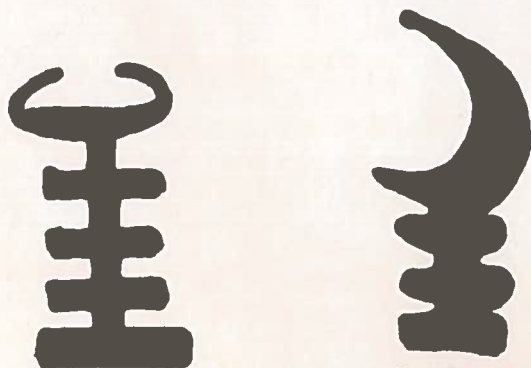


Introducing. . .

# MARXISM AND BLACK LIBERATION

A New Theoretical Journal

Peoples College  
P.O. Box 7696  
Chicago, IL 60680  
U.S.A.



AKO-BEN (War horn.)

The sound of the akoben is a battle cry, hence it symbolizes a call to arms.

**Marxism and Black Liberation** is a journal of theoretical discussion and debate. It is a non-sectarian tool of struggle seeking to involve everyone interested in the application of Marxism to the history and current problems facing Black people, and the revolutionary development of the Black Liberation Movement. Material selected for publication will be based on the criteria of theoretical clarity and correctness, historical scholarship and a good popular style of writing. Our main approach will be to combine a broad outreach policy, a sharp and responsive review process, and vigorous debate.

Peoples College

**\$1.**

Introducing  
**MARXISM AND BLACK LIBERATION**  
A New Theoretical Journal

Table of Contents

THE EDITORIAL UNITY STATEMENT .....	2
GENERAL MATERIAL FOR DISCUSSION .....	6

1. Why Marxism for Black Liberation?

Black Liberation cannot be achieved under capitalism.

The revolutionary struggle for Black liberation must be a fight for socialism.

One of the main shortcomings of the socialist movement has been white supremacy within its own ranks.

In fighting against opportunism and white supremacy, the new Marxist movement must guard against dogmatism.

In fighting against white supremacy and "left" dogmatism, the Black Liberation Movement must guard against narrow nationalism.

Marxist theory is an immediate strategic necessity for the Black Liberation Movement.

2. Why a Journal? .....

Journals have been important in the Black Liberation Movement, but none have focused on the systematic application of Marxism.

Journals have been key to the socialist movement in the U.S.A., but none have focused on Black Liberation.

The Journal will be a forum, an intellectual context for the struggle to develop correct ideas, scientifically-based revolutionary theory.

The journal must be a collective organizer of the rising revolutionary trend within the Black Liberation Movement.

3. How Can You Get Involved? .....

The main way to get involved is to read the journal and actively struggle in its pages for a correct revolutionary theory.

There are three levels of building unity through *Marxism and Black Liberation* (MAYBELL).

Now is the when, here is the where, and MAYBELL is the what!

CONTENTS OF FIRST ISSUE: FALL 1980

Back Cover

## MARXISM AND BLACK LIBERATION: A NEW THEORETICAL JOURNAL

### THE EDITORIAL UNITY STATEMENT

MARXISM AND BLACK LIBERATION is a new journal. It will be known as MAYBELL. Its purpose is to promote revolutionary scientific socialism in theory and practice. The **overall objective** of all of our efforts is Black Liberation based on revolutionary socialism here in the U.S.A. It must be clear at the outset that the task for this journal is to develop theory, and for this we are guided by the advances made by the world revolutionary movement, the tradition of Marxism. However, the main basis of our theoretical work is the concrete analysis of the objective facts of our situation here in the U.S.A. and the summation of all political practice against U.S. imperialism from inside and outside.

The pages of MAYBELL will present theory (logical arguments based on concrete, historical analysis of the Black experience) from the stand, viewpoint, and method of Marxism. It is planned that the struggle in the pages of the journal will reflect the on-going practical struggles in the United States and world history (class struggle and the fight against national oppression), and will lead to historically accurate and politically effective revolutionary theory, or guides to action. The scholarship and analysis will be on the highest professional level and will attempt to avoid the tired stereotyped rhetoric of dogmatism, and the watered down "hip" version of a "rap" that is usually quite ambiguous and ineffective. This is a serious project, and should be regarded as a necessary and rational act of war against racist oppression and economic exploitation.

The **overall objective** is the key, and can only be achieved as a result of the struggle for and development of a correct revolutionary line. The ideological stand required for this line of struggle is Marxism. It, and it alone, provides the philosophical basis for revolution—dialectical and historical materialism. In MAYBELL, we will use these theoretical tools of struggle to clarify some important historical issues in the fight for our liberation, issues which continue to come up again and again. Are Black people a nation and what difference does it make? What is **racism**, its historical development, current objective and subjective bases, and what are the lessons to be learned in the fight against it? What is the basis for the necessity of building Black and White unity? What is the class structure of the U.S.A. and Black people within it? Have Black people ever taken up Marxism, and what happened? In great detail, what has been the history of the Black liberation struggle over the last 20 years? What are the most valuable lessons we need to know

to guide our practice in the 1980s? How has the Black Liberation Movement been part of the overall class struggle in the U.S.? In the fight for Black liberation, what is the correct relationship between reform and revolution?

MAYBELL will be a force in the Black Liberation Movement. We will develop a consistent and comprehensive revolutionary analysis. We will argue against incorrect lines, organizational practice, and critically sum up general movement trends. All of this will focus on developing guides to action, within the dialectics of the historical situation. Marx put it very well in this refutation of idealism: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to **change it**."

