



A Short
History
of
Afrikan
Liberation
Day

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The Pan Afrikan People's Phone-in
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The Pan-Afrikan People's Phone-in is a space for themed interactive discussions conducted over the airwaves and cyberspace. The themes are focused around issues affecting Afrikan people both locally and globally.

The Pan-Afrikan People's Phone-in regularly features guests from revolutionary Pan-Afrikanist organisations. From time to time others including non-Afrikan guests will be invited to contribute. The activities of all guests will be examined on the basis of their relevance to Afrikan people locally and worldwide. Interviews and presentations with guests will set the scene for the more general discussion (in the second half of the programme) where listeners will be invited to phone in, ask questions and contribute.

Spread the word: Please tell all of your family, friends, fellow organisation members, colleagues, associates and other networks about the show. Encourage them to listen.

Short history of African Liberation Day (ALD)

The Second World War devastated imperialism

From its inception African Liberation Day (ALD) was anti-imperialist in character. ALD was born in the aftermath of the Second World War as part of the struggle of Pan-Africanism to prevent the imperialists from retaining their control over the land of African and the other oppressed people of the world.

The Second World War led to massive infighting amongst the imperialists which devastated their social, political and economic infrastructures.

“Europe emerged devastated from the ravages of war against fascism, and capitalism faced imminent collapse, the United States hastened to the rescue with its Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine and the establishment of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation].” (Babu, 1981, p. 83).

The war weakened imperialism to the point of impairing its ability to maintain control over the colonised world.

In a desperate attempt to retain control over the colonies, the imperialists under the newly established leadership of US imperialism convened the Bretton Woods Conference in July 1944. This conference marked the regrouping of imperialism for the purpose of overcoming its economic crisis and maintaining US hegemony over the world. The conference was the brainchild that launched the plethora of modern day capitalist killer institutions which reap havoc in the world today. Both the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) colloquially referred to as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) came into being as a direct result of Bretton Woods.

“The objective of the World Bank and the IMF was to ensure that no one strayed out of the sphere of interest of the new leader of the bourgeois powers.” (Babu, 1981, p. 33).

Other capitalist killer institutions to emerge from this process were the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which in 1995 was transformed into the World Trade organisation (WTO) in order to promote imperialism’s theft through ‘trade’ and the United Nations (UN), imperialism’s unofficial international police force. In short:

“... the imperialists reorganised themselves after the Second World War, and consolidated their position first by sending massive aid to Europe through the Marshall Plan, secondly by stabilising the international credit system through the IMF, and thirdly by establishing an elaborate system of money lending, especially in [underdeveloped] countries, through the World Bank and its subsidiaries.” (Babu, 1981, p. 48).

The determination of colonised people to be free, coupled with imperialism’s weakness due to war meant that Imperialism’s loss of control over its Afrikan and other colonies was now inevitable. This meant that it had to solve the problem of how to continue its theft of colonised peoples’ resources after the colonies gained formal political independence. It responded by setting up killer institutions to facilitate its

continued theft of the colonies' resources through economic domination and exploitation. The primary purpose of the IMF, the World Bank, the GATT (now WTO) and the UN was to facilitate and maintain imperialism's continued domination of the 'independent' former colonies by proxy through new global level economic institutions. The formation of these new killer institutions were an important milestone marking the ushering in of a critical change in capitalism's historical development. They symbolised capitalism's move from colonial to neo-colonial methods of domination exploitation.

ALD was anti-imperialist from the start

The Pan-Africanist movement responded to imperialism's aggressive onslaught by convening the fifth Pan-African Congress. This move was designed to counter imperialism's agenda of re-affirming and consolidating its hold over Africa and other colonised parts of the world. Pan-Africanism was at the heart of the battle between the thieving imperialist forces, on the one hand, and the masses of Africa and other colonised peoples of the world, on the other. The battle was for control of the land upon which the masses lived.

It was within this context that Pan-Africanists created ALD as an anti-imperialist weapon. ALD was designed to help raise the level of consciousness amongst the African masses and other oppressed people on the need to actively fight against imperialism in order to regain the lands and corresponding resources that it has stolen from them. ALD was therefore created as a Pan-Africanist institution and is a weapon in the arsenal of Afrikan and world revolution.

