

Akinyele Umoja is scholar-activist and author. He has been active over forty years in the Black liberation struggle. His activism, scholarship, and teaching are closely linked.

Activism

Umoja became an activist after graduating from high school in 1972. As a freshman at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), he began to write for UCLA's Black student newspaper NOMMO and joined the Muhammad Ahmad (Max Stanford) Defense Committee (MADC). Muhammad Ahmad was an organizer and associate of Malcolm X and Robert Williams, who was targeted by J. Edgar Hoover's "Cointelpro" program. Like many college students during the Black Power movement, Umoja would eventually drop out of college and commit himself to activism. He left UCLA after joining MADC and joined two Pan-Africanist, pro-Black self-determination organizations in Los Angeles, the African Peoples Party and the House of Umoja. Umoja is a founding member of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and the New Afrikan Peoples Organization.

Umoja's activism led to him meeting several important figures in the movement. Umoja would provide security and escort historic figures as reparation activist Queen Mother Moore and Imari Obadele (Malcolm X associate and founder of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika). Much of his political activism was focused around support for political prisoners. He has continued this work most of his adult life. Umoja has provided support for the legal defense of support of Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), Dr. Mutulu Shakur, Assata Shakur, the Republic of New Afrika 11, Gary Tyler, Jamil Al-Amin (H. Rap Brown), Kamau Sadiki, and Sekou Odinga among others.

Living in Los Angeles, Umoja also involved himself in campaign against police terrorism. He worked with residents of the Nickerson Gardens housing project to challenge police abuse and Black-on-Black crime. Umoja and his colleagues were also active in the Coalition Against Police Abuse (CAPA).

Umoja is also a Pan-Africanist and internationalist. He became a part of the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) in Los Angeles, which support African freedom fighters against Portuguese colonialism and white settler minority rule in Zimbabwe and South Africa. He has travelled such countries to Grenada, Cuba, Germany, the Basque region of Spain and France, Switzerland, and Haiti to express solidarity and share information about the status of Black human rights in the United States. Umoja helped support delegations from African liberation movements from South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, and the Congo in the United States. He also worked in solidarity with the fight for democracy and social justice in Guyana and in Haiti.

Scholarship

Umoja's writing was first published in Black Liberation movement publications such as NOMMO, Jihad News, Soulbook, Black Star, and By Any Means Necessary.

Currently, he is an Associate Professor and chair of the Department of African-American Studies at Georgia State University where he teaches courses on the history of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements and other Black political and social movements. Umoja is an active researcher and writer, focusing on the history of resistance of Afrikan people. New York University Press published Umoja's first single-authored book *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance and the Mississippi Freedom Movement* in April 2013.

Personal

Umoja's elders and guides in the movement taught him the household is "a unit of struggle." His marriage to activist and educator, Aminata Umoja, has worked to reflect that principle. Their family motto is "Upendo na Uhuru" (Ki-Swahili for Love and Freedom). The Umojas have been married for over three decades. They are the parents of two children, Tashiya and Chinua, who carry on their household's legacy. Tashiya is the co-director of Kilombo Academic and Cultural Institute and Chinua is a PhD student in Computer Science. The Umojas have a son-in-law, Ayinde M'Kanga, three grandchildren, Bem, Ire and Syng, and dozens of "godchildren" in California and Metro Atlanta community as part of their extended family.