MAYBELL is against U.S. imperialism. The role of the U.S. in the world must be thoroughly exposed, just as we must expose the many ways we are held inside this rotten system as its modern day slaves. MAYBELL is committed to socialist revolution. Capitalism is a rotten system just like cancer is a rotten disease, and MAYBELL will be as important to a revolutionary in the USA as a major medical journal is to a doctor in a hospital.

Moreover, this journal is based on the necessary revolutionary principle that political work must be rooted among the masses and carried out on a professional level. What is required is that our feet march in the struggles waged by the masses, our hearts throb in empathy with their joys and sorrows, while our heads rationally use the science of revolution to develop our strategy and tactics. We plot to win the war in the context of fighting battle after battle, trying to win immediate gains.

MAYBELL is a theoretical voice of the rising revolutionary trend of the Black Liberation Movement. It will contribute to developing a correct line that can unify the leading forces in the Black Liberation Movement, link progressive Black scholars with Black activist intellectuals, and link the revolutionary sector of the Black movement to the overall revolutionary forces in the United Front Against Imperialism, especially the working class and its vanguard party.

MAYBELL is the theoretical journal of Peoples College. Peoples College had been active in the ranks of revolutionary struggle for ten years. It has been rooted mainly in the work of doing anti-imperialist and revolutionary propaganda in the Black Liberation Movement. This has covered such areas as African Liberation support work, Black Studies, community struggles, and organizing rank and file workers. Our 10th Anniversary (October 1, 1980) will be an appropriate time to initiate a full discussion of the history of Peoples College, and our necessary self-criticism. Two lessons stand out as particularly important in our decade of study and struggle: (1) a small group of people united around a correct line can make a big battle; and (2) ideas when taken up by the masses of

people in struggle can become a meaningful force in changing the course of history.

But Peoples College is only a starting point. The overall mission of this theoretical project can only be realized if it is taken up by a significant number of individuals and organizations in the revolutionary movement. We are interested in people actively working with the journal, writing for it and struggling within its pages. We are particularly interested in summations of political practice concerned with Black Liberation, especially as a way to contribute to the overall body of revolutionary theory. On a broader and more significant level, we are interested in deepening and expanding political and organizational unity as agreement is reached on the ideological and political line presented in MAYBELL.

There is a severe crisis sending shock waves to the very foundation of this system. The economy is tail-spinning into a deep recession—runaway inflation, increasing unemployment, and a defacto wage-freeze serve to attack the entire working class and all oppressed people. The politics of the country are rushing into the arms of ultra-conservative fiends like Ronald Reagan. Black people are being sold out and conned into giving up many gains won in the 1960s. This is the worst of times. But it can also be the best of times because the overall crisis that is beating down the working class and the masses of Black people provides the best political and economic context in which one United Front Against Imperialism can emerge. With new and correct revolutionary leadership, we are in full agreement with Mao:

The struggle of the Black people in the United States is bound to merge with the American workers' movement, and this will eventually end the criminal rule of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class.

**MARXISM AND BLACK LIBERATION (MAYBELL)** will help chart the course!

**BUILD THE COMMON STRUGGLE FOR REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM AND BLACK LIBERATION IN THE U.S.!**

**WORKERS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE UNITE TO DEFEAT IMPERIALISM AND ALL FORMS OF OPPRESSION!**

**BUILD MAYBELL AS A WEAPON OF THEORY, A WEAPON FOR STRUGGLE!**

\*\*\*\*

**MAYBELL needs you!** A minimum of several thousand subscribers; a well-organized coast to coast distribution network; outlets in Africa, Europe, Asia, and Latin America; financial contributions from sustainers, etc.—all of this is needed as soon as possible if MAYBELL is to be successful. To put a journal out like MAYBELL is not a popular thing with the U.S. ruling class so any help you give is certainly important. No matter how little or how much is possible, get in touch and get involved. **MAYBELL needs you!**

#### Write to us

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PA GYA (To strike fire.)



NTESIE – MATEMASIE  
(I have heard and kept it.)  
"Nyansa bun mu nne mate masie."  
Symbol of wisdom and knowledge.

## GENERAL MATERIAL FOR DISCUSSION

The following ideological and political material is being distributed for discussion and debate. The "EDITORIAL UNITY STATEMENT" is what we want you to unite with; the following material we want to you to struggle with. It is expected that the following "GENERAL MATERIAL FOR DISCUSSION" will be widely debated. The statements are tentative formulations and require refinement (and in some cases possibly reformulation) through further empirical investigation and theoretical analysis. There are 3 central questions:

1. Why Marxism for Black liberation?
2. Why a journal?
3. How can you get involved?

## WHY MARXISM FOR BLACK LIBERATION?

### 1. Black liberation cannot be achieved under Capitalism.

We have learned through some very hard and trying struggles that the barbed wire fence of segregation can be overcome by some and that the pit of poverty can be escaped by a few. But under no stretch of the imagination have we learned how to get rid of racism and poverty (national oppression and class exploitation) for everybody. Under capitalism it is normal for somebody to be exploited and misused. And for over 200 years, this has certainly included nearly all Black people in the U.S.A. The lesson is that capitalism stinks! Malcolm put it very graphically. "Show me a capitalist and I'll show you a bloodsucker." In this light, Black people have been a blood bank for the U.S. capitalist class.

