

THE CONCEPT OF INTERNATIONAL BLACK POWER

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On this *Africa Day of Conscience*,² I would like to title my speech, "International Black Power," to explain why the concept of Black Power must become an international concept and why it must, especially, become a reality.

The concept of Black Power is based upon several factors -- one is that we are all Africans; we are not Afro-Americans or African-Americans; we, the Black people in the United States, are Africans inside the United States. There is no need for the terms "African-American" or "Afro-American" because the suffix "American" places us within the context of the United States Government as American citizens, which we know we are not. It is extremely important that our brothers in Africa begin to understand and to use the phrase, "the Africans inside the United States." It is important that all of us see ourselves as Africans inside the United States and speak especially to the other Africans inside the United States who come from the African continent.

Why is this important? It is important because we hope that as a result of your experiences in the United States you have had a taste of the racism which permeates this particular society, and if there is anybody, any African who comes from the continent, who can understand the situation of your brothers and sisters inside the United States, it is you. It is very difficult for an African who goes to school in England or who goes to school in France to understand what the Africans inside the United States have to undergo. Therefore, you must try to understand the conditions under which we are living. It is paramount to get rid of the concept that we are Negroes, Afro-Americans or African-Americans: we are Africans living inside the United States, and that has certain implications which we will talk about later on.

Not only are there Africans living inside the United States, but there are Africans living throughout the western hemisphere. Take the situation of Brazil: there is a tremendous African population in Brazil, which formerly set up African empires like the Pel Melo Empire in the eighteenth century, which had foreign ambassadors throughout South America; there are enclaves of African people who have consistently resisted western domination, western colonial experience.

While we may not know much about the people in South America who are African, nevertheless, it becomes important for us to understand that these are our brothers who live in South America, in the Antilles and in the Caribbean. Why the Antilles? Very few of us know that Martinique and Guadeloupe were way-stations for the French when they took trinkets and services from France to the west coast of Africa, unloaded them and took political prisoners. We are not slaves -- that is another concept that we must get rid of; the Africans in the United States came as political prisoners. It is true that our history says that slaves were taken, but we were actually political prisoners, brought over by a western colonial empire.

France picked up the Africans, transported them as political prisoners, and brought them to the Antilles, to Guadeloupe, and to Martinique. They then unloaded the political prisoners and forced them into servitude. This is what they called slavery: they forced the Africans into a servitude by arms, and took the rum and the sugar from the Antilles back to France. There was a three-way agreement, and anybody who owned a ship was making a tremendous profit; first of all, he had a full ship going to Africa; secondly, he had a full ship from Africa to the Antilles, Guadeloupe and Martinique; and thirdly, he had a full ship going from the Colony into France. Now, it is the surplus wealth created by situations like this which has helped to build western civilization, or the antithesis, western barbarism. Our blood, our sweat and our labor have helped to build these western, white barbaric countries. If you check the record you will find that a lot of the manufacturing industries, much of the industrial base of these countries, developed from the wealth which people gained through us.

Let us delve further into what we call white, western, barbaric countries. Consider Holland, which went eastward and took Indonesia; consider Belgium and the Congo; consider Sweden which even today has a tremendous investment in South Africa; consider Spain and Portugal, France and Great Britain. We see that these white, western civilizations, which we should begin to call white, western, barbaric countries, have been able to maintain their power, their affluence and their richness because of the exploitation of the third world and

especially of Africans.

Therefore, we say that the *Africa Day of Conscience* must become a day when we talk of international black power because the apex of power, guided by the United States, revolves around the western, barbaric countries in relationship to the exploited peoples of the third world. In other words, Africa today, which still suffers from colonialism and imperialism and neo-colonialism, must begin to wrench power from the white, western civilizations. To do this, it must have power, which means that the Black Power we are talking about in the United States has to become an international concept.

