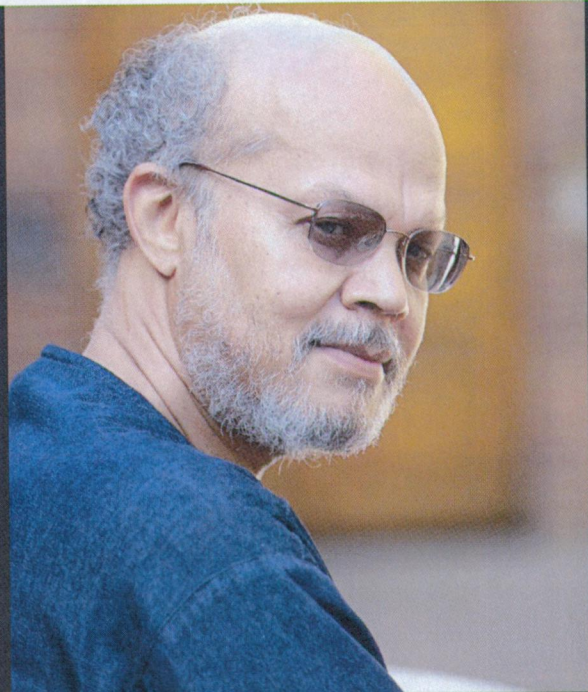


POWER LECTURE SERIES



Dr. Abdul Alkalimat

BLACK STUDIES & BLACK LIBERATION WHAT WENT WRONG? / HOW CAN WE FIX IT?

February 20, 2016

General Motors Theater/Charles H. Wright Museum

2pm - 4pm

Presentation - Q&A - Book Signing

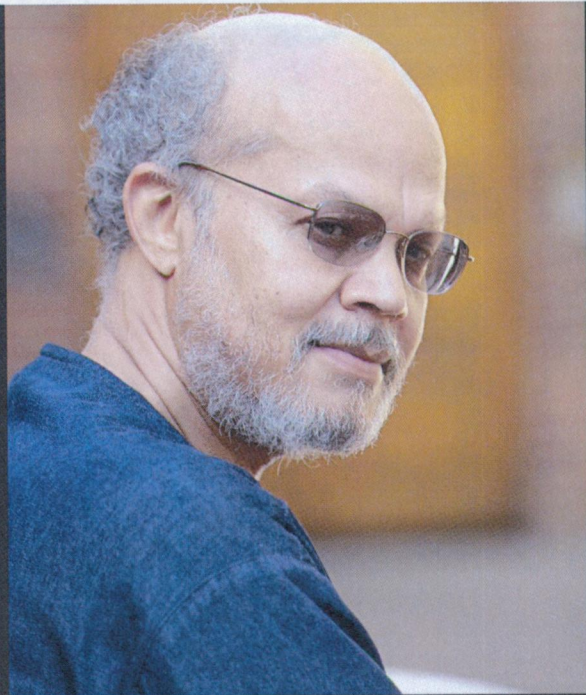
Dr. Abdul Alkalimat, Professor Emeritus – Scholar Activist
African American Studies and Graduate Library and Information Science
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



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YEARS

An Experience You Won't Forget
A History You'll Always Remember

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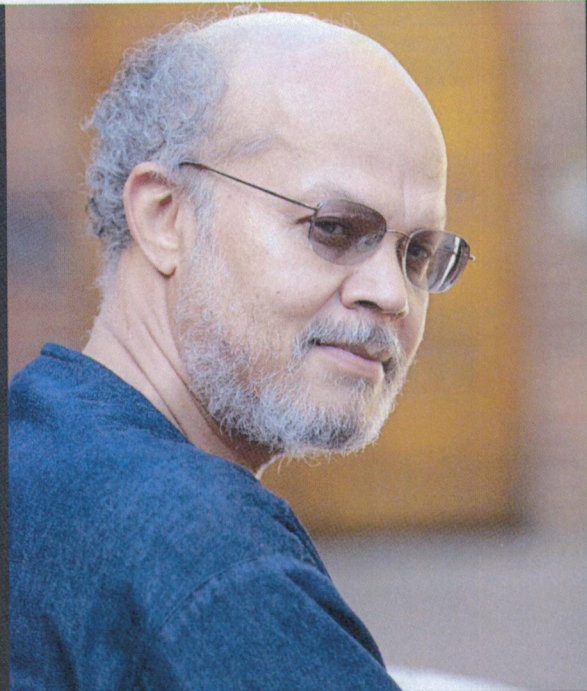
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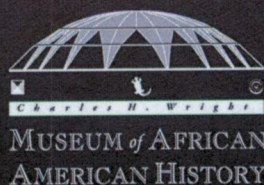
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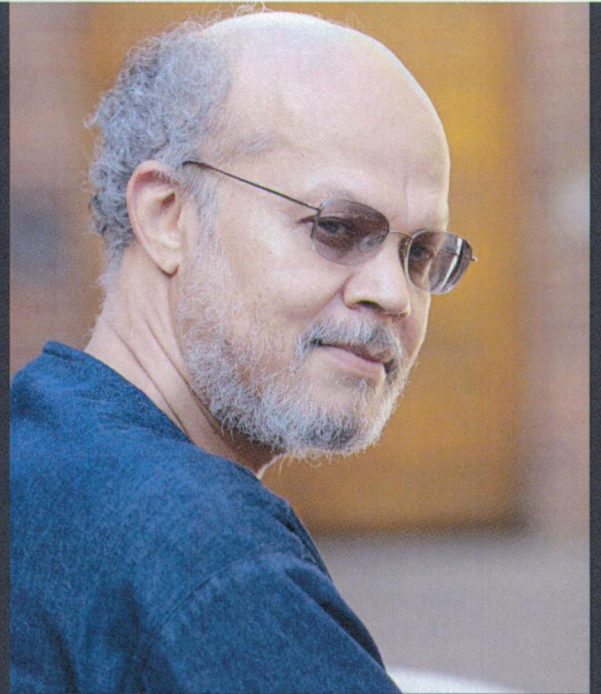
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50
YEARS

An Experience You Won't Forget
A History You'll Always Remember



50th Anniversary
An Experience You Won't Forget
A History You'll Always Remember

Power Lecture Series

Black Studies & Black Liberation: What Went Wrong & How Can We Fix it?

