National Black Elections Held by Republic of New Africa

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Monday, September 14, 1975, was a day of jubilation. We woke that morning—those of us in the cadre of the Republic of New Africa (RNA) located in more than a dozen cities—with the feeling of triumph, because, against great odds and in the face of persistent doubt in important places, we had successfully carried out the first National Black Elections that Africans in North America had ever held.

There had been black national conventions as long ago as the 1950's. Blacks (and a few white freedom workers) had held a magnificent, 80,000-vote people's election in fear-drenched Mississippi in 1963. And, down the years since that classic mobilization, there had been scattered people's elections in various communities—including the RNA's 1968 vote in the Oceanhill-Brownsville section of Brooklyn.

Yet never before had there been a national black election as occurred on Saturday and Sunday, September 13 and 14. On those two days RNA cadre members carried ballots to polling places in Detroit and Grand Rapids, Mich.; Washington, D.C.; Baton Rouge, New Orleans and Tangrs Parish, La.; McComb and Pearl River, Miss.; Lee County, Ala.; Huntsville, Ala., Nairobi, Pomona, Los Angeles and San Francisco, Cal.; the Bronx and Brooklyn, N.Y.; and to Chicago, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Boston and Philadelphia. And, under scrutiny of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, and its President, Dr. Leslie Burt McKeemore, they voted, nearly 7,000 people, a quarter of them in the Great Mississippi Valley. 

We were jubilant on Monday morning, September 15, 1975.

But what did it really mean for black people?

It means the gaining of a new tool in our struggle for freedom: a popularly elected Provisional Government for the subjugated Black Nation.

Only once before in our 300 year history in
Douglass, fearful of white motives, fearful of white slinging and therefore doubtful of the feasibility of a return to Africa, eschewed all colonization. He demanded for us U.S. citizenship.

When the Union Congress and the state legislatures ratified the Fourteenth Amendment in July 1868, they were too late. Black people had been a free community—now nearly five million strong—for more than three years. The Amendment is cautious in its wording. It attempted to give citizenship merely to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States." But by these words the Amendment missed 400,000 freed African Americans who had not been born in the United States.

More important, it was simply not possible under international law governing relations between free peoples for the U.S. body politic to pass a law and make the members of a different free community into U.S. citizens. The Americans cannot do this to the Canadians or the French or Chinese or Nigerians or any other free people. And they could not do it to the community of free Africans. Like the Canadians, like the French or Chinese or Nigerians, like any free people, we, the Africans in America, the New Africans, would have to be asked. And we have never been asked.

This deficiency in American law is not unrecognized by American authorities. In the case of the Puerto Ricans, in the case of the Virgin Islanders, in other cases when it has suited the fancy of the American Congress in relation to peoples the United States has subjugated, the American Congress has simply passed law, organic acts, "making" these peoples U.S. citizens or, in some cases, U.S. nationals, without asking them.

But the U.S. Congress has always implicitly understood that such impositions of citizenship were never any more valid than the acquiescence of the people. After Puerto Rican nationalists showed that they did not acquiesce by shooting up Blair House, the temporary residence of President Harry Truman, in 1950 and then shooting up the U.S. House of Representatives four years later, Congress did what international law requires. They permitted the Puerto Ricans to vote on the question of U.S. citizenship (and the status of their land) in 1952 and again in 1967. Only in this way—through the free expression of the people's will (and Puerto Rican nationalists charge that there was no free expression in the two Puerto Rican plebiscites)—could an offer of U.S. citizenship from the U.S. to another free community be accepted and made valid (or rejected).

We have never been given a chance to express our view in a plebiscite. Thus, our so-called U.S. citizenship remains as invalid for us today as it was for our brothers and sisters in 1868 when the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified. But the Thirteenth Amendment, which elevated us from chattel into a free community, contains a clause (as does the Fourteenth Amendment itself) which gives Congress the power to "enforce this article by appropriate legislation." This is the provision that grants Congress not only the power to participate in a plebiscite on our nationality, but the power to yield to those of us who choose New African citizenship exclusively (or, even, dually) the land, the five-state New African national territory, for an independent nation.

This is the issue which the popular mandate of September's National Black Elections requires us to take to the United Nations. We will continue to campaign for the independence of the complete New African national territory, the full Five States (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina). But we are campaigning now at the U.N. to have the Kush District western Mississippi from Memphis 350 miles south along the River to the Louisiana border, and two eastern and two central Mississippi counties declared a non-self-governing territory, ruled by a white minority.

And it is that, in Kush, though blacks are in the majority. We have only one black in the 142-member state House of Representatives and none in the 52-member state Senate. There is no county with a black governing majority. There is no black in the U.S. Congress, none in the U.S. Senate, and since