When I was in France I encountered resistance to this concept that we are Africans; students from the so-called former French colonies did not accept the concept of Black Power. Perhaps there is revolutionary Black Power and there is reactionary Black Power. We must not ignore the fact that some of our brothers and sisters who are leaders of certain African countries, like certain people within this country, are espousing the policy of reactionary Black Power. Hastings Banda, for instance, who is the Prime Minister of Malawi, talks about establishing relations with South Africa where millions of Black people are being exploited. Thurgood Marshall went to Africa and said, "well, Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael don't represent Black people in the United States," trying to disavow these brothers.

The concept of Black Power is a mass concept and it poses a threat to the existing power structures in many African countries, as it does in the United States, because certain leaders of African countries are really just agents of the colonial powers. If Black Power became a mass concept, these leaders would no longer have a following. Let us take the situation of the Central African Republic, where uranium was just discovered. Before the French granted independence to its colonies, it made sure that there was a clause in each constitution which said that they could send the army into these countries whenever they wanted to. Now how can a country be independent if another country can send in the army in case of a riot? That is like talking about controlling the Black communities when the United States Federal Government can send in the troops. You cannot control the Black community unless you have the power to keep all other forces out. Nevertheless, when there are disturbances in former French colonies, the French can send in the red berets.

The same thing is true in other African countries: their armies are controlled by foreign powers. This stems from the process of negotiated independence. Most of the countries (except Guinea and Algeria) above southern

Africa are countries which got their independence by negotiation. There were disturbances in these countries and the nationalist leaders demanded negotiations with the colonial government in order to establish their own governments. France and Britain, the most colonial governments, agreed but insisted upon maintaining economic strongholds.

By negotiating their independence rather than achieving it by armed struggle, then, the nationalist leaders have made it possible for these strongholds on the economy to exist. Thus in Kenya the red book of Mao Tse Tung is banned today and the Congo is plagued by problems. Even in Algeria today there are many people who say that one of the problems was that the negotiations came too early and that they concerned independence and not the kind of control the Algerians would have over their entire economy. When Ghana got its independence, I hailed it; and when other countries got their independence, I hailed it; but the implications of this phenomenon of negotiated independence, by which the colonial powers are maintaining economic strongholds and even control over the military, are now becoming clear. Because of negotiated independence, there exists a situation in which the formerly colonized people really do not have control. This means that the kind of struggle for liberation which is going on in the southern half of Africa is extremely important and must be supported.

Our organization has been trying to create an Afro-American skills bank. We have pointed out to several governments that inside the United States there are many people who consider themselves Africans, who are Africans regardless of what others may say, and who have acquired technical skills. The Africans living inside the United States are the most highly industrialized group of Africans in the world. We may have a bad mentality and some of us may be agents for the CIA and the FBI and the police department, but nevertheless we are the most highly industrialized Africans living in the world. This situation exists not by our choice, but because of the historical process by which we were taken from Africa and forced to live in and build this industrial giant.

Many of us are willing to take these skills and put them in the service of the continent. I know thousands of people who are willing to spend two or three years in Africa working to develop its resources. This purpose is to free Africa to some extent from the neo-colonialism that exists. The program has not yet been implemented primarily because of the neo-colonialism manifest in such organizations as the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps is nothing but an extension of the State Department, and it is also a method by which intelligence is gathered from African countries. Our program would have been directly opposed to the Peace Corps and it is precisely for this reason that it has not been implemented.

The United States has its tentacles in many African countries and is trying to extend these tentacles. It is certainly opposed to an organization like SNCC, which intends to institute a program to send Africans from the United States to work in Africa for a period of two to four years without pay. Thus, when I went to the Congo for a meeting of the OAU, a very high official told me that I was a political problem to the U. S. government because I represented an organization talking about Black Power in the United States.

