

Witnesses to Struggle: Reflections on Oppression and Resistance in the USA

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The following contributions come from some of the founding and longtime members of the New Afrikan People's Organization (NAPO) and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM): Kwame Kalimara, Watani and Ahadi Tyehimba, and Makungu and Chinganji Akinyela. Though not included in these reflections, Safiya Omari, the late Chokwe and Nubia Lumumba and Akinyele and Aminata Umoja were also instrumental to the development of NAPOs and MXGMs cadres. The following reflections illustrate the significance of the Southeast region of the territory commonly known as the United States of America to New Afrikan political organization – a terrain to which New Afrikans (Black people) refer to as the Republic of New Afrika. Each conversation outlines the history of the NAPO and MXGM, the objectives of these political formations, and their relationship to the ever-changing arrangements of global white supremacy. The authors suggest that the New Afrikan Independence Movement, though a challenge to global white supremacy, is guided by a desire for cultural, spatial, and economic self-determination for New Afrikans. Integral to this initiative is the disciplined study of key scholarship within Africana Studies and political practice that meets the various needs of New Afrikans across time and space. NAPO's and MXGM's diasporic politics makes possible alignments between the struggle of New Afrikans with those oppressed people of color throughout varying parts of the world. With that said, we intend for this compilation of insights from New Afrikans and about the histories of New Afrikan thought and practice to inspire and propel people's movement across the globe.

Akil Bakari: What is white supremacy?

Kwame Kalimara: White supremacy is an ideological term which states that people who are classified racially as “white” are superior to those peoples who are non-white. Moreover, it denotes that the resources of the planet must be under the dominion of both public (government) and private (corporations) enterprise within the conceptual framework of ideas and practices of persons classified as “white.” The term “race” is a social construct which has no basis in biology.



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It was created to justify inhumane conditions in efforts to control and at times destroy human (genocide) beings deemed non-white to control land and the resources of which they were custodians (land ownership was foreign to Afrikan peoples and other peoples of color).

Scientific racism is witnessed in the study of the Atlantic Slave Trade, Jim Crow laws, Nazism, Apartheid in Azania (South Africa). White supremacy has many forms and different faces. But they all look at peoples of color/non-white peoples as their primary enemy. Today, in the academic world “critical race theory” argues that “white supremacy” means that white people enjoy structural and systemic privilege (advantage) over non-white peoples, collectively and individually.

Akil Bakari: *Does white supremacy inform the founding of NAPO?*

Kwame: The New Afrikan Independence Organization (NAPO) is a nationalist organization and our primary objective is to win the independence of the Republic of New Afrika, an internal colony of the United States of America. As Pan-Afrikanists, we are committed to the total liberation and unification of all Afrikan nations on the Afrikan continent and around the world. We are a pro-socialist formation seeking to establish our nation as an independent socialist republic. We are anti-imperialist and support struggles to destroy imperialism wherever it exists. We are internationalists struggling in solidarity with colonized peoples around the world against their oppressors. We are revolutionaries who believe that well-armed masses must be organized to protect ourselves from police and government terror in order to win the war of liberation. We are a womanist formation and as such we are committed to eradicating sexist oppression of women and the oppression of persons of any gender identity.

White supremacy did not inform NAPO. Self-Determination informed the founding of NAPO. Self-Determination is an inherent right of all people. It is the process by which a people or country determines its own statehood and forms its own allegiances and government. We, as our ancestors, have always envisioned peace and security as a people, developing the best of who We are. The violation of our nations and communities in Afrika and the Afrikan diaspora through the acts of enslavement, colonialization, genocide, exploitation, and oppression informed us that we were in a war against European and other foreign aggressors. The legacy of our condition and desire to correct the conditions and repair ourselves speaks more about what We are fighting for as opposed to what We are fighting against. NAPO is, in essence, “proactive.” In fact, our constitution preamble states We are:

dedicated to the legacy of the struggle for self-determination passed on to us from our freedom-fighting ancestors, and committed to the struggle to liberate the New Afrikan Nation in America for ourselves: our children, and in the interest of Afrikans and other freedom seeking peoples throughout the world, We, as patriotic New Afrikan men, women and children, and as founders of the New Afrikan Peoples Organization.

