

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2018

Theme : Uniting the African Family

Venue : WEB Du Bois Memorial Centre for Pan African Culture, Accra

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Author : Our Motherland-My Life

Anthem of the African Union

Let us all unite and celebrate together

The victories won for our liberation.

Let us dedicate ourselves to rise together

To defend our liberty and unity

*O Sons and Daughters of Africa*

*Flesh of the Sun and Flesh of the Sky*

*Let us make Africa the Tree of Life*

A couple of days ago, the 7th February 2018 edition of 'The **Guardian**' of London published an article that may have escaped a lot of African intellectuals. Science correspondent Hannah Devlin, revealed a new scientific finding that states, and confirms, that 'the first modern Britons, who lived about 10,000 years ago, had 'dark to black skin'. This comes from a ground-breaking DNA analysis of Britain's oldest complete skeleton. The article says that 'it was initially assumed that Cheddar Man, the fossil, had pale skin and fair hair, but his DNA paints a different picture, strongly suggesting he had blue eyes, a very dark to black complexion and dark curly hair'.

Is this very important ?

Yes, this is Black History Month. Today, thanks to Science & Technology, and of course the world-wide-web, we know for certain that original world civilization began in Africa. We now know that it was all a lie when we were taught for hundreds of years that Christopher Columbus 'discovered' Africa. We now know from books and researched material from scholars like

WEB DuBOIS, Basil Davidson, Ibn Battuta, LSB Leakey, Kwame Nkrumah, Molefi Kete Asante and many more, that for many hundreds of centuries, Africa was in the forefront of all world progress. And that Africans once ruled the world.

It is now known that the origins of European culture trace their roots to the ancient African civilizations of the Nile Valley. Fast forward to the 17th century. A ship-load of slaves was first taken out of Angola, and later shiploads from West Africa, to the Americas and deposited Africans in the Carribean, Central and South America and in the United States of America.

About mid 1800, the official Scramble for Africa began in earnest, and Africa was divided and shared like pieces of cake to European powers that needed to industrialize their economies.

In the 20th century, forces of resistance got to a height from various parts of the world to culminate in the many boycotts, wars, meetings, conferences and demonstrations that centred on the liberation of the black man from the bonds of subjugation, oppression and repression, and the restoration of the dignity and freedom of not only the African continent but of blacks everywhere in the world.

The statement of WEB Du Bois at the 1945 Manchester Conference rings loud today :

**“When once the blacks of the US, the West Indies and Africa work and think together, the future of the black man in the modern world is safe”.**

The black alone diaspora is constituted by about 140m people. Available statistics show that Brazil has 56million blacks, United States 47million, Haiti 9million, Dominican Republic 8million, Colombia 5million, France 4million, Venezuela 3.5m, Jamaica 3m., United Kingdom 2.5m, Mexico 1.5m, Peru 1.3m, Canada 1.2m, Cuba 1.2m, Italy 1.2m, Puerto Rico 1m, Germany 900,000, Ecuador 700,000, Spain 700,000, Trinidad & Tobago 500,000, Barbados 250,000, Guyana 240,000, Suriname 200,000, Argentina 150,000, Grenada 100,000.

Add to these numbers (140m) the population of the African Union estimated at 1.2 billion. This is the United Africa we are talking about.

The African Union defines the African diaspora as consisting of 'people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union'.

Think of the huge entity of peoples united under a United States of Africa, under one President, stepping unto the world stage. If language did not become a barrier to some other Unions round the world, why worry about the number of African languages in Africa.

During my primary school days in small towns and villages in Ghana before 1957, we saluted the Union Jack, the official flag of the United Kingdom. We recited the words that went with the national anthem "God Save The Queen".

The words :

**"God save our gracious Queen  
Long live our noble Queen  
God save the Queen  
Send her victorious, Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us  
God save the Queen".**

On March 6, 1957, under the leadership of Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana gained independence, the Ghana Flag replaced the Union Jack, and our National Anthem replaced 'God Save the Queen'.