African Liberation day is an institution created by the Pan-African Movement

The fifth Pan African Congress held in 1945 was a critically important milestone in the development of the Pan-African movement and the overall African liberation process. It was the first congress where (i) large numbers of African people from the motherland were represented by delegates from their zones (ii) the meaning and purpose of Pan-Africanism and African Nationalism were discussed in great depth by delegates and (iii) the objective of the masses of Africa achieving state power was clearly established. Previous congresses were limited in that they had focused on complaining and protesting to colonisers about the ill-treatment of Africans under colonialism rather than procuring power.

The fifth congress took a qualitative leap by demanding 'autonomy and independence', African unity and self-determination, whilst also moving towards an effective organisational framework for progressing the African liberation struggle towards achieving these ends. At the level of ideas, what Pan-Africanism stood for and against became clearer. Pan-Africanism stood for the unity and liberation of the whole of Africa under a just social system (Padmore, 1963, p. 55-57). At the same time, Pan-Africanism stood resolutely against capitalism, imperialism, colonialism and settler colonialism (Padmore, 1963, p. 55-57). Pan-Africanism also stood against imperialist oppression of Asian and other non-African people (Padmore, 1963, p. 66-67).

Delegates realised that unless the masses of African people were actively involved in the process, African liberation would remain a dream. As a direct result of that congress, a concerted effort was made to mobilise the masses of African people in the African continent. Delegates returned to their homes and

worked towards achieving power in their localities. Many of the delegates went on to play leading roles in the processes that brought their countries to 'political independence'.

However, the organisational work on the ground was not limited to people that attended the fifth Pan African congress. Initiatives and activities were taking place across both the African continent and the Diaspora. One of the initiatives that contributed to the atmosphere of Pan-Africanism on the continent came from a medical doctor R.N. Duchein of Liberia. He launched a Pan-African Unification Organization in 1954 which was made up of Africans from all over the African continent. In 1957, he also published a document *The Pan-African Manifesto* in Accra. Dr. Duchein advocated a Pan-African Federation for the whole of the continent:

"where Africans will rule themselves and enjoy fully in liberty, respected, the inalienable rights of man."

His Pan-African organisation sought to end colonialism and also included Africans abroad who wanted to come home to Africa to participate in the liberation process.

Bandung: the spirit of co-operation between Afrikan people and Arabs

The Bandung conference which took place from 17th to 24th April 1955, helps to explain some of the international context surrounding the development of Afrikan liberation Day (Leonard, 2006, p. 139/140). It was hosted by Indonesia and co-sponsored the governments of Burma, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. They brought together an additional twenty-four nations from Asia and Africa including: Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, **Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gold Coast (Ghana)**, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, **Liberia, Libya**, Nepal, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, the Vietnam Democratic Republic, South Vietnam (later reunified with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) and Yemen (Republic of Yemen) - in total 29 countries; The Afrikan National Congress (ANC) of Azania (South Afrika) was also represented (Brian Bunting).

The tone for the conference was set by the opening address entitled '*Let a New Asia and a New Africa be Born*'. Since the decolonization process was still ongoing, the delegates at the conference also discussed the plights of other colonized peoples (especially in Africa) that had not yet established independent governments. They discussed issues such as national sovereignty, racism, nationalism and struggles against colonialism, world peace and economic and cultural cooperation among the participating countries. Their efforts contributed to the anti-imperialist spirit of co-operation between Afrikan people, Arabs and Asians that enabled Afrikan people and Arabs in North Afrika to work co-operatively towards Afrikan continental independence. Malcolm X explained how:

"Back in '55 in Indonesia – Bandung – they had a conference of dark skinned people. The people of Afrika and Asia came together for the first time in centuries. They had no nuclear weapons, they had no air fleets, no navy. But they discussed their plight and they found that there was one thing that we all had in common – oppression, exploitation and suffering. And we had a common oppressor, a common exploiter ... We had differences. Some were Buddhists, some were, Hindus some were Christians, some were Moslems, some didn't have any religion at all. But with all the differences that existed, they agreed on one thing, the spirit of Bandung was, from there on in,

to de-emphasise the areas of difference and emphasise the areas that we had in common ... it was the spirit of Bandung that fed the flames of nationalism and freedom, not only in Asia, but especially on the Afrikan continent ... And that spirit didn't stay on the Afrikan continent. It somehow or other, it slipped into the Western Hemisphere and got into the heart and mind and the soul of the Black man in the Western Hemisphere who supposedly had been separate from the Afrikan continent for almost 400 years." (Clark, 2003, p. 163).

