

EXPERIMENTAL  
FOURTH  
EDITION

INTRODUCTION TO

AFRO

AMERICAN

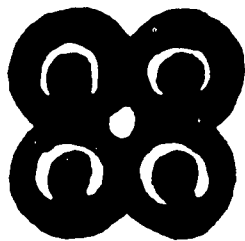
STUDIES

2

## A CALL FOR CRITICISM

THIS PRINTING OF THE SECOND VOLUME OF THE 4TH EDITION OF INTRODUCTION TO AFRO AMERICAN STUDIES IS BEING CIRCULATED FOR CRITICISM. WE ARE HEREBY SENDING OUT A GENERAL CALL TO EVERYONE WHO READS IT AND USES IT IN ANY WAY TO SEND US COMMENTS AND REACTIONS. CRITICISM IS A GOOD THING BECAUSE IT HELPS US TO KNOW WHAT IS GOOD IN OUR WORK AND WHAT IS BAD. WE WANT TO DISCARD THE BAD AND DEVELOP BETTER MATERIAL TO REPLACE IT. VERY FEW PEOPLE TAKE CALLS FOR CRITICISM SERIOUSLY. EITHER THEY FEEL INSECURE ABOUT THEIR IDEAS BECAUSE PEOPLE DON'T USUALLY REALLY CARE ABOUT THEIR THOUGHTS OR THEY FEEL CRITICISM IS IMPORPER AND WILL CREATE BAD FEELINGS. NO! YOUR IDEAS ARE IMPORTANT TO US, AND WE NOT ONLY WANT CRITICISM--WE NEED IT! THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO MAKE AN INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTION TO BLACK STUDIES AND BLACK LIBERATION. LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

PEOPLES COLLEGE EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE



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

## C O P Y R I G H T

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## A CALL FOR CRITICISM

### PREFACE TO VOLUME TWO

## PART V. BLACK PEOPLE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

### CHAPTER 10. BLACK POWER AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Study Guide and Overview 1

Required Readings 12

### CHAPTER 11. RELIGION AND THE CHURCH IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Study Guide and Overview 52

Required Readings 62

### CHAPTER 12. EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Study Guide and Overview 114

Required Readings 126

### CHAPTER 13. BLACK WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

Study Guide and Overview 196

Required Readings 208

### CHAPTER 14. BLACK CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Study Guide and Overview 245

Required Readings 262

## PART VI. IDEOLOGY AND STRATEGY IN THE STRUGGLE FOR BLACK LIBERATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

### CHAPTER 15. CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

Study Guide and Overview 321

Required Readings 333

### CHAPTER 16. NATIONALISM AND PAN-AFRICANISM

Study Guide and Overview 386

Required Readings 399

### CHAPTER 17. MARXISM AND BLACK LIBERATION

Study Guide and Overview 466

Required Readings 483

CHAPTER 18. WHAT PROGRAM WILL LEAD TO BLACK LIBERATION?	
Study Guide and Overview	533
Directory of Resources	541
Local Area Research Guide: STUDY TO STRUGGLE!	549
SOURCES OF READINGS: VOLUME ONE AND VOLUME TWO	558
APPENDIX: WHY SHOULD WE STUDY BLACK PEOPLE AND HOW? THEORY AND METHOD IN AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES (Study Guide/Overview from Chapter 1 of <u>Introduction to Afro-American Studies</u> )	566

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V O L U M E O N E

Part I. INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1. Why Should We Study Black People and How? Theory and Method in Afro-American Studies

PART II. THE BLACK EXPERIENCE FROM AFRICA TO THE AMERICAS: INTERNATIONAL ROOTS OF RACISM AND EXPLOITATION

CHAPTER 2. Africa before and after the Slave Trade: The Afro-American Heritage of Culture and Struggle

CHAPTER 3. Racism, Colonialism and Imperialism: The Legacy of Capitalist Slavery

PART III. THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE OF BLACK PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES

CHAPTER 4. The Slave Experience: The Melting Pot of African Peoples

CHAPTER 5. The Agricultural Experience: The Emergence of the Afro-American Nation

CHAPTER 6. The Industrial Experience: The Proletarianization of Afro-American Labor

PART IV. THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF AFRO-AMERICAN PEOPLE

CHAPTER 7. Black Workers and Trade Unions

CHAPTER 8. The Black Middle Class, Black Businesses and the Professions

CHAPTER 9. Racism and Black Liberation

# PREFACE

This is the first major printing of the second volume of the fourth edition of INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES. The content of this volume is based on the broad theoretical framework developed in Volume One. The key concept is the historical periodization of the Afro-American experience. We are continuing to work out our theory of Black history; the paradigm of historical periodization rooted in the qualitative changes of the system of production--the slavery, rural agricultural, and urban industrial periods--is a major contribution of theoretical significance. We consider the need to develop a revolutionary theory of Black history a necessary prerequisite to any effective movement for basic social change.

Each of the chapters in Volume Two stands by itself. And together, they weave a complex picture of the overall social experiences of Black people. Each of these nine chapters includes an overview which contains empirical information and theoretical concepts on the subject. We hope that readers will be inspired to go on and do further reading and research (and to share this or past research and insights with us to improve the next edition of this text).

Chapters 10 - 14 are concerned with the major institutional experiences of Black people, and can most usefully be used in relationship to all other material the reader has about particular institutional sectors of American life. Chapters 15 through 18 are concerned with the theories and movements for the freedom of Black people and the entire American society.

We have not written a middle of the road text in which all views are presented, but none is taken. We take a stand. We stand against all forms of exploitation and oppression, for freedom and liberation. Furthermore, we have presented considerable evidence, both as facts as well as statements from authoritative sources (mainly Black intellectuals and scholars). While some will not complete-

ly agree with us, we hope our readers will seriously take up what we have said, and struggle for the clarity of what is agreed to and what is differed with. We repeat what we emphasized in the PREFACE of Volume One of INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES:

The search for knowledge does not end when new knowledge confronts old knowledge and new ideas result. The real test of new ideas is not just in how well they help us understand the world; the real test comes in applying these new ideas to building a new and better world for the masses of people. Therefore, we encourage all of you who take up this course of study to test your ideas in practice.\*

STRUGGLE TO STUDY! STUDY TO STRUGGLE!

\* \* \*

\* Consult the study guide/overview of Chapter 1 of Introduction to Afro-American Studies for more discussion of these ideas. It is reprinted as a special appendix in this volume as well.

#### WHO WROTE THIS BOOK?

INTRODUCTION TO AFRO AMERICAN STUDIES represents a summation of the experience of the activist intellectual generation of the 1960s and early 1970s who stormed through the universities and colleges of America as the vanguard leadership of Black Studies movements.

The author of this anthology/text is the editorial collective of Peoples College Press. The editorial selections, revisions, and development have been made with the direct and indirect advice and criticism of teachers and students who have used INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES over the years.

Of the 137 readings in Volume two, about 90% were written by Black people and predominantly Black organizations. (This figure was 80% in Volume One for 78 readings) Several readings in this volume were written by other Third World people. On the other hand, however, the ideological and political line (position) put forward in INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES is shared by people of all nationalities.

But the key aspect of the authorship of this text is who is going to contribute to its further development. We look forward to hearing your response to INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES. We hope to be receiving your suggestions for its improvement--and to reading the new works which you produce that will take INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES a step further!

# Chapter 10

## BLACK POWER AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What were the major political forms by which Black people were oppressed in the slave, rural, and urban periods? How did Black people fight back?
2. What struggles led to the Civil Rights legislation of the 1950s and 1960s? What impact did the Civil Rights struggles have?
3. Why is "reform" and "revolution" a good way to discuss the struggle for Black liberation and social change? What are the similarities and differences in reformist and revolutionary positions?
4. Why has increased numbers of Black elected officials in Congress, as mayors, etc. not ended the exploitation and oppression that have historically faced the masses of Black people?

### KEY CONCEPTS

Disenfranchisement (poll tax, grandfather clause, etc.)

Voting/Electoral Politics

Fascism

Gerrymandering

Hayes-Tilden Betrayal

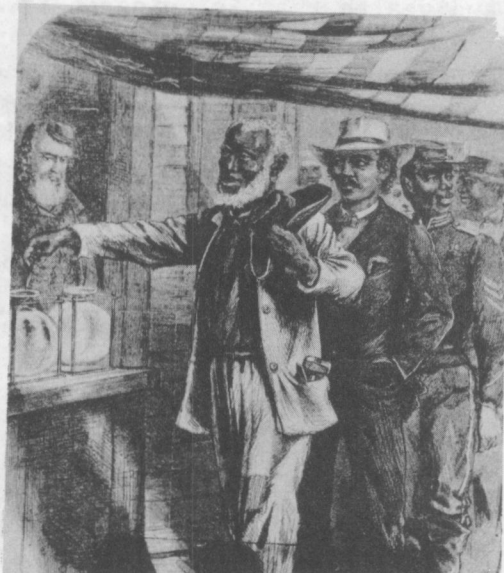
Human Rights/Civil Rights/  
Equal rights

One Man, One Vote

Political Repression

Reconstruction Amendments

Three-fifths Compromise



Black people have always viewed politics and the struggle for political power as one of the most important paths to liberation. Many say that the role of Black voters in deciding the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 is an indication that Black political power has arrived--a record 81% of Blacks voted and gave Carter his margin of victory in 13 states. There has also been an increase in the number of Black mayors and other elected officials, and more appointments at the federal, state and local levels. But the problems that Black people face in the United States--unemployment, inflation, decaying cities, poor health care, police brutality and many others--are no closer to solution now than they were before the increase in Black political officials. In fact, the situation for the masses is getting worse not better.

How are we to approach the political dimension of the Black experience? Generally, legal relations--the law and the government (state)--reflect existing power (class) relations. That is, government and the law has always served the interests of that class which dominates or rules the society at any particular time. Government and law also reflects the struggle for power and wealth that is going on at all times. Under slavery, the government served the slave owners and under capitalism it serves the capitalists. It is this fundamental law of politics that can help us to understand the role that the government has historically played in (and against) the struggle for Black liberation.

In the political arena, this struggle has changed forms as the main political problem facing Black people has changed. During the slave experience Black people fought to be defined by the political system as human. In the rural period the main political fight was for civil rights (for voting, office-holding, etc.). During the urban period,



Black people have been defined by law as equals but still face a disproportionate burden of poverty and racist discrimination in all areas of life.

Slavery: The Struggle for Human Rights. "Slavery is basically a system of political economy in which the production process is carried out by slaves, human beings owned as property by other human beings. Slaves work under direct coercion, and the product of their labor is entirely owned by their owner." Volume I of this book, p. 108 . This is the system which dominated the United States and contributed a lot to the economic development of the entire country.

Because of slavery's economic significance, the protection of the institution of slavery for the slaveowners and the regulation of the slaves assumed the highest priority of governmental bodies--federal, state and local. Thus beginning with Virginia in 1661, many colonial state governments passed laws which defined Black people as sub-humans and put them into the same category as "working beasts, animals of any kind, stock, furniture, plate, books, and so forth," as Maryland's law stated. These laws recognizing the slavery of Blacks passed in Southern states like South Carolina (1682), and Georgia (1749), and in Northern states--Massachusetts (1641), Connecticut (1650), Rhode Island (1652), and New York (1665).

The absolute necessity of controlling slaves through laws of repression is best illustrated by the slave codes passed by Northern and Southern States. These codes regulated many aspects of slave life--travel, marriage, religion, etc. But the most important function, however, was to maintain the slave production system of forced labor.

Because of slavery's economic significance the interest of slave traders and slave owners was reflected in all of the laws of the period. When the Declaration of Independence was drafted in 1776, for example, it is not surprising that New England slave trading merchants joined with Southern slaveowners to delete a passage which condemned slave trading into the United States. Similarly, the U.S. Constitution (1788) legalized the slave trade for an additional 20 years and contained the important provision that Blacks in slavery were to be counted as three-fifths human of a person. This strengthened rather than destroyed slavery, an American institution which was clearly inconsistent with the view in the Declaration of Independence "that all men are created equal." (After the 1793 invention of the cotton gin spurred cotton production and increased the need for slave labor, a significant movement developed to amend the constitution and permit slave trading after 1808).

Governmental bodies at the state and local level, in addition to Congress, the President and the Supreme Court, also served the interest of slaveowners. In 1859, for example, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Dred Scott decision that Black people "had no rights that the white man was bound to respect." Not only did this decision rule that slaves who were moved to non-slave states could not be free, it also deprived free Blacks (both in non-slave and slave states) of citizenship rights under the U.S. Constitution. This decision led attempts to enslave free Blacks and resulted in increased resistance to slavery.

In 1776, British colonialism was the main problem facing the American colonies and this united Northern industrial capitalist and merchants with the slave-owners of the South into the common cause of the American Revolution. By the 1850s however, this had changed. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 had revitalized the Cotton Kingdom; cotton pro-

duction increased from 3,000 bales in 1770 to 1.35 million bales in 1840 (a bale = 1000 pounds). Also between 1790 and 1830, Northern industry especially cotton textiles made rapid advances because of new inventions and production techniques. But the South continued to prefer England as the market for its cotton and as the source of manufactured goods. This restricted the growth of Northern factories and of the Northern industrial capitalists.

Thus, two wings of the ruling class representing two different kinds of property and social systems--slave and industrial--came more and more into open conflict. This economic conflict was the basis of the slavery-related political struggles during the pre-Civil War period. The conflict involved such important issues as whether the tariffs (fees) charged on imports and exports would be high (so Northern textile capitalists could keep the South's cotton in the U.S. and keep British manufactured goods out). Another question was whether new states admitted into the union would be slave states (which would increase the political power of the South) or free states. This latter issue was at the root of several important political compromises which sought a peaceful solution to this growing conflict. But such compromises (e.g., Missouri Compromise in 1820) were insufficient. Only the Civil War could resolve whether the Northern industrial capitalists or the slaveowners of the South would dominate the federal government and use it as an instrument to further their very different and opposed economic interests. And the Northern Industrial capitalists won!

(2) The Rural Period: The Struggle For Civil Rights. Emancipating the slaves was an historical and political necessity, the only way in which the Northern capitalists could defeat their slaveowning enemies in the Civil War.

But solving one problem often leads to other problems. Thus, while emancipation gave the North important Black allies in beating the South, it also upset the labor system in the South and unleashed a powerful movement to establish full democratic rights. Genuine democracy (not bourgeois or capitalist democracy where everyone can vote but the rich continue to rule) would have restricted some of the activities of the wealthy, Northern capitalists. Thus, reestablishing a system of labor in the South became one immediate aim of government during the Reconstruction period, and reconstructing a political system under the firm control of the Northern capitalists became the other.

The "Black Codes" clearly illustrate this governmental priority on the local and state level. The purpose of these "Black Codes" was to institute new conditions of exploitation as similar to slavery as possible. Mississippi was so bold as to almost completely re-enact its old "slave Code." While the Freedman's Bureau conducted essential relief work among free slaves, its most important function spelled out in Congressional legislation was to organize and regulate a system of labor contracts, again pointing out the importance of reestablishing a labor system in the war disrupted ~~economy~~ of the South.

The importance of the ex-slaves in the North's strategy to consolidate its victory was also reflected in the three Reconstruction Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. These amendments abolished slavery (the 13th), put the federal government behind the rights of the freed slaves (the 14th), and guaranteed the right to vote (the 15th). A close reading of these amendments--for example, section 3 and 4 of the 14th amendment--reveals that the amendments were also aimed at consolidating the defeat of the slaveowners by preventing them from voting and collecting on large loans that the former slaveowners made to the confederacy, two important bases of power.

The second stage of the relationship of Black people to the U.S. government during the rural period was based on the changing interests of Northern capitalists. The North used their alliance with the ex-slaves to consolidate their victory over the Southern slaveowners. The main problem now facing them was the disruption of the smooth and peaceful operation of capitalist exploitation by the newly enfranchised Blacks and a growing radical movement among workers, farmers and small manufacturers. Thus, Northern capitalists ended their alliance with Black people in the Hayes-Tilden Sellout of 1877. Federal troops were withdrawn from the South and political power was given back to the ex-slave owners, but this time with northern capitalists overseeing the entire process. It was consistent with the "serve the rich" role the U.S. government was playing that these same troops were used to suppress the militant national strike of railroad workers in the 1877 national strike.

During this period, however, Black people fought for and won many democratic rights. Blacks voted and were elected to federal, state, and local political offices. Laws creating the first tax-supported public education system and other progressive legislation were passed in legislatures where Black people were in a majority (South Carolina) or played a leading role.

The federal government gave over a billion acres of publicly-owned land to the railroads, mining and land corporations (and only a few acres to homesteaders). Millions of dollars of public funds were distributed to wealthy bondholders (over \$45 million between 1888 and 1890). Black and white farmers fought against this increasing domination of big business which resulted in low prices for farm products and high prices for transportation and manufactured goods. This farmers' revolt led to the Populist Movement which elected local, state, and federal officials,

and almost won the U.S. presidency in 1896. These officials supported such radical policies as public ownership of monopolized railroads, telegraphs and telephones, an income tax system, and reforms to benefit workers.

The high level of militant unity which developed among Black and White farmers during the rural period was a significant threat to the ruling class. Thus, all branches of government participated in the repression of Black people and maintaining them as a super-exploited sector among the workers on the farms and in the factories of the South. The Civil Rights Acts of 1870-71 were repealed in 1894, the Supreme Court ruled in Plessy vs Ferguson that segregation and discrimination against Black people were enacted (poll tax, grandfather clause, and the all-white primary), Thus, the main fight of Black people during the rural period was to restore these fundamental Civil Rights, a struggle which continues today (as we will discuss in Chapter 15).

(3) The Urban Period: The Struggle for Equal Rights. The migration, urbanization, and proletarianization (factory work) of Black people beginning during World War I led to a dramatic transformation of all aspects of Black life. Black people became highly concentrated in urban areas and involved in most sectors of the industrial economy. Thus, a new basis for the political development of Black people was laid. As stated in Volume I, "while geographic concentration enabled the ruling class to orchestrate new forms of oppression more effectively, it also enabled Black people to fight back with more intensity and more force." (p. 212) Because U.S. imperialism needed Black workers in the northern industrial economy, the federal government was compelled to end the more blatant forms of oppression while leaving the content of

oppression intact. These are the patterns that can be seen in the industrial period. Thus, Black people were given some Civil Rights on paper but the fight for full equality in practice in the political and economic system became the main focus of struggle during the urban period.

Because of the mass protest movements and revolutionary struggles during the Great Depression (see chapter 17), the Federal government, serving the interest of monopoly capitalism in crisis, was forced to institute a system of social insurance (unemployment insurance, welfare, etc.) and to recognize the right of workers to organize trade unions. Both of these benefitted Black people who were mostly workers. Black people initiated plans for a massive March on Washington Movement to protest discrimination just as the U.S. geared up for World War II. Because these protests weakened the attempt of U.S. imperialism to fight a war and grab a bigger share of the world, the federal government reacted with a series of executive orders to reduce racist discrimination: the Fair Employment Practices Commission (1941), the President's Committee on Civil Rights (1946), and integrating the armed forces (1948). The mass protest activities were continued and limited measures which restricted discrimination in housing and ended the all-white primaries were also issued. Thus, the stage was set for the Civil Rights Movement and the massive political protests that forced a flurry of governmental action starting with the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court which declared that discrimination against Black people was unconstitutional.

The 1960s was a high tide of struggle in the Black liberation movement. Two distinct trends developed in the political arena among Black people. On the one hand, the Voting Rights Acts of 1965 and voter registration projects funded by monopoly capitalists increased the number of Black

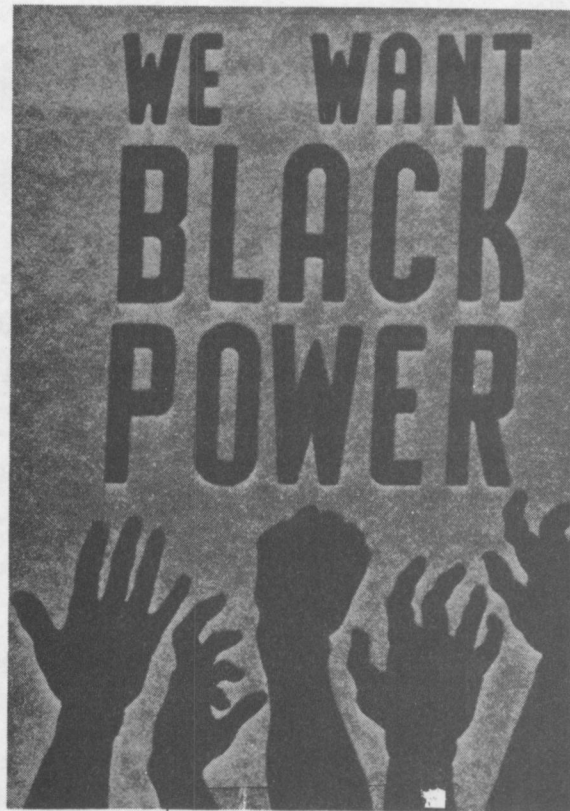
voters. This led to a greater emphasis on a reformist program for Black liberation--electing Black politicians as the most important way to achieve freedom for Black people. The number of these politicians has increased on the local, state and federal levels and such organizations as the Congressional Black Caucus and National Black Assembly were formed. But there has been no real long-term improvement in the conditions facing Black people. Electoral politics seeks to achieve Black liberation without fundamental changes in U.S. capitalism and capitalist democracy, a system in which the few rich continue to rule. Electoral politics prevents the masses of people from seeing that those capitalists who dominate the U.S. economy also dominate the political process, regardless of which political party is in office.

On the other hand, the struggle in the 1960s produced a more militant and radical program for Black liberation. Many Black people pointed to the historical role that the entire political system has played in helping to exploit and oppress Black people and concluded as Malcolm X did: "This so-called democracy has failed Black people". It was on this basis that the revolutionary sector of the Black liberation movement emerged and struggled for basic and fundamental changes in American society and attracted widespread support in the 1960s and early 1970s. The final chapters will explore these questions more fully.

Recently the Bakke case and other cases involving attacks on affirmative action reveal that the government is again orchestrating the efforts of the ruling class to reverse the gains of the Black liberation struggle. Learning the lessons of the last years of struggle especially since 1954), more and more Black people now see the dead-end nature of reformist politics and relying on the existing government to solve the



many problems facing Black people, problems which that same government has helped to create. It is our view that only a fundamental and basic revolutionary change in the existing political system will guarantee the democratic rights and freedom that Black people and the masses of the American people have fought for since the American Revolution.



## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 10

1.	SLAVERY AND THE U.S. CONSTITUTION	Rayford Logan	13
2.	WHAT TO THE SLAVE IS YOUR FOURTH OF JULY (1852)	Frederick Douglass	14
3.	RECONSTRUCTION AMENDMENTS TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION (1865-1870)		16
4.	RETURN TO SLAVERY: THE BLACK CODES (1935)	W.E.B.DUBOIS	18
5.	BLACK POWER IN THE RECONSTRUCTION GOVERNMENTS (1937)	James Allen	19
6.	THE HAYES TILDEN BETRAYAL OF 1877 (1954)	William Z. Foster	22
7.	POLITICAL DISFRANCHISEMENT IN THE RURAL SOUTH (1940)	Ralphe Bunche	24
8.	BLACK POLITICS IN THE CITY: THE CHICAGO CASE (1929)	Ralphe Bunche	26
9.	PROTEST POLITICS: THE FIRST MARCH ON WASHINGTON (1942)	A. Philip Randolph	30
10.	WE CHARGE GENOCIDE: PETITION TO THE UNITED NATIONS (1950)	William Patterson	33
11.	SERVING TWO MASTERS: AN ANALYSIS OF BLACK ELECTED POLITICIANS (1967)	E. Franklin Frazier	35
12.	THE BALLOT OR THE BULLET: REFORM OR RADICALISM	Malcolm X	38
13.	REFORMISM: PROGRESS THROUGH LEGISLATION (1973)	Louis Stokes Congressional Black Caucus	41
14.	RADICALISM: CALL FOR A NEW U.S. CONSTITUTION (1970)	Black Panther Party	44
15.	BUILDING BLACK POLITICAL UNITY (1972)	National Black Political Assembly	46
16.	A LESSON LEARNED: WHICH SIDE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS ON (1935)	Ralphe Bunche	48
	SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS		50

## SLAVERY AND THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

When the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia in 1787, the issue of slavery did not concern them greatly. Under the Articles of Confederation the central government lacked power to tax and was too weak to deal with threats of armed violence from discontented citizens like those led by Daniel Shays in Shays' Rebellion (1786). Businessmen, property owners and the middle class in general wished to strengthen the central government. By 1787, there was perhaps greater concern for the protection of property rights than human rights. As a result, when the federal Constitution was drawn up, the "rights" of slaveowners, as owners of property in slaves, were indirectly strengthened. The rights of slaves on the other hand, were ignored. Although the word "slavery" does not appear in the original text of the Constitution, three different sections dealt with the practice of slavery. Let us consider them briefly.

1. The "Three-fifths" Compromise. The most important part of the Constitution dealing with slavery was the so-called "three-fifths" compromise which was related to representation in Congress. The biggest issue at the convention was how the "large" states--those with the largest population--and the "small" states would be represented in the national legislature. This issue was largely settled by the "Great Compromise." Each state, regardless of population, was to have two seats in the Senate, but seats in the House of Representatives were to be apportioned on the basis of population.

The Southern states naturally wished to have all slaves counted in determining population. At the same time, they wished not to count the slaves when direct taxes were to be levied on the basis of population. The Northern states objected to these proposals because they would increase the power of the South in the House of Representatives and would enable slaveholding states to escape from paying their fair share of taxes.

The three-fifths compromise settled this dispute. Three-fifths of the slaves were to be counted in determining both a state's representation and taxes. This compromise, of course, conferred no rights on the slaves. Article I, Section 2, Clause 3 of the Constitution reads:

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within the Union, according to their respective

Numbers which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other Persons. . . .

2. The Importation of Slaves. Another section of the Constitution dealt with the foreign slave trade. Northerners generally opposed restrictions on foreign commerce, and some Southerners feared that such restrictions would curtail the number of slaves imported. On the other hand, some Northerners and some Southerners wished to end the importation of slaves. The result was that another compromise was written into the Constitution. It provided that Congress could not prohibit the importation of slaves before 1808. But it permitted Congress to impose a tax of not more than ten dollars on each slave brought into the country. Since this compromise did not say that the slave would be prohibited after 1807, Congress--if it so wished--would have to enact a law to end the trade after that time. Article I, Section 9, Clause 1 reads:

The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.

3. The Provision Concerning Fugitive Slaves. The third provision in the Constitution affecting slavery dealt with the question of runaway slaves. Though this section, like the others, did not use the word "slave," its meaning was clear: a slave escaping into another state had to be surrendered upon the claim of the slaveowner. This provision was destined to cause friction between free and the slaveholding states. Article IV, Section 2, Clause 3 of the Constitution reads:

No person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due.

WHAT TO THE SLAVE IS THE FOURTH OF JULY? (1852)

**2**

Fellow Citizens: Pardon me, and allow me to ask why am I called upon to speak here today? What have I or those I represent to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? And am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the natural altar,

and to confess the benefits, and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions. . . . But such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you this day rejoice are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence bequeathed by your fathers is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice. I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak today? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn you, that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, towering up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrecoverable ruin. I can today take up the lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people.

Fellow citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions, whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are today rendered more intolerable by the jubilant shouts that reach them. . . . My subject, then, fellow citizens, is "American Slavery." I shall see this day its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view. Standing here, identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this Fourth of July. Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity, which is outraged; in the name of liberty, which is fettered; in the name of the Constitution and the Bible which are disregarded and trampled upon; dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery--the great sin and shame of America! "I will not equivocate;

I will not excuse"; I will use the severest language I can command, and yet not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slave-holder, shall not confess to be right and just.

What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him more than all other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass-fronted imprudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety and hypocrisy--a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation of the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of these United States at this very hour.

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World, travel through South America, search out every abuse and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

## RECONSTRUCTION AMENDMENTS TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION (1865-1870)

# 3

### The Thirteenth Amendment (1865): The End of Slavery

Sec. 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Sec. 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

### The Fourteenth Amendment (1868): Citizenship Rights and Northern Capitalist Control over the South

Sec. 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall

abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Sec. 2. Representatives shall be apportioned among several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President of United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

Sec. 3. No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice President, or hold office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

Sec. 4. The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void. . . .

#### The Fifteenth Amendment (1870): Voting Rights

Sec. 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude.

Sec. 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

**4**

#### RETURN TO SLAVERY: THE BLACK CODES (1935)

The whole proof of what the South proposed to do to the emancipated Negro unless restrained by the nation, was shown in the Black Codes passed after Johnson's accession, but representing the logical result of attitudes of mind existing when Lincoln still lived. Some of these were passed and enforced. Some were passed and afterward repealed or modified when the reaction of the North was realized. In other cases, as for instance, in Louisiana, it is not clear just which laws were retained and which were repealed. In Alabama, the Governor induced the legislature not to enact some parts of the proposed code which they overwhelmingly favored.

The original codes favored by the Southern legislatures were an astonishing affront to emancipation and dealt with vagrancy, apprenticeship, labor contracts, migration, civil and legal rights. In all cases, there was plain and indisputable attempts on the part of the Southern states to make Negroes slaves in everything but name. They were given certain civil rights: the right to hold property, to sue and be sued. The family relations for the first time were legally recognized. Negroes were no longer real estate.

Yet, in the face of this, the Black Codes were deliberately designed to take advantage of every misfortune of the Negro. Negroes were liable to a slave trade under the guise of vagrancy and apprenticeship laws; to make the best labor contracts, Negroes must leave the old plantations and seek better terms; but if caught wandering in search of work, and thus unemployed and without a home, this was vagrancy, and the victim could be whipped and sold into slavery. In the turmoil of war, children were separated from parents, or parents were unable to support them properly. These children could be sold into slavery, and "the former owner of said minors shall have the preference." Negroes could come into court as witnesses only in cases in which Negroes were involved. And even then, they must make appeal to a jury and judge who would believe the word of any white man in preference to that of any Negro on pain of losing office and caste.