I trust that all of us understand what has happened throughout South Africa; we all understand that the United States Government is deeply committed to maintaining the apartheid system of government which exists in South Africa. If it were not for United States banks—the Chase Manhattan Bank, the First National City Bank of New York—which invested a tremendous amount of money in South Africa right after the Sharpeville Massacre, the government might have faltered. In addition, the United States is now buying arms from South Africa: the economy of South Africa is being so highly industrialized that we are now buying some arms from it. South Africa poses a great threat to all of Africa. It has the fourth largest air force; it has an air strip about fifteen miles from Zambia; it is sending its men up into Mozambique, to the Teta Province; it is sending people up to Zimbabwe (South Rhodesia) to fight against the freedom fighters. Its influence is being extended throughout the continent of Africa and it operates as a bulwark.

I have some concrete suggestions as to what we can do. First, all of the Africans inside the United States must get passports. Second, each African in the United States should make trips to Africa. We have been taught certain myths about Africa and many of us have overcome this brainwashing consciously, but many people have not. For instance, it is difficult for me to explain the beauty of Dar es Salaam (which I think is the most beautiful city that I have ever seen) or to talk about the highlands or the hills of Zambia and Kenya that range from five to eight thousand feet above sea level, because this is a situation very few people encounter. The white settlers wanted to stay because it is so beautiful. There are other areas of Africa that people could talk about, such as West Africa or the Sahara. These are things that individuals see and they are independent of the political situation.

It is our continent and we should visit it. It does not take me money: one can go for \$700 on a twenty-one day trip. One can go from here to Dar es Salaam, and on the way he can stop in Algiers, Cairo, Addis Ababa, Nairobi, and Lusaka. For a couple of hundred dollars more one can return.

the west coast. An African consciousness within the United States must be developed to the point where we are consciously willing to make tours of Africa, in groups of fours or fives. It is extremely important to do this in order to see certain things for ourselves.

The third thing of course, is the whole question of the publication of ideas. One of the ways that the white man has kept us divided and colonized is that valid and useful ideas circulating within the United States are not circulating in Africa. The reverse is also true: for example very few people in the United States get to read the ideas of Sekou Toure, who is one of the great thinkers on the western coast. Very few people get a chance to become familiar with the ideas circulating in Africa concerning African countries after independence: certain traps of neo-colonialism, certain traps of the governmental parties, and certain traps that the bourgeois parties can set, for which the masses of people must be on the look-out. We charge the *Pan-African Journal* with the task of bridging this gap.

We in the United States must begin writing for *African journals* and our brothers who are here from Africa must help us to get these ideas printed and circulated to the masses of the people. With these ideas we will be monitoring the USIA. The United States Information Agency spends billions of dollars to propogandize among our African brothers and to tell them that we in the United States are making on the average, \$7,000 to \$9,000 a year. It publishes a monthly magazine called *Topic*; in the first issue there was a story on how Mrs. Hamer and Bob Moses had won two seats at the Democratic convention for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964. Anybody who knows anything about the 1964 challenge to the Democratic Party knows that these people did not gain seats. But because the M.F.D.P. mounted a massive attack on racism in the United States, the USIA had to explain this phenomenon to Africa. If the CIA, the USIA and the United States Government can murder thousands of people in Viet Nam, they can also lie about what we are doing.

Furthermore, there was an article in the same issue of *Topic* about the Bronx High School of Science, asserting that it is a highly integrated school. That is also a lie. Clearly if they can lie *and* kill, they can falsify their reporting of what we are doing. The attempt of this propaganda is to convince Africans that we are living well in this country, and that African society should become consuming, capitalistic and commercial like that of the United States.

The Agency of International Development, the International Institute of Education, the Rockefeller Foundation and the African American Institute, etc. give scholarships to African students. Why do they give them? There are many reasons and motives -- but partly because they are playing a percentage game. The donors are the big corporations and companies which exploit African national resources and raw material. Recently President Nielson of the A.A.I. said that as long as we have six thousand African students in the United States, we are competing with the socialist countries; we can say that the United States is training an equal number, and many of them will go back home favorable to the United States. Any student who comes to the United States and gets an advanced degree can become a functionary in an African country today, because he may be in a position to utilize the knowledge acquired here. He may become junior minister of commerce or minister of the interior. Therefore, those given scholarships by these organizations should be wary about any efforts of any of them to use them to the detriment of their interests. (I tell you brother, take what is good for you and your country but do not fall into temptations of accepting every one who claims to be for your cause.) Ed.

