



by Kwame Nkrumah

THE VISION THAT I SEE

During the 1800s European nations divided Africa into colonies and ruled almost the entire continent. In the middle 1900s, however, many Africans began fighting to regain their independence and freedom and to bring an end to this practice, called colonialism. One leader of this fight was Jomo Kenyatta, who wrote the story that appears on pages 162–165. Another major leader in the struggle against imperialism and colonial rule was Kwame Nkrumah (KWAHM ee en KROO muh, 1909–1972), a member of the Nzima people. Nkrumah was born in Nkroful, a village in the British colony called the Gold Coast. Although imprisoned for his beliefs, Nkrumah continued to fight for an end to colonialism. In this speech, delivered in the 1950s, Nkrumah expresses his hopes for the Gold Coast and the rest of Africa. As you read an excerpt from this speech, notice Nkrumah’s goals and beliefs. How does Nkrumah use history to support his ideas?

The subject I have chosen to address you on this evening is “The Vision that I See.” . . . It is better to be free to manage, or mismanage, your own affairs, than not to be free to mismanage or manage your own affairs. . . .

You know, **Providence** must be at work. I don’t want to go back into history because I might be repeating sad memories but imagine the whole question of the slave trade, how Negroes from the West Coast of Africa were all carried over to the United States. And look into Negro history. You see the suffering and **tribulation** these people went through, and yet they survived in the United States of America and the **West Indies**. That’s Providence. God Himself came, and, as in the days of Moses and the Israelites, who spent so many hard years in Egypt under all kinds of suffering, what was the result? The day came, yes, when God Himself brought up the man, and that man led them out of Egypt. A greater **exodus** is coming in Africa today, and that exodus will be established when there is a united, free and independent West Africa.

providence: God’s guidance of human destiny

tribulation: pain

West Indies: Caribbean islands

exodus: mass departure

Again I don’t want to bore you with history. It is a sad story. Look at the whole country of Africa today. With the possible exception of Liberia, Egypt and Ethiopia, the entire country is divided and subdivided. . . .

Africa for the Africans! Is this some new concept that has come into being? . . . no! We are bringing into being another Africa for Africans, with a different concept, and that concept is what? A free and independent state in Africa. We want to be able to govern ourselves

in this country of ours without outside interference. And we are going to see that it is done.

Ladies and gentlemen, a people without a Government of their own is silly and absurd. Let us therefore **forge ahead** and develop our own countries, politically and economically. We must work for a greater glory and majesty, greater than the civilizations of our **grandsires**, the civilization of Ghana, the civilization of the [Mali] Empire and the civilization of the [Songhai] Empire. Long before the slave trade, long before Imperialistic rivalries in Africa began, civilizations of the Ghana Empire were in existence. And here, you even discover that at one time, at the great University of Timbuktu, Africans **versed** in the science of art and learning were studying their works translated in Greek and Hebrew, and at the same time exchanging professors with the University of Cordova in Spain. These were the brains, and today they come and tell us that we cannot do it. No, give the African a chance and he will show you that he can do it. . . .

And not only that, there have been great Africans, . . . who have distinguished themselves in the **cabinet** and in the field of battle. I need mention only a few: Anthony Amu, a man from the **Gold Coast**, was the first African to graduate with the degree of doctor of philosophy from the University of Wittenberg. Amu became professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin, 1954. He was an African. He came and died in the Gold Coast. That was a brain. . . . And not only that. In the field of battle there is **Toussaint**. Yes, these are the men who have put up the torch of light that we men of today, the youth of Africa, want to learn and **emulate** them, forge ahead, until Africa is **redeemed**, until we are free to manage or mismanage our own affairs in this country.

We believe in the equality of races. We believe in the freedom of the people of all races. We believe in cooperation. In fact it has been one of my **theses** that in this struggle of ours, in this struggle to redeem Africa, we are fighting not against race and colour and creed. We are fighting against a system—a system which degrades and exploits, and wherever we find that system, that system must be **liquidated**. Yes, we believe in peace and cooperation among all countries, but we also **abhor** Colonialism and Imperialism. We abhor man's inhumanity against man. . . .

We must learn to live together. The age of **aristocracy** is gone. God made all of us equal. In the sight of God we are one. We must combine. . . .

Four years after delivering this speech, Kwame Nkrumah helped lead his country to independence. On March 6, 1957, the colony of the Gold Coast became the free nation of Ghana. Nkrumah served as president of Ghana from 1960 to 1966 and inspired many other Africans to fight to regain their independence. One by one during the 1950s and 1960s, Africans liberated their nations from European rule.

Source: Bankole Timothy, *Kwame Nkrumah—From Cradle to Grave*. Dorchester, Dorset, Great Britain: The Gavin Press Limited, 1981.

forge ahead: move forward

grandsires: male ancestors

versed: educated

cabinet: government

Gold Coast: present-day country of Ghana

Toussaint: Toussaint L'Ouverture, the liberator of Haiti

emulate: equal or surpass

redeemed: freed

theses: beliefs

liquidated: destroyed

abhor: hate

aristocracy: government by a privileged upper class