

# Nkrumah of Ghana *speaks*

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Kwame Nkrumah (1909- ) is one of the most colorful and remarkable personalities on the world stage today. As the leader of the struggle for independence of Ghana and as its first Prime Minister he has attracted attention throughout Africa and the world. He is an impassioned orator, a warm human being, and a tremendous idealist, with a burning desire to build a better Ghana and to promote Pan-Africanism.

He was born in the village of Nkroful, a member of the Akan tribe. At the insistence of his mother he was sent to school and soon came under the influence of a Roman Catholic priest. After eight years of schooling, he began to teach and was soon spotted as a promising young man and sent to college. There he came under the influence of James K. Aggrey, a pioneer African educator.

After a period of further teaching, he went to Lincoln University in the United States and received degrees from it and from the University of Pennsylvania before going to England to study and work.

In 1947 he returned to the Gold Coast where he established a newspaper and worked as a political organizer. Splitting with the largest existing group, he organized the Convention Peoples Party as the best vehicle to achieve independence. He was released from prison in 1951 to become Prime Minister. In 1957 he formed the government of Ghana when it became a new nation. Today he is absorbed in the creation of a modern state in Ghana and in the promotion of Pan-Africanism.

As an outstanding contemporary leader he speaks to the world:

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## ON FREEDOM . . .

“Freedom for us means more than the end of colonial rule. The people of this country can be truly free if they are free from fear, and free from want, and if we so organize our affairs that they have the chance of a happy and prosperous life.”

“What other countries have taken three hundred years to achieve, a once dependent territory must try to accomplish in a generation if it is to survive.”

“The right of a people to decide their own destiny, to make their own way to freedom, is not measured by the yardstick of color or degree of social development. It is an inalienable right of peoples which they are powerless to exercise when forces, stronger than they themselves, by whatever means, for whatever reasons, take this right from them. If there is to be a criterion of a people's preparedness for self-government, then I say it is their readiness to assume responsibilities of ruling themselves. For who but a people themselves can say when the moment has arrived in the destiny of a subject people? What other gauge can there be?”

“We prefer self-government with danger, to servitude in tranquility. Doubtless we shall make mistakes as have all other nations. We are human beings and hence fallible. But we can try also to learn from the mistakes of others so that we may avoid the deepest pitfalls into which they have fallen. Moreover, the mistakes we may make will be our mistakes, and it will be our responsibility to put them aright. As long as we are ruled by others, we shall lay our mistakes at their door, and our sense of responsibility will remain dulled.”

## **ON JUSTICE . . .**

“Our next united task is the achievement of economic justice: freedom from want, and freedom from disease, filth and squalor. Industrial and agricultural development are essential for the achievement of our aim. We . . . are firmly resolved to build an economically strong nation that will improve the standard of living for its people.”

“Justice means more than that every man should be equal before the law and should have a right of access to the courts. Justice to us means that the State which we are building shall be a just one, devoted to the practice of equality, jealous of the rights of minorities, determined to preserve free speech and the right of free association, and resolutely opposed to any form of discrimination on grounds of race, color, or religion.”

## **ON LABOR . . .**

“We intend to encourage in Africa not only the dignity of labor in workers’ movements, but the dignity of man, whose needs constitute the ultimate end of all productive enterprises. We intend to demonstrate that exploitation of man by man must cease. We also intend to demonstrate that a man is entitled to the fruits of his labor. The Trade Union Movement . . . in Africa is one of the most important spearheads for economic and social progress.”

“In Africa the attitudes of labor will have to undergo radical examination and radical change as well. In the traditional society there can be no dependence on slave, serf, or forced labor and in the multi-racial societies the gulf that makes it difficult for ordinary human sympathy to be extended to the worker must be bridged.”

## **ON COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM . . .**

“I have always regarded colonialism as the policy by which a foreign power binds territories to herself by political ties, with the primary object of promoting her economic advantage.”

“Yes, we believe in peace and cooperation among all countries, but we also abhor colonialism and imperialism. We abhor man’s inhumanity to man.”

“We want it to be understood that it is the primary aim of this government to rid Ghana of every vestige of colonialism and imperialism and that we will not rest until this has been achieved.”