Ghanaian independence: the catalyst for African unity and African Liberation Day

Prior to the independence of Ghana there were seven independent states in Africa. They were: Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. Surprisingly, none of these states took the initiative of building a united framework of operation amongst themselves for directly working towards the liberation of other parts of the continent. It was not until the 6th March 1957 when Ghana became independent that the uniting and liberating process of African people took an organised continental form. Nkrumah (the Pan-Africanist that led Ghana to independence) made his intentions clear from the outset. At 12.01am his first act as president was a declaration that:

"The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked to the total liberation of the African continent."
(Nkrumah, 1980, p. 121)

He immediately set about creating diplomatic processes that would make African unity a reality. Out of those processes two conferences emerged. The first, a conference of Independent African States brought together all of the African Heads of State in existence at that point. Its purpose was to develop a plan aimed at freeing the remainder of the continent from colonial rule. The independent governments would spearhead the liberation process for the rest of the continent.

Nkrumah understood that the onus is always on oppressed people to come together to free themselves. He therefore convened a second conference. Operating through mass grass roots organisations the All African People's Conference was designed to put the African masses at the forefront of the struggle for African liberation. The results of these conferences were so powerful that in the years that followed, even those African leaders who for their own selfish reasons were personally against African unity felt obliged to publicly state their support for African unity. This two pronged approach to African self determination meant that under Nkrumah's leadership, Ghana became widely acknowledged as the fountainhead of the process for uniting and liberating Africa (Breitman, 2002, p. 78).

The origin and foundation of African Liberation Day

African Liberation Day was founded in Accra, Ghana, at the First conference of Independent Africa States. The conference was attended by the 8 independent African states plus two African liberation organisations – the Union of Cameroonian Peoples and the National Liberation front of Algeria – both in the midst of pitch battles to free their parts of the continent from imperialism. Held on the third anniversary of Bandung, the conference ran from 15th to 22nd April 1958 and the first day of the conference – 15th April was declared, by the delegates present, Africa Freedom day.

This was the first occasion that a day was set aside by Afrikan people to reflect on the progress that was being made towards the total unification and liberation of Afrika and her people. Its purpose was to mark the first occasion in modern history when independent African states met to plan the liberation process for colonised nations in Africa. It also symbolised the determination of the peoples of Africa to free themselves from foreign domination and exploitation. Previous Pan-African conferences, conventions and congresses were held abroad. This conference meant that this aspect of Pan-Africanism had taken root in Africa's soil.

The eight African countries at the founding of Africa Freedom Day understood that only a unified and liberated Africa could free all Africans. Kwame Nkrumah in his welcoming address at the Conference of Independent African States set the scene for Afrikan and Arab co-operation when he said:

"Today we are one. If in the past the Sahara divided us now it unites us. And an injury to one is an injury to all of us. From this conference must go out a new message. Hands off Africa! Africa must be free!" (Nkrumah, 1980, p. 128)

As a means of monitoring and measuring the development of African freedom and resistance against colonialism, it was decided by the eight participating states that the:

"15th of April should be named Africa Freedom Day, to mark each year the onward progress of the liberation movement and to symbolize the determination of people of Africa to free themselves from foreign domination and exploitation." (Nkrumah, 1980, p. 126)

Since the external manifestation of European capitalism seeks to dominate Africa, the day had to be anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and anti-neo-colonialist. Each of these evils are manifestations of an economic system that comes from foreign European countries; countries that have and are exploiting Africa's resources and labour for profit. The purpose of these exploiting systems is to enrich a few Europeans and the African puppet leadership that support those Europeans in Africa. Building on the experiences of Ghana, the main strategy adopted by Pan-Africanists to free Africa from foreign domination was "Positive Action" which involved campaigns in the form of boycotts, strikes and the vote.

