

Political Prisoners: Mondo & Ed

The Story of Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen We Langa and Ed Poindexter

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is reprinted from the *Buffalo Chip* Fall 2002 Issue entitled Political Prisoners in Nebraska.

The Real Story of the Rice/Poindexter Case

The Rice/Poindexter case is 34 years old, but 9/11 has made the counter-terrorism policies of the sixties and seventies newly relevant: Congress has recently voted overwhelmingly for Pres. Bush's anti-terrorism bill, again giving the FBI, the CIA and local police the powers they so abused in the past. Again the government can spy on citizens and ignore the Bill of Rights, just as they did 30 years ago. It's COINTELPRO redux.



Mondo We Langa (Left) and Ed Poindexter.

For those too young to remember that time, the Rice/Poindexter Case is a valuable history lesson. **Edward Poindexter** and David Rice (who later changed his name to **Mondo we Langa**) are currently serving life sentences for the August 17, 1970 bombing murder of Omaha policeman **Larry Minard**. Both continue to maintain their innocence -- and evidence that has come to light since their conviction is persuasive enough to convince Amnesty International, among many others, that, at the very least, they did not receive a fair trial. Some familiar with the case even believe it's possible they were framed.

The group seeking their release is NEBRASKANS FOR JUSTICE (NFJ), a non-profit organization which focuses on human rights in the justice system, and publishes *Buffalo Chip*. NFJ board member **Mary Dickinson** has organized a team of attorneys, law

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We Are Off Target:

The Bull's-Eye Is A Prosecutor

by **Muti Ajamu-Osagboro**, Political Prisoner AM-6021
12-1-2K4, 6:31:54PM

Uhuru dada ndugu!!!! I send extra L.O.V.E., loyalty, strength, and solidarity for the total liberation of the Global Afrikan Village. The task at hand, to free all Political Prisoners & P.O.W.s is doable, but the pace must be quickened for many of us. We are dying in these sanitized torture chambers, where Abu Ghraib is the norm, not an aberration. Last month, a comrade from Nebraska sent me an article from "The Omaha Star" written by her state senator Ernie Chambers. Senator Chambers, a conscientious Afrikan (yeah, we've got richly melanated folks in Nebraska, too. Malcolm was born there, remember...) wrote about the systematic corruption within Omaha law enforcement. The piece entitled "Not To Be Trusted Are the Police", was a detailed exposé on how cops in the heartland, in a ploy to keep federal funding, are illegally collecting DNA samples from Afrikan men to use later to set them up wholesale. As extensive and informative as Senator Chambers' article was, he failed miserably to uncover, in a substantial way,

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REVISITING SUDAN

Analysis and Clarifications

Last issue, we discussed the worsening situation in **Darfur, Sudan**, where rebel groups have been engaged in a brutal war against Sudanese Government forces and the infamous "Janjawid" militia and where the civilians of Darfur are being subjected to what many observers have called genocide. In the 11-page article, we examined the ethnic groups involved in the conflict, the Sudanese Government's crackdown to enforce order, the organized rebel groups, the plight of the civilians, the conflicted response of the international community and a number of voices that have come to the defense of the Sudanese Government. The chronology we presented was designed to show the complexity of the situation and the degree to which the crisis in Sudan defies simple characterizations and easy conclusions.

On that last point, we believe we achieved our objective. A respected elder who read the issue referred to the chronology of events as "head-spinning", and we agree with him. We waded through over 400 printed pages from a variety of organizations on many sides of the conflict. Because there were so many different facets to what is happening in Darfur, we kept our conclusions to a minimum. Here, we will try to state, as simply

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Mondo & Ed: {Continued from Page 1}

students and other specialists. After reviewing court transcripts, police reports, thousands of pages of government documents obtained through the **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)**, and other relevant material, NFJ has concluded: first, that serious doubts exist about the guilt of these men; second, that the FBI and local police committed many abuses from 1968 until their conviction; and finally, that the court system itself behaved with such cruel ambiguity that Poindexter and we Langa should be freed.

Background

A good place to start is 1968, with the FBI's Counterintelligence Program -- COINTELPRO. It was initiated by FBI Director **J. Edgar Hoover**, to spy upon and infiltrate groups of political activists. In Hoover's eyes this included everyone from Malcolm X to Dr. Spock. Hoover considered the Black Panthers "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country". It should be noted that he also considered Martin Luther King, Jr. a national menace, and that King was another victim of COINTELPRO. A September 16, 1970 memo from Hoover to the field is a good example of the FBI's intentions. In it Hoover stated, "The effectiveness of counterintelligence depends on ... the imagination and initiative of Agents. Purpose of counterintelligence action [COINTELPRO] is to disrupt BPP [Black Panther Party] and it is immaterial whether facts exist to substantiate the [charges]."

In Omaha, NE, racial tensions were high in the sixties. Four Blacks and two whites had been shot by Omaha police between 1966 and 1968, and one of those killed was a 14-year-old girl, Vivian Strong. Her death at the hands of a white policeman set off a riot and destroyed so many businesses in Omaha's North Side that the neighborhood has yet to recover from its losses. It was in this climate that Ed Poindexter, David Rice and other young Black leaders joined the Omaha chapter of the BLACK PANTHER PARTY. We Langa (Rice) has written from prison, "We ... set about to make ourselves more visible in the African community, participating with other organizations in community meetings; holding frequent rallies; starting a newsletter (Freedom By Any Means Necessary); doing cop patrols, in which we would document police behavior, sometimes show up at scenes of cop harassment of our people and have our guns in plain view, etc.; opening up our Vivian Strong Liberation School for Children; and otherwise doing what we could to serve the African community." Though it may not seem so now, all these

activities were considered radical behavior at the time. For African-Americans to be so bold as to offer classes in Black History, to speak out about the right of citizens to defend themselves against police brutality, to ostentatiously monitor police activities on the streets, to keep track of Omaha Mayor Leahy's schedule and attend many of his meetings, was threatening to public officials. They aroused implacable hostility in both the Omaha Police Department and the local office of the FBI. It is important to note that the FBI, the ATF and police kept a daily watch on them. As Poindexter told the BBC in a 1990 documentary about the case, "We were under constant surveillance ... We couldn't leave a building and enter the streets without being frisked or harassed. This went on around the clock." Yet their secret files maintained by FBI in the two years before the Minard murder show no criminal activity. They may have enraged and frightened public officials, but they acted within the law.

Chronology 1970

It can't be stressed enough that, both the police and many individuals believed the country was heading for anarchy. After **Martin Luther King, Jr.'s** assassination, cities went up in flames. This was also the summer that an epidemic of dynamite bombings struck in the Midwest. There were five bombings in six weeks in Iowa alone. Other explosions rocked buildings in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and both a police precinct and the Component Concept Corporation suffered bomb damage in Omaha. The Black Panthers were the prime suspects in these bombings, so any confrontation between Omaha Black Panthers and the police, however lawful, was bound to increase tensions.

July

Agent **Thomas J. Sledge** of the BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS (ATF) got a warrant to search the Omaha BPP headquarters, on the grounds that an informant had told him a suitcase bomb had been made there. He alerted the Omaha police, and scheduled a raid for July 21, 1970. The raid was called off.

July 28

Three men, **Luther Payne, Conroy Gray, and Lamont Mitchell**, were arrested in Omaha for possessing dynamite. One was an ex-Panther who had been expelled from the party; the other two had no connection with the BPP. Police confiscated the dynamite and held the three men.

