



**AFRICA UNITED AND IN STRIDE:
FOR ITSELF AND GLOBAL GOOD**
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The recent African Union Summit on the unification of Africa and African people in Accra Ghana, July 1-3, clearly raised hopes that are deeply rooted in the heart and history of the Pan-Africanist Movement. This focus on the indispensability of unity is found in the writings and work of 19th century pan-Africanists like Maria Stewart and Martin Delaney, and those of the 20th century like Sylvester Williams, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and others. On the table of what was called "the Grand Debate" were three proposed possibilities for unity: (a) the United States of Africa; (b) an interlocking system of AU continental institutions; and (c) a Union of African States. There was no final decision, only requests for further study and reports.

Clearly on the sides and in the circles of discussion were the habitual doubters, the psychological sons and daughters of Europe, proudly claiming artificial identities and borders imposed on them by their imperial European overlords; the dictators who jealously guard their national "sovereignty" over the suffering of the people; and the factotums and front men and women for foreign interests. But beyond this mix of subsidized and self-induced submission, there are those Africans, at home and abroad, who know that only united can Africa bring peace and security to its people, address their needs and aspirations, harness and develop their human and material resources, engage effectively in the global processes of the world economy, and play an expanded role in the interest of human and global good.

But the people must see how this thing called "unity" works, how it saves and improves their lives, how it helps solve and

prevent conflict, and promotes democracy—in a word, how it deals with issues of life and death, security, peace, food, freedom, genocide and justice. Thus, they rightfully question the AU's failure to deal with Darfur, Somalia, or Congo and other places of war, death, destruction, insecurity, and extreme suffering or even address the need for basic and steady steps, i.e., a common currency and a pan-African passport and citizenship and removal of barriers to the free flow of people, goods and services from country to country.

So, at the heart and center of any concept of African unity as principle, practice and promise of good in Africa and the world must be, first, a vision and set of values that actively open the way to a better life for the people thru immediate and long-term initiatives. The whole idea of African unity and the cooperative projects that give it life, legs and ultimate meaning must be rooted in the freedom, dignity, development and empowerment of African people at home and abroad. This is the meaning of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's assertion that "all the reasons for African unity can be summed up in one phrase—the welfare of the people of Africa. Their greater freedom is the objective, that is the freedom from outside oppression, from poverty and from the possibility of inter-African wars,"—indeed, the reality of inter-African war. Moreover, he reminds us that African people are not only the central justification for African unity but "also the only means thru which it will be attained"—especially in any meaningful, meritorious and enduring form.

Thus, it is African people who must democratize the discussion of unity, challenge the tendency to table, postpone and kill in committee action on the issues vital to

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African life and liberation. And it is they who must hold corrupt, incompetent and collaborating leaders and governments accountable thru confrontation and struggle. This is the meaning of Amilcar Cabral's assertion that only thru revolutionary struggle can the map of Africa be redrawn in the interests of its people.

There is also a great need for Africa to reposition itself and strengthen its position in global affairs. And this can only be accomplished in unity, i.e., thru structured, strategic and shared continental initiatives, whether in the form of a continental government, system of institutions or union of states. Only a united Africa can successfully deal with the issues of reparations, debt cancellation, rightful development assistance, equitable investment and trade policies, and the U.S.'s recent initiative to turn Africa into a series of interlocking military bases and a battleground for its bloody struggles with current and future enemies. And only a united African can effectively ward off or restrain the global financial and corporate vampires and vultures who regularly assemble to drain the blood, wealth and will of the people and then blame the people for weaknesses and corrupt leadership that they and their governments have financed and fostered.

Thus, Garvey tells us "if we must have justice, we must be strong; if we must be strong, we must come together; (and) if we must come together we can only do so through the system of organization." And this system of organization, he contends, must evolve into a united Africa, under one government with appropriate and mutually

beneficial relations with the global African community as a whole.

Finally, the unity of Africa not only holds expanded promise for the continent and world African community, but also for the world. Indeed, Marcus Garvey taught, like Frantz Fanon later, that in the post-imperial world and the liberation struggles that precede it and bring it to closure, Africa prepared and conscious of its role in history will have an important role to play. It will, he says, be able to offer an alternative model of using power, not "to oppress the human race," but "to preserve humanity and civilization" and "evolve a national ideal based on freedom, human liberty and true democracy."

Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah who was influenced thru reading and reflection on Garvey argued likewise. He noted that it is true "divided, we are weak" in the world. But he continues, "united, Africa could become one of the greatest forces for good in the world." Moreover, he said "I believed strongly and sincerely that with the deep-rooted wisdom and dignity, the innate respect for human lives, the intense humanity that is our heritage, the African race, united under one federal government, will emerge not as just another bloc to flaunt its wealth and strength, but as a great power whose greatness is indestructible because it is built not on fear, envy and suspicion, nor won at the expense of others, but founded on hope, trust, friendship and directed to the good of humankind." His conviction and commitment are our own and so is the self-conscious struggle we must wage to realize this great African and global good.