

**Remarks by Yolanda Renee King at the General Assembly commemorating
to mark the International Day of Remembrance
of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade
25 March 2024, New York**

Good morning

Thank you for introducing me. I would like to express my gratitude to the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Dennis Francis, for the invitation. It is a great honour for me to join you in commemorating this International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. I stand before you today as the proud descendant of enslaved people who resisted slavery and racism.

Like my grandparents, Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, my parents, Martin Luther King III and Andrea Waters King, have also dedicated their lives to pursuing an end to racism and all forms of bigotry and discrimination. Like them, I am committed to the fight against racial injustice and to carrying on the legacy of my grandparents, who championed social justice and equality.

I am here today, inspired by my grandparents, to be a change-maker – to make the world a better place – and to help realize my grandparents' dream. I am proud you have visited. I am dedicated to confronting issues that challenge our world. It is up to all of us to make the world a better place. And I use my voice to encourage young people to get involved, to get informed and to do whatever they want to make some change.

I am appreciative of the opportunity to observe this day with you, as it serves as an important reminder of the transatlantic slave trade and the suffering that arose from it. As a descendant of enslaved people in the family trees of both my father and mother, my ancestors were among the lucky ones who survived March 25, this day of reflection to remember the millions of men, women and children who suffered and perished as a result of slavery.

We are here to honour the estimated 7 million enslaved people who died aboard ships, making it one of the darkest chapters in our world history. Earlier this morning, I visited the Ark of Return, a powerful memorial that offers an opportunity to reflect on the legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It was a deeply moving and thought-provoking experience, equally memorable as my first visit back in our equitable world.

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As my grandmother, Coretta Scott King, who was an alternate United Nations delegate herself, said back in 2004 when she spoke at the Harriet Tubman Museum, the sons and daughters of the African diaspora have an ongoing important and powerful story to tell and will be heard. And then she went on to say our African ancestors came to these shores in shackles and we were brutalized, oppressed, and suffered unspeakable cruelties for centuries.

But we had something our captors could not destroy. Try as they did, we had an indomitable spirit that somehow overcame this terrible legacy and found noble expression in our arts and our achievements in every field of human accomplishment. Her words capture the stories and struggles of our ancestors, whose resilience and resistance paved the way for future generations.

So it is crucial that we shine a light on the past to raise awareness about the historical impact of slavery, and more importantly its lasting effects on our society today. It is a striking reminder that we are still struggling to eradicate systemic racism, inequality, violence, and poverty that continue to afflict communities worldwide. Regrettably, we cannot even say that slavery is a thing of the past.

In fact, the United Nations has estimated that as many as 50 million people are victims of slavery worldwide today. And broader definitions of slavery place the number at over 100

commitment, let's today affirm the bonds of interdependence that unite freedom and justice-loving people everywhere. And all of the young people in the world should embrace the future with hope, optimism, and radiant assurance that we shall overcome. Sisters and brothers of all races, religions and nations, united and determined, we will build the beloved community for all of humanity—a worldhouse.