Pan-Africanism — Land and Power

By Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael)
Whether we want it or not, there are division among black Africans living in the United States, the Caribbean and on the African continent, division which have been imposed on us by Europeans. There are geographical divisions, countries such as Senegal and Mauritania, Mozambique and Guinea, created by Europeans as they struggled for the wealth of Africa. Then there are political divisions and economic divisions, again imposed on us by Europeans.

Now they are planning to impose on us grave cultural divisions and, most of all, to divide us by naming us different things. If you are in San Francisco, for example, you do not say that there goes an American Japanese or a Japanese American. You say simply that there goes a Japanese—period. Yet probably that Japanese cannot speak Japanese at all; he may be the third or fourth generation in America, But no one calls him a Japanese American. The first thing you call him is Japanese, because a person is defined, really, at first by his physical presence, or in terms of his ancestral stock. Whether he is Chinese, Japanese or African. The same is true of the Indians. Even in America, when you see a red Indian, you do not say he is an American; you say he is an Indian. The same is true for East Indians; the same for Filipinos. Wherever you see them in any part of the world, you call them Chinese or what not.

The same is not true for Africans.

Let’s as ourselves why.

If you see an African in Europe, you do not say that he is an African. If you see him in America you do not call him an African. He may be Negro; he may be West Indian; he may be everything else but African. That is because Europe took its time to divide us carefully, quite carefully. And they gave us different names so that we would never, always never, always never, refer to ourselves by the same name; which helped to ensure that there would always be differences. If you say you are West Indian, it is fairly obvious that you are something different to be set apart from an African. An American Negro and an African also obviously are not the same thing.

One of the most import things we must now begin to do is to call ourselves “African.” No matter where we may be from, we are first of all and finally Africans. Africans. Africans. Africans. The same also happens to be true of North Africa. When they say “Algerians” or “Egyptians” they are talking about Africans, because Africa happens to be one solid continent. Among Africans there will and must be no divisions. They are just Africans—period.

You must also understand that there are two types of oppression, basically. One is exploitation. The other is colonization. With exploitation one is economically raped; for example, in the 1930s the labor movement was a response to economic exploitation. Rich white people, in that instance, were exploiting poor white people. But there is another type of oppression—colonization. Colonization is not just the economic raping of someone, not merely taking a lot of money away. Colonization deals with destroying the person’s culture, his language, his history, his total humanity. When one is colonized one is totally dehumanized. So that when the victims of colonization fight they are fighting for a process of humanization.

This is entirely different from the fight of people who are only exploited. The people who are exploited fight just for economic security. The colonized fight beyond economic security, far beyond. And so it seems to me that as we begin the search for allies and coalitions we can only for allies and coalitions based on whether those people are fighting for the same thing. Fighting the same fight that
we who have been colonized are fighting. In other words, people who are fighting for their humanity. This means for example that all nonwhite peoples who have been colonized can join hands, understanding of course that our fights remain entirely different.

The people who have been colonized by white folk, let us say in Asia, are fighting the same fight but a different fight because of culture, humanity. Their way of life is and will be entirely different from ours. But they are fighting nonetheless and fighting for a humanity of their own, albeit the same thing in a sense that we are fighting for, to affirm our humanity. We are fighting to affirm our humanity. With these nonwhite people we can begin to move so long as they understand precisely what the fight is all about and that we may differ in some respects.

In America, folk seem to think that the revolution there—will all be over in five years, when actually we are talking about a generation of struggle. That is why they always have deep questions in their minds to trouble them. They fail to understand that the struggle we are talking about inside America is only symptomatic of a worldwide struggle against Europe and its satellites. America, in fact, is nothing but Europe. The white people in America are not Americans but in fact Europeans. When we call them Americans, we allow them to escape; we define them incorrectly. We should call them Europeans and understand that they never belonged in America, that they took that continent from somebody else. When you call them Americans you forget that they are Europeans, because you give them in fact the theory of native origin, that they came out of America. Where did Americans come from? They came from America—that is, somebody you call American. But if you say that they are Europeans (which is what they are), then the question arises as to where they came from—Europe. What are Europeans doing in what is now called America?

We must understand that, because it shows how deep our struggle really, really, really is. These are things we do not even think about, because, if you see what I have been saying up to now, you also will see that, in the final analysis, the struggle is going to be waged with Europeans against non-Europeans. And that means that America is European. That means that our struggle is not in five or ten years but is, in fact, for a generation. Once we understand that our struggle is at least a generation, then we do not even have to worry about so many little things. We will know, then, that we are not going to see any really concrete or substantive victories in our fight for at least five or ten years. I mean to say really concreate enough for us to look at and say that that is what we have been able to do.