The CIA gathers intelligence and extends its influence in many ways. Therefore, publications must go to Africa and we must travel to Africa. There is no mystery why Vice-President Humphrey went to Africa or why he took Thurgood Marshall with him, as well as fifteen other "Negroes." He was trying to counter the impression that inside the United States there is a developing African consciousness. He was trying to say that Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown are just on extreme wings, that they do not represent anything. There is no mystery why every U. S. Cultural Affairs Officer (rather than Ambassador) south of the Sahara is black: the Cultural Affairs Officer has the most contact with the African masses, and the United States Government is consistently trying to recruit us. Many of us are falling for it, going as agents for the CIA as Cultural Affairs Officers.

The fourth thing that we in the United States can do, in addition to going to Africa, publishing ideas and monitoring the CIA and USIA, is to institute African history classes in Africa as well as in the United States. The history of our people, the history of slave trade, the history of people being taken from Africa as political prisoners is not known inside Africa. In the African schools where Africans control the government, the history of the people who were taken from their country is not taught. Therefore, there is no mystery why Africans who come to the United States still have the colonialist idea that the Negro in the United States is not like the African. This is a deliberate pattern. It

is a deliberate technique of the colonizing process, a deliberate technique that the United States uses to keep people separate. Thus, last year a Black Peace Corps volunteer said that he felt better around the white settlers that used to control Kenya than he did around the Kenyans. We fall for this idea because the groundwork is there -- it exists in Africa. One tribe or nation feels itself to be superior to another. Division is a deliberate colonial technique and therefore Africans feel that Negroes in the United States don't like them.

We inside the United States must begin promoting African history. In addition, I think that the brothers from the continent must make a conscious effort to make contact as many of us are trying to do here on this *Day of African Conscience*. Somebody has to break through this barrier because it creates a vicious circle. If the Africans don't like the Negroes and the Negroes don't like the Africans and they don't speak to each other, when is it going to end? We have to make a deliberate effort to end the vicious circle. We hope this organization will continue to have and invite us to this type of dialogue.

There are many brothers from the continent who can teach us about contemporary African affairs and can teach at some of the liberation schools which are being set up throughout this particular country. But this contact has to be a conscious effort, Africans have to be conscious about saying, "well, look man, I have four years in this country and I'm going to try to impart my knowledge to as many Africans inside the United States as I can." Which means that they have to consciously go where Black people are. The same is true for us. One of the reasons that we are here tonight is that we are consciously trying to break down the barrier. It is being broken down: look at the brothers and sisters in African dress and natural hair who are here from the United States because they represent an attempt to recognize that we are Africans who have an African consciousness and who are trying to break down the myth created by colonialism that we are Negroes.

The fifth thing that we in the United States can do is to use our technical skills in African countries. It is up to the brothers from Africa to go back and to begin mass movements in their countries in behalf of those of us who live in the United States. You must ask your government why no African has stood up in the United Nations to speak about the conditions of Africans inside the United States. A few have said it in passing but not one major speech has been made. Yet, Arthur Goldberg has made a major speech about the Jews in the USSR because he is the United States Ambassador to the United Nations and he is a Jew, and he is concerned about Jews in the Soviet Union. Not one African has stood up in the United Nations and made a major speech about us, though. This

is a result of the neo-colonialism and the negotiated independence of African nations about which we talked earlier.

Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee

Celebration of the successful launching of the Pan African Journal and the recognition of our brothers and sisters during the Africa Day of Conscience-held at Columbia University, May 18, 1968, under the sponsorship of the Pan-African Students Organization in the Americas. This concept of the African Day of Conscience originated from M. D. Kagombe,