August 17

Police were lured to a vacant house by an anonymous 911 call which reported hearing a woman scream-

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ing at a vague address on Ohio Street, in Omaha's North Side. Patrolmen **Michael Lamson** and **James Sledge** (brother of ATF Agent Sledge) were routed to the call. Other officers also responded. Five officers entered 2867 Ohio Street. They noticed a suitcase sticking halfway out the door. [This call occurred less than a month after cancellation of the raid on BPP headquarters to search for a bomb -- and in the aftermath of the Midwest bombings.] The officers passed it, and went to the rear of the house. Patrolmen Larry Minard and **John Tess** arrived later. As Minard approached the suitcase, patrolman Tess stood only a few feet away. The suitcase exploded and killed Minard, the father of five, instantly. Tess was seriously injured.

August 28

Fifteen-year-old **Duane Peak** was arrested. In his first of several confessions, Peak implicated no one else. In his second statement to police, he implicated six others, but not we Langa or Poindexter. Then in a subsequent statement Peak told police that we Langa and Poindexter had made the bomb and told him to plant it at the vacant house and to lure the police to the house with an anonymous phone call. Peak was charged with first degree murder.

August 31

Poindexter and we Langa were charged with murder.

September 28

At a preliminary hearing, Peak took the stand and recanted his story, testifying instead that neither Poindexter nor we Langa were involved. The prosecution was then granted a recess. When Peak returned to court he changed his testimony yet again and implicated Poindexter and we Langa. Witnesses state that on his return he wore dark glasses, and when **David Herzog**, we Langa's attorney, asked him to remove them, his eyes were red and swollen. We Langa's attorney questioned him about changing his story:

Q: You had a conversation between the time you were placed on the witness stand this morning and the present time ... Weren't you reminded of a few things that would happen to you if you didn't testify?

A: Yes.

Q: And those were the same things that the police officers told you about that would happen to you, like sitting in the electric chair, isn't that correct?

A: I didn't have a chance ...

Q: You are doing what they want you to do, aren't you?

A: Yes.

Q: Has anyone gone over your confession with you to help you to remember it?

A: Yes.

Q: Who did?

A: Mr. O'Leary [the County Attorney].

Q: Was your lawyer there ... when you went over it with Mr. O'Leary?

A: No.

April 1971

Poindexter and we Langa were tried in Douglas County District Court. The jury of eleven whites and one Black deliberated for four days before finding both men guilty. Judge **Donald A.**

Hamilton sentenced them to life in prison.

Corroborative Evidence: The Dynamite

Nebraska law requires corroboration. In addition to Peak's testimony, the state offered three pieces of evidence ... the dynamite! Though police claimed to have found it in we Langa's home, in their court testimony they couldn't agree on exactly where it had been found, nor on who had discovered it. Nor could they produce we Langa's or Poindexter's fingerprints as evidence that they had handled it. Ex-police officer **Marvin McClarty**, in a TV interview, stated he thought something was wrong because of the way the search was conducted. "It could have been something was planted in that house, and to this day I still believe that."

The names of Luther Payne, Conroy Gray and Lamont Mitchell -- the three men from whom the police had confiscated dynamite (just nineteen days before the bombing murder) never came up at the trial. Four days after the trial ended police dropped the charges against all three. They were released and disappeared. The state also alleged that particles of dynamite were found in the clothing of each defendant, but cross-examination revealed that the substances found lacked several characteristics of dynamite, and could have come from other sources. Skin tests of both we Langa and Poindexter were negative, whereas one other suspect's skin indicated that he had handled dynamite. Duane Peak was not tested.

The Rhetoric

The state's third allegation was that both men had written inflammatory literature. It should be noted that this was the era when underground newspapers thrived throughout the country, and "inflammatory literature" addressing racial issues and the war in Vietnam was epidemic. For example, in 1969 the underground New York city paper *Rat* published a very graphic cartoon of President Nixon raping "Miss Liberty". Muckraking is of course an honorable tradition going back to Thomas Paine, among others. The Constitution calls it freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Indeed, former Nebraska Governor **Frank Morrison**, who had represented Poindexter at his trial, believes Poindexter and we Langa are innocent. "The reason they were suspected was because they were members of the Black Panthers. [Authorities] had a couple of young Blacks who everybody knew used incendiary language -- hateful things that irritated the police. They weren't convicted of murder. They were convicted of rhetoric. The only thing these young fellas did was try to combat all the racial discrimination of the time the wrong way."

March 1974

We Langa appealed his conviction. Judge **Warren Urbom** of the FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT found that the police had no evidence to allow a search of we Langa's home, where they had allegedly found dynamite. Judge Urbom noted the inconsistencies in a Police Lieutenant's testimony about the reasons for a search warrant, concluded "it is impossible for me to credit his testimony", and overturned we Langa's conviction, ordering a new trial in which the evidence of the dynamite could not be used to corroborate the state's case. However, shortly after his conviction, we Langa's house was burned to the ground, eliminating any possibility of exploring the accuracy of police testimony about the dynamite.

1975

The State of Nebraska appealed to the EIGHTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS. The Court upheld Judge Urbom's ruling and ordered a new trial for we Langa -- without the evidence of the dynamite.

The 'Non-Decision Decision': July 1976

The State of Nebraska appealed to the U.S. SUPREME COURT. Although up to this time appeals like we Langa's did not go through state courts, but were taken directly to the federal level for adjudication, the U. S. Supreme Court did not rule on the order of the lower courts that we Langa should receive a new trial without use of the dynamite in evidence. Instead the Court ruled that, beginning with this and one other case, defendants could no longer bring appeals of illegal search matters to the federal courts without first going through state court systems.

We Langa duly took his appeal to the NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT. He was turned away, on the grounds that the time limit for appealing through the state court had been exhausted. Activist Anne Else, who has worked for years to free we Langa and Poindexter, has written, "Suppression of evidence usually overturns a conviction; so does an illegal search ... [A] later appeal to overturn their conviction by showing the court the FBI's own memo documenting the suppression of evidence did not succeed nor have any other appeals to date".

How could two men be convicted and sentenced to life in prison, on the basis of highly questionable testimony of a former Panther, the results of a search ruled illegal by two federal courts, and police testimony which a judge called "unbelievable?" The Civil Rights movement, and soon after, the war in Vietnam, brought thousands of people into the streets. The rhetoric, the police dogs, the cattle prods, the burning draft cards and the burning cities created a climate of fear that made it possible to overlook the flimsy evidence in the case, and to crush at any cost what was perceived to be a dangerous menace to the Republic.

Detective Jack Swanson, the officer in charge of investigating this case, made a comment in the 1990 BBC documentary about this case which seems to reveal the real reason the police targeted Poindexter and we Langa: "We feel we got the two main players in Rice and Poindexter, and I think we did the right thing at the time, because the Black Panther Party ... completely disappeared from the city of Omaha ... and it's ... been the end of that sort of thing in the city of Omaha -- and that's 21 years ago."

The *Washington Post* (1/8/78) asked County Prosecutor **Art O'Leary** if it was conceivable that we Langa could have been set up by local or federal officials. O'Leary replied that he had made a deal with Duane Peak to prosecute him as a juvenile in return for his testimony, and acknowledged that without Peak's testimony, Rice (and Poindexter) could not have been convicted.

The full story of this case is still not known. Poindexter and we Langa themselves were themselves unaware of its circumlocutions. But years later, the prosecution's case was seriously compromised with the emergence of the 911 tape and the evidence that the government had purposely suppressed it at the time of the trial.