Originally conceived by Kwame Nkrumah and George Padmore as the 6th Pan-African Congress, The First All African People's Conference was held on 8th to 13th December 1958, also in Accra, Ghana (Baptiste, 2009, p. 166). It brought together freedom fighters from all over Africa in a united effort aimed at achieving African liberation. At the time these freedom fighters were largely unknown outside of their immediate spheres of operation. However, many of them were to go on to become leaders, presidents and prime ministers in the 'wind of change' as independence (within national borders) swept across Africa.

Among the 300 delegates representing the entire continent and the African Diaspora were Peter Koinange, Joseph Murumbi, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Anthony Enahoro, Shirley Du Bois, Essie Robeson (Baptiste, 2009, p. 176). Among the better known participants were:

"Patrice Lumumba, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Tom Mboya, Oginga Odinga, Joshua Nkomo, WEB Du Bois, Paul Robeson, Congressman Charles Diggs, W Alphaeus Horton, George Padmore, Frantz Fanon ..." (AAPRP, 1988, p. 3).

It reaffirmed the resolution of the Conference of Independent African States by calling on All African countries and all friends of Africa throughout the world to observe Africa Freedom Day as a rallying point for the forces of freedom. It went further than the First Conference of Independent African States by resolving that where necessary, armed struggle should be employed as a means for liberating the African continent from imperialist domination. It was resolved that:

"The All-African people's Conference in Accra declares its full support to all fighters of freedom in Africa, to all those who resort to peaceful means of non-violence and civil disobedience as well as those who are compelled to retaliate against violence to attain national independence and freedom for the people. Where such retaliation becomes necessary, the conference condemns all legislation which considers those who fight for their independence as common criminals." (Milne, 1978, p. 80).

If the First Conference of Independent African States represented the coming home of Pan-Africanism, then the All-African People's Conference, by officially adopting Pan-Africanism as its objective, represented the grounding of Pan-Africanism firmly within the grassroots of the African liberation struggle. Nkrumah summarised its importance as follows:

"While this was primarily a Conference of dependent peoples, a bridge has been built between the freedom fighters throughout the continent. In other words, this conference has linked together the Independent States with the dependent territories in a common front." (Nkrumah, 1958, p. 10).

In the same year under the guidance of the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG) the Peoples Republic of Guinea achieved independence. Guinea which had suffered under French colonialism took on an active role in working towards continental unity and liberation. Ghana and Guinea combined to serve as an inspiration as well as base for the Pan African Movement world-wide.

The development of Africa Freedom Day

From 1958 to 1963 as the process of African independence intensified, Africa Freedom Day was held throughout Africa, the African world and in European countries. Emperor Haile Selassie in 1959 declared in a radio broadcast for Africa Freedom Day that:

"No power on earth is great enough to halt or reverse the trends now sweeping the African continent. The freedom march of Africans is relentless ..." (AAPRP, 1988, p. 4)

Observances were held in Azania (South Africa), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Britain, China, the USA and the USSR. In 1961, Kwame Nkrumah delivered a message during the third anniversary of Africa Freedom Day in which he stated:

"We in Ghana regard our independence as meaningless unless it is closely linked up with the total liberation of Africa ... The destiny of Africans everywhere is inseparably linked by our common heritage, common ideals and

aspirations. It develops upon all African leaders and the leaders of African descent, to unite in pursuit of our common objective – the total liberation of Africa and the union [government] of independent African states.”
(Nkrumah, 15th April 1961)

African Freedom Day commemorations were organised throughout the African Diaspora. For instance, Malcolm X regularly spoke at Africa Freedom Day Commemorations in Madison Square Gardens, New York to crowds of up to 10,000 people (AAPRP, 1988, p. 5).

In 1963 Kwame Nkrumah wrote the book *Africa Must Unite* in which he made a case for and explained the processes necessary for Africa's total liberation and unification. It was published just before the Conference of Heads of States and governments held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May 22nd - 25th, 1963. Nkrumah saw this conference as a prelude for setting up an All African Union Government to end the various divisions among African states.

