HOW WE SHARE THE FUTURE? ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY & INCLUSION TO THE YEAR 2030

Imagine 2030. September 21st. The Annual UN gathering in New York will be addressed by Drs. Usain Bolt and Shelly Ann Fraser, Co-Chairs of the Board of TRAXHAX, the $B Gaming Software company founded in Jamaica in 2016 following their record setting performance in the Olympics. The Company was started via creation of an app that allowed gamers around the world to play soccer; run track; and do steeplechase races against the world’s fastest man and woman in a rich virtual environment. As a result of the jobs created in the animation divisions based in Trench Town, Jamaica and, Jacmel, Haiti, these communities are now experiencing the lowest unemployment rates since 1970. A total of 10,000 have been created as a result of the Creative Communities Initiative launched as part of the UN Decade of African Descendants. Funding for the establishment of the animation cluster in these two communities was secured in part from the Creative Futures Fund established in 2016 to support community development in African descendant communities. Meanwhile, other positive developments in Latin America and the Caribbean include: the reduction in the spread of HIV/AIDs owing to the application of increased research on individualized medicine in Black communities; the securing of over 100 IP Patents for traditional medicines from various maroon communities in the Americas; and the assignment of collective land titles and land rights for same traditional communities. While there is still much left to be done, with respect to inequality, it is fair to say the UN Decade of African Descendants has made a sizeable dent in addressing key issues that can be directly traced back to the legacy of slavery and racial exclusion. Is such a story possible? What is our collective Vision for the year 2030? What will be different because we have convened the UN Decade for African Descendants? OR because we convene in Brazil to further our collective journey through the activation of this space for social experimentation? What is our vision of the future we want?

Widening poverty gaps, food shortages, climate change, economic crises, armed conflicts, rising unemployment, popular unrest, and other pressing challenges confront our world today. By the year 2030, there will be 1B people in Latin America and over 50 percent of them will be of African descent. By 2030, without policies that focus on the need to address inequality and advance equity, we can expect to see a world in which climate change and the ever increasing cognitive power of computer technology has created dramatic changes in every aspect of life including: Water Security; Food Security; Energy Security; and Job Security. The unfettered application of automation and artificial intelligence focused on the traditional bottom line could contribute to increasing inequality and insecurity as more of the region’s 100 million unemployed people take up residence in the underground economy.

Earlier this year, the UN adopted 17 sustainable development goals. Among these goals, Goals 8 and 10 are particularly relevant for racial and ethnic minorities and disenfranchised communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. What is not spelt out is how countries, conglomerates and communities will make good any of the noble goals spelt out. What is sure is that a new paradigm for the construction of a more secure human future is sadly needed. With the rapid technological advancements of the past two decades (e.g. computer technology, robotics, artificial intelligence), we have seen economic inequalities grow at alarming rates. Immense wealth is being created and “jobless” economic recoveries are the norm. It used to be that capitalism’s “creative destruction,” - - that “process of industrial mutation that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one” has historically garnered a net positive for society. In the past technological innovations have eliminated jobs for many, but has also created new industries and jobs alongside the innovation. However, the balance seems to be
shifting in another direction. Today’s information, cognitive, bio, and nano-technologies have already begun to eliminate more jobs than they create.

Compare the “big three” automakers back in 1990 (GM, Ford, Chrysler) to the big three tech companies of today. In 1990, these companies brought in a total $36 billion in revenue and employed over one million workers, compared to Apple, Facebook, and Google today, which together bring in more than one trillion dollars in revenue, but employ only 137,000 people. In this next decade, we anticipate the rise of automation will increase. According to an Oxford University Study up to 47% of jobs may be computerized in the next 10 to 20 years. UNEMPLOYMENT 2020

“There are warning signs,” said Elizabeth Tinoco, the ILO’s regional director. “The concern is that we are creating fewer jobs… at least one million (fewer) jobs have been created”.

The ILO said urban unemployment rate of young people remains between 2 and 4 times higher than that for adults and the unemployment rate for women is 30 per cent higher than that for men, and 47 per cent of urban workers work in the informal economy. The ILO is calling on countries in the region to prepare for the possibility of a labour market which has to take specific measures to stimulate employment and protect individual incomes. Even as technology becomes more affordable and internet access seems increasingly ubiquitous, a “digital divide” between rich and poor remains. The rich and educated are still more likely than others to have good access to digital resources. The digital divide could have especially far-reaching consequences when it comes to education, access to health, access to participatory governance if policies to ensure net neutrality are not observed. For children in low-income school districts, inadequate access to technology can hinder them from learning the tech skills that are crucial to success in tomorrow’s economy.