At this point, it becomes important that you have people of African descent—scattered over the Western hemisphere by Europeans, scattered across the West Indies and used so long as slaves—bound together in a unified struggle for their liberation. This is not impossible inasmuch as we have people today all over the world moving forward in the quest for liberation against their oppressors.

Because I understand so clearly the foregoing factors, the ancestral roots of the problem, I have concluded that the solution has to be Pan-Africanism. Everybody—DuBois, Padmore or whoever—or whoever—always comes back at last to Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism is not just some nonsensical black nationalism. Even white philosophers understand this fact. For example, Plato in The Republic talks about the theory of Antaeus.* The parable of Antaeus, says Plato, shows that the philosopher king has come up out of the earth, that the people grew out of the earth. They were asking, “Where are we from?” Plato says that you must always answer that question: “Where are we from?” They might wind up at Africa. One must know one’s beginning, who one is, before one knows where one is going.
People who regard Pan-Africanism negatively, who think that it is racist theory, ought to read George Padmore's book, Communism or Pan-Africanism. Padmore is clear on this. Writing around the 1930s, and one of the advisers to Dr Nkrumah, Padmore was crystal clear on the point that we must talk about Pan-Africanism.

There are many African organizations which accept as their ideology Marxism-Leninism. Many of these young organizations received their stimulus from the concept of black Power, which emphasized the powerlessness of Africans. The All-African People’s Revolutionary Party knows that the correct ideology for Africans the world over is Nkrumahism. Nkrumahism does not and cannot negate the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism; it merely incorporates these truths.

President Sékou Touré reminds us that Marx did not invent scientific socialism. Marx was an observer. He observed certain phenomena in relations to man and economic forces in general and to labor and capital in particular. Having observed the validity of certain theories based on historical materialism, he stated principles which act as a clear guide to the inevitable destruction of capitalism and its attendant evils, and for the reconstruction of a society free from exploitation of man by man. Many people who call themselves revolutionary accept these principles as universal truths. So do I. As we stated earlier, Marx, like Newton, observed and recorded but did not invent. Any student of science can independently observe the same laws of gravitation without prior knowledge of Newton. We thank Marx, Lenin and Newton for correctly classifying knowledge, thus making our own research easier.

In Osagyefo’s classical philosophical work, Consciencism, we can see that the theories of Marx and Lenin have their roots in communalism. Thus, as an African, I should study Nkrumahism, which knows communalism contains the very foundation of Marxism-Leninism. It contains my history, African history, as it must be presented in order to “become a pointer at ideology which should guide and direct African reconstruction.” Nkrumahism has already studied the theories of Marxism-Leninism, accepting their universal guidelines and scientific method. And Nkrumahism returns to Africa, returns to communalism, because Nkrumahism knows that if Mother Africa had been left untrampled by alien forces she would have been the first to achieve communism naturally, without bloodshed.

And yet, I view the struggle in the States as part and parcel of the entire world struggle, particularly the black world struggle. That is to say, I cannot see the struggle in the States as any different from the struggle anywhere else where men are fighting against a common oppressor. Our fight is clearly a fight against both capitalism and racism. One does not get rid of capitalism without fighting against racism.

I cannot agree with the ideology that says that capitalism and racism are two different entities unto themselves. I would have you struggle against both. To get rid of capitalism—I repeat—is not necessarily to get rid of racism. As a matter of fact, I think that black people ought to know this better than anyone else. I think that, in terms of reality and history and my own ideology, all of the movement that we have been building up in terms of black nationalism, from the sit-ins for coffee to “black power,” runs straight to Pan-Africanism. We always come back to that.

It is clear now that the only position for black men is Pan-Africanism. We need a land base. We need a base. A land base. In the final analysis, all revolutions are based on land. The best place, it seems to me, and the quickest place that we can obtain land is Africa. I am not denying that we might seek land
in the United States. That is possibility, but I do not see it clearly in mind at this time. We need land and we need land immediately, and we must go to the quickest place for it.

We need a base that can be used for black liberation, a land that we can say belongs to us. We do not need to talk too much about it. That will harm the struggle. When one needs a base one needs also to prepare for armed struggle. When on needs a base on needs also to prepare for armed struggle. To seize any of the countries in Africa today that are dominated by white people who have physically oppressed us is to confront an armed struggle, a prolonged struggle.

But once we have seized a base we will be on our way. We will then have to demonstrate our willingness to fight for our people wherever they are oppressed. I believe that people basically defend their own kind, as America did during the Spanish Civil War in the Middle East they did it even in 1967 with Israel. People who didn't have any rights in that country were flying in from all over the world to fight. There's nothing wrong with our doing the self-same thing. It can be done and, most important, we are trying to secure a political ideology as we seek a state. We are beginning to understand our movements and to see how we can move politically, so that we begin to talk clearly and critically now about Pan-Africanism. It is a discussion that must begin.

