Pauulu’s Diaspora
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Introduction

It was May 1975, and Bermudian Black Power organizer Pauulu Kamarakafego had just arrived in Port Vila, Vanuatu. It was not the environmental activist’s first visit to the political condominium then known as the New Hebrides, which lay some thousand miles east of Australia. As an architect of Tanzania’s Sixth Pan-African Congress (6PAC), Kamarakafego had passed through the joint British and French colony the year before to organize a black delegation from Oceania. Seeking black internationalist support in their bitter anti-colonial struggle, the New Hebrides National Party (NHNP) sent representatives to the 1974 Congress. While in Dar es Salaam, the party invited Kamarakafego to Vanuatu to conduct political education among its rural indigenous masses, a black Melanesian people known as the Ni-Vanuatu. Numbering about 100,000 people, they represented 85 percent of the total population and formed the political base of the NHNP. He accepted this invitation without reservation.¹

But after Kamarakafego gave speeches to rural audiences of about two hundred people, British and French colonial administrators moved to deport him from the 4,739 square mile archipelago for “propagating Black Power doctrines.”² From the state’s perspective, his other “crime” was developing environmental projects that enabled the Ni-Vanuatu to make key commodities from natural resources, such as natural soaps from lye, oil from coconuts, salt from the ocean, sweeteners from sugar cane, and cement from calcium carbonate deposits and clay. As a result, their communities could avoid having to buy these products from European and Australian multinational companies.³

British officials recommended using a joint Anglo-French military force to extract Kamarakafego if he forcibly resisted arrest. The British resident minister stressed that the operation needed to be “clean and effective” and that it would require “the total strength available” to handle a possible crowd of five hundred party supporters. They hoped that French gendarmeries
could be placed on standby, and they considered flying in British troops stationed in Singapore or Fiji or Gurkhas from Hong Kong. However, Kamarakafego’s capture was timed to take the party by surprise, and it occurred with little incident. Placed on board a small plane piloted by an Australian official, Kamarakafego was taken to a deserted airstrip. The strip’s surrounding sea, forest, and hills were full of aging Coca-Cola caps and bottles and discarded US weaponry—corroded grenades and bazookas, rusty helmets, and algae-attracting tanks—all lingering reminders that the airstrip had been built by the US military during World War II. Flanked by the British police commissioner and five Ni-Vanuatu officers, Kamarakafego remained here for most of the day. In between verbally dressing down the pilot and police commissioner about their colonial white privileges, he pressed the Ni-Vanuatu officers about their rights for self-determination. Why was the commissioner a person of British descent and not a Ni-Vanuatu? he asked. Why did the country need Australian pilots? He detailed his ability to fly the aircraft as an example of how indigenous New Hebrideans could technologically administer their own country. To the chagrin of the commissioner, this five-foot-six, muscularly built man completely enthralled the officers.

Kamarakafego was eventually flown to Vanuatu’s main airport in Port Vila, where he was to be quickly switched to a commercial flight headed to the United States. This time it was the party’s turn to use surprise. As Kamarakafego’s plane was taxiing to the back of the other aircraft, twenty-six NHNP members “caught the police on their wrong foot.” These protesters drove onto the tarmac, parked, and locked their cars in front of his aircraft. Shouting “Black Power!” they tossed away their car keys. Clashes with police broke out, arrests were made (conveniently, at nightfall), charges were filed, fines were levied, and Kamarakafego was sent on his way back to Bermuda.

However, with the help of two African American women, he miraculously evaded his FBI escort in the Los Angeles airport. Undaunted, he soon obtained a new passport from one his contacts at an African embassy. With the financial help of black activists and artists such as Jeff Donaldson, Mari Evans, Gwendolyn Brooks, Lerone Bennett, Elizabeth Catlett, and Ademola Olugebefola, he headed back to Oceania—this time to Fiji and then to newly independent Papua New Guinea as a rural development consultant for its government.

In the words of Kamarakafego’s political mentor, C. L. R. James, this account may seem “beyond belief.” How did a devout pan-Africanist envi-
ronmentalist from some nine thousand miles across the Atlantic Ocean end up embroiled in a black indigenous struggle for decolonization in Oceania? And why did his presence—and the ideas of Black Power—twist the proverbial knickers of the British and French governments? Remarkably, for Kamarakafego, such improbably wide-ranging, multidimensional, and potent engagement was typical. His fascinating sojourn throughout the African Diaspora is the heart of this book.

Born in the segregated British colony of Bermuda in 1932, Kamarakafego lived an epic life of global activism. He survived demonstrations against Cuba’s United Fruit Company and bouts with the Ku Klux Klan as a student activist in South Carolina’s black freedom struggle. Between 1959 and 1966, he taught biology and environmental studies at Liberia’s Cuttington College and University of East Africa’s campuses in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. He also co-organized Bermuda’s Committee for Universal Adult Suffrage (CUAS, 1961) and became a member of parliament for the island’s Progressive Labor Party (1968). Kamarakafego is perhaps best known for his leadership roles in organizing Bermuda’s First International Black Power Conference (1969) and 6PAC. His versions of Black Power and pan-Africanism included appropriate technology, sustainable development, and environmental justice. As such, his most lasting contribution as a black internationalist was in his dual political and environmental advocacy across the Global South.

