D.C.: Thousands rally for African liberation

By Omari Musa

WASHINGTON—Nearly 10,000 people marched and rallied here May 28 to mark African Liberation Day.

The largest demonstration was organized by the All-African Peoples Revolutionary party (AAPRP). More than 3,000 marchers stepped off from Malcolm X Park chanting "Africa must be free" and "We are an African people."

The march moved down Fourteenth Street through the Black community, where hundreds more joined in. As the demonstration passed the White House, chants of "Africa for the Africans" and "Down with Zionism" rang out. A small group of marchers demanded "U.S. out of Africa."

By the time the march returned to Malcolm X Park, now about 5,000 strong, it was greeted by another 2,500 people waiting for the rally to begin.

It was the largest African Liberation Day in Washington since 25,000 rallied at the Washington Monument in 1972.

The featured speaker at the rally was AAPRP leader Stokely Carmichael. "The reason the AAPRP organized African Liberation Day," he said, "was to build the AAPRP and rededicate African people all over the world for the struggle to free Africa."

Other speakers at the rally were: David Sibeko of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa); Andrés Torres of the Puerto Rican Socialist party; and Vernon Bellecourt of the American Indian Movement.

Brother Damu Smith of the National Wilmington Ten Defense Committee read a message from Rev. Ben Chavis on behalf of the ten framed-up North Carolina civil rights activists.

Chavis's message demanded the release of imprisoned South African nationalists Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, as well as the new victims of apartheid justice detained since the Soweto rebellion last June. He scored the maneuvers of the United States and Great Britain to impose neocolonial governments on the people in Namibia and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), and demanded Black majority rule for all of southern Africa.

A representative of the Eritreans for Liberation in North America explained the Eritrean struggle for self-determination against the military regime in Ethiopia.

A Brazilian student told of the beginnings of a Black power movement there:

"We live under a brutal military dictatorship in Brazil. People of African descent make up the majority of the population, but before, we were afraid to talk about African pride. Now some students are learning the lessons of the Black power movement that developed in the U.S. during the 1960s."

Representatives of the Iranian Students Association, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), CASA, and the Organization of Haitian Democratic Forces also addressed the rally.

The AAPRP had hosted a conference the previous day. The highlight of the conference, attended by 700 people, was the appearance of seventy-six-year-old Black rights fighter and author C.L.R. James.

Two other ALD demonstrations took place here May 28, both sponsored by Maoist-oriented groups. Despite some nuances of political difference between the two, neither focused on getting the United States out of southern Africa. Instead, they attacked both Washington and Moscow.

At the demonstration of 1,300 people sponsored by the African Liberation Day Coalition, members of the Revolutionary Communist party, which dominates the ALDC, set upon members of a rival Maoist sect, the October League, and *Militant* salespeople, physically forcing them to leave the park.

The other rally, which drew 300 people, was sponsored by a group calling itself the African Liberation Support Committee, although it is not the same organization that sponsored the first ALD protests in the early 1970s.

Amiri Baraka, a leader of these early protests, did address this rally. He is now a leader of a Maoist group called the Revolutionary Communist League (MLM).

Several thousand people participated in three separate demonstrations in Oakland, California, May 21. Other ALD activities were held in New York City, Canada, and the Caribbean.

Thousands marched in May 28 African Liberation Day demonstration in D.C.

Militant/Omari Musa