



Citizens Uprooting Racism in Bermuda

Racial Justice Platform

November 2012

What is racial justice?



- It is not uncommon to hear the term ‘post-racial,’ or it being alluded to, in public discourse. In its most basic context, it is the notion that race no longer matters in society. Yet, when statistical and social data are analysed, there are stark differences by race, with one race, Whites, fairing significantly better than others. Race therefore matters and we have not moved into a post-racial era. What we propose are the first steps of that thousand-step journey toward racial justice and racial reconciliation.
- In the Bermudian context, we view racial justice as a process where there is healing from past hurts, educational enlightenment, economic opportunity and alignment, a movement towards restorative justice, and measures put in place to ensure its sustainability.
- We further believe that *“racial justice should not only repair the damage that the legacy of racism has created, but should also dismantle the current structuring of racism in ... our laws, policies and culture.”*

Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, 2010

Why now?



- Author James Smith, in his *Analysis of Emancipation Experiences in Bermuda* concludes, *“Bermuda’s post emancipation governments failed to tackle the question of race relations directly, leaving a complex legacy of discrimination and segregation, which the present generations are trying to come to grips with.”* (New Dawn publishers, 1991).
- We have prepared this platform because we believe that if Bermuda is truly to become united, there must be healing, educational advancement, economic justice, and a method put in place for measuring progress, or lack of same. We encourage all candidates to endorse our 15-point plan.

Item 1



- **Support for a Reconciliation Process:** There needs to be a formal, structured, process where the harms and societal divisions caused by slavery, segregation and racism, can be addressed, with a view to healing those harms and mutually determining a path forward that is in the best interest of all.

Item 2



- **Guaranteed Scholarships for Public High School students who go on to graduate from the Bermuda College:** Combined with the current discounts for tuition, we propose the granting of scholarships for two years post graduation, which would cover at least 50% of all associated costs to complete a four-year degree outside of Bermuda, for all who are accepted at accredited institutes of higher learning.

Item 3



- **Revival of a Workforce Equity Bill:** It is accepted in the social justice arena that in order to address historical injustices and its continuing legacies, affirmative action may be necessary, and this tenet is recognised by the Bermuda Constitution. We view a Workforce Equity Bill as a rational step forward and support its revival or new legislation which has similar goals and objectives.

Item 4



- **1% Mortgages through the Bermuda Housing Corporation, 3.5% Mortgages for Expanding Families:** The lower mortgage rates would allow first-time homeowners and expanding families who meet eligibility requirements to afford homes that suit their needs.

Item 5



- **No-claims Discount, Home-Owner Insurance:** The encouragement of a public-private sector run insurance agency that rewards home-owners for no claims, returning funds back to them whilst keeping insurance premiums affordable.

Item 6



- **Establishment of a Necessity Goods Depot:** The Government, through its international connections, can secure bulk goods from overseas and set up a Goods Depot where basic foods and household items can be purchased at affordable prices.

Item 7



- **Capital Gains Tax on Houses over a Determined Annual Rental Value:** Lord Pitt, in making recommendations after the 1977 disturbances stated the following, *“We repeat our belief that in the long run it will prove essential to regulate the transmission of inherited wealth.”*
- It was believed that without such regulation, there would be continued and further economic division among the races. We believe that it is time to close those divisions.

Item 8



- **The Mandatory Reporting of Wealth by Race:** As part of their license, financial institutions would be required to report annually, aggregate net-worth data by race. This would provide the necessary information to determine if the wealth divide is changing.

Item 9



- **Decriminalisation of Marijuana:** We see no need to make criminals out of individuals who use small amounts of marijuana for personal use.

Item 10



- **Repeal of Section 315F of the 2005 Amendment to the Criminal Code:** We have championed for this over the past two years. This section of the Act brings persons into contact with the criminal justice system by stealth, severely limiting their life chances.
- We further believe that the powers granted law enforcement agencies under the 2006 PACE Act are more than adequate to fight crime without putting public safety at risk.

Item 11



- **Greater use of Restorative Practices in the Criminal Justice System:** Bermuda has inherited the Western punitive system of justice. We propose to encourage the implementation of a restorative process that focuses on healing all those affected by the harms crime causes.
- In jurisdictions where this practice has been used, there is strong evidence to suggest that the rate of recidivism decreases.

Item 12



- **Voting Rights Retained for those Legally Detained** : Those imprisoned and who are on parole should retain their voting rights.
- The retention of voting rights for such individuals prevents practices which encourage imprisonment for the sole purpose of disenfranchising sectors of the population.
- Policies that deny voting rights to people who are paying or have paid their debt to society offend fundamental tenets of democracy.

Item 13



- **A Complete Review of the Criminal Justice System:** We have reviewed and analyzed the Tumin Report, 1992, the last publicly-released document on the Criminal Justice System. We are also aware that not all of the recommendations of that review have been implemented. For instance: *“We recommend that offences ... or any laws that appear to discriminate on the basis of race or sex should be reviewed by a working party with a view to the abolition of those which are a legacy of an outdated era.”*
- We believe that far from repealing laws, there have been additions to the Criminal Code which have had the effect of unfairly targeting young Black males compared to other groups. It is long overdue for Bermuda’s criminal justice system, the legislature, the courts and prosecutions, the Police Service, and Corrections to be fully integrated, providing current data that speaks to the overall health and fairness of the system.

Item 14



- **Equality Impact Assessments:** An equality impact assessment involves assessing the likely or actual effects of legislation, policies or services on people in respect of disability, gender and racial equality, etc. It helps us to make sure that the needs of people are taken into account when we develop and implement new legislation, policy or service or when we make a change to current legislation, policy or service.

Item 15



- **Racial Equity Index:** The establishment of such an index will serve as a monitoring vehicle with which to measure by race, progress in education, access to health, and economic opportunity, among other variables; and to inform government and private sector policies that will encourage and enhance racial equity.

What would racial justice look like?



- If we are making strides towards racial equity, the evidence could be in the form of the following:
 - The strong statistical association between family wealth and racial identity declines.
 - Increased system or institution-based efforts to identify ways to reduce structural racism.
 - Each organization having an articulated analysis of structural racism and privilege, and continually shares and strengthens its analysis throughout those in authority and the wider community.
 - Sustained or endowed resources support tracking and sharing of outcomes at regular intervals over time.

What would racial justice look like? (continued)



- Shared commitment to the work of unifying Bermudians as a people, rejecting racism, and finding strength, not resentment, in our differences.
- The creation of an Institute of Reconciliation & Racial Justice to guide the process of racial healing in our homes, schools, neighbourhoods, organizations and places of worship through education and raising awareness.