

For And About You

By Harriett Muhammad

DEAR HARRIETT: I understand there are some people in the West Indies who, like ourselves, are dissatisfied with the white man running everything. They made inquiries to various African countries seeking a new home. Ethiopia replied, offering 30 to 40 acres of land to every skilled person. Is there any truth to this?

I believe Africa is, to some degree, to blame for our being here in the United States. Therefore, they should give us some land.—MR. F.J., Los Angeles, Calif.

DEAR MR. F.J. I haven't heard of any tracts of land being given away by Ethiopia, but I couldn't say definitely without knowing more about this group you mentioned. It just doesn't seem possible for a country like Ethiopia.

Ethiopia hasn't had any virgin land for thousands of years. Land there is owned by the Ethiopian aristocracy under a feudal system of government. Land to them is everything — security, wealth, a way of life. Can you see some private individual giving away tracts of land to skilled people? I have, however, been told by Liberian diplomats that their government will still give plots of land to black Americans to use for their betterment — provided they also do something or give something in return to the government.

There is something that many people fail to understand about land concepts and rights in Africa. The whole idea of land is a very complex subject and cannot be compared with Western concepts of land rights. Large tracts of SEEMINGLY virgin lands have been taken over by uninformed

Europeans who thought the land was vacant, while all the time these lands were held for certain purposes by the people in the areas.

In Africa some land is held for hunting and food gathering purposes. Other land is held for ritual and religious purposes, for it was the land founded by their ancestors, and as such is definitely inalienable. Under NO circumstances would they willingly part with these lands. Ancestral claims, among the Africans, have more weight than any claims stemming from inheritance, legal jurisdictions of foreign powers, or bills of sale. Some land just cannot be sold, given, or taken away from its rightful owners.

I could not begin to bring out all the salient features that connect land with political organizations, kinship systems, ancestral worship and patterns of accepted behavior in this limited amount of space. But just know that land is IT in Africa.

You say that you believe that Africa is to blame for our being here in the United States. No, AFRICA was not to blame. What was to blame was a force started in a few



MIGHTY CHARLES DAVIS, age 2, takes advice from an unseen trainer as he pursues his young career in boxing. The emergence of the young Muslim heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali has brought fresh impetus to

the sports, with the youngsters looking upon a new idol. Waiting his turn at the bag is Ronnell Booge (l.) while beyond bag puncher stands (l. to r.) Maurice Gibson, Katrina Gibson and Michelle Grant.

countries in West Africa that made existence survival of the fittest. When Europeans made a bid of one-gun-for-one slave, the Yuroba of Ogo in Nigeria, to name one group, started making slave raids to get guns to protect themselves from foreign intervention. The Dahomy, their neighbors, in turn got slaves in exchange for guns in order to defend themselves from the raids of the Yuroba. This whole social plague of slave raiding pushed on by "one-gun-one-slave" equation also took place in Angola and other areas.

The whole question of black Americans getting

land in Africa is dependent on suppositions and conditions. A good idea born too soon will die. Presently, we have many other problems to solve before we take up the land question. We should be concerned with obtaining training and technical know-how. No one needs unskilled labor.

African countries are welcoming black Americans who have something to offer, of course, because they know that we are, percentage wise, the best trained black people to be found. This is, so far, a strictly individual matter.

Yet, we MUST think of the well-being of our own mass-

es. What would happen if those who are skilled left the unskilled for better hunting grounds?

Something on your mind? Write and tell me about it.

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Confab Set for Cuba

WINNEBA, Ghana—Cuba in 1966 will be the next site for the African - Asian People's Solidarity Conference, it was announced here this week. Planning for the conference will take place in September this year in Cairo.