U.S. capitalism has clutched at our throats and grown fat off of us from the very beginning. Indeed, the beginning of the modern (capitalist) period of world history includes the Atlantic slave trade because the blood soaked superprofits derived from it were a decisive fuel for the industrial revolution. In general, merchants amassed great profits both in England and the U.S.A. (New England). These profits were invested in booming industries like textiles, and thereby increased the process of industrialization. For the U.S.A., this led to heightened regional contradictions between the free-farming Midwest, the industrial Northeast, and the slave South. For England, this led to the increased development of the capitalist class and the working class in England fought to abolish U.S. slavery in order to eliminate the unfair competition of their "free" wage labor against slaves who received no pay. In sum, the slave trade had two different aspects: (1) It ripped Africans out of their homeland and cast them down in the inhuman condition of slavery in strange lands (U.S., Caribbean, South America, etc.); (2) It provided the great profits on which industrial capital (the industrial revolution) expanded rapidly in England and the U.S.A. leading to greater exploitation of the entire working class.

Slavery in the U.S. South was a backward pre-capitalist system of production in which exploitation was intensified due to its subordination to the developing world capitalist system, especially in the U.S. North and England. The slave system of production sustained whites as rulers, especially the parasitic and idle class of plantation owners. Slavery oppressed Blacks at a sub-human level. To a slave, the capitalist North (or England) appeared as a promised land because chattel slavery did not exist there. Slavery was the basis of considerable protest and struggle. Frederick Douglass eloquently exposed this Achilles heel of the young capitalist democracy as "bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages." (Rochester, New York; 1852)

The Civil War and Reconstruction represented the intensification of class struggle that resulted in the national hegemony of the Northern capitalist class. Within this, Southern dispossessed planters were subordinated to becoming regional managers for Northern capital. After the 1877 Hayes-Tilden betrayal which pulled federal troops out of the South, farmers and artisans flirted with the revolutionary democratic themes of the period in the Populist Movement. However, they capitulated to the rule of the bourgeoisie and traded their class interests for nationality (American white) interests. Black people unleashed a profound democratic force in this period, especially in setting up free universal public education in the U.S. for the first time, for example. However, Blacks failed to fully overcome the limitations of slavery, in part because Northern capital refused to fully dismantle the old slavery social structure, and refused Blacks the material basis for "freedom" in the rural south. There was no genuine land reform, no "40 acres and a mule"!

The system of slavery was replaced by a system of farm tenancy. The ownership of land, the main means of production since agriculture was not yet mechanized, was concentrated in the hands of a few and rented out to the majority of people in farming. The most widespread method was sharecropping, i.e. paying rent with a portion of one's produce. Because political rule and land ownership were concentrated in the hands of a small regionally-based white ruling elite, Blacks and, to some extent, poor whites were still forced to work, legally by peonage (forced labor due to indebtedness) and illegally by lynching and mob rule. The social rules and regulations that spelled out the oppression of Black people were formalized in the laws and customs of the South, and from there spread throughout the country.

The other major historical development is that Black people were developing a distinctive social organization, culture, and general way of life. Black people no longer had the different characteristics they had brought with them from Africa to separate them. We were objectively becoming forged into a nation, especially in the Black-belt South where most Blacks were concentrated. This meant that relations between whites and Blacks were not only defined by law and described by color (race), but had become a profound confrontation between two developing nations of people. The national development of Black people was shaped by the oppression forced on them by white people: the development of the Black nation was intensified by segregation but limited by economic exploitation.

At the dawn of the 20th century, the U.S. was transformed into a monopoly capitalist country, an imperialist state. And in this context Black people were forced to migrate from the South to the North, from rural areas to the city, from the farm to the factory. There were two patterns: (1) Some Blacks remained in the Black-belt nation and barely managed to survive in subsistence farming

mainly as sharecroppers; and (2) Some Blacks migrated north to the city and worked in industry.

In this contradictory pattern of historical development, the 20th century Black Liberation Movement has reflected the ideological and political forces of both nationalism and internationalism. In other words, the main trends have been and continue to be based on both an oppressed Black middle class (with "bourgeois" aspirations), and workers tied to the color-blind rigor of assembly line factory production as part of the multi-national working class. On the one hand, you have the basis for nationalism: The Black middle class and its economic and political aspirations: segregated organizations, public institutions, and neighborhoods; family ties to the Black-belt nation of the deep South; discrimination and the continuation of vicious racist attacks. On the other hand, there is a basis for internationalism—the collective work experience of industrial workers, particularly in large scale industry; the impersonal characteristics of life in the modern city and the depersonalization of the rationalized bureaucracy. Both trends exist simultaneously, and both constitute the basis for struggle against racist national oppression and class exploitation in the third stage of the Black experience—the factory and the metropolis of monopoly capital.

The fight for Black liberation is against the capitalist system. Only and socialism can we successfully complete this fight and achieve Black liberation. Black people will be liberated when this society is free of white supremacy, when there is no discrimination and racial double dealing. And, in those geographical areas where Black people are in a majority, and on those issues mainly concerning Black people, the control of decision-making should unquestionably be in the hands of Black people. Liberation also means the opportunity to work productively and have a full share in the material rewards of this highly industrialized society. All of this is antithetical to the domination of capitalism.

In sum, our fight for Black liberation has been waged during three major stages of development—slavery, rural agricultural and urban industrial periods. We have been faced with more and more intense capitalist punishment at every stop. The bottom line of this analysis is not only the rejection of capitalism, but the necessary analysis of and commitment to fight for socialism as the best context in which to abolish racism. Even under socialism, however, we will have to continue to fight against racism until it is finally destroyed.

