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Delegation of Portugal

Global Reparations for Slavery

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As the delegation of Portugal, it is notable that Portugal recognizes the significant influence Portugal has had on the Trans-atlantic Slave Trade through the centuries. Portugal is determined to educate its citizens on the affect Portugal has had on enslaved Africans and has affected people of African descent today. Portugal is committed in reframing education and altering societie’s views on Portugal’s influence.

Portugal, officially The Portuguese Republic, is located in Southern Europe. Portugal is made up of 10.33 million people as of 2021. Portugal is a predominantly Roman Catholic country with heavy beliefs in family. Portugal places a larger significance on religious values than other Western nations in Europe, which places a stronger emphasis on the appreciation of people and relationships. The most spoken language in Portugal is Portuguese, but many people also speak English, Spanish, French, and Mirandese. Ethnically, the Portuguese people account for 95% of the total population.

Key Points:

* Inciting other countries that have enslaved people to be upfront about their past.
* Removing and reframing education as so it doesn’t appear as a whitewashed view of colonial oppression.
* The discussion of the implementation of projects similar to the UNESCO project.
* Promoting the contributions of people with African descent have made to expedite human progress.
* Questioning and addressing the effects slavery has on economic, social, and cultural inequalities.

In the 15th century Portugal became the first European Nation to have a significant influence over the Transatlantic slave trade. The Portuguese enslaved people for labor on plantations in the islands of Africa, but many slaves were also enslaved for labor in islands in the Caribbean and places in Brazil. In the beginning of Portugal’s influence in the slave trade, the Portuguese people raided small villages in Africa in order to acquire labor, but quickly found that these raids were ineffective against other powers. Portuguese traders then made the shift to develop slave trading relationships with African leaders in the Western and Central parts of Africa, where enslaved people from numerous African wars were given to the Portuguese in exchange for commercial goods. Through the gradual development of numerous commercial relationships with African leaders, Portugal had a significant influence over the slave trade in Africa which limited trade access for other Western European nations. Over time, the Portuguese utilized military power in order to meet the demand for slave labor in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, through creating alliances with certain African groups against their enemies, which encouraged a surplus amount of warfare which contributed in meeting the demand of enslaved individuals. Portugal also colonized portions of Africa to ensure their access to enslaved people. The Portuguese colonized portions of Angola in 1571 with the aid of military alliances, however efforts were eventually depleted through the limitation of African groups and other European competitors. In the 16th century, however, Portugal dominated the slave trade on the African coast. As a result, other Western European countries have captured Portuguese ships in order to have access to enslaved people as well as commercial goods. Over the centuries of the Atlantic Slave Trade, Portugal has enslaved millions of African Americans. Despite the decree in 1761 abolishing slavery in the homeland, Portugal still had a significant impact on the tragedy and affected people of African descent all over the world and through the generations.

Portugal, being a country that has notable impact on the African slave trade, has contended with historical misinformation as well as large political divide within the country. Multiple historians have noted that the idea of Lisbon being the slave capital of the world during the height of the Trans-Atlantic is false, as Lisbon only played a small role in the trade that was conducted between the countries of Angola and Brazil. Portugal has attempted to address its impact on the slave trade by memorializing the enslaved people who have suffered tragically, but people question the motivation behind the memorialization, questioning whether the memorial is self flagellation for reasons of historical opportunism. However, Portugal has made great leaps in educating their citizens on Portugal’s impact on slavery. The UNESCO Project, or the “Routes of Enslaved Peoples: Resistance, Liberty, and Heritage” Project launched in 1994, has contributed to innovative knowledge on the premise of slavery. There are 17 sites located in Portugal dedicated to representing African heritage and reducing the cultural, economic, and social discrimination that affect people with African descent. In addition, Portugal as made efforts in memorializing the enslaved people that were victim of the Atlantic Slave Trade, educating Portugalś citizens on the devastating affects the slave trade had on enslaved actions, and recognizing the influence Portugal has had on this tragedy. The history of the Atlantic slave trade is present in Portuguese textbooks and schools are educating their youth, however schools need to improve educating the youth on Portugal’s influence and affect on people with African descent.