Pauulu’s Diaspora explores how Kamarakafego fused his political worldview with his technical expertise in the service of black self-determination. In Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and Liberia he launched rural-based projects that built sustainable homes and water tanks from bamboo. Between 1959 and 1977, he wrote nine structural engineering manuals—How to Build a Watertank from Bamboo and Cement, Rural Agricultural Irrigation with Bamboo Tanks, Rural Electrification, A House for Every Family, Making Oil from Coconut, Making Soap, Rural Sugar Factory, Integrated Coconut Factory, and Back a Yard Garden. Into the twentieth-first century, his international posts included coordinator of the International Network of Small Island Developing States, NGOs, and Indigenous Peoples (INSNI); United Nations consultant on rural development and renewable energy sources; cofounder of the Southern Caucus of NGOs for Sustainable Development; and Consultant on Global Sustainability to the European Economic Community and the Commonwealth Fund Rural Development Program.

Chapter 1 unpacks Kamarakafego’s upbringing in Bermuda, where myths of white supremacy, British colonialism, de facto segregation, black disen-
franchisement, labor exploitation, West Indian migration, black culture, and his family’s Garveyism fueled his political development. By the time Kamarakafego reached secondary school, he often thought about how to best help his family, school, and community. His first foray into direct political action occurred in Cuba, where summer visits to family exposed him to both the Spanish-speaking black world and the exploitation of black migrant laborers working the sugarcane fields in the province of Central Chaparra. He entered the United States to attend New York University well aware of the international scope of racism and segregation.

Chapter 2 spans his time as a college student at Orangeburg’s South Carolina State College, Durham’s North Carolina Central University, and Pasadena’s California Institute of Technology between the years 1954 and 1959. It is focused on radical memories of armed self-defense and political activism in South Carolina. As a college student, Kamarakafego read newspapers and watched news broadcasts about the “injustices and suffering of the people in Africa.” He would ask himself, “How can Me One help to solve the injustices and suffering in Bermuda, Africa, and the world?” He was eventually expelled from South Carolina State College as a result of his involvement in a 1954–55 citywide boycott organized by the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter against White Citizen Council racial violence. This chapter challenges scholarship that has tended to render invisible South Carolina’s black freedom struggle of the mid-1950s.

Chapter 3 explores Kamarakafego’s political activities between the years 1959 and 1961. This was a particularly intense period for him, both politically and personally. He completed his college studies, traveled to Africa for the first time, got married, buried his father, and cofounded Bermuda’s CUAS. While he had been “wearing Africa on his back” for much of his life, his time on the continent was transformative. According to Kamarakafego, he was ceremoniously given the name Pauulu Kamarakafego, “brown-skinned son of Chief Kamara,” while visiting Kpelle relatives in Liberia.

In 1961, he joined a major labor strike in Liberia, forcing him to flee to Ghana. Here, Kwame Nkrumah urged him to continue on to Kenya, where Kamarakafego lived from 1963 to 1967. Chapter 4 explores his time in East Africa, where he assisted Jomo Kenyatta’s new government in “Africanizing” its national science and education programs. While teaching across the University of East Africa, he wrote his first manual on building water tanks with bamboo and cement. In Kenya, he joined an African American expatriate community that included women such as Catherine Mbathi, Ruth Stutts.
Njiri, and Ernestine Hammond Kiano. A fateful 1964 meeting in Kenya with Malcolm X led him to join the Black Power Steering Committee upon his return to the Americas. This chapter also details his involvement in party politics in Bermuda and on the Black Power conferences of Philadelphia (1968) and Bermuda.

Kamarakafego’s Black Power politics were charged by the major political trends sweeping Africa—decolonization, sustainable development, liberation struggles, neocolonialism, sustainable development, universal adult suffrage, and pan-Africanism. Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate his growth into a leading coordinator of Black Power in the Caribbean. In particular, these chapters detail state repression of the movement in the region and Kamarakafego’s botched efforts to organize a 1970 Black Power conference in Barbados.

While thwarted in the West Indies by government forces, the Black Power Committee decided to hold the Congress of African Peoples (CAP) in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1970; Chapter 7 focuses on Kamarakafego’s significant roles in these talks. In 1969, Melbourne’s Aborigines Advancement League invited him to Australia to support its Black Power struggle, which referred to land rights, self-reliance, and sovereignty for indigenous Australians. In return, he invited Bob Maza, Bruce McGuinness, Patsy Kruger, Jack Davis, and Sol Bellear to the talks. This chapter highlights the relationships between Kamarakafego and Australia’s delegation to explore CAP’s international dynamics.12

Chapter 8 is focused on Kamarakafego’s significant role as a catalyst for 6PAC. While held in Tanzania from June 19 to 27, 1974, the organizing of the congress was a monumental five-year process that began as early as Bermuda’s 1969 Black Power conference. Kamarakafego’s environmentalist background was stamped on 6PAC’s tangible aim to establish a pan-African science and technology center in Africa. His global network of black organizers were essential to the congress; through his relationships with activists from Oceania, leaders of Vanuatu’s NHNP participated in the talks. The congress solidified the deepening linkages between Africana liberation struggles and decolonization in Oceania. Chapter 9 explores Kamarakafego’s involvement in the NHNP’s liberation movement, his deportation from the condominium, and his return to Oceania—this time to Fiji. In Fiji, he forged relationships with activists Vanessa Griffen and Claire Slatter; these women were leaders in the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement, the Pacific Women’s Conference, and the Pacific People’s Action Front.
Kamarakafego did not return to Vanuatu until after it achieved political independence in 1980. Chapter 10 details how Griffen and Slatter helped to get him established in Papua New Guinea as the government’s rural development officer. From Papua New Guinea, he became a conduit for global representations of the Black Pacific. His experiences in Melanesia definitively marked his environmental and political work across the Global South for the rest of his career.

