

Nigeria and Emancipation 2006

The National Joint Action Committee embarked on the Internationalisation of August 1st Emancipation Day, because it viewed this as an important step in



President Olusegun Obasanjo

the emancipation process. On one hand, the negative impact of that tremendous human tragedy of chattel slavery and its legacy on the African, required positive steps to be taken to address this problem. There needed to be the development of a sense of pride, self-respect, self worth, as well as a focal point which could provide a sense of bonding and commonality

among Africans. In this way, the African would be able to develop that sense of power and accomplishment and gain the respect of peoples of the world.

On the other hand, the Internationalisation of Emancipation Day provides the world with an opportunity to reflect on the ideal of emancipation, to recommit itself to that ideal and to resolve within itself that what happened to the African, should never happen to any people again.

The realization, therefore, of the commitment made by President Obasanjo to the President of the Caribbean



Nnamdi Azikiwe

Historical Society and Deputy Political Leader of NJAC, Nyahuma Obika, to have Nigeria commence the annual observance of Emancipation Day, August 1st, from this year and to propose that the 53 nations comprising the African Union observe it, was truly historic and another step towards achieving the goals of Internationalisation. It

now means that not only Ghana, which began observances in 1998, but also 52 other members of the African Union, including Nigeria, would begin observing Emancipation Day. As such, NJAC wishes to acquaint readers with the following report carried by a Nigerian newspaper, of the first ever Emancipation Day address made on August 1st 2006, by President Obasanjo.

“President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday in a nationwide address paid glowing tribute to Nigeria’s first President Rt. Hon. (Dr) Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and other African leaders on the crucial roles they played for the emancipation of the African people, during and after the slave trade.

The broadcast is in commemoration of the maiden celebration of the 2006 Emancipation Day, the first day of August every year as contained in a proposal by Nigeria, which was approved by the Eighth Ordinary Session of the summit of the Africa Union, Sudan.

President Obasanjo said Nigerians and indeed Africans, should not forget the heroic role played in the struggle against the slave trade and Pan-Africanism by past world



Kwame Nkrumah

leaders and prominent Africans including Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah and others.

Nigeria joins the rest of Africa and indeed the rest of the world on this Emancipation Day, in saluting the efforts and heroism of the slaves and ex-slaves, as well as the abolitionists. On this day also, we remember heroes and champions of Pan-Africanism

including Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Dubois, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah and others, whose vision of Pan Africanism continues to be relevant, even to this day. We also salute the poets, authors, artistes and activists that struggled under the banner of Pan Africanism to support the struggle for emancipation”, he said.

However the President urged Africans to fight on, as the struggle is not over yet, until the war against poverty, diseases, hunger, corruption and other social vices are eliminated from our socio-economic and political lives.

“We must not forget that although the struggle for emancipation from slavery has been won, the struggle for emancipation from other strangleholds on the black person, including the stranglehold of hunger disease, chronic poverty, gender-based discriminations, corruption and unavoidable conflicts persist. We must continue to fight against these conditions which militate against our well-

being and retard our progress”, he stressed.

According to the President, the African continent owes most of her socio-economic problems to the age-long slavery which plagued the continent, resulting from the devastation, disorderliness and the psychological trauma that the continent passed through, during and shortly after the dehumanizing era of the slave trade.

“Today, almost 200 years after the Abolition, the scars of slavery can still be seen on both our continent and the diaspora. It cannot be denied that the exploitation that slavery constituted, has direct linkages with Africa’s present economic conditions, given the massive export of strong and virile human capital that the process entailed and the attendant human resource drain implied.

The distortions, disarticulations and underdevelopment that slavery, slave trade and colonialism entailed continue to complicate and compound the processes of growth and development today on our continent”, he stated

He further lamented that “even when the vicious system had been formally ended, the victims continued to endure the unenviable stigma of ex-slaves and the psychological trauma it engendered. Racial discrimination and segregation and xenophobia which are three of the most rampant international social vices of our time, have their antecedents in slavery and in the unwholesome attempt by one race to subjugate and dominate the other”.

While calling on all Africans in the diaspora to join hands with African Governments in their genuine efforts

to emancipate the people of the continent, Obasanjo said sincere efforts must be initiated through collaboration to advance the development of Africa.

In this respect, the Nigerian National Volunteer Service which coordinates the activities and efforts of Nigerians in the diaspora is already well positioned to enhance national development. Government is determined to continue to support the agency to achieve its laudable objectives”, he added.”

NJAC congratulates Nigeria and all the other members of the African Union for this historic development and pledges to continue its thrust for the continued Internationalisation of August 1st, Emancipation Day.