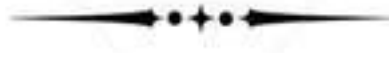


Attorney Chokwe Lumumba is the National Chairman and a cofounder of the New Afrikan People's Organization (N.A.P.O.) and has served as chairperson since its inception in 1984 having been re-elected to the position in 2004. On July 7, 2009, Chokwe Lumumba was seated as Ward 2 City Councilperson in Jackson, MS. He has pursued human rights on the streets and in the courtroom. He graduated with honors from Wayne State University Law School in 1975 after finishing first in his Freshman law class in 1973-74. In 1977, Chokwe Lumumba briefly served as Attorney for Black Liberation Army Soldier, Assata Shakur, in a murder case which was dismissed in Brooklyn, New York. Practicing law for more than 35 years, Lumumba is currently the senior law partner of Lumumba, Freelon and Associates in Jackson, MS.

DO WE NEED SELF-DETERMINING INSTITUTIONS?



CHOKWE LUMUMBA

I'm delighted to be here and share some time with you. I have always been an admirer of the work IHRAAM has been doing. In fact I think I was around when they first started doing some of this work. I bring greetings not only from the New Afrikan Peoples Organization and Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, but I can now speak for Ward 2 of Jackson, Mississippi. From my brothers and sisters from Jackson, Mississippi and most importantly from my own family, I bring greetings.

This is a wonderful work and wonderful question that is raised here. At the outset, we should understand that the election of Barack Obama is what we might call a quintessential victory for the civil rights movement. It is the quintessential victory for those that worked so hard and had to start at white-only counters, white-only restrooms, and white-only water fountains and had to face the years of lynching and things of that nature. It's amazing to see that our mothers, our fathers, our grandmothers, our grandfathers went through that terrible history of Jim Crow and American apartheid. So the achievement of that election is a quintessential, and to some extent, still symbolic but still to some extent, a victory for the civil rights movement nonetheless.

But then we have to understand what Malcolm tells us. He pointed out to us that civil rights are different than human rights. Civil rights are what they gave you and human rights are what you always had. And that a victory for the civil rights movement is not necessarily a victory

in the human rights movement. If we do not direct it in that direction and we allow things to be loosely interpreted, sloppily interpreted, and misinterpreted, then what we will find is that the quintessential victory of the civil rights movements actually winds up being a defeat in the human rights movement.

Because what it does is serve as window dressing in order to conceal the abuses which still take place. We have had problems ever since we were snatched from the coast of Africa. You've been in war for a long time. You may have not been *at* war for very long, but you certainly have been *in* war for a long time. You were in war ever since they snatched our ancestors from the African Continent. And to address that war and to have some kind of conceptual understanding of that war is very important. Because if we don't, we won't understand what a victory is and what a defeat is, and how to distinguish between the two. The reality is that our problems did not start with not being able to go to the same bathroom as white folks, that's not where our problems started. Problems started when our self-determination was snatched from us and when we were unable to make decisions which we had made for centuries by ourselves. We lost the ability to control our legacy and our wealth and to hand it down to generations that came after us. And so that is why so many of us have come here today from various different movements dealing with the question of self-determination, and dealing with the question of reparations because we understand that the human rights victory has not been achieved.

The human rights victory, unlike the civil rights victory, is revolutionary. Victory in the human rights concept requires a revolution. A victory in the civil rights concept requires certain modifications of perceptions over a period of time. But victory in human rights where people who have lost the ability to govern themselves, and then regain power over themselves is revolutionary because those other people in power don't give away power. They don't just say you can have your power back. And so in order to get that power back you have to find economic, political, and social ways to take that power back, not their power, but the power that belongs to you. So this is what we talk about when we address this important and interesting question.

I'm going to focus on a couple of key concepts and then move on. I'm not a technician of international litigation of human rights law. As busy as I've been, I've never had the opportunity to get a technical understanding of the various different covenants. Of course, I've studied the covenants and some of the international conventions and I definitely have an understanding of the international law concept. But what we are being introduced to today by the National Conference by Black Lawyers, by people like Standish Willis, and what we have been introduced to

for some time by organizations like IHRAAM, is the idea of using these covenants and things of the technical aspect to understand them, and understand how we must utilize them in order to bring our struggle to the international view of the world.

Malcolm told us that. Malcolm said that you really look kinda stupid—I know he didn't really put it like that, but knowing Malcolm he probably would put it pretty close to that—he said you look pretty stupid when instead of taking the criminal to court, you go to court and the criminal is in charge of the court! So what he says is that you need to find a way in order to take it to the international level. Malcolm was living at a time when the world was changing in terms of the United Nations. African nations, Latin American nations, Middle Eastern nations, were having revolutions and they were introducing into the General Assembly of the United Nations progressive nations who would go on to make different kinds of conventions and different types of decisions which would develop international law related to the non-self governing territories and upon the self-determination rights of territories. They would begin to expand that, whereas the initial United Nations was really pretty much controlled by the people who were the problem.

