

The Character of Kwame Nkrumah's United Africa Vision

by

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Abstract

I would like to give thanks to the ancestors, according to our tradition, and to Professor Quist Adade for this invitation. This conference of outstanding scholars, colleagues, and students will represent a watershed in the discourse on Nkrumah's vision and I am pleased to be a small part of this discourse. My paper examines the prospects and possibilities of world peace inherent in Nkrumah's vision of a United States of Africa. In effect, an Africa, freed from the vestiges of colonialism in all of its dimensions; economic, philosophical, and cultural, would lead to stability on the continent and remove it, especially in its fragmented reality as nation-states, from being a hotly contested region for international political maneuvers. Nkrumah's vision was political but also more than political; it was also cultural and philosophical, and in his terms, Afro-centric.

This is the meaning of Nkrumah's proposals for a new African personality, one loosed from an attachment to European and American cultural entanglements. Thus, my paper outlines the practical arguments for the United States of Africa and demonstrates how the resources of Africa are best preserved by a common external policy and an integrated continental market. Ultimately, I would like to re-iterate the Nkrumahist's vision and announce his advanced thinking for our era.

Structure for Peace

The structure for peace as a doctrine in world affairs has largely been left to European thinkers and politicians, with little attention paid to ideas from Africans. Yet it is clear that while Africans have looked to more practical examples of peace; the absence of war and the massaging of dignity, there have been political philosophers who have proposed enterprises that could create the conditions for world peace. Kwame Nkrumah was one of such philosophers. He was, in fact, from a long line of such philosophers dating back to Imhotep, whose name means, "He who comes in peace." I will seek to demonstrate that the prospects for and possibilities of world peace were inherent in Nkrumah's vision of a United States of Africa. He is among the first to call for an Afrocentric reality for Africans. This is the meaning of Nkrumah's proposals for a new African personality, one loosed from an attachment to European and American cultural entanglements. He advocated a personality that is not in lock-step with that of the oppressors of Africa as the only method for an assertion of this new reality. It is possible to demonstrate how the contest for the resources of Africa are best preserved by a common external policy and an integrated continental market. It is necessary for us to view Nkrumah, neither as a local politician, nor as a Ghanaian politician, but as an African political philosopher whose approach to governance was based on his 'big heart' theory of the black world.

Dickson Mungazi was correct about one thing in his book; *The Mind of Black Africa*, when he said that Nkrumah seemed to wrestle with the idea of returning to the Gold Coast to accept the invitation from the lawyers and businessmen who wanted him to be the secretary to their political party.¹ Nkrumah had to decide if he wanted to remain his own person or wanted to function in a political party that would, in some ways, be seen as a creature of the colonial administration. It was only when he felt that he could return to Ghana as a free man, his own man, that he assumed work in the United Gold Coast Convention on December 28, 1947.² Nkrumah believed that it was possible to work with the liberal whites in the colonial administration in order to establish a platform for the launching of his own political party. He felt that the masses were much more important than catering to the middle-class businesspeople. At the same time he was a realist, he knew what the conditions were during the colonial time in the Gold Coast.³ What he saw, however, as one who stood at the top of the mast of his generation and surveyed the political horizon for the future with the keenest prophetic insights of any of his peers, was that transformation was unthinkable without a change in the mental condition of the people. Yes, in a real sense he was a materialist, but he was different from Marx because the circumstances that confronted him were different from those that confronted many of the European societies. He was charged up about the abusive conditions that greeted the African troops returning to Kumasi from fighting in England's wars. He was disturbed by the meek, timid, responses of the black middle-class to the general terror of the colonial class. They were afraid to risk their class status and consequently would be able, with ease, to sell out their brothers and sisters. Nkrumah identified that change would call for a new personality.

