Pauulu Kamarakafego’s passport spoke many languages. It was May 1970, and over the past eight months, it had been opened, stamped, rejected, and photocopied by immigration officials across the globe. A tireless ally, it documented Kamarakafego’s efforts to organize both the first and second International Black Power conferences in Bermuda and Barbados on behalf of the National Black Power conference. It now found itself in the anxious hands of immigration officers stationed at Barbados’s national airport. Kamarakafego was being expelled from the Caribbean country in response to his Black Power activities.

Barbadian prime minister Errol Barrow had initially agreed to host the Black Power conference that July. But now, with the conference a mere two months away, he rescinded this offer in a meeting in his office. Watching Kamarakafego masterfully unleash a barrage of expletives at Barrow and his deputy, Cameron Tudor, was New York’s Sonny Carson, who was there to “keep things calm.” Instead, the police were now escorting both of these men to the airport. But where there is smoke, there is usually fire. Resting somewhere in between the conservative demeanor of Trinidad and Tobago’s Eric Williams and the political shrewdness of Guyana’s Forbes Burnham, the infallible Barrow did have his reasons to reverse his decision.

Only days before, Kamarakafego and Carson had picked up Kwame Ture from the same airport where they now stood. Ture had been invited to Barbados to speak at a People’s Progressive Movement (PPM) rally. He had just flown in from Guyana, where his speeches on Black Power called for revolutionary violence, bloodshed, and guerilla struggle. His trip to Barbados was thus in question. Weeks earlier, Trinidad and Tobago’s Black Power leaders Mackandal Daaga and Clive Nunez were denied entry into so-called Little
England, joining Ture and Kamarakafego on the prohibited-persons list of Black Power activists that was being circulated among immigration officials across the West Indies. But Barrow had overturned these bans; his cabinet had passed the order in his absence. His ministers included those, like Tudor, who claimed that “Black Power was as irrelevant to the Caribbean as White power was to Sweden.” Barrow had to fight for a compromise, which included the passing of a Public Order Bill that would allow Ture entry if he agreed to not make any public appearances or speeches.

Upon his arrival at the airport, Ture was asked to sign a document stating that he would not speak publicly. He signed it, “In order to free OUR land, we will have to KILL,” Stokely Carmichael.” Soon after, he was met by Kamarakafego and Carson, and they approached an ostensibly white-owned taxi. This prompted a group of black cabbies to hail, “Why are you, who stand up for the colored mass, traveling in a white-owned car?” Duly admonished, Kamarakafego, Carson and Ture changed taxis. Black Power could not have asked for a better way to start a Sunday night.

This small shift in plans triggered alarms among the Special Branch officers who were closely monitoring the group. British police commissioner Wilfred Parmer lurked close by with three riot squads on hand, prepared to swarm the PPM’s rally at Independence Square and arrest Ture on stage. The group instead went to the home of Lucius Cools. Cools was the father of Anne Cools, one of the students charged in Montreal’s Black Power sit-ins. He was also related to Bobby Clarke, the local coordinator of the second international conference. Clarke was also very influential among Bridgetown’s “young and unemployed.”

The group had their own meeting and was eventually joined by about seventy people who had attended the PPM rally. Palmer had placed the house under close surveillance. His officers tried to record all who entered the house by photograph and name. His informants allegedly heard Ture state that Barbados was lethargic and that blood had to run. The first target was to be Palmer, followed by any others who hindered Black Power. This included “white-hearted” Barrow, who also needed to be murdered. Action was needed to draw the police out in Bridgetown, leaving Clarke to lead an attack on the police station. The Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, Cable and Wireless, and the telephone company were to be taken over. The lessons of Trinidad and Tobago needed to be learned—Barbados stood in the way of the Caribbean Black Power revolution.

Ture’s “vitriolic” speech was passed to Barrow. Coupled with the fact that
Trinidad and Tobago was still smoldering from its massive Black Power uprising, Ture’s alleged calls for violence against him were likely part of Barrow’s decision to ban the conference. Days later, he presented Kamarakafego and Carson with a long list of demands for the conference, claiming that this was due to external foreign pressures that would negatively impact the tourist industry.\(^7\)

Kamarakafego promptly informed the *Bermuda Recorder* that the government of Barbados had issued demands to the Black Power Conference that “in preservation of its autonomy” were impossible to agree to. This included stating that they could not exclude anyone from attending (namely, white persons could participate), that conference participants could not attend or speak at any meetings or assemblies, could not address educational institutions, and could not make any video or tape recordings.\(^8\) He found it “a matter of grave concern” that no black government in the Caribbean had “the freedom or power to open its facilities to our Conference.” He understood that the foreign American, British, French, and Dutch colonial interests were fearful of even the least expression of Black Power. They had joined forces with white Caribbean bankers, hotel owners, sugar planters, bauxite company executives, and black bourgeois governments in the region to block the conference. This collective claimed that acts of protests in the Caribbean had escalated since Bermuda’s Black Power conference. Kamarakafego linked this agitation to decades of anticolonial resistance, including the 1920s and 30s activism of Marcus Garvey and George Padmore. For these reasons, it was clear that that conference could not be held in the Caribbean.\(^9\)

At the time, Chuck Stone was chair of the National Conference on Black Power. He and the Executive Committee of the national conference remained committed to holding a meeting that year. Hence, in September 1970, with the critical support of Amiri Baraka, the conference took place in Atlanta, Georgia, as the Congress of African Peoples (CAP). This chapter details Kamarakafego’s global efforts to organize the Barbados conference, and describes how the road to CAP passed through Africa, Oceania, Europe, and the Caribbean.

