

lic policy that will end existing favoritism towards speculators in land ownership and to create, in turn, public policy that has as its aim the preservation of diverse ownership of land and the continuation of the family farm system with its attendant values of stewardship, family, and community responsibility.

This we do as a people of God, struggling to be honest to the call to discipleship in rural America and all the world and believing that future generations will judge us harshly if we fail in this time of grave urgency.

#### **4.C.6.**

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Akinyele Umoja

### **“Why We Say ‘Free the Land’” (1984)**

An outgrowth of the Republic of New Afrika, the New Afrikan People’s Organization (NAPO) was a revolutionary Black nationalist organization inspired by Malcolm X and headquartered in Mississippi. This essay by the organization’s national secretary was published in its newspaper, *By Any Means Necessary*. In it, Umoja identifies land as a source of political power and collective survival for both Black and Indigenous people.

“Free the Land” is the battle cry of the New Afrikan Independence Movement. The NAIM is part of the Black Liberation Movement in North America that wants an independent Black nation on land in North America. The land identified by the New Afrikan Independence Movement is primarily known as South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and other areas of what is now called the Black-belt South (the southeastern part of the North American continent where Afrikan people are in the majority or have a historical/economical/sociocultural relationship to). When We say “free the land,” this is the land We are talking about freeing.

Malcolm X once stated:

Revolutions are fought to get control of land, to remove the absentee landlord and gain control of the land and institutions that flow from that land. The Black man has been in a very low condition because he has no control whatsoever over any land.

He later stated:

A true Negro revolt might entail, for instance, fighting for separate Black states within this country.

All nations and people wanting liberation from alien domination and seeking self-determination are fighting for land. When Angola, Mozambique, [and] Guinea-Bissau were fighting Portuguese colonialization they were fighting for land. When Zimbabwe was fighting for independence it was fighting for control

of its land. Azania (south afrika), Palestine, Northern Ireland today all struggle for land and independence. New Afrikans—Black people—in North America need land and independence.

Land is essential for a people's development. In order to grow food and obtain natural resources (oil, gold, uranium, timber, etc.) land is necessary. A landless people is a dependent people. A nation with land can utilize its labor and technology to develop in its own best interest.

Land is also important for national identity—a nation's sense of peoplehood. People develop a material and spiritual relationship to land. Land they tilled; land they built upon; developed families and communities on. The land becomes tied to a people's national consciousness as a consequence of their social and national development.

A nation for people means control over specific national territory with specific geopolitical boundaries. Boundaries determine where the nation's political jurisdiction begins and ends.

NAPO sees that We must "free the land" of New Afrika because land and independence can best guarantee self-determination and liberation for our people. Without independent nationhood the amerikkkan empire will always control the affairs of New Afrikans. They will control our economy; our education, security, and all aspects of development. Only when We control the land and the institution on the land can we be the masters of our own destiny.

New Afrika—South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and other areas of the "Black-belt South"—must be free. Afrika is the homeland of all Afrikan people, but We have no realistic plan to transport thirty million captive New Afrikans back to Afrika. While in North America, New Afrikans have developed historical, economic, social-cultural and spiritual ties to the New Afrikan national territory in North America. This is the land We became a unique New Afrikan nation on. This is the land We tilled without pay as bondspersons (slaves) and as sharecroppers. This is the land our people demanded after the Civil War and even attempted to establish New Afrikan governments on, only to be subjugated by the united states army and the ku klux klan. This is the land We have fought to stay on even though millions of us were forced to flee to become refugees in northern and western ghetto reservations through white terrorism and economic pressure. This is the land We must have to be free.

We recognize the claims of Native American Indians to this land and will struggle side by side to help them to regain their land. At the same time since our captivity in the Western Hemisphere progressive Native Americans have recognized We had no choice in coming to North America and the majority of us have no realistic way to get back to Afrika.

We say "free the Land" because We wish that our children live in dignity and prosperity. We wish to build a new society with new values and relationships. We say "free the land" because We want independence so We can insure our human rights are protected and that our land will be a zone and base for all who seek liberation and freedom.

*Free the land!*