

‘We can win this struggle’: Sankara’s message for today

written by Colby Byrd
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Thomas Sankara, President of Burkina Faso, at an international press conference on trees and forests at the Hotel Crillon in Paris, 1986.

“We can win this struggle if we choose to be architects and simply not bees.” –

[Thomas Sankara](#), *Imperialism is the arsonist of our forests and savannas*, 1986

We honor the life and revolutionary achievements of Thomas Sankara, known as “Africa’s Che Guevara.” A man on a mission to lift Burkina Faso out of the death grip of imperialism and transform it into a beacon of progress and true liberation on the African continent.

Under the leadership of Thomas Sankara, Upper Volta became the country of Burkina Faso, “The Land of Upright People.” Literacy rates rose exponentially across the whole country. Over two million Burkinabé children were vaccinated. He ended Burkina Faso’s reliance on Western aid and set out to create self-sufficiency for the country.

Land was redistributed amongst the working class and peasants of the country, and out of the hands of wealthy landlords under the control of Western imperialists. Ten million trees were planted across the country. Roads and railways were built to connect the country. All of these steps helped create better living conditions for the people of Burkina Faso while also healing the old wounds caused by imperialism and setting the country on a path towards progress.

Thomas Sankara saw the full picture of the global class struggle. He did not set out to create a better Burkina Faso without the country’s women. He banned genital mutilation, forced marriages and polygamy. Women were appointed to government positions and were able to, and encouraged to, join the country’s workforce and military. Pregnancy leave was granted for all expectant mothers.

He was a man committed to the people. Under his guidance, the old Western luxury and corruption within the Burkinabé government were done away with. Public servants drove cars produced in Burkina Faso and wore clothing made entirely of 100% Burkinabé cotton, tailored by Burkinabé artisans. He never allowed portraits and monuments of himself to be erected in public because he fully believed that it

was the people who made this progress happen. He said himself that there are “seven million Thomas Sankaras.”

His love of his country extended to the entire African continent. He believed that all of Africa had the right to tear away from the claws of Western imperialism. His passion for pan African liberation made him a target of Western imperialists and those of the African elite who wanted to continue gutting their continent all for their Western masters.

Thomas Sankara was brutally assassinated and gunned down in 1987, only four years into his presidency. Betrayed by Blaise Compaoré, a onetime ally turned rival who seized power and reversed Sankara’s policies until a popular revolution ousted him in 2014 and sent him into exile. France has yet to release its classified records regarding the assassination of Thomas Sankara.

In the 21st century, the revolutionary spirit of Thomas Sankara lives on. Currently, Captain Ibrahim Traoré, the sitting president of Burkina Faso, is continuing the mission set out by Thomas Sankara to see a fully liberated Burkina Faso, free of neocolonial rule and Western interference.