The term white supremacy gave a clear definition in the 1960s of the experiences of peoples of color. The definition addresses prejudices and discriminations directed against a person of a

different race based on the belief that their own race is the superior race. White supremacy recognizes the global reality of ‘white’ nations’ domination and control over nations of color, their resources and quality of life. It is important to examine racism further. Can black people be racist? The prejudice (pre-judgement) by New Afrikans/blacks is informed by history. It is safer to assume whites will harm us. The current killing of black women, children, by police and those taking on the role of race police (vigilantes) is evidence. NAPO and our parent formations understood racism and its implementation of power. We did not view all white peoples as enemies. We recognize the global abolition movements against slavery that have developed throughout history. We advanced the standard forwarded by John Brown, a white man who put his family on the line for the abolition of slavery. Maryln Buck, David Gilbert, Susan Rosenburg, Kathy Boudin and Silvia Baraldini are a few modern examples of John Brown.

The late 1960s is known as the Black Power Movement. Its predecessor was called the Civil Rights Movement because organizations (including the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)) sought redress for the conditions of black people through non-violent demonstrations aimed at legislative amendments. The Black Power Movement sought “power,” a term inclusive of racial pride, economic power, and the establishment of political and cultural institutions. The term “black power” became the clarion call in the 1960s, though it had been used in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1966, Kwame Ture (then Stokely Carmichael) and Willie Ricks (now Mukasa Dada) of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) led marchers in chanting “black power” in Greenwood, Mississippi. It was nationally televised march and “black power” chant energized communities to build more ‘power’ within black communities.

The New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM) studied the Haitian Revolution and the Quilombos of Brasil (and their nation states) as models of Afrikan/black Self-Determination in the New World (Western Hemisphere). In the early colonialization of the Americas, there were independent communities of Afrikans (Florida – Black Seminoles; Oklahoma – Black Seminoles; Louisiana – fugitive colonies; North Carolina and Virginia – the Great Dismal Swamp maroons). These early challenges to *French, Spanish, and Portuguese* white supremacy are inspirations to our movement.

We also looked to international law as one of our tools to use against our colonialization. The United Nations Charter provided definition for Self-Determination. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) listed a broad range of rights deemed to be inherent for all human beings. But it was Article 15 that informed our juristic approach. It states, (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality. This is a statement legally affirming New Afrikan nationality within the illegal boundaries of the U. S. empire.

NAPO has used other United Nations instruments in our pursuit of Self-Determination and Human Rights. They are the United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International

Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. From 1951 through 1984 these instruments were argued in our predecessor formations and became part of our arsenal when we established NAPO. We have incorporated other United Nations Conventions and Covenants. The latest is the Durban Declaration (2001) declaring that ‘slavery is a crime against humanity.’

The laws of the United States empire saw New Afrikan people as less than human in its founding documents, particularly the U. S. Constitution (1788). The United States in its census counted in the apportioning representatives, presidential electors, taxes, and enslaved Afrikans in the southern portion of the country. The northern industrial states had large percentages of European (white) peoples, where the south had fewer European Americans and large numbers of enslaved Afrikans. The objective was to create a fiction of the balance of power between the north and south. Afrikans were considered 3/5th human for the purpose of legislative representation – white supremacy. In 1857 the United States Supreme Court clearly articulated its racist (white supremacist) intention in the case of Dred Scott vs. Stanford which stated that “the black man has no rights in which a white man is bound to respect.” Moreover, it stated that the government never intended to grant rights to the enslaved Afrikan population. This landmark decision hastened the American Civil War (1861-1865). It would be the 13th Amendment (1865) to the U. S. Constitution that would abolish chattel slavery, with the exception as punishment for a crime. It would be the 14th Amendment (1868) to the U.S. Constitution which imposed “second class” citizenship on newly freed Afrikans in violation of their rights of voluntary citizenship, repatriation, expatriation, or an independent New Afrikan nation (see Article 15 of the UDHR as the contemporary articulation of Self-Determination).