## **2. The revolutionary struggle for Black liberation must be a fight for socialism.**

This is a message we can learn from our theoretical analysis of the current world capitalist crisis, from the national liberation

movements of Africa, and especially from the revolutionary history of such socialist countries as the Soviet Union under Lenin and China under Mao Tse-Tung. The main way we learn this, however, is by the scientific study of how capitalism in the U.S.A. has developed, how it has failed, and how we must fight it. In looking at Black people's relationship with capitalism, the fundamental historical point was made by Mao: "in the final analysis, national struggle (the fight against racism, for Black liberation) is a matter of class struggle (the fight against capitalism, for socialism)."

Capitalism is fatally ill. The general crisis of the capitalist system has its origins in class struggle—from within, the inevitable wars that break out between imperialist countries (like World War I); and from without by the threat to capitalism created by socialist revolutions like the 1917 Bolshevik seizure of power in the Soviet Union. The cataclysmic seizure that capitalism went through in the 1930s (the Great Depression) and the shrinking spheres of imperialist influence as a result of the success of the revolutionary national liberation struggles of the Third World (e.g., Zimbabwe) are both manifestations of class struggle. Looking at capitalist crisis historically, even James Baldwin said it for the masses of Black people when the Civil Rights Movement was being transformed into the Black Liberation Movement: "Who wants to integrate into a burning house?"

The only historically valid alternative to capitalism is socialism. This theoretical point is subject to great debate by those who really think (rightly or wrongly!) that they have a stake in this capitalist society. Our view is clear: the enemy of the masses is the economic and political system based on the exploitation of the many by the few (dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, or capitalist class); and the solution is to destroy this system based on private profit and construct a society run collectively for the common good of everyone (dictatorship of the proletariat, or working class).



#### DWANIMEN

(The horns of a ram.)

"Dwani ne ahooden ne n'amen; wopan  
n'amen a na wo ayi no awie no."

The strength of the ram lies in its horns.

### 3. One of the main shortcomings of the socialist movement has been white supremacy within its own ranks.

Racism has been a major historical problem of the left or socialist movement in the U.S.A., and represents a reflection of the divisions created and developed by the ruling class between Black and White workers, Black and White students, and Black and White communities. In fact, white supremacy (racism) is a vicious manifestation of opportunism, i.e., one of the many ways workers unite with the ruling class against other workers. Lenin makes an appropriate point: "Opportunism and social chauvinism have content, namely class collaboration. . . ." (**Collected Works**, Volume 22, p. 112). Lenin also put forward the correct revolutionary stand to take in our fight against this white supremacist trash in our movement:

By exposing the fact that the opportunists and social chauvinists are in reality betraying and selling out the interests of the masses, that they are defending the temporary privileges of a minority of the workers, that they are really allies and agents of the bourgeoisie, we teach the masses to appreciate their true political interests, to fight for socialism and for the revolution through all the long and painful imperialist wars and imperialist armistices. (**Collected Works**, Volume 23, p 120).

Concretely, in our movement there are two forms of this white supremacy: (1) the refusal to recognize the revolutionary side of the Black nationalist movement, and (2) the uncritical support of Black nationalism while preserving socialist theory for a mostly "white" movement. The first is a direct attack against the revolutionary nationalist aspect of the Black Liberation Movement, while the other condescendingly recognizes nationalism, but effectively liquidates its revolutionary side by accepting virtually all of it in an uncritical way. These are opposite poles of the same white supremacist stupidity. The history of the left is filled with such examples. However, these errors can be used negatively, as something to avoid, to establish a good line on Black liberation and revolutionary unity, and revolutionary leadership of the Black Liberation Movement.

### 4. In fighting against opportunism and white supremacy, the new Marxist movement has to guard against dogmatism.

This is one of the main problems to be faced, fighting a right error with a "left" error. Opportunism leads one to revise Marxist principles based on the so-called special and particular character of the U.S.. In other words, for opportunists the main thing is that the

U.S.A. is an exceptional case. Dogmatism can result from fighting this opportunism by relying too exclusively on the classics of Marxist theory (i.e., universal principles) rather than rooting this theory in the "concrete analysis of concrete things." Mao Tse Tung sums up this error of dogmatism in a way useful to quote in this context:

Where our dogmatists err on this question is that, on the one hand, they do not understand that we have to study the particularity of contradictions and know the particular essence of individual things before we can adequately know the universality of contradictions and the common essence of things, we must go further and study the concrete things that have not yet been thoroughly studied or have only just emerged. Our dogmatists are lazy-bones. They refuse to undertake a painstaking study of concrete things; they regard general truths as emerging out of the void; they turn them into purely abstract unfathomable formulas and thereby completely deny and reverse the normal sequence by which man comes to know truth. (**Selected Works**, Volume I, page 321)

Over the last 10 years, the new Marxist movement has had to return to the classics in order to successfully fight the revisionist garbage of the U.S. exceptionalism line, and correctly so. There has been a tremendous surge of interest in Marxist theory sparked by the revolutionary inspiration of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of China, and the political necessity created by the shortcomings of the mass movements of the 1960s.

However, this had led to a lazy-bones approach. Rather than Marxism being a guide to analysis and action in relation to the concrete conditions of the U.S. **right now**, it has frequently been ossified as some sort of eternally valid holy dogma to be worshiped—a new religion. This is bullshit! We need Marxism because we need the development of revolutionary theory, the strategy and tactics of making a revolution. As Lenin put it, "Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolution." Moreover, "The living soul of Marxism is the concrete analysis of concrete things."