From Africa Freedom Day to African Liberation Day

It was in the context of these world-wide and continental developments that the conference of Independent African States took place from 22nd to 25th May 1963. The conference was the fourth occasion that all African independent states came together to plan the unity and liberation of the continent. The conference was attended by more than 1100 people representing 32 African Countries, 21 African Liberation movements and hundreds of International supporters and observers.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was founded in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on the final day of the conference 25th May 1963. Since that date, conferences of the independent African states have been held on a regular basis as OAU conferences. The OAU was originally intended to bring strength, unity and co-ordination to the African liberation process. The conference that created the OAU was a continuation of the African political unification and liberation process spearheaded by the 8 original independent states; it was not the beginning of the process as has been misinterpreted by some observers. In the words of Haile Selassie:

"It has been five years since every year this day of April 15, was decreed to be celebrated as Africa's Independence Day. This day is celebrated throughout Africa. It reminds us of the struggles for independence during the last twelve months and of our African brothers that are still engaged in the fight for freedom.

For several years in the past, as must be remembered, a large part of the African continent was under colonial rule. In the course of that time, colonialists have stripped the Africans of their freedom and natural rights, and used their resources for the benefit and prosperity of their own country. Even today, colonial masters speak ill of Africans by exaggerating their poverty in the press. Africans are also blamed for the aid they receive. This aid cannot fill the needs of their peoples overnight. From under such humiliation, Africans rose up to safeguard their right and started to struggle to obtain their independence. This struggle began to bear fruit after World War II.

The first African Independent States Conference was held in Africa in 1958. The independent states at that time were only eight. Nevertheless, the freedom fight in Africa continued with more vigour and fervour and today the number of independent states has reached 32."

During the conference the original 8 states that spearheaded the liberation process, together with the other independent states, agreed to make 25th May African Liberation Day. This was in effect an alteration to the day set aside in 1958 to reflect on Afrikan peoples' progress towards the total unification and liberation of Afrika and her people. With that decision African Freedom Day was in effect renamed African Liberation Day and transferred from April to May. It was to be celebrated annually to mark the historical founding of the OAU and to carry forward the purpose and intent of Africa Freedom Day; African Liberation Day has since been observed on or around 25th May in Africa and throughout the world.

In truth, African Liberation Day is actually every day because as long as Africa is ravaged by neo-colonialism and is divided into 53 countries without a union government, no African the world over is free. When Africans worldwide demonstrate for African Liberation Day, their actions contribute to the destruction of the final phase of capitalist incursion into Africa – neo-colonialism. Once neo-colonialism is defeated, capitalism will have no other phases left, Africa's people will then be in a position to effectively manage their liberation and development.

Some milestones in the development of ALD in Britain

In Britain, the first Africa Freedom Day commemoration took the form of a concert and was organised by the Movement for Colonial Change in 1959 (AAPRP, 1988, p. 4). In 1962, the West Indian Association, the Uganda Association, the Southern Rhodesian Students Union, the Caribbean People's Organization, the British Guyana Freedom Association, Asia and Africa Magazine, the Solidarity Committee of Afro-Asian Unity (UK), the South Wales Miners' Union and the Nigerian Union joined with the Movement for Colonial Change and observed Africa Freedom Day. Fela Anikulapo Kuti performed at the programme (AAPRP, 1988, p. 6).

The first documented commemoration in Britain following the 1963 change of name from Africa Freedom Day to African Liberation Day appears to have been in 1967 when:

"In London, several heads of African missions declared at an ALD demonstration that white racist regimes in Africa threatened world peace." (AAPRP, 1988, p. 11)

The passing of Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah in 1972 seems to have triggered a revival in ALD commemorations throughout the world. Since that year ALD has been commemorated in Britain every year to the time of writing (2008). The organisers, operating in line with the anti-imperialist ethos of the originators of ALD were the Black Unity and Freedom Party (BUFP) and the Croydon Collective. They organised anti-imperialist ALD's in Britain from 1972 to 1983.

In 1975 the newly formed Pan-African Congress Movement (PACM) organised an alternative ALD commemoration along side the existing one. This new style ALD eventually deviated from the anti-

imperialist agenda of all previous ALD's and was positioned as an Afrikan only event. This variation of ALD continues to be commemorated until the present day (2009).