The final chapter spans Kamarakafego’s return to the Americas, where he worked extensively as an environmental activist within the framework of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. It details his advocacy of Small Island and Developing States, his coordination of INSNI, and the pan-African movement, and his work around renewable energy, climate change, and sustainable development. By this time, he had returned to Bermuda, where he continued to mentor generations of organizers, artists, and students.

Interventions

*Pauulu’s Diaspora* makes a number of critical historiographical, theoretical, and methodological interventions to the disciplines of African American, Caribbean, US, and African Diaspora history, and Africana, environmental, and Pacific studies. Kamarakafego remains conspicuously absent from book-length historiographies on global Black Power, pan-Africanism, and CAP.\(^\text{13}\) Some studies briefly mention his involvement with the 1969 Bermuda conference, 6PAC, and decolonization in Oceania.\(^\text{14}\) A few notable works seriously engage his global activism, including James Garrett’s illuminating *Black World* article, “The Sixth Pan-African Congress” (1975), Tracey Banivanua Mar’s pathbreaking *Decolonization and the Pacific* (2016), and my own *Black Power in Bermuda* (2009).\(^\text{15}\)

This unique project uses a conceptual framework of what I am calling *Radical Black Diaspora*, which is centered on global black freedom traditions of struggle, power, and self-determination. It engages the interdisciplinary methodological tools of African Diaspora studies and Africana/African American studies. This includes what Joseph E. Harris calls *trans-Africanism*, and his approach to studying the Diaspora from a pan-African perspective centered on dialectic relationships between global black spaces. It also centralizes the praxis and calls for a sense of urgency in using radical narratives to defend exploited communities of color within and beyond academia.\(^\text{16}\)
Elegba, too, makes history. *Radical Diaspora* is particularly focused on black movements that have been marginalized by scholarship. It particularly looks for black Diaspora linkages in unexpected crossroads, including spaces of supposed disconnect between black communities. It borrows from Pacific studies scholar Lea Kauvaka’s notions of “berths,” which she describes as being “real spaces influenced and constrained by geography, holding real memory of journeys, departures, homecomings, and crossings.” For Kauvaka, berths are not roots or routes, but “spaces of reciprocal exchanges that signify, create, and maintain relationships over distance and across time.”

*Radical Diaspora* engages but expands upon Cedric Robinson’s concept of the black radical tradition, particularly in the areas of black women’s activism, non-Anglophone movements, and the Black Pacific. It does so largely through the theme of black internationalism, a term attributed to Jane Nardal’s classic 1928 political essay “Internationalism Noir.” Writing from black Paris, Martinique’s Nardal called for the cultural rise of Afro-Latin and Francophone “New Negro” artists and writers, who, inspired by the New Negro movement, would study the history of the black race. Jane and her sister Paulette Nardal were among the pioneers of Negritude, that powerful black Francophone cultural and political anti-colonial movement of the 1930s.

Since that time, writers—Merz Tate, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Kwame Nkrumah, for example—have long since described black internationalism as an idea—often through the lens of pan-Africanism, Garveyism, socialism, and Black Power. However, the past few decades have witnessed a striking growth of studies implicitly framed under the banner of black internationalism. This scholarship continues to expand the conceptual, spatial, and temporal discourses on black internationalism beyond both the twentieth century and the Atlantic rim, describing how black communities vibrantly raised questions of struggle beyond the boundaries of European colonial and nation-states.

*Radical Diaspora* embraces West, Martin, and Wilkins’s notion of black internationalism as being historically rooted in struggle. Furthermore, it is interested in its routes across a radicalized Global South, or as Tate argued in 1943, the “darker peoples of the world” who questioned the reality of white superiority. Tate’s “darker peoples” included not only the “millions of Negroes” in the United States, the Caribbean, and Central and South America, but also the inhabitants of Africa, Asia, Malaysia, Polynesia, and Melanesia.
Kamarakafego was very much a part of this radical diaspora. A political Anansi, he weaved diverse streams of black consciousness into his efforts to help himself, his family, his community, and African people worldwide. Even as a child, he was a quintessential trickster who consistently outwitted his foes with wit and a wisdom that belied his young age. Much like a spider moving across a web, he traversed along the longstanding networks of black internationalism. But in Kamarakafego’s world, British West Indians in the early twentieth century not only migrated to the familiar nodes of black Diaspora, such as London, Harlem, or Colón. They also unpredictably traveled, like Kamarakafego’s parents, from St. Kitts and Nevis to smaller Atlantic outposts like Bermuda.¹⁹

In Pauulu’s Diaspora, the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Ocean worlds are shown to be and to have been in constant dialog. As Kamarakafego so-journed through southern hemispheric port cities, archipelagos, and travel spaces he forged concrete relationships with artists, exiles, laborers, students, and activist scholars of similar passage. From Bermuda, Kamarakafego and other activists organized 6PAC. Fiji played a similar role for his network in Oceania. Ships, airports, villages, immigration depots, buses, trains, classrooms, railway stations, and street corners linked the Diaspora through crossroads such as Hamilton, Dar es Salaam, and Suva. In these hubs of travel, boundaries of race, power, class, (de)colonialisms, identity, culture, (inter)nationalisms, gender, and ethnicity could be intensified and also transformed. Pauulu’s Diaspora shows how these “mobile metropoles,” berths, and border spaces have historically functioned as dynamic sites of knowledge production, political transformation, black internationalism, and Diaspora creation.