##### **5. In fighting against white supremacy and "left" dogmatism, the Black Liberation Movement must guard against narrow nationalism.**

Black people have had the historical experience of being molded into a (Black-belt) nation, have had an insecure middle class with grand aspirations, and continue to suffer the attacks of racism and

discrimination. It is understandable, therefore, that a significant sector of Black people have maintained a nationalist posture, though it has seldom been the dominant trend in the movement for Black liberation.

It is important to keep a clear understanding of two different Black nationalist tendencies: one is reactionary and serves as a tool of capitalist rule, while the other is revolutionary and serves as a force to galvanize Black people into an effective strike force against the rule of capital. Dogmatism feeds the reactionary trend since it actually walls off the socialist movement from the Black masses making Marxism appear as an alien thing in which the European god of Christianity (Jesus) is replaced by a European god of socialism (Marx). The United Front Against Imperialism is not based only on adherents to Marxism, but is much broader and bigger than that. Marxists, workers, the Black liberation movement, other classes, and other movements of oppressed people are all included. The central unity is being against imperialism and following the leadership of the most advanced and consistently revolutionary force in the fight for socialism—the working class represented by its political party.

White nationalism is the same as white supremacy and therefore is totally reactionary. In the U.S.A., white nationalism is the nationalism of the oppressor nation and therefore must be combatted. This is different than Black nationalism, since Black nationalism is the reaction of an oppressed nationality. White supremacy is the offensive attack of national oppression, while Black nationalism is the defensive reaction of an oppressed nationality fighting back.

A significant historical prism through which we can understand this distinction between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation is the life, thought, and political practice of Malcolm X. The historical roots of this question go back to the 1920s when the African Blood Brotherhood moved from being the left wing of the Garvey movement into the Marxist movement. Overall, we must maintain a dialectical materialist method in understanding the positive and negative features of Afro-American nationalism.

##### **6. Marxist Theory is an immediate strategic necessity for the Black Liberation Movement.**

Throughout the 1960s, the Black Liberation Movement was soaring; wave upon wave of people thrust themselves spontaneously into struggle. The issues, slogans and symbols of the movement were generally taken up by the broad masses of people. However, the major shortcoming of this movement was its lack of consistent revolutionary leadership. This means that there was and is a need

for revolutionary theory because revolutionary theory is the essence of revolutionary leadership. There have been severe historical limitations in overcoming this spontaneity of the Black Liberation Movement including the petty bourgeois opportunism of Black intellectuals, and the decisive structural changes that have kept transforming the overall character of the Black community (from rural South to urban North and South).

What is the solution? And how can these limitations be overcome? First, we must recognize that while the above are limitations, they must also be transformed into strengths. Only a revolutionary theory can transform facts into a consciousness pointing the way from capitalism toward socialist revolution. Only revolutionary theory can transform the generalized reactions of Black intellectuals against racist national oppression (most of which are valid) into a revolutionary force accurately summing up the political, economic and social problems faced by the masses of Black people.

Only revolutionary theory can accurately define the working class character of the masses of Black people. Marxism is the basis for this revolutionary theory that we so desperately need.

Many young intellectuals, in the university and cultural-artistic settings, are turning to Marxism because the message of ruling class intellectuals simply doesn't make sense when they try to explain the current capitalist crisis. And if the ideas of the ruling class don't work now, people are led to question whether they ever worked (past) or ever could work (future). In this context, however, it is important to recognize that most forms of academic Marxism that have been accepted on campuses have liquidated the revolutionary parts of Marxism. The key is that Marxism is the science for the masses of people to use in changing the world. With this orientation (toward revolutionary change, practice, etc.), many young people are grasping firmly the need for revolutionary theory. Marxism is the basis for developing the theory that we need. It is a necessary point of departure.

## WHY A JOURNAL?

### 1. Journals have been important in the Black Liberation movement but none have focused on the systematic application of Marxism.

There have been at least 40 important Black journals started since 1960. For the most part they fall into one of three categories: academic, cultural, and general. The main political publications have been newspapers, including three major national ones (*The African World*, *Muhammad Speaks*, and the *Black Panther Party Newspaper*). An important aspect of this literature is that most of it has been based on the development of the Black Liberation Move-

ment, particularly Black Studies, cultural organizations, and some political organizations.

However, most of these publications have failed to survive the 1970s. Of course, any explanation of this would have to take into account the overall social conditions that gave rise to these journals and the changes in these conditions. Thus, the general explanation has to be based on the overall economic and political crisis that has gripped this country, especially Black people. However, while this might not account for the general hard times faced by those journals it does not explain their disappearance. Without going further, we would fail to identify the basis on which MAYBELL will prosper in the even harder times we will face in the 1980s and beyond.

Our view is that the shortcoming has been the failure to develop a revolutionary theoretical analysis, especially an analysis that represents a summation of past practice, and therefore would be a guide to future practice as well. Overwhelmingly, the journals have been guided by Black nationalism. For the most part, this has not led to social theory. Moreover, the journals have been hostile to Marxism, and therefore have cut themselves off from the mainstream of theoretical development in the world revolutionary movement (including Marxism as applied to the struggle for African liberation.)

Earlier (the 1960s) we had a dynamic spontaneous mass movement in which nationalism became the guiding ideological and political stuff that held it together. Simultaneously, the rise of Marxism paralleled the decline of mass involvement as activists desperately searched for a new way forward. However, as Marxists within the Black liberation movement, we have thus far failed to develop a body of theory which firmly places Marxism as the ideological lighthouse for the movement.