Of course, all objective evaluations told Nkrumah what the conditions were, not just in the Gold Coast, but also in the rest of the continent. Egypt became the first nation on the continent to gain its independence and five years later Ghana would gain its freedom from the same British colonial administration. Nothing would be able to hold back the tide of strong African response to political, economic and social exploitation. Cheikh Anta Diop, the greatest African intellectual of the modern era, would ask in *Presence Africaine*, a year after Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast; “When shall we be able to speak of an African Renaissance?” Like Nkrumah, he was born in the colonial era, educated in the schools established by the colonial teachers, yet he was capable of reading the documents of Western culture with two sets of notes, one for the examinations and another for his personal sanity. When they said that Europe invented science; he wrote in the margins that this was a lie. When they said that Africans were inferior and had no philosophers; he wrote in the margins that this was false. When they said that Europe originated civilization; he wrote that Europeans had falsified history.⁴ It is out of this spirit that Nkrumah came to see the condition of the Gold Coast; he had been a confidant, a student if you will, a mentee, of two of the sharpest minds of his times, W. E. B. Du Bois and George Padmore. Kwame Nkrumah had met Padmore in England and had been pressed into service at the 5th Pan African Congress. Du Bois, the godfather of Pan Africanism, had influenced him greatly and given him the idea that Africa had lessons to teach the world.

It is my belief that when Nkrumah left Chorlton Town Hall, Manchester, on October 21st, 1945, he was a changed young man. Five days of intense debate, discussion, and predictions about the future of Africa had transformed the delegates into agents of history. Each one saw the power of his or her own agency. Some say that the Congress was militant, but militant is a bizarre term here; the delegates were determined, committed, assertive, and destined to create on the African continent, a leadership cadre for freedom. Nkrumah stood head and shoulders with Hastings Banda of Malawi, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Du Bois, and Amy Garvey. This was a decisive conference, one meant to send a message to the world that Africans had come to claim their birthrights.

A United Geography

The African continent is one continuous landmass with several outlying islands such as Madagascar, Zanzibar, Cape Verde and smaller islands. It is a vast territory, and if it were a country, it would be the largest nation in the world. One could put Russia (17 million sq. km) and Canada (10 million sq. km) inside the continent of Africa (30.2 million sq. km). Canada, the second largest country in the world, and the United States, the third largest, can fit comfortably inside Africa. You could fit the United States, India, all of Europe, including the United Kingdom inside Africa and have territory left over. Put another way, a United States of Africa would be the world’s largest nation in terms of territory. It would be the third largest in terms of population after China and India.

The continent of Africa is not poor, although the people of Africa are often in poverty. Africa has enough arable land to feed the entire earth, yet in some countries people regularly confront hunger. This is what others have called the paradox of Africa: The richest land and the poorest people. Even taking into consideration the deserts; Sahara and Kalahari, the African continent with its massive savannas, deep forest resources, and great arable regions could easily support the continent's people. It is a matter of organization of resources, not the lack of possibilities. The mineral resources make Africa the richest continent on the earth. Desert minerals, grazing animals, oils for industries, petroleum, futuristic minerals for information technologies are abundant in the continent. More types of wood can be found in Africa than all the other continents combined.

TOWARD A RE-ORGANIZATION OF AFRICA

Since these facts are true, how can Africa organize to take advantage of this strength? I believe that Kwame Nkrumah understood the potential for a continental powerhouse by uniting all of Africa. As J. M. Blaut understood in his works, especially in *the Colonizer's Model of the World*, Europe achieved its domination over Africa and the rest of the world because of the control of wealth from Africa, South America, and Asia.⁵ Africa has suffered for the last five hundred years by being victimized by European exploitation. Like Nkrumah, I propose an approach to African unity based on implementable policies and processes.

Almost all of the problems of Africa can be traced to economic exploitation and cultural degradation. The decline in agricultural production in Africa over the last thirty years, in most instances, is tied directly to how Western nations provided, prohibited or reduced the natural competitive exporting behavior of African nations. Even today, African exports have been heavily taxed, and consequently in areas such as cotton production, the European and American nations have supported their own farmers and stifled competition from African farmers who have been supported by their governments. There is no lack of energy, capability, or technical know-how on the part of Africa; it is strictly a lack of organizational and political power to see the continent's economic interest protected.

I am convinced that Africa must be united as one federative union. I like the title; United States of Africa. This is not a foreign idea; it is an African idea. Its origins are deep in the history of the continent itself.

