

Neo-Garveyism or Continentalism—the Pan-Africanism for the 21st century
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There were three main brands of Pan-Africanism in the 20th century: The DuBoisian racial integrationist Pan-Africanism; the Garveyite Negro Power Pan-Africanism; and the Nkrumahist Afro-Arab or Continentalist Pan-Africanism.

The DuBois Racial Integrationist Pan-Africanism held four Congresses between 1919 and 1929. Its agenda was to integrate elite black individuals--the “talented tenth”—and the near-whites in skin color into the higher levels of the structures of white power and white society in the world. This objective of social equality may be said to have been finally attained, at least symbolically, with the successes of the US Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, and with the rise of blacks to such positions as justices of the US Supreme Court, the US Secretary of State, the Secretary General of the British Commonwealth, the Secretary General of the UN, and to cap it all, with Barak Obama’s election as president of the USA. Despite these individual successes, racial integrationism has not emancipated the Negro race from slavery, neo-colonialism or racism. For as Maulana Karenga correctly points out: “one person in a position, however high, is no substitute for a people’s having real power over their own destiny and daily lives.”—[Karenga, “PRAISE SONG FOR A PEOPLE: PROSPECTS FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE PRESIDENCY”, Los Angeles Sentinel, 01-22-09, p. A7]

Between 1914 and 1925, Marcus Garvey, through his mass movement, the UNIA (the Universal Negro Improvement Association), launched the Pan-Negroism that aimed to create Negro Power. In Garvey’s own words:

“Power is the only argument that satisfies man. Except the individual, the race or nation has POWER that is exclusive, it means that that individual, race or nation will be bound by the will of the other who possesses this great qualification. . . . Hence it is advisable for the Negro to get power of every kind. POWER in education, science, industry, politics and higher government. That kind of power

that will stand out signally, so that other races and nations can see, and if they will not see, then FEEL.” [*Philosophy & Opinions, I: 21-22*]

Accordingly, the tasks that Garvey undertook, through his UNIA, were

- 1] To help create black governments, presidents, ambassadors, armies, navies, etc. and
- 2] To build a black superpower in Africa.**

These two tasks made a great leap forward in Pan-Africanism’s aspirations. Between 1920 and 1924, in New York City, the UNIA held four annual conventions of the Negro Peoples of the World. The first, in 1920, was attended by some 25,000 Negroes from all over the world. And it made a landmark DECLARATION OF RIGHTS OF THE NEGRO PEOPLES OF THE WORLD.

Then in 1958, there emerged the Nkrumahist Pan-Africanism which aimed at African unity—the political integration of all the ex-colonial countries on the African continent (Arabs and Black Africans) into what Padmore called the African Union or a United States of Africa, with one Continental Union Government. This brand of Pan-Africanism has dominated the stage since 1958: it is the father of the OAU; of its successor, the AU; and of Gaddafi’s projected USofAfrica that aims to submerge all of Black Africa under Arab colonialism. Nkrumah, with his Continentalism, led us astray, down the wrong path and we must be thankful to those who have resisted the Continental Union Government project for the last half century, thankful that they have, thus far, saved us from the dungeons of Arab colonialism and enslavement that are waiting in ambush for us at the end of that road.

These three strands each aimed to accomplish Black people’s emancipation from white domination, but they differed in what they defined as the constituency to be emancipated and in the project through which that emancipation would be pursued. In other words, they differed in their answers to the two key questions: emancipation for whom? And by what means?

For DuBois [1868-1963], the constituency was the Negroes (black peoples) of Africa and the Negro Diaspora in the Americas; and the project was to abolish the color line and socially integrate blacks with whites.

For Garvey [1887-1940], the constituency was all the Negro peoples of the world, wherever they were; and the means to achieve emancipation was by building “a strong and powerful Negro nation in Africa,” an industrial superpower that would be “strong enough to lend protection to the members of our race scattered all over the world, and to compel the respect of the nations and races of the earth. . . .”

