

WELCOME STATEMENT
First Kwame Ture Lecture Series for 2009
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Welcome to the first lecture of the Kwame Ture Memorial Public Lecture Series for Emancipation 2009. Since 1992 the Emancipation Support Committee has been hosting a public lecture series to disseminate information to our people to improve their psychological and psychic health, to provide a knowledge base of accurate and relevant information, to relieve their attitude of self doubt and self hate due almost entirely to an intake of other people's interpretation of our history and other people's manipulation of our memory. However, from 1999 after the death of our brother and friend, Kwame Ture, we declared this public lecture series The Kwame Ture Memorial Public Lecture Series in honor of his life: A life characterized by selfless devotion to the liberation of his people and all the down trodden of the world.

As some of you may know, the lecture series is also based on an annual theme and this year our Theme for the Emancipation Celebrations is "Seize New Opportunities as the World Changes". For us in the Emancipation Support Committee, Ture's view of finding the opportunities in every situation to advance the liberation of the Race, is the approach that we wish to emphasize in this year's Commemoration of Emancipation.

We also walk in the footsteps of those who went before Ture and who blazed a trail for Ture and for us. We remember Bookman, Toussaint and Christophe, the liberators of Haiti. We remember Nzingha and Yaa Asantewa, fighters for our people's freedom in West Africa. We remember Harriet Tubman, Booker T, Washington, Elijah Mohammed and Malick El Shabaz known as Malcolm X, fighters for the restoration of our peoples' pride and dignity and power, We remember Henri Sylvestre Williams, George Padmore, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. DuBois, and Kwame Nkrumah, ideologues, organizers and practitioners of Pan Africanism. Our Brother, Equino Moyo, called on them to join us this evening as we begin our annual commemoration of the 171st anniversary of the Emancipation of Africans from Chattel slavery in Trinidad and Tobago and other places of the then British Empire.

For our ancestors, 1838 was a time of tumultuous change. Our people were in a most hostile political, social and psychological environment. Approaches of all kind were used by the former slave master and the slave government turned colonial government to keep our people in slavery. Putting the price of land so high that it was out of the reach of our people, creating anti squatting policies to keep our people off the land, encouraging emigration to undercut the labor power of our people, implementing laws that banned business transactions after the regular hours worked by the Commercial/planter class, were all tricks and chicanery. In the face of this onslaught our people seized the opportunities that were available for freedom, independence of action and the like. They pooled their resources, money and labor and skills, and collectively purchased land. Our ancestors organized themselves into villages and settlements and took care of the elderly, the sick, the young and the infirmed. They assisted each other in building houses and for their communities they collectively built schools and churches and mosques. They established institutions such as the Su Su based on ancestral memories. You recall the Su Su and what it meant to our mothers and grand mothers and great grand mothers. They established Friendly Societies. You recall the buildings that once housed these Friendly Societies. Often they were owned by the Societies themselves and doubled as school rooms from Monday to Friday, as church halls on Sundays and as recreational centers for wedding receptions, christenings and village fetes throughout the year.

The period of the two world wars, from 1912 to 1945, the world again changed. The two world wars had weakened the hold that the colonial powers had on our ancestors and other colonized groups and our ancestors took the opportunity to gain political independence. In other places like the United States as a minority community, the civil rights struggle ensued. Our people marched, They made speeches, They organized. They fought wars of liberation and in the end their circumstances changed.

There is now another world change and we, like earlier generations, have to seize the opportunities. There is the international financial system that is falling apart. There is the international economic system in which the Asian continent and especially China is playing manufactures to the world. And there is climate change which some of argued are being induced by the invention and use of polluting technology for all the industries from medical to manufacturing. In this climate where the experts are without answers, where everyone is guessing, we have the opportunity to experiment in a serious way with new technology, new forms of organization and new models of living. Indeed, we can and must seize the time. Our ancestors, and especially those that we call into our space to day, expect no less and we dare not disappoint them. Kwame will be terribly disappointed and you know that he will redouble his efforts to find a way to come and tell us.

The Kwame Ture Memorial Public Lecture Series will pay particular attention to identifying some of these opportunities in 2009 and beyond to progress the struggle for control of our minds, our bodies and our souls for that is what our struggle is about.

Our Lecture Series will look forward and backward to discern new opportunities and to understand the strategies used by our fore parents to seize their time. We will look at Black Power and Pan Africanism as forces for change in a changing world and describe as best as we can, the new opportunities opening up for economic development, national political independence, mental emancipation and social reorientation.

We will review a locally produced documentary to determine the extent to which we have fashioned or can shape a solution from elements of our carnival culture to rescue our "at risk youth" and ways in which such a model could be disseminated to re-establish respect and peace in our communities. Already the African drum and the steel bands are being used elsewhere, like the USA and Canada, in programs with at risk kids.

We will air two films, one on Haiti and contemporary and the other on Cuba and historic to explore our people's will to survive and determine the opportunities available in one and the options taken by our people in the other.

We will return to this issue of African entrepreneurship and set the record straight on the manner in which our people exploited the opportunities for business in order to get ahead during the post enslavement period in the Caribbean.

We will pay tribute to our ancestors in Yoruba Village this year in song and dance and continue to heal ourselves from the psychic wounds we inflicted on ourselves when we were forced to turn our backs on then for so many centuries. In this we will be joined by the communities and especially those in the area.

Our youth will review the opportunities available to them in this changing world and share with us ways in which we might be able to assist them in pulling their peers back from the edge of the abyss, while providing an enabling environment for easier achievement of their goals.

We will continue our forum on Africa with representation from the continent and the Diaspora. We will take stock of where we are and the programs being pursued by the African Union on behalf of Africans at home and abroad.

Indeed, the new Pan African Institutions on the continent and ways in which Diaspora Africans are to be included is the stuff that our brother Kwame Ture worked so hard to realize.

This lecture series has been grace with the presence of a large number of activists, scholars, artists and politicians drawn from the African World. Winnie Madikizela Mandela and Nzingha Heru, Kathleen Cleaver and Judith Aidoo, Dr. Femi Biko, Dr. Charles Finch, Dr. Ali Mazurri, Dr. Tony Martin, Professor James Small, Dr Leonard Jefferies, Dr. Molefi Asante, Dr. Ralph Henry, Professor Dennis Pantin, Dr. Gordon Rohleure, Dr Maureen Warner Lewis, Leroy Clarke, Amena Blackwood,

The Emancipation Support Committee will continue to bring you a Pan African group of scholars, researchers and activists as our Committee seeks those who can bring to us information about our unfolding dream.

We in the Emancipation Support Committee place ourselves in a movement that has remained unbroken over the centuries whether we knew it or not. We stand on the shoulders of these great fighters for African redemption and we recognize them in our Lecture Series and through our brother Kwame Ture, we hold them high.

We thank you for coming out this evening and we welcome you in the languages of our ancestors, Hotep, Habari Gani, Alafia,