The book presses beyond a conceptual cartography of Africana scholarship and popular memory that has explored pan-Africanism as largely an Atlantic world experience, told through the lens of conference resolutions, speeches, arguments, and debates of heads of state—Africa’s “Big Men.” It recalibrates these boundaries, showing how pan-Africanism was also a grassroots movement that diversely impacted Africa and the Indian and Pacific Ocean worlds.²⁰

Scholarship on pan-Africanism and twentieth-century repatriation to Africa has placed most attention on Ethiopia and Ghana. Given the conceptual and political space that both countries have long occupied in the pantheon of pan-Africanism, this is certainly understandable. Harmonized by the pulsating chords of reggae music, Rastafari’s global trod has ensured that somewhere across the world, the sun is shining on a brightly waving
red, green, and gold flag of Ethiopia. Ghana’s Black Stars are arguably the Diaspora’s favorite African nation to root for during FIFA’s world cup—bested perhaps only by little Nigeria (Brazil). But Kamarakafego’s time in Africa demonstrates how countries like Liberia, Kenya, Uganda, and East Africa beyond Ethiopia were also significant sites of twentieth century pan-Africanism.21

Overshadowed by Liberian president William Tubman’s challenges to Nkrumah’s pan-African vision of a United States of Africa, Liberia is not typically viewed as a crossroads for pan-African activity in the era of African independence movements. However, Kamarakafego’s experiences show that pan-Africanism on the continent was also the muse of students, women, scholar activists, migrants, artists, and working-class laborers in urban and rural spaces. His return to Africa also reminds us how Africa’s children have “reversed sails” and returned to the continent in diverse capacities such as technicians, scientists, revolutionaries, lawyers, doctors, educators, and artists.22

_Pauulu’s Diaspora_ brings necessary attention to 6PAC, which in many ways was a complicated manifestation of decades of organizing by Black Power, pan-Africanist, and Civil Rights activists. In addition to serious ideological differences, other divisive issues plagued delegates as well—egoism, pettiness, and sexism. The interpersonal fallouts that emerged from 6PAC endured for a very long time, as old and new wounds alike were both opened and healed.

Scholarship has largely marginalized the congress’s focus on science and technology, ignored its impact on decolonization in Oceania, only hinted at Kamarakafego’s extensive involvement, and minimized the centrality of black women in the talks. Primarily engaging the perspectives of dissatisfied African American visitors to Tanzania and West Indian activists who were wrongly denied participation, the congress has been projected as a collective failure that did little to transform the political landscapes of the United States and the Americas. This view rightly holds some currency. But this vision of 6PAC has been dominated by the loudly masculinist voices that wrote their oft legitimate and oft unfair critiques of the congress with lyrical wit, in bold fonts, and in all capitals. This includes Amiri Baraka, who denounced the early efforts of the Washington, DC, organizers as abstract “airplane PanAfrikanism” and lambasted Haki Madhubuti for sliding around Tanzania like a reactionary “liberal phantom pouting about being black.” Yet Baraka counted himself among the outnumbered progressive factions who won out at 6PAC through its final declaration to end neocolonialism.23
Pauulu’s Diaspora is more concerned with highlighting the experiences of black women and men whose extensive and global efforts to organize 6PAC have been rendered largely invisible. It echoes emerging scholarship that explores the impact of 6PAC through lenses such as gender, return movements, Tanzanian politics, and state surveillance. It unpacks Kamarakafego’s involvement with 6PAC to explore the relationships between pan-Africanism, appropriate technology, and decolonization in Oceania. In addition, it reveals how governments of the United States, Australia, the West Indies, France, and Britain monitored and harassed its organizers in a collaborative effort to curtail the congress’s global impact. Furthermore, it demonstrates the networked and international relationships between the Pan-African and Black Power movements.

Black women like Sylvia Hill, Geri Augusto, and Australia’s Roberta Sykes were central in organizing 6PAC. These women established their own “networks within networks” to circumnavigate the bureaucracies of male chauvinism. Throughout his life, Kamarakafego formed political and personal relationships with women of such ilk. In addition to the aforementioned women, this global roll call includes Modjeska Simkins, Sonia Sanchez, Septima Clark, Mary M. Townes, Hilda Lini, Patricia Korowa, Queen Mother Audley Moore, Thais Aubry, and Lois Browne Evans. This speaks to the centrality of pan-Africanism’s ideological “daughters” and “mothers”—organizers, theorists, and martyrs alike—on historic black internationalism, Black Power, and the global black radical tradition.

Pauulu’s Diaspora is in conceptual conversation with an emerging subfield of Black Pacifics that is expanding the discourses of the black Diaspora beyond the Atlantic. While not in inherent opposition to the notion of the Black Atlantic, Black Pacifics interrogates the black world’s engagement with Oceania, Asia, and the Pacific coast of the Americas. This is clearly one future of Africana studies.

Kamarakafego’s pioneering roles in the areas of sustainable development, appropriate technology, and environmental justice makes a critical contribution to scholarship that demonstrates the intersections between Africana studies, Black Power, and environmental justice. This includes his manuals, conference papers, resolutions, and proposals on environmental justice that collectively span social activism, science, environmental racism, renewable energy, food security, the “NGO industrial complex,” reparations, and political sovereignty. Pauulu’s Diaspora thus offers much for contemporary green movements for environmental and social justice across the Global South.