For Nkrumah [1909-1972], the champion of Continentalism, the constituency was, as in the OAU, the inhabitants of the African continent, Arabs and Negroes together, but without the black Diaspora; and the means to achieve emancipation was by building socialism and integrating the neo-colonial states on the continent into one continental state with a single continental government.

DuBois was a pioneer, with the inevitable limitations in the work of a pioneer. Garvey was a great leap forward from DuBois; and Nkrumah was *a great leap backward* from both Garvey and DuBois. Why do I say that? DuBois got the constituency right and the project wrong; Garvey got the constituency right and the project right; Nkrumah got the constituency wrong and the project also wrong. But that is a topic for another occasion.

 Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, Pan-Africanism has lost its way and lies paralyzed by confusions about its constituency and healthy suspicions about its paramount project. It is our task to clear away the confusions and find a successful path for Pan-Africanism to follow.

To do so, we must refocus on the fundamentals of our situation as black people. Since white Europeans began raiding sub-Saharan Africa in the 15th century for Negro captives to enslave; since white Arabs invaded Egypt in 639 AD; and indeed ever since white Persians conquered Black Egypt in 525 BC, the cardinal question for Black Africans has been: ***How can Black Africans organize to survive in the world, and with security and respect?***

That question has remained unanswered for 25 centuries. We must today face and answer it correctly for the conditions of this 21st century, or we perish. For the sake of continuity, we must ask: Is any of the 20th century brands of Pan-Africanism still relevant to our situation today? Can any of them help us to organize and survive, with security and respect, in the world of the 21st century? I submit that only Garvey's Pan-Negroism can help black people solve our problems of this century. The DuBoisian and Nkrumahist brands of Pan-Africanism are obsolete. We must leave them in the museum and move on. That said, I must point out that Garveyism addressed our situation in the 1920s. You will agree that our situation in the 21st century is not exactly the same as it was in the 1920s. Garveyism must therefore be interpreted and upgraded for our situation in the 21st century, hence what we need is Neo-Garveyism. The project of building a black "superstate" has to be conceived in 21st century terms. We are, for this century, obliged to choose between the dangerous but entrenched Continentalism and the potent but yet to be propagated Neo-Garveyism. So, let us consider them.

Which way Pan-Africanism for the 21st century: Neo-Garveyism or Continentalism?

1] Pan-Africanism, as a global movement, needs to look at our situation in its global-historical context. For the last 2500 years, the most significant fact about the black race has been our lack of the power to protect our land, our population and our cultures from

white (Persian, Arab and European) enemies. As a result we have suffered conquest, enslavement, horrendous exploitation and the contempt of the world.

Since 1958, when Continentalism emerged, Pan-Africanism has doggedly refused to address two vital issues: the powerlessness of the black race in the world, and the Black comprador colonialism that arose with self-government, and that is a blight on Black Africa. These issues can no longer be evaded, if we mean to survive and prosper. And Neo-Garveyism is challenging each and every Pan-Africanist to acknowledge and address them.

2] Between 1897, when Pan-Africanism first appeared, and 1958, when Continentalist Pan-Africanism took over the stage, Pan-Africanism was a Pan-Negro movement dedicated to ameliorating the condition and status of Negroes in the world. It should have been more accurately called Pan-Negroism, as that would have saved us the confusions and diversions that have derived from the word “African.” After 1958, Pan-Africanism became an Arab-and-Negro affair, dedicated to Arab-Negro unity in the African continent.

Unlike the floundering Continentalism, Neo-Garveyism wants to solve the 21st century problems of the Black race by focussing on the mother of them all—black powerlessness in the world, and by building a black superpower in Africa, the homeland of the black/Negro race.

