



*The Ark of Return, the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, located at the Visitors' Plaza of UN Headquarters in New York.
Photo: UN Photo/Rick Bajornas*

23.08.16 – The slave trade and slavery created a storm of rage, cruelty and bitterness that has not yet abated.□

The night of 22 to 23 August marks 225 years since the historical turning point when African women and men slaves revolted against the system to obtain freedom and independence in Saint Domingue. This weakened the Caribbean colonial system and the island declared its independence as Haiti in 1804. Viewed as marking the beginning of the destruction of the slavery system, the slave trade and colonialism, their uprising greatly impacted the establishment of universal human rights, for which we are all indebted. Established by [UNESCO](#) in 1997, this [International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition](#) serves as a reminder of the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade and aims to pay homage to the dignity and resilience of the victims.

It is important we take the responsibility to commemorate this day, to remember in excess of 15 million women, men and children who were victims of the transatlantic slave trade for over 400

years, and pay tribute to those who have worked hard to abolish slave trade and slavery throughout the world. Not least in Europe where the involvement in the transatlantic slave trade has a fraught history, it is our responsibility to consider the interactions to which this tragedy has given rise between Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean.

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) adopted by world leaders offers a framework to fundamentally alter conditions fuelling poverty, specifically setting the goals of eradicating forced labour and human trafficking and ending all forms of [modern slavery](#) and child labour.



Three generations of Gangá Longobá. The Afro-Cuban Gangá Longobá were enslaved and forced to work the sugar cane plantations in the 19th century. Photo: ©Sergio Leyva Seiglie, They Are We Project

Citing the need to strengthen national, regional and international cooperation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society, the UN has declared this the [International Decade for People of African Descent \(2015-2024\)](#)

. The theme is “recognition, justice and development.” In addition to honouring and preserving

historical memory of people of African descent, the international community should give high priority to combating racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent.

[The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action](#)

and

[International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)

elucidate on our commitments.

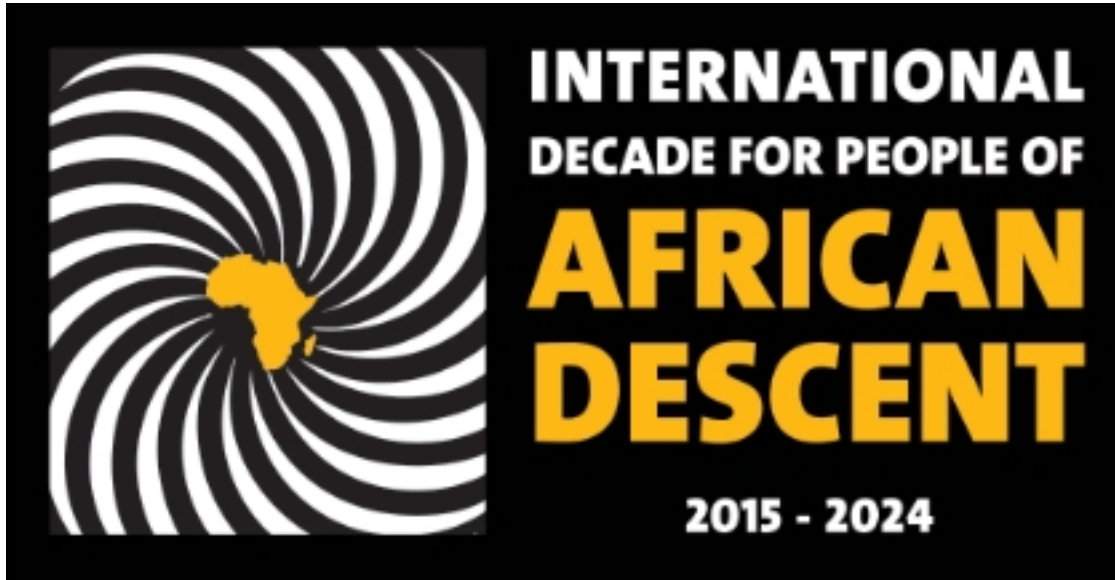


Image: UN

There will be a lecture on 'The Birth of a Nation: Slavery, Resistance & Abolition' on 31 August 2016, 1.15pm to 2.30pm at Headquarters in New York. Please contact Brenden Varma on varmab@un.org

Slavery casts a dark shadow over human history; henceforth, we must build societies that ensure dignity and equality for all human beings.