There are many people who live in Europe and America who support lands which do not belong to them. Concretely. They wage so large a propaganda campaign that one cannot say anything about their country without being automatically labeled “anti...” to the point where one is even afraid to move for fear of falling into that label. If we obtain a bigger base than they have we can do a better job than they do, because have more rights to be in Africa than they have to be where they are.

Malcolm X said that one fights for revolution but that in the final analysis revolution is based on land. He was absolutely correct. You have to have land in order to produce, in order to feed, shelter and clothe your people. People fight the revolution not solely for ideas; they fight also for a better way of life, and they incorporate new ideas introduced to them that promise a better way of life. People do not just fight for ideas, unless they are sure that they can see a better way of life coming out of those ideas.

Thus, unless one can feed and clothe and shelter people who want to fight for better ideas, there is nothing for the to fight for. In order to have a revolution one must have a clear and viable alternative for the masses, one they can understand and follow, one that can move them to struggle. I do not think that in the State there can be a clear and viable alternative for black people. I am almost convinced that there cannot be. That is not to say that the struggle cannot and will not continue.

But we cannot begin to understand clear and viable alternatives until we first obtain a land base. We have to have a land base. I think that the best place for that is Africa, and in Africa the best place is Ghana. Black people in the United states meanwhile must begin to understand that there needs now to be a clear sharpening of our ideologies. Our ideology must be Pan-Africanism, nothing else. I am almost convinced of that. Once we get a land base, we can begin to experiment with it and develop it and go about the concrete tasks of nation building.

One of the problems of black people is that we are afraid, always, to put up leaders. I don't know why. We have some fear of putting up leaders and following a leader. What we always look for instead is merely someone who has an idea. We all will agree with the idea but fail nonetheless to give concrete support to that man. We keep saying that the man is not important, that the idea alone is
important, but that is not necessarily true. You have to have someone who is capable of implementing the idea. Our enemies have recognized that, and whenever they find someone able to implement a viable idea, they move to destroy him. All the time. They kill him physically, or isolate him politically, or ruin his name among us.

We allow that to happen, and only after he has been destroyed does he become a hero for us. By that time it is too late. Now everybody is wearing Malcolm X t-shirts and Malcolm X, blah, blah, blah. But Malcolm today would be more important to us alive than dead, although in death he has become more famous. We need him now and we need to know what he would do in the present case, because at least he had some ideas about where he was going, before the rest of us did. He was ahead of us. We have caught up with him today in a sense, but he would still be ahead of us hopefully growing at the same rate that we are growing. But we never protect our leadership while our leaders are alive. We are afraid to do that.

We never understand history because history is always moved forward by a single person. China would not be China were it not for Mao Tse-tung. That is not to say that somebody else would not have led China, but it would not be what China is today without Mao. Vietnam would not be Vietnam without zho Chi Minh. France would not be France without de Gaulle. England would not be England without Winston Churchill. We have to understand that. Now I have traveled all around the world. I have looked and I have seen. I have been waiting for and seeking for a black man outside our generation who knows what is going on. I have found one—Dr. Nkrumah. He knows precisely what the struggle is. We should bring Dr. Kwame Nkrumah back to Ghana. I would not deny that he made some mistakes. But he was the first person to talk about Pan-Africanism as a concrete term. And he demonstrated his willingness to fight. He sent his troops to the Congo and mobilized his troops to move to Zambia when problems developed there. He trained many guerrillas. He was the first to give Lumumba assistance. He gave his country as an open base for every African freedom fighter or liberation movement. He trained his youth in the concept of Pan-Africanism. It was he who started the whole drive for African nationalism. Dr. Nkrumah was on of the first people to wake me up. It was he who began to wake up everyone. He is the person who can bring our fight together and give us some direction to fight. We need such a person, and Dr Nkrumah happens to be that person as far as I am concerned.

But the fact that we start in Ghana does not mean that we stop in Ghana. We must fight or the unification of Africa. That’s what Pan-Africanism is all about. The unification of the mother continent at this time must take priority. The unification of the African continent is entirely different from African unity. They are two different things. They are two different terms and they are two different things. African unity mean you have different states who come together and talk, talk, talk, talk. Unification of Africa means you have one state—Africa. Everybody speaks the same language; one government, one army.

So that you start in Ghana for the unification of Africa and you recognize, if you are intelligent, that South Africa is not going to be removed by talk. It is not going to be removed by talk. It is not going to be removed by Britain, by the UN, or by anybody. Nor is it going to be removed by a handful of guerrillas. I is only going to be removed by the entire black world standing up against it. Because when in fact the final confrontation over South Africa, for example, takes place, the black man will see that he is not just fighting whites in South Africa. He is fighting all of Europe, because all of Europe is going to actively defend South Africa.
We must begin to move. The who black world must begin to move, though we will not even be able to see anything concrete for at least five to ten years. Then you begin to understand precisely our direction. We are coming closer; we are more sharply defined now. We have always been moving. Let’s go back to the 1960s; we start a move for integration—a cup of coffee. Even before we got the cup of coffee, we recognized where else we were going. We were moving for the vote. By the time there were getting ready to give us the vote, recognized that that was not it either. So now we recognize that it is Pan-Africanism.