~ Speaker, Dr. Abdul Alkalimat (McWorter), Professor Emeritus, African American Studies, Liberal Arts, and Library and Information Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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BLACK STUDIES AND BLACK LIBERATION
WHAT WENT WRONG?
HOW CAN WE FIX IT?

Abdul Alkalimat

Charles Wright museum of African American History
Detroit, Michigan
February 20, 1916

TITLE SLIDE

Good afternoon

Brothers and sisters, comrades, and friends

It is a wonderful experience to be here in Detroit, here at the great Charles Wright museum of Black history, to share with you some thoughts and think with you about our struggle. But first I would be morally and politically remiss if I didn't begin with some comments on the genocidal attack against the working class here in Michigan, especially Black workers and the masses of poor people.

Exactly 80 years ago the Great Flint Sit-Down Strike was a high point in the mobilization of the working class against the exploitative practice of the capitalist giants, in this case General Motors. Now 80 years later the capitalist state, using a pitiful Black bureaucrat as Emergency Manager, took full vengeance and poisoned everybody left in Flint, especially now that it is a majority Black city facing permanent unemployment because of the way the auto industry has retooled around the new technologies. Everyone in the world feels the pain of Flint, and more than that we are so ready for a righteous rise up, a rise up that can ignite the many, it can be the

single spark we all know is coming, the single spark for the prairie fire we need.

And the Detroit schools crisis. When they needed us to work in the factory they managed to teach us to read and write, even for the European immigrants who came not speaking a word of English. Now, when they don't need our labor they are damming us to suffer the complete breakdown of our schools. The snake they had in Flint was commanded to come to Detroit so he could continue his evil deeds.

Detroit has been a city of great struggle and great revolutionary vision. Again I can't come to Detroit and not raise the name of a mighty revolutionary voice, one of our commanding officers, General Baker – Long live his name, his legacy, his example for the youth, his relentless path of revolutionary struggle against the evils of the capitalist system. Gen was my man. We worked together, we traveled the world together, the youth of Detroit must learn about him and raise up his memory as a light to show the path forward through these dark days we are living through at this time.

SLIDE OF OUTLINE

In this talk I want to contrast the general view of Black Studies with a new more inclusive view that honors our

people both in and outside of formal education. On this basis I want to share some thoughts about the 1930's and the 1960's to demonstrate when Black Studies was actually part of the Black liberation Movement, but then after the 1960's and as an unintended consequence of higher levels of integration Black Studies was delinked from the Black liberation movement. But then in today's terms I want to suggest how a new future is possible that reignites another great debate and on that basis a new connection between Black Studies and Black Liberation.

SLIDE OF THREE STAGES OF BLACK STUDIES

The history of the current manifestation of Black Studies is actually a three stage history, overlapping stages and all part of the process depending on how the forces of power impact Black people and what kinds of responses are made to those forces. As usually understood Black Studies was first a social movement, a project of the Black power assault on higher education. After King was killed there was a massive enrollment of Black Students, but higher education wasn't ready for these first generation students with their minds fresh with Black power as part of their consciousness. They broke up business as usual and created a new academic program. So then Black Studies became part of the academic mainstream and had to deal with all of its norms and

procedures. Of course beginning in the mid 1990's information technology hit hard and everything began to change. Now Black studies in the institutions is becoming a knowledge network, using email, websites, listservs, blogs and many other tools to the work.

SLIDE OF SURVEY OF BLACK STUDIES

We did a study and you can pick up a copy of the study (free) after the talk. Black Studies in higher education is based on the fact that 76% of colleges and universities in the US have been impacted by Black Studies. Using the official websites of institutions we found that 20% (total of 361) had formal administrative units including departments, programs, centers, and institutes. In addition in other departments 56% had courses with titles that strongly suggested that they came after the rise of the Black Studies movement.

But this is only part of the story, and in some respects not the most important part of the story. After all this story leaves most Black people out, we become objects for others to study even if that also includes Black academics.

SLIDE ON 1930'S – 1960'S

So the usual story is what we have just covered – Black Studies as activity within mainstream institutions. My argument is that this is a narrow view and must be

extended to include the community and the movement. So before I get to what went wrong I want to establish what went right. The major high points are when all three aspects of Black Studies are in sync, community institutions, the Black liberation movement, and Black Studies academic programs.

SLIDE ON HISTORICAL PERIODIZATION

But first a comment on how this fits into Black history in general. The major point that must always be made is that all politics and culture is based on the material conditions that shape the social and economic life of the community. This slide is a diagram of the major changes that Black people have faced over the last several centuries in this country. Modes of social cohesion are when several generations experience more or less a similar situation, but during times of social disruption a change in the material conditions forces a change in the thinking of people because they face a new situation and have to have a new analysis and new plans to struggle.

Each time things change there is a new GREAT DEBATE

SLIDE ON THE TRADITION IS DEBATE

SLIDE ON EMANCIPATION DEBATE

SLIDE ON SELF-DETERMINATION DEBATE

SLIDE ON BLACK LIBERATION DEBATE

So we will first take up the Self Determination debate.