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**Committee:** The Politics of Reparations

**Topic:** Global Reparations for Slavery

**Country:** The Portuguese Republic

**Delegate(s)**: Jonas Schroder

**School:** Simsbury High School

Portugal's Role inGlobal Reparations for Slavery

It is through a modern lens that we look at the issues of our past and attempt to forge a better future. Colonialism, slavery and its trade, and the exploitation of foreign peoples are a lingering blemish on many European nations, with no exception being lended to Portugal. In being recognized in its action as a great sin of the past, its impact on many peoples is also recognized. The Portuguese Republic hopes to work with European partners, and our friends in the African sub-continent and Latin America to evaluate modes of change and reconciliation compatible with and fair to our own domestic citizens, and meaningful to those living in impacted regions abroad.

This report has been inscribed on behalf of the Portuguese Republic and its many citizens, both of birthright and naturalization. The nation of Portugal is located on the western maritime cusps of the Iberian Peninsula of continental Europe. It is the westernmost nation of continental Europe and southern Europe’s foremost position on the Atlantic Ocean. In addition to its mainland territory, the Portuguese Republic maintains two overseas territories within the Atlantic: The Madeira and Azores archipelagos. Portugal is home to 10.33 million people and is a nation shaped by rich maritime history, mercantile interaction, and Latin subjugation. Today Portugal is a strong multicultural nation of ethnically Portuguese citizens, immigrants, and ex-pats who together form the popular basis of the modern state.

It is the desire of this delegation to collaborate with fellow lusophone nations to evaluate and address the effects of colonialism in a way truly conducive to progress. To achieve this, the delegation of Portugal proposes an expansion of the duties of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries. We propose that:

* Portugal and other nations expand their scholar exchange program to allow a greater diversity of academic pursuits and greater capacity for international students.
* Further develop the scholar's program to allow graduate studies most importantly in medicine, public policy, and law.
* Develop a commission with all states to evaluate prejudice and racism within Lusophone nations to better combat it.
* Increase collaboration with humane societies and NGOs to better combat resource insecurity and poverty abroad.
* Expand the economic principles of the CPLC to eliminate trade barriers between all nations to facilitate greater investment and opportunity in all regions.

Portugal in its present form owes hereditary ties to the past kingdoms of the region, most notably the long-deposed Houses of Habsburg and Braganza. It was under this archaic system: that of Absolute monarchy that the Portuguese elite funded expeditions and interactions into Africa and Asia, and then eventually the Americas. It was out of the coffers of the mercantile and noble elite, that Portuguese traders established the beginnings of the European slave trade in Africa. The first indentured Africans consumed by this industry were brought to Europe to work as servants and laborers, both in continental Portugal and the fledgling sugar industry emerging in their newly acquired domain of Madeira. It is undeniable that the city of Lisbon along with other coastal European trading hubs benefited greatly from the influx of commerce and wealth that these interactions brought it, and it is equally undeniable that the city and the crown as a whole took great advantage of this industry. The Portuguese Crown and its mercantilist allies worked in tandem with and under contractual oath towards the Spanish Crown and its colonial holdings, to transport needed labor in the wake of mounting indigenous American casualties. In addition to supplying slaves to other European colonies, the mercantile elite of Lisbon and Porto also abetted their counterparts in Brazil: the planter elite. To fill the demand of Brazilian planter barons, traders and smugglers of Portuguese descent supplied over 4.6 million slaves to satiate Brazilian needs. While those numbers are of the official record, illegal enterprises may have bolstered that number significantly. While it did burn brightly, the flame of slavery eventually subsided to snuffed embers, much to the chagrin of the bonfires of Brazil. The gradual end to the Portuguese slave trade started in 1761 when a ban on the importation of slaves in mainland Portugal and India was codified. In 1815, the Portuguese government prohibited the slave trade in the Northern Hemisphere, and in 1858 the government abolished slavery in all forms and in all its colonies, an action made before both the Netherlands, the United States, Spanish Cuba, and the now independent Brazil. The final vestiges of Portuguese colonialism ended in 1975 after the people of Portugal through peaceful means overthrew the old absolute regime of Salazar and instated democracy. Colonialism and slavery were the two biggest casualties of liberalization and democracy, and are now a memory associated with tyrannical absolution.