COINTELPRO became public in 1977, after a break-in of an FBI office in Media, PA (remember Watergate?). COINTELPRO documents were stolen and leaked to the press. Senate hearings led to passage of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in 1978, which opened government files to COINTEL-

PRO's victims. The FBI stonewalled for nineteen months before releasing a small portion of we Langa's FBI file, and Poindexter's first request garnered only six pages. They later learned their files were thousands of pages long. In 1980 former FBI Director L. Patrick Grey and Edward S. Miller, former head of COINTELPRO, were convicted for having "conspired to injure and oppress the citizens of the United States." Neither spent a day in jail. President Ronald Reagan pardoned them in 1981, because their misdeeds had occurred during a turbulent and divisive period in our history. It was time to "put all this behind us", he said, and to "forgive those who engaged in excesses" during the political conflicts of the era.

In 1978 Amnesty International published a report finding that irregular conduct by the FBI during its COINTELPRO operations had undermined the fairness of trials of a number of political activists during the 1970's.

The Evidence of the Witness

The tape of the 911 call which had lured police to Ohio Street was never presented as evidence in the trial, and we Langa's attorney, **William Cunningham**, had been told it no longer existed. Then Poindexter and we Langa obtained a copy of an FBI memo, dated 10/13/70, from the Omaha office of the FBI, and addressed to "Director, FBI" in Washington. It stated, in part: "... Assistant Cop Glenn Gates, Omaha PD, advised that he feels that any use of tapes of this call might be prejudicial to the police murder trial against two accomplices of Peak and, therefore, has advised that he wishes no use of this tape until after the murder trials of Peak and the two accomplices has been completed ... [N]o further efforts are being made at this time to secure additional tape recordings of the original telephone call."

As a result of this information, Cunningham finally forced the police to release the 911 tape of the call purportedly made by Duane Peak. Upon hearing it, it seemed clear to the defense why the police and the FBI had colluded to withhold it at the trial. David Herzog testified at the post-conviction hearing that this was not the voice of Duane Peak. Certainly the voice heard on the tape which the BBC used in its 1990 documentary is neither "raised" or "excited", as Peak had described it in his deposition before the trial. Nevertheless, the Judge ruled that we Langa had not proven the voice on the tape was not Duane Peak's.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S Secretary General **Ian Martin** noted on November 7, 1990, that withholding the 911 tape until after the trial "raised an inference that the FBI had performed scientific tests, including a voice print of the caller's voice, which may have been damaging to the state's case", and noted that the jury might have decided differently than the Judge, had they had the opportunity to hear the tape. Indeed, if the FBI memo had come to light in 1970, would there have been a trial at all?

County Attorney Sam Cooper told the BBC, "The forensic evidence of the dynamite is all we would have had ... Without Duane ... it would have been questionable if you could have filed it ... [A]bsent the testimony of Duane Peak, it would have been a weak, circumstantial case ... He was critical to the case."

Pardons and Paroles: An Alternative?

U.S. Supreme Court rulings have increasingly limited access to court appeals by petitioners. The **Herrera case** is another in which the U.S. Supreme Court seems to have changed the rules of the game. Herrera was on death row in Texas for murder when

his brother confessed to the crime. The Court refused to overturn his conviction, saying that if a trial and appeals process is conducted fairly, the defendant doesn't have a constitutional right to a new trial just because there is new evidence of innocence. With this case, the court established that the role of the judiciary is no longer to address the question of what happened in the trial and appeals process, only how it happened: was it done fairly? According to the constitution? State law?

As one prisoner advocate put it, "After Herrera, you no longer have a constitutional right to a new trial, even if you're innocent." The court's reasoning was that state pardons boards can deal with the question of when or if a convicted person should be freed or be shown mercy. The outcome of these decisions neither reflects well on the U.S. justice system, nor on the Nebraska Board of Pardons.

The Pardons Board

All the states have Pardons Boards. It is the means by which the state can alter a court verdict. States also have parole boards to review inmates' records and grant parole for good behavior or special circumstances. The existence of Pardons and Parole Boards is a tacit admission that time can alter conditions, and that humans make mistakes -- even in the justice system. The number of people released from Death Rows over the past few years is testimony to that.

Can anyone believe such mistakes are limited to Death Row cases? There are also moral and ethical considerations involved when the state locks someone up: should a convicted person be freed? Should the state show mercy to those condemned to death? And how can the state redress an injustice?

This system functioned almost unnoticed until the eighties, when politicians found they could win elections by running "tough on crime" campaigns (the **Willie Horton** Syndrome). We now live in a country which incarcerates over 2 million people, and spends much more money on prisons than on higher education. Pardons and pardons are hard to come by, no matter what the circumstances.

Nebraska is a case in point. In their 1996 Senate race, then Governor, now Senator **Ben Nelson**, and Attorney General **Don Stenberg** used their positions on the Nebraska Board of Pardons as a campaign platform. At the expense of petitioners, they vied with each other to prove who was tougher on crime. Governor Nelson also politicized the Parole Board during his term as Governor by his "tough on crime" appointments. The Nebraska Board of Pardons is free to do what it wishes, no matter how politically motivated or how unfair it may seem.

The Nebraska Supreme Court has ruled that a pardon is an "act of grace", which can be granted for any reason, or for none -- the Nebraska Board of Pardons has full authority to decide. So the Governor, the Attorney General and the Secretary of State can go wherever their politics takes them, as far as the courts are concerned. Nor must they impose the same standards on each petitioner: one may be freed and another held, and for opposite reasons.

So the burden of doing justice, case by case, falls upon the Board of Pardons. We can all hope this duty will supersede any election campaign, but if Mondo we Langa's history with the Nebraska Board of Pardons is any criterion, it is a sad commentary on how much the need to be elected overrides the duties of office.

It should also be said that in Nebraska, there is no parole in life sentences: a petitioner must first obtain a commutation of his sentence to a specific number of years before he can be paroled. Of late, the Nebraska Pardons Board rarely even grants petitioners a hearing. The Nebraska Board of Pardons has a history of inconsistent and contradictory decisions. For example, in 1994 under Governor Ben Nelson, Attorney General Don Stenberg refused to commute the life sentence of **Ronald E. ("Arch") Kirby**, stating that a perfect record of no infractions of the rules for fifteen years was not a reason for pardon. Also, on the same day, Nelson and Stenberg refused even to grant a hearing to Mondo we Langa, stating that his minor infractions were a factor (Secretary of State **Alan Beerman** voted for the petitioners).

In 1996 We Langa again petitioned the Board of Pardons to agree to hear all the evidence that has come to light since the trial: COINTELPRO abuses, withheld evidence, and the failure of a court system which first orders a new trial without the use of tainted evidence, then, on a technicality, shuts the door on the possibility of that trial. We will never know whether Governor Nelson, Attorney General Stenberg and/or Secretary of State **Scott Moore** would have agreed with Amnesty International that "serious doubts remain about the fairness of the proceedings", and would have made we Langa eligible for parole by commuting his sentence to time served--because the Board unanimously voted "no" to a hearing. The Board overlooked the Herrera case, and stated that the evidence of innocence was not cause to grant a hearing, and that guilt or innocence was the purview of the courts.

The Parole Board

The NEBRASKA PAROLE BOARD annually reviews eligible inmates. Before the year 2000, eligibility included a requirement that there be no major infractions (e.g., acts of violence) on the part of an inmate. For five consecutive years. Poindexter and we Langa were recommended for parole by the Nebraska Parole Board. However, in yet another "turn of the screw", the current Parole Board (now as politicized as the Pardons Board) has ruled that even minor infractions disqualify petitioners for parole for five years.