Kamarakafego’s political significance as an environmental activist can be
contextualized in the work of Africana environmental activists such as Kenyan Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai and her Greenbelt movement, Amilcar Cabral and the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, and Ken Saro-Wiwa of Nigeria’s Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). A brilliant writer, Saro-Wiwa outspokenly denounced the environmental exploitation of Ogoni lands and waters by multinational petroleum companies like Royal Dutch Shell. He was captured and executed in 1995 in a military operation led by Nigeria’s Rivers State Internal Security Task Force (RSIS). In May 1994, the RSIS noted that Shell’s economic operations would continue to be impossible unless “ruthless military operations [were] undertaken” against MOSOP to allow “smooth economic activities to commence.” The RSIS’s strategies to eliminate Saro-Wiwa included “wasting operations” during MOSOP gatherings, “wasting targets” that cut across various communities and leadership cadres (especially “vocal individuals”), the deployment of four hundred military personnel, “psychological tactics of displacement,” the restriction of visitors—particularly Europeans—to the area, the disbursement of fifty million naira as advanced allowances for officers and logistics, and the pressuring of oil companies to make “prompt regular [financial] inputs.” According to the chairman of the RSIS, surveillance, ruthless operations, and high-level authority were necessary for the effectiveness of the operation, which was to continue until “full economic activities commenced.”

**Black Power**

Black Power was a global phenomenon. It shouted at both imperialism and its own contradictions in many different languages, mother tongues, *lingua francas*, and *slungs*—including Bislama, Kiswahili, English, Ebonics, Patois, Pidgin, French, Yoruba, Creole, Spanish, Kikongo, Tok Pisin, and Portuguese. It grew locks, fades, and Afros and donned dashikis, *ilekes*, and *khimars*. Black Power was black and brown. It sometimes smoked peace pipes, sometimes drank rum, and regularly made love, fought wars, broke hearts, birthed children, built villages, and raised families. It coped with dysfunction. It simultaneously frightened and intrigued white allies. Black Power read books, penned memoirs, loaded Kalashnikovs, shut down universities, set cities on fire, grew food, and painted pictures of liberation. It poured libations, raised hell, called on God, built shrines, portrayed Jesus as black with locks, hailed Haile Selassie, gave *ebo* to ancestors Orisas, Abosua and Laos, and ate “soul” foods, *ital* meals, *laplap*, codfish and potatoes, and yams.
and fufu. Black Power was emotionally intelligent and possessed the logical impatience of young men and women who believed that tomorrow was not promised for the African world.

Black Power was public enemy numero uno. It burst through the airwaves of imperialistic radio stations with the musical scores of Bob Marley, Miriam Makeba, Fela Kuti, Peter Tosh, Steel Pulse, Ilê Aiyê, and Nina Simone. These tracks were stained with the blood of Walter Rodney, Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, Erskine “Buck” Burrows, George and Jonathan Jackson, Beverly Jones, Patrice Lumumba, Steve Biko, and Amilcar Cabral. In response, state intelligence agencies relentlessly infiltrated Black Power groups like cancerous attacks on the blood cells of Fanon, Marley, Nkrumah, Ture, and Kamarakafego.

But what are the roots of the Black Power movement? Are sovereign, historic African nations such as Kush, Kemet, Ghana, Mali, or Great Zimbabwe examples of Black Power? In the afterword to Black Power (1992), Kwame Ture asserted that the mass movement emerged in the 1960s “because of centuries of struggles by Africans everywhere, and that is why it affected Africans everywhere.” If we follow this line of reasoning—that Black Power was forged within a global tradition of African resistance to the ilk of white power (slavery, colonialism, and racism)—are not revolts by the enslaved or maroon communities examples of Black Power? Should not the roll call of the movement include the Amistad uprising, the Haitian Revolution, Bermuda’s Sally Bassett, Jamaica’s Nanny, Brazil’s Palmares and Zumbi, Mexico’s Gaspar Yanga, and Venezuela’s José Leonardo Chirino and Macuquita? This was the position of Guyana’s Walter Rodney, who located the roots of Black Power in African struggles against slavery.

What do we make of Edward Blyden’s nineteenth-century call, “We need some African power, some great center of the race where our physical, pecuniary and intellectual strength may be collected”? What of the radicalism in David Walker’s Appeal? Paul Bogle’s 1865 charge to “Cleave to the Black”? Ida B. Wells’s position on armed self-defense? Menelik II and Taitu’s 1896 victory over Italy at Adwa, Ethiopia? Jane Nardal’s 1928 “Internationalisme noir?” Aimé Césaire’s Discourse on Colonialism? Claude McKay’s If We Must Die? Where do black political organizations like Cuba’s Partido Independiente de Color, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Brazil’s Frente Negra Brasileira (Black Brazilian Front), and the African Blood Brotherhood fit within the genealogy of Black Power?

Is it possible to speak of black power in a general sense, but also give agency to the Black Power movement that emerged in the 1960s? Would it
be appropriate to follow St. Claire Drake’s suggestion for pan-Africanism—that is, to speak of “Black Power” as a movement and “black power” to describe ascendants to the movement more broadly? This is more than an exercise in nomenclature. For while black struggles against white hegemony since the era of slavery were struggles for power, some recognition should be given to the generations of the 1960s that were politically transformed by Black Power’s symbolism and agenda. After all, many of these freedom fighters still suffer from political repression for their efforts—Assata Shakur and Pete O’Neal are still “at large” in Cuba and Tanzania, respectively, and Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Jamil Al-Amin, Sundiata Acoli, and Mutulu Shakur all remain political prisoners.

The mid-1990s to early 2000s witnessed a proliferation of academic scholarship about the Black Power and Black Arts movements; studies on these themes continue to grow in exciting directions. Arguably, this initial thrust was largely the work of diverse scholars who were responding to myriad historical, social, genealogical, political, and cultural stimuli from within and outside of the academy. A fruitful project would be to delineate the broader contexts in which this community emerged. Collectively, this group had been engaging the ideas of Black Power at variant degrees for decades—via family and community members, educators, political prisoners, and Black Power activists themselves.