It becomes more and more sharply defined now. It has taken since the 1960s, almost ten years, to understand precisely where we are going. Ten years to take us to Pan-Africanism, and it will probably take us another ten to shapely define what that is all about. We mistakenly believe that we can solve the problems of the United States in five years. The, when the five years have come and gone and the problem remains unsolved, our people grow tired and say: “Well, you’ve been jiving me. You said five years.” We should prepare ourselves for twenty-five years. We should always say twenty-five, at least twenty-five. One generation will have to fight, because there are people who are always attuned to fighting if you have indoctrinated one generation thoroughly, prepared them to fight. Then all subsequent generations are prepared to fight. Vietnam is clearly a case of that readiness.

I believe that as you study you struggle and struggle. It’s like a math problem. If you are given a math problem, you may sit up all night working with it before, finally, things click and the problem is solved within five minutes. But that does not mean that you could com here and solve it in five minutes whenever you please. Before you solve it in five minutes, you have to sit down and go through that whole process of trying everything you know. If you have tried and you have eliminated all the possibilities. You now come to the one correct one. The same is true for us; that’s what we have been doing in our struggle.

Pan-Africanism wants to save as many black people as possible. We will lose some. Some will even die in the struggle. We know that, but there’s no need for us to emphasize those deaths. We want to emphasize that is alive. Revolution is not about dying; it is about living. People do not understand that. You kill to live; you die to live. It is not just about dying. We no longer have to prove that we are bad by dining. We want to live. Fratricide, for instance, is something that we must not in any way encourage. It is okay to back down from a fight with one’s people. The impression of Pan-Africanism especially is that one must be aggressive and intolerant against the enemy; but with one’s people one must always be humble. You are always humble to him whom you serve.

We must always be political. I think that culture, for example is always very political. It always has been and always will be. We must understand that his conference is really a political conference, especially for our people. It means that at this point Africa is ready to launch its real liberation. In order to launch its liberation it must have a culture, because a culture represents the values, the values for which one fights. If one is fighting for a revolution, one is talking about more than just changing governments and power, and that is changing the value system. What carries that value system is one’s culture. What we have here is the beginning of people who are trying to grope for a real fight with the culture.

Culture is a cohesive force. It is what keeps people together. Culture is very important in the fight, because a lot of people have fought against their oppressors yet maintained the culture of their oppressors, and culturally they are the same as their oppressors. They haven’t fought for anything
actually. All they have done is change powers, but that is not a revolution. You have to understand that changing powers is not a revolution.

Black people in America, Africans who live in America, especially must understand that and begin to alienate our people completely from the culture and values of Western society. That is going to be particularly difficult, because all of us live within those values and it is going to be hard for us to root them out. I mean that it is like people who say that they want to be black. But being black is an awfully hard job in the United States.

It is very, very difficult. But our first task is all the more to alienate our people at every chance we get from the Western culture and values, because once they are alienated there will be no influence over them. That is what we are seeking. We are seeking to stop all influence of Western culture on our people—completely. We must stop it; so we move to alienate. That is number one. Then number two we move to give a concrete ideology that the people in the United States will adopt. They have a lot of technical skills and a lot of information which they could begin to put to the aid of the unification of African—spiritually, morally and politically.

At the same time, there will be struggles inside the United States, always moving on different levels as black people keep trying to get a better way of life. These struggles will continue. I cannot say that I know exactly which way to go, but I that some trends are very important. For example, the trends in black studies are very, very important, and they must continue, because what is at stake in not the subjects but the attitude, the attitude of black people having the right to have the education that will benefit black people.

Those are the skirmishes. They are the beginnings because the rulers are not going to let us have truly black studies or a truly black university. In the final analysis one cannot have a black university in any other society than a black society, because the job of the university is to propagate the values and institutions of that society. In the United States, a black university, a truly black university, is going to be totally anti-America, not just possibly anti-American, but anti-American to the point where it urges people to destroy, dismantle, disrupt, tear down, level completely in America. So you cannot have that, but that is precisely the job of the black educator, to train his people how to dismantle America, how to destroy it.

What those black study groups should now do is to talk about not just Africans living in Africa, but Africans living all over the world, so that the subjects will become concrete subjects related to Africans in Africa, Africans in the Caribbean, African in the United States, Africans in Canada. We have to understand also that Egypt is in Africa; Algeria is in Africa. They are African; and even the Arabs are going to find that the African world must come first, because that is where they are continentally. They are African. That’s the toots, and that’s where we all have to come from.