The words in our National Anthem now:

The 1st verse says :

**"God bless our Homeland Ghana  
And make our nation great and strong,  
Bold to defend forever  
The cause of Freedom and of Right.  
Fill our hearts with true humility**

**Make us cherish fearless honesty,  
And help us to resist oppressors' rule  
With all our will and might for evermore".**

Significantly, the first two lines of the 3rd stanza are sometimes lost :

***"Raise high the flag of Ghana  
And one with Africa advance".***

Ghana is compelled by her historical circumstances, foundation, and standing in African affairs to advance her fortunes alongside the rest of Africa and the diaspora.

Kwame Nkrumah left us with indelible admonition : "**The Independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent**".

Nkrumah was very clear what his vision was for Ghana and Africa.

Among the many meetings and conferences organised by progressive heads of state, we know the following:

1963, May 24 in Addis Ababa : At a meeting of 32 African Heads of State and Government, recognising the enormous natural, mineral, agricultural, labour and social resources Africa possessed, vis a vis the festering sore of unnecessary and energy dissipating boundary disputes, Dr Nkrumah called for a strong Union of African States, around the following structures :

- A common defence system
- Common currency
- One monetary zone; one central bank
- All Africa Committee of Foreign Ministers – to be empowered to establish a commission to frame a constitution for a Union Government of African States; and also to work out a continent-wide plan for a unified or common economic and industrial programme for Africa.

In 1965, Nkrumah again laid the blueprint for the unification of the African continent.

Even when Nkrumah was overthrown, other African leaders like Muammar Gaddafi, and today the Rwandan President Paul Kagame have carried on the mantle.

Much earlier, Publisher, journalist and activist, Marcus Garvey had stated in one of his editorials :

**“Our Union must know no clime, boundary or nationality”.**

I do not know of any reason strong enough to dismiss the urgent request for a United States of Africa, except from a selfish, myopic, and visionless viewpoint. As Nkrumah emphasized on several occasions :

**'Divided we are weak; united, Africa could become one of the greatest forces for good in the world.'**

Before, and long after independence was declared, we in Ghana, like in all British colonies, were studying British and European civilization in our schools. I knew more about the British Isles, Europe and North America than I did about Africa. In Geography classes, no attempt was made in our syllabus to point us to any African country apart from Britain and North Africa. British Education was aimed at 'civilizing the African natives'. We were taught to sing "All things were bright and beautiful...the Lord God made them all". No cause for complaint.

African ancestral beliefs were equated with the devil, and new European values were taught to those who could qualify to go to school.

It was after Kwame Nkrumah executed an Accelerated Educational Plan that most Ghanaians were given access to education.

### **What was the Image of Africans in the Diaspora like ?**

Before Kwame Nkrumah, we were never taught to see blacks in the diaspora as our kith and kin.

The period of street agitations for civil and equal rights was portrayed to us on television as a representation of black, lazy and unproductive folks who wanted to bring down the stable economic and democratic society of America. In the movies we watched on television, black characters played menial roles, or

as gangsters and buffoons. We were not supposed to claim any relationship with them at all.

We never learnt anything about the inhuman and torturing treatment meted out to those who were taken through what has come to be called the Middle Passage.

For a few of us who were politically alert because of our pan-Africanist orientation through the Young Pioneer Movement, we went a step further. At the University of Ghana, where Kwame Nkrumah had opened the Institute of African Studies, we found the invasion of a number of African American and diaspora students as an opportunity to be more curious. In the late 1960s and early 70s, my Ghanaian colleagues and some black friends decided to form the International Black Alliance. Our objective was: To bridge the gap between the two sides. We mounted Public Lectures, Symposia, Seminars and held monthly meetings to give opportunity to individuals to share experiences and ideas. This was most productive, and our numbers shot up over time. We read books by Woodson Carter, WEB Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, and poetry by James Baldwin and Maya Angelou. We followed stories of black leaders in the civil rights movement and shared information across university campuses.

When I had the opportunity to teach in my former high school Adisadel College in the early 70s, I launched the Pan African Forum and registered quite a number of students for the study of Pan-African affairs including the Black Liberation Movements in various parts of the world.