But whether raised in the movement or not, these scholars were tremendously influenced by the publication, recirculation, popularization, and active study of Black Power literature in the late 1980s and 90s, some as high school and undergraduate students. These books included Horace Campbell’s *Rasta and Resistance* (1985); Amy Jacques Garvey’s *Marcus Garvey’s Philosophy and Opinions* (1986); Assata Shakur’s autobiography (1987); *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1987); Black Classic Press’s editions of Bobby Seale’s *Seize the Time* (1991) and George Jackson’s *Blood in My Eye* (1996); and Walter Rodney’s *Groundings With My Brothers* (1990). This occurred in a context of thriving black book stores, screenings of Julie Dash’s *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) and Haile Gerima’s *Sankofa* (1993), bootleg VHS copies of Sam Greenlee’s *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* and *The Battle of Algiers*, study groups around the writings of bell hooks and Cornell West, the health and self-care regimen of Dr. Africa’s *Nutricide*, ital food, Queen Afua and Dr. Sebi, community organizing around police brutality and mass incarceration (Rodney King and Amadou Diallo), Africana studies prison programs, African dance, drum and Capoeira Angola circles, Farrakhan mix tapes, Sizzla’s *Praise Ye Jah* (1997), Sister Souljah and Khalid Muhammad
on the Donahue Show, African street festivals, the writing and reading of letters from political prisoners, poetry collectives, demonstrations against apartheid in South Africa, questions of the US invasions of Grenada and Panama, the threat of nuclear war, popular culture (Hip-Hop's Dead Prez, X-Clan, and Nas; Neo-Soul's Erykah Badu; Reggae's Buju Banton, Garnett Silk, and Capleton; and Dancehall's Supercat, Lady Saw, Beenie Man, and Bounty Killer), immigration discrimination, black heritage tours to Kemet, the war with drugs against black and brown communities, student campus activism, the O. J. Simpson verdict, the Afrocentric movement's lecture circuits, VHS cassettes and CDs, the refashioning of locks and wearing of natural hair, the reinvigoration of traditional and transformed Africana spiritual systems (largely Rasta, Christianity, Islam, Nation of Gods and Earths, Lucumi, the National of Islam, African Hebrew Israelites, Ifa, Vodun, and Akan traditions), the braids of Venus and Serena Williams, Tiger Wood's "Cablinsasian" comment, Brazil's FIFA 2002 World Cup victory over Germany, the 1995 Million Man and subsequent Women and Family marches, September 11 and its political and social aftermaths, and political comedy expressed through HBO's Def Comedy Jam, Martin, BET's Comic View, and Comedy Central's Chappelle's Show. These broader phenomena influenced how this generation's ideas about Black Power eventually turned into term papers, theses, dissertations, articles, and now award-winning books. This was certainly the context in which I met Kamarakafego in Bermuda in 1997.

The immense personal, political, and community investment in these relationships by academics has led to important and contentious definitional debates about the movement from what appeared to be two distinct but certainly overlapping orientations—mainstream academic and activist scholar. The mainstream approach is based on ideological inclusion, in which Black Power represents a wide spectrum of black politics from the conservative to the radical, all placed into a political calabash of “black people wanting the same thing but by different methods.” But in this light, then, Black Power, very much like putty, can be molded, shifted, and baked to suit the needs, ideological positions, and perspectives of the writer, discipline, and contemporary politics. This certainly helped give Black Power academic and professional currency, and scholarship on the movement has been uncomfortably in vogue for some time. Still, as historian Brenda Plummer warns, “If Black Power is to mean anything, it cannot mean everything.”

Indeed, there is something to be said about Black Power’s conceptual flexibility that facilitated its wildfire-like spread across the world. However, one could argue that its global advocates were endeared to certain
fundamental ideas: black political and economic self-determination, global south solidarity, a revolutionary agenda, the legitimization of armed self-defense, pan-Africanism as an identity, embracement of political culture, environmental justice, a class analysis, freedom for political prisoners, and the overthrow of white power, capitalism, imperialism, and empire.

In contrast to inclusion, these “fundamentals” form the bedrock of activist scholar approaches to studying Black Power. These perspectives caution against the marginalization of Black Power discourses on revolution in favor of its supposed more “pragmatic” aims. This includes questioning attempts to link the movement to individual black-progress narratives within systems of white power. Concerned with the relevance of Black Power to contemporary brown and black movements, activist scholar approaches are particularly sensitive to the mainstream expansion of COINTELPRO-like surveillance and the plight of political prisoners. Whether appropriate or not, the activist-scholar approach is also suspicious of Black Power writers who appear to have little personal commitment to the movement’s tenets or to social justice in general.

The battlefront for some of these tensions occurred within Black Power studies, which historian Peniel Joseph founded as an academic subfield of American and African American history circa 2001. Among other concerns, the subfield’s US-centric framework largely dismissed an existing and growing canon of literature on Black Power’s global dimensions. Its argument asserting Black Power’s “deepening of American democracy” actually encouraged myopia in regard to the movement’s diasporic influences, indigenous stimuli, critical moments, key personalities, questions about gender, organizations, repression, challenges, pitfalls, successes, and legacies.