SLIDE ON THE SELF DETERMINATION DEBATE

Self-Determination Debate

After the formal end of slavery, the development of a Black national identity was still anchored in mass labor of picking cotton, now as sharecroppers rather than as slaves. They worked with the same productive forces (tools) but were now not legally owned, but most were nevertheless chained to the land in a system of debt peonage. Those who were living in the Northern cities lived crowded spatially into tightly defined ghettos. But with higher education becoming more available as explained above a new intellectual leadership strata emerged as part of the Black middle class. This new intelligentsia was focused as much on freedom in their time as the National Negro Conventions held before the Civil War were in their time.

Much like physics, in the sense that action leads to reaction, historical dialectics of social forces often acts in this same way. Sometimes it is immediate and sometimes it plays out over years, even decades depending on one's framework of analysis. Hughes, in an important article on

a less well known united front effort, set the stage for the 1920's:

The idea of creating a mass movement among Black organizations had been discussed for several decades after the end of the Civil War. It took the events of the Red Summer, between June and December 1919, to bring that idea to fruition. During the last six months of 1919 seventy-six Blacks were lynched and there were twenty-five race riots....Eleven Blacks were burned alive....In Chicago alone thirty-eight persons died, 537 were injured, and around one thousand were left homeless from a four-day reign of terror. The United States in 1919 was not a safe place for Afro-Americans, and public sensitivity on racial issues was at a new low. (C Alvin Hughes, The Negro Sanhedrin, Journal of Negro History 1984)

SLIDE OF KELLY MILLER

A call for a national meeting was issued by Kelly Miller, a Dean at Howard University, in order to unite the diverse forces within a common front.

Given the complexity of the "Negro Problem" and the numerous political persuasions of different Black groups, it is difficult to conceive that any one organization could ever establish a broad enough base

to satisfy all parties concerned. However Miller believed that even if the various factions in the Black community could not agree on specific programs and methods, they could and must agree on certain common and basic principles and goals to achieve. (Hughes, p 3)

He named this conference, the Negro Sanhedrin, after the Jewish Sanhedrin that was a council of seventy-one wise elders during the Roman period. He got six organizations to issue the call: The NAACP, the International Uplift League, the Friends of Negro Freedom, African Blood Brotherhood, the National Equal Rights League, and the national race Congress. At a planning meeting the ABB was a major player. Their program was clearly the most militant as it involved the following:

Armed resistance against lynching, self-determination for the Negro in states where he constituted a majority, enfranchisement, end of Jim Crowism, equal rights, trade unionism, cooperation between Black and white workers, and the eradication of imperialism in Africa and in the West Indies. (Hughes p 5)

Briggs was the keynote speaker at the main planning meeting during which he stated:

● If we are slaves in Africa we cannot expect to be accepted as freemen in the United States, certainly our status in the United States will affect our status in other parts of the world.

Miller on the other hand made his remarks focus on the American identity of Black people and the need for the struggle to focus on realizing political rights as citizens. The Sanhedrin met in Chicago, January 1924, and met from Monday morning until late Friday. Over 60 organizations sent over 300 delegates. However, after the meeting little was directly done and hence it raised expectations but did not follow through with organization or political accomplishments. It was an important experience however. Ralph Bunche summed it up this way almost 20 years later:

The Sanhedrin is significant chiefly because of the broadness of its perspective, its nationalism and its intent to build Negro unity. In all three of those qualities it was a modern forerunner of the National Negro Congress. (Hughes p 11)

SLIDE OF NATIONAL NEGRO CONGRESS

● The first National Negro Congress mass meeting was held in Chicago in February 1936. Again, the Great Depression was the crisis that precipitated this gathering

of forces into a broad debate to chart a path toward unity and a program for the freedom struggle. The NNC was initiated by two Harvard graduate students, John Davis and Robert Weaver, and joined by a committee of radical faculty at Howard University that constituted itself as the Joint Committee on National Recovery. The founding took place after a conference that was held at Howard in May, 1935. It was mainly staffed by Howard faculty, but included many workers and trade unionists, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the National Urban League, Church officials, school administrators, government officials, and others.

Jonathan Holloway (Afro American dean of Yale College) describes the beginning of the National Negro Congress:

Inspired by the numerous calls to arms at the Howard University conference, an enthusiastic group gathered at Bunche's campus house after the three day meeting adjourned and sketched out a specific plan that they believed would finally provide a means for a unified workers' movement to develop in the United States. At this meeting the National Negro Congress (NNC) was born.

Even though the first meeting of the NNC convened in Chicago a full nine months after the Howard

conference, the congress got off to a rousing start with over 800 delegates in attendance and as many as 8,000 people appearing for the open evening sessions. (Holloway, confronting the veil, p 75)

The Communist Party had changed its organizing strategy to build what it called a Popular Front. George Dimitrov, executive secretary of the Communist International, declared the new political line as a “People’s Front Against Fascism and War.” Given the danger of fascism the plan was to build broad united fronts that would reach deep into the middle classes in unity with the working class. This was a framework for the NNC, and at its launch was quite a success. Gellman describes its founding success:

On a bitterly cold February weekend, 750 delegates from twenty-eight states traveled to Chicago’s South Side Bronzeville neighborhood to register their names at the Eight Regiment Armory for the first conclave of the NNC. Inside the armory, banners read “Jobs and Adequate Relief for a Million Negro Destitute Families” and “Black America Demands an End to Lynching, Mob Violence.” Outside, thousands huddled around loudspeakers to hear the speeches of what the Chicago Defender termed “IKN’s” – “Internationally Known Negroes.” Top