**Black Power and Pan-Africanism**

The initial idea for the Barbados meeting had emerged at Bermuda’s 1969 Black Power Conference. Here, according to the CIA, considerable attention was given to “long-range plans for international coordination of the
Black Power movement.” Such enthusiasm led to plans not only for the 1970 Barbados conference, but also for a Sixth Pan-African Congress (6PAC).10

Cyril Lionel Robert James, a longtime mentor to Kamarakafego, was central to these discussions. While best remembered for his classic work on the Haitian Revolution, *Black Jacobins*, James’s critical relationship with the Black Power movement deserves much more scholarly attention. James remained in Bermuda for about a week after the conference. During that time, he and Kamarakafego had a “long and fruitful” discussion about the global status of black people. Kamarakafego raised the idea of a subsequent conference, 6PAC, and the need for participation from black people who had historically not been represented at such meetings. This included black communities of Oceania and the South and Central Americas. James instructed Kamarakafego to use his contacts to find out what black communities in those areas thought about Black Power and a 6PAC. This launched a five-year process of organizing and collaboration with activists from around the world.11

In late July 1969, Kamarakafego left Bermuda on a global tour to organize both meetings (his activities surrounding 6PAC will be discussed in the next chapter). He traveled through London and Paris, where he met with Aimé Cesaire. At James’s suggestion, Kamarakafego then traveled to Guinea to seek the consul of Nkrumah, who he had not seen since 1962.12

Nkrumah had lived in Conakry since Ghana’s military coup of 1966. There is much warranted visibility surrounding the relationship between Nkrumah and Kwame Ture. But Nkrumah influenced, was visited by, and corresponded with scores of Black Power activists and groups during his time in Guinea. This dynamic of Nkrumah’s, as well as his writings about Black Power, have not been sufficiently unpacked by Black Power literature. Nkrumah’s contacts ranged from little-known groups and personalities, such as Washington, DC’s, Blackman’s Volunteer Army of Liberation, Pharaoh Alumphaa Nkongo, and Los Angeles’s James 34 X, who warned Nkrumah to “be on the lookout for the CIA.”13 Nkrumah’s correspondents also included known personalities such as Shirley Graham Du Bois and James and Grace Lee Boggs.

In May 1968, London-based Nigerian Obi Egbuna introduced himself to Nkrumah by letter. Egbuna urgently requested a personal audience with Osagyefo, describing himself as a “true Africanist” and an “invincibly strong believer in Nkrumah.” He asked to spend two weeks in Guinea to work on a play that he was writing, *The Trials of Kwame Nkrumah*. Egbuna also sought counsel about his revolutionary activities; he was the president of
the Universal Colored People's Association (UCPA), the new organ of Black Power in Britain. He stressed that he understood what it meant to be a “philosopher in chains” and misunderstood by the people that he was fighting for.14

Egbuna and the UCPA were central players in Black Power's spread in Britain. In 1966, Egbuna toured the United States while visiting SNCC. In London, Black Power “came to dinner” in 1967, when Egbuna, Ture, and James were keynote speakers at the Dialectics Liberation conference. It never left. The movement rooted itself within urban black communities such as Brixton and Notting Hill—the backyard of Trinidadian Communist and founder of West Indian Carnival Claudia Jones. Spearheaded by West Indian and African migrant communities, Black Power refused to bow to police brutality, white violence, and Britain’s racist education system. Placed under constant pressure by British police officers, Black Power rallied around Caribbean restaurants, Rocksteady dancehalls, Rasta, and the historic hub of black radical speech making, Hyde Park. As it had been elsewhere in the world, the movement was an emphatic response to racism, police brutality, the criminalization of black youth, white xenophobia toward black immigration and culture, racist housing practices and social discrimination, an education system that denied West Indian and African heritage, and Britain's support of apartheid and neocolonialism in Africa.

After leaving the UCPA, Egbuna formed London's Black Panther Party in June 1968. According to Scotland Yard, the London Black Panthers swiftly grew to about eight hundred members, most of whom were Nigerian. According to the police, the militant party used extreme violence against people who disagreed with its views. It produced a booklet, Black Power Speaks, and met every Sunday at Hyde Park, where it “baited and subsequently assaulted the police and members of the public.” In response to these activities, on June 9, 1968, a Black Panther Party member, Maxwell Warren, was arrested and charged with wounding a police officer. Egbuna allegedly ordered the party to the police station in an effort to break Warren out.15

Displeased by the arrest, Egbuna handwrote a document, “What to do when cops lay their hands on black men at the Speakers Corner.” The Nigerian playwright found it a disgrace that “eight cats in police uniforms” were able to kidnap, club, and dump in a Black Maria van three black men, and then take them to their “police Klan Headquarters” while hundreds of black men stood watching. Egbuna felt that the police were able to do it not because these men were cowards, but because they did not know what to do in response. His pamphlet thus gave a plan of action for the next time it
happened. This included having all black men present to surge forward like a “black steamroller” and beating the cops until the men were freed. For Egbuna, it made no sense to beat up a cop unless you wanted to “beat him unconsciousness or dead.” Hence, at the end of any such rescue mission, no single cop could be left standing on his feet and therefore able to identify anyone.  

Allegedly, Egbuna sought to place the document in *Black Power Speaks*. Two other Black Panthers, Nigerian Peter Martin and Fijian Gideon Ketuuni Turagalevu Dolo, accompanied him to the printer, where Dolo asked for two thousand copies. Instead, the printer informed the police, claiming that he heard Egbuna tell them that the party was going to be “armed to the teeth” and planned to learn judo, karate, and how to use shotguns. He also claimed that Egbuna said that Nkrumah was going to give him funds for the party when they met in Guinea. In July, Dolo, Egbuna, and Martin were all arrested and tried and spent several months in prison. This was days after Egbuna returned from Guinea.

While in Guinea, he recorded on a cassette what would become Nkrmah’s historic “Message to the Black People of Britain.” Egbuna introduced the message: “[This] recording is the first of its kind, it is a message to the black peoples of Britain from Conakry by Osagyefo by president Kwame Nkrumah. We are recording it from his villa. Any noise you might here it is the sea, singing like a whispering, as it pays its respect to the overland.”

Nkrumah greeted “members of the Black Panther Movement, and all [his] black brothers and sisters, comrades and friends from the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Latin America and all corners of the Third World.” He stated that Black Power was the power of the four-fifths of the world population that had been “systematically damned” into a state of underdevelopment by capitalism, colonialism, and neocolonialism. Black Power was the sum total of the economic, cultural, and political power in which the black world needed to have in order to achieve survival in a highly developed technical society, and in a world ravaged by imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, and fascism. Black Power was the “struggle for the possession of the economic, cultural, social and political power which . . . in common with the oppressed and the exploited of the earth,” black people needed to have in order to “stampede and overthrow the oppressor.”