The topic of reparations is a tentative issue in Portugal. Portugal is not a wealthy nation, it lacks the capital and opportunity that has come to be expected of Europe. What it lacks in material though, is compensated through national demeanor. Portugal maintains a popularly backed liberal immigration program, a government commission to ease the burdens of integration for immigrant communities, and has recently worked to memorialize the victims of the slave trade. Portugal as a nation is one of social opportunities for various peoples, it boasts no major far-right political blocs, and the nation is proudly multicultural. Portugal welcomes those seeking opportunity as individuals, but entire countries seeking opportunity is a burdensome shift. That shift first came to light with a declaration from Caribbean states as a unanimous announcement from the CARICOM bloc, an announcement that continues to be evaluated. Reparations can come in many forms, and as a society, Portugal continues to change and liberalize. A form that is much harder to meet though is that of fiscal provisions and is one that would enforce an untold burden on Portuguese citizens of all colors and origins. This is a view reflected and agreed upon by the political faces of the nation, it is the national view. The view is as follows: Portugal continues to advance in social reform and action, more can be done and it is imperative that these historical injustices are not forgotten or perpetuated. It is crucial though that we engage in this in a manner conducive to progress rather than monetary waste and punishment.

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Committee on Symbolic Reparations

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1. The delegation of Portugal would like to strive to reach a strong agreement with the other nations regarding symbolic reparations. The current government of Portugal is open to any and all discussion regarding the history and future of symbolic reparations. Currently the Portuguese government is extremely stable and led by our prime minister Mr. Antonio Costa. We have a left-leaning socialist party currently in control of the government in Lisbon. Many of our representatives are pro-reparations while many of our others aren’t. However, all of our representatives are open to discussions regarding reparations.

The current Portuguese economy is extremely strong with a growth rate of 6.7% in 2022. Our current GDP is 253.7 Billion dollars and we have a GDP per capita of 24,567 dollars per person. This makes the Portuguese economy very strong which allows us to explore options for symbolic reparations.

1. We are the delegate from the government of Portugal. Portuguese people and language stretch far across the world. Much of it due to our old colonial past. Portuguese is the 9th most spoken language with almost 234 million speakers. However, Portugal only makes us a small part of that due to our population only being 10.4 million. Portuguese people, however, stretch far from the home country and there are estimated to be 60 million people with Portuguese descent living across the world.

1. 1. Work with our former colonies on how to create a meaningful symbolic reparation.

2. Come to a consensus agreement on the importance of symbolic reparations.

3. Encourage other former colonial powers to consider symbolic reparations.

4. What is the next step for both symbolic and other forms of reparations.

5. Try to build relationships with countries that have been devastated by colonialism.

1. Portugal’s history is stained by a dark history of slavery and human trading. The first slaves were brought to Brazil from Africa in 1526. This forced movement caused the start of the Atlantic slave trade. Lisbon became the capital of the Atlantic Slave Trade and became a hub for buying and selling slaves. The slaves brought to Brazil and other colonies were forced to work on sugar plantations for long hours with little or no pay. 4,650,000 people were carried on Portuguese ships during the slave trade. The slaves were treated as property and often received harsh punishments from slave owners. Portugal was also a colonial power and often slaves were taken from these colonies and sent to work in Europe and the Americas. Colonies such as Guinea-Bissua, Angola, and Mozambique are some of the larger African colonies. Portugal outlawed slavery in 1761 however, the generational effects of slavery still exist. Many Portuguese citizens believe that the government should do more to face the dark history of Portugal and the slave trade. The citizens of Lisbon voted in favor of building a memorial to the millions of people who either died or suffered during the slave trade. Many Portuguese political figures, however, are still minimizing the devastating effect that slavery had on millions of lives.

