

Introduction

It was May 1975, and Bermudian Black Power organizer Pauulu Kamarakafego had just arrived in Port Vila, Vanuatu. It was not the environmental activist's first visit to the political condominium then known as the New Hebrides, which lay some thousand miles east of Australia. As an architect of Tanzania's Sixth Pan-African Congress (6PAC), Kamarakafego had passed through the joint British and French colony the year before to organize a black delegation from Oceania. Seeking black internationalist support in their bitter anti-colonial struggle, the New Hebrides National Party (NHNP) sent representatives to the 1974 Congress. While in Dar es Salaam, the party invited Kamarakafego to Vanuatu to conduct political education among its rural indigenous masses, a black Melanesian people known as the Ni-Vanuatu. Numbering about 100,000 people, they represented 85 percent of the total population and formed the political base of the NHNP. He accepted this invitation without reservation.¹

But after Kamarakafego gave speeches to rural audiences of about two hundred people, British and French colonial administrators moved to deport him from the 4,739 square mile archipelago for "propagating Black Power doctrines."² From the state's perspective, his other "crime" was developing environmental projects that enabled the Ni-Vanuatu to make key commodities from natural resources, such as natural soaps from lye, oil from coconuts, salt from the ocean, sweeteners from sugar cane, and cement from calcium carbonate deposits and clay. As a result, their communities could avoid having to buy these products from European and Australian multinational companies.³

British officials recommended using a joint Anglo-French military force to extract Kamarakafego if he forcibly resisted arrest. The British resident minister stressed that the operation needed to be "clean and effective" and that it would require "the total strength available" to handle a possible crowd of five hundred party supporters. They hoped that French gendarmeries

could be placed on standby, and they considered flying in British troops stationed in Singapore or Fiji or Gurkhas from Hong Kong.⁴

However, Kamarakafego's capture was timed to take the party by surprise, and it occurred with little incident. Placed on board a small plane piloted by an Australian official, Kamarakafego was taken to a deserted airstrip. The strip's surrounding sea, forest, and hills were full of aging Coca-Cola caps and bottles and discarded US weaponry—corroded grenades and bazookas, rusty helmets, and algae-attracting tanks—all lingering reminders that the airstrip had been built by the US military during World War II. Flanked by the British police commissioner and five Ni-Vanuatu officers, Kamarakafego remained here for most of the day. In between verbally dressing down the pilot and police commissioner about their colonial white privileges, he pressed the Ni-Vanuatu officers about their rights for self-determination. Why was the commissioner a person of British descent and not a Ni-Vanuatu? he asked. Why did the country need Australian pilots? He detailed his ability to fly the aircraft as an example of how indigenous New Hebrideans could technologically administer their own country. To the chagrin of the commissioner, this five-foot-six, muscularly built man completely enthralled the officers.⁵

Kamarakafego was eventually flown to Vanuatu's main airport in Port Vila, where he was to be quickly switched to a commercial flight headed to the United States. This time it was the party's turn to use surprise. As Kamarakafego's plane was taxiing to the back of the other aircraft, twenty-six NHNP members "caught the police on their wrong foot." These protestors drove onto the tarmac, parked, and locked their cars in front of his aircraft. Shouting "Black Power!" they tossed away their car keys. Clashes with police broke out, arrests were made (conveniently, at nightfall), charges were filed, fines were levied, and Kamarakafego was sent on his way back to Bermuda.⁶

However, with the help of two African American women, he miraculously evaded his FBI escort in the Los Angeles airport. Undaunted, he soon obtained a new passport from one his contacts at an African embassy. With the financial help of black activists and artists such as Jeff Donaldson, Mari Evans, Gwendolyn Brooks, Lerone Bennett, Elizabeth Catlett, and Ademola Olugebefola, he headed back to Oceania—this time to Fiji and then to newly independent Papua New Guinea as a rural development consultant for its government.⁷

In the words of Kamarakafego's political mentor, C. L. R. James, this account may seem "beyond belief."⁸ How did a devout pan-Africanist envi-

ronmentalist from some nine thousand miles across the Atlantic Ocean end up embroiled in a black indigenous struggle for decolonization in Oceania? And why did his presence—and the ideas of Black Power—twist the proverbial knickers of the British and French governments? Remarkably, for Kamarakafego, such improbably wide-ranging, multidimensional, and potent engagement was typical. His fascinating sojourn throughout the African Diaspora is the heart of this book.

Born in the segregated British colony of Bermuda in 1932, Kamarakafego lived an epic life of global activism. He survived demonstrations against Cuba's United Fruit Company and bouts with the Ku Klux Klan as a student activist in South Carolina's black freedom struggle. Between 1959 and 1966, he taught biology and environmental studies at Liberia's Cuttington College and University of East Africa's campuses in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. He also co-organized Bermuda's Committee for Universal Adult Suffrage (CUAS, 1961) and became a member of parliament for the island's Progressive Labor Party (1968). Kamarakafego is perhaps best known for his leadership roles in organizing Bermuda's First International Black Power Conference (1969) and 6PAC. His versions of Black Power and pan-Africanism included appropriate technology, sustainable development, and environmental justice. As such, his most lasting contribution as a black internationalist was in his dual political and environmental advocacy across the Global South.