THE FIRST NATION

There is a history for African leadership in regard to nation-building. The first nation on earth was an African nation. The creation of Kemet was an act of the collective will of indigenous African people. The state of Kemet was comprised of 42 ethnic groups with spiritual, mathematical, philosophical, cosmological, and agricultural similarities. Their response to nature and to human relations was something to be envied and emulated by others.

When Menes came down from the South of Egypt, called Kemet by the Africans, to unite the forty-two *Sepats*, called nomes by the Greeks, he achieved something that would have been criticized in the same way as people criticize the discussion of a united Africa. Each *sepat* had its own emblem, its own name for the supreme deity, its own variation on the language of the Nile Valley, its own special ethnic history, and its own capital city with its own shrines, and yet, Menes the Great was able to successfully merge them into a nation.

For example, the *Sepat* called Ta Seti had as its emblem, “The Land of the Bow,” its *Neteru* were Anuket and her mother Satis the wife of Khnum, and its capital was Abu, known later as Elephantine (Greek).

INSPIRATION FROM CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHERS

In the more contemporary era, we see the giants of Pan Africanism, such as Marcus Garvey, W.E. B. DuBois, Cheikh Anta Diop, Kwame Nkrumah, and Muammar al Qathafi. Garvey believed in one aim, one destiny and one god. Diop wrote constantly about an African renaissance with cultural unity. Nkrumah saw a larger Africa, one bigger than Diop’s cultural unity of black Africa, because he felt that the North had been predominantly black before the Arabs came, and therefore had to be included in a continental state. Du Bois searched for a scientific base to political unity based in the material conditions of the continent. Qathafi has argued for the expression of African values, beliefs, ideals, fashions, architecture, distinctive politics, and continental unity based on a strong federal system. Why is it that, now on the African continent, the most important voice for the United States of Africa, in the Nkrumah mold, is Muammar al Qathafi? Of course, as an African leader he has every right to take this path, but where are the leaders of South Africa, Sudan, Congo, Nigeria, and Ethiopia? Why have they only given lip service to African unity?

Qathafi alone consistently wears African clothes to international gatherings. You may argue that this is only ‘a show’, but even ‘shows’ require thought, reflection, and independent action. The fact is, Al-Qathafi is the most consistent contemporary leader on the question of African unity and he should be recognized for his leadership.

Speaking at the 13th Summit of the CEN-SAD Community (Sahel-Saharan states) on July 24, 2010, just days before the African Union meeting in Kampala, Al-Qathafi went all out in his criticism of the way Africa had handled its mandate for unity. Speaking in the Chadian capital N'Djamena, the Leader of the Revolution, Muammar al-Qathafi said the establishment of African Unity was a requirement by the power of the African Union Constitution. He is correct, and it is important to remember the reason for the creation of the African Union.

Qathafi called for a renewed commitment to African unity, saying that Libya had \$90 billion to invest in the creation of a United Africa. In fact, he asked the Sahel-Saharan States to press for African unity at the summit. Then Qathafi said;

“Without the votes of this community, no resolution can be passed with the two thirds majority required for most resolutions in the AU. This clout should be used for the advancement of the unity of the African continent.”⁶

Much like Nkrumah, Qathafi understands that it is necessary to have an economic, political, social and ideological position toward African advancement. This is his great achievement. Like Nkrumah he sees a united Africa bringing stability, security, independence, and a trustworthy place where huge sums of money can be invested to improve the lives of the people. In his Chadian speech, Qathafi said that the pro-unity states were on the right path and that those who wanted the Kampala conference to deal with issues of children in Africa had lost their way. This position, he said, was one for UNICEF, not for the African Union.

THE AFRICAN UNION AND A NEW MANDATE

Let me state clearly what the creation of the OAU, the organization of African Unity, had as its most pressing agenda. It had two purposes. The first was the freeing of the continent from oppressive colonial regimes and the second was the uniting of the continent. The OAU was relentless on the colonial regimes and succeeded in wiping all of them out. At the end of the colonial and settler era, when Mandela came out of Robben Island and other prisons, the OAU had accomplished an elephantine task. But it never organized sufficiently to deal with Nkrumah's dream.