3] Who is an African remains a contentious question on which a consensus may never be reached; but who Negroes are is not in doubt or debate. By their woolly hair or black skin, or both, you shall know them. Neo-Garveyism is interested in Negroes/Black Africans, not in Africans. Anybody who is a Negro by appearance, but is insecure about being called a black or Negro, or who is uncomfortable about the words race, Negro or Black, is invited to stay away from Neo-Garveyism.

4] What is the constituency and what is the project of NeoGarveyism for the 21st century? NeoGarveyism is for those Pan-Africanists who accept that the correct constituency of Pan-Africanism is the black race and that the paramount project is to

build a black superpower in Africa. Neo-Garveyism is inviting Pan-Africanists to return to the pre-1958 constituency of Pan-Africanism and to stop evading the question of Black powerlessness in the world.

5] One of the crippling failings of Continentalism is that it has been oblivious to the question of racial power, the lack of power by the black race. It has been oblivious to this mother of all the problems of the black race. Another is that it has been inflicted with complexes about race, and has been afraid of being smeared as “racist” by our white-supremacist enemies, Arab and European alike.

Pan-Africanism was a mono-racial movement before Nkrumah perverted it with his multiracial, integrationist, Afro-Arab Continentalism. Some Pan-Africanists are very scared of returning to that original mono-racialism lest their white liberal “friends” accuse them of racism. It is therefore important to point out why an organization is not guilty of racism, simply because it is monoracial. Any group, monoracial or multiracial, is racist only if it subscribes to the superstition that one race is superior and another inferior. Therefore, a monoracial Negroes-only Pan-Africanism, which does not claim that Negroes are superior, is not racist. Neither Garveyism nor Neo-Garveyism claims that Negroes, or any other race, is a superior or inferior race. Therefore it is a racial but not a racist movement. Those who call it racist are either ignorantly misusing language or up to mischief. White liberals like to play mischief by falsely accusing monoracial Negro groups of “black racism.” That way they intimidate ill-informed Negroes into admitting white enemies into their groups, so that the whites can then control and misdirect the blacks in their just struggle against white domination and white racism. Steve Biko rejected this accusation when white liberals hurled it at his Black Consciousness Movement. He wrote:

Those who know, define racism as discrimination by a group against another for the purposes of subjugation or maintaining subjugation. In other words one cannot be a racist unless he has the power to subjugate. What blacks are doing is merely to respond to a situation in which they find themselves the objects of white racism. We are in the position in which we are because of our skin. We are collectively segregated against -- what can be more logical than for us to respond as a group? When workers come together under the auspices of a trade union to strive for the betterment of their conditions, nobody expresses surprise in the Western world. It is the done thing. Nobody accuses them of separatist

tendencies. Teachers fight their battles, garbagemen do the same, nobody acts as a trustee for another. Somehow, however, when blacks want to do their thing the liberal establishment seems to detect an anomaly. This is in fact a counter-anomaly. The anomaly was there in the first instance when the liberals were presumptuous enough to think that it behoved them to fight the battle for the blacks. [Biko, Steve *I Write What I Like*, (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Books, 1987) p. 25]

Biko's full critique of integration should be required reading by all Black Africans today. I encourage Pan-Africanists to study and learn from his powerful refutation of the charge.

We must organize the black race regardless of what anybody says. As Garvey pointed out, "To suggest that there is no need for Negro racial organization . . . is but to, by the game of deception, lay the trap for the destruction of a people whose knowledge of life is incomplete." [*Philosophy & Opinions, II*: 16] We must insist that the Negro race has as much right as any other human group to organize itself and to define and defend its interests in the world, and we should not be intimidated into not exercising that right.

6] Some Pan-Africanists claim that we already have "black power" in Africa. I can't see what they are referring to. I see black governments but I don't see black power. I see black governments that are neo-colonial fronts and agents for white power. All I can see are weak neo-colonial governments with armies that can defend them only against their own unarmed populations. Which black African army is self-supplied with doctrines and equipment? Which of them can defeat a regiment of Lithuanian girl scouts? The black presidents of neo-colonial African countries do not represent black power. They are white power in black face. After all, President Obama is in the White House, the mansion and symbol of white power, wielding and serving white power. Does that mean that there is now Black power in the USA? Like Obama, the presidents of the neo-colonial countries of Black Africa do not exercise black power. They are black agents of white power.