As we Langa wrote in the Fall 1999 issue of *Buffalo Chip*, it is almost impossible for a prisoner to know all the rules and regulations, and they are arbitrarily imposed. If any guard wishes to charge a prisoner with an infraction, there is no way to avoid one. We Langa, who has committed no violent act during his thirty-two years in prison, is currently disqualified for parole for five years, due to two infractions. They are, first, he did not wear socks to the cafeteria; and second, he (who is a vegetarian) gave his meat to another inmate.

This case is just like a "Catch-22" but written by **Franz Kafka**. NEBRASKANS FOR JUSTICE asks: If not in the courts, if not with the Nebraska Board of Pardons, if not at the Nebraska Parole Board, where is there justice for Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa?


EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT: **Gloria Bartek**, the writer and publisher of this article for the *Buffalo Chip* Newsletter in Omaha, Nebraska and a tireless defender of both men, died last year. As of 2002, **John Wilmerding** was the Convener and List Manager for the COALITION FOR EQUITY-RESTORATIVE JUSTICE (CERJ), founded in New York in May 1997. E-mail: CERJ@igc.org.

Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1949, graduated from **Creighton Preparatory School** and took courses at **Creighton University**. He wrote for the local underground paper, *Buffalo Chip*, from 1969 to 1970 and joined the BLACK PANTHER PARTY. In the 32 years since his conviction, Mondo has created art, written short stories, poetry and journalism. He had five books of poetry published between 1973 and 1978 and has contributed poems and stories to such literary journals and magazines as *Prairie Schooner*, *The Black Scholar*, *ARGO*, *Black American Literary Forum*, *Shooting Star Quarterly Review*, *Pacific Review*, *Obsidian*, *Black Books Bulletin* and over 30 more. In addition, his poem, "Great Babaleur" was featured in *Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary* by **Walter Dean Myers** (Scholastic, Inc, 1993). Two of Mondo's plays, "Different Dances" and "We Dance in Our Neighborhood", were

performed by **Ujima Youtheatre** in Nebraska, as well as in New York City. He is one of several co-authors (including **Yosef-ben-Jochannan**, **John Henrik Clarke**, et al) of *The Race: Matters Concerning Pan Afrikan History, Culture, and Genocide* (NATIVE SUN PUBLISHERS, 1992).

In prison, he has continued his education, and now in his 50's, is a mentor and exemplar to young inmates just coming into the system. In all the years of his incarceration, he has not committed a single act of violence; he has, in fact, been an exemplary prisoner.

Ed Poindexter was born on November 1, 1944. He served in the U. S. Army in both Germany and Vietnam.

For more information on the case of Mondo we Langa and Ed Poindexter, visit the Web Sites www.n2pp.info and www.mondo.info. 

From One African To Others

In the summer of 1970, I was a Black Panther, Deputy Minister of Information of the Omaha, Nebraska chapter of the Panther Party's NATIONAL COMMITTEES TO COMBAT FASCISM (N.C.C.F.). **Ed Poindexter** was Deputy Chairman. 35 years later, we are prisoners, who have been locked up since August of 1970. Ed is doing time in the LINO LAKES joint in Minnesota, where he transferred to, in about 1980, in order to take advantage of academic opportunities that weren't available here. I'm at the state prison in Lincoln, Nebraska.

As to why Ed and I are imprisoned; in August of 1970, an Omaha cop was killed by a booby-trapped suitcase when it exploded in a vacant house cops had been dispatched to. According to the police department, a 911 call had been made, giving a false report of a woman screaming. Within a matter of several days, a 15-year-old African male, **Duane Peak**, was arrested in connection with the bombing. Eventually, he confessed to setting the bomb, and under coaching and threats by cops, he would point the finger at Ed, myself, and three others. Ed and I would be the only ones to be tried. We were found guilty of first-degree murder, by a jury of 11 Europeans and 1 African, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Shortly after the conclusion of our trial, Duane pleaded guilty to "juvenile delinquency."

I am a political prisoner in that, because of the political beliefs I held and expressed, I was arrested, tried, and convicted for a killing I neither did nor had knowledge of. In addition, the prosecutor's office used perjured testimony, false and manufactured "evidence," and other tricks of the "justice" trade in order to insure a conviction. And lastly, unjust arrests, trials, and convictions, as well as acts of harassment and terrorism, were all aspects of the national F.B.I./police-led war on the Black Panther Party. But it's not my purpose to use this space to talk about the fact that I'm locked up but to share with you Sisters and Brothers what it feels like to have been locked up 35 years ago, at a time when African people in this country were feeling collective pride and pushing for our liberation, and to being witness today to much that amounts to a spitting on the graves of our ancestors.

Understand that, in August of 1970, prior to my arrest, I was living in a world in which many African people in this country were feeling "Black pride" and believing in the validity of "Black power." On various levels, our people saw the Euro-

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pean (Caucasian) economic/political establishment as "the enemy." It was

common for us to be greeting each other on the streets as "Brother" and "Sister." Some of us were looking for and finding the Africa in us. To be a snitch or straight-out agent for the police was seen by many of us as a form of betrayal of or treason against our people, NOT just part of "the game." In our Omaha N.C.C.F. chapter, we sometimes carried guns, but not because we felt we needed protection from our own people. We carried guns sometimes because we were trying to protect the African community from harassment and brutalization by the Europeans' cops and because we faced danger from these cops.

In Omaha, there was no organized Afro-centric cultural movement, so while there were a lot of Sisters and Brothers who were aware and proud of their "blackness," there was little African consciousness. But we knew that the various shades of brown skin we had, the nappiness of our hair, and other physical appearances associated with being "black" were inheritances from our ancestors in Africa. Brothers and Sisters were sporting the "nachrals" with pride. The wearing of African clothing wasn't common in Omaha but was in larger cities, especially on the coasts. In rallies and festivals and so forth around the country, traditional African drumming and/or dance were often featured.

It wasn't just events and concrete developments and such. It was a spirit, a spirit of a people. But some things happened. Some had already begun happening before the summer of 1970. Some would happen later. Important African voices were silenced--by natural and not-so-natural deaths, by exile and imprisonment. The F.B.I.'s COINTELPRO (Counter-Intelligence Program) used our own egos, jealousies, and rivalries to pit us against each other. And it, as well as local police departments, prosecutors, etc. used frame-ups to get targeted individuals off the streets and used this and other means to "kill" the heads of organizations so that the bodies would die. Government agencies and private corporations bought off and/or co-opted many Africans who had potential to be important voices and/or organizers.

We came under attack by the commercial media. Television ads turned our "nachrals" and hand-shakes and so forth from symbols of pride in our collective identity to mere exhibitions of style and fashion that could be used to sell everything

from burgers and fries to Cadillacs. Television series like "Kojak," "Beretta," "Get Christy Love," "Miami Vice," and others injected us with heavy doses of Africans as pimps, dope sellers and addicts, police informants, etc., and promoted such characters as acceptable to and for us. On the big screen, it was the "blaxploitation" films. On both television and at the movie theaters, individual Africans and organizations of Africans who were opposed to the European-supremacist political/economic system were crafted and portrayed as fanatic, foolish, or just plain laughable.

We were hit by corporate America and the U.S. government with chemical warfare - malt liquors; cheap, potent wines; heroin; cough syrups; crack cocaine; etc.