The African Liberation Committee comprising the Black Liberation Front (BLF), the BUFP, the Black Socialist Workers (BSW) and the Croydon Collective was formed in 1983. It took over and kept up the organising of the anti-imperialist ALD commemorations until 1988. From 1988 to 2005 the All-African People's Revolutionary Party (AAPRP) organised the anti-imperialist ALD, with the African People's Liberation Organisation (APLO) and the African Liberation Support Campaign Network (ALISC Network) collaborating with them in 2004 and 2005.

In 2006, the anti-imperialist ALD commemoration was organised by the newly formed African Liberation Day Organising Committee (ALDOC) comprising the Pan-African Society at London South Bank University (PAS), the AAPRP, the APLO and Uhuru; ALISC Network organised an anti-imperialist ALD series of events in Scotland. The Pan-African Society Community Forum (PASCf), an outgrowth of the PAS and ALISC Network organised separate anti-imperialist ALD commemorations in 2007.

In 2008 both the PASCf and the AAPRP organised separate anti-imperialist ALD events. In both 2007 and 2008 State forces moved in and organised counter-rallies to the anti-imperialist ALD. Supported by the neo-colonial Afrikan Union, the British state removed the 'liberation' from African Liberation Day and called these pseudo-events 'Africa Day'. In 2009 the Afrikan People's Socialist Party (APSP)/Uhuru Movement organised a new anti-imperialist ALD in Manchester. The A-AAPRP organised a distinct anti-imperialist ALD in London and a week later joined with the PASCf, Southwark Black Parents Forum (SBPF) and Afrikan Hebrew Israelites (AHI) in organising a collective anti-imperialist ALD - also in London.

The constituency of ALD

Clearly it is an expectation that African people will attend ALD commemorations, but is anyone else allowed to attend? Whilst there may be differing opinions amongst African people in the Diaspora, the history of ALD has set a clear precedent. From the origin of ALD it is clear that African states governed by Arabs have been in attendance at ALD commemorations. They were present and participated in the initial 1958 Conference of African Independent States and the 1963 conference that formed the Organisation of African Unity. It remains a fact that Arabs in Africa have never been excluded from any conference of African Independent States, nor have they been excluded from any meeting of its successors the Organisation of African Unity and the African Union. In that sense, the spirit of Bandung still holds some influence.

The Charter of the 1958 Conference of Independent African States provides clear historical evidence confirming the intentions of the African nations involved. Section I (I) (a) talks of "support for the charter of the United Nations". This suggests that from its very inception, the ALD event was linked to all nations in the world. Section I (I) (b) talks of "adherence to the principles enunciated at the Bandung conference", which implies a special affinity between African and Asian nations. Section II (2) states "... the future of dependent territories in Africa are ... the responsibility of all members of the United Nations and in

particular the independent African States.” This is clearly seeking the involvement and assistance of all nations in the pursuit of justice for African people. Section IV (1) “Condemns the practice of racial discrimination and segregation in all its aspects all over the world”, which strongly implies that the exclusion of non-Africans is against the spirit of those that created African Liberation Day. (Thompson, 1969, p. 342-350).

Section 1 (4) of the 1958 All African People’s Conference’s Charter describes Africa Freedom Day as a rallying point for: “... all African countries and all friends of Africa throughout the world ...”. Again this suggests that non-Africans who are supportive of African liberation are welcome. Similarly, section II (4) of the 1963 conference charter expresses its: “Condemnation of racial discrimination in all its forms ...”. Since the exclusion of non-Africans is a form of racial ‘discrimination’, such a practice would run counter to the principles adopted by the African states at this conference. (Thompson, 1969, p. 356 & 364-350).

In addition, it is documented that the British Member of Parliament Tony Benn addressed the delegates at the All African People’s Conference in January, 1960 (Thomson, p. 299). This is tangible evidence that non-Africans enjoyed full participation in proceedings that provided part of the context surrounding African Liberation Day. It is also clear that all of these conferences had foreign observers and it is highly likely that these observers were non-Africans. Nkrumah summarised the position in his opening speech at the 1958 All-African People’s Conference. He said:

“The liberation of Africa is the task of Africans. We Africans alone can emancipate ourselves. We welcome the expressions of support from others, for it is good to know that we are wished well in our struggle; but we alone can grapple with the monster of imperialism ... while we believe that Africa belongs to Africans, we are not racialists or chauvinists. We welcome into our midst peoples of all other races, other nations, other communities, who desire to live among us in peace and equality. But they must respect us and our rights, our right as the majority to rule.” (Nkrumah, 1958, p. 7).

