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Barbados Prime Minister Supports Removal of Lord Nelson's Statute From National Heroes Square

Race Relations / **Published On June 23, 2020 08:21 AM /**

Staff Consortium **June 23, 2020**

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BRIDGETOWN, CMC – The Barbados government has said while it is in favor of removing the statue of Lord Nelson from National Heroes Square in the heart of the capital, it believes also that this is a decision that must involve the population.

“This is a government that works with people and consults people. I will strongly encourage Barbadians to follow me on this issue when we have the conversation,” Prime Minister Mia Mottley said in response to calls by the Caribbean Movement for Peace and Integration for the removal of the statue of the British naval commander and slavery sympathizer erected in March 1813.

“I, like you, believe that National Heroes Square should be the home of a National Hero of Barbados,” Mottley said during the weekend three-hour long edition of “We Gatherin 2020”.

An online petition calling for the removal of the statue led by former journalist Alex Downes has already garnered more than 10, 000 signatures and Mottley said that more than a decade ago she led the call for the removal of the controversial statue as Minister of Culture.

She told the Zoom event that after much push back then, a committee set up to consider the matter proposed the creation of a naval maritime museum to house the statue and this could still be considered.

“The notion of a naval museum, a maritime museum- was very much on the cards I think that is where we are likely to go back after consultation, “ Mottley said, adding “ whether the museum [the Barbados National Museum] is prepared and can take it and what are the costs, and what are the opportunities to relocate it.

“That now has to be investigated as part of the conversation. But the Government is not going to definitively state a position without appropriate consultation, “she added.

Sport, Youth and Culture Minister, John King, has sought to clear the air on reports that he was not in favour with the removal of the statue.

King said that he only rejected the notion that the statue should be thrown into the water, insisting that his original comments were taken out of context.

“So there was no push back from anyone about the idea of removing the statue from Heroes Square. We understand fully well what Nelson would represent and how people feel about it but really and truly as a mature society and mature people they are certain ways that we have behaved in the past as responsible citizens,“ he said.

Several groups worldwide, including those in the Caribbean, have been calling for the removal of statues they said glorify the slave trade and other acts of racism. The calls have gathered steam following the protests in the United States and major global cities after the African American, George Floyd was killed by four white police officers last month.