

## 'Pardon Us for Slavery,' Says Brazil's Lula in Africa

Contributed by Mylena Fiori  
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Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva asked Africans to forgive the suffering inflicted during the era of slavery. "I have no responsibility for what happened in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. But I think it is good policy to tell the people of Senegal and Africa: Pardon us for what we did," he said

The forgiveness plea happened during a visit to the island of Gorée, four kilometers by boat from the capital of Senegal, Dakar.

Lula declared that it is very important for Brazilian children to learn that, if Africa is a backward region nowadays in comparison with the developed world, it is not because Africans lack competence or intelligence.

"It is because for three centuries the people who were strongest and most able to work were taken away from this territory," he said.

The special Secretary of Policies to Promote Racial Equality, Minister Matilde Ribeiro, explained to the President of Senegal that her Secretariat was created by the current Administration to valorize Brazil's black population.

The Minister also pointed out that, over the course of Brazilian history, black Brazilians were taught "to forget the negative consequences of slavery. It is very important to recover this part of our history."

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Gorée was the base from which slaves departed for other countries. Today it has 1,200 inhabitants and a museum on slavery.

There are records there that children were exchanged for mirrors, and virgins or men who weighed over 60 kilograms were worth a barrel of rum.

"These people suffered to help build my country," the President remarked, eliciting an emotional response from his entourage and the others who were listening to his speech.

Lula was paid homage and received a Gorée Pilgrim certificate, given to those who visit the island.

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