But whatever or wherever this alleged "black power" in Africa may be, did it deter or defeat those who threw the AIDS bomb on Black Africa? Has it defeated the Arab attack on Darfur? What did this alleged "black power" do to defend South Sudan from Arab colonialists in the last half century, or to end the Arab enslavement of blacks in Mauritania? What is it doing to protect Haiti from being tortured by the USA, France

and their UN? Can it defend us against the EU? Can it take on NATO? If not, we need to focus on building the black power with which we can fully liberate and protect the Black race from NATO, the UN, the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, and the Arab League. That is the measure of the black power that we need and that Neo-Garveyism is proposing that we build.

7] Some argue that we were not the exclusive or unique victims of racism and slavery and should therefore not make them the focus of our Pan-Africanism. On the contrary, Pan-Africanism, if it is to be of value and service to us, should focus on all the evils that have been inflicted on us. And should make it its mission to ensure that we *never again* suffer any of them. Whether others have also suffered them is a totally irrelevant consideration. If you have cancer, it is your duty to get rid of it, regardless of whether others also have cancer.

8] Cultural Pan-Africanism, which some urge us to restrict ourselves to, is important; but it is not enough. It is not adequate to our liberation needs. A *Sankofa Movement* for the reclamation of the values, tenets and institutions of our Black African heritage we must have. Sankofa is important for our identity. But Sankofa is not enough for our survival and advancement. A purely or narrowly cultural Pan-Africanism does not address our problems of racism, neo-colonialism or poverty, or the power gap between us and others in the world.

We must also ask: What changes must we make in our ancestral cultures if we are to be victorious over our enemies? That is the key question we must pose and answer. Only such retentions, changes and additions as are dictated by this criterion are legitimate. Even democracy, in whatever version we choose or invent, has to meet this criterion. If it can't, then we must discard it. However endearing, and however attached we may be to the values and customs of our culture, that culture is fatally deficient if it cannot win encounters on the battlefield. If a people love their culture, they must see to it that it is, at any time, militarily stronger than any potential challenger.

No matter how ecologically viable it may be; no matter how good or virtuous its values and customs may seem; no matter how advanced it may be judged in this or that

aspect or department, a culture is fatally deficient if it fails to win when challenged on the battlefield. And our ancestral African cultures failed woefully when put to that test in the last several centuries. We must bear that in mind and do everything to correct that chronic weakness.

We need particularly to note that returning to our roots does not mean reverting to retarded and ineffective technologies or worldviews. As Cabral admonished:

“No one should think that the culture of Africa, what is really African and so must be preserved for all time, for us to be Africans, is our weakness in the face of nature. . . . We should not persuade ourselves that to be African is believing that lightning is the fury of the deity (God is feeling angry). We cannot believe that to be African is to think that man has no mastery over the flooding of rivers.

--*Unity and Struggle*, pp. 57-58

We must also note that a purely cultural Pan-Africanism is futile. Our cultural Pan-Africanists easily forget that cultural loyalty follows power. All the skin-bleaching, hair-straightening and other absurd aping of European styles, tastes, beliefs and values that cultural Afrocentrists, from Sekyi to Fela and others, have condemned and still love to condemn are the result of our loss of Black African power, and they can be cured only after we have made Black Africa powerful and respected in the world. When that has happened, it wouldn't be necessary to preach to any black person not to bleach his skin. Yes, certainly, let us keep our eyes on the ball, but the correct ball, the fundamental ball, the ball of Black African power which is the key to everything.