A lot of things happened, hurting things. A lot of these things are still happening. And now, like before, most of these events and developments that are destructive to us are being put into effect and continued with the help of African agents. **Clarence Thomas** is an agent for a right-wing European-supremacist agenda, as are **Ward Connerly** and several other prominent "Black conservatives." There are African entertainers who are agents on behalf of the European-supremacist goal of destroying self- and mutual-respect among African people. African actor/comedians, such as **Chris Rock, Martin Lawrence, Damon Wayans, Jamie Foxx**, et al have brought back eye-bugging, butt-scratching buffoonery to a level not witnessed since the days of **Stepin Fetchit**. There are African rappers whose raps offer us a god of bling-bling to worship, to risk our lives and risk getting big time in the joint to obtain; rappers whose raps popularize the sick idea among us that African girls and women have no value beyond their sexuality and/or their capacity to support us financially; rappers whose raps cultivate a belief in us that there's nothing wrong with blood-spilling gangsterism against African people.

Magazines and other media owned by African persons promote every imaginable form of cultural de-Africanization--presenting images that equate feminine beauty with straight and/

or blond hair, light skin, and other European or near-European features; presenting images that equate male sophistication in appearance with Europeans' suits and ties and other trappings of success in European-dominated, capitalist America; and presenting political, economic, and other ideas that reflect Euro-centric perspectives, while ignoring or down-playing ideas that are Afro-centric in nature or that otherwise challenge Euro-centric perspectives seriously.

All this mess is like a nuclear weapon. There's fall-out, a kind of mental and emotional radiation poisoning. I'm hearing and seeing it every day in this joint. The world I was a part of before I was imprisoned, and for even a couple of years or more afterward, has changed. It's as though I've been in a painting and, whenever I've closed my eyes, somebody has switched a color on this canvas, or a shape or a brush stroke. More often in here than not, I'm hearing Africans speak of "nigger"/"nigga," rather than "Brother." More often in here than not, I'm hearing Africans talk about "bitches" and "hos," and the females they're talking about are our Sisters. These are Africans' mamas, sisters, daughters, and so forth. It gets old--grown-ass African "men" claiming or aspiring to be pimps or players or gangsters. Every day, usually more than once, I'm challenging a Brother--sometimes young and sometimes not so young--to respect himself and the rest of us.

I know that, ultimately, it's European-supremacist institutions (past and present) in this country that are responsible for this fall-out, this sickness. But what are we--powerless, mindless people who can be nothing more than puppets? We aren't powerless or mindless. But too many of us in positions to influence African people are ready to say and do the lowest of things for some dead presidents, for some approval by Europeans, for some reputation. And these "too many of us"--including Africans of all kinds of occupations, ages, and backgrounds--have at least one basic thing in common: They look like us, but their minds and hearts belong to others.



We Are Off Target--Muti Ajamu-Osagboro {Continued From Page 1}

the role of the prosecution in any police initiative. Though meaning well, the Senator only used one sentence to mention that prosecutors were "behind it." Herein lies the tactical error we make all too often.

New intelligence has given us a clear understanding of how the chain of command operates within the oppressors' machinery of injustice. It tells us that some of the strategies of yesterday, though helpful, are today misdirected and in some instances obsolete. With this wisdom has come a vision that allows us to now see the exact strategy necessary to accelerate the release of Political Prisoners and P.O.W.s. However, WE... MUST... BE... PRACTICAL! Practicality is our best weapon because it is accessible to common folks -- doable right where they stand --- and can be quickly gauged for its effectiveness. Practicality is extremely powerful!

We now know that some of the symbols and agents we have targeted in the past are not central to the defeat of the legal war machine whose battlefield is the amerikkkan courtroom. Most of our time, energy, money, spirit and creativity have been focused on crooked cops and judges, especially cops. However, my

Beloved people, I boldly submit to you that... we are off target! In this fight for liberation, cops are secondary to the central figure in our illegal imprisonment: The corrupt prosecutor is the bulls-eye!!!

We must refocus our telescopes on the prosecutor because he or she is the sun in the judicial constellation that all other law enforcement entities revolve around; second to none in power or influence. When the chain of command within the just-us system is understood, you realize that above the damage wrought by a judge, a cop, or a treasonous defense lawyer, stands the work of the prosecutor. Most people don't know that in the keystone state, in the city of brotherly loathing, under the **Commonwealth Attorney's Act of 1850**, the district attorney is the "chief law enforcement officer(s) for the county in which [they were] elected." This means that the police are subordinate agents of the prosecutor's office.

Moreover, legally the prosecutor is charged with everything the police say and do. *Everything!* As I stated in UHURU MOVEMENT'S October press conference, the prosecutor is the first domino of corruption and to topple him/her will set in motion the exposure of every shameful an illegal element within the court system. Our resources must be poured into a mass campaign to expose the prosecutor as the lynch pin in every

single illegal conviction. The district attorney has sole discretion on whether or not to try a case regardless of the evidence. The police killing of our teenage Afrikan brother, **Donta Dawson**, is only one example of thousands that clearly demonstrates the unchecked abuse of power by the prosecution.

If cops knew that they faced severe repercussions because the district attorneys weren't backing them up with the tacit green light, we would see a significant drop in civilians being shot, beaten, robbed, harassed, set-up, killed, and raped by crooked police. The corrupt prosecutor is the puppeteer and the cop is the puppet. Malcolm taught us, that in a "revolutionary struggle for national liberation we must stop aiming at the puppet and aim at the puppeteer." To expose one cop, you uncover maybe 15 or 20 cases, but to pull the sheets off a prosecutor is to tip a domino connected to at least 75 cops. That is 75 times 20. My math is poor, but know that that is one thousand five hundred Political Prisoners and P.O.W.s brought to the forefront immediately because we exposed one prosecutor.

I must reiterate, WE... MUST... BE... PRACTICAL... in our missions and the definitions of our strategy. Often we get lost in the undefined big picture where the system of white supremacy becomes a monolithic, unfatigue-able, faceless beast that hypnotizes us so that we are not sure if it's the head or the tail we are looking at. This causes us to either misfire or swing at shadows and if we do get a direct hit, we are so exhausted that our blow has a minimum effect. The big picture is made up and exists only because of little snap shots. These snap-shots are regular people, like you and I who put their pants on one leg at a time and their bras on one strap at a time. Practicality says we must go after these individuals and as we defeat them hold them up as examples of 90% of the office.

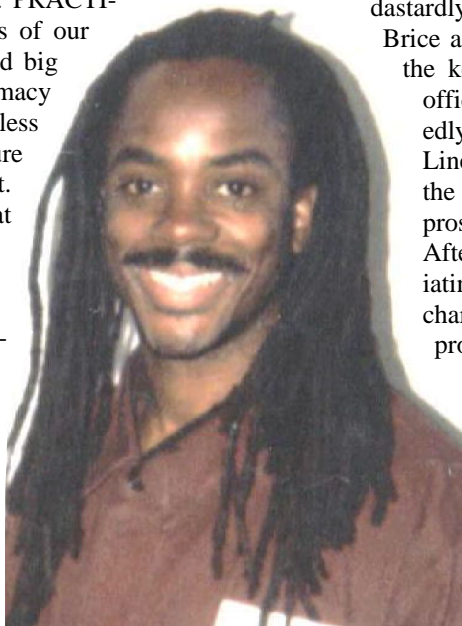
One of their key strengths is that they operate virtually invisible – their deeds and faces. We must take the faces and names of trial prosecutors and put them *everywhere*, on flyers, placards, informational leaflets, banners, letterheads, t-shirts, websites and on petitions of recall/impeachment or dismissal. Prosecutors routinely withhold exculpatory evidence, threaten witnesses, falsely testify, manufacture evidence, suborn perjury as well as perform numerous other criminal acts. For these crimes, they should be put on wanted posters. Wanted by the people for removal from office for unspeakable crimes against the people, particularly Afrikan people. The district attorney is used to being on the offensive so we must put them on the defense, which will assure our victory because their criminal conduct is indefensible.