1. Symbolic reparations for Portugal mean taking responsibility for our dark history and finding a way to move forward in a positive way. Portugal wants to move in a positive direction when it comes to acknowledging our dark past and we hope to work with other delegations to try to heal the wounds of the past. Currently Portugal hasn’t delivered a symbolic reparation to another country and there is no record of issuing a symbolic reparations to the ancestors of slaves. However, Portugal has encouraged greater education about the history of slavery and the city of Lisbon built a memorial to honor the lives that were negatively affected by slavery. Most Portuguese citizens agree that Portugal should do more to fix the negative effects of slavery that still haunt the country even to this day. However, the government has been inactive in making or delivering symbolic reparations and apologies. Many in government are starting to push the president and the dominant party to consider giving reparations or even making a formal apology. Portuguese citizens mostly agree that the best type of reparations are paid reparations to the communities that were affected the worst by slavery. However, on a smaller note most citizens want the government to formally apologize for the actions of Portugal during the slave trade and find ways to honor those whose lives were ruined. For example, building monuments and educating further would be a good start. After some time we hope that we can start to remove some statues and monuments of the evil people that allowed for slavery to start and continue in Portugal. Lastly, citizens want legislation that works to fix the generational effects of slavery. Hopefully the government in Portugal would be open to consider these actions to partially fix the dark history of the Portuguese nation.

Good Afternoon, I’m William J. Strayer, and I'm representing the government of Portugal for economic and financial concerns about reparations. Portugal is currently a stable parliamentary democracy, and just like many other countries, we have a multiparty political system with frequent transfers of power. Ever since 1976, Portugal has been a democracy. As of January 30th, the Socialist Party has taken control of our government and we are striving to create a stronger economy under Keynesian economic ideologies, where we believe that the government should intervene often to stabilize the economy. While the word “Socialist” may seem controversial, and maybe even evil here in the US, Portugal is in a very different situation since our economic competitiveness has been damaged by oligopolies that have held large market shares in many markets.

Our economy currently has the 46th largest nominal GDP in the world, we have a GDP per capita of $21,316 which is tiny compared to the US’s GDP per capita of $59,939. While our people are not necessarily struggling, it is important to show that we also aren’t dominating the world economy. The people of Portugal are progressive and seeking change which has been shown by our landslide 2022 election, and although we are socialist, our ultimate goal is to become an efficient, successful and just country.

One of the most important issues I would like to discuss is how much money the other countries would like for each human life that we enslaved. While Chat GPT says that there is no dollar amount that can be exchanged for a human life, I could understand that the other delegates may disagree with the most advanced AI the world has seen. Secondly, I would like to make it known that our current government has zero tolerance for any kind of human enslavement, and while we may debate over why we have no responsibility to repay certain countries, it would be very unintelligent to assume that we support slavery. Thirdly, I would like to question how the people of Portugal would be responsible for the actions of the Portuguese Monarchy hundreds of years ago. Nobody alive in Portugal ever enslaved any other humans, and we are under a completely different government. I think that we should bear zero financial responsibility for what they did. On the contrary, if there is evidence of wealth that was accumulated from the enslavement of others, I would find that it is the responsibility of the ancestors to repay those amounts if the countries go to court with them since they are benefitting from the enslavement of other people, just hundreds of years later. Because of mass inflation that has occurred over the hundreds of years and currency transitions, it may be hard to find an amount for the individuals to repay and it may be very minimal. Lastly, I would like to make it be known that the people of Portugal do have one thing in common with their ancestors, the sequence of the nitrogen bases in their DNA. That’s it. It may seem reasonable that we should repay countries for what our ancestors did, though one would have to have an immense lack of intelligence to believe that DNA sequencing should make us, the people of Portugal, responsible for horrific deeds done by others. There is no reason to make us carry this tremendous weight since we never did it, and there is no way to undo what happened.