Black people were in Britain not by chance or by choice; they were there because of British colonialism and the strangling of their home countries by British neocolonialism. They lived in the “citadel of British imperialism” and thus had a significant role to play in the international black revolutionary
movement. Just as how in Nkrumah’s days in London, the black community organized the Colored Men’s Association, today, Black Power produced groups like Michael X’s Racial Adjustment Action Society and Egbuna’s Black Panther movement. These two organizations needed to “mobilize, educate, and re-awaken the black people of Britain to the full realization of their revolutionary potential.” The discrimination, prejudice, and racial hostility that blacks experienced in Britain went on in the United States, apartheid South Africa, Latin America, Australia, Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique, and Portuguese Guinea. Nkrumah argued that what was “important is not where you are but what you do”—black people needed to fight wherever they found themselves, whether home in Africa or in the Diaspora. Finally, he stated that he was not in exile but at home in Conakry, for he would be at home “in any part of the black world.” Nkrumah accepted a request to be a patron of Black Power, and he stood behind Black Power’s “revolutionary endeavors.” In return, he asked that the black people of Britain answer his “call when the clarion sounded.”

Egbuna carried the cassette back to Britain. He transcribed and edited this statement, which was later published in Nkrumah’s *The Struggle Continues*. In August 1970, he sent Nkrumah a review copy of his heartfelt *Destroy This Temple: Black Power Speaks in Britain*, which he wrote while incarcerated. However, Nkrumah felt that his discussion of race and sexuality would harm the African revolution, the Black Power movement, and his personal reputation.

By this time, Black Power in Britain had spread across London, Manchester, and Birmingham via groups like the South East London Parents Organization. Panthers like Darcus Howe, Jamaica’s Olive Morris, Trinidad and Tobago’s Althea Jones-Lecointe, and poet Linton Kwesi Johnson rose to the occasion. In March 1970, sixteen Panthers were arrested during a demonstration at the US embassy in support of Bobby Seale. In August 1970, they led a protest against racism and the aggressive policing of the West Indian Mangrove restaurant. When a clash with the police broke out, the “Mangrove Nine” were charged with assault, possession of an offensive weapon, and incitement to riot. Also in August, Panthers fought off police during a raid of one of its social events at the Oval House, leading to the arrest of Jones-Lecointe and others.

Nkrumah discussed Black Power extensively with James and Grace Lee Boggs. In 1968, the couple informed him that the Black Panther Party was the organization that had come closest to having a program that black youth could identify with, but they felt that the size of its membership was
increasing more rapidly than its “politically educated and disciplined cadres.” While there was a growing militancy in African American youth, the Boggses felt that the weaknesses in the movement were emerging as a result of a “worship of success,” illusions about overnight revolution, a tendency to envision “revolutionary war only in terms of Western-style shoot outs,” and an “unconscious racism which found it hard to accept serious theoretical-political leadership from Africans or Afro-Americans.” The Boggses felt that some members of the movement needed to comprehend that its military wing needed to be politically minded—the best guerilla fighter was a “politically educated one.” They hoped that Nkrumah’s writings could help in these efforts. They felt that the Panthers needed to come to grips with these fundamental questions—the cult of personality, the inseparable relationship between political theory and militancy, and illusions about overnight success. They also argued that fratricidal conflict had broken out at the New Jersey and Philadelphia Black Power conferences. The Boggses called for Nkrumah to publish pamphlets relating the African revolution to the Black revolution in the United States.

Nkrumah was also critical of the Black Power movement in the United States. He felt that the movement was adopting tactic after tactic without an overall strategy and thus could not ultimately succeed in seizing political control of the white power structure in the United States. According to Nkrumah, Black Power needed to organize scientifically through a vanguard party, and African Americans had to improve the conditions of blacks in the United States, embarrass the US power structure, and volunteer to participate “in the armed phase of the African revolution on African soil.” He also asserted that the African revolution was “indissolubly linked” to the black revolution in the United States. Nkrumah felt that the impact of Black Power did have imperialist and neocolonial structures trembling. His contemporary Amy Jacques Garvey certainly agreed, asserting that Black Power struck fear in the hearts of whites. Nkrumah argued that the only way to achieve African liberation was through armed struggle and believed that Black Power’s emergence had made the African American freedom struggle “militant and armed.”

Nkrumah saw Black Power as a “daughter” of pan-Africanism. His 1968 pamphlet, The Specter of Black Power, stated that the movement had descended on the world like a “thunder cloud flashing its lighting.” Black Power had emerged from the “ghettoes, swamps, and cotton-fields of America” to now haunt its streets and legislative councils. After historicizing Black Power in the struggles of the black world since the Atlantic slave trade, he centered
it in the 1965 urban uprising of Watts. For Nkrumah, Black Power was “part of the vanguard of world revolution against capitalism, imperialism and neo-colonialism that had enslaved and exploited oppressed peoples.” Black Power was part of the world rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor. It operated across Africa, North and South America, the Caribbean, and the entire African Diaspora. It was linked with the pan-African struggle in Africa.  

It was this level of political discourse that led Kamarakafego to visit Nkrumah in Guinea, and he immensely enjoyed these fruitful talks. Kamarakafego left Nkrumah for East Africa to continue organizing 6PAC and the Barbados conference. He traveled through Zaire, Uganda, Kenya, Mauritius, Kenya, and Tanzania. From East Africa, he continued on to Australia and Oceania.

Kamarakafego returned to Bermuda in October 1969. He was aware that the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) had invited Barrow to speak at its annual banquet. The spirit of Black Power was in the air. Barrow spoke in front of PLP members such as party leader Lois Browne-Evans, who had just been Bermuda’s lone delegate to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in Trinidad and Tobago. While there, Browne-Evans informed the *Trinidad Express* that the time was “fast approaching when oppressed Black people all over the world” would get what was theirs. Wearing a dashiki, wooden earrings, and an Afro, she told the press that Black Power’s challenge to the established system meant that every effort was being made to suppress it.

Kamarakafego spoke with Barrow while he was in Bermuda. While here, the prime minister agreed that the conference could be held in Barbados. After subsequently meeting with his cabinet, Barrow gave Kamarakafego the green light to inform the Black Power Committee about the confirmation. After doing so, Kamarakafego continued to organize for the talks.