Black intellectuals, churchmen, labor leaders, and artists – including Ralph Bunche of Howard University, the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Jr., James Ford of the Communist Party, Lester Granger of the National Urban League, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and Arna Bontemps – debated during sessions on unions, youth, churches, business, war and fascism, the role of women, and interracial relations....The NNC convention in Chicago proved unique because its participants not only talked about working-class Blacks but also looked to them for leadership. (Gellman, Death Blow to Jim Crow, 2012)

The industrial base of the US heading into WW II was recovering from the Great Depression based on the New Deal policies of President Roosevelt and the economist John Maynard Keynes. But Black workers were still getting shafted by the norm of racist discrimination and marginalization. People were open to a new level of militancy, so the leaders of the different social forces of the Black community were coming together into a common front. The NNC was active in trade union organizing, lending at least one of their paid organizers to the Steel Workers Organizers Committee. The NNC also made an impact by supporting the development of the

● South Side Community Art Center as a WPA Project. This became one of the main meeting places for Black artists and facilitated their interaction with political radicals

The third national meeting of the NNC was held in Washington DC, in 1940 attended by over 1,200 delegates, including 370 white delegates. There was increased red baiting from the US Congress and some people began to follow this lead in their criticism of the NNC. The key figure in this was A Philip Randolph of the Sleeping Car Porters Union. He had been elected NNC president at the Chicago meeting, but declined to run again at the third meeting in Washington DC. In his speech he criticized the increased role of whites, the increased role of the CIO, and the increased role of the Community Party. On the other hand Randolph continued his fight for fair labor practices by the federal government. This led to his calling for the first great March on Washington in 1941 that pushed President Roosevelt to create the Fair Employment Practice Commission. So the strategic unity of the NNC was broken, but the fight kept going, and the debate keep going as well. This is the important point.

● **SLIDE ON THE THREE LEADERS OF BLACK SELF-DETERMINATION**

Again, there were three basic positions summed up by the following quotes. Booker T Washington on accomodationism:

The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.

W E B DuBois on transformation:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and famous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. You're playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that people

won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in all of us. And when we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others

Marcus Garvey on emigration:

A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots....Africa for the Africans... at home and abroad!....I have no desire to take all black people back to Africa; there are blacks who are no good here and will likewise be no good there.... God and Nature first made us what we are, and then out of our own created genius we make ourselves what we want to be.

That was the 1930's. These issues continue to be the subject of Black historical; reflection in Black Studies.

Now let's turn to the 1960's.

SLIDE ON BLACK LIBERATION DEBATE

Black Liberation Debate

The dialectic that pushed us forward to the next great debate was the repression of the fascistic period led by

Senator Joseph McCarthy from Wisconsin in the 1950's on the one hand, and the 1954 Supreme Court decision about integrating public schools. McCarthy had built a repressive culture of fear and retreat by leading an anti-communist crusade in the US during the first phase of the cold war with the Soviet Union led by Josef Stalin. Countering this, the Civil Rights Movement broke through and liberated people to speak and act against racism and related forms of repression. The Brown decision hit Black consciousness like it was a second emancipation proclamation, it energized the people to rebuild the fight for social equality and justice. On the global scale Black people were energized by the 1957 liberation of Ghana followed by the Cuban revolution take off in 1959. Africa and the African Diaspora was awakened. Black youth grabbed this spirit of change and with their sit-in tactic in 1959 and 1960 sparked a massive movement against Jim Crow practices that had chained Black people down.

The fight against Jim Crow was a necessary fight for democracy, especially the de jure legal forms of segregation that were so pervasive in the Southern states. But this enabled the mainstream to help turn the movement from the strategic goal of freedom to one of civil rights, from revolution to reform within the system.

This reflected class differences within the Black community, with the middle class fighting for reform compared to the masses of Black people who were gravitating toward the revolutionary path of the freedom struggle.

SLIDE ON GENERAL BAKER AND LRBW VETERANS

The base of the Black struggle was the proletarian force formed in the heart of the major industries of steel, auto, and other forms of manufacturing. This is a slide of the Detroit experience, both yesterday at the height of the industrial system and today as these veterans fight on in their senior years as retired workers. Again at the center is General Baker with Marian Kramer his life partner, Daryl “Waistline” Mitchell and others. These were and are sho nuff revolutionary brothers and sisters.

SLIDE ON MARTIN LUTHER KING

As the struggle intensified even within the Civil Rights Movement a contradiction began to emerge between reformism and linking the fight for reform to a revolutionary strategic vision for societal transformation. The key figure in this tension was Rev Dr. Martin Luther King. He was born into a church leadership network, and reared in the deep theological and rhetorical of its

traditions. While a student at Morehouse College (1944 – 1948) he was mentored by Benjamin Mays, just missing DuBois as he left Atlanta University the very year King entered.

King became the iconic voice of the Civil Rights Movement keeping it linked to the Black church, its social gospel tradition of theology for social justice, and an evolving consciousness that increasingly went beyond reform to considering the necessity of fighting for a completely different new system.

There are 40 million poor people here. And one day we must ask the question, “Why are there 40 million poor people in America?” And when you begin to ask that question, you are raising questions about the economic system, about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalist economy. And I’m simply saying that more and more, we’ve got to begin to ask questions about the whole society. (quoted in Cone, for my people, pp 189-190)

He was an intellectual trained by the mainstream, attaining a PhD degree at Boston University. On his journey he was vilified as a radical that had to be ostracized, he was both embraced and rejected by the militants of SNCC inside the Civil Rights Movement as

well as Malcolm X outside of that movement. He wrote books and laced his speeches with references to great thinkers from Black intellectual history and great minds from all over the world.