Pauulu's Diaspora explores how Kamarakafego fused his political worldview with his technical expertise in the service of black self-determination. In Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and Liberia he launched rural-based projects that built sustainable homes and water tanks from bamboo. Between 1959 and 1977, he wrote nine structural engineering manuals—*How to Build a Watertank from Bamboo and Cement*, *Rural Agricultural Irrigation with Bamboo Tanks*, *Rural Electrification*, *A House for Every Family*, *Making Oil from Coconut*, *Making Soap*, *Rural Sugar Factory*, *Integrated Coconut Factory*, and *Back a Yard Garden*. Into the twentieth-first century, his international posts included coordinator of the International Network of Small Island Developing States, NGOs, and Indigenous Peoples (INSNI); United Nations consultant on rural development and renewable energy sources; cofounder of the Southern Caucus of NGOs for Sustainable Development; and Consultant on Global Sustainability to the European Economic Community and the Commonwealth Fund Rural Development Program.

Chapter 1 unpacks Kamarakafego's upbringing in Bermuda, where myths of white supremacy, British colonialism, de facto segregation, black disen-

franchisement, labor exploitation, West Indian migration, black culture, and his family's Garveyism fueled his political development. By the time Kamarakafego reached secondary school, he often thought about how to best help his family, school, and community. His first foray into direct political action occurred in Cuba, where summer visits to family exposed him to both the Spanish-speaking black world and the exploitation of black migrant laborers working the sugarcane fields in the province of Central Chaparra. He entered the United States to attend New York University well aware of the international scope of racism and segregation.

Chapter 2 spans his time as a college student at Orangeburg's South Carolina State College, Durham's North Carolina Central University, and Pasadena's California Institute of Technology between the years 1954 and 1959. It is focused on radical memories of armed self-defense and political activism in South Carolina. As a college student, Kamarakafego read newspapers and watched news broadcasts about the "injustices and suffering of the people in Africa." He would ask himself, "How can *Me One* help to solve the injustices and suffering in Bermuda, Africa, and the world?"⁹ He was eventually expelled from South Carolina State College as a result of his involvement in a 1954–55 citywide boycott organized by the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter against White Citizen Council racial violence. This chapter challenges scholarship that has tended to render invisible South Carolina's black freedom struggle of the mid-1950s.

Chapter 3 explores Kamarakafego's political activities between the years 1959 and 1961. This was a particularly intense period for him, both politically and personally. He completed his college studies, traveled to Africa for the first time, got married, buried his father, and cofounded Bermuda's CUAS. While he had been "wearing Africa on his back" for much of his life, his time on the continent was transformative. According to Kamarakafego, he was ceremoniously given the name Pauulu Kamarakafego, "brown-skinned son of Chief Kamara," while visiting Kpelle relatives in Liberia.¹⁰

In 1961, he joined a major labor strike in Liberia, forcing him to flee to Ghana. Here, Kwame Nkrumah urged him to continue on to Kenya, where Kamarakafego lived from 1963 to 1967. Chapter 4 explores his time in East Africa, where he assisted Jomo Kenyatta's new government in "Africanizing" its national science and education programs. While teaching across the University of East Africa, he wrote his first manual on building water tanks with bamboo and cement.¹¹ In Kenya, he joined an African American expatriate community that included women such as Catherine Mbathi, Ruth Stutts

Njiri, and Ernestine Hammond Kiano. A fateful 1964 meeting in Kenya with Malcolm X led him to join the Black Power Steering Committee upon his return to the Americas. This chapter also details his involvement in party politics in Bermuda and on the Black Power conferences of Philadelphia (1968) and Bermuda.

Kamarakafego's Black Power politics were charged by the major political trends sweeping Africa—decolonization, sustainable development, liberation struggles, neocolonialism, sustainable development, universal adult suffrage, and pan-Africanism. Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate his growth into a leading coordinator of Black Power in the Caribbean. In particular, these chapters detail state repression of the movement in the region and Kamarakafego's botched efforts to organize a 1970 Black Power conference in Barbados.

While thwarted in the West Indies by government forces, the Black Power Committee decided to hold the Congress of African Peoples (CAP) in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1970; Chapter 7 focuses on Kamarakafego's significant roles in these talks. In 1969, Melbourne's Aborigines Advancement League invited him to Australia to support its Black Power struggle, which referred to land rights, self-reliance, and sovereignty for indigenous Australians. In return, he invited Bob Maza, Bruce McGuinness, Patsy Kruger, Jack Davis, and Sol Bellar to the talks. This chapter highlights the relationships between Kamarakafego and Australia's delegation to explore CAP's international dynamics.¹²

Chapter 8 is focused on Kamarakafego's significant role as a catalyst for 6PAC. While held in Tanzania from June 19 to 27, 1974, the organizing of the congress was a monumental five-year process that began as early as Bermuda's 1969 Black Power conference. Kamarakafego's environmentalist background was stamped on 6PAC's tangible aim to establish a pan-African science and technology center in Africa. His global network of black organizers were essential to the congress; through his relationships with activists from Oceania, leaders of Vanuatu's NHNP participated in the talks.

The congress solidified the deepening linkages between Africana liberation struggles and decolonization in Oceania. Chapter 9 explores Kamarakafego's involvement in the NHNP's liberation movement, his deportation from the condominium, and his return to Oceania—this time to Fiji. In Fiji, he forged relationships with activists Vanessa Griffen and Claire Slatyer; these women were leaders in the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement, the Pacific Women's Conference, and the Pacific People's Action Front.