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Listening to the Ancestors

Worrill's World

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BC Columnist

African people throughout the world are uniformly under the yoke of white supremacy. This has created tremendous problems for us as a people. There are solutions to these problems that we must be reminded of time and time again. These solutions have come from the wisdom of the ancestors and their deep thought.

Our thinkers and activists of the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries have set forth many of the solutions to the problems and crisis of African people. From time to time, movements have unfolded that have picked up on the ideas of these thinkers and activists. When this has occurred, serious challenges to breaking the yoke of white supremacy seemed within reach. However, due to internal and external manipulations of these movements, they became short lived. For example, one of the most successful of these movements was the Garvey Movement of the 1920s.

As African people in the twenty-first-century, it is imperative that we collectively join and participate in the Reparations Movement as we seek to dismantle white supremacy. Let us briefly examine some of the ideas our leaders presented in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries that should be the foundation for establishing the framework for the growing Reparations Movement at this critical juncture in the history of African people.

Jean Jacques Dessalines, one of the leaders of the Haitian Revolution in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries said, "Never again shall a colonist, or European, set his foot upon this territory with

the title of master or proprietor. This resolution shall henceforward form the basis of our constitution.”

Henry Highland Garnet, a mid-nineteenth-century Black Nationalist thinker and organizer explained in the following statement that African people need “...a grand center of Negro nationality, from which shall flow the streams of commercial, intellectual, and political power which shall make colored people respected everywhere.”

Martin Robeson Delany, Harvard-trained physician of the mid-nineteenth-century and leading Black Nationalist espoused, “We must act for ourselves - We are a nation within a nation; as the Poles in Russia, the Hungarians in Austria, the Welsh, Irish, and Scotch in the British dominions. But we have been, by our oppressor, despoiled of our purity, and corrupted in our native characteristics, so that we have inherited their vices and but few of their virtues, leaving us really a broken people.”

Edward Wilmot Blyden, a leading educator and Pan Africanist of the mid- and late-nineteenth-centuries said, “We need some African power, some great center of the race where our physical, pecuniary, and intellectual strength may be collected. We need some spot where such an influence may go forth in behalf of the race as shall be felt by the nations. We are now so scattered and divided that we can do nothing... So long as we remain thus divided, we may expect imposition... An African nationality is our great need... We must build up Negro States; we must establish and maintain the various institutions.”

One of the greatest Pan Africanist and Black Nationalist leaders of the twentieth-century, Marcus Mosiah Garvey succinctly states, “Africa for the Africans at home and abroad.”

Another great Black Nationalist leader of the twentieth-century, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad challenged that “we must do for self.”

Professor Joseph Harris, in commenting on the work of William Leo Hansberry, one of our leading authorities on African History in the twentieth-century said, “Hansberry realized that the African students not only had to contend with life in this racist country, but that they also had the obligation to return to their countries with both the skills acquired at Howard and an Afrocentric perspective of their heritage.”

And finally, the editorial commentary in the *Afrocentric World Review*, Vol. I, No. I, Winter 1973, explained, "In this crucial world wide scramble for Africa, African minds and African bodies, we must proclaim in our own right African interest first... Blacks must cease becoming a vest pocket people for other national interests and world pursuits, and hasten to revive the age old traditional quest for a World African Center that will make us once again masters in our own house."

In this spirit, let us listen to the wisdom of our ancestors as we continue to forge ahead in strengthening our Black Liberation and Reparations Movements. Our challenge is to study our history, listen to the wisdom of our ancestors, and take appropriate action. **Long live the Spirit and Wisdom of our Ancestors!**

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