

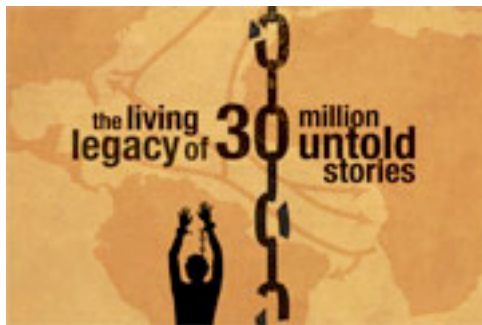


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## On International Day, UN honours legacy of transatlantic slave trade victims



25 March 2011 – The United Nations today capped off a week of activities to honour the memory of the millions of innocent victims who suffered over four centuries due to the transatlantic slave trade, focusing on the legacy of those enslaved and their contributions to the societies in which they lived.

“The living legacy of 30 million untold stories” is the theme of this year’s International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, which is observed annually on [25 March](#).

“By studying slavery, we help to guard against humanity’s most vile impulses,” [Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#) said in a [message](#) to mark the Day. “By examining the prevailing assumptions and beliefs that allowed the practice to flourish, we raise awareness about the continued dangers of racism and hatred.

“And by honouring slavery’s victims – as we do with this International Day, with a permanent memorial that will be established at the UN Headquarters complex in New York, and with the observance of 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent – we restore some measure of dignity to those who had been so mercilessly stripped of it,” he added.

Mr. Ban also [addressed](#) a special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly to mark the Day, at which he said the challenge today is to remember slavery then, and continue the fight against its contemporary versions now, including debt bondage, domestic servitude, forced marriages and trafficking in children.

“This International Day forces us to confront human beings at their worst,” said the Secretary-General.

“But in those who opposed slavery then and now, we also celebrate people at their best: the brave slaves who rose up despite mortal risk; the abolitionists who challenged the status quo; the activists today who fight intolerance and injustice,” he stated. “Whether renowned or unsung, these heroes show that the pursuit of human dignity is the most powerful force of all.”

General Assembly President Joseph Deiss said today’s meeting is an occasion to renew the commitment to education programmes on slavery.

“Public awareness about the causes, consequences, lessons and legacy of the 400-year-long slave trade are key for a better understanding of history and for educating future generations about the dangers of racism and prejudice and about the universality of human rights.

“Furthermore, it is an opportunity to highlight the fact that regrettably, two centuries after the official abolition of slavery, contemporary forms of slavery-like practices persist, and millions of human beings around the world are still being treated as commodities in a variety of ways,” he noted.

The keynote address at the meeting was delivered by the first African-American President of an Ivy League University in the US, Ruth Simmons, President of Brown University. The Brown family, after whom the University is named, were slave traders.

Among the other [events](#) the UN organized over the past week for the fourth annual commemoration of the Day was a one-day global videoconference for teachers, curriculum supervisors and administrators from countries in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and North America focusing on new research, curricula and teaching of the transatlantic slave trade.

The events will culminate with a Living Legacy concert that will be staged in the General Assembly Hall tonight featuring prominent artists such as Melba Moore and Randy Weston of the United States, Morgan Heritage of Jamaica, Aurelio Martinez of Honduras, Khaira Arby of Mali and a cultural group from Equatorial Guinea.

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