I am very solemn to say that Portuguese vessels from the monarchy carried an estimated 5.8 million African Slaves. While not all of these were technically slaves in our colonies, our ancestors were responsible for all of the alleged 5.8 million slaves. The Portuguese monarchy started enslaving people in 1444, and then led the market in total number of slaves until 1850, and completely stopped in 1861. Although Portugal became a weak colonial power after England, France and others joined in, we were by far the largest country in slave trading.

Finally, let's look at what Portugal has done for reparations. We currently have acknowledged our ancestor’s involvement in the trans-antlantic slave trade and nothing more. Individuals who are currently benefiting from inherited wealth that was accumulated by the trade of slaves should be subject to pay reparations based on how much they inherited. The average Portuguese taxpayer should not have to have their tax dollars go towards reparations when they never were even alive during the slave trade, never profitted off of the slave trade and never supported it. No material reparations are necessary.

Building the Future

Located on the western part of the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal reached the height of its power in the 15th and 16th centuries. It was considered a major maritime force due to its colonial holdings and impressive fleet. However, this status was lost in the 18th century due to a combination of natural disasters, the Napoleonic Wars, and, perhaps most importantly, the independence of Brazil, Portugal’s largest and most profitable colony. By 1975, the rest of its colonies had also become independent and today, the nation’s only overseas holdings are the Azores and Madeira. Portugal is a member of NATO and the European Union. It covers 92,090 square kilometers and has a population of 10,223,150. Most (95%) citizens are Portuguese, while the remaining 5% of the population includes descendants from former colonies. The official language is Portuguese and the majority of the country is Roman Catholic.

Portugal is a semi-presidential republic (and has been since its dictatorship was overthrown in the second half of the 19th century), meaning it has both a president and prime minister. While the president is the chief of state, the prime minister is the head of the government and takes care of most day-to-day issues. The country also has a unicameral legislature. Currently, the socialist party is in charge of the government because it is the party of the prime minister; however, the president belongs to the social-democrat opposition party. While the socialist party is technically the minority party and only won the election through an alliance with other left wing parties, it advocates for more progressive social and civil rights policies. The social-democrat party, on the other hand, tends to align more with traditional Christian values.

Most of Portugal's citizens enjoy a high standard of living due to the country’s strong economy; however, the country does have a high public debt. Despite this issue, Portugal is a major producer of renewable energy and thrives on tourism, banking, and telecommunication. Major exports include cars, petroleum, leather footwear, paper, and tires. The country imports products such as aircraft, medicines, and natural gas.

**Issues that need to be addressed:**

* How does the international community move on from the legacy of slavery?
* How do we establish a relationship between Portuguese-speaking countries that is profitable for all participants?
* How do we acknowledge the legacy of slavery without placing blame on modern-day citizens who played no role in the institution? Portugal does not want to sacrifice its citizens’ quality of life for reparations for atrocities its current government and people did not contribute to.
* How do we balance the call for reparations with the current needs of each nation? Is it possible to offer programs such as job training or scholarships to former colonies as a form of reparations?
* What does a world that has fully addressed slavery look like?