Whilst this is not an exhaustive examination, the pattern is clear – from the very beginning non-Africans have been consistently permitted to attend ALD commemorative activities.

Furthermore, nowhere in the historical literature is there any request for the exclusion of any racial group from ALD commemorations and associated proceedings. The available evidence points to the conclusion that ALD was envisaged by our ancestors that created it as an African centred event rather than an African only event. It is therefore incumbent upon those that argue the case for the exclusivity of ALD to produce the historical evidence to support their position.

Africa’s armed liberation struggle

After the Organization of African Unity’s formal declaration of African Liberation Day in 1963, the national African liberation movements began to take on a different tone. Rather than limiting themselves to using strikes, boycotts, demonstrations and the vote, the African masses began to incorporate organized armed struggle. The gestation of armed conflict was already raging in Algeria under the leadership of the FLN (National Liberation Front) against French colonial rule and in Kenya, the Mau Mau (Land and Freedom

Army) had been fighting British colonialism since the 1950s. As a result of these wars and a growing volume of organised mass struggles, an increasing number of states became independent.

During the mid 1960s-1990s the people of Guinea Bissau led by the PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independencia da Guine e Cabo Verde), Mozambique's FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) and Angola's MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) waged armed struggle and defeated the Portuguese. Led by ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) Zimbabwe's African masses fought and won its independence from the minority British settler colonialist. Namibians joined SWAPO (Southwest African People's Organization) and waged guerrilla warfare against the South African apartheid regime. The armed wings of the African National Congress *Umkhonto We Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation) and the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania *Poqo* (Pure) which was later renamed the Azania Peoples Liberation Army fought South Africa's racist apartheid regime as well. Eritrea's EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front) ended Ethiopia's domination on 27th May, 1993.

Neo-colonialism prevents Africa's liberation

With all 53 African countries 'politically free', the last remaining obstacle preventing Africa's unification and liberation is neo-colonialism. This is a disguised form of European foreign rule which because it is fronted by African Heads of State and their entourages, gives the illusion that all African countries are politically independent. However in actuality, because African economies, African Heads of State and their support structure are controlled from the outside, African countries are in fact still colonized (with Libya arguably being the only exception). European foreign domination in the form of neo-colonialism incites military coups – where military personnel are paid by the CIA to overthrow governments; neo-colonialism also uses, international lending agencies (IMF and World Bank) and African Heads of States as puppets to take out most of Africa's wealth and resources. In addition, the United States and Western European intelligence agencies hire mercenaries to provoke ethnic wars inside Africa and arms are sold for profits to all sides of the conflict.

By using these tactics, US and European imperialism is able to maintain poverty among the masses of African people, while at the same time exploiting our raw materials and labour, in order to sell the finished product (from the raw materials) back to Africans at an enormous profit. For example, the wars fought in the independent countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, the Congo, Cote d' Voire, Angola and Mozambique are and were a result of US and Western European intelligence destabilization and capitalist financing to extract Africa's rubber, iron ore, diamonds, oil, uranium, cobalt, gold, manganese, bauxite, nickel, copper and other mineral resources at little or no cost.

Those tactics also divert the attention of the people away from their natural resources whilst they are being stolen by European capitalism. When the conflict among the warring faction has abated, the IMF and World Bank controlled by the same capitalists in European countries and the US, lends money to the war torn countries in Africa, thereby sinking Africa further into debt and poverty to facilitate the continual exploitation of its resources and labour. The downward spiral intensifies through episodes of famine, joblessness and refugees, which then leads to more wars and further entrenches neo-colonialism in Africa.