Since the OAU could not succeed in the second purpose, a new organization had to be created, and that is how we got the African Union in 2002. During the time that he was chairman of the African Union in 2009, Qathafi did not cease to remind the members of the purpose of the African Union. In his acceptance speech, Qathafi said, “I think the near future will be a time of serious work and a time of action and not a time of words.”⁷

Thus, at the close of the Kampala Summit of the African Union on July 27, 2010, less than a month ago, Qathafi said, "I am satisfied that Africa is going along its historic and right road...One day it will become similar to the United States of America. We are approaching the formation of the African Authority each time we solve African problems and also move in the direction of peace and unity. We deal with problems step by step. We are continuing to do that."⁸

For eight strong years, Senegal, under the leadership of President Abdoulaye Wade, and the brilliant former Foreign Minister, Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, was a spark plug for the development of this continental-wide unity. Wade had declared that if the nations could agree to bring about continental unity, he would gladly become the "Governor of Senegal." This was a statement of profound clarity. It touched the heart of the matter with most leaders on the continent and reached the very issue that had troubled the leaders of Africa during the Nkrumah years. What the debate has demonstrated is that there are still strong sentiments against the United States of Africa. One can say that they are irrational, but because ideas are irrational does not mean that no one inheres to them. We still have people in the United States, called birthers, who believe that President Barack Obama is not an American citizen. Do not treat irrationality lightly.

The opposition to Kwame Nkrumah emerged in several types of argument, many of which are repeated today.

Africa is too large and diverse to be united.

The former Soviet Union demonstrated that no area is too large to be under one central government. India and Brazil have demonstrated that democracies can be built in places where there is considerable diversity. The reason the Soviet Union did not work had more to do with economic and political fatigue than it did with the brilliance of the idea.

There are too many languages.

What is the meaning of too many languages? At least this is one area where there is common agreement. Swahili, Arabic, English, French, and Portuguese are the official languages of the African Union. Encouragement of local languages is fundamental.

The European nations will not allow it to happen.

Africa must be released from the colonial tendencies toward the old empires and must rethink national, that is, continental integration, without attention to what others want for their economic reasons.

Africans and Arabs cannot live together on the continent.

Africans and Arabs have lived on the continent together since the 7th century this era. What has to be worked out are the behaviors, attitudes, and values that must govern the continental state. This would not be based on religion or ethnicity, but on the allegiance to the common, united idea of Africa itself. What is appealing about Qathafi's call is not his heritage or his language, but his total commitment to the advancement of an African ethos.

Nkrumah wanted to be president; al-Qathafi wants to be president.

So what? Even if Nkrumah had become president of the United States of Africa he would not now be president. Nations last far longer than individuals. The person who would be president of the United States of Africa must be the one who best interprets the narrative of African history and culture in his or her own career objectives. Africa belongs to everyone who is a citizen of Africa, but it belongs to no one person.

Nothing dramatized the arguments against the United States of Africa any clearer than the failed Accra Summit of 2007. Mwesiga Baregu summarized it eloquently in this way, "Somewhere in his works, Karl Marx agreed with Hegel that history repeats itself but added: "the first time as tragedy and the second time as farce."⁹ This couldn't be better affirmed than in the outcomes of the 2007 AU Accra Summit. In a farcical replay of history, reminiscent of the 1963 OAU Summit, the AU Summit, nearly forty five years later, ended up with a split between the gradualists (then the Monrovia group) and the fast-trackers (then the Casablanca group). While in 1963 the camps were led by Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana respectively, in the AU replay the camps were led by Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Muammar Al Qathafi of Libya."¹⁰

Here is the text of the wishy-washy resolution at the end of the Accra Summit.

*"CONVINCED that the ultimate objective of the African Union is the United States of Africa with a Union Government as envisaged by the founding fathers of the Organisation of African Unity and, in particular, the visionary leader, Dr Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana; ALSO CONVINCED of the need for common responses to the major challenges of globalisation facing Africa and boosting regional integration processes through an effective continental mechanism...."*¹¹

One can see that the gradualists as opposed to what Baregu calls the "rapidist" managed to place breaks on the idea of continental unity. Some of this is xenophobia, but I think most of it is national selfishness based on the false idea of the loss of sovereignty. South Africa, one of the gradualist states, does not lose sovereignty; it gains a continental sovereignty with the United States of Africa. There will no longer be a South African nation. There will not be a Kenya nation to hold fast to some false idea of national boundaries created by the Europeans at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85.