The work of psychiatrist, Dr. Francis Cress Welsing, particularly, her publication of *The Cress Theory of Color Confrontation*, gave New Afrikans (Black people) greater ideological clarity on racism and the term “white supremacy.” Although the Black Liberation Movement did not support all of her theories, her research laid a strong basis for the use of the term. Much of her framework was based on Dr. Cress Welsing’s review of Dr. Neely Fuller, Jr.’s research which determined that “white supremacy” was global racism.

The New Afrikan Independence Movement was very well read. Dr. Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, Mao Zedong’s *Red Book*, *We Charge Genocide* by William Patterson, *Black Reconstruction* and *The Souls of Black Folks* by W.E.B. DuBois, Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, Regis Debray’s *Revolution in the Revolution?*, Ho Chi Minh’s *Selected Writings, Before the Mayflower* by Lerone Bennett, Jr., *The Choice* by Samuel Yette, *Revolution in Guinea* by Amilcar Cabral, *Destruction of a Black Civilization* by Chancellor Williams, and *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx are a few examples of the diverse readings of revolutionary forces in the early 1960s. NAPO has a legacy which predates our founding. We have built on that legacy and We will continue to listen, learn, teach and organize our people on the path of Self-Determination/Liberation/Nationhood. Revolutionary theory and practice is an ‘evolving’ process. We understand that material conditions change, and We will address those conditions with the

appropriate theories, practices, strategies, and tactics to meet our liberatory needs. We will “Free the Land!!!”

Interaction between Rukia Lumumba and Watani and Ahadi Tyehimba

Rukia Lumumba: *Did white supremacy inform the founding of MXGM?*

Watani and Ahadi Tyehimba: White supremacy did not inform the founding of MXGM. In 1990, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movements (MXGM) was created as the mass association of its parent organization, the New Afrikan People’s Organization (NAPO), which was formed in 1984 to struggle for self-determination and national liberation of the New Afrikan Nation. However, white supremacy being a racist ideology utilized by the United States’ white settler nation to keep other people and nations of color colonized must be challenged by organizations like MXGM.

NAPO was comprised of young radicals from the House of Umoja (HOU), Afrikan People’s Party (APP), Provisional Government-Republic of New Afrika (PG-RNA), New York Black Panther Party (BPP), the National Task Force for COINTELPRO Litigation and Research (NTFCLR), Take the Land cadre (TTL) and the New Afrikan Women’s Organization (NAWO). We were all Revolutionary Black Nationalists, Pan-Africanists, Internationalists, Pro-Socialists and Anti-Imperialists demanding the right of self-determination and the liberation of the New Afrikan nation. Ahadi and I are founding members of NAPO and MXGM coming from the HOU and APP.

Rukia Lumumba: *How have NAPO & MXGM evolved as a grassroots organization?*

Watani and Ahadi Tyehimba: I will use excerpts from a chronology I’ve written entitled *NAPO & MXGM Roots / Chronology and Significant Events: 1960s – 1990s “A View From The House of Umoja”*

In 1976, some of the activists, foot soldiers, and “quiet warriors” from HOU, APP, PG-RNA, NTFCLR, New York BPP, and TTL cadre, began serious discussions about consolidating into a grassroots people’s organization that would represent our soldiers, and advance our movement toward self-determination. We agreed to honor political prisoners (PP) & prisoners of war (POW), to organize a movement to struggle for their release, and to work for the return of our exiles. We also agreed upon the necessity of organizing the ‘National Territory’ - shifting emphasis from northern cities.

On September 9, 1978 the HOU, APP, PG-RNA, NTFCLR, Black United Front (BUF), National Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL), National Black Student Association (NBSA), and the N.Y. BPP were among ten major Black organizations that came together to form the National Black Human Rights Coalition, (NBHRC).

1980 – Sisters from the New York BPP, PG-RNA, APP, and ‘quiet warriors’ founded the New Afrikan Women’s Organization (NAWO), advocated for the full equality and participation of women in the leadership of the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM) as well as for the international recognition and support for Black/New Afrikan PP and POW.