One of his most important speeches that links him to the rationale and program of research in Black Studies is a 1967 speech he gave to the American Psychological Association titled “The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement. He stated:

Negroes want the social scientist to address the white community and “tell it like it is.” White America has an appalling lack of knowledge concerning the reality of Negro life. One reason some advances were made in the South during the past decade was the discovery by northern whites of the brutal facts of southern segregated life. It was the Negro who educated the nation by dramatizing the evils through non-violent protest. The social scientist played little or no role in disclosing truth. The Negro action movement with raw courage did it virtually alone. When the majority of the country could not live with the extremes of brutality they witnessed, political remedies were enacted and customs were altered.

(<http://www.apa.org/monitor/features/king-challenge.aspx>)

● He goes beyond this by indicating how Black people were not only acting, but were becoming conscious of the bigger social context for their struggle. King explained the origin of Black Studies and focused on the role of the social sciences:

Ten years of struggle have sensitized and opened the Negro's eyes to reaching. For the first time in their history Negroes have become aware of the deeper causes for the crudity and cruelty that governed white society's responses to their needs. They discovered that their plight was not a consequence of superficial prejudice but was systemic.

● The slashing blows of backlash and front lash have hurt the Negro, but they have also awakened him and revealed the nature of the oppressor. To lose illusion is to gain truth. Negroes have grown wiser and more mature and they are hearing more clearly those who are raising fundamental questions about our society whether the critics be Negro or white. When this process of awareness and independence crystallizes, every rebuke, every evasion, become hammer blows on the wedge that splits the Negro from the larger society.

● Social science is needed to explain where this development is going to take us. Are we moving

away, not from integration, but from the society which made it a problem in the first place? How deep and at what rate of speed is this process occurring? These are some vital questions to be answered if we are to have a clear sense of our direction.

King was speaking to the white academic mainstream that had no inclination nor capacity to respond. This task was to be taken up by Black Studies. He somehow knew this:

On March 19, 1968, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. proclaimed: "We're going to let our children know that the only philosophers that lived were not Plato and Aristotle, but W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke came through the universe."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alain_LeRoy_Locke

SLIDE OF MALCOLM X BOOK COVERS

The Black radical tradition was being reborn in an alternative social motion to the Civil Rights Movement, the legacy of Black Nationalism as embodied in the life and work of Malcolm X. Malcolm, like King, was born into his future role. His parents were active members of Garvey's UNIA, and his class orientation linked him to the working class both in occupation and being "schooled" not so much in formal institutions but in

apprenticeship relationships in the streets and prisons. Malcolm was recruited into the Nation of Islam and became a protégé of Elijah Muhammad its supreme leader. His consciousness evolved with the social motion of Black resistance, especially in the ideological cauldron of the centers of Black radicalism – Harlem, Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles among other places. Beginning with the dogma of the NOI Malcolm was plunged into debate with all strands of Black radicalism and was transformed. His transformation led a movement transformation from being sectarian to being a force in the dialectical development of the overall Black liberation movement.

Malcolm was a revolutionary who thought “out of the box.” Being keenly aware of the need for study he directed people not only to African American history, but to world history as well:

Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research. And when you see that you’ve got problems, all you have to do is examine the historic method used all over the world by others who have problems similar to yours. Once you see how they got theirs straight, then you know how you can get yours straight. (Malcolm X Speaks, p 8)

One of the first things I think young people, especially nowadays, should learn is how to see for yourself and listen for yourself and think for yourself. Then you can come to an intelligent decision for yourself. If you form the habit of going by what you hear others say about someone, or going by what others think about someone, instead of searching that thing out for yourself and seeing for yourself, you will be walking west when you think you are going east, and you will be walking east when you think you are walking west. This generation especially of our people has a burden, more so than any other time in history. The most important thing that we can learn to do today is think for ourselves.

It's good to keep wide open ears and listen to what everybody else has to say, but when you come to make a decision, you have to weigh all of what you've heard on its own, and place it where it belongs, and come to a decision for yourself, you'll never regret it. But if you form the habit of taking what somebody else says about a thing without checking it out for yourself, you'll find that other people will have you hating your friends and loving your enemies. This is one of the things that our people are beginning to learn today that it is very

important to think out a situation or yourself. If you don't you'll always be maneuvered into a situation where you are never fighting your actual enemies, where you will find yourself fighting your own self. (Talks to Young people, pp 4-5)

In actual fact the main national Civil Rights leaders made a pact to not debate Malcolm X as they were aware that the national mood was not trending in their favor and he was too skilled to risk being defeated in a public forum. However, as de facto proxies for King and the rest, Malcolm did debate James Farmer, Byard Rustin, Louis Lomax, and James Baldwin. (Ogbar p 53-54)

SLIDE MALCOLM'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

So for the impact of Malcolm X, and this was indicative of many diverse aspects of the movement, Malcolm sent people into the libraries to dig into the Black intellectual and radical tradition to get clarity and direction for the struggle as it was developing.

He was a master teacher in the community, in the Mosque, and on many campuses. READ THE SLIDE

The Black Liberation debate swung into high gear, and it was this tide of study and struggle that created Black Studies on campus. So at the beginning of the current

institutional phase of Black Studies activists became professors, and continued to be activists. The turning point was the great Black Power conference in Newark in 1967 followed by the founding conference of the African Heritage Studies Association in 1970 at Howard University.

SLIDE THE DEBATE CONTINUED

Major conferences carried the debate into electoral politics, into a consensus about a Pan African consciousness. There was also Black Panther gatherings that led us to rethink the US constitution in Philadelphia in 1970 attended by 7,000 people.