Of course, those of us who are Pan Africanists in the Diaspora were sorely disappointed that the African leaders had backed away from the future. I had been fortunate in 2005 to attend a sub-committee of the African Union at Aso Rock, the Nigerian Presidential Mansion, as a member of the Senegalese delegation. I had also been asked by President Wade to deliver comments to the presidents. This was a historic moment for me, maybe not for them, but I wanted to assure them that the African diaspora supported the idea of African unity and the grand notion of a federative state. President Obasanjo of Nigeria was the chair of the sub-committee and the members included, among others, Ghana's John Kufuor, South Africa's Thabo Mbeki, Uganda's Museveni, Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi, Senegal's Abdoulaye Wade, and representatives from Algeria and Tunisia. My speech was brief, but several continental scholars, all of whom I must say spoke in the interest of continental unity, joined me in urging the leaders to act quickly. Unfortunately the sub-committee was quite political and I was able to see how the issues confronted by Nkrumah had resurfaced in the contemporary leaders. The truth is that two of the leaders, Obasanjo and Mbeki, are no longer in office, so one would argue that they should have had the courage to make the recommendation for the fast track. Instead, it would take two years for the African Union to establish what was called an African Authority with the power to forge unity among the nations over a period of years. But as you can see at the Kampala Summit, there were a number of ruling potentates who had little interest in the collective good of the continent. However, a majority of states still seem to want to move in the direction of continental integration. The Eastern bloc of nations has already agreed to integrate more fully with each other. This is going on throughout the continent. The gradualists have called for economic integration before political integration, but the rapidists have called for political integration as a means to economic integration.

Among the issues yet to be resolved are: tariffs and taxes, contractual issues, and ways to transfer sovereignty from one legal entity to another. Fortunately some of the foreign ministers are working on these issues as we meet. Ultimately the African Authority will have to move from being an Authority to being a state, even if it means including only the states of the rapidist school. Supposedly the date for the conclusion of the union is 2017, but we will have to see how this works out in practice.

TOWARD SHAPING A CONTINENTAL STATE

The current situation on the continent is untenable. Africa's destiny will be that of a beggar continent for centuries if Africa is not united. We cannot allow this moment to pass. It will take great heroes to rise to the challenge.

The boundaries of nation states established by Europe are unstable and serve to exacerbate inadequate communication, ethnocentric worldviews, poor interstate transportation, marginal trade with neighbors, lack of crop diversity, overemphasis on export crops to maintain connection to former colonial powers, and lack of regional planning authorities.

It is unacceptable that 14 of the world's 28 landlocked nations are on the continent of Africa. The political, communication, and transportation situation is directly related to food distribution.

There is a continental destiny that can be played out in Africa. Nothing that happens on the continent with one nation can be said to happen in isolation. The continental destiny is one. A few months ago, it was revealed that Zimbabwe held one-fourth of the world's diamonds. This may be considered good for Zimbabwe, but what does it mean for Mozambique or Zambia? Why should not Zimbabwe be a rich state within a richer nation? Gabon is statistically one of the world's five richest nations by per capita income when you consider the size of the population and the value of wealth from its oil, but why should Gabon be rich and its neighbors suffer. And why should its own people suffer from poor distribution? Why not have a federal government that manages a continental-wide policy of development?

At a minimum I believe that our move toward African unity should be based on a common currency, the Afro; a common passport, Africa; a common foreign policy with one African Foreign Ministry; an African parliament with two chambers, one representing traditional leaders or their appointees; the African presidency; an African infrastructural minister charged with articulating a rebuilding of the continent; a chief of military operations for continental security; an education minister with a charge to fashion a continental wide curriculum, taking into consideration local histories; a strong navy and military to protect the extensive coastline; a permanent external legal department to mediate and negotiate bilateral agreements from old political entities insuring that the new African state not incur deficient contracts; and a permanent secretary for ethnicity to insure the protection of minority linguistic groups. Now, this is just the beginning; we must also educate a new citizenry.