Now we have a period of low ebb of mass struggle, but we know this is not a permanent state. The Black liberation movement will rise again, stronger and more dynamic than ever. We must not be caught without the availability of Marxist theory. **WE NEED MAYBELL!** We need an analysis that can answer questions, sum up our past practice and guide the struggle forward.

For example:

- (a) Is the United Front strategy the correct road to revolution? What is the difference between the Black United Front and building the United Front Against Imperialism among Black people? What has been the experience of the Brooklyn-based Black United Front, the Mississippi-based United League of Northern Mississippi and other United Fronts. What has been the history of United Front work in the Black community—its successes and failures? Was the African Liberation Support Committee (A.L.S.C.) a successful United Front between 1972 and 1976?

(b) What has been the contributions (positive and negative) of key Black publications, particularly *Black World*, *Black News*, *Soul Book*, *African World*, *Black Scholar*, *Black Books Bulletin*, *Black Collegian*, *Muhammad Speaks* and *The Black Panther Party Newspaper*?

(c) What can we learn from the struggle for Black Studies? Did it make a contribution to the revolutionary development of the Black liberation movement?

## **2. Journals have been key to the Social Movement in the USA, but none have focused on Black liberation.**

While revolutionary theory has not been the major strength of the left in the U.S.A., there is a particularly obvious vacuum on the Afro-American National Question, on the Black Liberation Movement. Even now, with renewed interest in Marxism, there is relatively little consistent attention given to Black liberation. However, we believe the current situation is excellent, and more than ever before the opportunity to study and grasp Marxist theory is available.

Journals play an important role in the left. There are three types: (a) organizational journals of left organizations that generally put forward their program and defenses of it; (b) academic journals in which campus-based scholars discuss problems of Marxist theory; and (c) independent journals in which broad participation is encouraged. The main incorrect tendencies are respectively dogmatism, legal Marxism, and eclecticism (a little bit of everything resulting in a lot of nothing.) However, we want to make it absolutely clear that while there is no existing overall political line in the movement we completely unite with, we **do** encourage the reading of many of these publications because there is a great deal to learn from many of them (both by positive and negative example.)

The major independent journal in the USA is *Monthly Review* published since 1949. Since then over 300 issues have been published but little attention has been given to Black people. On the average they have published less than one article and less than one review or letter per year that deals with Black people. In these 30 years, moreover, of the 21 articles and 26 reviews/letters on Black people, one person has contributed 6 articles, 1 review and 1 letter.

What is needed from a Marxist journal at this time is a full invitation to the developing anti-imperialist intellectuals and activists within the Black liberation movement. What is needed is a full opportunity to develop a revolutionary theoretical analysis of the complex questions that have been obstacles to the Black liberation movement and to the revolutionary movement as a whole. MAYBELL is the journal for this task. Yes, MAYBELL must fully

defeat the American lies that not much need be written on the Afro-American National Question—on Black liberation—at this time, or that there are not enough Afro-American revolutionary activists and intellectuals to contribute to this process.

## **3. The Journal will be a forum, an intellectual context for the struggle to develop correct ideas, scientifically-based revolutionary theory.**

First of all, there is a need for a non-sectarian though openly Marxist forum for intellectual discussion and debate. The journal is partisan, but within the movement. It must strive to reach out broadly. This non-sectarian identity is necessary because our general interest is Marxism. Of course we have to reach out to many people, particularly those who are revolutionary and those who are in the Black Liberation Movement. This process must start out in a broad way allowing various positions to openly contend because there is a need to stimulate and spread the interest in Marxist theory.

However, even in this broad context we have criteria based upon our political line. We have a double need for clarity and correctness. Clarity is necessary for education, overcoming ignorance. Also, we have the assumption that while different lines contend there is only one correct line we all want to get hold of by intense ideological and political struggle, resulting from a theoretical analysis of our concrete practice and that of world revolution. The point is that while the journal should strive to clarify the different lines contending in the movement, it should lead the discussion (and our ongoing practice) toward the correct line.

The responsibility for the political judgements over what is clear and correct, of course, will have to rest mainly on the editors of the journal. However, once we get the journal going it is the readers and supporters of the journal who will increasingly have a critical role to play through their responses (letters) and their articles. The key fact is that clarity and correctness are dangerous for both dogmatists and empiricists. Dogmatists try to sneak by with abstract phrases that, minimally, appear logical and analytically precise. This is the case of appearing to have a lot of 'clarity' but being incorrect because of not sufficiently learning from the facts. Empiricists, on the other hand, boast of detail after detail while failing to sum up particularities into general patterns, and failing to identify the principal contradiction. Once they speak, and one recovers from their many 'facts', their error appears initially as one of lacking clarity. They lack clarity because they don't know how to sum concrete things up.

Further, only by having such a journal can we fight within the mainstream. It should be clear that there is a continuing need to be

critical and respond to the continued onslaught of ruling class rhetoric, especially as reformist Black leaders try to convince Black people that we have become too sophisticated for militant struggle and that "they" will set us free!

One of our main tasks is to take on all comers over all issues. Every major idea about the Black experience, capitalism, and socialism should be taken up and evaluated. Every major book should be answered as fully as possible. Just consider the outbursts of reaction to two recent books—*The Declining Significance of Race* by William Wilson and *Black Macho and the Myth of the Black Superwoman* by Michelle Wallace. Where is the Marxist response? From now on, you can look for the Marxist response in **MAYBELL**.