SLIDE THE ALSC DEBATE 1974

Perhaps the highpoint of the Marxist Nationalist Debate in the movement was the 1974 national conference at Howard University. This combined spirited speeches and a massive unity protest march. As a movement ALSC was based in the community and on campus. Here in this slide John Warfield (UT Austin), Akinlabi (SUNY Buffalo), Baraka (SUNY Stony Brook), me (Fisk), Owusu (MXLU)

SLIDE THE AHSA DEBATE AT WAYNE STATE 1977

The high point of the Marxist national debate in Black Studies was at the 1977 AUSA conference held here in Detroit at Wayne State under the chair of Prof Geneva Smitherman. Perhaps the only time that a national conference cancelled 12 breakout sessions because the participants demanded the debate that started at 9am go forward all day! Everyone learned and most were sent back to the library to do more reading, to learn more, and to affirm the need for Black Studies as it connected to the struggle.

SLIDE THE BRC DEBATE 1998

Two decades later we reunited and continued the debate. Of the five people that started the BRC, four were Black Studies faculty and one a trade union official. This was a reboot of what the National Negro Congress was like.

Every part of the freedom movement came to be counted in the debate, the desire to unite was a powerful imperative.

SLIDE ON BLACK STUDIES AND THE DEBATES

Read the slide

These are the key questions for us as we need to re ignite the debate and re-commit ourselves to building a unity of our freedom forces.

But it is the condition of our community that has to drive this and not the campus based intellectuals because the logic of our struggle is incompatible with mainstream institutional norms.

SLIDE ON THE DELINKING

What went wrong?

1. The material class basis got hit with transformative technology – workers with stable families and institutions, decline of trade unions, attack against anything “public” and turning our communities into drug infested war zones, forbidden zones where nobody wants to live
2. The global developments in Africa were reversed and Afro-Pessimism took hold, so the organizations we fought for have turned into their opposites for example the ANC in South African or ZANU in Zimbabwe
3. In Black Studies we had an extreme polarity tear our unity apart – right politics took over, Post Modernism of those who were raised up into the mainstream, Afro-centrism for those few inside to reign over the masses who were more marginalized. The context of the masses of people – the structural exploitation and genocidal racism was delinked. The post-modernists focused on the texts but out of context, and the Afro-

centrists looked more backward to past highs but failed to project a path for future highs.

SLIDE THE DEBATE CONTINUES

The debate continues, but the main point is that these voices point to the crisis without an anchor into a new re connecting of the Black liberation movement with the campus and Black Studies

1. Houston Baker: attacks his colleagues for betraying the legacy of the movement in the comfort of their class rooms
2. Noliwe Rooks: exposes the role of the NGO funding streams in impacting the direction of Black Studies
3. Cornel West: on the other hand West throws himself into the heart of the street struggles but as an individual without an organized plan for reenergizing Black Studies
4. Michael Dawson: a person trained in the movement who is calling for the rebirth of a Black left, but again without a plan for the path forward

SLIDE ON NEW POSSIBILITIES

1. Black Lives Matter – origin, but who is the message for (Hands up don't shoot) not your mama's movement, e.g. Jesse I am somebody I may be poor (while Jesse goes to Wall Street)

- 2. Philadelphia conference – we don't need to read books
- 3. Dyson supporting Obama and Clinton, while advancing the notion that the system can be self-correcting.
- 4. Main point is that we have to avoid being played (Google gave \$600K to Black Lives Matters, Soros) will they fund the revolution. Just like the trade unions, Black Studies professionals have stable incomes and therefore have the possibility of self-financing what we need for our freedom struggle.

SLIDE ON THE NEXT GREAT DEBATE

● The fundamental crisis is a deep contradiction in the current stage of capitalism. If they are building a system for the production and distribution of good and services without the need for human labor and therefore without wages being payed out then the system can only exist if consumption is not based on money. Our needs exist, and the goods and services will exist. This is the reason you don't want to debate capitalism versus socialism, they don't want you to do this because it is the ultimate threat.

● The middle class Black studies professors are scared to do this for fear they will lose their campus cred, might lose their job or not get tenure. So we have a presidential race where the softest version of socialism is being put on the

agenda by Bernie Sanders and lots of Black people are afraid to stand up and say that's what we are for. On the other hand the PEW survey of US public opinion finds that a major of Black people are against capitalism and for socialism. But check South Carolina, and especially the Congressional Black Caucus – they are so far up into the system that they have lost their vision of what freedom has to mean.

In terms of Black Studies Harvard is a good example. They are the HNIC center that the system has certified. But their leader is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, sitting proudly among the very top servants of the ruling class. They are so slick that they have a Hip Hop Institute and get rappers to contribute money to Harvard. We live in very strange times.

But the fix is not going to come from the intellectuals, not from any aspect of the campus. The fix has to come from the movement, and the movement has to align itself with the objective necessity of class struggle in the community – the working class and the new class of the poorest permanently unemployed. We have to be our own saviors.

This means that it will be study circles in the community, the exploited and oppressed becoming conscious and aware of what going down. No ignorant people have ever

● been able to throw off the shackles of their oppression. We've done it before, and we can do it again. Of course this means we have to delink from the mechanisms that seduce us into thinking we can't defeat the enemy, in fact we don't even have clarity about who the enemy is.

Let me hip you –

IT'S THE WHOLE DAMN CAPITALIST SYSTEM.

SLIDE ON THE NEXT STEP

Let's have a discussion about all of this and more about what we can do.

SLIDE ON THANK YOU

●

Black Studies and Black Liberation What went wrong? How can we fix it?



Abdul Alkalimat
February 20, 2016

Outline

1. What is Black Studies?
2. Black Studies in the 1930's
3. Black Studies in the 1960's
4. Black Studies today
5. How can we change Black Studies?