A NEW CITIZENSHIP

As an Afro-centrist, I believe in the agency of African people. I accept that we must find our resources, as much as we can, in our own historical well. Therefore, for me, the key to a continental state means common knowledge and common ways of viewing the future of the African world. This does not imply total agreement on every issue but a basic consideration of the most important ideals. In education, broadly speaking, it is necessary that a common reservoir of African knowledge be tapped. The children of Africa must know Imhotep, Amenhotep, the son of Hapu, Duauf, Akhenaten, Hannibal, Hatshepsut, Hanno, the Sailor, Thutmoses III, Amadu Bamba, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nzingha, Nehanda, Langston Hughes, the Pyramids in Kemet and in Sudan, DuBois, Cheikh Anta Diop, Fanon, Menelik II, Sungbo's Eredo, *Kebrá Nagast*, and so forth.

There is no history and there have been no men or women any greater than the geniuses produced by Africans. There are no places any more sacred than those that have been hallowed by the deeds and presence of our Africa's own ancestors. Marcus Garvey had it right, "*The West has out propagandized us.*"

In a united Africa the universities must have students who come from feeder schools that teach the intricacies and nuances of Africa's collective history. Men and women who have achieved a place in Africa's memory because of their deeds must be shown to be those who believed in the centrality of Africans within their own narratives.

AN NKRUMAHIST VISION

There must be an active defense of African cultural elements as being historically valid in the context of art, music, education, science, and literature. Actually this means that the civic commitment of the citizen must be to the ideal African cultural elements. If you study art, education, science, literature, philosophy, or mathematics, you need to, first of all, interrogate it from the standpoint of African culture. The *sebayet*, proverb, must be reintroduced as the cornerstone of cultural communication. It should be said at some point in time, if we are good politicians and teachers and philosophers, that the masses understand the comprehensive nature of our *sebayet*. Actually, Africans must teach the masses to learn the classical language of the Nile Valley as a source of common ancient symbols. As Cheikh Tidiane Gadio of Senegal says, "We must not be stuck in the past, but we must not forget the past, we must use it as a resource to insure civic commitment and to build our civil society."

What I am proposing, in the tradition of Nkrumah, is that children interrogate the most ancient documents as well as the epics, myths, and narratives of Africa to discover their own wisdom. This is not to reject useful information from other sources, but rather to insure that in the national community, we use all of the available knowledge in the world, beginning with that produced by African thinkers. Others do this and celebrate their philosophers; we are no less than others. The names of Imhotep, Merikare, and Khunanup must become commonplaces among the masses of our people, just as we know about Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

There must be a celebration of "centeredness" and agency and an uncompromising commitment to lexical refinement that eliminates pejoratives about Africans. Our intention must be to reshape language so that all negativity, gathered for five hundred years, against Africa and Africans, is destroyed. This is a national citizenship drive. We must assume that we can eliminate negative references to Africans as we can eliminate the fly. Each one teaches one. Each person becomes a model citizen. We will put the youth to work to obliterate all traces of negativity about Africa. They must see themselves in the service of something far greater than their own immediate lives. They celebrate centeredness by dreaming of greatness for the nation. Terminology introduced into the languages of Africa; like primitive peoples, traditional religion, ethno-music, African Slave Trade, Pygmy, Hottentots, Huts, and jungle, must be purged through a national effort at this dignity-affirming position. It is true that this continent has the earliest human beings and the earliest civilizations, but there are no 'primitives' in this land. An effort to eradicate the definitions imposed on Africa by Europe will be a primary goal of the civil society.

The use of terms like ‘African Slave Trade’ must give way to ‘European Slave Trade’. Our music, religion, dance, and families need no qualifying adjectives that leave Europeans as an imposed universal. Theirs is no more universal than ours. Their dance is as *ethnic* as ours. Their music is as *traditional* as ours. Their religion is no more valid than ours. We are all humans and the role of the civil society in an integrated continental national state must be to drive out all forces that would make Africans and blackness pejoratives.