Just before America's CIA overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah he declared:

"Foremost among the neo-colonialist is the United States which has long exercised their power in Latin America."
(Nkrumah, 1974, p. 239)

Accordingly, the US imperialism along with Western European imperialism form a powerful entity and together they constitute Africa's number one enemy. Nonetheless, Africans have experience of defeating US imperialism in combat. The racist apartheid regime backed by the US, Britain, France and NATO were defeated in 1988 at Cuito Carnavale in Angola by a Pan-African force of the Southwest African People's Organization (SWAPO), the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the African National Congress (ANC) and the Cuban military. This brought about the removal of the racist apartheid regime's troops from Angola, the independence of Namibia in 1990 and forced South Africa to write a new constitution, which brought Africans to power politically. Furthermore, in 1992, 28,000 US troops invaded Somalia and by 1994 they were crushed by the African masses in Somalia and had to withdraw.

The only solution to the debt crisis, the imperialist control over Africa's resources and foreign military invasions, is the coordination of the liberation forces in Africa for the final triumph over neo-colonialism. This is a necessary step towards bringing about a genuine All African Union Government in which the working masses own and control the means by which wealth is produced and the resources equitably distributed in African society.

A Genuine All African Union Government is the solution

Despite the great hopes held out initially, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has a history of failing to solve the problems described above. Over the years it developed from being a potential liberation tool into a club for the mutual support of neo-colonial puppet regimes. In 2002, it tried to fool the masses of African people by changing its name to the African Union (AU). The change of name did little to alter its position as a neo-colonial tool. Since then it also tried to remove the 'liberation' from African Liberation Day by changing its name to 'Africa Day' and promoting it as a continental holiday devoid of politics. The AU has also refused to include the word 'government' in its name, as was suggested by Kwame Nkrumah in 1963. This indicates that, even with the lessons of recent history available to them, its participants still have no genuine desire to achieve full political unity as a basis for self-determining power for the people of Africa. It follows that a genuine union government will have to be established despite the AU.

Once a genuine union government rooted in the support of the African masses is realized on the continent, military coups will cease and ethnic warfare will end. These are modern day symptoms of the divide and rule tactics used by European imperialism against the people of Africa. In addition, extortion under the guise of loans will not be paid. Since European domination has wreaked havoc in Africa for 500 years from the exploitation of our resources through slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism, Africa is not obligated to pay this debt. Rather, it is for them to pay what they owe us as part of our just reparations.

When this is done, the masses of African people will allow a genuine All African Union government to investigate and determine the extent of the riches in our continent in the world and begin to take back all of the resources that were stolen by European imperialism. The evidence is already strong; for example, 60% of the gold in Fort Knox, where the United States of America stores its bullion, originated from the shores of Africa. This calibre of foreign monopoly control of our resources demonstrates that whilst Africa has the appearance of being 'politically independent', it is held prisoner economically. Our resources and economy must be totally liberated from European imperialism for Africa's political independence to be real.

What you can do

Today ALD reflects the fact that as Africans, we have not yet achieved our freedom and provides an occasion on which we reaffirm our commitment to Pan Africanism - the total liberation and unification of Africa in an environment of justice, peace and prosperity for African people. Neo-colonialism is the principal barrier disqualifying us from achieving our liberated status. It is therefore important that the masses of African people worldwide defend themselves against the ravages of neo-colonialism by furthering the institutionalization of African Liberation Day as part of a range of activities aimed at achieving our liberation. Areas for immediate action include: (i) fighting against neo-colonialism to achieve its total destruction, (ii) actively mobilising and organising the masses of African people against neo-colonialism and for freedom, (iii) working toward a genuine All African Union Government and, (iv) keeping 'liberation' firmly on the agenda of African Liberation Day.

The greatest contribution an African attending an African Liberation Day commemoration activity can make to the achievement of Pan-Africanism is to join an organisation that is sincerely working towards African self-determination and a genuine permanent end to poverty, wars and other forms of injustice confronting Africans in Africa and around the world. Joining an African liberation organisation can be our first crucial step to on the path of liberating ourselves for a better future. When these actions are achieved, we will truly be able to say that Africa is liberated and African Liberation Day will become a reality. Even when we do succeed in uniting and liberating Africa, it will still be necessary to commemorate African Liberation Day so that African people never forget this era of our subjugation. The memory will serve as a basis for ensuring that we never ever allow such a calamity happen again.

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