Otherwise the miseducation continued in many other schools.

**Significantly**, this kind of miseducation was even worse in the Diaspora.

Carter Godwin Woodson summarises the situation in America in his book entitled 'THE MIS-EDUCATION OF THE NEGRO':

***The philosophy and ethics resulting from our educational system have justified slavery, peonage, segregation and lynching.'***

***The 'educated Negroes' have the attitude of contempt toward their own people as well as in their mixed schools; Negroes are taught to admire the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin and the Teuton and to despise the African.***

On both sides of the Atlantic, the thought of inferiority of the black man was drilled in the minds of students in every class or community.

**And, of course, when you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions.**

***It is happening in our everyday lives even today.***

However it is not all negative.

Africans in various fields are asserting themselves and recording remarkable achievements.

The African Union is now speaking with one voice on some issues.

The Diasporan Forum is rallying together men, women and business leaders.

Africans are now very vocal about corrupt and selfish leaders, and there is greater demand for probity and accountability in public and private life.

Yes there is still a long way to go.

**Throughout my experience and life as a Pan-Africanist, one truth has always come to confront me : Africans on the continent, as well as Africans in the diaspora are equally mis-educated, first about themselves, and second about each other. And that until a conscious effort is made on both sides to educate ourselves, our unity will be seriously undermined.**

Until PANAFEST became popular in Ghana, very few Ghanaians and Africans had visited the Slave forts and castles dotted across the central and west coasts of the country to educate themselves about the inhuman treatment meted out

to fellow Africans by colonial rulers. This part of the story must continue to be told.

When the Pan African Historical Theatre Festival ( PANAFEST) was first launched in Ghana in 1992, I was offered the chair of the Publicity Committee and I toured the United Kingdom, North America, Brazil and the Caribbean countries, in addition to various parts of Africa to promote the need for all of us to join hands in Uniting the African Family. Later, I was to be elected chairman of PANAFEST for another 10 years to institutionalize the mission to unite the African family and give a rebirth to African Civilization.

What really happened at PANAFEST? PANAFEST re-energized the African Unity dream. With performers, intellectuals and the youth from various parts of the continent and the diaspora, we set the agenda for the unification of creative forces on the continent.

**This is the time for Africans on the continent and in the diaspora to readjust their mind sets towards the African Unity Agenda. African leaders should integrate the subject in all their speeches and actions. Ministers should incorporate the integration agenda in their policies. Media men and women should be guided by the African Unity agenda so they do not generate unnecessary hostilities and animosity among Africans. Their editorial space should be used to canvass wider African and black interests for the benefit of the peoples. African businessmen should organise themselves with their counterparts in the diaspora to generate wealth and create jobs. African filmmakers and playwrights must positively promote the African personality in their creations. Educational administrators on both sides of the Atlantic should infuse more history and Africana studies in the curricula of schools. There should be more exchange of faculty and students across the Atlantic. African governments should incorporate the African Union Anthem in their events and school anthems. And more support should be given to festivals like PANAFEST to**

**continue to consolidate the agenda for a united African family.**

In conclusion, Brother Chairman,  
let me say briefly why I wrote “Our Motherland-My Life” :

- 1) We Africans don't write as much as we should do. So, in most cases, we read about ourselves through other lenses. (I hope more of my colleagues will take a queue from here)
- 2) Africans, both on the continent and in the diaspora, are not learning enough about each other; and together we are fast alienating ourselves from what gives us a different and distinguishing African Personality/Identity.
- 3) Today, technology and research have combined to reveal so much about African history, African philosophy and African civilisation, yet our mindset is not there yet.
- 4) Africans are busy tearing themselves apart through their mass media; otherwise leaders are stealing from their people and plundering their resources while other continents and sub-continents are creating wealth from the resources we have on the continent.
- 5) Fifthly, I wrote this book because I want to make a contribution towards the creation of knowledge that we need as a people to inspire our youth and unite our energies.
- d) Finally, it is time, even if we lost the way, for Africans and peoples of African descent, to stop working like rivals, and think African and work together with one voice towards a United States of Africa.

Thank you !