There must be a powerful imperative from innovative research sources to revise the collective text of African people. Our children must reject notions of African inferiority. A sixteen-year old girl at Achimota School in West Africa asked me, “What would have happened to Africa if the whites had not come?” I said to her that we would have been much farther along than we are now and we would have not suffered the same psychological and cultural upheavals that we now have. During the days before the invaders, we were able to leave all doors unlocked, now that we have had Western civilization, we have to double lock our doors. In addition, we are frightened of our own children. Africa would not have been a continent so severely maligned. While we escaped the decimation of the natives of Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas, we became disoriented with the persistence of the physical, cultural, and economic violence against our people.’

There must be a massive acceptance of Africa as “The Nation that Embraces Diversity.” We must create the educational and cultural mechanism that will deliver the national message that Africa embraces diversity. In a nation that has nearly 2000 languages and numerous nationalities, kingdoms, and empires it is un-African to oppose diversity. Indeed to claim that any one element of this vast nation is its leading edge is to practice provincialism. Africa must be for those who embrace diversity. The meaning of this acceptance of diversity is that there should be respect for the historic ancestors of every ethnic and language group that defines itself as African. There are no superior and inferior ethnic communities in Africa. This idea, if it exists, is merely a false notion imported from outside of our continent.

If the motto of the nation becomes “the nation that embraces diversity,” it means that Africa is set up as the standard for the 21st century and beyond. In fact, as Africans we have the opportunity to assert a narrative of the future, filled with human freedom and possibilities. This is a message of leadership; this is not Africa waiting for others to define the Millennium, the New World Order, the Era of Assistance Fatigue, or reacting to the G-20. No, this is Africa taking the leadership to define itself as a society that embraces diversity.

THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

There must be an openness to include all of the achievements and contributions of African people as the collective gift of Africa to humanity. What this implies is that the African nation in its continental dimension is simply the core of a much larger African world. Those of us who were born outside of the continent and reside in thousands of places around the globe must be seen, as most of us see ourselves, as adding to the historical flow of African life. We have been moved away, but we have never been detached, as our poets have sang brilliantly of Africa in Jamaica, Haiti, Colombia, Costa Rica, Trinidad, Guadeloupe, Brazil, Surinam, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Uruguay, Ecuador, Peru, the United States, Canada, and islands too numerous to mention. It is not just that every time we look at ourselves in the mirror, we see the imprint of Africa; it is also because our emotional and psychological attachment to our motherland has never been severed regardless of the brutality we suffered as Africa's children.

The richness of the Diaspora in every department of human achievement is nothing more than an extension of the richness of Africa. We are African products, however mangled by circumstances and however misguided by Africa's enemies, and as Africans we count our weaknesses and our wealth as African weaknesses and wealth.

When we celebrate Arnaldo Tamayo and Guion Bluford, the first two Africans to fly in space, one as a cosmonaut from Cuba and the other as an astronaut from the United States, because they declared their African-ness, we celebrate ourselves. Their achievements must be placed alongside all other African achievements. What others have done in unions, we can do; what others wish to do, we have done, but have often forgotten. This is the African condition.

As in previous ages African inventors have added to the stock of human knowledge. When the sage inventors of our villages and towns created new ways to deal with lingering technical problems, they were adding to the Pan African repertoire of creations. Multiply the activity of men and women of science thousands of times and you have the creative energy of a massive block of human beings who made it possible for African communities to have farming instruments and implements of war. But these are not the only areas of creativity among African people. Africa has given to the world superior artists, creative novelists, competitive athletes in all sports, wise philosophers, incomparable engineers and space scientists, gifted mathematicians, impressive sailors who have rounded the earth alone, noble historians, and unselfish politicians.

The grand names of our military leaders, Mena, Thutmoses III, Ramses II, Hannibal, Nana Karikari, Yenenga, Nzingha, Shaka, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Dessalines, Nanny, Nat Turner, Sundiata, Uthman dan Fodio, Mzilikazi, Lat Dior, Zumbi, Kwame Nkrumah, and a thousand others must be resurrected and remembered by own historians. We must now embrace Africa's total heritage and claim the entirety of the African nationality.

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