=tab13&d=d
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WV6lvRaUs4> *Human Rights and Justice* Episode 14: “UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent: Black Women Advancing Reparations in Geneva”