

## COMMENTARY

# The world will miss Kwame Ture's voice, presence

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

There have been a few giants in the struggle for human rights and Kwame Ture was one of those giants. When we lost Kwame Ture to prostate cancer a few days ago, we lost a charismatic, articulate brilliant warrior in the struggle for the rights of black people the world over.

Many remember Ture, who was once known as Stokely Carmichael, as the originator of the phrase "black power."

Many remember him as a fearless soldier in the battle for civil rights, first as head of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and then as prime minister of the Black Panther Party.

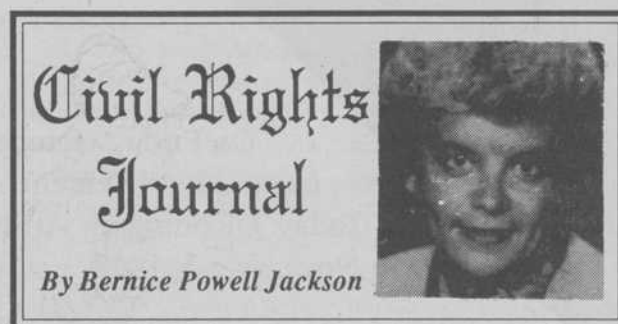
Many remember him as one dedicated to the pan-African vision, which

ultimately caused him to move to Guinea in West Africa and to change his name to honor two of his heroes, Kwame Nkrumah and Ahmed Sekou Toure.

I remember him as the handsome, outspoken voice of young blacks who had become disillusioned with the slow progress of the non-violent civil rights organizations and fed up with what we now would call internalized racism, or the fact that blacks often allowed white Americans to take charge of our organizations.

"We want control of the institutions of the communities where we live and we want to stop the exploitation of nonwhite people of the world," he said in one interview.

Rev. Jesse Jackson, who visited with Ture three times



during the last week of his life, said He was one of our generation who was determined to give his life to transforming America and Africa. . . He was committed to ending racial apartheid in our country.

He helped to bring those walls down." Rev. Jackson also said that Ture died at peace with himself, adding that he wanted to spend his last days in Africa.

The young Stokely Carmichael was a fiery leader

in the early days of the student civil rights movement. He joined the early Freedom Rides, bus trips which were designed to challenge racial segregation on public transportation, and was arrested dozens of times. He said he lost count after 32 arrests, including being held in the notorious Parchman prison in Alabama. He worked as a field organizer for SNCC's voter registration campaign, where they registered 2,600 blacks in

Lowndes County, Alabama, one of the most dangerous counties in the nation for those doing voter registration work.

In 1966 Carmichael was elected national chairman of SNCC and it was shortly thereafter that he coined the phrase "black power" which was beautiful music to many young African Americans' ears, but which was misunderstood and misused by many others. That term "raised the consciousness of people, but it frightened a lot of people," said John Lewis, who preceded Carmichael as chairman of SNCC.

In 1968 Carmichael left SNCC for the Black Panthers, but left them the next year, citing his opposition to their commitment to work with radical white Americans because he believed that such

alliances led to "complete subversion of the blacks by the whites." It was then that he moved to Guinea, to continue his work in a different venue.

A self-proclaimed socialist, Ture traveled the world lifting up black power and condemning the evils of capitalism. He married South African singer and activist Miriam Mikeba, working against apartheid in Africa and in America.

Kwame Ture never backed down and never compromised in his total devotion to his people. Even while sick with cancer, his speeches did not lose their fiery tone or their brilliant critique of racism and economic injustice. Kwame Ture was a warrior for justice. The world will miss his voice, but we treasure his legacy.

## Declarations unlikely to quell AIDS myths among Blacks

*By Earl Ofari Hutchinson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

The dramatic action by Alameda County officials declaring a state of emergency to get federal funds to combat the soaring rate of AIDS/HIV infection in African-Americans should not be a surprise.

How else to call attention to the shocking fact that Blacks make up nearly half of those diagnosed with the disease, though they are only 13 percent of the population.

Alameda County is hardly the only place devastated by the crisis.

According to a recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, African-Americans account for nearly one out of two AIDS related deaths in the United States. By the year 2000 they will make up half of all AIDS cases in the country. This comes at a time when AIDS deaths have dropped among Whites.

With a health crisis that wreaks this kind of carnage, it shouldn't take a state of emergency to get a massive rush of state and federal aid. But it did.

It's certainly easy to blame uncaring politicians, insensitive health officials, public indifference and, of course, racism, for the crisis.

But, these usual suspects aren't the only ones to blame for letting this health problem get out of hand. Many African-Americans ignored it too.

As the AIDS/HIV death toll rose among African-Americans, many Black leaders and organizations kept silent or denied that it was a major problem. Far too many clung tightly to the myth that AIDS was a "White gay disease."

