

Remembering an Ancestor Kwame Ture

Written by Conrad W. Worrill ID2117
Thursday, 17 November 2005 03:37 -

On the morning of November 15, 1998 it was learned that Kwamé Turé (a.k.a. Stokely Carmichael) had made his transition into eternity (died) in Conakry, Guinea.

Along with Henry English of the Black United Fund of Illinois (who also is the administrator of the Kwamé Turé Medical Fund), we were fortunate and honored, to attend the memorial tribute and burial of Brother Kwame on November 22nd in Conakry, Guinea, where Kwamé had lived, worked, studied, taught, and struggled the past thirty years.

On the anniversary of his transition, we must always remember Brother Kwamé's contributions to the worldwide African Liberation Movement.

In the late 1960s, Brother Kwamé Turé was one of the chief spokespersons and organizers for the All African Peoples Revolutionary Party (A-APRP), where he had lived in the Republic of Guinea in West Africa. While in Guinea, Brother Kwamé studied with, and worked under the guidance of the late President of Guinea, Ahmed Sekou Turé and the late President of Ghana, Osagyefo Kwamé Nkrumah.

Most people throughout the world began to hear of Kwamé (a.k.a. Stokely Carmichael) during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s where he participated in the first Freedom Rides and many sit-ins and marches.

The origin of Kwamé's participation in the Civil Rights Movement began during his high school years at Bronx High School of Science where he graduated in 1960. Kwamé always had a tendency to be active around the movement circles in New York while in high school and this continued when he enrolled at Howard University in 1960.

Primary source documents reveal that, "In the Winter of 1960, Black college students in dozens of communities across this country conducted sit-ins to secure the desegregation of lunch counters in drug and variety stores. These sources go on to explain that, "Arrests numbered in the thousands. On every major college campus in this country, students organized groups such as NAG (The Non-Violent Action Group) at Howard University to continue the Sit-In Movement." Kwamé was a founding member of NAG and was one of its early leaders.

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Out of this student activism, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed at Shaw University in April of 1960. SNCC and its student base provided ground troops for almost every major Civil Rights Demonstration and Campaign during the 1960s period of the Movement. Kwamé was one of the three hundred "Freedom Riders" that were arrested "in Mississippi and Alabama during the Spring and Summer of 1961." From that point on, Kwamé participated in every major campaign that emerged.

Kwamé Turé came to the public's attention on November 16, 1965 when Look Magazine featured an article titled "Freedom Road," that mentioned Kwamé's role as an organizer and leader in SNCC.

Several months later, in June of 1966, Ebony Magazine historian and writer, Lerone Bennett, Jr. wrote an article featuring Kwamé. Brother Bennett observed in this article that (a.k.a. Carmichael) Kwamé like, "No other young man, with the exception of Martin Luther King, Jr. has risen so fast so quick. No other young man has sparked such an avalanche of hope, fear, anger, and public concern." Bennett asked the question, "Who is this young man? What does he want? What does he mean by Black Power?"

Again, primary source documents explain that, "In April, 1966, at the Kingston Spring SNCC staff meeting (a.k.a. Stokely) was elected chairman, ushering in a new level and direction for both the organization and the larger movement of which it was an integral part." These same sources indicate that, "In June, after James Meredith was gunned down on a highway in Mississippi, (a.k.a. Stokely) sounded the new Black mood." This is what Kwamé said, "The only way we are gonna stop them white men form whippin" us is to take over. We been saying freedom for six years and we ain"t got nothing. What we gonna start saying now is BLACK POWER!!"

Kwamé Turé was one of the leading advocates of Pan Africanism through his leadership in the A-APRP. Since the late 1960s, Kwamé had traveled throughout the world lecturing and organizing African people to understand the need to struggle around the idea of Pan Africanism, "as the only solution to our problems."

When people in our movement give unselfishly, and consistently of themselves, over the years, like Brother Kwamé Turé, we never forget them.

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