The Negro's access to the land was hindered and limited; his right to work was curtailed; his right of self-defense was taken away, when his right to bear



arms was stopped; and his employment was virtually reduced to contract labor with penal servitude as a punishment for leaving his job. And in all cases, the judges of the Negro's guilt or innocence, rights and obligations were men who believed firmly, for the most part, that he had "no rights which a white man was bound to respect."

Making every allowance for the excitement and turmoil of war, and the mentality of a defeated people, the Black Codes were infamous pieces of legislation. . . .

Especially in the matter of work was the Negro narrowly restricted. In South Carolina, he must be especially licensed if he was to follow on his own account any employment, except that of farmer or servant. Those licensed must not only prove their fitness, but pay an annual tax ranging from \$10-\$100. Under no circumstances could they manufacture or sell liquor. Licenses for work were to be granted by a judge and were revokable on complaint. The penalty was a fine double the amount of the license, one-half of which went to the informer.

Mississippi provided that "every freedman, free Negro and mulatto shall on the second Monday of January, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-six, and annually thereafter, have a lawful home or employment, and shall have written evidence thereof . . . from the Mayor . . . or from a member of the board of police . . . which licenses may be revoked for cause at any time by the authority granting the same."

Detailed regulation of labor was provided for in nearly all these states. . . .

## BLACK POWER IN THE RECONSTRUCTION GOVERNMENTS (1937)

# 5

The Constitutional Conventions elected by the new voters were the first really representative bodies of the people to meet on Southern soil. They were also the first state assemblies in which Negroes participated as elected representatives of the people. In the South Carolina Convention there were 48 white delegates and 76 Negro, fully two-thirds of whom had once been slaves, while the white up-country was represented by some substantial farmers and "low-down whites." In Louisiana 49 delegates of each race participated. The "Black and Tan" Convention of Mississippi had 17 Negro delegates out of a total of 100, although there were 70 delegates from the 32 Black Belt counties.

Negro delegates were also elected to the other constitutional conventions. But only in South Carolina and Louisiana did the Negroes participate in proportion to their ratio in the population or in the electorate. [In the other states: Florida, 27 white and 18 Negro; Virginia, 80 white and 25 Negro; Georgia, 137 white and 33 Negro; Alabama, 90 white and 18 Negro; Arkansas, 58 white and 8 Negro; North Carolina, 118 white and 15 Negro; Texas, 81 white and 9 Negro.]

Most of the conventions were predominantly agrarian and directly representative of the poorer sections of the population, especially in South Carolina. The white delegates of the state paid altogether \$761 in annual taxes, of which one conservative paid \$508. The taxes paid by the Negro delegates totaled \$117, of which a Charleston Negro paid \$85. Fifty-nine of the Negro and 23 of the white delegates paid no taxes whatever. These certainly were not men of property gathered in South Carolina to create a new democratic state. Almost half of them had toiled on the plantations as slaves, others had scratched out a bare living in the up-lands.

Fully half of the 98 delegates at the Alabama convention were agrarians; 16 of the 18 Negroes had been slaves. But there was also good representation from the urban middle class: 16 lawyers, 9 physicians, 4 of other middle-class occupations, and 4 white-collar employees. Six town workers were also delegates. Contrary to the general impression created by highly prejudiced accounts that the Reconstruction bodies consisted largely of "carpetbaggers," at least 70 of the delegates were native Southerners. Likewise in Mississippi, where Negroes had evidently been discriminated against in the selection of delegates--the so-called carpetbaggers only had some 20-odd representatives, nearly all of whom had been soldiers in the Union Army and who had been elected from the Black Belt counties. On the other hand, there were 29 native white Republicans. Of the 17 Negro delegates, at least seven were ministers. The Negroes had supplied the necessary majority for calling the Convention, while it was dominated by the white delegates. In Louisiana, many of the Negro delegates were property-free Negroes under slavery, while a good proportion once tilled the soil as slaves.

These people's conventions, the overwhelming majority of whose delegates were newly awakened peasants, proceeded to write state constitutions which would revolutionize the South if put into effect today. "These documents,"

rages Bowers, "framed by ignorance, malevolence, and partisanship, sounded the death-knell of civilization in the South." They did, indeed, place the official seal upon the death certificate of the slave civilization and swept aside, at least in words, all the cobwebs of history which had gathered in the corners of the oligarchy.

The new constitutions provided for Negro suffrage and for complete equality of civil rights. They disfranchised and barred from office the leaders of the Confederacy, as already stipulated in the Fourteenth Amendment. The most drastic steps in this regard were taken by Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana, only the last of which had a large enough number of Negro delegates at the convention to make their action decisive. The Alabama and Arkansas constitutions disfranchised all who "had violated the roles of civilized warfare"; Louisiana disfranchised all who had voted for secession or had advocated treason against the United States. Mississippi and Virginia disbarred from office any one who had voluntarily participated in the rebellion or had voluntarily given aid. The opposition of the up-lands to the old planter aristocracy is indicated by the fact that disfranchisement was most stringent in those states where the white delegates sat as a majority in the conventions.

Other measures passed by the conventions reflect the thoroughgoing nature of the democratic overturn. The South Carolina constitution provided that no person be disqualified for crimes committed as a slave. Property qualifications for office were abolished and representation in the Lower House was to be apportioned by population and not property, as had been the case under slavery. No one could be imprisoned for debt nor prevented from enjoying property rights. A system of universal public education was to be created. Rights of women were extended. The system of county government was reorganized, providing for the election of all county officials and enlarging county self-government. In Mississippi and Louisiana additional provisions were included to assure equal rights on all public conveyances. The University of Louisiana was opened to Negroes. Other state conventions passed similar constitutions, which embodied a complete transformation of the old social structure.

The conventions also struck at ideological remnants of the slave system. One resolution passed by the South Carolina body demanded that steps be taken to "expunge forever from the vocabulary of South Carolina, the epithets,

'nigger,' 'negro,' and 'Yankee' . . . and to punish this insult by fine and imprisonment." A resolution in the Mississippi body changed the name of Davis County to Jones, to extinguish any official recognition of the former president of the Confederacy.

6

THE HAYES-TILDEN BETRAYAL OF 1877: SELLING BLACK PEOPLE  
DOWN THE RIVER (1954)

Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio, the Republican candidate for president in 1876, was a lawyer who had risen to the rank of major-general in the Civil War. During his one term in Congress, in 1865-67, he fully supported the program of the Radicals on Reconstruction, and later he backed the Grant Administration. Samuel J. Tilden, the Democratic standard-bearer, was a New-York lawyer, a "war Democrat."

*South* The election campaign of 1876 was very sharp. The lines were drawn pretty much as in the previous presidential campaign. The Southern question was the main bone of contention, with Tilden demanding "full autonomy for the South"--meaning the restored power of the planters--and Hayes ostensibly promising to continue the general line of the Grant Administration. . . .

The national vote was as follows, according to the eventual Republican count for Tilden 4,285,992 votes, and for Hayes 4,033,768, or a popular majority of 252,224 for the Democratic candidate. Tilden, therefore, claimed the victory, with 203 electoral votes for himself, against 166 for Hayes. The Republicans, however, contested this claim, challenging the returns from four states--South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana and Oregon. Undoubtedly there had been big frauds in the South, with large numbers of Negroes--Republicans--kept away from the polls by terror. The Republican challenge left the undisputed vote of Tilden at 184 and Hayes at 166--or one short of the needed majority for Tilden in the electoral college, with the votes of four states contested.

The Hayes-Tilden agreement consisted of a cynical sell-out of the Negro people. The bargain was made in a series of conferences, February 26-27, 1877, just before Hayes took office. Hayes promised liberal appropriations for Southern internal improvements and the passage of the Texas Pacific Railroad bill; but the key to the agreement was the surrender to the Democrats of political control of the state governments of South Carolina and Louisiana, which the Republicans still held.

The Northern bourgeoisie, who were beginning to develop monopoly capitalism, betrayed the Negro people by making a bargain with Southern reaction, because they had accomplished their major objectives through the revolution. That is, they had preserved the Union and smashed the menace of the cotton planters, thus forever removing them as a dangerous obstacle in their economic and political path. With this done, they had no further concern about the Negro people, except to make sure that they were kept in a position where the Northerners themselves could participate in their super-exploitation.

First by the revolution, the capitalists of the North, increasingly monopolist, had quite established their control of the Federal government. Prior to the Civil War, in the 72 years between Washington and Lincoln, the South had held the presidency for 50 years, and provided 20 of the 35 Supreme Court justices and 13 of the 23 Speakers of the House. After the war, the political picture was radically changed. Since Johnson, no president has been a Southerner. President Wilson (1913-21), although born in Virginia, actually hailed from New Jersey, and President Eisenhower (1953- ), Texas-born, has been almost altogether a resident of the West and North. During these decades the cotton industry vastly expanded--from 4,491,000 bales in 1860 to 15,694,000 bales in 1911; but never again were the once arrogant cotton masters able to challenge the victorious Northern capitalists. The illusion of "King Cotton" was liquidated. As part of their control of the Federal government, the Yankee capitalists proceeded to domesticate in their service not only the Republican Party, but the Democratic Party as well. They both became primarily Northern capitalist parties; henceforth, no matter which one carried the elections, Northern capitalist interests were safeguarded.

Second, by the revolution, the Northern industrialists also accomplished their basic economic objectives. After the war they were able freely to jack up the tariff, cultivate internal improvements and consolidate into monopolies. They also won access to the raw materials and markets of the South. They ousted British influence in the South and took full command themselves. Par-  
rington says that, after the Civil War, "an ambitious industrialism stood on the threshold of a continental expansion that was to transfer sovereignty in America from a landed and mercantile aristocracy to the capable hands of a

BJ  
Clinton  
Carter

new race of captains of industry." Indeed, by 1877 this transformation had already been basically accomplished.

7

#### POLITICAL DISFRANCHISEMENT IN THE RURAL SOUTH (1940)

In their efforts to insure the permanence of white supremacy and to eliminate the Negro vote as a serious factor in political affairs, the Democrats of the South adopted almost every conceivable measure that might tend to accomplish this purpose. To many white Southerners, the partisan election laws, poll tax requirements and the irregular practices which were used at the polls were not enough assurance of maintaining white supremacy. In order further to safeguard this concept, the gerrymander was frequently used. Legislative and congressional districts were set up with the definite purpose of insuring a Democratic majority. In 1882, for example, the legislature of South Carolina so gerrymandered that state that the Republicans could control but one of the seven congressional districts. The same device was used in arranging legislative districts. Another method used by the Democrats to frustrate the will of the black majorities in counties where Negroes outnumbered whites was that of centralized state government. So long as the whites stuck together, the Democratic control of the legislatures was assured. This made the highly centralized state government method very effective. In order to put this policy into effect, the legislature of North Carolina passed a county government law in 1876. This act provided for the election of justices of the peace by the legislature. In turn, the justices of the peace were to elect from three to five persons from their respective counties to act as a board of commissioners. Thus, the chief county officers were appointed rather than elected by the people.

The agrarian upheaval and the rise of the Populist party had a profound effect upon Negro suffrage and, in the long run, contributed much to the complete disfranchisement of Negroes in the Southern states. The economic distress of the region's farmers, coupled with the conservative and business-oriented leadership of the Bourbon regimes in the South, eventually inspired a widespread political rebellion. The poor white population began to assert itself and to demand a voice in the political controls of the section. It began to develop a new group and class consciousness, and to produce its own leadership. Often meeting with an inhospitable reception in the conservation

Democratic party, the leadership of the upsurging white masses began to flirt with the idea of an alliance with the Blacks as a means of crashing through the established order. The repressive activities against Negroes in the 1890's and early 1900's were stimulated not by fear of the Negro but by fear of the unity of Blacks and whites. The Negro, by this time, was no longer a menace; he had been thoroughly suppressed.

Thus, the Populist revolt furnished new reasons for dealing harshly with Negro voters. Effective--and legal--disfranchisement became an important factor in helping to reunite the white South in the wake of the divisions of the late nineteenth century. . . .

An examination of the disfranchising amendments adopted by the various Southern states reveals a striking similarity in the essential features of the acts. Each contains an educational prerequisite for voting, which is usually the ability to read a section of the state or federal constitution, and to write one's name. Poll taxes or other taxes had to be paid by the applicant for registration. It was necessary to register months ahead of elections, and a receipt for taxes paid had to be shown to registration and election officials. The property qualification was a new feature. This usually ran to two or three hundred dollars. One or more alternatives were usually provided for this qualification. Literacy was one of these. Another was the "understanding" clause, which usually called for the ability to interpret the state or federal constitution to the satisfaction of election officers. In some cases "good character" might qualify one for registration and voting, but it had to be substantiated by sworn testimonials, by proof of steady employment during a specified preceding period, or by an affidavit giving the names of employers for a period of from three to five years. The property and literacy qualifications automatically eliminated large numbers of Negroes, and the alternatives which were generally provided were easily manipulated by the election officials so as to operate to the disadvantage of Black applicants. A further impediment took the form of residence requirements and a list of disqualifying crimes, which were supposedly peculiar to the Negro's low economic and social status. The crowning glory of constitutional disfranchisement was the grandfather clause, which was the safeguard for the poor and illiterate whites.

In the first three decades of the present century the Negro vote in the South was negligible. While not minimizing the importance of the

disfranchising amendments, it should be noted that the most effective disfranchising weapon--and the one which has had the most permanence--is not expressly formulated in the laws of the states. This is the "white primary." The effectiveness of this color bar was detected early by white Southerners. During one of the debates on proposed disfranchisement clauses, an opponent of the proposal contended that they were unnecessary, since the white primary was already taking care of the black vote very effectively. Small wonder that the Negro, continually turned away from participation in the only real elections, and denied registration by "impartial" registrars, frequently made no effort to vote. In addition to these conditions, it was clearly brought home to even those Negroes who were still active in the most ineffective Republican party that they were not wanted in any political circles. This realization came with the adoption of lily-white policies by the party which has been traditionally regarded as the sole political hope of the Black citizens of the South.

The severe rebuff given to the high hopes of Negroes in the period of reaction following Reconstruction led to disillusionment and ultimately to an attitude approaching resignation and fatalism. The last quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of decreasing political activity for Negroes, and Black leaders sought to discover a new line and a new direction. This quickly took the form of a philosophy of conciliation, which involved a recognition of the supremacy of the dominant white population and of the inferior caste status of the Negro. The philosophy of the Negro in this period reveals itself as a somewhat strange admixture of futility and hope, and it was given its proper refinement through the lips of Booker T. Washington. The political aspirations of the Negro came to be regarded as chimerical, and he was directed to other channels of activity, such as the economic, in which he would be able through thrift, industry and vocational skill to win for himself strength and respect in the community. The Negro reluctantly accepted his removal from political affairs and attempted to make the best of it.

## BLACK POLITICS IN THE CITY: THE CHICAGO CASE (1929)

**8**

Chicago, America's most sensational municipality, with its "pineapple" [the bombs hurled by Chicago gangsters] politics and racketeers, has become the "seventh heaven" of Negro political activity.



The state of Illinois, Cook County (of which the midwestern metropolis comprises the major part), and Chicago boast a greater degree of Negro political participation and influence than any city, county or state in the nation. The toga of Negro political leadership adorns the Illinois Negro. His influence is vitally felt at every election. His vote is often the conclusive determinant in hot races for political office. His reward for support of the successful candidate is the usual consideration condoned by contemporary American political practice.

Any analysis of the political development of the Negro in Chicago must concern itself with, first, the very nature of the characteristically American system of "machine" government and "bossism," and, second, the political career of William Hale Thompson--"Big Bill the Builder," "Friend of the Plain People," "Democracy's Child," as he is variously and significantly called. . . .

"Big Bill" Thompson is the political "boss" of Chicago. The Negro political leaders have, by and large, been cogs in his well-oiled machine. Thompson apparently has the customary politician's affection for the plain people. Seemingly humane, tolerant, the "angel of the underdog" and a "good fellow," he has won to power because he has won the good will of hundreds of minor ward and precinct "bosses"--many of them Negroes.

"He is the wholesaler, they the retailers in a government built on friendship and this friendship thrives on trades in patronage and favor."

Chicago, the second black city, the sixth German city in the world, with a large Polish element, an Italian city comparable to Naples, is an ideal place in which to assemble unrelated minorities. Organization here counts tremendously in election results. "Big Bill" proceeded to build up a powerful organization, and the Negro minority plays a vital role in it. Patronage and favor are "swapped" for Black ballots.

Chicago today has a Negro population of approximately 200,000. When Mayor Thompson was first elected in the spring of 1915, approximately 55,000 Negroes were residents of the city. These were concentrated chiefly in the district just south of the "loop," politically designated as the second ward. Many years before, Thompson had been elected alderman from this same ward on the strength of the Negro vote. In the municipal election of 1915 he was solidly supported by the same electorate--gaining a majority of more than 10,000 votes over his opponent in the Negro district. He was elected, and served two terms (until 1923), during which time the political influence of

the Negro population of the city began to assume important proportions. Indeed, in 1919, when Mayor Thompson was reelected by a plurality of 21,622 votes in a total city vote of 698,920, his poll in the Negro wards was 15,569 to his nearest opponent's 3,313. The Negro support was consequently sufficiently strong to control the result.

It was during Thompson's first two administrations that the first Negro alderman was returned to the city council, and the mayor promptly appointed him floor leader. At the same time there were three Negroes appointed as assistant corporation counsels; another to a comparatively lucrative position as attorney for the traction commission; and a number of minor appointments in other city offices were made. This representation in the government of the city served to stimulate the political interest of the Negro groups. The ballot was seen as an effective instrument whereby they might to no little extent select those who were to govern them and at the same time win moderate prestige for their race. Negro political leaders with actual political experience were being developed, and the war placed new power in their hands. They found welcome places in the "machine." The exodus from the South greatly augmented their population and the number of Negro inhabitants in Chicago jumped startlingly from 44,103 in 1910 to 109,595 in 1920, an increase of 148 per cent, most of which occurred between 1916 and 1919. This increase virtually trebled the number of Negro voters, many of whom were of the ignorant, peasant class--fine raw material for machine digestion.

Mayor Thompson did not run in the 1923 election but was a candidate for a third term in the spring of 1927. Never since the fire of 1871, was Chicago so aroused over a local affair. It is no small matter that stirs 3,000,000 people with anxious interest and sends over 1,000,000 to the polls. The Negro was destined to play a stellar role in this mighty political melodrama. Unfortunately, the racial issue early became predominant. This was due in part to the size of the potential Negro vote, which was known to be strongly in support of Thompson; and in part to the fact that some of the supporters of Mayor Dever's candidacy viciously attacked Thompson as the "Negro candidate." The inevitable result was to stampede the Negro vote to the Thompson banner more solidly than ever. "Big Bill" won the Negro leaders behind him almost to a man. What with kissing dark-hued babies and abusing Irish police who raided the Negro clubs and sometimes made mistakes and raided Negro homes, he held the Negro vote practically unanimously.

A good deal of vilification and scurrilous propaganda was circulated during the hectic campaign. Hoaxes were perpetrated, calliopes paraded the streets piping the strains of "Bye, Bye, Blackbird"; a typical circular displayed a trainload of Negroes headed from Georgia with Thompson as pilot of the train, and the significant legend inscribed below: "This train will start for Chicago, April 6, if Thompson is elected."

Election day brought out a record vote. Thompson surprised political prophets by winning over Dever by a plurality of 82,938 votes. A total of 1,010,582 ballots was cast, of which 10,739 were disqualified. By far the major portion of this plurality was gained in the "south side" or Negro wards, where Thompson's majorities ran from eight to one to as high as sixteen to one. The second, third and fourth wards, with a Negro population respectively of about 98, 95 and 60 per cent,--the "strongholds of the Negro vote,"--gave 59,215 votes of the Thompson plurality of 82,938.

With the Thompson victory and the campaign excitement abated, the color issue was flatly dropped, and but scant mention was made of it by the local press, which had featured it so prominently in the pre-election ballyhoo. Interest now centered on the prospective political "house-cleaning" by the new administration. In the new city appointments Negro political leaders shared generously. . . .

All of the Negro political representation in Chicago is not, however, by appointment. In the two strong Negro wards, the second and third, the majority group has elected two of its own members as aldermen. A Negro municipal court judge with a salary of \$10,000 has also been nominated and elected.

The natural result of this stimulated political activity found its expression in an increased interest by Negroes in state political affairs. Four Negroes have been elected to the lower house of the Illinois state legislature and one state senator. State appointments have been numerous. A Negro serves as the governor's appointee on the powerful Illinois industrial board, which controls the workmen's compensation awards. Another serves as state commerce commissioner, one of a commission of seven members, controlling all public utilities and state commercial enterprises. A Negro is serving as an assistant attorney-general of Illinois on the special commission whose object is the purging of Chicago politics of vice and corruption. Mr. Oscar De Priest, of course, has been elected to the National Congress as Representative from the first congressional district, with a plurality of about 4,000 votes over his white opponent. . . .

What then, is the future of the Negro in Chicago politics, whose political development has been so intimately related to the Thompson organization? . . . Thompson has helped the Negro to develop and assert his potential political power in Chicago politics. The Negro electorate must certainly be taken into serious account henceforth by the machines which succeed the present administration. The Negro is established politically in Illinois today and can be relied upon to shift for himself from now on. He has capable leaders, well-trained for their tasks. The earlier leaders were often of a rather low type, but those of the newer generations are of much higher caliber. The Negro has acquired a new confidence in his political ability. It can probably be safely predicted that the Chicago Negro in future years will continue to wield as much influence and to hold as many (if not more) offices, as he now does under the Thompson regime. . . .

## PROTEST POLITICS: THE FIRST MARCH ON WASHINGTON (1942)

# 9

Fellow Marchers and delegates to the Policy Conference of the March on Washington Movement and friends: We have met at an hour when the sinister shadows of war are lengthening and becoming more threatening. As one of the sections of the oppressed darker races, and representing a part of the exploited millions of the workers of the world, we are deeply concerned that the totalitarian legions of Hitler, Hirohito and Mussolini do not batter the last bastions of democracy. We know that our fate is tied up with the fate of the democratic way of life. And so, out of the depth of our hearts, a cry goes up for the triumph of the United Nations. But we would not be honest with ourselves were we to stop with a call for a victory of arms alone. We know this is not enough. We fight that the democratic faiths, values, heritages and ideals may prevail.

Unless this war sounds the death knell to the old Anglo-American empire systems, the hapless story of which is one of exploitation for the profit and power of a monopoly-capitalist economy, it will have been fought in vain. Our aim, then, must not only be to defeat Nazism, fascism and militarism on the battlefield but to win the peace, for democracy, for freedom and the Brotherhood of Man without regard to his pigmentation, land of his birth or the God of his fathers.

We therefore sharply score the Atlantic Charter as expressing a vile

and hateful racism and a manifestation of the tragic and utter collapse of an old, decadent democratic political liberalism which worshiped at the shrine of a world-conquering monopoly capitalism. This system grew fat and waxed powerful off the flesh, blood, sweat and tears of the tireless toilers of the human race and the sons and daughters of color in the underdeveloped lands of the world.

When this war ends, the people want something more than the dispersal of equality and power among individual citizens in a liberal, political, democratic system. They demand with striking comparability the dispersal of equality and power among the citizen-workers in an economic democracy that will make certain the assurance of the good life--the more abundant life--in a warless world.

But, withal this condition of freedom, equality and democracy is not the gift of the Gods. It is the task of men--yes, men--brave men, honest men, determined men. . . .

Thus our feet are set in the path toward equality--economic, political and social and racial. Equality is the heart and essence of democracy, freedom and justice. Without equality of opportunity in industry, in labor unions, schools and colleges, government, politics and before the law, without equality in social relations and in all phases of human endeavor, the Negro is certain to be consigned to an inferior status. There must be no dual standards of justice, no dual rights, privileges, duties or responsibilities of citizenship. No dual forms of freedom. . . .

But our nearer goals include the abolition of discrimination, segregation and Jim Crow in the government, the Army, Navy, Air Corps, U.S. Marine, Coast Guard, Women's Auxiliary Army Corps and the Waves, and defense industries; the elimination of discrimination in hotels, restaurants, on public transportation conveyances, in educational, recreational, cultural, and amusement and entertainment places such as theaters, beaches and so forth.

We want the full works of citizenship with no reservations. We will accept nothing less.

But goals must be achieved. They are not secured because it is just and right that they be possessed by Negro or white people. Slavery was not abolished because it was bad and unjust. It was abolished because men fought, bled and died on the battlefield.

Therefore, if Negroes secure their goals, immediate and remote, they must

win them and to win them they must fight, sacrifice, suffer, go to jail and, if need be, die for them. These rights will not be given. They must be taken.

Democracy was fought for and taken from political royalists--the kings. Industrial democracy, the rights of the workers to organize and designate the representatives of their own choosing to bargain collectively is being won and taken from the economic royalists--big business.

Now, the realization of goals and rights by a nation, race or class requires belief in and loyalty to principles and policies. . . . Policies rest upon principles. Concretely, a policy sets forth one's position on vital public questions such as political affiliations, religious alliances. The March on Washington Movement must be opposed to partisan political commitments, religious or denominational alliances. We cannot sup with the communists, for they rule or ruin any movement. This is their policy. Our policy must be to shun them. This does not mean that Negro Communists may not join the March on Washington Movement.

As to the composition of our movement. Our policy is that it be all-Negro, and pro-Negro but not anti-white, or anti-Semitic or antilabor, or anti-Catholic. The reason for this policy is that all oppressed people must assume the responsibility and take the initiative to free themselves. Jews must wage their battle to abolish anti-Semitism. Catholics must wage their battle to abolish anti-Catholicism. The workers must wage their battle to advance and protect their interests and rights.

The essential value of an all-Negro movement such as the March an Wash- ington is that it helps to create faith by Negroes in Negroes. It develops a sense of self-reliance with Negroes depending on Negroes in vital matters. It helps to break down the slave psychology and inferiority complex in Negroes which comes and is nourished with Negroes relying on white people for direction and support. This inevitably happens in mixed organizations that are supposed to be in the interest of the Negro. . . .

Therefore, while the March on Washington Movement is interested in the general problems of every community and will lend its aid to help solve them, it has as its major interest and task the liberation of the Negro people, and this is sound social economy. It is in conformity with the principle of the division of labor. No organization can do everything. Every organization

can do something, and each organization is charged with the social responsibility to do that which it can do, is built to do. . . .

# 10

## WE CHARGE GENOCIDE: PETITION TO THE UNITED NATIONS (1951)

The responsibility of being the first in history to charge the government of the United States of America with the crime of genocide is not one your petitioners take lightly. The responsibility is particularly grave when citizens must charge their own government with mass murder of its own nationals, with institutionalized oppression and persistent slaughter of the Negro people in the United States on a basis of "race," a crime abhorred by mankind and prohibited by the conscience of the world as expressed in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1948.

If our duty is unpleasant it is historically necessary both for the welfare of the American people and for the peace of the world. We petition as American patriots, sufficiently anxious to save our countrymen and all mankind from the horrors of war to shoulder a task as painful as it is important. We cannot forget Hitler's demonstration that genocide at home can become wider massacre abroad, that domestic genocide develops into the larger genocide that is predatory war. The wrongs of which we complain are so much the expression of predatory American reaction and its government that civilization cannot ignore them nor risk their continuance without courting its own destruction. We agree with those members of the General Assembly who declared that genocide is a matter of world concern because its practice imperils world safety.

But if the responsibility of your petitioners is great, it is dwarfed by the responsibility of those guilty of the crime we charge. Seldom in human annals has so iniquitous a conspiracy been so gilded with the trappings of respectability. Seldom has mass murder on the score of "race" been so sanctified by law, so justified by those who demand free elections abroad even as they kill their fellow citizens who demand free elections at home. Never have so many individuals been so ruthlessly destroyed amid so many tributes to the sacredness of the individual. The distinctive trait of this genocide is a cant that mouths aphorisms of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence even as it kills.

Your petitioners will prove that the crime of which we complain is in fact genocide within the terms and meaning of the United Nations Convention providing for the prevention and punishment of this crime. We shall submit evidence, tragically voluminous, of "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious groups as such,"--in this case the 15,000,000 Negro people of the United States.

We shall offer proof of economic genocide, or in the words of the Convention, proof of "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its destruction in whole or in part." We shall prove that such conditions so swell the infant and maternal death rate and the death rate from disease, that the American Negro is deprived, when compared with the remainder of the population of the United States, of eight years of life on the average.

Further we shall show a deliberate national oppression of these 15,000,000 Negro Americans on the basis of "race" to perpetuate these "conditions of life." Negroes are the last hired and the first fired. They are forced into city ghettos or their rural equivalents. They are segregated legally or through sanctioned violence into filthy, disease-bearing housing, and deprived by law of adequate medical care and education. From birth to death, Negro Americans are humiliated and persecuted, in violation of the Charter and the Convention. They are forced by threat of violence and imprisonment into inferior, segregated accommodations, into jim crow busses, jim crow trains, jim crow hospitals, jim crow schools, jim crow theaters, jim crow restaurants, jim crow housing and finally into jim crow cemeteries.

We shall prove that the object of this genocide, as of all genocide, is the perpetuation of economic and political power by the few through the destruction of political protest by the many. Its method is to demoralize and divide an entire nation; its end is to increase the profits and unchallenged control by a reactionary clique. We shall show that those responsible for this crime are not the humble but the so-called great, not the American people but their misleaders, not the convict but the robed judge, not the criminal but the police, not the spontaneous mob but organized terrorists licensed and approved by the state to incite to a Roman holiday.



Since the wealth of the Black bourgeoisie is too inconsequential for this class to wield any political power, the role of Negro politicians has been restricted to attempting to satisfy the demands of Negro voters while acting as the servants of the political machines supported by the propertied classes in the white community. When the Negro enjoyed the right of suffrage in the South during the Reconstruction period, the Negro political leaders were a part of the Republican Party machine supported by northern industrial capitalism. The state constitutions which the Negro leaders helped to draw up embodied middle-class interests and ideals. With the exception of a few political leaders who were concerned with making land available for the freedmen, the Negroes' political leaders, many of whom belonged to the class of Negroes who were free before the Civil War, were interested primarily in securing civil and political rights for the freedmen.