Right now we are back in the situation where the United Nations is pretty much controlled by the people who are the problem because of the grip that the Security Council has on the United Nations. So we have to be innovative in relation to the United Nations as an arena, as a stream, where we can introduce some of our concepts and try to educate the world. Where we can use whatever modalities we have and which we can find in order to progress our struggle. But we cannot become reliant upon it totally. We have to understand that the power ultimately comes from the people. And only the people will move us forward. Not only the people here, but the people around the world. Like Martin Luther King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

So we can't sit around here crying about Trayvon Martin if we did not say anything about those people in Afghanistan who got butchered by the American military. We have to understand. We have to have an understanding of, and partially an answer to this question that we ask ourselves: do we need independent or self-determining organs in order to try to make our decisions.

Martin Luther King said towards the end of his life, according to Harry Belafonte, that "We are going to win this integration thing, but I am getting a little leery about it. Seems like we are integrating into a burning house." So he was not impressed by the way that America treated those that were accepted as American. And he could not be sure that they would treat us in the proper way. Of course he was prophetic in that regard. As we found out, before he died he embraced the poor

people's march, he embraced the various different economic modalities which were necessary to contest the power of the United States capitalist giant that was suppressing the power of not only Africans, but suppressing the power of all types of people all over the country. Martin Luther King was a prophet in the respect that here we sit, supposedly integrated into the country, and we do not have a pot to pee in, so to speak. We are getting worse off than we were. The people on Occupy Wall Street talked about the 99%. We must be 199 % because when everyone else is catching hell, we are catching super hell. We are in bad shape. And we see this all over the country.

It was a very proud experience when we busted out in various different places: in Chicago with the experience of the election Harold Washington; in Detroit when we took over the city council, we took over the mayoralty and we had 30 judges and out of the 30 judges that were adjudicating in Detroit, Michigan, we wound up with 25 that were black and two of them were white guys that said that they were communists and supported the black folks. So this is legal revolutionary black work. And we had this all over the country. But all of those things are being ruined. Gentrification has been the weapon which has wiped us out in city after city: in Washington, DC, in Harlem, NY, and right now working on Detroit, Michigan. And it has gotten a crazy man in office here in Chicago.

These are the kinds of problems we have. We shouldn't have to face these problems in 2012 if in fact a movement is a progression which is assured. But a movement is only assured in a progressive manner if the people make it that way. We cannot lay down on the job. We must understand that time never stands still. We must understand that nothing ever stands still. So either we are getting better or we are getting worse. And what has been happening over the last decade and several decades is that we have been getting worse. So we have to take a clear look at this self-determination thing and see how much interest we have in it and how much importance it has to us.

It's not only import from a political perspective, so we can say a dark guy is the mayor or a dark guy is the sheriff and things of that nature, but it is important to us from an economic perspective. It has to make a difference in our people's lives. When we elect these governmental officials that look like us and who don't make any difference in our lives, then we have to start taking a look at what officials we are electing. And one of things we have to do is we have to give them a litmus test. We have to ask them: "What do you know about these questions that the brothers have asked here today? What do you know about this self-determination thing? What is your position on self-determination? Are you just one of those people that feel that they should be elected because God has ordained you and you are going to be alright, in other words are

nothing but a social opportunist? If you do not have a viewpoint which can be expressed on a sheet of paper, other than talking about you and where you were born and where you are going and all that kind of stuff, then you got a problem.”

So we need predictable people that we put into office. One of the things that needs to be predictable about them is their view about self-determination. I think the answer to the question is obviously that we have to have self-determination. That we have to be identified as a group of people, not just because it is something fashionable, but because you do not get power unless you operate as a group of people. You do not get economic power unless you operate as a group of people. You do not get political power unless you act as a group of people. So it is very important that we combine together and operate as a group. And one of the main reasons it is important is because we *are* a people. Just because you go around barking all the time does not mean you are not a cat. If you're a cat you're cat, if you're a dog, you're a dog.

And what we are is Africans, that's what we are. We are Africans. We are different types of Africans from different parts of the world and different cultural experiences that has brought us to different places, but we are still essentially African. And one of the reasons we are still essentially African is because of the horrific history of the United States which refused to allow us—the combination of people—to create a society which could in fact be considered some kind of integrated society. Secondly, the way that our introduction to this continent came about was a problem. It's a problem to take people into slavery, to put us here and to keep us on the bottom. And then integration became our great grandmother or aunt working in some white man's house—that's what integration was. Raising his kids, and scrubbing his floors and things of that nature. That's not the kind of integration we're looking for. We're looking for the qualitative resurrection for us as a people and as a people of power.

I think that the answer to the question is yes, we have to be identified as a people. We've always had this name problem, this identity problem. We were Negroes at one point. We were colored folks at one point. It's interesting because we started out as being Africans. That's what they use to call us and that is what we used to call ourselves. Now I like the term “New Afrikan”. But it doesn't make any difference as long as you know it when you are talking about yourself. If you don't know when you are talking about yourself, then you've got a problem. Malcolm used the term “African American”, but he was very clear about why he used the term “African American”. Malcolm said that just because you are a kitten born in the oven that don't make you a biscuit. He pointing out that we are Africans born in America. It is because of the culmination of history that we are a little bit of a lot of things, in truth. I like the term

“New Afrikan” because I think we really have to struggle against the immense imperialist power of the United States.