While the spotlight constantly shines on police violence, we leave the prosecutor, who is the architect of violence, hidden in the shadows unchallenged and unscathed by the sickle of truth. They are public officials; yet, most of the public doesn't know their names or what they look like. We must officially introduce them to the public. In the interim, we must start the process that will create a Community Prosecutorial Review Board with subpoena power.

Some of us avoid mentioning the name of the prosecutor who convicted a political prisoner or P.O.W. but this is a grave tactical error. Some of us say that they do not want to make the prosecutor famous. We won't – we will simply make them visible through infamy because we will control the image and the name so that it always reflects their criminality. If we don't make them seen, we fail in applying the necessary pressure for them to capitulate.

Nevertheless, if you have ever been duck hunting in the fog, you know it is next to impossible to hit a target you cannot see. Hence, we must put them on the bulletin boards of our universities and colleges, churches, mosques, temples, and recreation centers or anywhere people meet to converse. If we don't teach the masses how to smoke out corrupt prosecutors and overwhelm them with our campaign of mass exposure, we will continue to take huge losses on a battlefield where we are being slaughtered.

How so, you ask? One month ago, on November 2nd I helped liberate a young Afrikan from the clutches of two dastardly assistant district attorneys (ADA): Brandi Brice and Carmen Lineberger. After we proved that the key witness, who was a cop, was lying, the officer then calmly pointed to ADA Brice, supposedly identifying her as the one who told him to lie. Lineberger pretended not to know anything about the false testimony, but the judge, because of the prosecutors' bold disregard for the law, was irate. After apologizing to the young Afrikan and humiliating both ADA's, the judge dismissed all the charges without prejudice. Lineberger is now prosecuting a high profile homicide case against four Afrikan youths. We must make her name and face known to the people through our magnifying lens and have her removed from the office of prosecution. When asked [in November 2004] by a reporter from the *Philadelphia Daily News*, what Lineberger thought about the accused being a juvenile she replied, 'Daddy told me, baby rattlesnakes are more dangerous than the adults.' To compound the viciousness, Lineberger's father is a Philly common pleas judge. Not



Muti Adisa Ajamu-Osagboro

only do they see us as nonhuman, but also as animals – poisonous snakes and our youth are worse than us. If we don't stop them, they have made it very clear they will pursue our youth worse than they did and do us.

The prosecutor in my case, Richard Michaelson, was connected with a drug-dealing mobster in 1979 and had he been exposed back then, he wouldn't have been in the position to illegally convict me two years thereafter in 1981. The prosecutor in Mumia's case, Joseph McGill, was caught red-handed breaking the law in the Baker case while getting a conviction by misleading the jury. Had we exposed McGill back during the Baker case, he wouldn't have been in the position to illegally convict Mumia in 1982, with the exact tactic and identical words to the jury the state supreme court said were against the law.

Tragically, most of us don't know the names, let alone the faces of the prosecution who put our **General Geronimo ji Jaga** in prison for nearly three decades. Obviously, we have been missing the mark. If we expose them now, we will thwart them from making our children Political Prisoners and P.O.W.s and

simultaneously free us from these kkkamps. Each time we hold up an image of a Political Prisoner or P.O.W. we must hold up the image of the criminal who convicted them.

Uhuru sasa!!!

Innocence Has No Statue of Limitation

23 years, 6 months, 3 weeks, 4 days, 18 hours, 31 minutes and 54 seconds from the bowels of the Terrordome – *Your kinsman, comrade and mirror* -

Muti Ajamu-Osagboro, Political Prisoner #AM-6021

"You will know the lovers of freedom by their scars!" --Muti

Muti Adisa Ajamu-Osagboro means "the protector that makes his meaning clear and fights for what he wants because of God". According to Muti, he was snatched by the Philadelphia police from his beloved community, Richard Allen Homes, at the age of 17, arrested and convicted for a crime (homicide-robbery) he did not commit through the actions of prosecutor Richard Michaelson and court-appointed attorney Arlan Mintz. His young life was sent on a downward spiral of injustice, torture and illegalities. Twenty-three years later, he still fights, still innocent and still locked in a cold cell. The four actual perpetrators of the crime have either pleaded guilty or confessed to the crime and have furthermore exonerated him, stating that he was not involved. Recent disclosures of compelling newly discovered evidence (which the Philadelphia District Attorney's office withheld for over two decades) has begun to lift his case into the light of day. Help from his attorney, **Alison Reiss** of Reiss & Motta and the courageous Honorable Judge **M. Teresa Sarmina** has

made his return to the community more a reality. The Free Muti Now Defense Committee recently hired attorney **Jeremy Gelb**, referred to them by Alison Reiss, to help undo the injustices Muti has incurred.

Muti is housed at STATE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION AT GRATERFORD. He is an innocent man who has survived the terrors of this life and existence. He has co-authored a book entitled *Celling America's Soul: Torture and Transformation in our Prisons*. Furthermore, Muti is known and viewed as a progressive prisoner throughout the inmate population and community activists programs. He has worked on countless artistic, educational and social reform community outreach projects. He has served population in prison legislative reform with **Ernest Preate, Jr., Esquire**. Muti has been a volunteer literacy tutor for the mentally challenged and mediates along with Professor **Dr. Julia Hall** in prison reform education for her students through the NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM. He has generated community proposals along with, Philadelphia Police Commissioner **Sylvester Johnson** in his effort to prevent youth from entering prison. Muti invites various progressive judges and legislators to Graterford to enhance prisoners' legal education. Additionally, he has a reputation as a peacemaker and problem solver for the many conflicts in prison that are diffused without violence. As well, he is an acclaimed writer, poet, artist, and father.

Chairwoman Sister Manchua serves the FREE MUTI NOW DEFENSE COMMITTEE, working with his sister, **Rosalyn Payne**, and the many other committee members. It was through her efforts that we learned about Muti's case.



JUSTICE FOR MARSHALL EDDIE CONWAY!

Marshall "Eddie" Conway is currently in the **35th year** of his incarceration in the Maryland prison system for a crime that he did not commit. As an important member of the Baltimore chapter of the BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF-DEFENSE, Eddie was targeted by local, state and federal police under the FBI's infamous counterintelligence program, known as COINTELPRO.

Despite being a model prisoner, infraction-free for over 22 years, Eddie has been repeatedly denied parole by the State of Maryland. Now, with the assistance of several State politicians and support groups (AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE, FRIENDS OF EDDIE CONWAY, THE MARSHALL E. CONWAY SUPPORT COMMITTEE, JUSTICE FOR EDDIE CONWAY, the ORGANIZATION OF ALL AFRIKAN UNITY-BLACK PANTHER CADRE and others), as well as his legal team, Eddie is seeking a new trial that would uncover the "dirty tricks" that were used to target and unfairly convict him of killing a Baltimore police officer in 1970. Eddie himself has repeatedly stated: "At no time in my life have I killed or attempted to kill anyone. I have no involvement in that incident. I'm innocent." The Baltimore City Council passed a unanimous Resolution in 2001 calling for a review of Eddie's case. However, then-Governor Parris Glendening and the Maryland



Legislature (despite the strong work of Clarence "Tiger" Davis and Salima Marriott, among others, of informing people about his bogus conviction) did not call for a review of Eddie's case.

What Can You Do To Help?

Write to Maryland Governor **Robert Ehrlich**, Lieutenant Governor **Michael Steele** and Maryland's State Legislators to demand that Eddie be granted parole or a new trial. Join or support the organizations fighting for Eddie.

