

AFRIKAN WISDOM

Alisema Kama Atakuja (He said he would come)

by: Geronimo ji Jaga



I woke up this morning at 4 am, wide awake. Something led me out of my bed, and out the door of my shamba home here in Tanzania. I walked outside and looked into the Afrikan sky and wondered what this strange feeling was that had come over me. It wasn't bad, it was just a feeling that something was amiss. I just couldn't put my finger on it.

I walked back inside and went to the computer and right away i saw Johnnie's face, and i knew it was Johnnie who woke me up. Johnnie, who last time we spoke had told me, "G, I'm coming. I told you I was coming. I am coming to the mama land with you!!!" And true to his word, he is right here with me. I can feel his presence grow stronger as the sun ascends over these sacred lands of the Great Rift Valley where life began. He is talking to me now. "Look out for Chief." "Tell Ed to be cool." "Tell Stu not to worry." "Take care of Ginny."

It's not easy to try and put into words one's feelings at a time like this. So many words and pictures come to mind that it is very hard to put them in order and transcribe them. What i can say is this: Johnnie was a beautiful brother, who even after becoming well versed in the ugly reality of Cointelpro, always

remained a calming influence for me, encouraging forgiveness for all those puppets that were being exploited by the system. Despite the sick, sadistic practices of the government and its stooges, as documented in their own records, Johnnie continued to believe in the goodness of everyday people, who were being used as he used to say, "For they know not what they do."

Johnnie would want us all to keep forgiveness in our hearts, but to remain vigilant of these rats, who are now going to come out of the woodwork and claim friendships with Johnnie and sing his praises just to promote themselves and their egos. Johnnie never bought into the ego trip, and was always willing to give his time and energy to represent the most underrepresented in society. He was a man with a heart as big as Yogi Pinell's.

Johnnie and i connected long before he began defending members of the Black Panther Party against police repression in Los Angeles. We both came out of the Mississippi Delta and the great tradition of struggle by Africans in the south to liberate ourselves from oppression. We were born into this glorious history of resistance to the slavocracy, from the Bras Coupee Uprising and many other insurrections, to the Afrikan Blood Brotherhood and the Garvey Legionnaires in the 1920s to the Deacons for Defense during the civil rights movement. Johnnie and i were comrades in struggle, sometimes employing different methods but fighting for similar goals, the freedom and self-determination of Afrikan people in particular and all oppressed people in general.

The tradition of struggle continued in Los Angeles where Johnnie "Chief" Cochran Sr. was one of the first men in Los Angeles to support the Free Breakfast for Children's program of the Black Panther Party at the Second Baptist Church with Rev. Kilgore. Soon after, his son, Johnnie Cochran Jr. began defending the members of the Black Panther Party in court against the racist police and other agencies who set out to destroy our movement as part of the federal government's illegal Cointelpro pogrom.

People were surprised, but not us, that Johnnie was willing to come to the fore of our struggle for Reparations. In 1975, while i was imprisoned on san quentin's death row, he and i began to dialogue via mail about the legal predicates regarding the money owed the descendants of African slaves. Johnnie was impressed with the arguments being made under international law, and the legitimacy of our right to reparations as was being taught by the great legal minds of Imari Obadele and Chokwe Lumumba.

His commitment to our struggle and his eager willingness to begin to engage in the struggle for reparations for Mama Afrika, who was raped first by colonialism and slavery, makes me suspicious of the suddenness and speed in which this healthy, picture perfect man, was taken from us by this strange illness. Johnnie also recognized that there were many other political prisoners in the United States such as Sundiata Acoli, Leonard Peltier, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Mutulu Shakur, Marilyn Buck, and too many others to list here. Johnnie was just as supportive of them as well. He would agree that we needed to go beyond domestic law, which is inherently racist, and use international law to escape the many racist trappings of domestic law that have been instituted since the early days of the slavocracy.

We had spoken about him joining me in Afrika to work on some of the issues facing our people here, and he had told me it was his next quest. He was anxious to address the problems of orphans, HIV Aids, poverty, genocidal sorties, and patterns of economic exploitation that have continued since the days of colonialism. Johnnie wanted to come and pay homage at the Altar of Mt. Kilimanjaro, but he also wanted to meet two of our greatest heroes, Pete and Charlotte O'Neal. Johnnie was amazed at contradictions surrounding Pete's case, and the fact that he, Assata, Don Con and Cetewayo had to remain in political exile clearly and only because of the FBI's war against the Black Liberation Movement.

Many of Johnnie's detractors like to claim he played the race card in the OJ trial by exposing the misconduct, racism and ineptitude of the Los Angeles police. But those critics fail to accept the truth that Johnnie knew all too well; the Cointelpro card. This dirty, pernicious, secret, illegal war, that victimized even Johnnie when the police pulled him out of his car and had him prostrate on the ground in front of his children. His past experiences on my case and many others having shown him how deliberately and shamelessly the police would manufacture evidence, lie on the stand, and generally use all sorts of nefarious tactics to get a conviction. Johnnie stood up and refused to blindly accept the testimony of police or other government agents. Unfortunately too many people still refuse to acknowledge the corruption and injustice that is rampant within the so-called justice system in America. But Johnnie knew it, and fought against it at every opportunity.

But Johnnie is home now. Another great son of Afrika has returned to the Ancestors. He has been a great son. A father, a brother, a friend and a comrade. We can all feel a little more secure knowing that while our brother is no longer able to look after us individually in the courtroom, he now watches over us collectively alongside Bunchy, Red, Toure and all the other Freedom Fighters who

have gone before him. Johnnie fought not only for justice, but also for peace. And he has finally found his. I could talk all day about my beautiful brother, but I know he didn't wake me up for that this morning. I can hear him calling me now, telling me to get up, get out, and continue to "Fight the Good Fight!"

Pamberi ne Chimurenga! (Ever Onward to Liberation)

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"You do not turn any society, however primitive it may be upside down, with such a program if you have not decided from the very beginning, from the actual formulation of that program, to overcome all the obstacles that you will come across in so doing. The native who decides to put the program into practice, and to become its moving force, is ready for violence at all times. From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called in question by absolute violence".

Frantz Fanon