Historical development of Black Studies

Black Studies as social movement

Black liberation movement targets higher education and creates new intellectual space for creative work to serve the needs of the people



Black Studies as academic profession

Black Studies conforms to campus culture and administrative practices and becomes estranged from the community

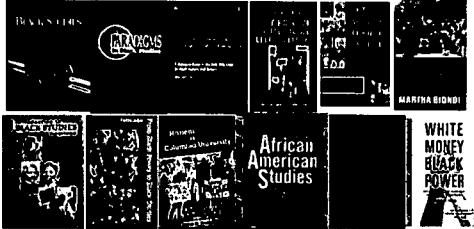


Black Studies as knowledge network

With digital technology, Black Studies begins to reunite with the community via cyberspace and become a major global discourse



African American Studies 2013 A National Web Based Survey



Department of African American Studies
University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

We need to rethink Black Studies



Usual Story: The academic program that developed after Black people began to integrate mainstream higher education in the 1960's

New Story: The Black rational reflection and creative cultural production that documents and interprets the Black experience – in the community, in the movement, in the schools – everywhere we are!

1930's – 1960's

**Modes of
Social cohesion**

**Modes of
Social disruption**



Africa

Slavery

Rural

Urban

Information

Slave trade

Emancipation

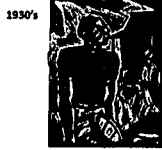
Great migrations

Crisis

Material conditions are the basis for Black intellectual tradition

The tradition is debate

The radical Black canonical tradition = three great Black debates



Three great debates:

Emancipation
Self-Determination
Black Liberation

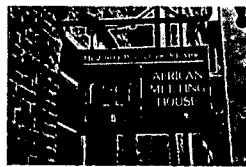


Three main solutions:

Escape
Persuade
Fight

Emancipation Debate:

How can Black people get free?



The Abolitionist Movement, The Civil War, The Reconstruction

Self-Determination Debate

How should Black people organize their "freedom"?



Niagara Movement




National Negro Business League

Segregation, Migration, Integration


Black Liberation Debate

The debate made a revolutionary leap to changing all of society!




Self-Determination Debate

How should Black people organize their "freedom"?



Niagara Movement National Negro Business League

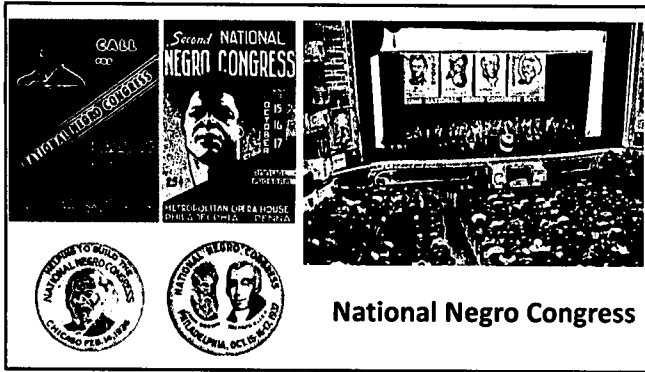
Segregation, Migration, Integration

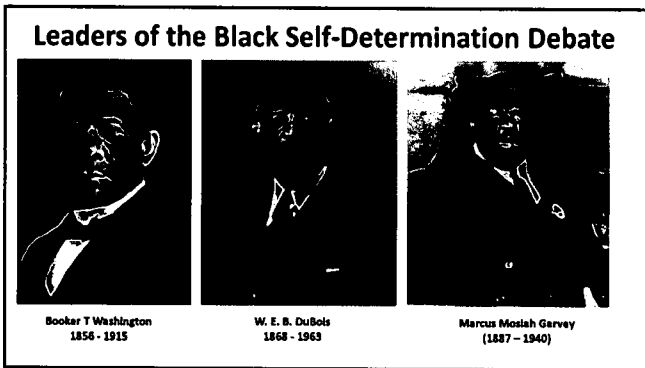


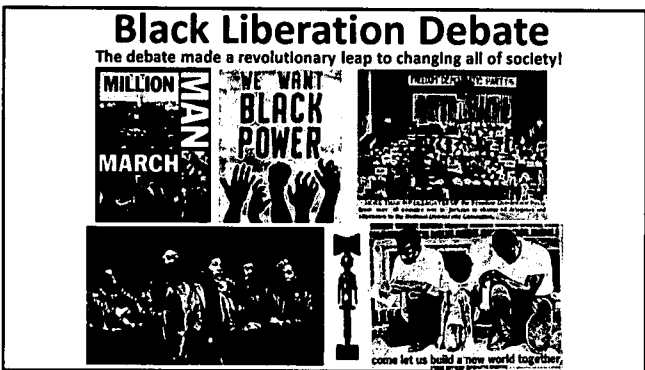
Kelly Miller
(1863 – 1939)
Dean, Howard University

"The time has come for all to pull together. If we continue to pull apart, we will pull to pieces. The whole is greater than any of its parts. The members of the body can never cooperate properly unless they become consciously subordinated to the welfare of the body as a whole." (1923)