It was not a given that Barbados would be the conference location. Howard University president James Cheek turned down a request by Chuck Stone, chair of the National Conference on Black Power, to hold the conference on its campus in April 1970, claiming that the school was planning to use spring recess to conduct rehabilitation work on several buildings after the intensive use of its facilities during the regular academic year.

By March 1970, plans for the Barbados conference had gained much traction. The *Bermuda Recorder* noted with much anticipation that the conference was going to be held in July. It contextualized the previous five Black Power conferences in the histories of Marcus Garvey’s “Back to Africa
Movement,” W. E. B Du Bois’s NAACP, and George Padmore’s Pan-African Movement. Barbados was a “tolerant and small society” that welcomed “all brothers and sisters.” White colonial oppression was a daily nightmare, and there was a “growing trend towards black genocide.” Hence, the conference sought to establish techniques, methods, and alternative strategies to help black people achieve political, economic, educational, and cultural power. Applications for the conference were available at the PLP headquarters. Bermuda’s Donald Smith Travel Agency, which was organizing trips to the conference, advertised in the Recorder that roundtrip tickets were set at $175.32

Advertisements for the talks also appeared in African American media such as the African-American Teachers Forum, the newsletter of the New York–based African-American Teachers Association. Its March-April 1970 edition noted that with the Black Power conferences becoming more successful, the Bridgetown conference was about “Black survival and Black consciousness through Black operation harmony.” With a registration fee of $10, preregistration was to be directed to Kamarakafego in Bermuda.33

Kamarakafego communicated with activists from across Africa, the Americas, and Oceania about the conference. In March 1970, Nkrumah wrote to Kamarakafego, thanking him for a recent letter. He noted with interest that there would be “a meeting of Black people from Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Australia and other parts of the world. . . . I shall be glad to be an official patron.”34

However, by April 1970, two major events had taken place that influenced Barrow to change his mind about the talks. One was the Black Power revolution in Trinidad and Tobago. The second was Kwame Ture’s electrifying Caribbean tour.

Black Power in Trinidad and Tobago was driven by student radicalism, militant trade unionism, and a 15 percent urban unemployment rate. It was also greatly moved by the Montreal protests at Sir George Williams University. Daaga, a student at the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, traveled to Canada to meet with the Montreal defense committee. While in route in New York, he met with the local branch of the Black Panther Party. Reportedly, the party turned down his request for financial assistance to “help bring about a revolution in Trinidad.”35

Daaga was former president of the Students Guild of UWI. In solidarity with Montreal’s students, in February 1969, he helped to form UWI’s NJAC, a “pressure group” that emphasized Black people’s rights. One of the committee’s strengths lay in Daaga’s ability to forge relationships with labor organizations like the Oilfields Workers Trade Union and its president-general
George Weekes. In April 1969, NJAC held demonstrations in support of a strike by Nunez and the Transport and Industrial Workers Union.\textsuperscript{36}

In August 1969, CIA officials claimed that Black Power in Trinidad had lost “a unique opportunity to fill the vacuum . . . of political opposition” to Prime Minister Eric Williams’s government. Strikingly, the agency saw this failure as being a result of “poor leadership, lack of organization and concentration on purposeless demonstrations that” did not “capture the imagination of the people,” noting that the movement had failed to “transfer nebulous theories of Black power into issues with which the populace is genuinely concerned.” With “little popular appeal,” the movement’s political influence, according to the CIA, was “nil.” As such, while Black Power had probably initially been “considered a serious threat” to Williams, the CIA felt that this was no longer the case.\textsuperscript{37}

In 1970, the CIA’s assessment was decisively proven to be wrong. Black Power messages and iconography were seen and heard during Carnival via Calypso artists and other participants. In February, Daaga, NJAC, and the UWI Students Guild launched demonstrations in protest of the trial of the Montreal students. George Weekes and the Oilfield Workers’ Trade Union soon joined in. Weekes had just spent a month in the United States and Canada, where he reportedly made Black Power contacts. Amid government indecision, NJAC mobilized over ten thousand people and established a “people’s parliament.” During a march that included several hundred people, Canadian banks and a Roman Catholic cathedral were damaged. Nine protestors were arrested, rallying several thousand more demonstrators in support. At the March trial of these “ringleaders,” clashes broke out with police, who injured many with batons. However, NJAC’s attempts to organize a mass march to the cane fields in solidarity with East Indian sugar workers failed to convince them to join wholeheartedly.\textsuperscript{38}

The acquittal of the Trinidadian students in Montreal of the most serious charges and the government’s decision to pay the fines that had been imposed temporarily reduced tensions. During a radio and television address, Williams admitted a “failure of communication and promised immediate reforms.” This was a classic case of too little, too late. Nunez warned that the payment of the fines was not the end. The struggle “had only just begun and would only end when NJAC controlled the economy of the country.” Nunez expressed support for a Castro-type revolution in Trinidad. He and Daaga “were not interested in participating in a national government, but in spearheading a revolutionary movement throughout the Caribbean.”\textsuperscript{39}

In early April, one protestor was shot and killed after allegedly threatening
a policeman with an ice pick. Amid his calls for the nationalization of the oil and sugar industries, Weekes threatened to lead a general strike. This prompted Williams to declare a state of emergency on April 21. Weekes, Nunez, and Daaga were all arrested, prompting the mutiny of eighty soldiers at the Teteron Bay barracks. Investigations alluded to a conspiracy to overthrow the government. 40 Williams requested military support from the United States to put it down. Three leaders were charged with treason and a number of others with sedition. Two of these men, Raffique Shah and Kumar Mahabir, had reportedly received three weeks of guerilla training in Cuba in 1968. 41

The fifty-six-day uprising pushed the CIA to change its position. By June 1970, the agency was forced to admit that NJAC had emerged from “relative obscurity . . . to challenging the stability of the Government.” This reflected a “deep underlying resentment” of Williams’s “slow-moving efforts to promote socio-economic change.” It had been a long fourteen years of economic “sufferation” and the rising of urban unemployment. In a sense, Black Power was helping to “vocalize and accelerate a trend already in existence.” Lloyd Best, UWI lecturer in economics, argued that the “February revolution” had proved the government to be irrelevant. 42