#### **4. The Journal must be a collective organizer of the rising revolutionary trend within the Black Liberation Movement.**

The ideological and political trends in the Black Liberation Movement are diffuse and the clarity of 1969 or 1974 is sorely missed. **MAYBELL** is designed to contribute to developing a center for revolutionary Marxist ideology and politics to give leadership on the issue of Black liberation and socialist revolution. What is necessary is that the journal provide a collective summation of struggle, raising collective practice (experience) to the level of theory. This will not unite everyone, because a summation will separate the good from the bad, the weak from the strong. However, a revolutionary center of ideological and political line focused mainly on the issue of Black Liberation will galvanize revolutionary activists and intellectuals into a more conscious and capable force in the overall United Front Against U.S. Imperialism.

This will require a deliberate method of building unity. Our approach is not a nationalist deviation, a sidetracking of the revolutionary impulse within the Black struggle. We are the link between that spark of revolution within the Black Liberation movement and the revolutionary destiny of the multi-national (multi-racial) working class. Our legitimacy is that we strive to harness the positive aspects of existing Marxist theory and root it in the concrete facts of the Black experience. We struggle to unite within the revolutionary ranks, based on our developing line, for an overall center—a new communist party of a revolutionary type—to lead the struggle.



OWO FORO ADOBE  
(Snake climbing the palm).  
Performing the unusual or  
the impossible.

## **HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?**

### **1. The main way to get involved is to read the journal and actively struggle in its pages for a correct revolutionary theory.**

The imperialist economic crisis is plunging the U.S.A. into the depths of a terrible recession, and unemployment is ravaging every working class community. Inflation combined with slowly rising wages is putting the screws to those who remain employed, including virtually the entire Black middle class. The trend toward war is rushing forward, with draft registration likely to be implemented before the campus army forms for battle against it in the fall. In response to all of this, the mood of the 1980 presidential politics is feeding into a climate of reaction, with right-wing militaristic conservatism sweeping the land. But as with all other times in the history of this country, Black people speak out with all the rage befitting several centuries of slavery and degradation.

**MIAMI!** Even in the premier "fun-in-the-sun" city, Black people screamed "Lie!" when they took to the streets in a wild rage. Over three days of insurrectionary violence showed a courageous spirit, the spirit of resistance, and a willingness to fight back against outrageous crimes. However, this is not the best type of violence (collective, spontaneous commodity riots) because it is not focused in on a significant political target. It is not organized and it is certainly not set up to be a protracted struggle. It is not guided by a committed core of activists who have been tried and tested in the history of the movement. We failed to sum up these events the last time our people erupted in mass resistance in the late 1960s (Detroit, Newark, and Watts in 1966-1968) and here we go again. The storm is brewing and its **gonna** blow. Miami was just an early announcement of what is to come. It was the tip of the 1980s iceberg. We must face the future with clarity, correctness of line, and resolute commitment as we march into battle.

**MAYBELL!** We need to seize the time and rally around this theoretical journal in order to transform our blinding rage and our emotional war cries into a more deliberate and conscious fighting force. This begins with the most advanced, the people who are conscious of the need for a clear theoretical framework within which all of our ideas can take shape and lead to militant and positive practice, a fighting program of action.

The key to this will be how willingly people will sit down and systematically sum up their practice. All line struggle—ideological, political, and organizational—must be rooted in a summation of practice. If it is not, it will quickly degenerate into dogmatism and be full of empty sloganeering that anybody can quickly produce and get into regardless of their grasp of the actual time, place and con-



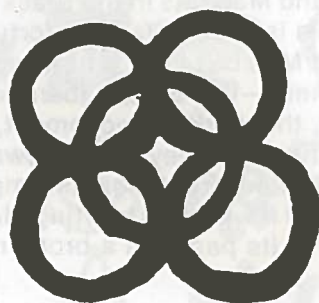
ditions of the struggle. During the line struggle between Nationalists and Marxists in the Black Liberation Movement from 1973 to 1976, this is exactly (and unfortunately) what happened.

We need MAYBELL for a new type of national discussion within the movement—the Black Liberation Movement, the revolutionary movement, the workers movement, and the interrelationships between all three as they move toward merger, into a unity of action—the United Front Against Imperialism. This dialogue will be possible only if we avoid treating MAYBELL as a fetish, and actively contribute to its pages in a broad non-sectarian manner.



ANIBERE A ENSO GYA  
(Red eyes can not light the fire.)  
Your anger can not set me on fire.  
You can not frighten me by  
pretending to be angry. Another  
symbol of defiance.

KUNTINKANTAN  
(Do not boast)



## 2. There are 3 levels to building unity through MAYBELL.

- (A) **GENERAL CONTACT:** This is the most general level of unity, including someone who is concerned about the same general issues, and who is struggling for general agreement with the line MAYBELL puts forward. At this level people are raising some questions, beginning to use a common language, and sharing a common body of factual information. The highest level of joint practice is regular correspondence and individual promotion of MAYBELL.
- (B) **J. COLLECTIVE:** This is a collective form of unity of action. Here a group of contacts engage in group discussion and projects with members of Peoples College. Here the emphasis is on the summation of concrete struggle. Also, as part of this summation, attention will be given to summing up the different lines contending in the movement. The J-Collectives will also engage in projects to increase distribution of MAYBELL (set up literature tables at conferences, distribute brochures, etc.) and represent the line of MAYBELL in open discussions, forums, and debates.
- (C) **PEOPLES COLLEGE MEMBERSHIP:** This is the highest level of organizational unity. This includes agreement on ideological, political, and organizational line. The actual process will involve higher levels of theoretical and practical unity which will be discussed by Peoples College and candidates for membership.