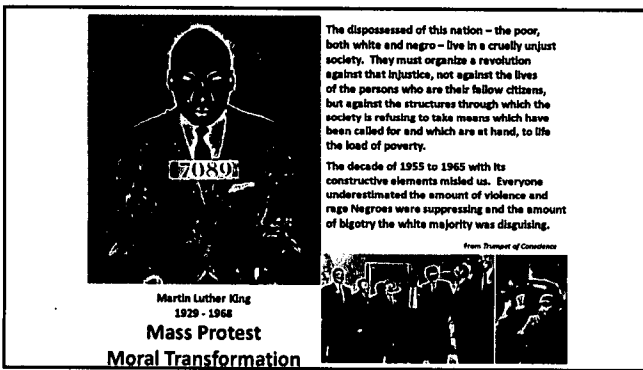
The Negro Sanhedrin Movement















Malcolm X
1925 - 1965
**Revolutionary
Ideology**

"I am not a racist.... In the past I permitted myself to be used...to make sweeping indictments of all white people, the entire white race and these generalizations have caused injuries to some whites who perhaps did not deserve to be hurt. Because of the spiritual enlightenment which I was blessed to receive as a result of my recent pilgrimage to the Holy city of Mecca, I no longer subscribe to sweeping indictments of any one race. I am now striving to live the life of a true...Muslim. I must repeat that I am not a racist nor do I subscribe to the tenants of racism. I can state in all sincerity that I wish nothing but freedom, justice and equality, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all people."



Methodological approach of Malcolm X: Principles for Black students

1. Think for yourself
2. Practice self-criticism
3. Master language
4. Study history
5. Learn to debate

"It's good to keep wide open ears and listen to what everybody has to say...you have to weigh all of what you've heard... [but] come to a decision for yourself and you'll never regret it."

"My greatest lack has been, I believe, that I don't have the kind of education I wish I had been able to get."

"I love languages. I wish I were an accomplished linguist." (Read the dictionary.)

"Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research."

"In the prison, debating, speaking to a crowd, was as exhilarating to me as the discovery of knowledge through reading had been."

The debate continued:

Congress of African People (1970)
Black Political Assembly (1972)



African Liberation sparked an Intense Marxist-Nationalist Debate



A.L.S.C. Executive Committee: Ousou Seudati, John Wetzels, Brenda Paris, Gene Locke, Alkhushi, Annel Baraka, Abdul Alkalimat

This debate worked the axis of class versus national liberation, or what has been misnamed as class versus race. It changed the emigrationist posture to one of global unity to aid African armed struggle for liberation. It also connected with the global split in socialism between China and the USSR.

Black Studies hosted many critical debates



NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE AFRICAN HERITAGE STUDIES ASSOCIATION

APRIL, 21-24, 1977
HOST: THE CENTER FOR BLACK STUDIES
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN
"PROFESSORS FOR BLACK LIBERATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE"



The debate got so heavy that a national conference was hijacked and the opening plenary lasted all day. The players were Haki Mahabuti, Kwame Ture, and Abdul Alkalimat. All sessions at a national meeting were cancelled and the participants carried on the Marxist-Nationalist debate for 8 hours! Workers from the auto plants joined the scholars; that intensified the debate.

The Black Radical Congress continued the debate (1998)

Black people face a deep crisis. Finding a way out of this mess requires new thinking, new vision, and a new spirit of resistance. We need a new movement of Black radicalism.

We know that America's capitalist economy has completely failed us. Every day more of us are unemployed and imprisoned, homeless and hungry. Police brutality, violence and the international drug trade threaten our children with the greatest dangers since slavery. The politicians build more prisons but cut budgets for public schools, day care and health care. They slash welfare yet hire more cops. The government says working people must pay more taxes and receive fewer services, while the rich and the corporations grow fat. Black people and other oppressed people have the power to change the way things are today. But first we must unite against the real enemy.

Now is the time for a revival of the militant spirit of resistance that our people have always possessed, from the Abolitionist Movement to outlaw slavery to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, from Black Power to the anti-apartheid campaign of the 1980s. Now is the time to rebuild a strong, uncompromising movement for human rights, full employment and self-determination. Now is the time for a new Black radicalism.



Bill Sales

Sam Anderson



Manning Marable Barbara Ransby

Black Studies is the institutional home of the debates but too often dogma or polite discourse eliminates debate. Critical questions for each campus to ask:

1. Have the Great Debates been studied on campus?
2. Have we trained our students to debate?
3. Do we always feature opposing views in debate?
4. Does our campus have a class bias?
5. Do we invite the community into our forums?
6. Do we encourage disagreements & free thinking?



Delinking the Black Liberation Movement from Black Studies

Decline of the working class

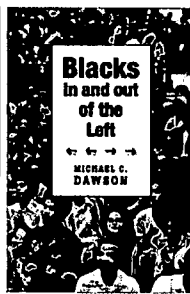
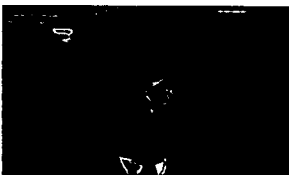


Ideological retreats

Afro-Centrism vs Post Modernism

Global set backs

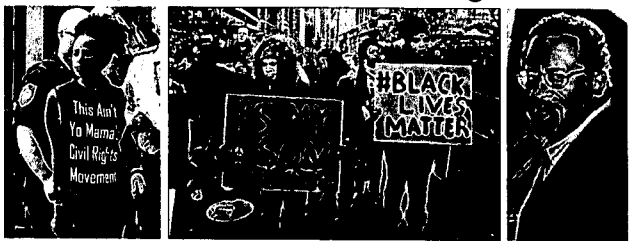
REVERSAL OF AFRICAN LIBERATION -> AFRO PESSIMISM



The Debate Continues

New Possibilities?

Can a spontaneous movement do the job?
Are the public intellectuals working it for us?



WHAT IS THE NEXT STAGE OF BLACK STUDIES ?

**A GREAT DEBATE OVER CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM
WHEN LABOR FACES GENOCIDE OR REVOLUTION**



WE HAVE A REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY – WE NEED TO STUDY IT!

**The next step is yours to make.
What are you gonna do?**

Thank you

**Abdul Alkalimat
Mcworter@Illinois.edu**