In February 1970, John Marson and Jitu Weusi (Les Campbell) of the New York–based Afro-American Students Cultural Association visited the demonstrators. While there, they called for “global revolutionary struggle and action” against “black men with white minds.” A history teacher by profession who worked closely with Sonny Carson, Weusi would later form Uhuru Sasa Shule (the Freedom Now School) and the EAST organization. 43

Other Black Power groups in Trinidad and Tobago included Aldwyn Primus’s Black Panther Organization, the Young Power Group, and the National Union of Freedom Fighters (NUFF). Years later, NUFF lost members such as Beverly Jones while engaging in armed struggle against the state. Jones’s sister was Althea Jones, who would head London’s Black Panther Party. In 1969, Best and the New World Group formed Tapia House and its radical journal, Tapia. Black Power publications in the country included the United National Independence Party’s Moko, Pivot, and East Dry River Speaks. 44

Never Honored: Kwame Ture in the Caribbean

Bob Marley’s 1978 song “Black Survival” lamented that “a good man is never honored in his country.” The song could have written about Kwame Ture.
During Ture’s Caribbean tour in the spring of 1970, he was not permitted to pass through the land of his birth, Trinidad and Tobago. He was also prevented from entering Montserrat, St. Vincent, Bermuda, and Jamaica. However, he did reach Guyana, where his trip came to a head.

Black Power in Guyana public was driven by two main organizations: the Ratoon group and the state-endorsed African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA), which had been formed in 1964 by Eusi Kwayana (Sydney King) to develop “educational programs related to African history, culture, and language to emphasize the African heritage of Black Guyanese.” Kwayana was born on April 4, 1925, in Demerara, the site of the massive 1823 anti-slavery rebellion. Raised in a “poor African family,” he was a longtime African-centered organizer. A schoolteacher by trade, Kwayana started a private school in the village of Buxton in 1956. In 1961, he formed the African Society for Racial Equality. Appropriately defined by Nigel Westmass as an “organic pan-Africanist,” Kwayana’s grassroots support came from primarily non-urban village communities.

In contrast, US embassy officials in Guyana described the charismatic Kwayana as being a “fanatic” who was a highly ascetic and disciplined person. A vegetarian, he did not smoke or drink alcohol and lived and dressed in simplicity. The embassy claimed that Kwayana shunned social occasions, abjured romantic relationships with women, appeared incorruptible, and though soft-spoken, was “intense and deadly serious.” Indeed, the embassy felt that he was “capable of deception and violence.” In 1968, at a government-sponsored memorial service for Martin Luther King, Kwayana allegedly called “for the lives of two white persons for every black American killed” in Vietnam. The embassy felt that Guyana’s prime minister Burnham needed to watch him closely.

Burnham did not need to be told that.

Kwayana called for a black Guyanese economic system developed along the lines of African socialism. During a visit to Israel, he was impressed by the communal Kibbutz settlements. In 1968, he launched a “cultural revolution.” His pamphlet, The Teachings of the Cultural Revolution, was comprised of popular Guyanese cultural proverbs. It urged blacks to adopt African names and to revive African culture by studying models such as the “philosophy of creation of the Akan peoples, in which Nyame” made man, nature, knowledge, order, and death. He also referenced Central Africa’s Kimbundu and called for the education of children to follow that of East Africa’s Kikuyu. Members of ASCRIA also studied Kiswahili.

Britain’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) claimed that ASCRIA emerged from the “tough Negro village of Buxton” and Georgetown. From
its formation, ASCRIA expressed solidarity with international black movements. In 1966, it protested human rights violations in the United States and supported a solidarity day for black prisoners. By 1969, it had grown to about two hundred members and thousands of sympathizers.49

In March 1969, ASCRIA held its third annual convention at the Buxton high school, of which Kwayana was principal. One hundred delegates representing some twenty of thirty-seven chapters attended. Kwayana called for ASCRIA to reject all things white, and to seek the “material, cultural, political, spiritual salvation for the black people of Guyana, the Caribbean and the Western Hemisphere.” This included Global South solidarity with African communities in the Caribbean, Cuba, Brazil, Surinam, and Africa.50

Kwayana told his audience, “We have not in ASCRIA seen fit to use the slogan of Black Power as our mode of struggle. But we want it to be understood that so long as Black Power means the overthrow of white power by non-whites, by black men and brown men and yellow men on a world scale, we identify ourselves with it completely and without reserve.” According to the CIA, this reflected Kwayana’s reorientation of ASCRIA to an “aggressive racist position with the avowed goal of destroying white influence in the country.” Kwayana continued, asserting that “we could never be true soldiers of Bandung” unless we first accept “our African heritage as Black people.” He also attacked “certain professed Black Power movements” in London for contradicting themselves “by falling under the power of militant white international movements that [did] not share the aspirations of the revolutionary black people of the world.”51

While organizing the Bermuda conference, Kamarakafego met with Janet Jagan and Kwayana in Guyana. As a result, at the ASCRIA convention, it was decided to “campaign hard” with Bermuda’s “regional Black Power Conference for a Caribbean General Certification of Education” instead of one from London. The talks also called for: a drama festival of African plays; invitations of Afro-American folk singers; the establishment of cooperatives in savings, forestry, mining, and small industry; the spreading of Guyanese history through lectures and literature; and bringing international black athletes to the country. Ndugu Merwyn Salaam, an African American member of the Nation of Islam, discussed black resistance in the United States, arguing that revolts against slavery originated the Black Power slogan, “Burn, baby, burn.”52

Black Power in Guyana was part of a political chess game played between Kwayana and Prime Minister Burnham. Burnham appointed Kwayana chairman of the Guyana Marketing Corporation. During the convention,
Kwayana thanked Burnham for declaring at a 1968 Youth Power Now rally that Black Power was the consolidation of black men and brown men over their resources and destiny. This was strikingly similar to ASCRIA’s own definition of Black Power. Kwayana also congratulated the Guyanese government for “steering clear of the anti-Black hysteria” of Jamaica, Trinidad, and Surinam, and he demanded that it provide sanctuary to black liberators. For its part, ASCRIA did not regard the ideas of Malcolm X, Ture, Elijah Muhammad, Walter Rodney, or Muhammad Ali as being subversive. On this note, ASCRIA welcomed a group of black “Muslim brothers and sisters” who had recently moved to Guyana. The meeting ended with the singing of the Guyanese National anthem.53