## **ON GHANA . . .**

“The name Ghana is rooted deeply in ancient African history, especially in the history of the western portion of Africa known as the Sudan. It kindles in the imagination of modern West African youth the grandeur and the achievements of a great medieval civilization which our ancestors developed many centuries before the European penetration and subsequent domination of Africa began.”

## **ON THE FUTURE OF GHANA . . .**

“First of all, give us time to sort ourselves out.”

“We have to work hard to evolve new patterns, new social customs, new attitudes to life, so that while we seek the material, cultural and economic advancement of our people, while we raise their standards of living, we shall not sacrifice their fundamental happiness.”

## **ON THE GHANAIS AND THE BRITISH**

“The strands of history have brought our two countries together. We have provided much of the material benefit to the British people and they in turn have taught us many good things. We want to continue to learn from them the best that they can give us and we hope that they will find in us qualities worthy of emulation. In our daily lives we may lack those material comforts regarded as essential by the standards of the modern world, because so much of our wealth is locked up in our land; but we have the gifts of laughter and joy, a love of music, a lack of malice, an absence of the desire for revenge for our wrongs—all things of intrinsic worth in a world sick of injustice, revenge, fear, and want.”

## **ON THE COMMONWEALTH . . .**

“We value the Commonwealth link because it brings us closer to other nations who practice the same type of democracy and have the same system of laws which we have established here. Particularly we value it because it brings us into association with the newer commonwealth countries of Asia whose problems are so akin to ours.”

## **ON FOREIGN POLICY . . .**

“As Ghana achieves independence it observes a world torn and divided in its political relationships. The government of Ghana therefore feels that at this stage the country should not be committed in any aspect of its foreign policy and that it should not be aligned with any particular group of powers or political bloc. The government of Ghana does not intend to follow a neutralist policy . . . but it does intend to act as it seems best at any particular time.”

## **ON HIS PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE . . .**

“Today I am a non-denominational Christian and a Marxian socialist and I have not found any contradiction between the two.”

“Throughout history great things have often had small beginnings.”

## **ON HIS PHILOSOPHY OF RACE RELATIONS . . .**

“We must learn to live together. The age of aristocracy is gone.”

“We believe in the equality of races. We believe in the freedom of 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 color and creed. We are fighting against a system, a system which degrades and exploits; and wherever we find the system, that system must be abolished.”

## **ON QUALITIES NEEDED IN PEOPLE . . .**

“In preserving our freedom and independence it is clear that we shall need at least four great qualities—patience, understanding, fortitude, and tolerance.”

“More than ever before we need men and women with knowledge and foresight. We need men and women whose positive and creative ideas and opinions can influence those of their countrymen. We need men and women with the courage of their convictions to show the world that the African, when given the chance, can take his full and rightful place in the comity of nations.”

## ON EDUCATION . . .

“If we cannot find the breadth of outlook and lofty idealism in our schools and colleges, where else in the name of Humanity can we find them?”

“Think! Study hard! Work with sustained effort. As never before we want thinkers—thinkers of great thoughts. We want doers—doers of great deeds. Of what use is your education of you cannot help your country in her hour of need?”

“University education is preparation for life. Your job is to prepare yourself for service to your country and to humanity; to give of your utmost and not to expect fat rewards. It is equally anti-social to rob your country as it is to rob your fellow men.”

## ON PRISONS AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

(While in prison) “. . . I wondered whether prison punishments really did achieve their purpose in reforming the criminal, whether capital punishment was a solution to murder cases. Criminals, after all, are human beings. No man is born a criminal; society makes him so, and the only way to change things is to change the social conditions. It is only from the social standpoint that crime and punishment can be effectively approached. I have always been against the death penalty . . . I believe that it is a relic of barbarism and savagery and that it is inconsistent with Christian ethics. The aim of punishment should be that of understanding and correction.”

## ON AN AFRICAN WAY OF LIFE . . .

"Our aim is to work with others to achieve an African personality in international affairs."

"The times are changing and we must change with them. In doing so we must combine the best in Western culture with the best in African culture."

"It is not an exaggeration to mention that African music and dancing played no small part in influencing this revolution (of the modern arts) as you can see by observing some of the age-old tribal dances and even the present day High Life which is really an old folk dance of the country under a modern name, which in turn gave birth to the calypso and other dances of this kind."

"It is our earnest hope that the Ghana which is now being reborn will be like Ghana of old, a center to which all peoples of Africa may come and where all the cultures of Africa can meet."

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