Portugal was the first country to significantly participate in the Atlantic Slave Trade and profit off of the existing process of human trade, common in Africa at the time. Starting in the 15th century, Portugal bought slaves for use on their sugar plantations on Atlantic islands such as Madeira. Later, most slaves were sent across the Atlantic to labor on sugar plantations in Brazil. Originally, Portugal held a monopoly over relationships with West and Central African nations, limiting other countries’ access to the slave trade. However, over time, others gained access to Africa through wars with Portugal. Eventually, Portugal established military alliances with African nations in order to promote fighting between tribes. In turn, these tribal wars led to more prisoners of war, which were then traded to Portugal as slaves. As Portugal focused its colonial ambitions on the New World, it established a massive array of sugar plantations in Brazil. Slaves sent to the colony were subjected to long work days in horrific conditions and harsh punishment for any perceived offenses. However, it is important to note that after Brazil was established, Portugal’s role in the slave trade decreased; while Brazil still received large shipments of slaves, the transaction between slave traders and buyers did not include the country of Portugal. Instead, trades were conducted directly between Brazilian planters and Angolan slave traders. Additionally, Portugal abolished the slave trade in 1836, while Brazil was the last Portugese colony to do so in 1888. Likewise, when democratic rule was established in 1974, ending centuries of monarchies and authoritarian regimes, Portugal let go of its colonies. Its colonial past is directly linked to its history of repressive governments. The establishment of a modern democracy caused Portugal to renounce its colonial holdings and today, the country opposes colonialism.

However, despite the changes in government, the legacy of slavery continues with Portugal to this day. Conservative factions within the government have made it impossible for the country to meaningfully acknowledge its past. These groups have protested the building of monuments addressing slavery and have bristled at the idea of apologizing for the nation’s past. It is important to realize that although Portugal’s current government is very different from the one that perpetuated colonialism and slavery, the country is still linked to the institution. Additionally, the entire world is still affected by the practice, especially those of African descent. One of the most pervasive legacies of slavery is the racism that grew out of it. Racially motivated violence and police brutality towards those of African descent (many of whom have roots in Portugal’s former colonies) exists in Portugal. The country also deals with systemic racism. These discrepancies stem from the treatment of slaves during the colonial era; the fact that Portugal ruled over people of color with an iron fist created a system of racial hierarchy. This hierarchy was the Caste system, ranking people of White Portuguese descent over those of Indigenous American and Black African descent. The legacy of this legal system has persisted to this day in the form of racism in Portugal and its former colonies. However, Portugal is working to address these concerns to negate this legacy through education and reform. Similarly, nations whose citizens were stolen for labor on plantations are still dealing with the economic impacts of slavery. European nations stripped East and Central African groups of their resources and citizens, creating a wealth deficit that persits to this day. However, Brazil’s economy has benefited from colonialism. Without Portugal setting up the nation and opening up Brazil’s markets to ludicrous international trade, Brazil would not be the major world power that it is today, proving that all of Portugal’s actions were not detrimental to its former colonies. Coupled with the fact that Portugal was not involved in many of the worst aspects of slavery in Brazil, this economic growth proves that more than just Portugal’s involvement in colonialism contributed to the circumstances we see today.

In Portugal, one of the most obvious legacies of slavery is the country and government’s refusal to completely acknowledge its role in the process. Education on the subject in schools is limited and tends to gloss over the extent of the atrocities committed by Portugal. The country also has several statues depicting navigators, priests, soldiers, and others who played an active role in the slave trade, glorifying them and their legacies not unlike how American glorify Christopher Columbus. In order to fully cleanse the country from the stain of slavery, these faults need to be acknowledged. Portugal, along with the rest of the world, needs to acknowledge the role it played in the Atlantic Slave Trade. Only by accepting the past can we learn how to avoid repeating it and build a better future.

Therefore, the first step for the international community in preventing slavery in the future is to acknowledge that it existed. However, countries should be sure to distinguish between the actions of its government/people in previous centuries and those of current citizens. It is important to note that in many places, Portugal included, the regimes that facilitated the slave trade no longer exist. So while these nations still need to acknowledge their past and take responsibility for their current actions, they should not try to place the blame on modern-day people who had no role in the slave trade. This way, the world can address the issue without people feeling attacked for something they had no involvement in. In regards to more concrete reparations, Portugal supports strengthening alliance with Portuguese speaking-countries. It feels that by creating programs such as scholarship funds, favorable trading conditions, and policies to help immigrants such as health care coverage, Portugal can help citizens of its former colonies thrive and help integrate them into the developed world. By mediating the gap between the past and the present, Portugal and others can make way for a better, more equitable future.

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