The politically shrewd Burnham used Black Power for his own purposes. He handled Kwayana “gingerly.” Kwayana’s positions within the government seemingly gave him influence within Burnham’s Peoples National Congress (PNC). Yet Burnham benefited by having Kwayana kept under close watch. The CIA felt that Burnham’s Westernism prevented him from totally supporting Kwayana. For example, Burnham disavowed PNC members from publicly participating in Black Power activities.54

On February 23, 1970, Guyana became a republic. This was the 207th anniversary of the revolt of Coffy (Kofi) in Berbice. Burnham referred to Coffy as Guyana’s first national hero. He later informed his PNC Congress:

> We have carried out the political revolution. We are independent, we are a republic, we have our national hero—Cuffy . . . The economic revolution can no longer be delayed . . . I have been referring to the social and economic revolution, the national ownership and control of Guyana’s resources, and their development by and for Guyanese. That is what Black Power is about.55

In conjunction with the Republic celebrations, Guyana hosted a three-day Pan-African and Black Revolutionary National Seminar. During the meeting, Burnham expressed solidarity with Black Power. He used Guyana as an example of how “political power [did] not give economic power” to blacks. In contrast, he argued, his cooperative economic scheme—led by Kwayana—included the development of black economic power. Seemingly in response to ASCRIA’s calls of the last year, he stated that “exiled freedom fighters” could find refuge in Guyana.56

This occurred during the growing Black Power dissidence in Trinidad and Tobago. The CIA felt that Burnham was “trying to disarm Black Power militants by acceding to their demands and adjusting his policies in their
direction.” At an April Caribbean heads of state meeting, Burnham had un-
successfully tried to convince other West Indian leaders that “violent agita-
tors should be controlled after they arrive in a country but should not be
banned.” He felt that Black Power in the Caribbean was a “force to be reck-
oned with,” and if its dissidents were not controlled, “the Movement could
be turned against all authority.”

Burnham’s true feelings on Black Power were perhaps best described in
his statement that Caribbean heads of state were “all sitting on a volcano.”
The developments in Trinidad were a “threat to the entire establishment.”
He argued that he had been able to control Black Power by giving it some
ground. Still, his ministers took steps all the time to preempt those who
might cause trouble. This included ASCRIA, which Burnham’s minister,
Sonny Ramphal, felt had been given too that many concessions—as had
“those gentlemen at the University,” the Ratoon group.

Ratoon was much smaller than ASCRIA. Comprised primarily of radical
university students and faculty, its monthly newsletter Ratoon stressed Black
Power, New World, and Leftist themes. University of Guyana professor Wal-
ter Green Omowale, who was also the junior vice president of ASCRIA, led
the organization. Clive Thomas was also a member.

Ture had been invited to Guyana by Ratoon. He arrived there with his
wife, Mariam Makeba. Always one to make an impression, his short time in
the country was full of controversial public statements. He was placed under
tight surveillance. At a May 5 press conference, Ture stated that he had been
“banned from Trinidad & Tobago because of American and British pres-
sure” that had been placed on Williams. America controlled the island, and
Williams had “sold out to the imperialists.” Yet he would eventually “return
to the island because the people would eventually run it.” Ture defined Black
Power as “a movement of liberation to encourage Black people to come
together and organize themselves for freedom, using any means necessary.”
This meant political and economic control of resources. Black Power “did
not connote black visibility” but instead the “ability to perform functions
as human beings in a society which dehumanized us.” Blacks did not own
or control land but “were victims of capitalism and racialism.” The “African
struggle was going to be long and fierce,” and blacks needed to organize. He
applauded the Guyanese government’s support of “free speech” and intel-
ligence in allowing him to visit.

According to one FCO official, Carmichael’s visit was Guyana’s most sig-
nificant week since its 1968 elections. He claimed that Ture had “abused
Guyanese hospitality by preaching murder and violence.” This “virtually
destroyed” the Ratoon group, undermined Cheddi Jagan’s East Indian overtures toward Black Power, and identified Black Power with “unremitting study and an end to jollity.” Ture’s first public talks took place at secondary schools. He told students that they needed to “be prepared for violence since there could be no remission of sins without the shedding of blood.” Yet the “cat among the pigeons” was when he defined “Black Power as African Power and specifically excluded Chinese and Indians from the Movement.” After arguing that the highest expression of Black Power was pan-Africanism, a number of non-African students left the talks. This left some confusion on the platform, as the Ratoon group had gained popularity via its multiracial composition.

The day’s next drama came when Carmichael spoke at an ASCRIA “Con-key Reception.” When members of the crowd refused to be silent, Carmichael threatened to leave. Kwayana convinced him to stay, and calm was eventually restored. This time when he began to speak, the lights in the hall went out. He continued to speak about “kill or be killed.” The following day was the University of Guyana’s turn. Standing firm in a jacket and tie, Carmichael was the keynote speaker at an “Ideology and the Black Revolution” symposium. He received a “boisterous reception” while expressing his pleasure at being in Guyana despite the “rudeness” shown to him. After giving thanks, he returned to his pleas for violence, remarking that in Guyana, there would have to be “bloodshed and guerillas.” He would not have the last word of the night.

Representing Ratoon, Thomas took to the rostrum to read a paper on Black Power that expressed the group’s disagreement with Ture. It argued that pan-Africanism was an African ideology that had revolutionary potential everywhere except in three societies: Surinam, Trinidad, and Guyana. In contrast, Ratoon’s ideology was correctly based on “Afro-Indian solidarity at all and every stage in the struggle against imperialism and white racism.” This divergence of views headlined Guyana’s and the broader Caribbean’s newspapers.

Allegedly, Burnham had pressured Ratoon to ensure that Ture did not use Guyana as a launching pad from which to attack Williams and other Caribbean leaders. Burnham himself was pressed to make a statement separating himself from Ture. For example, Jamaican prime minister Shearer telephoned Burnham in protest against Ture’s attacks on other West Indian governments.