To send correspondence to Eddie, write: Marshall E. Conway #116469, Box 534, Jessup, MD 20794.

To contact the Governor, write to: Governor Robert Ehrlich, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401; or call: **1-800-811-8336** (phone) or **410-974-3901**; faxes to: 410-974-3275. The Governor's e-mail address: governor@gov.state.md.us; the Governor's website: www.gov.state.md.us

To contact the Marshall E. Conway Support Committee, write: P.O. Box 41144, Baltimore, MD 21203-6144. Or call: 410-276-7221. Or call KUUMBA EVENTS and COMMUNICATIONS at **410-865-2723**. E-mail: kuumba@bellatlantic.net.

"All Power To The People"

The Afrika Page

AFRICA: YUCKY, YUCKY!

By Rudolf Ogoo Akonkwo
February 9, 2005

Africa is a continent of many stories. Over the years, Africa's stories have resisted attempts by historians to bring them all together to make sense. They are like tissues that refused to be stitched together. Because Africa's stories do not yet make sense, African plight is always difficult to dissect and diagnose. One of those Africans in the forefront of marshalling out solutions to Africa's numerous maladies is **George B. N. Ayittey**. Ayittey is a Ghanaian economic professor at American University in Washington who uses his columns in *The Wall Street Journal* to propound solutions to Africa's problems. Some of his solutions are far from being palatable.

One of Ayittey's most controversial recommendations is that some African countries should establish what he called "free economic zones" where big businesses would be enticed with tax breaks and waivers on duties. Such countries would in return, give up sovereignty over such territories. For those countries that would not be interested in giving up territory, Ayittey suggested that they should lease out parts of their territories for some years in return for debt forgiveness. What Ayittey wants to see are lots of Hong Kongs in Africa. Nigeria for instance can give up the Sharia States to Microsoft and Coca-Cola. International business interests will then descend on those lands and turn them into an economic miracle. Apparently, it appears that to people like Ayittey, there really is no hope that Africa, left on its own can crawl out of its predicaments.

Ayittey and his likes are only giving intellectual backing to those who are more and more concluding that Africa is once again lost and as such needs another dose of colonization as the only way to bring about "civilization" to our once again darkening continent. This trend of portraying Africa in a bad light is exploding every other day. *The Economist* of London recently put Africa on its cover and declared Africa "A Hopeless Continent". And in America, policy makers picture Africa as a case of "wall-to-wall incompetence, disorder and danger." Despite the protests of a few who understand the complexity of the forces acting in Africa, these labels are sticking.

Many Africans are beginning to think that probably we chased the Europeans out too early. Some Africans are so disillusioned that they are nostalgic about those days when the Europeans were in absolute control. Africans have joined the rest of the outside world to refer to their homeland as a lost cause. An African man after a recent visit called his homeland "bush" and swore never to step in there again. He had thrown in the towel and turned his back permanently. Other Africans, who still care, do so reluctantly. Some are just waiting for their parents to die off before they finally slam the door on Africa. For the rest, it is a constant prayer that the immigration office will one day let them bring out their loved ones. Once that is accomplished, it is goodbye Africa.

Over three decades after most of Africa achieved their political independence, the trials and tribulations of the African have worsened. Why? Why? Why? Who failed Africa? Who lost Africa? Who will save Africa? Who will rescue her? Why is Africa, the motherland, the cradle of civilization, and the home of all of humanity in such a huge despair? We know the usual

suspects: Colonization, slavery, IMF, the West, AIDS, corruption, "the Wasted generation", illiteracy, ignorance, ethnicity, religion, drought, flood, famine, Mobutu, Moi, Mugabe, malaria, mad cow disease, Ebola, Eyadema, soldiers, Obasanjo, Gaddafi, Abacha, warlords, witches, water-babies, mermaids, Ogoni and what have you. But what about you and me? Are these impediments insurmountable? Have we tried with all our might? Have we exhausted all our options?

It has been suggested that international donors and western nations and their financial institutions should tie aid to African nations to human rights observations and improvements in democratic institutions. Currently, that suggestion is being implemented. Ayittey has taken it a step further. He wants American aid to be tied to the existence of a strong central bank, independent media, courts and security forces. He wants war-torn countries like Sierra Leone taken over by the United Nations. To pay for the cost of running the country, clearing up the mess brought about by warlords and International Diamond businesses backing them, Sierra Leone's diamond deposits would be sold off.

Obviously, to the likes of Ayittey, the struggle to save Africa is an emergency situation that requires emergency measures. It is more or less a case of 'by any means necessary'. When one listens to the reports about AIDS and the devastation it causes, one is shaken up. The common phrase is that a generation of Africans is being wiped off the face of the earth. If nothing is done, by the time AIDS finished with Africa, there will not be anyone standing. The warlords will call for war and nobody will come out to carry their AK47. Drought will come and there is nobody to force into relocation. Leaders who are used to driving to the Central Banks and loading millions of dollars into trucks will not have children to give the money for safe keeping. The shadow of death will be all over Africa.

What is to be done? Mortgage Africa? For the second time? Are the results out? Did the colonial masters do better than African leaders?

The implications of Africa's failure are so unimaginable. The survival of the black race is tied up with the survival of Africa. If Africa shines, the black race shines. But if Africa remains on its knees, so shall all blacks all over the world. No black man will be able to stand tall and raise his head high with all boldness until Africa is on the path to progress. Nothing is as pathetic as seeing that there is no glimmer of hope anywhere in Africa. South Africa, with its comparative advantages, is devastated by violence and AIDS. It also has the misfortune of having a president that *TIME* magazine recently tagged "a dissident."

The search for answers is proceeding unabatedly in every direction. One time Nigeria's Senate President, Dr. Chuba Okadigbo, once suggested that Nigeria should abandon the written constitution and adopt the unwritten code of conduct - a kind of indigenous democracy. Which means that we may not have heard the last from medicine men and juju priests. In a different suggestion, the Eastern Mandate Union (EMU) abroad once called on Bill Clinton to use the opportunity of their meeting with President Obasanjo of Nigeria to compel him to call a National Conference. As more African nations fight their first civil wars,

and some prepare for their second, it is becoming clear that National Conferences may be the only way to go. Such a conference is needed in order to set up structures of nationhood and administration to be agreed upon by all nationalities and socio-political forces in these African countries. The exploitation of structural flaws in Africa's present nation-state by the ruling elite has been the bedrock of Africa's problems.

The needs of the ordinary Kikuyu man eating Ugali in Nairobi or the ordinary Igbo man eating akpu in Sokoto are all the same. They all want a safe continent where there is hope and an opportunity for them to maximize their potentials. In their desperation, they may not care how that is achieved. But they have never forgotten how we got into this mess in the first place. It is therefore the duty of African intellectuals, especially the drive-by types who live outside Africa, to make responsible choices for Africans. In their anger and despair, they should not prescribe a remedy that in the long run will short change Africa and be worse than the illness whose cure is being sought. Africa should not be short-changed and undersold. The greatest help will always be the self-help. The danger in assuming that Africa's survival can only be found in the laps of foreigners amounts to an acceptance of Africans' inferiority. If the Indians, the Malaysians, the Brazilians, the Mexicans, the Hungarians, the Iranians are digging out rather than selling out, the Africans should have the courage and the decency to hang in there and dig out.

Do the likes of Ayittey consider the fact that exchange of flags did not end colonization? As they chunk out solutions the West should implement, did they consider the fact that the West has always been involved and often indicted in African tragedies? They plan the coups, bring up governments and bring down governments. They start wars and end wars. Have the West changed? Where did they find the milk of human kindness to come to Africa just to do good? What did they do with their self-interest that has always overridden their sense of what is right and what is wrong? What makes the likes of Ayittey develop so much trust for the same people who killed **Patrice Lumumba**?