After the disfranchisement of the Negro in the South, the Republican Party continued to maintain a mere skeleton of an organization in most of the southern states. In these organizations, which played no real role in local political struggles, Negro politicians continued to have influence. Although the Republican Party organizations did not have much influence locally except in the matter of federal appointments, they were important in the Republican National Conventions where candidates were nominated for the presidency and vice-presidency of the United States. A candidate who could be sure of the support of the southern delegates to the Republican National Convention would have a good chance of securing the nomination. The only rewards that Negroes received for their support of the Republican Party were a few federal appointments that went to middle-class Negroes. The most important rewards included the appointment of Negroes as minister to Liberia, as recorder of deeds in the District of Columbia, and as registrar of the United States Treasury. A few Negroes were also appointed as consular agents, postmasters in small towns, and as a collector of a port until President Taft inaugurated the policy of not appointing Negroes to posts in the South because of the opposition of the southern whites. These appointments did not affect the economic or social welfare of the Negro in American life, though Negro leaders made the appointments appear to be of great importance to the Negro. Southern Negro politicians continued to be the most important political leaders among Negroes until

the mass migrations to northern cities where the masses gained once more the right to vote.

When the Negro masses acquired the right to vote in northern cities, they continued for a while to give their support to the Republican Party, chiefly on sentimental grounds, though there were some good reasons for their sentimental attachment to the Republican Party. The Republican Party was the party of Lincoln; it was the party which had given them their freedom. The Democratic Party was the party of the southern white men who had been responsible for lynching, disfranchisement and segregation. Negroes had respect for the words of the great Negro abolitionist leader, Frederick Douglass, who once said, "The Republican Party is the ship. All else is the open sea." But gradually the Negro masses began to demand more than the appointment of middle-class Negroes to honorific posts. A part of their re-education was due to the activities of the Communist Party. The Communists began to attack the religiosity and otherworldly outlook of the Negro masses. They organized Negroes in demonstrations against racial discrimination; they nominated Negroes for political office; they gave special attention to Negro workers in their attempt to capture organized labor. However, the Communists succeeded only in enlisting the support of relatively small numbers of Negroes. The small gains which the Communists were able to make resulted in an anti-Communist campaign on the part of the municipal authorities and middle-class Negro leaders, especially the Negro preachers. Negroes who were active in Communist activities were subjected to special brutality on the part of the police. Because of their traditional religious background, the Negro masses were easily persuaded by Negro preachers that the irreligious Communists were using Negroes as tools.

The Communists had less influence in directing the political development of the Negroes than did the inauguration of the New Deal program during the Depression years. The situation in Chicago provides an excellent study of the change in the Negro's political outlook. At the time of the presidential election in 1932, less than a fourth of the Negro vote as compared with three-fifths of the white vote in Chicago went to Roosevelt. But in 1933, when more than 80,000 Negroes or 34.4 [per cent] of the entire Negro population were on relief, Negroes began to shift their support to the Democratic Party which utilized its strategic position to capture Negro votes. In the 1935 election of the Democratic mayor, four-fifths of the Negro vote went to the Democratic

candidate; and in 1936 half of the Negroes voted for Roosevelt. From then on the Negro voters supported the Democratic candidates. Oscar DePriest, a leading Negro Republican, had been elected to the United States Congress in 1928; but in 1934 Arthur Mitchell was elected to Congress on the Democratic ticket and thus became the first Negro Democratic congressman in the history of the United States.

The political leaders who have emerged as a consequence of the new role of Negroes in the political life of America are men and women with a purely middle-class outlook. In the rough and tumble politics of American cities, it has often been Negroes associated with the underworld who have been able to organize the Negro voters and wring concessions from white society. These Negro leaders often operate behind the facade of a legitimate business, very frequently the undertaking business. The undertaking business brings them into intimate contact with the Negro masses. Among the Negro masses they gain a reputation for generosity and humanity by giving money to the poor and to churches and by enabling criminals to escape punishment. Behind the facade of their legitimate business, they carry on illegitimate businesses such as gambling, vice and the lottery known as the "numbers." Therefore, their interest in the political machines is mainly to secure protection for their business enterprises. They often make financial contributions to both the Democratic and Republican Party machines in order to insure protection for their businesses. Their political affiliation or leadership has no relation to the needs of the Negro masses.

Except in the case of a crisis such as that created by the Depression when the Negro masses changed their political affiliation, the Negro politician may even mobilize the masses to vote against their economic interests. In his role as leader, the Negro politician attempts to accommodate the demands of the Negro masses to his personal interests which are tied up with the political machines. He may secure the appointment of a few middle-class Negroes to positions in the municipal government. But when it comes to the fundamental interests of the Negro masses as regards employment, housing and health, his position is determined by the political machine which represents the propertied classes of the white community.

"THE BALLOT OR THE BULLET": REFORMISM OR RADICALISM?

Although I'm still a Muslim, I'm not here tonight to discuss my religion. I'm not here to try and change your religion. I'm not here to argue or discuss anything that we differ about, because it's time for us to submerge our differences and realize that it is best for us to first see that we have the same problem, a common problem--a problem that will make you catch hell whether you're a Baptist, or a Methodist, or a Muslim or a nationalist. Whether you're educated or illiterate, whether you live on the boulevard or in the alley, you're going to catch hell just like I am. We're all in the same boat and we all are going to catch the same hell from the same man. He just happens to be a white man. All of us have suffered here, in this country, political oppression at the hands of the white man, economic exploitation at the hands of the white man, and social degradation at the hands of the white man.

Now in speaking like this, it doesn't mean that we're anti-white, but it does mean we're anti-exploitation, we're anti-degradation, we're anti-oppression. And if the white man doesn't want us to be anti-him, let him stop oppressing and exploiting and degrading us. Whether we are Christians or Muslims or nationalists or agnostics or atheists, we must first learn to forget our differences. If we have differences, let us differ in the closet; when we come out in front, let us not have anything to argue about until we get finished arguing with the man. If the late President Kennedy could get together with Khrushchev and exchange some wheat, we certainly have more in common with each other than Kennedy and Khrushchev had with each other.

If we don't do something real soon, I think you'll have to agree that we're going to be forced either to use the ballot or the bullet. It's one or the other in 1964. It isn't that time is running out--time has run out! 1964 threatens to be the most explosive year America has ever witnessed. . . .

It was the Black man's vote that put the present administration in Washington, D.C. Your vote, your dumb vote, your ignorant vote, your wasted vote put in an administration in Washington, D.C., that has seen fit to pass every kind of legislation imaginable, saving you until last, then filibustering on top of that. And your and my leaders have the audacity to run around clapping their hands and talk about how much progress we're making. And what a good president we have. If he wasn't good in Texas, he sure can't be good in Washington, D.C. Because Texas is a lynch state. It is in the same breath

as Mississippi, no different; only they lynch you in Texas with a Texas accent and lynch you in Mississippi with a Mississippi accent. And these Negro leaders have the audacity to go and have some coffee in the White House with a Texan, a Southern cracker--that's all he is--and then come out and tell you and me that he's going to be better for us because, since he's from the South, he knows how to deal with the Southerners. What kind of logic is that? Let Eastland be president, he's from the South too. He should be better able to deal with them than Johnson.

In this present administration they have in the House of Representatives 257 Democrats to only 177 Republicans. They control two-thirds of the House vote. Why can't they pass something that will help you and me? In the Senate, there are 67 senators who are of the Democratic Party. Only 33 of them are Republicans. Why, the Democrats have got the government sewed up, and you're the one who sewed it up for them. And what have they given you for it? Four years in office, and just now getting around to some civil-rights legislation. Just now, after everything else is gone, out of the way, they're going to sit down now and play with you all summer long--the same old giant con game that they call filibuster. All those are in cahoots together. Don't you ever think they're not in cahoots together, for the man that is heading the civil-rights filibuster is a man from Georgia named Richard Russell. When Johnson became president, the first man he asked for when he got back to Washington, D.C., was "Dicky"--that's how tight they are. That's his boy, that's his pal, that's his buddy. But they're playing that old con game. One of them makes believe he's for you, and he's got it fixed where the other one is so tight against you, he never has to keep his promise.

So it's time in 1964 to wake up. And when you see them coming up with that kind of conspiracy, let them know your eyes are open. And let them know you got something else that's wide open too. It's got to be the ballot or the bullet. The ballot or the bullet. If you're afraid to use an expression like that, you should get on out of the country, you should get back in the cotton patch, you should get back in the alley. They get all the Negro vote, and after they get it, the Negro gets nothing in return. All they did when they got to Washington was give a few big Negroes big jobs. Those big Negroes didn't need big jobs, they already had jobs. That's camouflage, that's trickery, that's treachery, window-dressing. I'm not trying to knock out the Democrats for the Republicans, we'll get to them in a minute. But it is true--you put the Democrats first and the Democrats put you last.

Look at it the way it is. What alibis do they use, since they control Congress and the Senate? What alibi do they use when you and I ask, "Well, when are you going to keep your promise?" They blame the Dixiecrats. What is a Dixiecrat? A Democrat. A Dixiecrat is nothing but a Democrat in disguise. The titular head of the Democrats is also the head of the Dixiecrats, because the Dixiecrats are a part of the Democratic Party. The Democrats have never kicked the Dixiecrats out of the party. The Dixiecrats boiled themselves once, but the Democrats didn't put them out. Imagine, these low-down Southern segregationists put the Northern Democrats down. But the Northern Democrats have never put the Dixiecrats down. No, look at that thing the way it is. They have got a con game going on, a political con game, and you and I are in the middle. It's time for you and me to wake up and start looking at it like it is, and trying to understand it like it is; and then we can deal with it like it is.

The Dixiecrats in Washington, D.C., control the key committees that run the government. The only reason the Dixiecrats control these committees is because they have seniority. The only reason they have seniority is because they come from states where Negroes can't vote. This is not even a government that's based on democracy. It is not a government that is made up of representatives of the people. Half of the people in the South can't even vote. Eastland is not even supposed to be in Washington. Half of the senators and congressmen who occupy these key positions in Washington, D.C., are there illegally, are there unconstitutionally. . . .

If the Black man in these Southern states had his full voting rights, the key Dixiecrats in Washington, D.C., which means the key Democrats in Washington, D.C., would lose their seats. The Democratic Party itself would lose its power. It would cease to be powerful as a party. When you see the amount of power that would be lost by the Democratic Party if it were to lose the Dixiecrat wing, or branch, or element, you can see where it's against the interests of the Democrats to give voting rights to Negroes in states where the Democrats have been in complete power and authority ever since the Civil War. You just can't belong to that party without analyzing it.

I say again, I'm not anti-Democrat, I'm not anti-Republican. I'm not anti-anything. I'm just questioning their sincerity, and some of the strategy that they've been using on our people by promising them promises that they don't intend to keep. When you keep the Democrats in power, you're keeping

the Dixiecrats in power. A vote for a Democrat is a vote for a Dixiecrat. That's why, in 1964, it's time now for you and me to become more politically mature and realize what the ballot is for; what we're supposed to get when we cast a ballot; and that if we don't cast a ballot, it's going to end up in a situation where we're going to have to cast a bullet. It's either a ballot or a bullet.

In the North, they do it a different way. They have a system that's known as gerrymandering, whatever that means. It means when Negroes become too heavily concentrated in a certain area, and begin to gain too much political power, the white man comes along and changes the district lines. You may say, "Why do you keep saying white man?" Because it's the white man who does it. I haven't ever seen any Negro changing any lines. They don't let him get near the line. It's the white man who does this. And usually, it's the white man who grins at you the most, and pats you on the back, and is supposed to be your friend. He may be friendly, but he's not your friend.

So, what I'm trying to impress upon you, in essence, is this: You and I in America are faced not with a segregationist conspiracy, we're faced with a government conspiracy. Everyone who's filibustering is a senator--that's the government. Everyone who's finagling in Washington, D.C., is a congressman--that's the government. You don't have anybody putting blocks in your path but people who are a part of the government. The same government that you go abroad to fight for and die for is the government that is in a conspiracy to deprive you of your voting rights, deprive you of your economic opportunities, deprive you of decent housing, deprive you of decent education. You don't need to go to the employer alone, it is the government itself, the government of America, that is responsible for the oppression and exploitation and degradation of Black people in this country. And you should drop it in their lap. This government has failed the Negro. This so-called democracy has failed the Negro. And all these white liberals have definitely failed the Negro.

REFORMISM: "PROGRESS THROUGH LEGISLATION" (1973)

# 13

Many people have raised the questions: Why a separate caucus of Black Congresspersons? Why is this necessary? What is the role of the Congressional Black Caucus? What are its primary objectives? And since its organization in January 1969, what has the caucus done?

It is common knowledge that American politics began with coalitions based on common interests involving economic, social, religious and ethnic groups. Today, on Capitol Hill, there are many caucuses, both formal and informal. Generally, these caucuses are based on partisan politics, political philosophy, geography, social issues and special interests.

In this context, the Congressional Black Caucus is not a maverick organization. Instead, we are a coalition of Congresspersons deeply concerned about the issues, needs and aspirations of minority Americans. We are, therefore, interested in developing, introducing and passing progressive legislation which will meet the needs of millions of neglected citizens.

As Congresspersons, we realize that power politics is the name of the game. We have studied the rules. We comprehend the game and we are determined to have some meaningful input in the decisions of the legislative branch of the federal government. Furthermore, we have reached a point of political sophistication that provides us the knowledge and skill necessary not only to set our own agenda, but to determine our own frame of reference. In so doing, we move not against the current, but in fact with it, in seeking to make democracy what it ought to be for all Americans.

Initially, there were a number of misconceptions as to the role and responsibilities of the Congressional Black Caucus. Some felt that the caucus was trying to replace traditional civil rights groups. Still others felt that the caucus was trying to become the national forum or clearinghouse for a host of problems and issues confronting Black Americans.

In fact, at first we were unclear about our proper role. Therefore, in the past year we have had to analyze what our resources are, what we should be doing, and how best to do it. And our conclusion is this: If we are to be effective, if we are going to make a meaningful contribution to minority citizens and this country, then it must be as legislators. This is the area in which we possess expertise--and it is within the halls of Congress that we must make this expertise felt.

This, essentially, is our mandate in the 93rd Congress, and to this end we have solicited and continue to seek financial resources for the maintenance of an excellent staff which provides us with the necessary professional services needed to accomplish these goals.

For over a year we have held hearings and conferences on subjects ranging from health to minority enterprise, from racism in the military to racism in



the media. In the course of our investigations, we have assembled data which serve as the basis for a portion of our legislative program.

Thus far, the members of the Congressional Black Caucus have, as a body, sponsored or introduced bills in a number of areas which relate to the needs of our communities. Our legislative efforts had positive results in the recent attempt by Congress to rescue the Office of Economic Opportunity from presidential dismemberment, and to increase the minimum wage. We have united behind several pieces of anti-impoundment legislation, hoping to checkmate the administration's callous domestic policies. Our hearings on governmental lawlessness resulted in the Bureaucratic Accountability Act, a bill which would protect individuals' rights in their dealings with the federal government and strengthen the oversight powers of Congress. We have also joined together in support of a bill making Dr. Martin Luther Kings' birthday a national holiday.

Moreover, we have introduced legislation in every conceivable area. We are offering legislative alternatives to correct the problems of the elderly; improve and expand federally assisted child care centers; provide for direct election of the President; create a system of national health insurance; improve pension systems; grant equal representation to the residents of the District of Columbia; create jobs through public service employment; broaden the income tax base; require U.S. companies to abide by fair employment practices in South Africa; compensate innocent victims of violent crime; abolish the death penalty; improve the legal services program; and out-law the unethical practice of psycho-surgery.

More importantly, the myriad bills that I mention here are only a fraction of our legislative efforts in this 93rd Congress.

As Congress moves to reassume its rightful place in our tripartite system of government, you can be assured that the Congressional Black Caucus will move progressively on several fronts. Where we can provide leadership for those colleagues who represent large minority constituencies, we shall. Where our causes can benefit by coalition politics, we shall coalesce. And whenever or wherever we can serve impoverished and minority citizens as legislators, unquestionably we shall.

## RADICALISM: CALL FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION (1970)

The United States of America is a barbaric organization controlled and operated by avaricious, sadistic, blood-thirsty thieves. The United States of America is the Number One exploiter and oppressor of the peoples of the whole world. The inhuman capitalistic system which defines the core of reality of the U.S.A., is the root of the evil that has polluted the very fabric of existence within the U.S.A. Exploitation of man by man; the rule of man over man instead of the rule of the laws of Human Rights and Justice; savage wars of aggression, mass murder, genocide and shameless slaughter of the people of the world; impudent, arrogant White Racism; and a naked, brazen attempt to perpetuate White Supremacy on a world scale--these are a few of the unsavory characteristics of the U.S.A. Monster with which we have to deal.

We did not ask for this situation. We did not create it. And we do not prefer it, but we must deal with it.

The Constitution of the U.S.A. does not and never has protected our people or guaranteed to us those lofty ideals enshrined within it. When the Constitution was first adopted we were held as slaves. We were held in slavery under the Constitution. We have suffered every form of indignity and imposition under the Constitution, from economic exploitation, political subjugation, to physical extermination.

We need no further evidence that there is something wrong with the Constitution of the United States of America. We have had our Human Rights denied and violated perpetually under this Constitution--for hundreds of years. As a people, we have received neither the Equal Protection of the Laws nor Due Process of Law. Where Human Rights are being daily violated there is denial of Due Process of Law and there is no Equal Protection of the Law. The Constitution of the United States does not guarantee and protect our Economic Rights, our Political Rights nor our Social Rights. It does not even guarantee and protect our most basic Human Right, the right to LIVE!

Black people can no longer either respect the U.S. Constitution, look to it with hope, or live under it. The Constitution is the social contract that binds the American people together into a sovereign nation and defines authority and the distribution of power, rights and privileges. By shoving the Constitution aside, rendering it null and void, in order to carry out fascist oppression and repression of Black people, the fascists have, by that very fact,

destroyed even the false foundations of authority in this society. We live in a lawless society where racist pigs have usurped the Legislative, Judicial and Executive branches of government and perverted them towards the prosperity of their private interests. We repudiate, most emphatically, all documents, laws, conventions and practices that allow this sorry state of affairs to exist--including the Constitution of the United States.

For us, the case is absolutely clear: Black people have no future within the present structure of power and authority in the United States under the present Constitution. For us, also, the alternatives are absolutely clear; the present structure of power and authority in the United States must be radically changed or we, as a people, must extricate ourselves from entanglement with the United States.

The Black Panther Party fully realizes that the two roads open to us as set forth above involve monumental undertakings. But we are trapped in a monstrous situation that requires a monumental solution. And no task, however great, is too much to deal with when the very welfare, survival and national destiny of our people are at stake. Having already struggled up from the dismal depths of chattel slavery, no obstacles can be too high for us to surmount in order to liberate our people and take back the freedom and security that was taken away from us and denied us for so long.

The hour is late and the situation is desperate. As a nation, America is now in the middle of the greatest crisis in its history. The Black Panther Party believes that the American people are capable of rising to the task which history has laid before the nation. We believe that the American people are capable of rejecting the fascist solution to the national crisis which the fascist Nixon clique, the George Wallaces, Lester Maddoxes, Ronald Reagans, Spiro Agnews, etc. hold out to the people.

WE THEREFORE CALL FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION TO BE CONVENED BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, TO WRITE A NEW CONSTITUTION THAT WILL GUARANTEE AND DELIVER TO EVERY AMERICAN CITIZEN THE INVIOLEABLE HUMAN RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS!

We gather here to let it be known at home and abroad that a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness has in its maturity become an imperialist power dedicated to death, oppression and the pursuit of profits. We will not be deceived by so many of our fellow men; we will not be blinded by small changes in form which lack any change in

the substance of imperialist expansion. Our suffering has been too long. Our sacrifices have been too great, and our human dignity is too strong for us to be prudent any longer.

Black people and oppressed people in general have lost faith in the leaders of America, in the government of America, and in the very structure of American government--that is the Constitution, its legal foundation. This loss of faith is based upon the overwhelming evidence that this government will not live according to that Constitution because the Constitution is not designed for its people. For this reason we assemble a Constitutional Convention to consider rational and positive alternatives.

# 15

BUILDING BLACK POLITICAL UNITY: NATIONAL BLACK  
POLITICAL CONVENTION (1972)

What Time Is It? We come to Gary in an hour of great crisis and tremendous promise for Black America. While the white nation hovers on the brink of chaos, while its politicians offer no hope of real change, we stand on the edge of history and are faced with an amazing and frightening choice: We may choose in 1972 to slip back into the decadent white politics of American Life, or we may press forward, moving relentlessly from Gary to the creation of our own Black life. The choice is large, but the time is very short.

Economic, cultural and spiritual depression stalk Black America, and the price for survival often appears to be more than we are able to pay. On every side, in every area of our lives, the American institutions in which we have placed our trust are unable to cope with the crises they have created by their single-minded dedication to profits for some and white supremacy above all.

Beyond These Shores. And beyond these shores there is more of the same. For while we are pressed down under all the dying weight of a bloated, inwardly decaying white civilization, many of our brothers in Africa and the rest of the Third World have fallen prey to the same powers of exploitation and deceit. Wherever America faces the unorganized, politically powerless forces of the non-white world, its goal is domination by any means necessary as if to hide from itself the crumbling of its own systems of life and work.

But Americans cannot hide. They can run to China and the moon and to the edges of consciousness, but they cannot hide. The crises we face as Black people are the crises of the entire society. They go deep, to the very bones

and marrow to the essential nature of America's economic, political and cultural systems. They are the natural end-product of a society built on the twin foundations of white racism and white capitalism.

A Black political convention, indeed all truly Black politics must begin from this truth: The American system does not work for the masses of our people, and it cannot be made to work without radical fundamental change. (Indeed, this system does not really work in favor of the humanity of anyone in America.)

Both Parties Have Betrayed Us. Here at Gary, let us never forget that while the times and the names and the parties have continually changed, one truth has faced us insistently, never changing: Both parties have betrayed us whenever their interests conflicted with ours (which was most of the time), and whenever our forces were unorganized and dependent, quiescent and compliant. Nor should this be surprising, for by now we must know that the American political system, like all other white institutions in America, was designed to operate for the benefit of the white race: It was never meant to do anything else.

If we have never faced it before, let us face it at Gary: The profound crisis of Black people and the disaster of America are not simply caused by man nor will they be solved by men alone. These crises are the crises of basically flawed economics and politics, and of cultural degradation. None of the Democratic candidates and none of the Republican candidates--regardless of their vague promises to us or to their white constituencies--can solve our problems or the problems of this country without radically changing the system by which it operates.

The Politics of Social Transformation. So we come to Gary confronted with a choice. But it is not the old convention question of which candidate shall we support, the pointless question of who is to preside over a decaying and unsalvageable system. No, if we come to Gary out of the realities of the Black communities of this land, then the only real choice for us is whether or not we will live by the truth we know, whether we will move to organize independently, move to struggle for fundamental transformation, for the creation of a new direction, towards a concern for the life and the meaning of Man. Social transformation or social destruction, those are our only real choices.

We Are the Vanguard. The challenge is thrown to us here in Gary. It is the challenge to consolidate and organize our own Black role as the vanguard

in the struggle for a new society. To accept that challenge is to move to independent Black politics. There can be no equivocation on that issue. History leaves us no other choice. White politics has not and cannot bring the changes we need.

Towards a Black Agenda. So when we turn to a Black Agenda for the seventies, we move in the truth of history, in the reality of the moment. We move recognizing that no one else is going to represent our interests but ourselves. The society we seek cannot come unless Black people organize to advance its coming. We lift up a Black Agenda recognizing that white America moves towards the abyss created by its own racist arrogance, misplaced priorities, rampant materialism and ethical bankruptcy. Therefore we are certain that the Agenda we now press for in Gary is not only for the future of Black humanity, but is probably the only way the rest of American can save itself from the harvest of its criminal past.

# 16

## A LESSON LEARNED: WHICH SIDE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS ON (1935)

Perhaps the favorite method of struggle for rights employed by minority groups is the political. Through the use of the ballot and the courts, strenuous efforts are put forth to gain social justice for the group. Extreme faith is placed in the ability of these instruments of democratic government to free the minority from social proscription and civic inequality. The inherent fallacy of this belief rests in the failure to appreciate the fact that the instruments of the state are merely the reflections of the political and economic ideology of the dominant group, that the political arm of the state cannot be divorced from its prevailing economic structure, whose servant it must inevitably be. . . .

The confidence of the proponents of the political method of alleviation is based on the protection which they feel is offered all groups in the society by that sacred document the Constitution. Particularly do they swear by the Bill of Rights and its three supplements, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments, as a special charter of the Black man's liberties. The Constitution is thus detached from the political and economic realities of American life and becomes a sort of protective angel hovering above us and keeping a constant vigil over the rights of all America's children, Black and white, rich and poor, employer and employee and, like impartial justice,

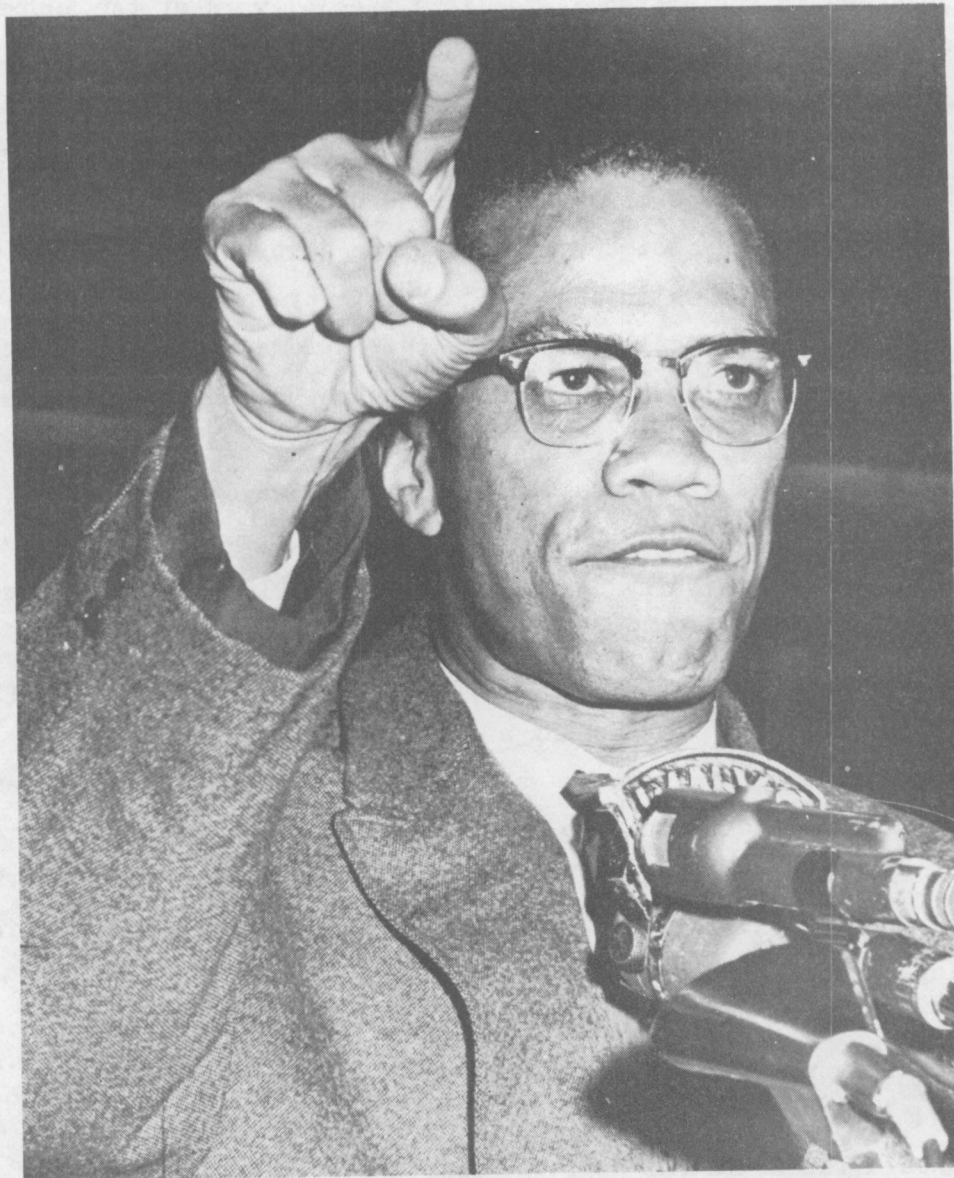
blinded to their differences. This view ignores the quite significant fact that the Constitution is a very flexible instrument and that, in the nature of things, it cannot be anything more than the controlling elements in the American society wish it to be. In other words, this charter of the Black man's liberties can never be more than our legislatures, and, in the final analysis, our courts, wish it to be. . . .

It has been established by the legal and political history of the group that the Negro in the United States is a special ward of the Supreme Court. The Negro has had countless experiences which sufficiently establish the fact that he has rights only as this august tribunal allows them, and even these are, more often than not, illusory. It is only inadvertently that the courts, like the legislatures, fail to reflect the dominant mass opinion. It must be futile, then, to expect these agencies of government to afford the Negro protection for rights which are denied to him by the popular will. Moreover, even could we optimistically hope that the Supreme Court, in its theoretical legal detachment, would go counter to the popular will and wipe out the proscriptions imposed on the Negro, as it appeared to do in the Scottsboro cases, the condition of the group could not be greatly changed. In the first place, American experience affords too many proofs that laws and decisions contrary to the will of the majority cannot be enforced. In the second place, the Supreme Court can effect no revolutionary changes in the economic order, and yet the status of the Negro, as that of other groups in the society, is fundamentally fixed by the functioning and the demands of that order. The very attitudes of the majority group which fix the Negro in his disadvantaged position are part and parcel of the American economic and political order.