After the university talk, Ture went to a meeting in Tiger Bay with the “roughs” of Georgetown. Ratoon was apparently not aware of this meeting.
He held a public rally at Guyana's National Park, reiterating the need for bloodshed. Critically, he attacked his denunciation by a local paper, the *Evening Post*, but accepted its idea that he should not attack Williams from Guyana. He also conceded that Ratooon had a democratic right to disagree with his position on Black Power, which ASCRIIA, in contrast, agreed with.65

Radio Demerara's Robert Williams denounced Ture. Williams claimed that when Ture, the “High Priest” of Black Power reached Guyana, he found that the movement had been adulterated to fit various shapes and forms. At every public appearance, he reiterated that Black Power “embraced only Black people, people of African descent.” He also allegedly stated that other non-white races were natural allies of black people, with common enemies of white imperialism and capitalism. Still, they needed to organize themselves separately. He also referenced constantly the “necessity to kill.” Biblically speaking, “there could be no remission of sins” except by the “shedding of blood.” He also referred to ASCRIIA as the only ideologically pure Black Power movement in Guyana and that other institutions, including the government, were only giving “lip service” to Black Power.66

Carmichael left Guyana on May 10. His time in Guyana was publicly criticized and condemned. The president of the Maha Sabha, Guyana’s largest Hindu organization, attacked Carmichael’s definition of “Black Power as African Power” and chastised Ture for undoing the efforts of the government and other organizations to rebuild the “fabric of national unity.” He also blamed the groups that had sponsored Carmichael’s visit for the troubles. Cheddi Jagan found himself at a loss, for he could not associate himself with either ASCRIIA or Ratooon because he shared Carmichael’s anti-imperialism. Yet even he conceded that Ture’s Black Power thesis “made a mockery of the Guyanese national motto of One People, One Nation, One Destiny.”67

Former mayor of Georgetown Archie Codrington publicly alleged that Carmichael’s “campaign of murder, arson and confiscation” aroused “feelings of disgust and derision.” Furthermore, it “reminded his listeners that Nkrumah . . . was a man discredited and repudiated by” the masses of Ghana. The government-sponsored *Sunday Chronicle* took the opportunity to criticize Ture. In the *Sunday Graphic*, renowned journalist Carl Blackman asked, “Oh my God, Stokely, what have you done?”68

Carmichael found that ASCRIIA was being most closely associated with his views on Black Power. Yet Kwayana may have been concerned with the public image of ASCRIIA, which had not been associated with violence. The FCO gleefully reckoned that Ratooon needed a “period of convalescence” before it could “venture again into the public eye.”69
The PNC attacked Ratoon in its newspaper, *New Nation*. The article, titled “Ratoon Men Earn 4-Figure Salaries,” attacked the group as a “confused bunch of kids.” It asserted that while Ratoon claimed to be an anti-elite champion of the people, it was comprised mostly of members of the University of Guyana. Yet they did not march with the people during one Labor Day, and were perhaps too busy “enjoying the luxuries of life.” It argued that Omowale, Rickey Singh, Miles Fitzpatrick, Thomas, Josh Ramsammy, and Compton Bourne were “not poor boys” and were doing quite well. As a professor of social sciences, Thomas earned $1,010 per month. Furthermore, they put in less hours of work than did Burnham.\(^\text{70}\)

Ture had not spent much time in Guyana, but the FCO felt that it would be “weeks or months” before his full impact was felt. Jagan’s political momentum had been slowed, as he had been arguing for weeks about the East Indian identification with Black Power. The FCO problematically asserted that this was the “first real confrontation between the real Black Power fanatic and the cheerful and easy-going Caribbean population.” According to one FCO official, at one speech, Ture was “obviously dismayed by the local capacity for alcoholic consumption by a great many Guyanese Africans.” Condescendingly, he remarked that this was a “considerable compliment to the Guyanese attitude and outlook.” This was no compliment.\(^\text{71}\)

The FCO felt that Burnham had correctly handled his trip. In contrast, the prime minister felt that Williams had been slow to address Black Power in Trinidad and Tobago. British high commissioner Kenneth Ritchie “knocked on wood” after remarking that events in Trinidad and Tobago had not sparked any similar issues in Guyana. This, he thought, was a tribute to Burnham’s handling of the movement. Ritchie was forced to agree with Burnham’s tactics, even as he suspected that Burnham adeptly exaggerated pressures “to achieve a particular objective in London or in Washington.”\(^\text{72}\)

Burnham closely communicated with the FCO throughout the entire process. In one meeting, Ritchie commented that the pressure from Black Power had waned since Ture’s visit and that it had been a “very good week for Burnham.” Burnham agreed—Ratoon “had been hit very hard and Jagan knocked even harder.” Ritchie suggested that Burnham could “carefully exploit all this.” Burnham felt that Ture “had misjudged the people of [Guyana], who knew more about violence then he did.”\(^\text{73}\)

In the same conversation, Burnham questioned Ritchie’s concern about his plans to speak with two bauxite companies, Reynolds and Demerara Bauxite Company (DEMBA) about securing equity participation for the government. According to Ritchie, the two companies were “worried
stiff” about Burnham’s plans. The prime minister’s response was that he was determined to be retired at fifty-five and not before then, and if he did not quickly “get on with radical policies,” then the latter would happen. The forty-six-year-old prime minister questioned Ritchie’s concern about DEMBA, a subsidiary of Aluminum Canada. Ritchie retorted that he was there to “watch the interests of British companies,” and what happened to other companies could happen to those under his sphere as well. After pressing Burnham for his plans for the sugar industry, Burnham, “with his most angelic expression,” remarked that the sugar companies were locally owned, and if he felt that something needed to be done with them, there would be “a full and friendly conversation first.” Ritchie told Burnham that he was making it “bloody difficult” to sympathize with him and that he needed to do “something urgently to reassure” his “US colleague,” as he knew that certain people in Washington were “pretty restive.” This brought a lecture from Burnham on the “difficulties of talking to dull men.”

Put another way, Burnham was prepared to maintain political power by any means necessary, and if this meant entertaining Black Power, then he was all for it. But he also reserved the right to use violence against his detractors if he felt the need to do so.