The question of self-determination is not just a question of establishing something of our own— that’s an important part of it—but you have to understand that no two powers can occupy the same space at the same time. That’s a fundamental principle of physics as applied to human dynamics. No two powers can occupy the same space at the same time. So if some power is occupying the space of your community, of your territory, of your energy, of your workplace, then in fact you cannot occupy that space at least as a parallel power, you become a junior power. You become an underling. Somebody that is controlled. So we have to some fighting in order to throw off the yolk of imperialism . When I say fighting I’m talking about in terms of our writing, in terms of our electoral strategy, in term of our economic development strategy. We have to understand that it’s not just a question of allowing racism and repeated abuse of ourselves and others and understanding that these exist, but that these have to be undone. We have to be empathetic to other folks that suffer the same problems that we suffer in America. Although we suffer perhaps to a greater degree, we have the Mexicans, we have the Puerto Ricans, we have the people who are Indians of the various different respects, or the original Red Nations. Not only the ones that we identify as such, but the ones in Hawaii, the ones in Alaska that have become victims of the same thing. We have to understand that this a prison house, an empire, a prison house of nations, and all of these constructive energies of these nations for self-determination must be released so then we can come together on a voluntary basis and create that association of the Americas if that is what we want to do. And at the same time we must be very conscious of what must be done in Africa.

What we are doing in Mississippi is this. All around the country we face some serious challenges in terms of gentrification. Gentrification is one of the main weapons being used and the main anti-self-determination weapon around. I live in Jackson, Mississippi. I live in a county that is 75% black and a city that is 85% black. More importantly, it is important to understand that I live in what we have renamed—what we have taken opportunity to rename the western part of Mississippi—the Kush District. That’s what we call it. So all the way from Oktibbeha which is in the north to Wilkinson county in the south, on the western part of Mississippi—those are 18 contiguous counties. Of those 18 counties 17 of them are solidly black. Three are the blackest counties in the United States. And one of the counties that is not predominantly black is Warren County where Vicksburg sits and 47% black and teeters between being predominantly black and predominately white. And what we do is work to elect someone to the council and eventually to the mayoralty. We

are not just looking for a city, we are looking for a region of the country.

We have to understand that not only in terms of politics, but in terms of economics. We cannot have knuckleheads in office because we have to understand that you have to use the public sector in order to seize the ability to create wealth in the private sector. We have to create wealth for our people. We have to look at not only consumer cooperatives, but we have to look at producers' cooperatives. There are all kinds of businesses coming into Jackson and trying to develop and take over particularly the downtown area. Jackson has a double A ++ debt rate so that means that if the city borrows money companies will come in and try to get at the money and then develop their industries. It used to be that they would talk about ball parks, but now they are talking about hotels. They want everything. So they want to get that money. And they will promise you things, like: "We'll give you a few jobs." I don't want just a few jobs. I want to own the hotel. We want to own the hotel. We have to hold out and use this.

What makes what we are doing in Mississippi so important is that it's a region. What we are trying to do is take over the state. We want the whole state. We are 40% of the state. And it didn't take us with this gifted information about self-determination to come down and convince the people of Mississippi that they should elect their own people. Mississippi has more black elected officials than anywhere else in the entire country. You go through the Kush District, you got black sheriffs, you got black mayors, you got city council people; some of them are knuckleheads and some of them are not. But the reality is that the importance of our mission is to educate them about what is possible and educate about where we need to be headed.

What we are trying to do is convince you folks in Chicago that have run from Mississippi to come back home. We are trying to stabilize the population in Mississippi and to then introduce more blacks into Mississippi. Because we had an election just a little while ago for the governor, and the governor, the guy that won, was a white boy, a racist's republican, a reactionary republican. He's against immigration, he's against everything—if you are for it he is against it. So he won, but he won by 60% to 40%. 40% is the population of black people in the state. The fella that he beat was a black republican. So all we need is some more of y'all to come down. Atlanta had 500,000 black people immigrate to Atlanta in a 10 year period from the mid 80s to mid 90s. That was because of Mayor Jackson's insistence that the development at the airport would be inclusive of black ownership and black development and he insisted on that, even though they got ready to close down the whole airport project. White folks said we ain't going to even build it if he's going to keep on insisting like that. The mayor said it isn't even going to happen.

From Civil Rights to Human Rights and Self-Determination?

So when you walk through the Atlanta airport today and see all those black people around selling this that and the other...

What we need is to get a project which complements our international initiatives and I say that project be what we call the New Justice Frontier. We call it that because we all respect justice, because you know we lacked a lot of justice, but we fought against it and we are going to win, we are going to beat it. It's not just political, its economic, really economic, and it's also going to be social. And what we do very much embraces the works that we are doing here on the human rights agenda.

I am going to ask you to come down on September 13 when we will have a national justice conference. We want to explain to folks the aspects of this international movement that we are involved in.