The recent discouraging decision of the Supreme Court in the Herndon case gives eloquent testimony to the ability of the Court to avoid delicate issues by hiding behind legal technicalities.

Such economic political tactics, while winning a minor and too often illusory victory now and then, are essentially inefficacious in the long run. They lead up blind alleys and are chiefly programs of escape. No minority group should relent in the most determined fight for its rights, but its leadership should recognize the limitations of opportunistic and socially blind policies. The only realistic program for any minority group in modern America is one which is based upon an intelligent analysis of the problems of the group in terms of the broad social forces which determine its condition.

Certainly no program of opportunism and no amount of idealism can overcome or control these forces. The only hope for the improvement in the condition of the masses of any American minority group is the hope that can be held out for the betterment of the masses of the dominant group. Their basic interests are identical and so must be their programs and tactics.



*Malcolm X*



## SUPPLEMENTARY READING FOR BLACK POWER AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

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# Chapter 11

## RELIGION AND THE BLACK CHURCH

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What was the difference between the "invisible institution" in the South and the institutional church in the North during the slave period?
2. Why has the church been a more important social institution in the rural South than in the city?
3. Is christianity white? Or have Afro-Americans transformed it in their beliefs and practices?
4. What role has the Black church played in the struggle for Black liberation (both in terms of ideas and practice)?

### KEY CONCEPTS

African Survivals

Call and Response

Invisible Institution

Jackleg Preacher

Religious Cults/Sects

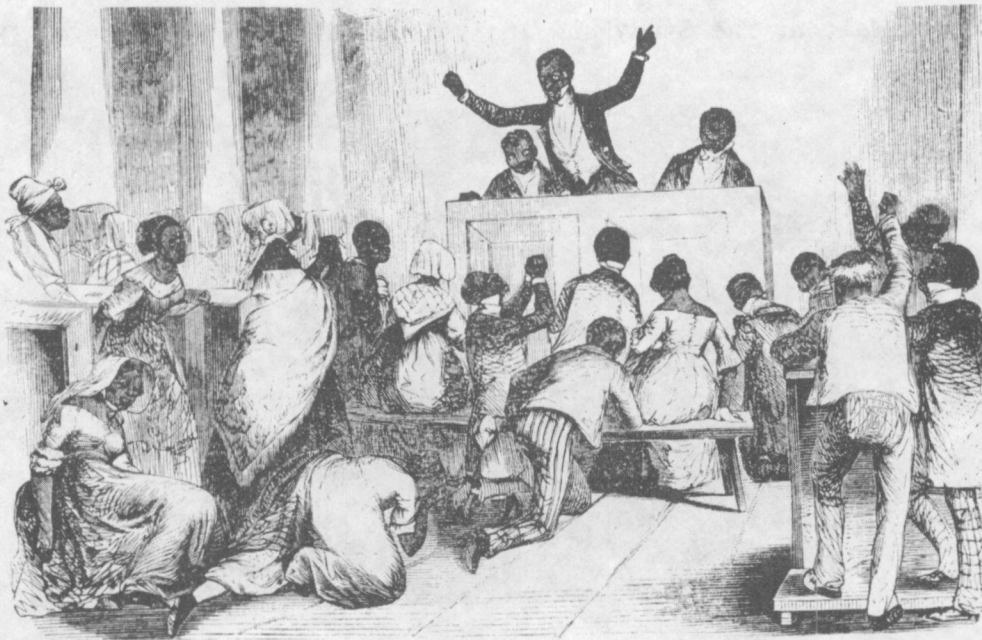
Church denominations

Secularization vs. other-worldly outlook

Spirituals

Storefront Church

Gospel



The Church has been the most important social institution in the Black community. This means that the ideology of religious beliefs (particularly Christianity), the social organization of the church, and the community leadership of the minister have combined to represent the main organized social form of historical stability.

Religion is a set of ideas, ideological beliefs, in which the beginning of the world and all subsequent historical and social phenomena are the result of actions by one or more Supreme Beings (God, Allah, Jehovah, etc.) which exist outside of the material world (the real world and not the world of ideas). But the concrete historical conditions that Black people have faced and still face in their day to day lives call for changes in "the here and now." Thus, religion and the Black church have been historically confronted with a contradiction: to believe that "God helps those who help themselves" and to get fully involved in the struggle for Black liberation, or wait for some "Supreme Being" to solve the problems that Black people face.

But, however "other worldly" in its focus, the church exists "down here on the ground" with other aspects of the society, economy, politics, culture, etc. Thus, our analysis of the church and religion must take into account the concrete conditions within which they exist. In this way we discover that the main forms of the Black church and the religious experience of Black people has changed during the three main periods of Afro-American history: from the invisible institution of slavery to the small rural church, to the large urban church and the storefront church. Let us look at these in greater detail, beginning with religion in Africa.

The impact of African religious practices on Afro-American religion has been the subject of an intense debate. There are two schools of thought. (1) E. Franklin Frazier and others argue that the manner in which Africans were captured and enslaved in Africa and slavery in the Americas practically stripped the slaves of their African social heritage, religion included. This was a deliberate process by the slave traders and slave owners who could more easily maintain control over culturally disoriented and dehumanized slaves. (2) On the other hand, Lorenzo Turner, a Black linguist, and Melville Herskovitz, a white anthropologist, attempted to show that African survivals could be discovered in almost all aspects of Black life in the United States. Included among these survivals in religion for example, were the "call and response" interaction between preacher, choir, and congregation, "shouting" which results from "possession" by the supernatural and the practice of immersing the body in water (baptizing). All have been both in parts of Africa and in some Black churches in the United States.

Subsequent research has indicated that the brutal experiences of enslavement and the "middle passage" did not completely erase all of the African cultural heritage of Afro-Americans. But it is also true that these new conditions of slavery in the New World were significant factors in determining what would remain of this cultural heritage as Black people struggled for survival in the United States. Thus, the religious practices of Black people are best understood by looking at them in the concrete social context of the Afro-American experience in the United States as it has historically evolved.

Although Frazier incorrectly argues that slaves suffered a total loss of African culture, he was the leading scholar recognizing the pivotal social role that the Black church has played in the Black experience since slavery. The slave trade represented a profound disruption in the social life of Black people. During slavery the Christian religion, to some extent, provided a new and vitally

necessary basis of social cohesion and helped to create group solidarity and a structured social life among Black people.

While Quakers, Presbyterians, and Catholics were first to try and recruit Blacks, it was mainly the Baptists and secondarily the Methodists that slaves responded to and joined. Several factors accounted for this:

- (1) Baptist and Methodist preachers were mainly uneducated and poor like the slaves and their appeal appeared to be more genuine and inviting.
- (2) The emotionalism of Baptists and Methodists provided more of an outlet for the pent up feelings and emotions of the oppressed slaves than did the more reserved practices of other denominations.
- (3) The decentralized political structure of the Baptist denomination with each church operating as an autonomous unit under the leadership of a local preacher gave more real involvement to the members and proved more appealing than the centralized structure of the Methodist church.

Religion was also a social bridge between the house slaves and slavemasters who often worshipped together, either in special sections of white churches or in the special services in the slave owners house.

Slavemasters deliberately used religion to reinforce slavery. (1) They passed laws which overruled the view of many Christians that only a heathen could be enslaved and that once baptized a slave was free. (2) The Bible was used to teach slaves a submissive orientation and a "divine, God-given" justification for their condition as slaves. Slaves were the "cursed children of Ham" and destined always to be oppressed workers--"hewers of wood and drawers of water." (3) Slavemasters used religion to further social distinctions between "house slaves" (who were more assimilated and shared the religious practices, beliefs and interests of the master) and the "field slaves" (who remained more African in orientation). Because the preacher was appointed and functioned with the blessings of the master, he often became a useful tool of social control.

The plantation owners, however, did not allow organization to develop among the slaves so an underground church--what E. Franklin Frazier calls "the invisible institution"--emerged. In this way the religious practices of the slaves

flourished beyond the watchful eyes of the slaveowner and overseers. Slavery also defined the status of free Blacks. Even in white churches, free Blacks were denied equality and continually subjected to racist abuse. In 1786, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones faced with vicious discrimination in Philadelphia led a group of Black people in establishing the first Black denomination--the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME).

Resistance was a central aspect of the church during slavery. Slave spirituals spoke of the fight against slavery. "The sweet chariot" that would "swing low" referred to the underground railroad, a clandestine escape route for slaves organized by Harriet Tubman and others and supported by Black churches in the South and North. Men like Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, and Denmark Vesey were either inspired by biblical passages or used their roles and skills as preachers to organize armed resistance against the institution of slavery. It is therefore not surprising that Black churches and Black preachers were declared illegal by the laws of many states after the slave revolts of the early 1800's.

In the rural period, the end of slavery provided conditions under which the "invisible institution" of the slaves merged with the institutional church of the free Blacks (like the AME church). These new church institutions thus increased in size and in importance and played important role in stabilizing Black life after the Civil War. Among the important contributions of Black churches during the rural agricultural period were those in the following areas:

(1) Social Stability. The moral life of captured Africans was disrupted and subjected to the economic dictates of slavery. Thus, the importance of family life, moral values, etc. were corrupted and negated. The Black church in the post Civil War period helped to foster a new sense of community and to evolve a system of beliefs and values that sustained the development of stable families, social practices, and moral values.

(2) Economic Cooperation. Black people pooled their meagre resources to build their own churches after slavery. "Mutual aid societies" and "sickness and burial societies" also emerged. These early efforts at capital accumulation also helped to lay the basis for church-supported businesses, newspapers, banks, and insurance companies.

(3) Education. The first independent Black schools were established by Black preachers while the Civil War was still being fought. Millions of dollars were raised to support Black education through church suppliers and programs immediately after slavery. Black church-supported colleges were also a response to the need of Black churches for an educated ministry, though many Black people other than ministers were trained.

(4) Arena of Political Life. During Reconstruction, Black preachers became important elected and appointed political leaders. After the Hayes-Tilden sell-out forced Black people out of politics, the Black church became the most available center for Black political activity. Here, individual preachers could struggle for power and the masses could voice their choice for leadership through voting, committee work, and holding various church offices.

As we will further discuss especially chapters 16 and 17, Blacks were molded into an Afro-American nation in the slavery and rural periods of the Black experience in the U.S. Imperialism and racism stunted the development of the Afro-American nation, especially in blocking the development of a Black bourgeoisie. Because of this, the Black church as a social institution has played a very important role in the Afro-American nation. The Black preacher emerged as a personification of the cohesiveness and national unity of Black people. In addition, the church was the basis for the collective expression of Afro-American national development in the area of economic life (mutual aid societies, etc.). This pivotal role of the church in Afro-American national development is the basis for the continued key

role of the church among Black people.

Migration, urbanization, and proletarianization (factory work) had a profound impact on the institutional life of Black people in the urban period. The Black church, the center of social life in the rural South, was not immediately available to meet the needs resulting from the new, cold, and impersonal life in the city. In response to this new environment and transformation of the Black experience from rural to urban and from farm to factory, the Black church was also transformed in several significant ways:

(1) Secularization. The Black church added to their mainly other-worldly outlook more social programs to deal with the conditions of Black people "on this side of Jordan." Many of the prohibitions like those against dancing, card-playing and other recreational activities were dropped (certainly in part because they were being increasingly ignored!). More importantly, many churches and ministers became actively involved in the struggle for Black liberation like the struggles for jobs, housing, against lynching, etc. Gospel music is another indication of secularization. This music is not as religious and other-worldly as the spirituals, the "sacred folk songs" which emerged during slavery. Instead, gospel--a synthesis of spirituals and blues--symbolized the efforts of Black people to use their traditional religious heritage in coming to grips with their changing life and the problems they confronted in the real world.

(2) Storefront Churches. In order to compete with the large and varied institutions which characterized urban life, many Black churches became large impersonal bureaucracies. Many churchgoers, especially the newly-arrived migrants from the South, desired a more intimate church experience and joined one of the many smaller churches housed in rented stores or houses. Many Southern preachers even followed their members North as they migrated and set up shop in their new communities. Storefront churches were historically necessary responses to the inadequacy of established denominations in meeting the spiritual needs felt by Black



people from the South in the urban industrial environment.

(3) Black Religious Cults. Storefront churches usually maintained traditional beliefs and practices. But Black religious cults abandoned conventional beliefs about God and about Black people. Two kinds of cults stand out: (1) "Holiness" cults seek to restore a purer form of Christianity through the sanctification (or purifying) of their members. Father Divine's Peace Mission Movement and Daddy Grace's United House of Prayer for All People are examples of this type. Prohibition on alcohol, gambling, dancing, etc. and a religious frenzy called "shouting" or "getting happy" characterized these cults. (2) The second type of cult seeks "salvation" through escape from being identified as Christian. This is done by rooting its beliefs and practices in a religious tradition (often Islam) that is not common to Black people in the United States and thus developing a mark of distinction because of this. The Moorish Science Temple of Noble Drew Ali and Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam are examples of this type. Generally, cults reflect the dissatisfaction of Black people with their oppressed and exploited conditions and a genuine desire to seek any way out of these conditions. Regardless of how slim the possibilities of success are, conditions dictate that everything must be tried.

THE CURRENT SITUATION. The last two decades have revealed several trends in Black religion. Black people have become more differentiated--socially, culturally, and economically. Black religious practices have likewise become more varied. Religion has generally become less important among Black people. This is because of everything else that the church has to compete with and the historical and continuing failure of the church to deliver Black people from the valley of exploitation and oppression is the mountaintop of freedom and liberation.

Two contradictory forces have shaped the recent activity of the Black Church. (1) The struggle for Black liberation since 1954 has had a great impact. As the

masses of Black people got more involved in struggle, so too did the Black church and Black preachers get up off their knees and into the streets--if for no other reason than to keep up with their constituency and to save their jobs. (2) The rise of the new Black middle class has greatly influenced the church. This new middle class has more of an interest in business, politics and securing government appointments and grants. Therefore, it is often solely interested in the organized power of the Black church to achieve these aims.

All of the important ideological forces in the Black liberation movement over the past few years have had an impact on the Black church. Many churches have become involved in issues of social justice. Some preachers advocated Black power. Nationalist and Pan-Africanist practices and beliefs have been incorporated into church ritual. Anti-imperialist consciousness surfaced with the opposition of many ministers to the war in Vietnam, in the protest against the role of U.S. imperialism in exploiting and oppressing the people of Africa, and in building support for the African liberation struggles.

Thus, some churches are involved in the struggle for Black liberation, but many more are pulling Black people away from struggle and more into religious fanaticism, escapism and a "wait and God will take care of everything" mentality. The Black church continues to make contributions to the freedom struggle. Today, however, it falls far short of the decisive contributions it made during slavery and even during the recent period of the Civil Rights struggles. Thus, the Black church comes closer to repeating the role that E. Franklin Frazier described almost 20 years ago: "The Negro Church and Negro religion cast a shadow over the entire intellectual life of Negroes and have been responsible for the so-called backwardness of American Negroes."

Moreover, given the worsening social conditions of Black people in the U.S., the role of such an influential institution as the Black church must be investigated and strongly criticized. The Black church's current failure to be fully

committed to and involved in the struggle for Black liberation leaves it very close to a description of religion by a leading minister of the Church of England in the 1800s: "An opium dose for keeping beasts of burden patient while they are being overloaded."

The solution to this dilemma is clear if we study and correctly understand the lessons of Black people's struggles in the 1950s and 1960s. We must reclaim the Black church for the struggle and rekindle its fighting heritage. The Black church must "get up off its knees and back into the streets" with the same fighting spirit with which the masses of Black people have historically fought for freedom and justice.

In short, to use the language of the Church itself, "heaven," if it comes, will not come without a successful struggle for freedom and liberation for Black people right here on "earth."

## BUILDING BLACK UNITY



## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 11

17.	AMERICAN INFLUENCE ON AFRO-AMERICAN RELIGION (1944)	Authur Fauset	63
18.	SLAVE RELIGION AND THE INVISIBLE INSTITUTION (1964)	E. Franklin Frazier	65
19.	A RESPONSE TO RACISM: THE FIRST BLACK DENOMINATION: (1880)	Richard Allen	68
20.	THE 'OTHER' WORLD: AN EX SLAVE'S RECOLLECTION(1927)		70
21.	SLAVE SPIRITUALS AS BLACK RESISTANCE (1972)	James Cone	70
22.	THE CREATION: A NEGRO SERMON	James Weldon Johnson	73
23.	THE RURAL CHURCH AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION (1934)	Charles S. Johnson	75
24.	THE BLACK PREACHER AS RURAL COMMUNITY LEADER (1947)	Harry W. Roberts	76
25.	YOUTH AND THE RURAL CHURCH (1941)	Charles S. Johnson	79
26.	THE NEGRO'S GOD (1938)	Benjamin Mays	81
27.	FIVE MAJOR BLACK DENOMINATIONS		84
28.	CLASS STRUCTURE AND THE BLACK CHURCH (1942)	Vattel Daniel	89
29.	NEW GODS OF THE CITY: BLACK RELIGIOUS CULTS (1944)	Arthur Fauset	93
30.	GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN: "THE SEVENTH DAY"	James Baldwin	97
31.	BLACK RELIGION: OPIATE OR INSPIRATION TO STRUGGLE	Gary Marx	99
32.	LETTER FROM A BIRMINGHAM JAIL (1963)	Martin Luther King	103
33.	BLACK CHURCHMEN ON BLACK POWER (1966)	National Committee of Negro Churchmen	105
34.	BLACK MANIFESTO TO WHITE CHURCHES AND JEWISH SYNAGOGUES (1969)	James Forman	107
35.	WHY AFRICAN LIBERATION SUNDAY? (1978)	Chicago Committee for a Free Africa	109
36.	NEW WINE IN OLD BOTTLES: A RESPONSIVE READING ON THE BLACK CHURCH AND STRUGGLE	Chicago Committee for a Free Africa	111
	SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS		113

## AFRICAN INFLUENCE ON AFRO-AMERICAN RELIGION (1944)

It is safe to assume that not one Negro in the original cargo of slaves landed at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 was a member of the Christian faith. Probably less than a fraction of 1 per cent of the enormous numbers of Negroes who were victims of the slave traffic between Africa and the United States had any acquaintance with Christianity before their arrival on these shores. It is quite remarkable, therefore, that less than one out of every hundred of the millions of Negroes in the United States today who adheres to a religious faith subscribes to any but a Christian belief, although practically all the Negroes living in America at this time are direct descendants of these African slaves whose religious background certainly was African and neither European nor Christian.

The influence of that overwhelming African heritage still must persist within the cultural nimbus which surrounds the religious beliefs and practices of the descendants of these African slaves. Yet the degree of that influence is problematical, to say the least, and is the subject of considerable dispute. In the earliest historical development of these practices among American Negroes the facts became obscured partly because, for a considerable time, slave owners discouraged rather than encouraged the progress of Christianity among Negroes. Consequently it is not until relatively late in the Negro's experience in the United States that we have trustworthy records of practices among Negro slaves which we may be certain are to be included within the general framework of their religious beliefs and practices. By this time the basic elements in these practices are frequently difficult to distinguish from those of various European forms, to which in large measure they undoubtedly owe their derivation.

E. Franklin Frazier, a profound student of the origins of Negro institutions in America, is emphatic in his insistence that American religious practices owe very little to remote African influences. Thus, when referring to the role of the Negro preacher among the slaves, he says: "Undoubtedly, the most influential personalities among the slaves were the preachers. . . . These preachers became the interpreters of a religion which the slaves had developed on American soil. This religion was not a heritage, as many have assumed, from Africa." He is in agreement with [Robert] Park that various

elements in the white man's religion "met the demands of his peculiar racial temperament and furnished relief to the emotional strains that were provoked in him by conditions of slavery."

[G. R.] Wilson is of the opinion that "the religion of Africa disappeared from the consciousness of the American slave; that the slave himself, by contact with a new environment, became a decidedly different person, having a new religion, a primitive Christianity, with the central emphasis, not upon this world, but upon heaven." He continues: ". . . the religion of the Negro slaves between 1619 and the Civil War did not originate in Africa, but was something totally different from the prevailing religion of the Black continent."

Melville J. Herskovits probably ranks foremost among dissenters from this point of view. Granting a "partial validity" to the usual compensatory explanations of the special forms assumed by Negro versions of Christian dogma and ritual, he insists that the African influence, or at any rate the influence of the old African impulses, must definitely be taken into account in any appraisal of present-day American Negro religious forms and their derivation. "Underlying the life of the American Negro," he maintains, "is a deep religious bent that is but the manifestation here of a similar drive that, everywhere in Negro societies, makes the supernatural a major focus of interest."

Expatriating upon the point, Herskovits continues:

The tenability of this position is apparent when it is considered how, in an age marked by skepticism, the Negro has held fast to belief. Religion is vital, meaningful, and understandable to the Negro of this country because . . . it is not removed from life, but has been deeply integrated into the daily round. It is because of this, indeed, that everywhere compensation in terms of the supernatural is so immediately acceptable to this underprivileged folk, and causes them, in contrast to other underprivileged groups elsewhere in the world, to turn to religion rather than to political action or other outlets for their frustration.

Whatever the remote influences on American Negro religious practices may or may not have been, there is quite general agreement with Frazier when he states, "It was only with the coming of the Methodists and Baptists that the masses of slaves found a form of Christianity that they could make their own."

Common sense requires us to believe that everything cultural which the Negro brought over with him from Africa could not have been eradicated from his heritage, despite the centuries since he left Africa, the thousands of miles which have separated him from the ancestral homeland, and the eroding influences of an overwhelming and inescapable super-culture. Nevertheless, if we do not go all the way with Frazier and Park in their almost wholesale assertions that there are no African religious survivals to speak of, neither can

we accept every chance correspondence which might appear to indicate survival. Certainly for the United States, where the European influence in both form and content of the worship is so marked as to be undeniable, we are not inclined to accept mere correspondence between American Negro and African practice as conclusive indication of African origin. The historical evidence must be present to support these clues. . . .

# 18

## SLAVE RELIGION AND THE INVISIBLE INSTITUTION (1964)

It is our position that it was not what remained of African culture or African religious experience but the Christian religion that provided the new basis of social cohesion. It follows then that in order to understand the religion of the slaves, one must study the influence of Christianity in creating solidarity among a people who lacked social cohesion and a structured social life.

From the beginning of the importation of slaves into the colonies, Negroes received Christian baptism. The initial opposition to the christening of Negroes gradually disappeared when laws made it clear that slaves did not become free through the acceptance of the Christian faith and baptism.

As Woodson, the Negro historian, has so aptly called it, "The Dawn of the New Day" in the religious development of Negroes occurred when the Methodists and Baptists began proselytizing the Blacks. Why did the Negro slaves respond so enthusiastically to the proselytizing efforts of the Methodists and Baptists? From what has been pointed out concerning the manner in which the slaves were stripped of their cultural heritage, we may dismiss such speculations as the one that it was due to their African background. We are on sounder ground when we note first that the Baptist and Methodist preachers, who lacked the education of the ministers of the Anglican church, appealed to the poor and the ignorant and the outcast. In the crowds that attended the revivals and camp meetings there were numbers of Negroes who found in the fiery message of salvation a hope and a prospect of escape from their earthly woes. Moreover, the emphasis which the preachers placed upon feeling as a sign of conversion found a ready response in the slaves who were repressed in so many ways. Then there were other factors in the situation that caused the slaves to respond to the forms of religious expression provided by the Baptists and Methodists. As we have indicated, the slaves, who had been torn from their homeland and kinsmen and friends and whose cultural heritage was lost, were isolated and broken men, so to speak. In the emotionalism of the camp meetings and revivals some social

solidarity, even if temporary, was achieved, and they were drawn into a union with their fellow men. Later, common religious beliefs and practices and traditions tended to provide a new basis of social cohesion in an alien environment.

Not only did religion draw the Negroes into a union with their fellow men, it tended to break down barriers that isolated them morally from their white masters. Where the plantation tended to become a social as well as an industrial institution, the Negro slaves participated in the religious life of their masters. It was part of the discipline on many plantations to provide for the religious instruction of slaves. The house servants often attended the family prayers. As a rule, the galleries in the white churches were reserved for the Negro slaves. The master, and more especially mistress, gave religious instruction to the slaves, and white ministers often preached to Negro congregations and supervised their activities. Thus, despite the vast gulf in the status that separated master and slave, participation in the same religious services drew the Negroes out of their moral isolation in the white man's world.

Christianity: A New Orientation Toward Existence. The uprooting of Negroes and the transportation of them to an alien land undoubtedly had a shattering effect upon their lives. In destroying their traditional culture and in breaking up their social organization, slavery deprived them of their accustomed orientation toward the world.

The new orientation to the world was provided by Christianity as communicated to the slaves by their white masters. Naturally, those elements among the slaves who worked and lived in close association with the whites were more influenced by Christian teachings and practices than the slaves who had few contacts with the whites. Those slaves who were largely isolated from the whites engaged in religious practices that undoubtedly included some African survivals. However, the whites were always on guard against African religious practices which could provide an opportunity for slave revolts, and they outlawed such practices. Moreover, there were efforts on the part of the whites to bring the slaves increasingly under the influence of the Christian religion. This was accomplished in part by acquainting the slaves with the Bible.

There were some misgivings and in some instances strong opposition to acquainting the Negro with the Bible. This fear of teaching the slaves the Bible was tied up with the laws against teaching slaves to read and write. But it was also feared that the slave would find in the Bible the implications of human



equality which would incite the Negro to make efforts to free himself. Opposition to teaching the Negro the Bible declined as masters became convinced that sufficient justification for slavery could be found in the New Testament. In fact, some masters became convinced that some of the best slaves--that is, those amenable to control by their white masters--were those who read the Bible.

The Bible was the means by which the Negroes acquired a new theology. As we have noted, the Negroes who were brought to the New World undoubtedly carried memories of their gods. These memories were lost or forgotten and there was a determined effort on the part of the whites to prevent any resurgence of African religion. It was from the Bible that the slaves learned of the god of the white man and of his ways with the world and with men. The slaves were taught that the God with whom they became acquainted in the Bible was the ruler of the universe and superior to all other gods. They were taught that the God of the Bible punished and rewarded Black men as well as white men. Black men were expected to accept their lot in this world and if they were obedient and honest and truthful they would be rewarded in the world after death.

The "Invisible Institution" Comes into Existence. It is no exaggeration to say that the "invisible institution" of the Negro church took root among the enslaved blacks. The key to an understanding of the "invisible institution" may be found in the typical remark of an ex-slave who wrote:

Our preachers were usually plantation folks just like the rest of us. Some man who had a little education and had been taught something about the Bible would be our preacher. The colored folks had their code of religion, not nearly so complicated as the white man's religion, but more closely observed. . . . When we had our meetings of this kind, we held them in our own way and were not interfered with by the white folks.

Since all forms of organized social effort were forbidden among the slaves and in the absence of an established priesthood, the Negro preacher played the important role in the "invisible institution" of the church among the slaves. The Negro preacher was "called" to his office and through his personal qualities achieved a position of dominance. The "call" was supposed to have come through some religious experience which indicated that God had chosen him as a spiritual leader.

One qualification which the Negro preacher among the slaves needed to possess was some knowledge of the Bible. Another qualification which the slave preacher must possess was the ability to sing. From the beginning of religious expression among the slaves which was characterized by the "shout songs," preaching on the part of the leader was important. This preaching consisted

of singing sacred songs which have come to be known as the spirituals. Because of the local autonomy in Baptist churches in contrast to the centralized hierarchy of the Methodist church, the Negro preacher was free to exercise his gifts and to direct his followers. This also accounts in part at least for the larger number of slaves who were attracted to the Baptists. The leadership of the preacher was recognized by his "congregation" insofar as the white masters were willing to concede to him this role among the slaves.

The recognition which the whites accorded to the Negro "congregations" was accorded them as segments of the white organizations. White control of these segments was never completely relaxed. Therefore, there was always some tension because the slaves preferred their own preachers and wanted to conduct their religious services according to their own mode of worshipping. This tension was always sharpened by the fact that there were free Negroes in the churches which were established in connection with the white church organizations. The tension was never resolved and the Negro church never emerged as an independent institution except under the Negroes who were free before the Civil War.

# 19

## A RESPONSE TO RACISM: THE FIRST BLACK DENOMINATION (1880)

I was born in the year 1760, February 14th, a slave to Benjamin Chew, of Philadelphia. After spending some time away from Philadelphia, I returned and purchased my freedom. February, 1786, I came to Philadelphia. Preaching was given out for me at five o'clock in the morning at St. George church. . . . I preached at different places in the city. . . . I soon saw a large field open in seeking and instructing my African brethren, who had been a long-forgotten people and few of them attended public worship. . . . I raised a society in 1786 for forty-two members. . . . We all belonged to St. George's church. . . . We felt ourselves much cramped; . . . We established prayer meetings and meetings of exhortation, and the Lord blessed our endeavors, and many souls were awakened; but the elder soon forbid us holding any such meetings; but we viewed the forlorn state of our colored brethren, and that they were destitute of a place of worship. They were considered a nuisance.

A number of us usually attended St. George's church in Fourth Street; and when the colored people began to get numerous in attending the church, they moved us from the seats we usually sat on, and placed us around the wall, and on Sabbath morning we went to church and the sexton stood at the door and told

us to go in the gallery. He told us to go, and we would see where to sit. We expected to take the seats over the ones we formerly occupied below, not knowing any better. We took those seats. Meeting had begun, and they were nearly done singing, and just as we got to the seats, the elder said, "Let us pray." We had not been long upon our knees before I heard a considerable scuffling and low talking, I raised my head up and saw one of the trustees, H\_\_\_\_\_ M\_\_\_\_\_, having hold of the Rev. Absalom Jones, pulling him up off his knees, and saying, "You must get up--you must not kneel here." Mr. Jones replied, "Wait until prayer is over." Mr. H\_\_\_\_\_ M\_\_\_\_\_ said, "No, you must get up now or I will call for aid and force you away." Mr. Jones said, "Wait until prayer is over, and I will get up and trouble you no more." With that he beckoned to one of the other Trustees, Mr. L\_\_\_\_\_ S\_\_\_\_\_ to come to his assistance. He came to William White, to pull him up. By this time prayer was over, and we all went out of the church in a body, and they were no more plagued with us in the church. This raised a great excitement and inquiry among the citizens, in so much that I believe that they were ashamed of their conduct. . . . We had subscribed largely towards finishing St. George's church, in building the gallery and laying the new floors, and just as the house was made comfortable, we were turned out from enjoying the comforts of worshipping therein.