An African-American child was reported to have been asked by his teacher what he thought about Africa and he responded, "yucky, yucky". The same expression he uses when his mother asks him to taste broccoli or uncooked tomatoes. If Africans like Ayittey and I do nothing to rescue Africa ourselves, tomorrow, this African-American child that will call Africa "yucky, yucky" may be yours or mine. As for his children and his children's children, they will read our stories of today and declare our days, the dark ages.



Doesn't that possibility make *you* feel yucky?

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as possible, what we concluded from our review for those who may have been "left hanging" by last issue's article.

REVISITING Sudan

{Continued From Page 1}

(1) First and foremost, everyone who is currently engaged in hostilities is **using the civilian villagers who are caught in the middle**. Neither the Government nor the rebels appears to be expending as much energy in protecting their civilians as they are in attempting to destroy their enemies. So long moral high ground; let's all just wallow in the muck together.

(2) This is **not a conflict between light-skinned "Arabs" and Black "Afrikans"**. Just about everyone in this conflict is darker than most Afrikans living in America. Ethnically speaking (if that is an appropriate word), they are *all* Black Afrikans. Some speak Arabic as a first language and *have chosen to consider themselves "Arabs"*. This designation seems more one of political and cultural self-identification (or self-nullification) than true ethnicity. Not only that, but several "Arab" groups have refused to assist the supposedly-"Arab" Janjawid and have been subjected to attacks as a result, while others are represented on *both sides* of the fighting.

(3) There is **confusion as to whether or not what is happening constitutes "genocide"**. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL hesitated to use the term because it saw no organized, concerted effort by the Government to wipe out the people of Darfur. Some of the ambivalence around the word also harkens back to the **Rwandan genocide**, which ended when the Tutsis finally fought off the Hutu aggression, and which was marked by the inactivity of the worldwide community because the word "genocide" had been carefully avoided by the United States and others. Thus, some see the hesitancy to use the word as an international cop-out. For example, **Salih Booker**, Executive Director of AFRICA ACTION, which is bound by no such restrictive definition, has freely used the term to describe the Sudanese Government's deeds. Mean-

while, several Afrikan-American Muslims, who are worried about US aims to destabilize and destroy Sudan's Islamic govern-

ment, recently returned from a fact-finding mission to Darfur and have concluded that no genocide has taken place there and that the people of Sudan are "working the problem out themselves". For our part, we have concluded that while there may not be genocide occurring, *someone* has committed war crimes in Darfur. The Janjawid, and possibly the Government and rebel forces as well. All have failed to show the proper commitment to the very people they claim to represent. And someone *must*.

(4) There is **plenty of blame to go around** as to how this crisis has reached such a critical point, and, much as we suspect the motives of some of the players involved, at least some blame must fall to the Sudanese Government. On the one hand, Government officials insisted on tightly controlling the access of international observers and aid organizations in the name of sovereignty, while on the other hand, they answered criticisms of their inability to stop the violence by stating that they were doing all they could. Then, why not *ask for help from the start*? Why not negotiate terms early on for international observers and peacekeepers to assist in controlling the situation?

(5) As much as some Darfurians have been shown on television praising the Bush administration for its pressure on the Sudanese Government, and as much as some activists have been pushing for the United States to increase pressure on Khartoum to be more responsive to the crisis in Darfur (up to and including economic sanctions and US military intervention), **one cannot possibly be serious about wanting the United States to take a lead role in any intervention in Sudan**, least of all a military one. The United States has not been known to engage in interventions for altruistic purposes. It had to be practically dragged into World War II after the Nazi, Italian and Japanese aggressions had

reached critical levels. Some "America First-ers" point to the Somalia relief effort as an example of US humanitarian action that was met by violence and the world's ungratefulness, but the US bears some responsibility for flooding that country of starving people with guns during the previous decades, in an attempt to win their "proxy Cold War" with the Soviets. The interventions in Iran, Vietnam, Chile, Grenada and Iraq were due to *US pursuit of strategic or material interests* in those areas of the world, and not to any commitment to truth and justice for anyone other than America's Robber Barons. And if the US were to intervene in Sudan, one can expect it to seek as "payment" the abundance of natural resources suddenly available.

(6) And just what are these resources? The most obvious is **oil**. Sudan is one of the most oil-rich countries in Afrika, perhaps second only to Nigeria. That US oil companies must be salivating over the prospect of drilling for all that oil is obvious. Among the reasons for China's opposition to US intervention is the fact that it is seeking a deal with the Khartoum Government for oil drilling rights, especially in the southern region, where a decades-long civil war appears finally, and thankfully, to be coming to an end. The second is the **strategic position** of Sudan in north-east Afrika, within arm's reach of several eastern and central Afrikan nations. The third is **the Nile**. The Blue Nile and White Nile come together in Sudan, creating one of the great freshwater conduits of the world along with **the Tigris and Euphrates** in Iraq (where the US is trying to establish a "friendly", meaning compliant, government) and **the Amazon** in South America (specifically, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil, all of which are being watched closely by US officials). Consider the state of the world's drinking water today and what possession of these great freshwater bodies would mean in the future.

(7) The dreaded T-Word, "**tribalism**". This word is carted out whenever we see Afrikans fighting each other. Was that same word used in Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union or Northern Ireland? At any rate, any discussion of "tribalism" must go back to its root cause: the dispersal and fragmentation of Afrikan people as they fled from European aggression, which started thousands of years

ago. Ancestor **Chancellor Williams** explained this very well in his classic book *The Destruction of Black Civilization*. The fragmented Afrikan people were, centuries later, subjected to the varied colonial influences of the French, the Dutch, the English, the Portuguese, the Arabians and the United States. Finally, at the Berlin Conference of 1880, the oppressors forced these different and now-alienated "tribes" back together in 53 colonial nation-states, maintained for the benefit of the exploiters and not the Afrikan people. "**Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.**" Thus, we have Zulu and Xosa together in South Afrika instead of a Zululand or a Xosaland. We have the Hutu and the Tutsi waging war in Rwanda and Burundi instead of a Hutuland and a Tutsiland. We have a Nigeria where the Igbo, the Ogoni, the Yoruba and the Hausa engaged in conflicts instead of a Yoruba Nation, a Hausa Nation, an Igboland and an Ogoniland. And in Sudan we have the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa people engaged in a fight for their lives and culture against members of the Rizeiqat, Miseriya and Tama, with the Beni Hussein and the Dorok, among others, caught between them in a battle for farmland that is threatened by an encroaching desert. The fact is, any number of so-called "tribal" conflicts might have been avoided had the people of Afrika been allowed to develop their civilizations undisturbed by colonialism even *once* over the last several thousand years. Afrika would not be the current battleground between the forces of Capitalism and Communism that it is. It would not be the arena where Christianity and Islam are competing for the "immortal souls" of Afrikans who, judging by their connection to their Creator and by their behavior toward one another, were probably closer to God than the Christian and Muslim mercenaries that had come to "save their souls". A true analysis of what is happening in Sudan or any of Afrika's many trouble spots must ultimately take us to the doctrine of White Supremacy, and any effective solution must seek to undo the damage wrought by these immensely destructive policies that firmly placed Afrikan people on their collective knees.

In Future Issues:

Recent Developments In Sudan and Darfur



Next Issue:

**The Pan Afrikan Organizing Committee
The Need for a Cooperative Economics Movement
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