9. Let us consider the major differences between the brands of Pan-Africanism that are now on offer.

Major differences between Neo-Garveyism & Continentalism

	Continentalism	NeoGarveyism
1. Diagnosis of Black Africa's fundamental problem	Disunity/ "Balkanization"	Powerlessness
2. Proposed remedy	Build Continental Union Government (CUG) and Socialism	Industrialize our countries, organize a Black World League and build a black superpower in Africa.
3. Theme	African Unity	Black Power

4. Constituency	The African continent: All the multiracial inhabitants of the African continent	The Negro/Black African race
5. Operational concept of total liberation. Without an operational concept thereof, we cannot tell whether or not we have achieved total liberation.	None	Total liberation is a function of power. For a people to be totally liberated, they must be truly independent: they must be powerful, and powerful enough to deter or defeat any attempts, by anyone whatsoever, to impose on them in any way. In other words, they must be truly sovereign; i.e. they must be able to act independently, without outside interference. For Black Africa to be totally liberated, it must have at least one superpower as “core state” among its countries to lead and protect it.
6. Arab colonialism, racism and expansionism	Does not recognize them. The AU has been, actually, aiding and abetting them, especially in Sudan by protecting Bashir from arrest by the ICC, and by its silence on the enslavement of Black Africans by Arabs in Mauritania.	Recognizes and aims to stop them.
7. Black comprador colonialism	Does not recognize it.	Recognizes and aims to abolish it; and to foster Black liberationist leadership.
8. UN Imperialism	Does not recognize it, and submits to it through our governments taking orders from ‘donors’ and the UN agencies; and through an AU whose annual budget is substantially funded by imperialist donors.	Recognizes it and aims to defeat it in Black Africa.

10] Continentalism has never been alive to the power dimension of our racial situation. It is remarkably blind and deaf to issues of the economic and military power of nations and races. As Nkrumah, the founder of Continentalism, said; “The Party has always proclaimed socialism as the objective of our social, industrial and economic programmes.” [*Revolutionary Path*: 190] And again: “Our goal must be the establishment of African dignity, progress and prosperity” [*Revolutionary Path* p.227] Not a word there, or anywhere I have looked, about African power. On some occasions, he comes close to articulating the idea of African power, but never quite does so. (And I challenge anyone to produce a passage where Nkrumah explicitly discusses African power.) He gave no hint of an understanding that dignity/respect is a by-product of power. And he further said: “It is incredible that they will defy a united continent.” [*Revolutionary Path*, p. 281] Clearly, he was expecting from unity what can, in reality, only be expected from power! He failed to realize that the powers of the world respect and respond only to power, not to territorial bigness, or sheer numbers or to a powerless show of ‘unity’.

11] Garvey was alive to issues of power. Following Garvey, Neo-Garveyism is alive to the great power gap between Black Africa and other parts of the world, and to the need to close the power gap between the black race and the other races of humanity. Accordingly, Neo-Garveyism is not for those Pan-Africanists who are not interested in, or are allergic to the matter of national or racial power.

12] Building a black superpower in Africa is the only remedy for our pathetic powerless and poverty-stricken condition. Doing anything less than that is meaningless, is as good as doing nothing at all. So, that is the project on which, Neo-Garveyism insists, we should focus our minds and efforts day and night until it is accomplished, and by any means necessary.

13] The supreme question for Pan-Africanists, therefore, is this: What must we do, starting today, so that before 2100, we would have created a strong and powerful Negro nation in Africa? A Negro nation so powerful that no power on earth would dare meddle

in the affairs of any Negro society anywhere, or dare maltreat any Negro person anywhere.

14] We have come a long way since 1900, but we have a much longer way still to go. We now have clearly before us what we need to do. We may decide not to do it; or we may decide that we are not up to the task, but we can't henceforth say we had no idea what is required of us if we want to totally liberate and end the miseries of the black race.