We then hired a store-room and held worship ourselves. Here we were pursued by threats of being disowned, and read publicly out of meeting if we did continue to worship in the place we had hired; but we believed the Lord would be our friend. . . . Here was the beginning and rise of the first church of the denomination later known as the African Methodist Episcopal. Many of the colored people in other places were in a situation nearly like those of Philadelphia and Baltimore, which induced us, in April, 1816, to call a general meeting, by way of conference. Delegates from Baltimore and other places which met those of Philadelphia, and taking into consideration their grievances, and in order to secure the privileges, promote union and harmony among themselves, it was resolved: "That the people of Philadelphia, Baltimore, etc., etc., should become one body, under the name of African Methodist Episcopal Church.

**20**

## THE "OTHER" WORLD: AN EX-SLAVE'S RECOLLECTION (1927)

When I first heard the voice He said to me, "You got to die to live again." When I died I was as wide awake as I am now. I felt the flesh trembling on my bones and I died from my feet up. I heard my tongue as it clicked and seemed to be fastened to the roof of my mouth so I couldn't speak.

The first thing I knew I was at hell's dark door. I looked in and saw old Satan chained about his chest and legs in a square pit. He just stood staring at me and moving his club-foot. I saw the flames of hell and they seemed crowded with souls. I stood back and put my hands on my hips and said, "Lord, what place is this?" And He said, "This is hell where sinners burn forevermore." I prayed for deliverance and looking to the east I saw the Gospel train. I lifted my wings and passed through the flames but not a hair on my head was singed. I also passed two ferocious beasts (wolves) at the door but He never let them bother me nor so much as raise their heads.

I was dressed up and as I went on east I saw a lot of people and I wanted to go with them but something seemed to tell me that I had to ask God. I came to some winding steps and began to climb them and came into the presence of God. He had His hair like lamb's wool and He was sitting there reading something like a newspaper. He spoke to me saying, "My little one, My grace is sufficient to lead and save you. Go in My name and thou shalt neither stumble nor falter for I will encamp around and about thee like a mighty wall." I heard a great rejoicing and the prettiest singing that I ever heard.

I came back to myself shouting and praising God and I will continue to praise Him until I die, for aside from Him I have no hope.

**21**

## SLAVE SPIRITUALS AS BLACK RESISTANCE (1972)

Slave religion was permeated with the affirmation of freedom from bondage and freedom-in-bondage. Sometimes Black religious gatherings were the occasions for planning overt resistance. At other times the reality of freedom was affirmed in more subtle ways. The theme of liberation that ran through slave religion explains why slaveholders did not allow Black slaves to worship openly and sing their songs unless authorized white people were present to

proctor the meeting. And after the Nat Turner revolt, Black preachers were declared illegal in most southern states.

It is the spirituals that show us the essence of Black religion, that is, the experience of trying to be free in the midst of a "powerful lot of tribulation."

Oh Freedom! Oh Freedom!  
 Oh Freedom, I love thee!  
 And before I'll be a slave,  
 I'll be buried in my grave,  
 And go home to my Lord and be free.

The spirituals are historical songs which speak about the rupture of Black lives; they tell us about a people in the land of bondage, and what they did to hold themselves together and to fight back. We are told that the people of Israel could not sing the Lord's song in a strange land. But, for Blacks, their being depended upon a song. Through song they built new structures for existence in an alien land. The spirituals enabled Blacks to retain a measure of African identity while living in the midst of American slavery, providing both the substance and the rhythm to cope with human servitude.

The spiritual, then, is the spirit of the people struggling to be free; it is their religion, their source of strength in a time of trouble. And, if one does not know what trouble is, then the spiritual cannot be understood. This is what one Black woman, who had lost all but one of her twenty-two children, meant when she said: "I likes 'Poor Rosy' better dan all de songs, but it can't be sung widout a full heart and a troubled sperrit!" Trouble is inseparable from the Black religious experience. For what is a people to do when they are "troubled in mind" and "they don't know where to roam"? What are they to do about the "end of tribulation," the "end of beatings and for shoes that fit their feet" when they are powerless economically and politically? The spiritual is the people's response to the societal contradictions. It is the people facing trouble and affirming, "I ain't tired yet."

But the spiritual is more than dealing with trouble. It is a joyful experience, a vibrant affirmation of life and its possibilities in an appropriate esthetic form. The spiritual is the community in rhythm, swinging to the movement of life. The best approach in interpreting the song is to feel one's way into the cultural and historical milieu of the people's mind and let the song speak to and for you. When the song is sung, "Have you got good religion?" and you can respond from the depths of the Black soul, "Certainly Lord," then you

are moving in the direction of the meaning of the spiritual. The meaning of the song is not contained in the bare words but in the Black history that created it.

The divine liberation of the oppressed from slavery is the central theological concept in the Black spirituals. These songs show that Black slaves did not believe that human servitude was reconcilable with their African past and their knowledge of the Christian gospel. They did not believe that God created Africans to be the slaves of Americans. Accordingly they sang of a God who was involved in history--their history--making right what whites had made wrong. Just as God delivered the Children of Israel from Egyptian slavery, drowning Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, he will also deliver Black people from American slavery. It is this certainty that informs the thought of the Black spirituals, enabling Black slaves to sing:

Oh Mary, don't you weep, don't you moan,  
Oh Mary, don't you weep, don't you moan,  
Pharaoh's army got drowned,  
Oh Mary, don't you weep.

The basic idea of the spirituals is that slavery contradicts God; it is a denial of his will. To be enslaved is to be declared nobody, and that form of existence contradicts God's creation of people to be his children. Because Black people believed that they were God's children, they affirmed their somebodiness, refusing to reconcile their servitude with divine revelation. They rejected white distortions of the gospel, which emphasized the obedience of slaves to their masters. They contended that God willed their freedom and not their slavery. That is why the spirituals focus on biblical passages that stress God's involvement in the liberation of oppressed people. Black people sang about Joshua and the battle of Jericho, Moses leading the Israelites from bondage, Daniel in the lions' den, and the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. Here the emphasis was on God's liberation of the weak from the oppression of the strong, the lowly and downtrodden from the proud and mighty. And Blacks reasoned that if God could lock the lion's jaw for Daniel and could cool the fire for the Hebrew children, then he could certainly deliver Black people from slavery.

My Lord delivered Daniel,  
My Lord delivered Daniel,  
My Lord delivered Daniel,  
Why can't He deliver me?

## THE CREATION: A NEGRO SERMON

And God stepped out on space,  
And He looked around and said,  
"I'm lonely  
I'll make me a world."

And as far as the eye of God could see  
Darkness covered everything,  
Blacker than a hundred midnights  
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,  
And the light broke,  
And the darkness rolled up on one side,  
And the light stood shining on the other,  
And God said, "That's good!"

Then God reached out and took the light in His hands,  
And God rolled the light around in His hands  
Until He made the sun;  
And He set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.  
And the light that was left from making the sun  
God gathered it up in a shining ball  
And flung it against the darkness,  
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.  
Then down between  
The darkness and the light  
He hurled the world;  
And God said, "That's good."

Then God Himself stepped down--  
And the sun was on His right hand  
And the moon was on His left;  
The stars were clustered about His head,  
And the earth was under His feet.  
And God walked, and where He trod  
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out  
And bulged the mountains up.

Then He stopped and looked, and saw  
That the earth was hot and barren.  
So God stepped over to the edge of the world  
And He spat out the seven seas;  
He batted His eyes, and the lightnings flashed;  
He clapped His hands, and the thunders rolled;  
And the waters above the earth came down,  
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,  
And the little red flowers blossomed,  
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,  
And the oak spread out his arms,

And the lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,  
 And the rivers ran to the sea;  
 And God smiled again,  
 And the rainbow appeared,  
 And curled itself around His shoulder.

Then God raised His arm and He waved His hand,  
 Over the sea and over the land,  
 And He said, "Bring forth. Bring forth."  
 And quicker than God could drop His hand  
 Fishes and fowls  
 And beasts and birds  
 Swam the rivers and the seas,  
 Roamed the forests and the woods,  
 And split the air with their wings.  
 And God said, "That's good."

Then God walked around,  
 And God looked around  
 On all that He had made.  
 He looked at His sun,  
 And He looked at His moon,  
 And He looked at His little stars;  
 He looked on His world,  
 With all its living things,  
 And God said, "I'm lonely still."

Then God sat down  
 On the side of a hill where He could think;  
 By a deep, wide river He sat down;  
 With His head in His hands,  
 God thought and thought,  
 Till He thought, "I'll make me a man."

Up from the bed of a river  
 God scooped the clay;  
 And by the bank of the river  
 He kneeled Him down;  
 And there the great God Almighty  
 Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,  
 Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,  
 Who rounded the earth in the middle of His hand;  
 This Great God,  
 Like a mammy bending over her baby,  
 Kneeled down in the dust  
 Toiling over a lump of clay  
 Till He shaped it in His own image;

Then into it He blew the breath of life,  
 And man became a living soul.  
 Amen. Amen.



## THE RURAL CHURCH AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION (1934)

The church is the one outstanding institution of the community over which the Negroes themselves exercise control, and because it stands so alone in administering to their own conception of their needs, its function is varied. The religious emotions of the people demand some channel of formal expression, and find it in the church. But more than this, the church is the most important center for face-to-face relations. It is in a very real sense a social institution. It provides a large measure of the recreation and relaxation from the physical stress of life. It is the agency looked to for aid when misfortune overtakes a person. It offers the medium for a community feeling, singing together, eating together, praying together, and indulging in the formal expressions of fellowship. Above this it holds out a world of escape from the hard experiences of life common to all. It is the agency which holds together the subcommunities and families physically scattered over a wide area. It exercises some influence over social relations, setting up certain regulations for behavior, passing judgments which represent community opinion, censuring and penalizing improper conduct by expulsion.

The authority of the church here [in Tuskegee, Macon County, Ala.] does not appear to be as strong as in certain other Negro communities, nor does it seem to have, in its disciplinary restraints, that immediacy which could make it most effective in controlling conduct.

The notable distinction in growths is between the church as a social center, the church as an agency of social control, and the church as the medium of spiritual expansion. With respect to the first, there has been a pronounced development; with respect to the second, the church is less effective than in other communities with a different organization of Negro life; with respect to the last, there is a widening gap between doctrine and behavior which leaves the traditional doctrine empty and unconvincing in relation to the normal currents of life.

It is respectable to belong to church, and practically all families retain some degree of connection with it. Only 17 of the 612 families had no church connection. The pattern of religious observance was borrowed, like many of their other cultural traits, from their earlier associations with whites under slavery. Despite the fact that they now control very largely their own religious organizations, there have been few adaptations to the changing

exigencies of their own life. The satisfactions derived from this institution, apart from such objective indications of social response as could be observed, are questions related to the character of the religious experiences of the group with which this account does not presume to deal.

The community is predominantly Baptist. Methodists rank next in point of numbers. In 612 families, 439 were Baptists and 147 Methodists (86 A.M.E. and 61 M.E.). These two denominations from the beginning of their influence in America made a pronounced "evangelical appeal to the untutored mind," and in time, although not at first especially interested in the Negro, they drew into their fold most of the Christianized Negro slaves.

There were persons who disliked the church, and those who merely disregarded all its attempted regulations, but nowhere was there observed anything approaching religious skepticism. Imperfect understanding of the Bible extended at times to the ludicrous, as, for example, in the serious expostulation of one man: "Cain found his wife in the land of Nod, and she was a monkey." The dominant attitude was one of unquestioning belief in and reliance upon God as a protection against everything that was feared, and an answer to everything that could not be understood.

In so simple a society the range of the unknown fell far into the field of ordinary experience. Just as God brought droughts, rain, pestilence, disease for a purpose both local and inscrutable, there was no appeal from his elections, whether with respect to the incidence of contagion or the exigencies of the cotton crop. All is mystery colored by a faith and fatalism which tended to dull both striving and desire. The conventional response to a death in the family, to the acuteness of hard times, to tragedy, and to the prospect of personal death and damnation is "seeking." And such seeking partakes of all the fears which make up life. It probably accounts for the frequent "visions" and dreams so colored by the workaday world, and for the ecstasies of the release. It seems just as true of the religious experiences of this group as of other similarly naive Negro groups of which it has been observed that they were not converted to God, but converted God to themselves.

THE BLACK PREACHER AS RURAL COMMUNITY LEADER ( 1947)

**24**

This is a study of the personal and social characteristics of the rural Negro minister. It includes 141 ministers who attended the Summer School for

Ministers at Virginia State College from 1943-1946. Ninety ministers pastored rural churches only, 15 pastored urban churches only; 27 pastored both rural and urban churches; and nine were not pastoring. The 132 ministers pastoring churches served 305 churches in as many communities located in 60 counties, representing every significant subregion in the State in which Negroes comprise a significant part of the population. . . .

Historically, the Negro minister has been the outstanding leader of his people, and recognized as such by both the whites and non-whites in the community. One indication of his leadership and participation in community life is his membership or lack of membership in organizations other than the specifically religious ones. Most of these organizations are racial--the members primarily, if not wholly, of the race of the minister.

About 70 per cent of the rural ministers and 93 per cent of the urban ministers hold membership in some non-church organization, with fraternal orders, civic leagues, parent-teachers associations and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People claiming the largest memberships. The fact that nearly one-third of the rural ministers report no memberships in non-church organizations may reflect in part their low income and the sparsity of non-church organizations in the rural areas of which they may become members (in some cases the organizations are non-existent, in other cases their racial identity may bar them) and to some extent their interpretation and understanding of their function as ministers. In most cases, it appears that, in the organizations of which they are members, they hold the chief or some leadership office. Membership in non-church organizations, however, is only one index of leadership activities. In all parts of the state there have been and still are a few men, some well trained and others with little training, who have given able leadership in all phases of community life. They have inspired their people to build public schools and to contribute to the support of their denominational colleges. They have preached home ownership and actually enabled their congregation to become home owners. They have given leadership in all worthwhile civic enterprises. At the present time, the only Negro hospital in rural Virginia is being built by a rural minister who is head of a fraternal order which he established in 1904.

The relations which these ministers have with white people in or outside the community in which they serve may be of great social significance for ministers and for the Negro and white communities.

Of the 75 pastors of rural churches only who reported, 24 per cent

reported no relations with white people, of the 15 ministers pastoring urban churches only, 27 per cent reported no relations with white people; and of the 27 pastors reporting who pastored rural and urban churches, 20 per cent reported no relations with whites. When the character of the contacts reported are analyzed, the contacts are perhaps not as significant as the numbers would make them appear. The white persons who addressed the congregation may have been ministers or persons seeking the cooperation of the congregation in some community project (e.g., health) or persons who were invited to bring some special message after which they may have no further contacts with the minister or his people. Two of the three contacts through ministerial associations were reported as actual memberships. Religious activities consisted of such different things as vocational Bible schools, exchange church services, religious work training schools, membership in a religious council, and joint worship services--the last reported from the western part of the state and among the smaller denominations. Most of the contacts through civic and welfare activities come through the participation of the pastor in the activities of the Red Cross, of the United Service Organization, community chest drives, and the tuberculosis seal sales.

Business relations are chiefly buying and selling relationships; and friendly social relations is to be interpreted to mean primarily a general atmosphere of good will rather than any particular type of institutionalized relationship, although there are notable exceptions.

On the whole it appears that the minister has rather few, casual, superficial, and brief contacts with white people. This fact of cultural isolation, together with the fact of birth and rearing of the minister within a relatively small area, and his relatively limited formal education adds up to a man seriously handicapped by a deficiency of cultural equipment for his task of leadership. It means further that there is little understanding between the Negro and the white religious community; and what is more, little understanding between the Negro and white religious leadership.

Many factors have contributed and do now contribute to this situation; but undoubtedly, a society based on the principle of the legal segregation of the races is the predominantly determining factor. In such a society, natural or normal contacts and relationships are often hindered, made difficult, and unpleasant. Ministers and their people increasingly resent and seek to avoid all interracial contacts which even suggest to them inequality of status.

## YOUTH AND THE RURAL CHURCH (1941)

The church has been, and continues to be, the outstanding social institution in the Negro community. It has a far wider function than to bring spiritual inspiration to its communicants. Among rural Negroes the church is still the only institution which provides an effective organization of the group, an approved and tolerated place for social activities, a forum for expression on many issues, an outlet for emotional repressions, and a plan for social living. It is a complex institution meeting a wide variety of needs.

In order to understand the behavior of rural Negro youth in relation to the church one must appreciate the cultural aspect of their religion. In the case of the Negro living in the rural South the religious conceptions and interpretations of doctrine which he expresses have been conditioned by his level of culture. Religious attitudes, like other social attitudes, are a part of youth's cultural heritage, and bear the stamp and limitation of the carriers of the culture. The first patterns have come from the parents, and these have been reinforced or redefined by the more formal agencies of religious instruction, the most important of which is the church.

Historically, the formal respect accorded Christianity in America has modified at significant points the expected patterns of treatment for a subject people. Under the slave system, religious gatherings were the first forms of association permitted Negroes, religious teachers were the first leaders allowed to develop, and reading of the Bible was the only tolerated excuse for literacy.

The Negro church came to serve a vital role linked intimately with the status of the race. The doctrine of otherworldiness provided an essential escape from the tedium and tribulations, first of slavery and later of economic serfdom. Educational limitations and the cultural isolation fostered by the rural life of the Negro and by the system of separate social institutions retarded the development of the Negro and stamped him with characteristics associated with the essential patterns of Negro life. Many patterns of religious expression were based upon the practices of white groups not far removed in culture. Frequently, the religious doctrines appropriated were in conflict with pragmatic social values.

The Negro rural church was useful to the older generation of Negroes. The economic homogeneity of the group gave it considerable cohesion. The

indifference of the Negro church to current social issues and its emphasis on the values of a future life lent indirect but vital support to the race patterns of the early postslavery period. The formal ban of the church upon dancing, cardplaying, and baseball did not seriously trouble the older members because these were not normal expressions of their impulses to recreation and diversion. Other codes of behavior, when in conflict with the folkways of the people, were less conspicuously enforced. The sex mores with which the rural Negro emerged from slavery were a direct result of a situation which prevented an organized family life and the development of personal habits in terms of the standards approved by white society. Through the early period of Negro family organization and the emergence of new values, inconsistencies have appeared between formal codes regarding "illegitimacy," marriage, divorce, and separation, on the one hand, and the requirements for the survival of an "economic family" reinforced by the strength of uncritical custom, on the other. The rural church has been more tolerant of sex mores which violated its codes of conduct than it has of certain forms of recreation such as dancing and card-playing.

The introduction by the school of new values stressing literacy, economic improvement, and urbanization has brought significant changes in the role of the rural Negro church in the community. The institution itself has changed but little, but in its function it has a different impact upon new generations of Negroes.

Not very distantly related to the sort of frustration phenomena reported is the current tendency observed in rural areas for traditional congregations to disintegrate and reassemble as "cult" churches. These churches of recent development have the advantages of smallness and homogeneity of membership, of doctrines newly interpreted and vigorously proclaimed, and of new procedures for the resolution of personal tensions in work, family life, and community relationships. In many of these rural communities, and in the towns and cities, the number of "cult" churches continues to grow, and in vigor and practical social value they are an interesting contrast with the traditional institutions.

It is an inescapable observation that the rural Negro church is a conservative institution, preserving in large part many values which, in the general cultural ferment of the Negro group, might well be altered. Its greatest present value appears to be that of providing emotional relief for the fixed problems of a hard life. As one woman put it, "It just seem like I can stand my worries better when I go to church." The secular institutions of the Negro community are changing slowly, but at a more rapid rate than the rural church.

The young people are dividing their loyalties between the church and the school and the overtly questionable agencies of commercial recreation. They require the church less than their parents for emotional release because they are both more mobile and less docile. Increasing literacy and education, and the increased value attached to education, emphasize the distance between themselves and the present church leaders, particularly in the plantation areas. All evidence points to the conclusion that the church will increasingly influence youth as its programs take their needs into account on a new and improved cultural level. Where this has been done, the church has tended to retain its role as a vital social and spiritual force in molding the wholesome and socially acceptable patterns of behavior.

## 26

### THE NEGRO'S GOD (1938)

The ideas of God in Negro literature are developed along three principal lines: (1) ideas of God that are used to support or give adherence to traditional, compensatory patterns; (2) ideas, whether traditional or otherwise, that are developed and interpreted to support a growing consciousness of social and psychological adjustment needed; (3) ideas of God that show a tendency or threat to abandon the idea of God as "a useful instrument" in perfecting social change.

The compensatory ideas are those that are commonly taught and exposed to the mass of Negroes; they are reflected in sermons, particularly the other-worldly type; such ideas are found in practically all of the stenographically reported prayers; the compensatory ideas are also set forth in the Spirituals; and they are revealed in the Church School Literature of three major Negro denominations. These ideas support the first trend and they adhere strictly to traditional, compensatory patterns. Though recognizing notable exceptions, they are compensatory and traditional in character because they are neither developed nor interpreted in terms of social rehabilitation. They are conducive to developing in the Negro a complacent, laissez-faire attitude toward life. They support the view that God in His good time and in His own way will bring about the conditions that will lead to the fulfillment of social needs. They encourage Negroes to feel that God will see to it that things work out all right; if not in this world, certainly in the world to come. They make God influential chiefly in the beyond, in preparing a home for the faithful--a

home where His suffering servants will be free of the trials and tribulations which beset them on the earth. A brief summary of such ideas follows:

God fights the battles of His chosen people, and He will bring them out victors in every crisis. Not only is God to fight our battles, but He is to prepare a place for us in Heaven. For example, "Fight our battle for us and lead us to the rock of Salvation." "Oh, Lord, here we are down here in a world of trouble; down here in a world of sorrow--Oh, Lord, have mercy right now this day our Heavenly Father and in the end, give us a lasting resting place in that city where we can praise Thy name forever." Whatever happens is "permitted by God" and there is nothing we can do about it. God will protect us from physical danger, sickness, and disease if our ways are pleasing to Him. If they are pleasing to Him, He will solve our problems. For example, "If a man's ways please God, He can awake at the hour of midnight with a smile on his face and solve the problems and he will defeat those who try to retard his progress. He simply kneels down and tells God about his problems and God will solve them." A mother prayed to God and asked Him to save her four sons from death in France. God answered her prayers. Notwithstanding the fact that millions were killed in the War, her four sons were saved. God is in His Heaven; all is right with the world. God is a rock in a weary land and a shelter in a mighty storm. God knows all our needs and He will provide for them. All things work together for good for those who love the Lord. God takes care of His own during the depression.

This brief summary of ideas is fairly representative of those that are commonly taught to the mass of Negroes in sermons of the other-worldly type, in the Spirituals, in prayers, and in Church School Literature for pupils between the ages of six and sixteen. They adhere to traditional, compensatory patterns.

Although the literature under discussion contains ideas of God as described above, it must be pointed out that there are ideas in this literature that are not compensatory, though in essence traditional. They represent the second trend and they are developed and interpreted along social lines. In the "mass" literature numerous ideas show that God is against slavery; that of one blood God created all races; that it is against God to take life; that the Negro is not an inferior person; that God is just; and that, in due time, He will bring slaveholders to His judgment seat.

"Classical" Negro literature is composed of the writings of poets, novelists, biographers, orators, and social scientists--productions that have come out since the time of Jupiter Hammon.



It is significant to note that there is virtually no difference between the ideas of God found in the "classical" literature between 1760 and 1860, and those found in the "mass" Literature of the same period. In fact compensatory, other-worldly views in this period are comparatively rare. Negro writers of this period were primarily concerned with emancipation and they developed their conceptions of God to that end. The same is true of the period between the Civil War and 1914. The writers of "mass" Literature are just as much concerned with social reform as the writers of "classical" literature. But there is a striking difference between the ideas of God found and developed in "classical" Negro literature since 1914 and those ideas of God of the Negro masses since 1914.

The third and final trend in the development of the ideas of God in this study shows that there is a tendency on the part of recent Negro writers to consider the idea of God as useless in any effort to reconstruct the world socially. Many of these ideas are not flat denials of the existence of God, but they show incredulity, frustration, and pessimism which make the idea of God of little value in social crises. In every case, in this third emphasis, the traditional views of God as exemplified in the Negro masses and in the white man's conceptions of God are abandoned as useless in the social struggle. They run the entire gamut from mere protest against traditional ideas and abandonment of the same to a complete denial of the existence of God.

The data show that however the ideas are used, they develop at the point of social crisis; at the point where justice is denied, hopes thwarted, and plans shattered, owing in part to the hampering proscriptions imposed upon the Negro by the dominant group. His ideas of God, so to speak, are chiseled out of the very fabric of the social struggle. Virtually all of them express the unfilled yearnings of the Negro group, whether they be worldly or other-worldly. They developed, as can be validated historically, along the line of the Negro's most urgent needs and desires. Prior to 1860, the Negro's ideas of God were developed around slavery. After the Civil War, they grew out of the wrongs of Reconstruction. Since 1914, they are inseparable from the social and economic restrictions which the Negro meets in the modern world.

Unlike that of many people, the Negro's incredulity, frustrations, agnosticism, and atheism do not develop as the results of the findings of modern science nor from the observation that nature is cruel and indifferent; but primarily because in the social situation, he finds himself hampered and

restricted. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Negro group has produced great preachers but few theologians. The Negro is not interested in any fine theological or philosophical discussions about God. He is interested in a God who is able to help him bridge the chasm that exists between the actual and the ideal. The Negro's life has been too unstable, too precarious, too uncertain, and his needs have been too great for him to become sufficiently objective to theologize or philosophize about God.

# 27

## FIVE MAJOR BLACK DENOMINATIONS

Denomination	Number of Members	Number of Churches	Number of Pastors	Sunday School Members
National Baptist Convention, USA 1880	5,000,000	26,000	27,500	2,407,000
National Baptist Convention of America	2,668,000	11,398	7,598	2,500,000
AME Church 1793	1,166,000	5,878	5,878	363,432
AME Zion Church 1821	770,000	4,083	2,400	199,250
CME Church 1870	444,493	2,523	1,792	115,424

### The Baptists

Prior to the Civil War, the Baptist Church among Negroes consisted almost entirely of local congregations. Organization into district, state or national bodies was difficult both for slaves and free Negroes. With the coming of freedom, the organization of larger bodies rapidly took place. The first state Convention was organized in North Carolina in 1866, just one year after the close of the war. Alabama and Virginia followed in 1867, and by 1870 all the Southern states had state conventions.

On the national level, the Negro groups at first were affiliated with white national bodies. In 1867, however, the Consolidated American Baptist Convention was organized and continued until 1880, when the National Baptist Convention was established at Montgomery, Alabama. Three smaller conventions grew out of this body: the Foreign Mission Baptist Convention of the U.S.A., 1880; the American National Baptist Convention, 1880; and the American National Educational Baptist Convention, 1893. All of these were united in 1895 at

Atlanta, Georgia, into the National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A., which was incorporated in 1915. This convention when formed had three million members, and thereby became the largest single denomination of Negro Christians in the world. Such tremendous growth in the fifty years from 1865 to 1915 reveals the rapidity with which the church grew among Negroes after Emancipation.

With the passing years the National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A. [Incorporated] has suffered a number of splits. The largest of these separating groups is the National Baptist Convention of America.

The tendency toward division, so characteristic of Baptists, continues to the present time. Today there are three national conventions: the National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A., the National Baptist Convention of America and the Progressive Baptist Convention.

Although divided, Baptists are by far the largest single group of Negro Christians in the world. They have approximately 7,668,000 members, 37,300 churches, and 4,900,000 children in church schools. There are 35,000 preachers in the Baptist ministry.

There are no distinctive doctrines or patterns of policy in the Negro Baptist Churches. They adhere in all basic essentials to the beliefs and practices of the major Baptist bodies of the nation. The Baptists have played a great part in the progress of the Negro group in education, in civic leadership and in other ways. They also have an extensive foreign mission program.

#### The Methodist Churches

Methodists were early active among Negroes both in colonial and post-Revolutionary times. They won large numbers to Methodism and took them readily into church membership. They organized a number of Negro congregations, usually presided over by white preachers, and took a number of Negroes into the ministry.

The Negro members, both slave and free, were usually restricted, however, in their participation in church life. They sat in segregated seats during services, and communed after the others or in special services. Dissatisfaction with such arrangements steadily increased, so that by 1785 in several Northern cities Negro members had organized themselves into separate congregations. In 1787 a company of Negroes in Philadelphia withdrew from the white church, and under the leadership of Richard Allen, a free and well-to-do Negro,

built a chapel where they held separate services under an ordained Negro Episcopal priest.

Despite opposition from the white Methodists in Philadelphia, in 1793 Bishop Asbury dedicated the chapel as Bethel Church, and in 1799 he ordained Richard Allen a deacon.

In 1814, out of litigation brought by the white Methodists, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania ruled that Bethel Church was an independent body. In 1816 Richard Allen and others called together representatives of separate churches similar to Bethel that had been organized in Delaware, Maryland and New Jersey. This meeting resulted in the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the second separate Negro Methodist denomination. The first was the Union Church of Africans which had been incorporated in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1813. This church, however, has grown very little. About the same time a third separatist movement, much like the first, resulted in the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1820.

Prior to the Civil War, the Negro Methodist churches were not able to expand widely. The national pattern of church life characteristic of Methodism with its itinerant ministry and traveling officers, was not possible for Negroes, either slave or free. With the coming of freedom, permitting the movement and evangelism necessary for expansion, the Negro Methodist bodies grew very rapidly, but not as much as the Baptists. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, discussed below, illustrates the rise and growth of a church after the Emancipation.