This book is in conversation with existing and emerging projects on global Black Power that, intentionally or not, challenged this conceptual invisibility. In 2007, V. P. Franklin edited a *Journal of African-American History* special edition on New Black Power studies, which sought to address the national, international, and transnational perspectives of Black Power. In 2009, Bermuda’s Pauulu Kamarakafego Grassroots Collective held a conference to honor the fortieth-year anniversary of the 1969 Bermuda conference. In 2010, the University of the West Indies, St, Augustine, held an International Black Power conference in Trinidad. A year later, the Association for the Study of the World Wide African Diaspora (ASWAD) held a conference on African liberation and Black Power at the University of Pittsburgh. Exploring Black Power as a global phenomenon, ASWAD sought to interrogate the antecedents of Black Power from the seventeenth century and
spanned questions of culture, sexuality, environment, and ideology across Africa, the Americas, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia.⁶⁶

_Pauulu’s Diaspora_ defines Black Power as a global, black internationalist, anti-colonial, inherently pan-African, and revolutionary movement that sought political, economic, and cultural self-determination from systems of white hegemony such as (neo)colonialism and imperialism, even when these systems were represented by black heads of state. It shares this perspective with Kwame Ture, who stressed that black visibility in political offices was not Black Power. He connected Black Power to Global South liberation struggles, defining America’s black community as being an internal colony of the United States. His mentor Nkrumah defined Black Power as being “part of the vanguard of world revolution against capitalism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism.” Writing in 1968, Amy Jacques Garvey linked the movement to Marcus Garvey and the UNIA of the early twentieth century. Rodney saw Black Power in the West Indies as representing a “break from imperialism,” the “assumptions of power by the Black masses,” and “the cultural reconstruction of the islands in the image of the Blacks.”³⁷

This is in contrast to Peniel Joseph’s _Dark Days, Bright Nights_, which asserted that Barack Obama’s presidency was an “example of black power once thought inconceivable.” However, from a global perspective, Obama’s presidency reflected a very familiar political situation that Black Power had in fact rebelled _against_ across the world. This included clashes with neocolonial black leaders, heads of state, police officers, and soldiers in the Caribbean and Africa (and in the United States). Joseph also portrayed the political agitation of both Ture and Malcolm X as a “pragmatic” attempt by Black Power to transform American democracy. But this is problematic, because for the wider Black Diaspora, Malcolm X and Ture largely represented black revolution _against_ American imperialism.³⁸

_Pauulu’s Diaspora_ cautions against “US-centric” appraisals of Black Power that render its global spread as either a hodgepodge of sporadic, fractured, and inevitably failing moments or a collection of loose appropriations of Black Panther symbolism. Such conceptual invisibility surrounding Black Power’s global roots and routes means that all too often, explorations of Black Power’s internationalism only go as far as the travel logs and intelligence documents of US-based activists and organizations take them. But this book hopes to go further than this. It calls for a paradigm shift in the study of Black Power. The global narratives of Black Power should not be “stuffed” into a US framework; Black Power in the United States should be read within this global context. Put another way, the book’s
critical intervention is that the movement must be globally contextualized to holistically grapple with and understand its collective challenges, international criminalization, and aborted transformative possibilities to the (post) colonial state worldwide.

Kamarakafego’s deportation by the French and British governments from New Hebrides is an apt example of how state hostility to Black Power needs to be understood beyond the conceptual boundaries of the desks of J. Edgar Hoover, his “look out fetishes,” and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) COINTELPRO. It is a story that includes the offices of the United States Department of State, National Security Agency, and Central Intelligence Agency (and its domestic programs like Project Merrimack and Project Resistance); Britain’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), M-15, M-16, and Scotland Yard; Australia’s Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO); the Canadian Royal Military Police; France’s Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure; and the Caribbean’s Special Branches. Along these very lines, Pauulu’s Diaspora examines the role that US, British, Canadian, Dutch, French, Australian, and West Indian governments played in the surveillance and suppression of Black Power. Supported by a body of work about the repression of Black Power, it suggests that we internationalize our studies of COINTELPRO to better understand the repression of Black Power within a context of the global suppression of black radicalism.39

Kamarakafego’s Black Power politics of the late 1960s were precluded by years of agitation against segregation, racism, labor exploitation, and (neo) colonialism across Africa and her Diaspora. As such, Pauulu’s Diaspora engages literature on Black Power that has redefined perspectives that suggest that where and when the Civil Rights movement ends, Black Power begins. While Sundiata Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang demonstrated the pitfalls of this symbiotic long view approach, this study is informed by works that locate the routes of Black Power with black internationalism of the inter-war era and post–World War II African American engagement with Global South anti-colonial struggles. For example, David Austin, Kenyatta Hammond Perry, and Robbie Shilliam demonstrate how Black Power was globally connected with black Diasporic migration to Canada, Britain, and New Zealand, respectively.40

While Pauulu’s Diaspora clearly intersects with Black Power across the Americas, Oceania, Africa, and Europe, it is not a complete narrative of the movement. To tell this massive story of an unapologetic global black rebellion that torched the world would be a daunting but fruitful task. While the most ambitious and far reaching attempt appears to be Rhonda Williams’s
groundbreaking Concrete Demands, the writing of such a monograph is well overdue.

