



photo by Eugene O'Neal

Marcus Riddick takes a shot during last year's basketball action.

## Shaunell McMillan on the passing of *Kwame Toure*

Guest Columnist

By Shaunell McMillan

You may have missed the limited news coverage on the death of Kwame Toure. Ask your friends who Kwame Toure is and you may often get a puzzled look or an indifferent shrug. It may even be hard for you to find the name Kwame Toure in your history books.

The fact that his name is unknown and unacknowledged by so many is a shame in itself because not many decades ago Toure stood as a hero to millions of black youth and as one of America's leading proponents for change.

Some of you may be more familiar with the name Stokley Carmichael, which was his birth name. While a student at Howard University, Toure, along with hundreds of other students, was beaten and jailed repeatedly in efforts to end segregation. He was a participant in the Freedom Rides of the early 1960's and later risked his life to help register thousands of disenfranchised African-Americans throughout

the South.

It was under the name Carmichael that he came into the spotlight as chairperson of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a group that mobilized college students from across the country in order to stand for the civil rights of blacks in America.

Carmichael was a leader whose views were often seen as controversial and revolutionary but he was not alone in the opinion that revolution (change) is exactly what was needed to end injustice in this country. In a 1966 march in Mississippi he popularized the phrase "Black Power" and, in doing this, endorsed what would become the label for a movement that would inspire millions.

"Black Power" was called racist by many people but Toure explained: "It is a call for black people in this country to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations to resist the racist institutions and values of this society." It was political and economic empowerment.

Toure was named Prime Minister of the Black Panther Party in 1968, an or-

ganization known for its militant stand against the system of apartheid that existed here in America. In our history classes we are often taught about Martin Luther King Jr. and others who advocated non-violence, but rarely do we discuss the fact that like Toure, many blacks were ready to pick up arms in defense against a system which they viewed as oppressive and violent itself.

In 1969 he left the U.S. for the African nation of Guinea and began to advocate the establishment of a homeland in Africa for oppressed blacks. Toure contended that capitalism and Western Imperialism had led to the exploitation of billions of non-whites around the globe. He changed his name from Stokley Carmichael and took the name Kwame Toure from African leaders Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) and Ahmed Sekou Toure (Guinea). He also founded the All-People's Revolutionary Party (AAPRP) which still exists today.

It was in Guinea that Toure died of prostate cancer on Sunday, Nov. 15. He was 57.

Toure received much criticism from

black and white leaders for advocating socialism and "Black Power," and for speaking against capitalism, Zionism and the United States. Though many disagreed with his fiery cries for revolution, it cannot be denied that many of the rights that we take for granted today would not be possible if it was not for the sacrifice of Toure and others like him.

His life should hold a special interest to the college students of today. Often we struggle to graduate and take little time to get involved in anything that we perceive of being out of our individual comfort zones.

Many students have no idea that only decades ago cries for freedom rang from campuses and youth across the nation. They were people our age who were willing to risk their lives and demand revolution (change). Toure stood as a voice for thousands of black youth and in keeping his name and memory alive, may we never lose sight of the difference one voice can make in the struggle to bring about change in society.