#### The AME Church

The AME Church today is truly international in scope. It has churches in Africa, Canada and the Caribbean area. Figures on membership are only approximate because of the lack of reports. The last reported figure [1951] gave an inclusive membership of 1,166,301 and 5,878 churches. In the same year [1951] 6,472 Sunday Schools were reported, with 262,432 members. It seems that today this church has somewhere between a million and a million and a half members.

The AME Church is divided into eighteen episcopal districts. The governing bodies of the church are the General Conference, which meets quadrennially; the Council of Bishops and the General Board. The work of the church is under the supervision of ten Boards or Departments, such as the Board of Missions, the Board of Church Extension, the Department of Education and the Department of Evangelism. There are five publications, the Christian Recorder, The AME

Review, the Voice of Missions, the Southwestern Christian Recorder, and the Woman's Missionary Recorder. The church maintains a publishing house in Nashville, Tennessee.

#### The AMEZ Church

The origin of the AMEZ Church is much like that of the AME. In 1796 a group of colored members, led by James Varick and others, withdrew from the John Street Methodist Church in New York City to escape the problems of segregation in church life. In 1800 they built a church which they named Zion. They at first maintained cooperative relationships with the white Methodist Church, but in 1820 this cooperation failed. Joining with separate Negro congregations in other cities, in 1821 they held an annual conference, and elected James Varick their first bishop. Several elders had been ordained by sympathetic white Methodist ministers. This gave them a ministry.

This church, like all the others, experienced its great growth after the Civil War. By 1880 fifteen annual conferences had been organized in the South. Today this church performs missionary work in West Africa, South America and the West Indies.

#### The CME Church

The third major Negro Methodist body is the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Originally it was called the Colored ME Church, but in 1956 the word Colored was changed to Christian.

At the close of the Civil War there were over 250,000 Negro members in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. They had long been dissatisfied with the segregation and restrictions imposed upon the colored members. Immediately after the war, in 1866, they appealed to the General Conference of the ME Church, South, to be set apart in a church of their own. The conference ruled that wherever there were sufficient numbers, they be set aside in separate annual conferences. It further appointed a commission to study the request for a separate church and to report to the next general conference. In 1870 the commission recommended that the Negro members be organized into a church of their own. Later that year, in December, the first General Conference of the CME Church was held at Jackson, Tennessee. Two Negro bishops were elected, Henry Miles and Richard H. Vanderhorst.

In the years since the separation the ME Church, South, has kept its interest in the CME Church, and has assisted in many ways, especially in organizing and operating the educational program.



# 28

## CLASS STRUCTURE AND THE BLACK CHURCH (1942)

It is our hypothesis that religious ritual performs different functions for different classes within an urban American Negro population, while at the same time performing a function common to the entire class and one that is also common to all members of the particular denomination or sect with which the individual church is identified.

Passing over the superficial, common sense criteria of class based on appearance and manner of speech, we have used occupation, income, consumption, education, philosophy of life, pattern of behavior, associational activity, and family life as bases for grouping. The upper class includes the leading business men and women, statesmen and politicians, as well as the professional class. The professional class comprises not only physicians, ministers, and attorneys, but also dentists, pharmacists, editors, teachers, librarians, social service workers, engineers, architects, and concert artists. The business class consists of insurance company executives and other important enterprisers. Statesmen and politicians may be differentiated as congressmen, state legislators, aldermen, ward committeemen, although some of the latter are in lower groups.

The most important elements in upper class status are found in activities which are not centered in the church. Thus, churchgoing is not an important activity for many persons of the upper stratum. Except in the cases of those who belong to middle-class or lower-class churches for business reasons, upper-class persons who attend church regularly are inclined to devote themselves to those of the ritualistic or of the deliberative type, and largely to Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches, which churches

have become known as the churches of the social elite. Generally speaking, upper-class behavior means manifesting self-control.

The upper middle class is characterized by conservatism, conformity, thrift, industry, and ambition. The upper-middle-class person is deeply interested in civic affairs, particularly those which affect his racial class. His participation is noted for its sincerity and dependability and he does much of the work for which upper-class leaders receive credit. In this class are placed the less successful professional and business men and women, minor executives, government employees, the more advanced clerical workers, and important politicians who do not qualify for higher status. While the personal service types have been lowered in the social scale, government employees (and more specifically postal employees), because of income, education, and other factors, have moved steadily upward. The upper middle class shows the greatest variety in church as well as in associational interests. It frequents the Congregational, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and some of the Methodist and Baptist churches. It is quite similar to the upper class in its choice of ritual and ceremony, but is more faithful in attendance. This attendance is often for social reasons as well as for spiritual uplift, since some of the recreation of the older group is organized under the auspices of the church.

Differences between the upper and lower middle classes are those of point of view, family connection, education, and occupational status. Occupations indicative of lower middle-class status are tailor, waiter, orderly, houseman, bellman, hairdresser, dressmaker, salesclerk, barber, cashier, worker in one of the industries, and in some cases, domestic service. In the lower middle class, we have the strongest supporters of the semidemonstrative churches, large and small. Those who can do so, often join the larger churches because of their prestige, while persons with little money are more comfortable in the smaller Baptist and Methodist churches. On the other hand, there are both respectables and nonrespectables who consider deep religious devotion a symbol of lower-class status, and religion an "opiate" foisted on them by the upper classes of the larger society, and thus seek to show their urbanity and freedom, sometimes by indifference and nonparticipation, and at other times by open resentment. Opposed to this attitude of the heretic, that of the devotee evidences almost a blind belief in God's power to rectify immoral conditions without the conscious mediation of man.

The most distinguishing marks of the lower class are low income and low educational status, which all these imply. Two implications are poor environment and poor ways of conducting oneself. Because the economic depression has reduced persons of various classes to a relief status, crudity and ignorance, indicative of lack of gentility or of poor ways of conducting oneself may well be chosen as criteria. Since this class comprises marginal workers, consisting mainly of common laborers and domestic servants, it furnishes the majority of unemployed persons and relief clients, since too large a percentage of the meager income has been spent for certain items of furniture (an aspect of conspicuous consumption), for food and liquor, or for other media of dissipation. There is practically no associational life among lower-class men, while lower-class women of the respectable type find their most satisfying associational contacts in church clubs. Yet some associational relationships are afforded by labor unions, by clubs of migrants from the same southern states, and by protest groups among the unemployed. There are two contrasting attitudes toward religion and the church on the part of those in the lowest class. Some persons are antagonistic and condemnatory, even blasphemous. Others are religious devotees who put to shame the average churchgoer of the upper and middle classes. Many of these manifest a high standard of morality, and have their associational and leisure time activity within the church. Members of this category are found in large numbers in the Baptist, Pentecostal, and Spiritual congregations. Since the beginning of the depression, those of the lower class who have been recipients of the charity of the Catholics have often become interested also in their ritual, but the most frequent lower-class religious group is a sect, characterized by emotional demonstrativeness, and usually housed in a storefront building.

Former studies of the church have not been concerned specifically with a natural and functional classification that shows just how the several types of churches differ in their relationship to social structure, social status, and social situation. In this study, we have made such a classification and have found through an analysis of the type of life lived outside the church that the type of ritual engaged in, reflects the life of the society of which the worshipper is a member. The social nature of the bizarre behavior of the ecstatic sects prevents that type of isolation that accentuates inferiority and takes the devotee into a world where temporarily he can live above the handicaps of everyday life. The congenial informality of the semidemonstrative



church groups affords fellowship, personal recognition, and tension release, so consoling to the former ruralite in the urban situation. The members of the deliberative and of the liturgical churches seem already to have adjusted themselves to city life and their church services stress meeting squarely the issues of life rather than seeking escape through emotional release.

In determining the relation of ritual and general church behavior in urban Negro churches to various classes within the Negro group, we have been concerned primarily with the part which types of churches play in the social adjustment of types of persons. Hence we have used the sermon, prayers, songs, and behavior in studying the ceremonials and beliefs of types of communicants representing class and economic differences in urban Negro life. The functions which churches perform for Negroes can be interpreted properly only when one realizes fully the nature of the social situations in which Negroes of different social status find themselves in the social structure of our nation. These churches serve a triple function. Not only do they enable the communicants to celebrate the Christian triumph, but they also render a distinct service to them as members of a minority group, and through differentiation in ritual, they minister to various classes within this group. As Holt has said:

There is an intimate relationship between personal feeling of success or failure and the social situation in which the individual is living. There is a close relationship between personal feeling of depression or exhaltation and the prevailing type of religion in which the individual is participating. . . . If we are to have a sociology of religion, it must come through observation of religion in action among other social forces.

### Religion in the "Storefront" Church

The inadequacy, from a religious standpoint, of the institutional denominations accounts for the "storefront" churches which one finds in Negro communities in American cities. In the survey of Negro churches in twelve cities, to which we have referred, out of a total of 2,104 church buildings, 777 were "storefront" churches or houses and the remainder were conventional church buildings. These "storefront" churches, as the name suggests, are generally conducted in unrented or abandoned stores, though some may be found in run-down houses. They are located in the poorer and deteriorated areas of Negro communities. They often owe their existence to the initiative on the part of a "Jack-leg" preacher, that is, a semiliterate or an uneducated preacher, who gathers about him the poorer Negroes who seek a religious leader in the city.

Nearly a half of 777 "storefront" churches in the study referred to above were Baptist and a somewhat smaller number were known as Holiness and Spiritualist churches. There were less than ten churches identified with any of the three regularly established Methodist denominations though many of the members of these "storefront" churches had been in Methodist churches.

The "storefront" church represents an attempt on the part of the migrants, especially from the rural areas of the South, to re-establish a type of church in the urban environment to which they were accustomed. They want a church, first of all, in which they are known as people. In the large city church they lose their identity completely and, as many of the migrants from the rural South have said, neither the church members nor the pastor know them personally. Sometimes they complain with bitterness that the pastor of the large city church knows them only as the number on the envelope in which they place their dues. In wanting to be treated as human beings, they want status in the church which was the main or only organization in the South in which they had status. Some of the statements concerning their reason for leaving the big denominational churches was that "back home in the South" they had a seat in the church that everyone recognized as theirs and that if the seat were empty on Sunday the pastor came to their homes to find out the cause of their absence.

The desire for the warm and intimate association of fellow worshippers in church services was not the only reason why the "storefront" church was more congenial to the recently urbanized Negro than the cold impersonal atmosphere of the large denominational city church. In these small "storefront" churches the Negro migrant could worship in a manner to which he had been accustomed. The sermon by the pastor is of a type to appeal to traditional ideas concerning hell and heaven and the imagery which the Negro has acquired from the Bible. Much emphasis is placed upon sins of the flesh, especially sexual sins. The preacher leads the singing of the Spirituals and other hymns with which the Negroes with a folk background are acquainted. The singing is accompanied by "shouting" or holy dancing which permits the maximum of free religious expression on the part of the participants.

In the cities of the North and even in the cities in the South, these "storefront" churches are constantly being organized by all kinds of so-called preachers in order to attract lower-class Negroes. During the 1920's when southern Negroes were flocking to Harlem in New York City, it was found that only 54 out of 140 churches in Harlem were housed in regular church structures.

The remainder were of the "storefront" type which had been organized by preachers, many of whom were exploiters and charlatans. They based their appeal on the Negro's desire to find salvation in the next world and to escape from sickness and the insecurities of this world. One of these churches advertised:

We Believe that all Manner of Disease Can Be Cured  
Jesus is the Doctor  
Services on Sunday.

The large number of churches in Negro communities in the North as well as in the South has raised the question as to whether the Negro population is over-churched. There is no way of answering this question and it is irrelevant in a sense when one considers the important role of the Negro church in the organization of the Negro community. The vast majority of Negroes have constituted a lower class, gaining a living as common laborers and in domestic service. Among these people there is little associational life and the churches of all types represent, as we have seen, the main form of organized social life. Even when Negroes have broken away from the traditional churches they have sought in new religious groups a way of life which would conform to their needs. This may be seen when we turn to consider the cults which have grown up in recent years among Negroes.

## 29

### NEW GODS OF THE CITY: BLACK RELIGIOUS CULTS (1944)

#### A. United House of Prayer for All People

Origin. The founder of this cult, Bishop Charles Emmanuel Grace, is a man of mixed parentage, said to be Negro and Portuguese. Bronze of color, and with flowing hair, he does not admit to being a Negro. Frequently he adopts a patronizing attitude towards his Negro followers (who in Philadelphia and New York represent nearly 100 per cent of the members) by pointing out to them that when he took on earthly form he chose to lead the Negroes, lowly in state though they are, rather than the members of some more privileged racial group.

This church had its origin in the South where, according to reports, Grace worked for years as a cook in the railway service, then began preaching in the year 1925. "Grace" is an assumed name. Whether accidentally or by design, the name serves a useful purpose in the general pattern of his religious teachings. Today his churches dot the eastern seaboard in a score or more of strategic spots.

Bishop Grace is the undisputed head of the United House of Prayer. No board of presbyters appoints his preachers. He reserves this prerogative to himself. In private he is even known to boast that he will not have any preacher serve in the United House of Prayer whom he might consider smart enough to question his undisputed authority.

Instead of Mt. Sinai's one convocation a year Bishop Grace has arranged separate convocations in different states and localities. In each of these convocations sums of money are raised and turned over to the bishop. When all these district groups have met, a monster convocation is called in a selected place, and to this representatives from all over the East and South pour in. The scores of contributions from the local convocations are now augmented by one master contribution known as the national offering.

Sacred Text. The sacred text is the Bible.

Beliefs. The cult represents a Christian sect of the holiness type, believing in conversion, sanctification, and the intervention of the Holy Spirit, etc. There are the usual taboos.

Actually, however, the beliefs boil down to a worship of Daddy Grace. God appears to be all but forgotten. The followers concentrate their thoughts on His "great man," Grace. Such a line of thinking is encouraged by Bishop Grace and by his preachers. Thus Bishop Grace has been heard admonishing his worshippers: "Never mind about God. Salvation is by Grace only. . . . Grace has given God a vacation, and since God is on His vacation, don't worry Him. . . . If you sin against God, Grace can save you, but if you sin against Grace, God cannot save you."

Scriptural references by the dozens, in which the word "grace" appears, are quoted to demonstrate that "this man Grace" is the spirit of God walking among men.

Practices. The United House of Prayer for All People has meetings every night and all day Sunday. The distinguishing characteristics of the practices of this cult are their extreme physical frenzy, and the use to which these frenzies are applied in raising money for carrying on their work. Thus in one service I heard the preacher, who was expounding upon the duty of a wife to make sacrifices for her husband, turn off and remark, "And you see why you must give all you can for dear Daddy Grace."

Allusions to sex motives are numerous. In a moment of comparative tranquillity, I heard a preacher call out to the followers, who were chiefly women,

"Who has the best thing you ever did see? I mean the best feeling thing you ever did feel? You feel it from your head to your feet. You don't know what I mean? Makes you feel good. Makes everybody feel good."

Such allusions, like the dancing, cause weird cries to emanate from various parts of the house of prayer. "Sweet Daddy!" "Oh, Daddy!" "Daddy, you feel so good!" "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!" are typical expressions.

Followers are encouraged to dance ecstatically, but always with members of the same sex. Frequently the dancer falls to the floor and lies there many minutes. In order to break the fall, it is customary to cover the front part of the house of prayer with sawdust.

While these things are happening, time is taken to make collections, invite members to purchase food at the canteen, or to place on sale various Daddy Grace products which are an essential part of the spiritual exposition. Thus Daddy Grace soap will cleanse the body, or reduce fat, or heal, according to the individual need. Daddy Grace writing paper will aid the writer in composing a good letter. Has the follower a cold or tuberculosis? The Grace Magazine will, if placed on your chest, give a complete cure.

Similarly there is Daddy Grace tooth paste, transcontinental tea and coffee, men and women's hair pomade (which ostensibly cancels the taboo against beautifying the person), face powder, cold water soap, talcum powder, shoe polish, lemon cream, cold cream, pine soap, vanishing cream, castille and palmolive soap, and even Daddy Grace cookies. There also is a home-buying association, and an insurance and burying society.

In addition there are numerous emblems, buttons, badges, banners, and finally elaborate uniforms with accessories of swords, batons, and walking sticks, whose sale swells the totals of funds employed by the bishop in his United House of Prayer for All People.

#### B. Moorish Science Temple of America

Origin. This cult was founded about 1913 by Timothy Drew, who came from North Carolina where he was born in 1886. Somewhere in his life he came upon two facts which radically influenced his thinking:

He encountered some forms of oriental philosophy and was impressed with its racial catholicity. The fruits of his research have been compressed into the Holy Koran of the Moorish Holy Temple of Science, which is not to be confused with the orthodox Mohammedan Koran.

He became obsessed with the idea that salvation for the Negro people lay

in the discovery by them of their national origin, i.e., they must know whence they came, and refuse longer to be called Negroes, Black folk, colored people, or Ethiopians. They must henceforth call themselves Asiatics, to use the generic term, or, more specifically, Moors or Moorish Americans.

Drew would harangue small groups of Negroes on street corners, in basements, or empty lots. Although he had little formal education, a certain magnetic charm, a sincerity of purpose, and a real determination to lead his people out of the difficulties of racial prejudice and discrimination brought him followers.

He established his first temple in Newark, New Jersey. Gradually, as his following increased, temples were established in Pittsburgh, Detroit, and in numerous cities in the South. His greatest achievement was the founding of a temple in Chicago. But this was to prove his personal undoing.

Many Negroes on the South Side of Chicago flocked to the new teacher. Complete emancipation through a change of status from "Negro" to "Asiatic" promised an easy way to salvation.

Practices. In connection with the services in the temple the following practices are especially to be noted, for they are quite distinct from practices to be observed at most Negro religious services.

When sitting in the temple, men and women are segregated. In Philadelphia it is customary to have the women seated in the front, the men to the rear.

All members are particular about having everyone pay strict attention to the service. Older members frequently are prodded because they nod during the service. But the pranks of the young children are regarded with an amazing patience and with an unusual degree of sympathy for the restlessness of children.

All services are extraordinarily quiet, belying the generally accepted beliefs regarding the Negro and his religious worship. Thus it often is extremely difficult to make out the words of a speaker addressing the congregation from the front of the temple despite the tomb-like stillness. Although there is some bustle as the women take care of the needs of their children, this is accomplished with a minimum of commotion or noise. Exclamations from the congregation are few and almost inaudible; there is a complete absence of that emotionalism which is considered characteristic of Negro services, and this is the more surprising because the basic principles of the cult involve those

very elements which would be expected to arouse the emotions to an extreme degree. Finally, the meetings begin punctually and end punctually, a most unusual condition in Negro churches.

There is no baptism or communion and little singing. There are few hymns, and these are mostly chants. Members must pray three times daily, at sunrise, noon, and at sunset. When praying, members stand facing the east (Mecca), and raise their hands but do not prostrate themselves.

All Moorish Americans must obey the laws of their (American) government. "Radicalism" is forbidden.

# 30

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN: "THE SEVENTH DAY" (1953)

Everyone had always said that John would be a preacher when he grew up, just like his father. It had been said so often that John, without ever thinking about it, had come to believe it himself. Not until the morning of his fourteenth birthday did he really begin to think about it, and by then it was already too late.

His earliest memories--which were, in a way, his only memories--were of the hurry and brightness of Sunday mornings. They all rose together on that day; his father, who did not have to go to work, and led them in prayer before breakfast; his mother, who dressed up on that day, and looked almost young, with her hair straightened, and on her head the close-fitting white cap that was the uniform of holy women; his younger brother, Roy, who was silent that day because his father was home. Sarah, who wore a red ribbon in her hair that day, and was fondled by her father. And the baby, Ruth, who was dressed in pink and white, and rode in her mother's arms to church.

The church was not very far away, four blocks up Lenox Avenue, on a corner not far from the hospital. Every Sunday morning, then, since John could remember, they had taken to the streets, the Grimes family on their way to church. Sinners along the avenue watched them--men still wearing their Saturday-night clothes, wrinkled and dusty now, muddy-eyed and muddy-faced; and women with harsh voices and tight, bright dresses, cigarettes between their fingers or held tightly in the corners of their mouths. They talked, and laughed, and fought together, and the women fought like the men. John and Roy, passing these men and women, looked at one another briefly, John embarrassed and Roy amused.

Roy would be like them when he grew up, if the Lord did not change his heart.

Their church was called the Temple of the Fire Baptized. It was not the biggest church in Harlem, nor yet the smallest, but John had been brought up to believe it was the holiest and best. His father was head deacon in this church--there were only two, the other a round, black man named Deacon Braithwaite--and he took up the collection, and sometimes he preached. The pastor, Father James, was a genial, well-fed man with a face like a darker moon. It was he who preached on Pentecost Sundays, and led revivals in the summertime, and anointed and healed the sick.

On Sunday mornings and Sunday nights the church was always full; on special Sundays it was full all day. The Grimes family arrived in a body, always a little late, usually in the middle of Sunday school, which began at nine o'clock. This lateness was always their mother's fault--at least in the eyes of their father; she could not seem to get herself and the children ready on time, ever, and sometimes she actually remained behind, not to appear until the morning service. When they all arrived together, they separated upon entering the doors, father and mother going to sit in the Adult Class, which was taught by Sister McCandless, Sarah going to the Infant's Class, John and Roy sitting in the Intermediate, which was taught by Brother Elisha.

When Sunday school service ended there was a short pause before morning service began. In this pause, if it was good weather, the old folks might step outside a moment to talk among themselves. The sisters would almost always be dressed in white from crown to toe. The small children, on this day, in this place, and oppressed by their elders, tried hard to play without seeming to be disrespectful of God's house. But sometimes, nervous or perverse, they shouted, or threw hymnbooks, or began to cry, putting their parents, men or women of God, under the necessity of proving--by harsh means or tender--who, in a sanctified household, ruled. The older children, like John or Roy, might wander down the avenue, but not too far. Their father never let John and Roy out of his sight, for Roy had often disappeared between Sunday school and morning service and had not come back all day.

The Sunday morning service began when Brother Elisha sat down at the piano and raised a song. This moment and this music had been with John, so it seemed, since he had first drawn breath. It seemed that there had never been a time when he had not known this moment of waiting while the packed church paused--the sisters in white, heads raised, the brothers in blue, heads back;



the white caps of the women seeming to glow in the charged air like crowns, the kinky, gleaming heads of the men seeming to be lifted up--and the rustling and the whispering ceased and the children were quiet; perhaps someone coughed, or the sound of a car horn, or a curse from the streets came in; then Elisha hit the keys, beginning at once to sing, and everybody joined him, clapping their hands, and rising, and beating the tambourines.

The song might be: Down at the cross where my Saviour died!

Or: Jesus, I'll never forget how you set me free!

Or: Lord, hold my hand while I run this race!

They sang with all the strength that was in them, and clapped their hands for joy. There had never been a time when John had not sat watching the saints rejoice with terror in his heart, and wonder. Their singing caused him to believe in the presence of the Lord; indeed, it was no longer a question of belief, because they made that presence real. He did not feel it himself, the joy they felt, yet he could not doubt that it was, for them, the very bread of life--could not doubt it, that is, until it was too late to doubt.

On Sunday mornings the women all seemed patient, all the men seemed mighty. While John watched, the Power struck someone, a man or woman; they cried out, a long wordless crying, and, arms outstretched like wings, they began the Shout. Someone moved a chair a little to give them room, the rhythm paused, the singing stopped, only the pounding feet and the clapping hands were heard; then another cry, another dancer; then the tambourines began again, and the voices rose again, and the music swept on again, like fire, or flood, or judgment. Then the church seemed to swell with the Power it held, and, like a planet rocking in space, the temple rocked with the Power of God. John watched, watched the faces, and the weightless bodies, and listened to the timeless cries. One day, so everyone said, this Power would possess him; he would sing and cry as they did now, and dance before his King.

RELIGION: OPIATE OR INSPIRATION TO STRUGGLE?

# 31

The relation between religion and political radicalism is a confusing one. On the one hand, established religious institutions have generally had a stake in the status quo and hence have fostered conservatism. The other-worldly orientation of the masses, particularly as expressed in the more

fundamentalist branches of Christianity, has been seen as an alternative to the development of political radicalism. On the other hand, as the source of both universal humanistic values and the strength that can come from believing one is carrying out God's will in political matters, religion has occasionally played a positive role in movements for radical social change.

One faces opposing views, or at best, ambiguity in contemplating the current effect of religion. The quietistic consequences of religion are all too well known, as is the fact that only a relatively small segment of the Negro church is actively involved. On the other hand, the prominent role of the Negro church in supplying much of the ideology of the movement, many of its foremost leaders, and a place where protest can be organized, can hardly be denied. It would appear from the bombings of churches and the writing of Martin Luther King and other religiously inspired activists that, for many, religion and protest are linked.

Denomination. It has been long known that the more fundamental sects, such as the Holiness groups and the Jehovah's Witnesses, are relatively uninterested in movements for concrete, secular, political or social change. Such transvaluational movements, with their otherworldly orientations and their promise that the last shall be first in the great beyond, are said to solace the individual for his lowly status in this world and to direct attention away from efforts at collective social change. While only a minority of Negroes actually belong to such groups, the relative percentage belonging is higher than among whites. Negro literature is rich in descriptions of these churches and their position on race protest.

Our research shows the following number of militants in these denominations: Sects and Cults--15 per cent; Baptists--25 per cent; Methodist--28 per cent; Catholic--36 per cent; Presbyterian--36 per cent; United Church of Christ--42 per cent; Episcopalian--43 per cent. The percentage of respondents scored as militant is about twice as high among members of the more conventional religious groups than among those who belong to sects. The percentage militant increases from only 15 per cent for the sects to 43 per cent for Episcopalians. It is perhaps ironic that those individuals in largely white denominations (Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Catholic) appear somewhat higher in militancy than those in Negro denominations, in spite of the greater civil rights activism of the latter. This was true even when social class was held constant.

The study measured several dimensions of religious involvement: the importance of religion to the respondent, the orthodoxy of his religious belief, and the frequency of his attendance at worship service. Even with the sects excluded, irrespective of the dimension of religiosity considered, the greater the religiosity, the lower the percentage militant. Militancy increases consistently from a low of 22 per cent among those who said religion was "extremely important" to a high of 62 per cent for those who indicated that religion was "not at all important" to them. For those high in orthodoxy (having no doubt about the existence of God, the devil, or an after-life), only 20 per cent were militant, while for those totally rejecting these ideas 57 per cent indicated concern over civil rights. Militancy is also inversely related to frequency of attendance at worship service. While 18 per cent of those who attend church more than once a week are high on militancy, 32 per cent who attend less than once a year are high in militancy.

Religiosity and militancy are both related to age, sex, region of the country raised in, and denomination. Older people, women, those raised in the South, and those in Negro denominations were more likely to be scored as religious and to have lower percentages scoring as militant.

The incompatibility of piety and protest that these data show is evident in comments offered by respondents. Many religious people hold beliefs that clearly inhibit race protest. For a few, segregation and a lowly status for Negroes are somehow God's will and not for men to question. Thus a housewife in South Bend, Indiana, in saying that civil rights demonstrations had hurt Negroes, added, "God is the Creator of everything. We don't know why we all dark-skinned. We should try to put forth the effort do what God wants and not question." A Negro spiritual contains the lines, "I'm gonna wait upon the Lord till my change comes." Rather than seeing segregation as God's will, our respondents more frequently stressed that God, as absolute controller of the universe, would bring about change in his own way and at his own time. In indicating her unwillingness to take part in a civil rights demonstration, a Detroit housewife said, "I don't go for demonstrations. I believe that God created all men equal and at his appointed time he will give every man his portion; no one can hinder it."

Although the net effect of religion is clearly to inhibit attitudes of protest, many religious people are nevertheless militant. A religious orientation and a concern with racial protest are certainly not mutually exclusive.

Given the active involvement of some churches, the singing of protest spirituals, and the ideology of the movement as it relates to Christian principles of love, equality, passive suffering, and the appeal to a higher moral law, it would be surprising if there were only a few religious people among the militants. A study of Southern Negro CORE activists indicates that less than one person in ten never attends church while almost six out of ten attended church weekly. A religious orientation and a concern with racial protest are certainly not mutually exclusive, and some of those in our study would no doubt agree with Thomas Jefferson that "resistance to tyranny is obedience to God."

However, what determines whether religion leads to an active concern with racial matters or results in quietism?

The classical indictment of religion from the Marxist perspective is that, by focusing concern on an after-life, the evils of this life are ignored. However, there are important differences among religious institutions and among individuals in the importance they give to otherworldly concerns. Like most ideologies, both religious and secular, Christianity contains many themes, which, if not in contradiction, are certainly in tension with one another. Here, no doubt, lies part of the explanation of religion's varied consequences for protest. One important strand of Christianity stresses acceptance of one's lot and glorifies the after-life. However, another is more concerned with the realization of Judaeo-Christian values in the current life. Martin Luther King clearly represents this "social gospel" tradition. When one's religious involvement includes temporal concerns and acceptance of the belief that men as well as God have a role in the structuring of human affairs, then, rather than serving to inhibit protest, religion can serve to inspire and sustain it. This religious inspiration is clearly present in the writings of King and others.

However, among sect members and the religious with an otherworldly orientation, religion and race protest, if not mutually exclusive, are certainly what one observer has referred to as "mutually corrosive kinds of commitments." Until such time as religion loosens its hold over these people, or comes to embody to a greater extent the belief that man as well as God can bring about secular change, and focuses more on the here and now, religion would seem to be an important factor working against the widespread radicalization of the Negro public.

## LETTER FROM A BIRMINGHAM JAIL (1963)

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

Basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place.

I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are at present misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here. For more than two centuries our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation--and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

## BLACK CHURCHMEN ON BLACK POWER (1966)

We, an informal group of Negro churchmen in America, are deeply disturbed about the crisis brought upon our country by historic distortions of important human realities in the controversy about "Black power." What we see shining through the variety of rhetoric is not anything new but the same old problem of power and race which has faced our beloved country since 1619.

