Call for input – 2024 SG report IDPAD | 30 April 2024

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Greetings,

My name is Hunter Adams, III of the Humanity Summit Open Society Organisation, and herein I offer input[[1]](#endnote-1) on the implementation of the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent. I offer for consideration several recommendations to meet a challenge posed by Psychiatrists, Dr. Franz Fanon and Dr. Patricia Ann Newton: how do we imagine a new humanity?

My input overlaps these programme areas: (1) recognition, a) right to equality and non-discrimination, and b) education on equality and awareness raising; (2) justice, special measures; (3) development, a) education and b) health; and (4) aggravated discrimination.

To start, my considerations are inspired by a tragic event. On 3 April 1968, the night before being sacrificed, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “*I come here tonight to get the language straight.”* In that way, my input intersects the above programme areas in how language manoeuvres perceptions and identity of self and other, hence reality, and how language can harm or heal.

Neuroscience research on propaganda, disinformation, misbeliefs, and assorted cognitive biases, such as implicit and confirmation effects have documented how the behaviour of individuals and groups, can be manipulated with speech.

Five hundred years following the Age of African Plunder, under the *Doctrine of Discovery*, in many societies, racism, xenophobia, and various forms of discrimination, such as gender and disability, have evolved as default mode brain states among many of their citizens. To meet that challenge of *“how can we all get along,”* such scientific research has significant application in the intersection between epistemic, legal, and social justice, and the understanding of human rights.

Words matter

In medicine, a placebo (Latin, *placēbō*, 'I shall please', from *placeō*, 'I please') is a sham substance, drug, or treatment given to a patient believing it helps them. Less well known is the *nocēbō*, (Latin, 'I shall harm', from *noceō*, 'I harm'). Science is understanding, the “biology of belief,” that is how placebos and nocebos such as expectations, cultural cues, rituals, and language, affect neuroplasticity or how brains are wired. Thus, various forms of speech can heal or harm beyond the clinical context, into everyday life, for example, in human rights law[[2]](#endnote-2).

Consider this: the word ‘slave’ is a nocebo. It suggests something is wrong with you. Its invisible violence denies and denigrates Africans' humanity. It traumatizes. I can never forget decades ago, in a Chicago church Sunday school, a white boy blurted out, “You are a slave, like Hebrews were in Ancient Egypt.” That’s not true!

The word slave functions as a magician’s trick, but no rabbit is pulled out of a hat, just minds muddled in a vat of conjured ideas of inferiority and superiority[[3]](#endnote-3). This “spell of inequality” evolved 2300 years ago, out of the Greek philosopher Aristotle's[[4]](#endnote-4) rhetorical political ploys[[5]](#endnote-5). It has developed into a dangerous brain-based science of global inequality[[6]](#endnote-6),[[7]](#endnote-7). Along with this, public relations pronouncements bind everyone, notably youth, to a multi-media matrix of malinformation.

Therefore, from a cultural neuroscience perspective, l recommend, (1) the reframing of harmful noceboic speech[[8]](#endnote-8), misbeliefs, and mainstream narratives[[9]](#endnote-9) pursuant to the Human Rights Council resolution 47/21 for effecting transformative change for racial justice and equality to *break this inequality spell*.

Specifically, I recommend, in future communications, a) to STOP referring to millions of *de-ancestralized* African souls, extracted from soil that sanctified human personhood as ‘Slaves.’ They were human beings, and were, at least initially, war captives. The word slave derives from Slav, the name of the formerly oppressed Eastern Europeans, whose ethnicity across Europe, became the brand for bondage. The word slave is a slur that still humiliates, even the term [en]slaved doesn’t dismiss its demoralization. A “slave” is someone else’s idea of someone else’s world.

Furthermore, I recommend, b) reframing the notion of the ‘slave trade.’ “Trade” obscures and normalizes a multi-generational, global human extraction and trafficking plot and an illicit multi-faceted financialization enterprise. To be sure, amongst the perpetrators, the “slave trade” was not a crime. Yet, since the Durban Declaration, the “slave trade” is now a Crime Against Humanity.

Status Counts.

In the coastal city of Lagos, Portugal, in 2009, after excavating a sinkhole filled with 560 years of trash, for an underground car park, buried at the bottom were the discarded skeletal remains of over 150 Africans—children, women and men[[10]](#endnote-10). They were throw-away people called “*negro rescata cautivos”* (negro [black] ransom captives), instead of slaves.There is no memorial to them; the site is covered over by a mini-golf course. Therefore, (2) I recommend the establishment of a UNESCO African Heritage Site, marking this 1444, First Generation of African War Captives.[[11]](#endnote-11)

Thank you.

1. Aspects of my input here were part of my, 18 April 2004, speech/statement at the United Nations 3rd Session Permanent Forum for People of African Descent in Geneva, Switzerland. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Amitai Aviram (2005). The Placebo effect of Law. <https://law.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1035&context=uiuclwps> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. (1998). The Ten Precepts of Slavery Jurisprudence, Appendix. **Shades of Color: Racial Politics and Presumptions of the American Legal Process**. Oxford University Press. https://books.google.fr/books/about/Shades\_of\_Freedom.html?id=NM\_rf6TndMsC&redir\_esc=y [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Aristotle on Inequality. https://newlearningonline.com/new-learning/chapter-5/supproting-materials/aristotle-on-inequality. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. # Lisa Orkin (2000). *Archaeologists Find Ancient Greeks Practiced That Old--Very Old--Black Magic.* <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-apr-22-mn-53984-story.html>.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Alexander Lenger & Florian Schumacher (2014). *The Global Configurations of Inequality: Stratification, Global Inequalities, and the Global Social Structure.* In: Lenger, A., Schumacher, F. (eds) **Understanding the Dynamics of Global Inequality**. Springer, Berlin, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-44766-6\_1. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. How to Fix Economic Inequality? An Overview of Policies for the United States and Other High-Income Economies <https://www.piie.com/microsites/how-fix-economic-inequality>. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Jennifer Saul (2023) Dogwhistles and Figleaves How Manipulative Language Spreads Racism and Falsehood https://global.oup.com/academic/product/dogwhistles-and-figleaves-9780192871756?cc=us&lang=en& [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Alfred de Zayas (2022). **Countering Mainstream Narratives: Fake News, Fake Law, Fake Freedom**. Clarity Press. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Afua Hirsch (2020). The injustice of slavery is not over: the graves of the enslaved are still being desecrated https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/08/injustice-slavery-not-over-graves-desecrated-black-history [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. On 18 September 2023, The Humanity-Summit group commemorated these ancestors for the first time. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)