Nation of Islam leader, Louis Farrakhan, some Black writers and rappers publicly called homosexuality a deviant and degenerate lifestyle that threatens Black communities. They relentlessly ridicule

Black males that don't act like "real" men. It was silly and mindless name calling, but it was driven by genuine fears of masculinity and deeply held religious beliefs.

From cradle to grave many Blacks have believed and accepted the gender propaganda that the only real men in American society are White men. In a vain attempt to recapture their denied masculinity, many Black men mirrored America's traditional fear and hatred of homosexuality. They swallowed whole the phony and perverse tough-guy notion of manhood, that real men talked and acted hard, shed no tears and never showed their emotions.

Many Blacks have also listened to countless Black ministers condemn to fire and brimstone any man who dared think about, yearn for or engage in the "godless" and "unnatural" act of having a sexual relationship with another man.

When that belief was challenged, they would quickly flip to the oft-cited line in Leviticus in the Bible that brands the act of men laying down with men as "the abomination."

When pro football star Reggie White caught heavy public flak earlier this year for his reprehensible assault on gays he justified it with biblical lore, and got a quiet chorus of amens from many Blacks. The gospel singing Winans sisters drew heavy fire from gay groups in 1997 for their anti-gay single, "Not Natural", yet there were no major protests from Black communities and the sales of their records leaped.

This heavy layer of myths, lies and stereotypes prevents a frank, rational discussion of the AIDS problem among African-Americans. But, now that the crisis has imploded within Black communities, many are scrambling to take action.

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## Abu-Jamal still unable to get fair shake despite contrary evidence

*By Linn Washington Jr.  
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

The recent Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruling denying a new trial to internationally celebrated death-row inmate Mumia Abu-Jamal is far from an unassailable endorsement of guilt.

In reality, this ruling is further evidence of the politicized perversion of justice characterizing Abu-Jamal's case since his Dec. 9, 1981 arrest where eyewitnesses say police brutally beat him with batons and kicked him in his testicles.

One major flaw in this unanimous ruling is easily evident to non-lawyers. It is the actions of Albert Sabo, the notoriously controversial Philadelphia judge who presided over Abu-Jamal's original 1982 trial and his 1995 appeal hearing.

Despite ugly and obvious examples of Sabo's lack of judicial impartiality in either proceeding, the Supreme Court's recent ruling anointed him as "honorable, fair and competent."

Abu-Jamal's defense team asked Sabo to remove himself from presiding over the 1995 hearing. The team saw bias in Sabo because of his behavior during the original trial and his previous membership in Philadelphia's police union.

Judges should remove themselves from cases where their "continued involvement creates an appearance of impropriety," the Court ruling reminded.

Nevertheless, this ruling declared that Sabo "did not show bias" in 1995 despite acknowledging his "intemperate" actions including jailing and fining Abu-Jamal's lawyers.

The court hid behind legalisms to adopt all of Sabo's findings as its basis for rejecting all 22 issues raised in Abu-Jamal's appeal.

Sabo summarily rejected all issues Abu-Jamal's defense team presented in '95 including compelling new eyewitness testimony indicating his innocence and disturbing new evidence of misconduct by

police and prosecutors that sabotaged any semblance of a fair trial in 1982.

Sabo, for example, refused defense requests in 1995 to issue subpoenas for six police officers who were in the hospital emergency room when Abu-Jamal allegedly made his confession hours after the murder. These officers never reported hearing this admission of guilt.

The defense felt these six officers could help disprove the testimony of two other policemen about the confession.

This duo claimed they heard the confession despite the fact that neither revealed this crucial piece of evidence until two months after the murder.

Sabo's 1995 ruling eagerly embraced this duo's ludicrous claim that being "emotionally" distraught about their colleague's murder caused them to forget Abu-Jamal's confession for 64 days.

They proclaimed it was purely coincidental that each suddenly remembered the confession on the same day they were questioned by a prosecutor in 1982 about a police brutality complaint filed against them by Abu-Jamal.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said racist America chops off the legs of Black people and then blames them for being crippled.

Sabo's rulings in 1995 chopped off the legs of Abu-Jamal's lawyers and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's recent ruling blames Abu-Jamal's lawyers for presenting a crippled defense.

The ruling pontificated that "many of the adverse rulings complained of were necessitated by the defense's repeated attempts to secure evidence which was only 'believed' to exist... we cannot conclude that any of (Sabo's) rulings were legally improper."

It is a maxim of American law that a fair trial is one with an impartial judge.

But, this latest Abu-Jamal ruling proves once again that legal maxims mean nothing when judges manufacture justifications to mask injustices.