We realize that neither the term "power" nor the term "Christian conscience" is an easy matter to talk about, especially in the context of race relations in America. The fundamental distortion facing us in the controversy about "Black power" is rooted in a gross imbalance of power and conscience between Negroes and white Americans. It is this distortion, mainly, which is responsible for the widespread, though often inarticulate, assumption that white people are justified in getting what they want through the use of power, but that Negro Americans must, either by nature or by circumstances, make their appeal only through conscience. As a result, the power of white men and the conscience of Black men have both been corrupted. The power of white men is corrupted because it meets little meaningful resistance from Negroes to temper it and keep white men from aping God. The conscience of Black men is corrupted because, having no power to implement the demands of conscience, the concern for justice is transmuted into a distorted form of love, which, in the absence of justice, becomes chaotic self-surrender. Powerlessness breeds a race of beggars. We are faced now with a situation where conscienceless power meets powerless conscience, threatening the very foundations of our nation.

We give our full support to all civil rights leaders as they seek for basically American goals, for we are not convinced that their mutual reinforcement of one another in the past is bound to end in the future. We would hope that the public power of our nation will be used to strengthen the civil rights movement and not to manipulate or further fracture it.

We deplore the overt violence of riots, but we believe it is more important to focus on the real sources of these eruptions. These sources may be abetted inside the ghetto, but their basic causes lie in the silent and covert violence which white middle-class America inflicts upon the victims of the inner city. The hidden, smooth and often smiling decisions of American leaders which tie a white noose of suburbia around the necks, and which

pin the backs of the masses of Negroes against the steaming ghetto walls--without jobs in a booming economy; with dilapidated and segregated educational systems in the full view of unenforced laws against it; in short: the failure of American leaders to use American power to create equal opportunity in life as well as in law--this is the real problem and not the anguished cry for "Black power."

We do not agree with those who say that we must cease expressing concern for the acquisition of power lest we endanger the "gains" already made by the civil rights movement. The fact of the matter is, there have been few substantive gains since about 1950 in this area. The gap has constantly widened between the incomes of nonwhites relative to the whites. Since the Supreme Court decision of 1954, de facto segregation in every major city in our land has increased rather than decreased. Since the middle of the 1950's unemployment among Negroes has gone up rather than down while unemployment has decreased in the white community.

While there has been some progress in some areas for equality for Negroes, this progress has been limited mainly to middle-class Negroes who represent only a small minority of the larger Negro community.

These are the hard facts that we must all face together. Therefore, we must not take the position that we can continue in the same old paths.

When American leaders decide to serve the real welfare of people instead of war and destruction; when American leaders are forced to make the rebuilding of our cities first priority on the nation's agenda; when American leaders are forced by the American people to quit misusing and abusing American power; then will the cry for "Black power" become inaudible, for the framework in which all power in America operates would include the power and experience of Black men as well as those of white men. In that way, the fear of the power of each group would be removed. America is our beloved homeland. But, America is not God. Only God can do everything. America and the other nations of the world must decide which among a number of alternatives they will choose.

Both the anguished cry for "Black power" and the confused emotional response to it can be understood if the whole controversy is put in the context of American history. Especially must we understand the irony involved in the pride of Americans regarding their ability to act as individuals on the one hand. In the tensions of this part of our history is revealed both the tragedy and the hope of human redemption in America.



The future of America will belong to neither white nor Black unless all Americans work together at the task of rebuilding our cities. We must organize not only among ourselves but with other groups in order that we can, together, gain power sufficient to change this nation's sense of what is now important and what must be done now. We must work with the remainder of the nation to organize whole cities for the task of making the rebuilding of our cities first priority in the use of our resources. This is more important than who gets to the moon first or the war in Vietnam.

To accomplish this task we cannot expend our energies in spastic or ill-tempered explosions without meaningful goals. We must move from the politics of philanthropy to the politics of metropolitan development for equal opportunity. We must relate all groups of the city together in new ways in order that the truth of our cities might be laid bare and in order that together, we can lay claim to the great resources of our nation to make truth more human.

BLACK MANIFESTO TO WHITE CHURCHES AND JEWISH SYNAGOGUES (1969)

# 34

We the Black people assembled in Detroit, Michigan, for the National Black Economic Development Conference are fully aware that we have been forced to come together because racist white America has exploited our resources, our minds, our bodies, our labor. For centuries we have been forced to live as colonized people inside the United States, victimized by the most vicious, racist system in the world. We have helped to build the most industrialized country in the world.

We are therefore demanding of the white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, which are part and parcel of the system of capitalism, that they begin to pay reparations to Black people in this country. We are demanding \$500,000,000 from the Christian white churches and the Jewish synagogues. This total comes to fifteen dollars per nigger. This is a low estimate, for we maintain there are probably more than 30,000,000 Black people in this country. Fifteen dollars a nigger is not a large sum of money, and we know that the churches and synagogues have a tremendous wealth and its membership, white America, has profited and still exploits Black people. We are also not unaware that the exploitation of colored peoples around the world is aided and abetted by the white Christian churches and synagogues. This demand for \$500,000,000 is not an idle resolution or empty words. Fifteen dollars for

every Black brother and sister in the United States is only a beginning of the reparations due us as people who have been exploited and degraded, brutalized, killed and persecuted. Underneath all of this exploitation, the racism of this country has produced a psychological effect upon us that we are beginning to shake off. We are no longer afraid to demand our full rights as a people in this decadent society. . . .

Brothers and sisters, we are no longer shuffling our feet and scratching our heads. We are tall, Black and proud.

And we say to the white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, to the government of this country and to all the white racist imperialists who compose it, there is only one thing left that you can do to further degrade Black people and that is to kill us. But we have been dying too long for this country. We have died in every war. We are dying in Vietnam today fighting the wrong enemy.

The new Black man wants to live, and to live means that we must not become static or merely believe in self-defense. We must boldly go out and attack the white Western world at its power centers. The white Christian churches are another form of government in this country, and they are used by the government of this country to exploit the people of Latin America, Asia and Africa, but the day is soon coming to an end. Therefore, brothers and sisters, the demands we make upon the white Christian churches and the Jewish synagogues are small demands. They represent fifteen dollars per Black person in these United States. We can legitimately demand this from the church power structure. We must demand more from the United States Government.

But to win our demands from the church, which is linked up with the United States Government, we must not forget that it will ultimately be by force and power that we will win.

We are not threatening the churches. We are saying that we know the churches came with the military might of the colonizers and have been sustained by the military might of the colonizers. Hence, if the churches in colonial territories were established by military might, we know deep within our hearts that we must be prepared to use force to get our demands. We are not saying that this is the road we want to take. It is not, but let us be very clear that we are not opposed to force and we are not opposed to violence. We were captured in Africa by violence. We were kept in bondage and political servitude and forced to work as slaves by the military machinery and the Christian Church working hand in hand.

We recognize that in issuing this Manifesto we must prepare for a long-range educational campaign in all communities of this country, but we know that the Christian churches have contributed to our oppression in white America. We do not intend to abuse our Black brothers and sisters in Black churches who have uncritically accepted Christianity. We want them to understand how the racist white Christian church with its hypocritical declarations and doctrines of brotherhood has abused our trust and faith. An attack on the religious beliefs of Black people is not our major objective, even though we know that we were not Christians when we were brought to this country, but that Christianity was used to help enslave us. Our objective in issuing this Manifesto is to force the racist white Christian church to begin the payment of reparations which are due to all Black people, not only by the church but also by private business and the United States government. We see this focus on the Christian church as an effort around which all Black people can unite.

Our demands are negotiable, but they cannot be minimized, they can only be increased, and the church is asked to come up with larger sums of money than we are asking. Our slogans are:

All Roads Must Lead To Revolution  
 Unite with Whomever You Can Unite  
 Neutralize Wherever Possible  
 Fight Our Enemies Relentlessly  
 Victory to the People  
 Life and Good Health to Mankind  
 Resistance to Domination by the White Christian Churches and the Jewish  
 Synagogues  
 Revolutionary Black Power  
 We Shall Win Without a Doubt

WHY AFRICAN LIBERATION SUNDAY (1978)

**35**

AFRICAN LIBERATION SUNDAY IS A SUCCESS! Chicago Committee for a Free Africa (C.C.F.A.) initiated the African Liberation Sunday Coalition with a clear understanding of the important historical role of the Black church.

Because of the historical conditions of exploitation and racist national oppression Black people have suffered since being taken from Africa into slavery, the church has functioned as an essential basis of social cohesion. The history of the Black church is rooted in the fight for liberation. During

slavery, the Black church was key to the slave revolts in the South and to the underground railroad in the North. And in the Civil Rights Movement, the church again played a key role in such struggles as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and in the school boycotts in Chicago.

But today the Black church is too often written off as politically irrelevant. Too often the Black church is just an arena for politicians merely seeking votes or others seeking funds. However, the response of ministers, church organizations and members to AFRICAN LIBERATION SUNDAY has been inspiring, indicating new and exciting potential. From initial discussion between the Chicago C. F. A. and a few ministers, the AFRICAN LIBERATION SUNDAY COALITION has grown to be endorsed by almost 50 ministers and organizations representing more than 660 churches of all denominations. We have made extensive efforts to educate church members about what is really going on in Africa and now we can support the freedom struggle.

But this is only a small beginning. The mountain of injustices against the peoples of Africa and Black people in the U.S. is big, but it can be moved. We have started to speak out, to move that mountain. Through unity, we can succeed. As an old African proverb wisely states, "When spider webs unite they can tie up an elephant!" Thus our UNITY is essential--people from all walks of life, people of all religious denominations, church members and non-members, believers and non-believers, peoples of all nationalities.

While the church has been the main organization among Black people in size and influence, it may sometimes go astray and fail to be involved in the struggles of Black people. But the success of any mass movement, however, will depend on its relationship to the Black church, as the Civil Rights movement in the 1960's proved.

Thus, we must reclaim the Black church for the struggle, and rekindle its fighting heritage. The Black church must get up off its knees! The Black church must get back into the streets with the same fighting spirit of the struggles led by Martin Luther King! AFRICAN LIBERATION SUNDAY IS A SMALL BEGINNING IN THIS DIRECTION!

NEW WINE IN OLD BOTTLES: A RESPONSIVE READING ON THE BLACK CHURCH  
AND STRUGGLE (1978)

Speaker: Let a new earth arise!

Congregation: Let a generation full of courage rise and take control!

Speaker: In the Union of South Africa (USA) to the United States of America  
(USA)!

Congreg: Let a new earth arise!

Speaker: Let the dirges disappear!

Congreg: Let a new generation rise and take control!

Speaker: From the USA to the USA!

Congreg: Ban the gold coin of death,  
Ban the bloody South African Krugerrand!

Speaker: Let a new earth arise!

Congreg: Stop bank loans for South Africa!  
Stop redlining against Blacks and the poor!

Speaker: Let a generation of men and women rise and take control!

Congreg: No Sowetos over me,  
No more Sowetos over me, No more, no more!

Speaker: From the USA to the USA!

Congreg: No more Bakkes over me,  
No more Bakkes over me, No more, no more!

Speaker: Let a new earth arise!

Congreg: No more auction blocks for me!  
No more police brutality!

Speaker: "Over my head . . ."

Congreg: I feel freedom in the air,  
There must be Nat Turner somewhere!

Speaker: Sing it children: "Over my head . . ."

Congreg: I feel freedom in the air,  
There must be Steve Biko somewhere!

Speaker: From the USA to the USA!

Congreg: We can feel freedom in the air,  
There must be struggle somewhere!

Speaker: "For my people everywhere!"

Congreg: Being buked and being scorned!

Speaker: From the USA to the USA!

Congreg: Being buked and being scorned!

Speaker: Slaves chained and sold like cows!

Congreg: Being buked and being scorned!  
 Speaker: Boers taking the land of Black South Africans!  
 Congreg: Being buked and being scorned!  
 Speaker: "For my people everywhere!"  
 Congreg: Rise up, fight for what is right!  
 Rise up and fight!  
 Speaker: From the USA to the USA!  
 Congreg: Rise up and fight for what is right!  
 Rise up and fight!  
 Speaker: Let the spirit move you!  
 Congreg: But don't let the action lose you!  
 Speaker: From the USA to the USA!  
 Congreg: Let the Spirit move you  
 But don't let the action lose you!  
 Speaker: Let a new earth arise!  
 Congreg: This land is my land!  
 Speaker: From the USA to the USA!  
 Congreg: This land is my land!  
 I built it with my hands!  
 Speaker: Let a generation of men and women rise and take control.  
 Congreg: Stand up, fight for your rights!  
 Stand up and fight!  
 Speaker: Come out to the picket line!  
 Congreg: Stand up, fight for your rights!  
 Stand up and fight!  
 Speaker: Come out to the testing line!  
 Congreg: Just like Martin!  
 Just like Martin!  
 Speaker: Come out to the struggle line!  
 Congreg: Just like Malcolm!  
 Just like Malcolm!  
 Speaker: From the USA to the USA!  
 Congreg: We make our stand to defend our rights and fight for liberation.  
 Speaker: From the USA to the USA!  
 Congreg: Same struggle. Same fight!  
 Speaker: From the USA to the USA!  
 ALL: SAME STRUGGLE, SAME FIGHT!

Supplementary Readings for Religion and The Black Church

1. James H. Cone, The Black Church and Black Power, 1919.
2. St. Clair Drake, The Redemption of Africa and Black Religion, 1970.
3. W.E.B. DuBois (ed.), The Negro Church, 1903.
4. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 1964.
5. Charles S. Johnson, (ed.), God Struck Me Dead: Religious Conversion Experiences and Autobiographies of Ex-Slaves, 1945.
6. Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph Nicholson, The Negro Church, 1963.
7. Gerald McWorter, "A Critical Book Review of the Negro Church in America by E. Franklin Frazier," Sociological Analysis, Winter 1966.
8. Hart M. Nelsen, et. al. (eds.), The Black Church in America, 1971.
9. Ethel Williams (ed.), Afro-American Religious Studies: A Comprehensive Bibliography, 1971.
10. Carter G. Woodson, The History of the Negro Church, 1921.



This poster, with the legend **VOTE TODAY FOR A BETTER TOMORROW**, brought a Negro union leader in Alabama a six-month sentence on a chain gang.

# Chapter 12

## EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Were the slaves ever educated? Describe how and under what conditions this took place and what impact it had? How did the educational experiences under slavery compare with that of the Reconstruction and Rural periods?
2. How did industrialization, migration, and urbanization influence the educational experiences of Black people in the industrial period?
3. What kinds of struggles did Black people wage for greater educational opportunities and what impact have they had?
4. What social forces are shaping the current attacks on the educational opportunities for Blacks? What is likely to happen in the future?

### KEY CONCEPTS

Affirmative Action/Bakke Decision

Black Studies

Community Control

De facto vs. de jure segregation

Industrial education/vocational education

School Integration

School Segregation Cases (Brown)

"Separate but Equal".

Talented Tenth

Tracking



The historical development of Black people's educational experiences reflects the operation of economic, political, and social forces of the capitalist society in the United States. The level of social and economic development of a society sets standards for the skills people must obtain in order to lead productive lives and contribute to the maintenance of that society. In class society, the main factor determining who obtains a given skill level is the political factor of who rules. The level of technological development and resulting division of labor are important factors and grow in importance over the long run.

It is popularly believed that education's main purpose is to benefit the masses of people by training them for jobs and facilitating upward mobility. Our analysis, however, reveals that the primary function of education under U.S. capitalism is to serve the interests of the ruling class through achieving two main objectives: (1) to train a disciplined and skilled labor force which can take its place in the existing order and contribute (mainly its labor power) to the maintenance and expansion of the society; (2) to indoctrinate the youth of the society in the ideas, beliefs, values, and practices which are also important to maintaining the existing social order.

To achieve these objectives, control over the educational system is maintained by the ruling class in several ways (each of which can be proven by studying any large college or university):

(a) The ruling class makes sure that the trustee boards of colleges and universities are "dominated by merchants, manufacturers, capitalists, corporation officials, bankers..." as several studies conclude.

(b) The ruling class insures that the ideas which are taught in universities are those which reinforce and not threaten the existing capitalist social order. This is done through funding only selected projects and through selective hiring and firing (e.g., denying employment and tenure to faculty with radical ideas as has happened with many activists in the Black liberation movement).

(c) The ruling class maintains close ties between the universities and the government (which they also closely administer). The government provides billions of dollars for war-related research and other needed functions and draws heavily on university faculty for its staff.

For Black people, of course, the two objectives of education and the operation of the three mechanisms listed above are qualitatively influenced by the history of racist oppression and economic exploitation that Black people have faced. Thus, the educational experiences of Black people must be evaluated in that context.

Slavery: Education during the period of slavery was shaped by the main aim of the brutal institution of slavery: to exploit the greatest amount of wealth and profits from the forced labor of slaves. To accomplish this main economic aim, it was necessary to make the slave plantation a self-sufficient unit, capable of producing all or most of its own needs. Thus, under slavery Black people received "on the job training" in many skill areas. In addition to using slaves as field hands and domestic labor, "the masters found it easier and cheaper to have their slaves trained in carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, and the other mechanical trades..." as Harris and Spero state in The Black Worker. This training can be seen in the quantity and quality of what the slaves produced: The woodwork, ironwork, and brickmasonry is lasting testimony to the capacity of the slaves to learn, use, and improve on

existing skills. Racist scholars would have us believe, however, that all slaves were lazy and incompetent.

In addition to "worldly" work-related training, religious instruction was important in the education of slaves. Some slaveowners finally agreed to religious instruction for three reasons: (1) Religious training often made slaves more hardworking, obedient, and submissive than they would ordinarily be. The most loyal slaves, according to the testimony of many slavemasters, were those who could read the Bible. (2) Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831 convinced many owners that unless religious instruction was properly supervised slaves who met and "got religion" would also plot to overthrow slavery. (3) Many "Christian" slaveowners felt a "moral" duty to provide religious instruction.

Black people themselves played a major role in providing their own education during slavery. To maintain slavery, the slaveowners used a variety of techniques to mold the slaves into loyal, submissive, and efficient workers. But the slaves were able to develop and transmit a set of beliefs, ideas, values, and practices which were different from what the slaveowners intended. Such themes as the importance of hatred of the slaveowners and their power, the importance of the family, the significance of learning and education, and the value of freedom were among the "illegal" lessons that slaves taught and learned. Recent research has also revealed that the main educational mechanisms among slaves were the family, the peer group, the underground church, songs and stories, and the slave community.

Opportunities for education also existed for free Blacks in the North. One of the best known schools for Blacks was New York's African Free School opened by the manumission society in 1787 which served as a model for schools in other northern cities.

Thus, some slaves were "educated" through work-related training, through religious instruction, or through their own efforts. But, regardless of how one learned, an educated slave was a dangerous contradiction under slavery. If slaves could read work instructions, they could read and spread the word about the revolutionary struggles of Toussaint L'Ouverture and the defeat of slavery in Haiti in 1791. Slaves who read passages in the bible about obedience and submissiveness also drew revolutionary implications about the necessity of overthrowing slavery.

In fact, it was the growing struggles of the slaves for freedom--a struggle in which many "educated" slaves and free Black were active participants--that caused slaveowners to rethink the policy of education of Black people during slavery. As the slave revolts increased in the U.S. after 1820, most Southern states passed laws prohibiting the teaching of slaves and preventing them from association with free Blacks. It even became illegal for slaves to teach their own children to read!

The Rural Period. The defeat of the slaveowners and the Southern agricultural system by the rising Northern industrial capitalists brought great changes as the tenant system replaced slavery. The tenant system was a system of agricultural production based on free labor employed on large privately--owned farm units; it was a system in which the majority of producers did not own land or tools and were therefore forced to rent it for cash and/or a share of the crops produced. Moreover, the transition from slavery to tenancy and this new "freedom" of Black people required the development of Black social institutions that could provide the kind of "social control" that the institution of slavery had provided.

Thus, education became this vehicle of control and a training ground for leadership. Black colleges became a key mechanism used to train a sector of the Black population in the skills of social control.

On the other hand, Black people were anxious to be educated. Slaveowners had paid considerable sums to finance the education of their own children and in employing "educated" assistants to help maintain their economic and political power. Black people were convinced that education was thus a real source of power. After slavery, Black people actively sought education as one of the most important tools for liberation. As Booker T. Washington observed, it appeared "a whole race was trying to go to school.

There were four main sources of educational experiences for Black people during the agricultural period:

(1) The Black Community: From the beginning of the Civil War Black people arranged to have lessons offered. Schools were set up with teachers as soon as an area was captured by the Union army. Almost \$1.2 million was contributed in taxes and tuition and by Black church organizations. Black soldiers gave their army pay to establish schools such as Lincoln University in Missouri. In South Carolina, the Black-majority state legislature during Reconstruction passed a bill which established the first system of tax-supported public education for all citizens. Many Black people who could already read and write offered invaluable services in establishing schools in the South.

(2) Civic and Church Organizations: Religious organizations and churches contributed to meeting the educational needs of the ex-slaves. The American Missionary Association opened schools in several areas and later assisted in the founding of several colleges, among them Fisk (1866), Talladega (1867) and Hampton (1868). More than 65 societies were organized to support Black education between 1846 and 1867. Between 1862 and 1874,

16 of these contributed almost \$4 million. These organizations also assisted in recruiting teachers and providing school supplies.

(3) Government-sponsored: The government played the major role in orchestrating the development of education for Black people during this period. From 1866 to 1870, almost 50% of the \$11 million allocated to the U.S. Freedman's Bureau, created to "assist" the former slaves, went to support Black schools. According to DuBois: "For some years after 1865, the education of the Negro was well nigh monopolized by the Freedman's Bureau...." Howard University established in 1866 is the best example of a Black college organized by the government.

(4) Northern Industrial Capitalists: Raising the educational and skill levels of Black people in the South would greatly benefit Northern capitalist. Their new investments, their factories, and investments would be located in the South. Thus, many of the leading capitalists who profited from the Civil War itself now gave millions of dollars to educate the ex-slaves: Slater (cotton textiles), Rockefeller (oil), Peabody (retail), Carnegie (steel), Morgan (steel, finance), Baldwin (railroad), and Rosenwald (retail Sears). While their funds were important in increasing educational opportunities, they did much to reinforce the prevailing pattern of racist discrimination against Blacks (e.g., giving Black schools only 2/3 of the allocation given to white schools or supporting racist legislation).

During the rural agricultural period, a significant controversy developed between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. One issue was the educational policy most advantageous to Blacks: Washington argued for industrial education as the major focus and DuBois advocated the education of a "talented tenth" that would provide the broader intellectual leadership and training needed by the masses of Black people.

While the debate centered on education, the two also had different social-political philosophies as well. Washington's go-slow accomodationist philosophy ("Blacks should not demand full social equality") combined with his emphasis on industrial training was preferred by the industrial capitalists who were seeking not only to produce more efficient Black workers but to reestablish a good relationship with Southern Whites. DuBois militant agitation for full equality and his emphasis on struggle would have continued the conflict between Black and Whites and slowed down the economic expansion of Northern capital in the south. DuBois' program would have also secured political power for Blacks in some areas of the Black Belt South. Thus, Washington and "the Tuskegee machine" were fully supported by the ruling class (e.g., he was given a private train to use by Carnegie). DuBois, on the other hand, was forced to resign his teaching position at Atlanta University because its funding was threatened as a result of his militant stands.

Historically, racist discrimination has always characterized the education of Blacks in the South, and this can be demonstrated by analyzing discrepancies in the allocation of federal, state, and local funds for teacher's salaries, school books, supplies, and buildings. For example, in North Carolina, considered one of the more "enlightened" states, between 1925-1935 over \$6.7 million was spent on new buildings for rural white children while only \$444,000 was spent for Black children.

The Urban Period. Migration, industrialization, and urbanization characterized the Black experience after World War I and had a marked effect on the education of Blacks. The spread of large-scale machine industry in the South and in the North ended the Washington-Dubois debate over industrial training vs. academic training.

SECONDARY EDUCATION. The public school was the main institution that Black families came into contact with in the urban North. Several problems confronted Black people in the new educational environment: School attendance had not been mandatory in the South, the curriculum had not been as rigorous in the South and most students were underprepared, white teachers and students reacted negatively to the different cultural backgrounds of rural Southern Black students. All of this made the situation very difficult. The concentration and overcrowding of Black people in urban ghettos and extreme poverty combined with the above difficulties to make school segregation prevailing pattern in the urban North. This was called de facto segregation because it was segregation in fact based on housing patterns but not segregation by law or de jure segregation as was the required in the South.

Numerous protests against school segregation took place. Given the history of the U.S. government and Supreme Court in legitimating the racist denial of equal rights to Black people, the Federal Government became the main target of Black efforts to secure these rights. Thus, increased protests and demonstrations and increased legal challenges in the courts became the dual tactics used in the fight to end racist discrimination in education. In May 1954, the Supreme Court ruled on cases initiated by Black people and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in four states--Delaware, Kansas, South Carolina and Virginia--which challenged the denial of admission to public school under state laws permitting racist discrimination. The court's decision in the School Desegregation Cases (called Brown vs Board of Education because those suing were listed in alphabetical order) read: "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate facilities are inherently unequal."



The Supreme Court, however, dodged the issue of establishing a timetable for desegregation and hid behind the phrase "with all deliberate speed." Local and state officials have continued to procrastinate and 25 years after the ruling that "separate and unequal" facilities should end, over 66% of Black students in the U.S. are still found in schools that are more than 50% Black and minority. What makes these schools undesirable is not that they are majority Black, but that they are located in inner-city areas where most are underfunded and without the resources needed to provide the best possible education for Black students.

Thus, the key to Black education in the cities rests with the economics of inner-city public schools. While an overall budget crisis is affecting all schools, the pattern is that inner-city schools where Black students are concentrated are being hit the hardest. Several tactics have emerged to confront this situation:

(1) Busing. Some Black people support this alternative because a few good schools with sufficient funds are often located elsewhere than in the Black community; transporting Black students to these schools is one alternative. But because most public schools are providing a poor education, this alternative leaves the basic problem untouched and does very little for most students. In addition, busing is another example of a government dictated program, which, like the Bakke decision, inflames racial tensions unnecessarily while not solving the main problem.

(2) Independent educational institutions. These emerged as an alternative to the miseducation of Black students in public school systems, and differ from the private schools initiated by white parents to avoid school desegregation. They include several types: from Montessori schools (which stresses developing a child's own initiative in teaching) and the 'freedom schools' which have been especially popular among Black Nationalists. But these schools must charge tuition and thus do not offer a real alternative for the masses of Black students trapped in poor

public schools systems which their families' tax dollars continue to support.

(3) Community control. Black people have also fought for control over schools and districts which are supported by their taxes. Many of these institutions have a student population that is majority Black but in which Black parents, residents, teachers, and administrators have been systematically excluded from decision-making regarding curriculum, teacher hiring and accountability, discipline, etc. This alternative, because it focuses on the tax-supported schools where more Black students are, and because it involves the Black community in a collective struggle for power, has the greatest potential for improving the quality of education in the public school system.

HIGHER EDUCATION. The recent period in higher education for Black people has been shaped by the militant struggle of the Black liberation movement in the 1960s which had two major consequences:

(1) It demanded and achieved a sizeable increase in the enrollment of Black students in higher education and an increase in Black faculty and staff employment. The number of Black students enrolled in colleges and universities increased from 6% in 1960 (about 227,000) to 11% in 1976 (almost 1 million).

(2) It fueled a militancy among these Black students who were admitted to colleges and universities and led to the successful struggle for Black studies, which was to serve as a base for an educational experience relevant to the history and aspirations of Black people for freedom ("Education for Liberation").

Because these militant demands were made during the period the Vietnam War, there was sufficient financial resources for the U.S. ruling class to make these concessions. But the last few years have witnessed a decline in the economic prosperity of U.S. imperialism. One result is belt-tightening in higher education and attempts to cut back or cut out the gains made by Black people during the past ten years. The recent decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in the Bakke Case is a most obvious example. The impact is becoming clear: there has already been

a decline in Black enrollment in medical schools (from 7% in 1976 to 6% in 1977) and other areas of higher education. But the historical impact of years of racist discrimination against Blacks is still with us: for example, there is only 1 doctor for every 3800 Black people while the national ratio is 1 in 700. This obvious example of racism reveals the Bakke decision and other attacks on affirmative action in higher education as continuing the policies of racist oppression of the U.S. ruling class and must be fought.

Thus, Black people approach the 1980s clearly understanding that educational opportunities, though fought for and won, have not been the keys the liberation that many once believed. Education for Black people still reflects the oppression that Black people suffer at the hands of the dominant economic and political forces in this society. It is as important as ever, therefore, that we escalate the struggles against attacks on affirmative action and the fight for community control of schools, Black Studies, and other educational activities that seek to contribute to the liberation of Black people.



*The 101st Airborne Division escorts Negro students into Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.*

## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 12

37.LAWS FORBIDDING EDUCATION OF SLAVES OR FREE NEGROES (1823-1831)		127
38.HOW I LEARNED TO READ (1845)	Frederick Douglass	128
39.THE EDUCATION OF THE NEGRO PRIOR TO 1861(1961)	Carter G. Woodson	131
40.LEARNING TO READ	Frances E.W.Harper	134
41.THE OBJECTIVES OF RECONSTRUCTION EDUCATION (1939)	Horace Mann Bond	135
42.CAPITALIST SUPPORT OF BLACK EDUCATION (1967)	Henry Bullock	138
43.INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION FOR THE NEGRO (1903)	Booker T. Washington	143
44.THE TALENTED TENTH (1903)	W.E.B.DuBois	146
45.BOOKER T. AND W.E.B. (1952)	Dudley Randall	150
46.TEACHING IN A RURAL SCHOOL (1903)	W.E.B.DuBois	150
47.COTTON PLUS STEEL EQUALS SCHOOLS, 1900-1930	Horace Mann Bond	153
48.FROM THE MAKING OF MEN TO THE MAKING OF MONEY MAKERS (1957)	E. Franklin Frazier	156
49.HISTORY OF CHICAGO SCHOOL SEGREGATION TO 1953	Harold Baron	161
50.THE SCHOOL SEGREGATION CASES: LEGAL CHALLENGES TO "SEPARATE BUT EQUAL"(1954)		166
51.RACISM AS JUSTICE(1969)	Howard Moore	170
52.COMMUNITY CONTROL OF SCHOOLS IN BLACK COMMUNITIES (1969)	Preston Wilcox	175
53.THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK STUDENTS (1975)	Peoples College	178
54.UNEQUAL EDUCATION AND THE REPRODUCTION OF THE SOCIAL DIVISION OF LABOR	Samuel Bowles	182
55.TO BLACK STUDENTS	Larry Neal	185
56.EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE: THE CONTINUING FIGHT FOR BLACK STUDIES (1977)	Peoples College	185
57.THE SUPREME COURT ON THE BAKKE DECISION: IGNORING A HISTORY OF RACISM (1978)	Thurgood Marshall	192
SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS		193

## LAW FORBIDDING EDUCATION OF SLAVES OR FREE NEGROES

MISSISSIPPI (1823)--All meetings or assemblies of slaves, or free negroes, or mulattoes, mixing and associating with such slaves above the number of five, at any place of public resort, or at any meetinghouse or houses, in the night, or at any school or schools, for teaching them reading or writing, either in the day or night, under whatsoever pretext, shall be deemed and considered an unlawful assembly, and any justice of the peace of the country or corporation wherein such assemblage shall be, either from his own knowledge, or the information of others, of such unlawful assemblage or meeting, may issue his warrant, directed to any sworn officer or officers, authorizing him or them to enter the house or houses where such unlawful assemblages or meetings may be, for the purpose of apprehending or dispersing such slaves, free negroes, or mulattoes, and to inflict corporal punishment on the offender or offenders, at the discretion of any such justice of the peace, not exceeding thirty-nine lashes.