Kamarakafego’s time in Africa only hints at the full scope of Black Power in the continent. This would certainly include its dynamics in Algeria and Tanzania, Stephen Biko and South Africa’s Black Consciousness movement, Amilcar Cabral’s fight against Portuguese colonialism in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, and Nkrumah’s time in Guinea. As in the Caribbean, it was often fallaciously claimed that African countries with African leaders was, in fact, Black Power. For example, in Mobutu Sese Seko’s neocolonial Zaire in 1974, one billboard in Kinshasa boasted, “Le pouvoir noir se cherche partout, mais il s’exerce effectivement au Zaire”—Black Power is sought everywhere, but it is already realized here in Zaire. Yet in Africa, Black Power reflected a struggle against neocolonialism. Fela Kuti, who became a Black Power advocate after being introduced to black radical literature by African American Sandra Isadore, decried the colonial mentality of African leadership. Kuti, whose music referenced Black Power, referred to the Nigerian government’s attacks on himself, his mother, and his comrades against South African apartheid.41

Mapping Kamarakafego’s evolution into an international Black Power organizer raises fundamental questions about the movement’s definitions, temporality, and geographic scope. It gives us some sense of how Black Power organically filtered throughout the world, convincingly demonstrating that the movement globally was more than just a sidebar of the US-based movement. It shows how Black Power’s global emergence was more than a spontaneous response to television broadcasts of Black Panthers—it was impacted by local, national, regional, and international factors, such as Global South liberation struggles in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania. Physical contact between intentional conduits of Black Power—often from the Caribbean—facilitated the movement’s growth and spread of ideas, literature, and material culture. Kamarakafego’s transcontinental activism dating back to the early 1950s helps to reposition the movement’s roots before the 1960s. He served as a direct bridge between elder pan-Africanists—such as Nkrumah, Amy Jacques Garvey, and C. L. R. James—and an emerging generation of Black Power organizers; this demonstrates the relationship between Black Power and the pan-African movement. His involvement in decolonization movements—as in Oceania and Bermuda—highlights the movements’ anti-colonial nature. Kamarakafego’s understanding of Black Power reflected praxis of ecological self-determination. His environmental activism well into the 1980s reveals another intersection of the movement,
asking, What can we learn by analyzing the relationships between sustainable technology and environmental justice across the Diaspora?

**Methodology**

*Pauulu’s Diaspora* is constructed via the exhaustive worldwide trail—paper, phonetic, and technological—that Kamarakafego left, both consciously and unwittingly, of his global experiences. This includes an immense trove of interviews, correspondence, photographs, newspapers, print and digital media, oral testimonies, books, scientific manuals and proposals, organizational reports, conference proceedings, and government surveillance. Numbers of Kamarakafego’s communities, comrades, friends, and family members recall his political and environmental work across the Global South. His physical footprint remains in places such as Vanuatu, where a few of his water tanks and a home that he built (albeit no longer functional) are still standing in Mele and Pentecost Island.

Despite his relative invisibility in scholarship on Black Power and pan-Africanism, Kamarakafego was quite visible to the state authorities that kept tabs on his activities across the world. This included the US Justice Department Intelligence Evaluation Committee’s 1972 report on the “Interrelationship between Black Power Organizations in the Western Hemisphere,” which considered Ture, Kamarakafego, and Rosie Douglas to be the most significant coordinators of Black Power across the Caribbean region.42 A 2013 Freedom of Information Act request revealed that the FBI holds approximately 1,500 pages of surveillance documents related to Kamarakafego, who also shows up notably in the archives of the CIA, Britain’s FCO, ASIO, French and British residencies in Vanuatu, Bermuda’s Intelligence Committee, and the State Department of the United States.

Gerald Horne has long since called for scholars of African American history to adopt a “transnational research agenda,” one that utilizes archives across the globe. Indeed, Horne’s prolific body of work has singlehandedly demonstrated the far-stretching reach of black internationalism across the world.43 Ambitiously following his charge, this project required travel to national, local, and private archives and special collections located in the United States, Bermuda, Canada, Britain, Australia, Vanuatu, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji. It was an unforgettable challenge to conduct research in Oceania. Traveling by fishing boat, yacht, microbus, eight-seat prop plane, and on foot, a 2014 National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship allowed me to conduct extensive interviews with villagers, artists,
family members, scholars, musicians, and political leaders who had close relationships with Kamarakafego.

Kamarakafego’s invaluable autobiography, *Me One: The Autobiography of Dr. Pauulu Kamarakafego*, is the only full-length work based on his life. It was indispensable in completing the current text, which is also buttressed by formal interviews that I conducted with Kamarakafego in 2004, numerous conversations that we had between 1997 and 2007, and personal recordings of his lectures in Bermuda and Washington, DC. Much of my time writing this book was spent clarifying and painstakingly reconstructing Kamarakafego’s political life from *Me One’s* plethora of uncaptioned but telling photographs, imprecise dates of events, and references to scores of individuals, political movements, and geographical spaces that scholarship deems to be obscure. For sure, this colossal task has certainly produced its own imprecisions.

Indeed, despite its heavy use of “the imperial archive,” *Pauulu’s Diaspora* is in consistent conversation with and critique of Kamarakafego’s radical memories of his upbringing in Bermuda in the 1930s until his passing in 2007. These are largely told through *Me One*. As in the case of his involvement in South Carolina’s black freedom struggle in the 1950s, these memories often clash with narratives mined from traditional archives. But how do we find balance between truths, experiences, and reality?

All that being said, this book is not a biography. Kamarakafego crossed paths and formed relationships with global trailblazers similar to himself, indicating how black internationalism functioned within a globalized, multigenerational, networked, gendered, and often contested ideological space, replete with black women and men who traversed the Diaspora as activists, revolutionaries, cultural workers, students, teachers, scientists and even agents provocateurs. Oftentimes, Kamarakafego drops into the background of the text as other political personalities and movements that he engaged move to the forefront. This is intentional. In essence, the book is a political narrative of twentieth-century black internationalism logistically anchored by Kamarakafego’s globe-trotting activism. It is a journey that begins in Bermuda.