15] For the benefit of those who are addicted to calling themselves Africans instead of Negroes/Black Africans, let me give Neo-Garveyism's answer to the vexed question: Who is an African? Bearing in mind that the African continent is today populated by the indigenous/aboriginal Negroes, as well as by non-Negro alien settlers from Arabia, Europe, India, Malaya etc.; and bearing in mind that Negroes are the only indigenous population and therefore the only authentic Africans; therefore, Neo-Garveyism, like Garvey, means by Africans just those who, in Garvey's day were called Negroes. To be an African, one has to be a Negro racially and also adhere to the culture of one of the Negro societies in Africa, or be a descendant in the Diaspora of an African thus defined. Be it noted that a Negro-looking person of Arab culture and allegiance, such as Khartoum's Omer Bashir and his fellow black Arabs, is not an African.

16] Neo-Garveyism defines Pan-Africanism as a monoracial movement of Negroes for the total liberation of all Negroes from all forms of enslavement, colonialism and Negrophobia—the specific brand of racism that has been inflicted on Negroes.

17] Finally, I submit that: If we want to abolish our powerlessness, if we want to abolish our poverty, **the theme or objective of Pan Africanism needs to change from African Unity to Black African Power and Prosperity; if Pan-Africanism is to become once again relevant to the ordinary people, it must return to its pre-1958 ethos and become the champion of the reforms that will give the ordinary Black African a life of prosperity and dignity.**

I might add that despite all formidable obstacles, despite the opposition of the imperialists, despite neo-colonialism, despite the Arabs, we can abolish poverty from

Black Africa. Others have done so in the last half century, even at a time when Nkrumah was claiming that it could not be done without our first creating his Continental Union Government. South Korea did it in a “capitalist” way; North Korea did it in a “socialist” way. Several others did it, each in its own ways. Having wasted the last half century avoiding the project, let us now get on with the task of bringing prosperity to all members of each country of the black race.

Let me also point out that

Racism will not disappear until there is a Black superpower on earth, and a USofAfrica will not be a superpower. Therefore, the problem of the 21st century is not the problem of African unity, or the problem of the color line, but the problem of Black African power: how to build it, and enough of it to stop the extermination of Blacks that is now in process, and to compel the respect of all humanity and guarantee the survival, sovereignty and dignity of the Black race.

I have shown elsewhere that the key tasks for 21st century Pan-Africanism include:

1. Reverting to Pan-Africanism’s original monoracial constituency , namely the Black/Negro race, i.e. Sub-Sahara/Black Africa and its Diaspora; and redefining its paramount project as the building of a Black/Negro superpower in Africa.
2. Building a Black superpower in Africa.
3. Creating a Black World League of states.
4. Industrialization of each Black country.
5. Building a social welfare system in each Black country.
6. Defeating Arab expansionism and colonialism.
7. Liberation from the UN Imperialism of the World Bank, IMF, & WTO.
8. Teaching Pan-Africanism to the young.
9. Eradicating AIDS.
10. Reviving agriculture and ensuring food security in Black Africa.

[Please see “Pan-Africanism and a Black Superpower —The 21st century agenda”, www.houseofknowledge.org.uk/site/documents/chinweizu/2010/Abuja%20paper%205A.pdf]

Continentalism has not, in 50 years, addressed these tasks, has not even discerned many of them. Garveyism, in contrast, was unequivocally for the emancipation and

powerfulness of the Negro/Black race. It put forth the basic recipe for those still unattained aims.

Pan-Africanism needs therefore to revert to Garveyism, upgrade it, drop the constituency confusions inherent in the name “African,” stop being oblivious of the matter of racial power, and change its theme from African unity to Black power.

Do Black Africans want to end up in the dungeons of Arab colonialism? If so they should continue with Continentalism and the AU and the USofAfrica project. But if they want to liberate themselves from Arab as well as European domination, they should switch to Neo-Garveyism and the project of building a strong Negro nation, a Black superpower, in Africa before 2100. The choice is clear.

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