Thus, the future may become even more unequal as technology continues to replace labor and leave the masses unemployed and ownerless. And, given the disproportionate number of people of African descent in the unemployed masses in LAC, the need to include a consideration of the emerging future in our design of alternative policies and programs to assist us in securing a thriving future is paramount.

It is said that “Development is a human right”. Everyone is “entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized”. This was proclaimed on 4th December 1986, and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. But the Right to Development can be realized only when there is a solid national and international accountability framework for development that respects this right and enacts policies and metrics that measure the gaps in opportunity and equity that causes the pervasive inequality in the region. For excluded communities, application of the integral development framework is proposed as a means to enabling development effectiveness. This framework begins with the twin pillar of Identity and Empowerment and then address Equality and Equity.

A key factor then in the Development Agenda of the DECADE of African Descendants must be about Identity and Empowerment.

When I claimed as my job title “Development Equity Specialist” in the inter American Development Bank, there was no such job title in the institution. However, my acting in the tradition of “fake it, until you make it”, created the belief in many that there was such a job function and those an interest
and purpose to our work with the communities of African descent. Equity represents a belief that there are some things which people should have, that there are basic needs that should be fulfilled, that burdens and rewards should not be spread too divergently across the community, and that policy should be directed with impartiality, fairness and justice towards these ends. Equity means that there should be a minimum level of income and environmental quality below which nobody falls. Within a community it usually also means that everyone should have equal access to community resources and opportunities. It also means that no individuals or groups of people should be asked to carry a greater environmental burden than the rest of the community as a result of government or private sector actions. It is generally agreed that equity implies a need for fairness (not necessarily equality) in the distribution of national economic gains and losses, and the entitlement of everyone to an acceptable quality and standard of living. Equity is about the creation of a just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Equity is supposed to be a central ethical principle of sustainable development. There is need for decision making equity. In a myriad of ways the approaches to sustainable development advocated and taken up by governments in many countries, either reinforce or exacerbate inequities in those countries. If equity is to be taken seriously then new ways of decision-making must be found that enable the multifaceted values to be fully considered and heeded. There is need for Health Equity; Education Equity; Environmental Equity; Economic Equity; Digital Equity – A leveling of the playing field so that more people can experience better lives.

Most recently the America Quarterly’s 2015 Social Inclusion Index announced that they have now included a new variable ethno-racial indicator to help assess access to information about Social Inclusion in the LAC region. This was done with assistance from the Gender and Diversity Division at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which again gives credence to my belief that naming the thing you want is an important first step to seeing the change we want come to fruition. For early attempts proposed back in 2009 were met with the push back as to what could be captured, given the challenges in racial identification. Yet here we are. Not perfect but at least a proxy for allowing us to measure what matters. This variable is based on three criteria: the existence of race and ethnicity questions in national census or household surveys; the existence of inclusion legislation; and the existence of affirmative action laws for Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. The top five, in order of rank: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, the U.S., and Panama. The scorecards and rankings by variable provide a snapshot of each country’s level of inclusion, how it compares to others in the hemisphere, where progress has been made, and where public policies are still lagging. But close examination reveals how entire segments of the population in some countries are crippled by unequal access to formal jobs, education, income, and rights. And it is no surprise that Women and Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities lag behind in almost every variable.

In the case of the English Speaking Caribbean, where people of African descent are a numerical majority, but wealth and power remains concentrated in the hands of minority ethnic elites – White, Syrian, Indian, Chinese -- framing the challenge of economic inequality through the lens of economic justice might be instructive.

Economic justice is a set of moral principles for building economic institutions, the ultimate goal of which is to create an opportunity for each person to create a sufficient material foundation upon which to have a dignified, productive, and creative life beyond economics. Like every system, economic justice involves input, output, and feedback for restoring harmony or balance between input and output. Within the system of economic justice as defined by Louis Kelso and Mortimer Adler, there are three essential and interdependent principles: Participative Justice (the input principle), Distributive Justice (the out-take principle), and Social Justice (the feedback principle). Like the
legs of a three-legged stool, if any of these principles are weakened or missing, the system of economic justice will collapse.

**Participative Justice**

"Participative Justice" describes how one makes "input" to the economic process in order to make a living. It requires equal opportunity in gaining access to private property in productive assets as well as equality of opportunity to engage in productive work. The principle of participation does not guarantee equal results, but requires that every person be guaranteed by society’s institutions the equal human right to make a productive contribution to the economy, both through one’s labor (as a worker) and through one’s productive capital (as an owner). Thus, this principle rejects monopolies, special privileges, and other exclusionary social barriers to economic self-reliance.