Members of the aforementioned organizations, in addition to the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America (BAAANA) continued discussions regarding the needs of the movement. During this time there was a serious crisis within the NAIM. The APP and PG-RNA were both suffering from divisions within their respective organizations. There were two PG-RNA formations, and numbers of PP & POW's were increasing without campaigns for their release, nor support during their captivity.

1983 – Black Nation Day March 25- 27, Detroit Michigan was a historical event because both PG-RNA Presidents, Dara Abubakari and Imari Obadele, were in attendance. The two provisional governments were able to work out their differences. The formations and individuals that would eventually become NAPO played a major role in making this happen.

May 19-20, 1984 after several years of joint discussions and coalition work, the various organization members agreed upon the formation and surfacing of the New Afrikan People's Organization (NAPO), with New Afrikan Security Union (NASU) as the security wing, New Afrikan Scouts (NAS) as the youth wing, and *By Any Means Necessary* (BAMN) as its official newspaper.

NAPO is a cadre organization that believes that New Afrikans/Black people in North America are a nation within a nation. We believe the captive Black nation in North America, which we call New Afrika, is a colonized nation and has all of the rights of any other nation, including the right to self-determination, self-defense, land and independence. Our ideology is Revolutionary New Afrikan Nationalism. We are Pan-Afrikanist, Pro-Socialist, Anti-Imperialist, and Internationalist. NAPO is dedicated to organizing politically for human rights, self-determination and liberation of the New Afrikan nation.

Our nation's land mass is the land that Black people in North America have lived on for a long time, which we have worked and built upon and which we have fought to stay on and buried our ancestors on. This is the landmass in the southern U.S. that was identified by the PG-RNA in 1968 as South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

1990 – The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM) was officially formed around the five basic principles of the 1989 Malcolm X Self-Determination Campaign at NAPO's National Convention - with the New Afrikan Militia (NAM), under the chain of command of the NASU as its security wing, and NAWTF as the women's wing.

1993 – The NAWTF promoted and MXGM adopted the sixth principle dealing with the total liberation of women and an end to sexist oppression at a January national MXGM meeting. The MXGM constitution reflected these changes by mandating that a woman must be one of the national co-chairs.

1994 – NAPO was a founding member of the National Liberation Front (NLF), later the New Afrikan Liberation Front (NALF). NASO held its first Camp Pumziko at Oak Mountain State Park in Pelham, Alabama, in July 1994. This came into fruition fifteen years from the initial vision of

an original co-founder, Kweli Sobukwe Umoja, of a national New Afrikan Scout camp gathering - similar to the Boy Scouts of America's Jamboree.

1995 - On November 30th, the National Central Committee (NCC) of NAPO adopted bylaws, formally changing the name of the New Afrikan Scouts (NAS) to the New Afrikan Scout Organization (NASO), identified as the youth wing of NAPO. Camp Pumziko was recognized as the national collective camping experience for all NASO chapters.

Interaction between Akil Bakari and Makungu and Chinganji Akinyela

Akil Bakari: *Please introduce the readers to NAPO and MXGM, their origins and direction.*

Makungu and Chinganji Akinyela: We have been asked to speak to two specific questions related to the emergence of the New Afrikan People's Organization (NAPO) and that organization's mass association, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. Both of us (Makungu and Chinganji) are founding members of the New Afrikan People's Organization and we both were previously cadre of one of the organizations which were predecessors of NAPO grounded in Revolutionary Black Nationalist theory and practice. We were both personally, and as a couple, committed to the national liberation struggle of our people from United States' settler colonialism and imperialism. We saw our commitment to our people's liberation as a commitment to human rights, socialism, national self-determination, internationalism and Pan-Africanism. These are founding principles of the NAPO's, which united the various groups and individuals who were to come to initiate our organization. We were all patriots committed to the liberation of our country, New Afrika, and inspired by one of the key theoreticians of modern Revolutionary Black Nationalism, Malcolm X.