These are the three ways we will be building unity among the individuals and groups generally developing in the course of our struggle. We are also open to establishing dialogue and fraternal relationships with other revolutionary forces. We welcome dialogue (your criticisms especially) because we want to build unity and improve our work.

## 3. NOW IS THE WHEN, HERE IS THE WHERE AND MAYBELL IS THE WAY!

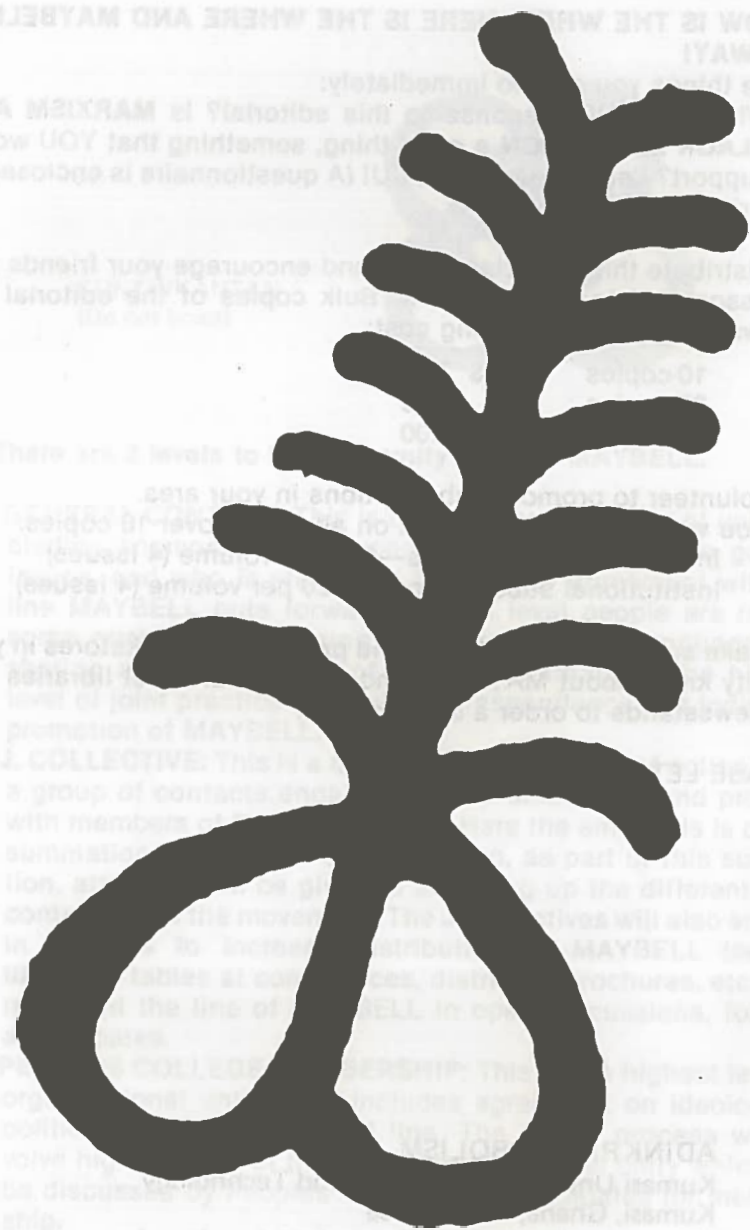
These things you can do immediately:

- (A) What is YOUR response to this editorial? Is **MARXISM AND BLACK LIBERATION** a good thing, something that YOU would support? Let us hear from YOU! (A questionnaire is enclosed or write for one)
- (B) Distribute this editorial widely and encourage your friends and associates to respond to it. Bulk copies of the editorial are available at the following cost:
- |            |         |
|------------|---------|
| 10 copies  | \$ 7.50 |
| 25 copies  | 15.00   |
| 100 copies | 50.00   |
- (C) Volunteer to promote subscriptions in your area.  
You will get a 20% discount on all orders over 10 copies.  
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- (D) Make sure that all the Black and progressive bookstores in your city know about MAYBELL and place orders. Get libraries and newsstands to order a subscription.

PLEASE LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

### ADINKRA SYMBOLISM

Kumasi University of Science and Technology  
Kumasi, Ghana, West Africa  
(Formerly the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.)



AYA (the fern)

This word also means 'I am not afraid of you.'  
A symbol of defiance.

## TIMBUKTU

### The Black Peoples Bookstore

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TIMBUKTU: The Black Peoples Bookstore is a non-profit bookstore and educational/cultural center operated by PEOPLES COLLEGE PRESS. Opened in October 1979, TIMBUKTU carries over 1000 titles on Black history and culture, Africa, the Third World, titles for children and in many other areas (see list inside). With the theme of "education for liberation," TIMBUKTU's main responsibility is to educate people of all races and nationalities about the history, current conditions, and freedom struggle of Black people. TIMBUKTU also houses an art gallery and holds jazz concerts, forums, films and children's activities. VISIT US SOON!

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PEOPLES COLLEGE PRESS is a small and independent publishing collective dedicated to the development and distribution of educational materials about Black people. It is a non-profit institution.

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**Marxism and Black Liberation (MAYBELL)**  
**Theoretical Journal of Peoples College**  
**Issue #1 Fall 1980**

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