**Distributive Justice**

"Distributive Justice" defines the "output" or "out-take" rights of an economic system matched to each person’s labor and capital inputs. Through the distributional features of private property within a free and open marketplace, distributive justice becomes automatically linked to participative justice, and incomes become linked to productive contributions. The principle of distributive justice involves the sanctity of property and contracts. It turns to the free and open marketplace, not government, as the most objective and democratic means for determining the just price, the just wage, and the just profit.

Many confuse the distributive principles of justice with those of charity. Charity involves the concept "to each according to his needs," whereas "distributive justice" is based on the idea "to each according to his contribution." Confusing these principles leads to endless conflict and scarcity, forcing government to intervene excessively to maintain social order. Distributive justice follows participative justice and breaks down when all persons are not given equal opportunity to acquire and enjoy the fruits of income-producing property.

**Social Justice**

"Social Justice" is the “feedback” principle that detects distortions of the input and/or out-take principles and guides the corrections needed to restore a just and balanced economic order for all. This principle is violated by unjust barriers to participation, by monopolies or by some using their property to harm or exploit.

Economic Justice in the CARICOM Caribbean would ensure Equity in access to government contracting opportunities or loosening of state capture of the “traditional families” which are said to control these small economies.

**NEXT STEPS**

So what do we do in the next ten years to make a dent in advancing equity, to ensuring that countries in the LAC region move forward in the attainment of their Sustainable Development Goals. I lend my voice to the chorus, in articulating a Call for SMART Development Agenda -- Specific, Measurable, Aspirational, Realistic, Tactical.
SDG 8 and SDG 10 offer some guides as to how we might align the current interests of the status quo. SDG 8 asks to: *Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all*; while SDG 10 asks to: *Reduce inequality within and among countries*. Sustainable economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow people to have quality jobs that stimulate the economy while not harming the environment. Job opportunities and decent working conditions are also required for the whole working age population. Targets include:

- Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors
- Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services
- Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all
- By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization
- By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
- By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products
- By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

There has been significant strides made towards lifting people out of poverty. However, inequality still persists and large disparities remain in access to health and education services and other assets within countries, and in some cases has risen. Economic growth is not sufficient to reduce poverty if it is not inclusive and if it does not involve the four dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental and cultural – which concur with the integral development framework – identity, empowerment, equality and equity. Ten SMART Goals for consideration as proposed.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

I. **COMMUNITY DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT**

Recognizing the family and the community as the basic building block unit of need for economic and social security, establish a community development framework that would be basis for development investments in marginalized communities. This would include: education and workforce training; healthcare; housing, micro-enterprise aimed at providing basic goods and services including food, health, energy services; community based financial institutions,
II. CREATIVE FUTURES AGENDA
Recognizing the urgent need for job creation and the opportunities afforded in the creative sector, establish a Creative Futures Agenda that will:

a) Support education and training that can develop talent needed for the creative industry
b) Establish grants and investment funds to target businesses in the creative economy that could provide self-employment and jobs

III. ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL GENUINE PROGRESS INDICATOR
Recognizing the impact of automation on low skilled labor, and unemployment, promote the adoption of genuine progress indicator that takes into account racial and social inequality.

IV. ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENT FUND for COMMUNITY BASED DEVELOPMENT
This Fund would be operated in a way to optimize participation of leaders from the African descendant community in all levels of the fund management. This method would mark a departure from status quo where mainstream as fund managers, fund promoters and marketers, project sponsors and reviewers. The fund’s operational credo and mandate should include

V. CREATE FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS FOR SECURIZATION OF COMMUNALLY HELD LANDS
This would create new paths for economic development for traditional rural and maroon communities that would allow them to access finance for development.

VI. ESTABLISHMENT DIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCILS at relevant International Organizations. Create High Level Diversity Advisory Councils at the relevant development agencies charged with the task of promoting development with equity -- World Bank – Regional Vice Presidency for Latin America; Inter-American Development Bank; OAS; Accounting for Empowerment:

VII. CONDUCT A TWO YEAR STUDY ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE within the Caribbean with a View to enabling greater openness for small and micro-businesses for the largely African Majority.

VIII. AFRICAN CENTERED EDUCATION
Develop and Require Education for Identity: Include in World History Syllabus African History Prior to Colonial Encounter; Education about History from African viewpoint.

IX. DIGITAL EQUITY
Require policies that ensure access to the digital economy that allows participation of traditionally excluded groups.

X. PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE Promote Diversity and Participatory Programming that Democratize and make more inclusive Government Agencies which support policy making. This would address issues of decision-making equity