Barbados

Ture was on his way to Barbados. Burnham was not Barrow, and Guyana was not Barbados. In the latter, Black Power was driven by the PPM and the University Student Front (USF). Formed in 1966, the PPM had a membership about fifty people. Driven by Cuban- and Chinese-oriented Marxism, it occasionally contacted Jagan. Its Black Star paper was heavily focused on Black Power themes but had ceased publication in May 1969. Still, the Black Star Bookshop remained a hub for Marxist and radical literature.

The USF was based out of the Barbados campus of UWI. The CIA claimed that the group had “alienated the majority of the population” by “rowdy and disruptive behavior” during rallies. In a public radio confrontation with USF, Barrow caustically derided “Black Power slogans calling for the overthrow of West Indian society.” He labeled Black Power as being “highly subversive” and advised the students to “tend to their studies rather than destroying society.”

Barrow decided to “ban” the Black Power conference. Unlike Burnham, Barrow publicly denounced Black Power’s supposedly “racist tactics and revolutionary declarations.” His position had only hardened as a result of
Trinidad and Tobago’s revolution. Black Power “militants” were banned from the island, and all non-Barbadians were prohibited from speaking at public rallies. All speakers and topics had to be vetted by the government before permits would be issued for public meetings. The government’s new Public Law and Order Act made it a “crime to preach racial hatred or violence.”

But Barrow was also not Williams. He was actively involved in the social life of the island, whereas Williams may have “isolated himself from the people.” This enabled Barrow to curtail the Black Power movement, which lacked a clear leader. The FCO felt that this was not because Barbadians were not interested in Black Power, but because of “third-rate opportunists.”

Intimately involved with Nina Simone, Barrow was seen everywhere across the country. So said the FCO:

One day he is aqua lunging with the underwater boys, and then attending their annual dinner. Next morning we can be “buzzed” by the Prime Minister flying himself on a tour of inspection of Barbados. Sometime during the week he may be either buying or selling a cow; and he will certainly be driving himself around in a Vauxhall Viva or an 1100, shunning chauffeurs and ceremony. At 5:30 in the morning he can . . . be seen riding down Broad Street on his bay mare—incidentally, the wrong way on a one-way street, or shooting duck. He will perhaps lunch at the American Businessmen’s Club. . . . No one can say that he is cut off or aloof. He is well informed of every new thought and new movement in this island.

Ritchie had informed John Bennett, an FCO official assigned to Barbados, about Ture’s visit in Guyana. He was told to warn Deputy Prime Minister Tudor that Ture “had expressed revolutionary views in Guyana and was quite unpredictable in his utterances.” The visit had been carefully handled internally to prevent any problems. After thanking him, Tudor responded that as the Barbados Workers’ Union had come out in support of the Public Orders Act, the government decided to ban Carmichael from Barbados. However, Barrow disagreed with the decision, arguing that Carmichael should be allowed to land but not to attend any political meeting or make any public speech. If he accepted these conditions, he would be allowed to spend one or two nights in Barbados.

On May 14, 1970, Ritchie had a confidential lunch with the British police commissioner Palmer and his wife. The police commissioner called the meeting, as he wanted “a frank and full discussion of the problems of unrest
in Barbados.” He asked the high commissioner to drive himself to his house and to not use a chauffeur; for security reasons, Palmer arranged for his domestic staff to take the day off. The main course at lunch was a discussion on Black Power and Ture’s impending visit. According to the commissioner, all members of the cabinet except Barrow called for a ban against Ture’s visit. They had reached a compromise was reached whereby Carmichael would be allowed to land but would not be allowed to speak or attend a public meeting.81

From Bridgetown to Atlanta

This was the context in which the Barbados Black Power conference was banned. Kamarakafego’s efforts to organize for the talks were being thwarted across the region. Along with PLP leaders Freddy Wade and Arthur Hodgson, Kamarakafego was now on the stop lists of St. Lucia, Antigua, St. Vincent, Anguilla, and the Cayman islands.82

In April 1970, Barrow asked Kamarakafego to come to Barbados to discuss the talks. As described earlier, it was then that Barrow informed him that he had rescinded his initial support due to “international pressures.” In a May 4, 1970, letter to Kamarakafego, Barrow stated that recent events in the south Caribbean had prompted a number of questions about the Black Power conference. Barrow’s government wanted assurances that the occasion would not be used by “dissident elements in Barbados” and neighboring territories to initiate “violent demonstrations.” He wanted guarantees that no one attending the conference would advocate the overthrow by violence of Barbados or any other friendly democratic government in the region or incite racial hatred or discrimination against any groups, that no one would be excluded based upon race or color, and that adequate staff would be there to handle logistics, control participants, and cooperate with the government.83

In April, Stone had questioned the National Conference on Black Power’s Executive Committee about the need for a national Black Power conference in the United States, given that Kamarakafego had planned the Barbados meeting. On May 4, Kamarakafego wrote to Stone, asking him to give remarks at the Barbados conference. Signed “Revolution and Peace,” he now had other things to ask the chair of the Black Power Conference Continuation Committee.84

As a result of Kamarakafego’s announcement to the committee that Barbados was a “no go,” in a Washington, DC, meeting later that month, the
Executive Committee made a few critical decisions. According to Hayward Henry Jr., it was decided that a World Congress of African Peoples would be held in Atlanta, Georgia, in September 1970. The meeting would be international in scope and focus on the theme “From Black Power to Pan-Africanism.” Secondly, it would aim to create a national structure that could provide a basis for operational harmony within the larger black freedom struggle. At the meeting, they hoped to develop a possible structure for the World Congress Assembly. Furthermore, the National Conference of Black Power and its Continuations Committee were to be abolished and replaced by Planning and Structure Committees.\(^8\)

Haywood Jr. was chair of the Planning Committee. He informed the group that he was securing a meeting space at Paschal’s Motor Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia, for a June planning meeting. The hotel was a historic meeting place for organizers of Atlanta’s civil rights movement. Kamarakafego was also on the Planning Committee, and Amiri Baraka was selected to be on Structure Committee. According to Jimmy Garrett, Baraka was invited into a leadership role because he had the organizational apparatus that could hold such a conference at late notice.\(^8\) All of this is the subject of the next chapter.