In what is one of his most significant speeches, *Message to the Grassroots*, Malcolm posited that "A black nationalist wants land." In that speech he also made the link between Nationalism and Internationalism. This speech is believed by many to be the inspiration for the emergence of the New Afrikan Independence Movement and the founding in 1968 of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (PGRNA) from which the revolutionary greeting and slogan "Free the Land!" comes.

While NAPO was not part of that Provisional Government, our founders were inspired by the work of the PGRNA and like the workers from that group we considered ourselves citizens of the colonized New Afrikan nation. We also agreed that as Malcolm said in *Message to the Grassroots*, a real Black revolution in America was a struggle for land. We believed that land was the basis of a people's freedom and ability to control their lives and national destiny. We agreed with the PGRNA and our past Revolutionary Black Nationalist elders from the early twentieth century (Cyril Briggs, Harry Haywood, The African Blood Brotherhood, and Queen Mother Audley Moore) that our national homeland was in the Black Belt Southeastern territories of the current United States.

Akil Bakari: *How do you define “Free the Land” in addressing supremacy and its uninterrupted access to land, property, surplus and wealth?*

Makungu and Chinganji Akinyela: The primary political contradiction for the people of the world today is settler colonialism and racial capitalism, both of which serve the interests of white supremacist patriarchy. The super exploitation of our people as a result of this contradiction means that New Afrikans suffer for lack of economic, political, social and cultural control of our lives. We have no collective control of the natural or manufactured resources which come from the land. We don't even have power to determine how and under what conditions we can live on the land. Under America's settler colonial state, police and security forces are able to assault and kill our people without recourse to justice regardless of our social or class position. Throughout the twentieth century millions of our people were forced off of millions of acres of land by white supremacist terrorists like the Ku Klux Klan through bombings, lynching and shootings. The demand to end settler colonialist racial capitalism found in the slogan “Free the Land!” is a call to dismantle the structural system of white supremacist colonialism which through control of the natural resources, productive forces, and living space which people need. Access to these fundamental rights will make the collective control of our lives possible. As a commentary on the primary contradictions which are in place to control our lives, this slogan is a demand to dismantle settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and the patriarchy at the center of the oppression of our nation New Afrika.

Akil Bakari: *Does white supremacy continue to inform the political learning, strategy and evolution of MXGM and its grassroots work?*

Makungu and Chinganji Akinyela: We would respectfully push back on this question as an evocation to reaction. One of our founding documents is entitled *the Seven Commandments of Umoja*. Umoja is a Kiswahili word meaning unity. The second of these commandments is “Be positive: Don't base your position on some other group or some other people. A love supreme for Black people, must completely overshadow hating white people.” For us this is a relevant teaching for the question of whether or not white supremacy “informs” our political learning.

The politics, strategy, and evolution of NAPO and the MXGM is informed by our love for Black people, generally, and the New Afrikan nation in particular. We are a colonized and oppressed nation, exploited by racial capitalism and American imperialism. We are clear that anger and resentment against our oppressors and their systems of oppression are not enough to sustain the protracted struggle that will be necessary for our freedom. The founding chairman of our organization, the late Chokwe Lumumba said, “If you don't love the people, sooner or later you will betray the people.” Another great internationalist revolutionary, Che Guevara, said, “A revolutionary is guided by great love for the people.” This idea of “a great love supreme for the people” is foundational to our commitment, politics, and strategy for national liberation and evolution of our mass movement. White supremacy is an ideology which informs the systems of settler colonial capitalism and cannot inform the theory or practice of Revolutionary Black Nationalism. White supremacy is the source of our oppression, but it cannot be allowed to be the solution to our problems nor can it be allowed to inform our strategy for liberation or our development. To consider or admit to white supremacy informing the work we do seems to us to

be a path to reaction rather than revolution. We reject all forms of racialism and oppressive systems and we believe that our fight for the liberation and self-determination of the people of our nation regardless of class, social status, gender, or sexuality will contribute to the liberation of all people oppressed by settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and white supremacist patriarchy.