

Nigeria: A black powerhouse



WILLIAM REED

By William Reed
 What do you normally think of when you hear people mention Nigeria? Do you note that it is the most populous country in Africa? Or, do you recall that it is the home to the most black people on the planet? Does your information about Nigeria include the fact that one of every four people on the continent of Africa is Nigerian, or that one of every five blacks on this planet is a Nigerian? As a black person do you realize that if the world's blacks are to ever rise up and regain their rightful place it's imperative the country of Nigeria be in the forefront of our plans and activities?

Nigeria is on the west coast of Africa and is one of the largest countries in the world. It is a country of great variety and potential. It has hot, rainy swamplands; dry, sandy areas; grassy plains; and tropical forests. High plateaus and rocky mountains rise up in various parts of the country. The bulk of problems we hear about regarding Nigeria result from its population of 115 million people having 250 different ethnic and cultural groups each proud of its identity and fearing domination and marginalization by other groups. Most of its people live in rural areas, but Nigeria has several large, crowded cities. Lagos is the largest and chief commercial city, and Abuja is the capital. Great pride exists among Nigerians, hundreds of years ago a number of ancient kingdoms developed in the area

King

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 partly right about Ray. There is strong evidence he was the triggerman. His fingerprints were on the alleged murder weapon. He was at the crime scene, and he confessed. His protests of innocence and frame-ups a quarter century later sound like a dying, discredited man desperately thrashing around to save his conscience, grab media attention, and cash in on the notoriety of the case.

A new trial for Ray probably wouldn't uncover any hard proof that the government or racist groups directly issued orders to kill King. But this doesn't absolve the FBI, and government agencies of their disgraceful, destructive, and illegal campaign against King.

The climate of suspicion and hostility they created toward the civil rights movement made it possible for Ray to murder King. And ultimately they must share at least some of the blame for that.

that is now Nigeria. Its professionals dominate the ranks of the technical class in Saudi Arabia, Britain, China and the U.S. Many of the slaves captured and shipped to the New World were from what is now known as Nigeria. Nigeria is universally acknowledged as an important moral and material contributor to the struggle against colonialism and racial discrimination in Africa.

Most Nigerians earn their livelihoods by farming, fishing, or herding. The country is

poised to be a world power. It is a leading producer of cacao and peanuts and has vast mineral resources, including large deposits of petroleum. Since its independence from Britain, in the 1960s, profits from its oil industry — the ninth largest reserves in the world — have brought increased wealth to the nation. Because of its oil and mineral wealth, Nigeria has the potential to be one of the world's most influential countries.

At a 51 percent rate of

literacy, Nigeria has one of the best education programs and highest literacy rates in Africa. It has more than 18 million students in its system, exceeding the school populations of South Africa, France, and even its old colonial protectorate, Britain. Nigeria runs secondary schools, and funds technical colleges, polytechnics, and universities in all of its 30 states.

African-Americans seeking enduring democracy in Nigeria should continue to do so, and

monitor progress, such as the upcoming state-level elections, closely. At the same time, we should keep an eye on business taking place in Nigeria, looking to our own accruals and interest. Nigeria is the largest U.S. Sub-Saharan African trading partner accounting for 20 percent of U.S. exports to the region and 10 percent of U.S. oil imports. Nigeria hosts over four billion dollars of U.S. investments. The country encourages African-American investment and participation in its high potential economic

system. It currently has the world's fifth largest natural gas reserves and a great variety of mineral resources available for exploration including iron, coal, lead, uranium, zinc, zircon, manganese and phosphates.

By taking the initiative now, African-Americans can play *(See Nigeria, Page 16)*

"A CALL TO CONSCIENCE"

FROM: Dorothy R. Leavell, President-National Newspaper Publishers Association

Black Americans can no longer tolerate a "double standard" treatment of Black African Nations by the United States Government. If Jewish Americans can stand up for Israel we can stand up for Africa. Now is the time to let President Clinton know that we African-Americans respectfully recommend responsible engagement with Nigeria and oppose isolation and economic sanctions.

Let us all sign the Petition For Fairness To Nigeria, we will see that they reach the White House during Black Press Week, March 19 - 22, 1997.

NATIONAL COALITION FOR FAIRNESS TO NIGERIA -PETITION DRIVE-

The National Coalition for Fairness to Nigeria was formed in November 1995. The purpose of the organization is to encourage open and objective dialogue among those who write and implement America's foreign policy and to advocate fairness toward Nigeria.

- Whereas Nigeria held local non party elections in March 1996, when 60% of the people voted.
- Whereas Nigeria is holding local party elections in March 1997.
- Whereas Nigeria is scheduled to elect State Governors in the Fall of 1997.
- Whereas Nigeria is planning for a Presidential Election in 1998 to transfer power from military to civilian government.
- Whereas The Black Press of America monitored the elections in March 1996 and March 1997 and will monitor the 1998 Presidential Election.
- Whereas Nigeria has demonstrated its support of the United Nations Peacekeeping efforts in the Congo, India, Pakistan, Lebanon, Bosnia, Angola, Somalia, Rwanda, and Liberia and paid all cost for its Liberian Peacekeeping Operations of 7,000 Nigerian troops and
- Whereas Nigeria has been a stabilizing influence in West Africa and provided leadership on the African continent by supporting Freedom Fighters in Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and reconciliation in Angola and
- Whereas Nigeria has been a reliable and loyal supplier of petroleum to America and has 100 million population that would suffer hardships from the destabilizing effect of economic sanctions.

We, the undersigned do petition President Clinton to lift diplomatic sanctions and reject appeals to impose economic sanctions on Nigeria and to adopt and accept recommendations for a policy of responsible engagement and a FAIRNESS DOCTRINE to help Nigeria as we are helping Israel and the PLO resolve the crisis of the Middle East and promoting a peace process in Bosnia with the Dayton Agreement.

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