NORTH CAROLINA (1831)--Whereas the teaching of slaves to read and write, has a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion, to the manifest injury of the citizens of this State: Therefore:

I. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same: That any free person, who shall hereafter teach, or attempt to teach, any slave within the State to read or write, the use of figures excepted, or shall give or sell to such slave or slaves any books or pamphlets, shall be liable to indictment in any court of record in this State having jurisdiction thereof, and upon conviction, shall, at the discretion of the court, if a white man or woman, be fined not less than one hundred dollars, nor more than two hundred dollars, or imprisoned; and if a free person of color, shall be fined, imprisoned, or

whipped, at the discretion of the court, not exceeding thirty-nine lashes, nor less than twenty lashes.

II. Be it further enacted: That if any slave shall hereafter teach, or attempt to teach, any other slave to read or write, the use of figures excepted, he or she may be carried before any justice of the peace, and on conviction thereof, shall be sentenced to receive thirty-nine lashes on his or her bare back.

III. Be it further enacted: That the judges of the Superior Courts and the justices of the County Courts shall give this act in charge to the grand juries of their respective counties.

# 38

## HOW I LEARNED TO READ

The frequent hearing of my mistress reading the bible--for she often read aloud when her husband was absent--soon awakened my curiosity in respect to this mystery of reading, and roused in me the desire to learn. Having no fear of my kind mistress before my eyes (she had then given me no reason to fear), I frankly asked her to teach me to read; and, without hesitation, the dear woman began the task, and very soon, by her assistance, I was master of the alphabet, and could spell words of three or four letters. My mistress seemed almost as proud of my progress, as if I had been her own child; and, supposing that her husband would be as well pleased, she made no secret of what she was doing for me. Indeed, she exultingly told him of the aptness of her pupil, of her intention to persevere in teaching me, and of the duty which she felt it to teach me, at least to read the bible. Here arose the first cloud over my Baltimore prospects, the precursor of drenching rains and chilling blasts.

Master Hugh was amazed at the simplicity of his spouse, and, probably

for the first time, he unfolded to her the true philosophy of slavery, and the peculiar rules necessary to be observed by masters and mistresses, in the management of their human chattels. Mr. Auld promptly forbade the continuance of her instruction; telling her, in the first place, that the thing itself was unlawful; that it was also unsafe, and could only lead to mischief. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take a mile," "he should know nothing but the will of his master, and learn to obey it." "Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world"; "if you teach that nigger--speaking of myself--how to read the bible, there will be no keeping him"; "it would forever unfit him for the duties of a slave"; and "as to himself, learning would do him no good, but probably, a great deal of harm--making him disconsolate and unhappy." "If you learn him now to read, he'll want to know how to write; and, this accomplished, he'll be running away with himself." Such was the tenor of Master Hugh's oracular exposition of the true philosophy of training a human chattel; and it must be confessed that he very clearly comprehended the nature and the requirements of the relation of master and slave. His discourse was the first decidedly anti-slavery lecture to which it had been my lot to listen. Mrs. Auld evidently felt the force of his remarks; and, like an obedient wife, began to shape her course in the direction indicated by her husband. The effect of his words, on me, was neither slight nor transitory. His iron sentences--cold and harsh--sunk deep into my heart, and stirred up not only my feelings into a sort of rebellion, but awakened within me a slumbering train of vital thought. It was a new and special revelation, dispelling a painful mystery, against which my youthful understanding had struggled, and struggled in vain, to wit: the white man's power to perpetuate the enslavement of the black man. "Very well," thought I; "knowledge unfits a child to be a slave." I instinctively assented to the proposition; and from that moment I understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom. This was

just what I needed; and I got it at a time, and from a source, whence I least expected it. I was saddened at the thought of losing the assistance of my kind mistress; but the information, so instantly derived, to some extent compensated me for the loss I had sustained in this direction. Wise as Mr. Auld was, he evidently underrated my comprehension, and had little idea of the use to which I was capable of putting the impressive lesson he was giving to his wife. He wanted me to be a slave; I had already voted against that on the home plantation of Col. Lloyd. That which he most loved I most hated; and the very determination which he expressed to keep me in ignorance, only rendered me the more resolute in seeking intelligence. In learning to read, therefore, I am not sure that I do not owe quite as much to the opposition of my master, as to the kindly assistance of my amiable mistress. I acknowledge the benefit rendered me by the one, and by the other; believing, that but for my mistress, I might have grown up in ignorance. . . .

Seized with a determination to learn to read, at any cost, I hit upon many expedients to accomplish the desired end. The plea which I mainly adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of using my young white playmates, with whom I met in the street, as teachers. I used to carry, almost constantly, a copy of Webster's spelling book in my pocket; and, when sent on errands, or when play time was allowed me, I would step, with my young friends, aside, and take a lesson in spelling. I generally paid my tuition fee to the boys, with bread, which I also carried in my pocket. For a single biscuit, any of my hungry little comrades would give me a lesson more valuable to me than bread. Not every one, however, demanded this consideration, for there were those who took pleasure in teaching me, whenever I had a chance to be taught by them. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a slight testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them, but prudence forbids; not that it would injure me, but it might, possibly, embarrass



them; for it is almost an unpardonable offense to do anything, directly or indirectly, to promote a slave's freedom, in a slave state. It is enough to say, of my warm-hearted little play fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin & Bailey's shipyard.

# 39

## THE EDUCATION OF THE NEGRO PRIOR TO 1861

The history of the education of the ante-bellum Negroes falls into two periods. The first extends from the time of the introduction of slavery to the climax of the insurrectionary movement about 1835, when the majority of the people in this country answered in the affirmative the question whether or not it was prudent to educate their slaves. Then followed the second period, when the industrial revolution changed slavery from a patriarchal to an economic institution, and when intelligent Negroes, encouraged by abolitionists, made so many attempts to organize servile insurrections that the pendulum began to swing the other way. By this time most southern white people reached the conclusion that it was impossible to cultivate the minds of Negroes without arousing overmuch self-assertion.

The early advocates of the education of Negroes were of three classes: first, masters who desired to increase the economic efficiency of their labor supply; second, sympathetic persons who wished to help the oppressed; and third, zealous missionaries who, believing that the message of divine love came equally to all, taught slaves the English language that they might learn the principles of the Christian religion. Through the kindness of the first class, slaves had their best chance for mental improvement. Each slaveholder dealt with the situation to suit himself, regardless of public opinion. Later, when measures were passed to prohibit the education of slaves, some masters, always a law unto themselves, continued to teach their Negroes in defiance of the hostile legislation. Sympathetic persons were not able to accomplish much

because they were usually reformers, who not only did not own slaves, but dwelt in practically free settlements far from the plantations on which the bondmen lived.

Timorous southerners, however, soon had other reasons for their uncharitable attitude. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century two effective forces were rapidly increasing the number of reactionaries who by public opinion gradually prohibited the education of the colored people in all places except certain urban communities where progressive Negroes had been sufficiently enlightened to provide their own school facilities. The first of these forces was the world-wide industrial movement. It so revolutionized spinning and weaving that the resulting increased demand for cotton fiber gave rise to the plantation system of the South, which required a larger number of slaves. Becoming too numerous to be considered as included in the body politic as conceived by Locke, Montesquieu, and Blackstone, the slaves were generally doomed to live without any enlightenment whatever. Thereafter rich planters not only thought it unwise to educate men thus destined to live on a plane with beasts, but considered it more profitable to work a slave to death during seven years and buy another in his stead than to teach and humanize him with a view to increasing his efficiency.

The other force conducive to reaction was the circulation through intelligent Negroes of anti-slavery accounts of the wrongs to colored people and the well portrayed exploits of Toussaint L'Ouverture. Furthermore, refugees from Haiti settled in Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston, and New Orleans, where they gave Negroes a first-hand story of how black men of the West Indies had righted their wrongs. At the same time certain abolitionists and not a few slaveholders were praising, in the presence of slaves, the bloody methods of the French Revolution. When this enlightenment became productive of such disorders that slaveholders lived in eternal dread of servile insurrection, Southern

States adopted the thoroughly reactionary policy of making the education of Negroes impossible.

The prohibitive legislation extended over a period of more than a century, beginning with the act of South Carolina in 1740. But with the exception of the action of this State and that of Georgia the important measures which actually proscribed the teaching of Negroes were enacted during the first four decades of the nineteenth century. The States attacked the problem in various ways. Colored people beyond a certain number were not allowed to assemble for social or religious purposes, unless in the presence of certain "discreet" white men; slaves were deprived of the helpful contact of free persons of color by driving them out of some Southern States; masters who had employed their favorite blacks in positions which required a knowledge of book-keeping, printing, and the like, were commanded by law to discontinue that custom; and private and public teachers were prohibited from assisting Negroes to acquire knowledge in any manner whatever.

The majority of the people of the South had by this time come to the conclusion that, as intellectual elevation unfits men for servitude and renders it impossible to retain them in this condition, it should be prohibited. In other words, the more you cultivate the minds of slaves, the more unserviceable you make them; you give them a higher relish for those privileges which they cannot attain and turn what you intend for a blessing into a curse. If they are to remain in slavery they should be kept in the lowest state of ignorance and degradation, and the nearer you bring them to the condition of brutes the better chance they have to retain their apathy. It had thus been brought to pass that the measures enacted to prevent the education of Negroes had not only forbidden association with their fellows for mutual help and closed up most colored schools in the South, but had in several States made it a crime for a Negro to teach his own children.

The reactionary movement, however, was not confined to the South. The increased migration of fugitives and free Negroes to the asylum of Northern States, caused certain communities of that section to feel that they were about to be overrun by undesirable persons who could not be easily assimilated. The subsequent anti-abolition riots in the North made it difficult for friends of the Negroes to raise funds to educate them. Free persons of color were not allowed to open schools in some places, teachers of Negroes were driven from their stations, and colored schoolhouses were burned.

# 40

## LEARNING TO READ

Very soon the Yankee teachers  
 Came down and set up school;  
 But, oh! how the Rebs did hate it,--  
 It was agin' their rule.

Our masters always tried to hide  
 Book learning from our eyes;  
 Knowledge did'nt agree with slavery--  
 'Twould make us all too wise.

But some of us would try to steal  
 A little from the book,  
 And put the words together,  
 And learn by hook or crook.

I remember Uncle Caldwell,  
 Who took pot liquor fat  
 And greased the pages of his book,  
 And hid it in his hat,

And had his master ever seen  
 The leaves upon his head,  
 He'd have thought them greasy papers,  
 But nothing to be read.

And there was Mr. Turner's Ben,  
 Who heard the children spell,  
 And picked the words right up by heart,  
 And learned to read 'em well.

Well, the Northern folks kept sending  
 The Yankee teachers down;  
 And they stood right up and helped us,  
 Though Rebs did sneer and frown.

And, I longed to read my Bible,  
 For precious words it said;  
 But when I begun to learn it,  
 Folks just shook their heads,

And said there is no use trying,  
 Oh! Chloe, you're too late;  
 But as I was rising sixty,  
 I had no time to wait.

So, I got a pair of glasses,  
 And straight to work I went,  
 And never stopped till I could read  
 The hymns and Testament.

Then I got a little cabin  
 A place to call my own--  
 And I felt as independent  
 As the queen upon her throne.

# 41

## THE OBJECTIVES AND CONTENT OF RECONSTRUCTION EDUCATION (1939)

Education was clearly regarded as an instrument of social and economic policy by the different classes contending for control of Alabama in the years immediately following the Civil War. The extent to which the schools could be used for this purpose changed rapidly as political status changed; and educational objectives changed in turn. In the first year after the Civil War, before the participation of Negroes in politics was assured, the objectives of the missionaries were quite moderate. The scope of the work among the Freedmen was expressed as intended ". . . to make known the work of salvation--to gather and sustain Christian Churches--to instruct the people in all that pertains to life and goodness. . . ."

With the passage of the Amendments giving Negroes the vote, the mission bodies immediately struck a new note. The schools were now to help realize the noble slogan, "Let Us Make Man!" The religious instruction stressed two years before was enlarged to include emphasis on "liberty, the ballot, and intellectual training." Those who would now be called the "ideologists" of the work

among Freedmen saw clearly that change in political status signaled by enfranchisement created a new social objective for the schools.

In Alabama the personalities in control of the objectives and content of schools for Negroes were the officials of the American Missionary Association. They represented the strongest anti-slavery, "equalitarian" sentiment of the Abolitionist North. Fleming concedes that "many of the Northern teachers were undoubtedly good people," but he says that "all were touched with fanaticism." From the content of education, as well as from the objectives, it is easy to see how most Southerners would regard the American Missionary Association teachers as "fanatics."

The textbooks used in the missionary schools were standard Northern books, containing anti-slavery poems by Whittier, Holmes, and others; and a special textbook, The Freedmen's Book, was widely used as a reader. The editor of this book, L. Maria Child, had been a vigorous anti-slavery worker for years before the Civil War. Among the readings included were:

Ignatius Sancho

(A story of a Spanish Negro who achieved distinction in letters in Europe in the 18th Century.)

Extract from the Tenth Psalm

Ethiopia

(A poem by Frances E. W. Harper, a Negro Poetess. The poem was descriptive of Ethiopia's strength, now unleashed--"And Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands.")

The Hour of Freedom

(A speech by the noted Abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, describing the wrongs of the Negro and discussing the possibilities of Freedom in no moderate terms.)

Toussaint L'Ouverture

(A reading from an eulogy of the Haitian revolutionary, by Wendell Phillips. Certainly a revolutionary document in the hands of ex-slaves.)

Bury Me in a Free Land

(A poem by Frances E. W. Harper, giving the plaint of a slave who died under the lash, but wished his bones to lie in free ground.)

Madison Washington: The Story of the Creole

(A story of a slave mutiny on the brig Creole, during which the slaves massacred all of the whites on board and finally brought the ship into a British harbor, free.)

John Brown

(The story of the revolutionary, by L. Maria Child, praising his attempted insurrection in Virginia in glowing terms. It will be remembered that this

story was a part of the reading content of ex-slaves less than ten years after the South had been infuriated by Brown's exploit at Harper's Ferry.) Several poems from Whittier

(Accounts of the heroism of Negro soldiers in the Civil War, and of the victory of Negro troops over "Rebels.")

The book was dedicated to  
The Loyal and Brave  
Captain Robert Small  
Hero of the Steamboat Planter.

Small, a free Negro engineer on the Confederate steamer "Planter," had taken the boat out of Charleston Harbor during the Civil War and delivered it to the beleaguering Federal Navy outside the city. It was not a dedication which might be expected to commend the volume to men like General Clanton, late of the Confederate Army. The title page had a verse from Whittier,

O dark, sad millions,--patiently and dumb,  
Waiting for God,--your hour at last has come.  
And Freedom's song  
Breaks the long silence of your night of wrong.

There was a curious mixture of political opportunism and high idealism, a working together of Northern, capitalist-sponsored political organizations such as the Union League, and the Northern religious, philanthropic bodies. "Pig-Iron" Kelley, the darling of the Union League whose speech to Mobile Negroes resulted in a race riot and whose ever waking thought besides Negro suffrage, was said to be a high tariff on Pennsylvania Iron, was represented in the Freedmen's Book by a speech to Freedmen. An excerpt read:

There are Southerners who are prejudiced against you; but you can find the way to their hearts and consciences through their pockets. When they find that there are colored tradesmen who have money to spend, and colored farmers who want to buy goods of them, they will no longer call you Jack or Joe; they will begin to think that you are Mr. John Black and Mr. Joseph Brown. (Great laughter from the Freedmen.)

Interest in political activity extended to extra-curricular activities. In Montgomery, "The advanced grammar-class ended its lesson with the correction, on the blackboard, of a letter by a colored candidate for office, recently published; the class gave rules for its criticism and explanation."

The teachers in these schools taught the children the social graces by

precept, but also by example; part of their technique consisted in living with the Negroes, eating with them, and treating them in accordance with the equalitarian principles that were characteristic of their code. We have cited the case of William Luke, who was lynched because his white neighbors objected to his "fraternization," and teaching of the doctrines of "miscegenation" to Negroes. A Negro, America Trambles, of Chambers County, was allegedly killed because a white woman teacher was living in his house. Allegations of "bad character" imputed to white teachers in Negro schools by white Alabamians in many cases appear to have been due to the practice of "social equality"--i.e., eating and living with Negroes--which was as much a shock to the native sense of propriety, and as much an index of "bad character," as a violation of the sex code would have been.

Those critics of Reconstruction education who apply the epithet "fanatic" to the Northern missionaries neglect the fact that the kind of education sponsored by the missionaries for Negroes during Reconstruction was the natural outgrowth of a social and political theory diametrically opposed to that of the Conservative whites. Opposition to the education of Negroes was crystallized by the clearly drawn issue between two different social and economic systems, while the school was logically regarded as an instrument of social control. Prejudice against educating Negroes developed from the identification of the school with the Northern humanitarian program of social revolution in Alabama.

CAPITALIST SUPPORT OF BLACK EDUCATION (1967)

**42**

Despite the effectiveness of the massive program launched by the Conference for Education in the South, there still remained a major problem--particularly as related to the Negro schools. The program had been projected far beyond the range of funds then available to the conference. The organization's influence,



though significant, was not strong enough to open the public purse to the extent necessary to meet the needs of all the schools. Consequently, another source of financial support had to be found if the program was to move forward.

This support was found. It came, in surprising strength, not so much out of the Southern paternalism and noblesse oblige to which C. Vann Woodward attributed the philanthropic movement, but mainly from the basic historical process that made it necessary. Even as the great detour was being shaped, financial support for it was being developed. The booming period of industrial expansion that caused the national government to abandon the Negroes to the will of Southern people operated, as if by benevolent design, to create an industrial class whose philanthropy the leaders of the conference would be able to stimulate.

By the close of the nineteenth century an economic revolution had begun in the United States. The large populations that had shifted westward after the Homestead Act of 1862 and the pacification of the Indians were bound into a single economy by the cementing force of railroad extension. The urbanization process, which had started on the Atlantic seaboard, flowed westward to spur the development of gateway cities along the inland waterways until, interrupted with small regional communities, our inland empire had matured. Opening up incredible resources and vast markets for manufactured goods, these opportunities challenged the imagination and ingenuity of a select group of men who built the large fortunes that were to support the Southern educational renaissance and the Negro American's great detour.

Therefore, when the special educational program was completely designed and ready to go into production, industrial America had already produced the philanthropists who could afford to finance it. Andrew Carnegie, whose philanthropy was to provide library services for many Negro communities in the South, had made his start during this period. Having come to this country

from Scotland in 1848, he had a million-dollar steel plant in operation by 1875 and was well on his way toward building the fortune that would make his philanthropy possible. John D. Rockefeller, a twenty-year-old bookkeeper had resigned his \$50 a month job in the summer of 1859 to take his first steps toward becoming America's foremost industrial pioneer and most generous philanthropist. Seven years later "his Cleveland refinery had begun to expand with almost explosive force," and the young industrialist had started the career that would make him the oil magnate of all the world, savior of a goodly portion of the South's free public school system, and patron saint of the Negro college.

George Peabody had already applied his ingenuity to the growth of America's working class with good results. Born in Danvers, Massachusetts, he left school at eleven to become a grocery clerk. He later established a wholesale drygoods business with Elisha Riggs in Baltimore, and by 1829 had developed a prosperous and influential firm. After moving to England, he directed his philanthropy toward the promotion of education, and in 1867, he established The Peabody Education Fund for the promotion of education in the American South. John F. Slater, whose uncle may well be considered "the father of American manufactures," came into the inheritance of his textile properties about the time that Carnegie was building his first steel plant. Less than one decade later Slater was to create a fund for industrial education among the freedmen of the South. Julius Rosenwald, although of a slightly later period of American industrialization, is also one of this group. The fortune that fed his wide philanthropy apparently started with his modest investments in Sears Roebuck and Company during 1895.

Of equal significance is the fact that those who were to trigger the great philanthropic movement were also products of these times and, though to a lesser degree, members of this developing industrial class. While Rockefeller

was on the rise, Robert C. Ogden, who was to guide his philanthropy in Negro education and to become the diplomat of the great detour, was establishing himself as an important retail merchant through a partnership with John Wanamaker. William Henry Baldwin, also to be a source of influence among the potential philanthropists, was building a strategic career with the Union Pacific Railroad and the Southern Railway Company.

There is no need to expand this list of American industrial pioneers or to describe their entrepreneurial exploits in greater detail. The story has been adequately told elsewhere. It must be emphasized, however, that they constituted an industrial class whose business methods were not wholly acceptable to the American public. Influenced by the Social Darwinists, and particularly by the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, these men shaped an ideology of rugged individualism to justify the methods that made their achievements possible. But big business was not to remain a class virtue, nor poverty a personal vice. The great combines so hurriedly erected as weapons against competition were opposed by the development of conflict between the propertied and nonpropertied classes. The ideas of Henry D. Lloyd contributed heavily to the development of this conflict. Through articles published in the Atlantic Monthly during 1881, he pictured the Standard Oil Company, for example, as an unscrupulous monopoly and aroused the country against the industrial class and its business methods. The Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 threw a halter about the necks of the unbridled industrialists, and by 1898 the labor movement had developed to the point where organized workers had begun to challenge seriously management's exclusive control over labor policy. As the new century opened, the die had been cast. Industrial conflict had threatened industrial peace, and the image of the new industrial class had been seriously tarnished.

To a class so plagued by threats of public rebellion against its private

ways, the South offered a convenient avenue of relief. Its readiness for industrial exploitation had already been heralded by Charles Nordhoff, who, after a trip through the region in the spring and summer of 1875, had written exuberantly: "I was deeply impressed with the natural wealth, mostly undeveloped, of the states I saw." Southern workers were still not strongly organized; industrial peace prevailed in the region; and the growing population offered a good source of cheap labor. With its tax base still impaired, the South became a good outlet for charitable expressions that could possibly repair the image of the industrial class then being shattered by rising class conflict in Northern cities. It presented industrialists with a good opportunity to regain public acceptance while remaining true to their class ideology of rugged individualism. Through charitable contributions to the South's institutional life, they could help the Southern people help themselves, increase labor value where wage scales were kept lower by custom, and open greater consumer markets for the many manufactured products then being created through their industrial leadership. Most attractive of all must have been the appealing recognition that the region's educational leadership had passed to those who identified with the industrial class--to a breed of men who not only spoke the language of this class but also shared its basic aspirations. Therefore when Ogden and his associates really opened their campaign to secure funds for the support of Southern education, they found ready converts in men who, in addition to having the money to give, were badly in need of an opportunity to show their humanitarianism and to preserve the dignity of their class.

## INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION FOR THE NEGRO (1903)

One of the most fundamental and far-reaching deeds that has been accomplished during the last quarter of a century has been that by which the Negro has been helped to find himself and to learn the secrets of civilization--to learn that there are a few simple, cardinal principles upon which a race must start its upward course, unless it would fail, and its last estate be worse than its first.

It has been necessary for the Negro to learn the difference between being worked and working--to learn that being worked meant degradation, while working means civilization; that all forms of labor are honorable, and all forms of idleness disgraceful. It has been necessary for him to learn that all races that have got upon their feet have done so largely by laying an economic foundation, and, in general, by beginning in a proper cultivation and ownership of the soil.

Forty years ago my race emerged from slavery into freedom. If, in too many cases, the Negro race began development at the wrong end, it was largely because neither white nor black properly understood the case. Nor is it any wonder that this was so, for never before in the history of the world had just such a problem been presented as that of the two races at the coming of freedom in this country.

For two hundred and fifty years, I believe the way for the redemption of the Negro was being prepared through industrial development. Through all those years the Southern white man did business with the Negro in a way that no one else has done business with him. In most cases if a Southern white man wanted a house built he consulted a Negro mechanic about the plan and about the actual building of the structure. If he wanted a suit of clothes made he went to a Negro tailor, and for shoes he went to a shoemaker of the same race. In a certain way every slave plantation in the South was an industrial school.

On these plantations young colored men and women were constantly being trained not only as farmers but as carpenters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, brick masons, engineers, cooks, laundresses, sewing women, and housekeepers.

Only a short time before his death the late Mr. C. P. Huntington (a California railroad capitalist) to whose memory a magnificent library has just been given by his widow to the Hampton Institute for Negroes, in Virginia, said in a public address some words which seem to me so wise that I want to quote them here:

Our schools teach everybody a little of almost everything, but, in my opinion, they teach very few children just what they ought to know in order to make their way successfully in life. They do not put into their hands the tools they are best fitted to use, and hence so many failures. Many a mother and sister have worked and slaved, living upon scanty food, in order to give a son and brother a "liberal education," and in doing this have built up a barrier between the boy and the work he was fitted to do. Let me say to you that all honest work is honorable work. If the labor is manual, and seems common, you will have all the more chance to be thinking of other things, or of work that is higher and brings better pay, and to work out in your minds better and higher duties and responsibilities for yourselves, and for thinking of ways by which you can help others as well as yourselves, and bring them up to your own higher level.

In what I say here I would not by any means have it understood that I would limit or circumscribe the mental development of the Negro student. No race can be lifted until its mind is awakened and strengthened. By the side of industrial training should always go mental and moral training, but the pushing of mere abstract knowledge into the head means little. We want more than the mere performance of mental gymnastics. Our knowledge must be harnessed to the things of real life. I would encourage the Negro to secure all the mental strength, all the mental culture--whether gleaned from science, mathematics, history, language, or literature that his circumstances will allow, but I believe most earnestly that for years to come the education of the people of my race should be so directed that the greatest proportion of the mental strength of the masses will be brought to bear upon the every-day

practical things of life, upon something that is needed to be done, and something which they will be permitted to do in the community in which they reside. And just the same with the professional class which the race needs and must have, I would say give the men and women of that class, too, the training which will best fit them to perform in the most successful manner the service which the race demands.

I would not confine the race to industrial life, not even to agriculture, for example, although I believe that by far the greater part of the Negro race is best off in the country districts and must and should continue to live there, but I would teach the race that in industry the foundation must be laid--that the very best service which anyone can render to what is called the higher education is to teach the present generation to provide a material or industrial foundation. On such a foundation as this will grow habits of thrift, a love of work, economy, ownership of property, bank accounts. Out of it in the future will grow practical education, professional education, positions of public responsibility. Out of it will grow moral and religious strength. Out of it will grow wealth from which alone can come leisure and the opportunity for the enjoyment of literature and the fine arts.

Many seem to think that industrial education is meant to make the Negro work as he worked in the days of slavery. This is far from my conception of industrial education. If this training is worth anything to the Negro, it consists in teaching him how not to work, but how to make the forces of nature--air, steam, water, horse-power and electricity--work for him. If it has any value it is in lifting labor up out of toil and drudgery into the plane of the dignified and the beautiful. The Negro in the South works and works hard; but too often his ignorance and lack of skill causes him to do his work in the most costly and shiftless manner, and this keeps him near the bottom of the ladder in the economic world.

I close, then, as I began, by saying that as a slave the Negro was worked, and that as a freeman he must learn to work. There is still doubt in many quarters as to the ability of the Negro unguided, unsupported, to hew his own path and put into visible, tangible, indisputable form, products and signs of civilization. This doubt cannot be much affected by abstract arguments, no matter how delicately and convincingly woven together. Patiently, quietly, doggedly, persistently, through summer and winter, sunshine and shadow, by self-sacrifice, by foresight, by honesty and industry, we must re-enforce argument with results. One farm bought, one house built, one home sweetly and intelligently kept, one man who is the largest tax payer or has the largest bank account, one school or church maintained, one factory running successfully, one truck garden profitably cultivated, one patient cured by a Negro doctor, one sermon well preached, one office well filled, one life cleanly lived--these will tell more in our favor than all the abstract eloquence that can be summoned to plead our cause. Our pathway must be up through the soil, up through swamps, up through forests, up through the streams, the rocks, up through commerce, education and religion!

# 44

## THE TALENTED TENTH (1903)

The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races. Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task. Its technique is a matter for educational experts, but its object is for the vision of seers. If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical



skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men. Men we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of the schools --intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men to it--this is the curriculum of that Higher Education which must underlie true life. On this foundation we may build bread winning, skill of hand and quickness of brain, with never a fear lest the child and man mistake the means of living for the object of life.

Can the masses of the Negro people be in any possible way more quickly raised than by the effort and example of this aristocracy of talent and character? Was there ever a nation on God's fair earth civilized from the bottom upward? Never; it is, ever was and ever will be from the top downward that culture filters. The Talented Tenth rises and pulls all that are worth the saving up to their vantage ground. This is the history of human progress; and the two historic mistakes which have hindered that progress were the thinking first that no more could ever rise save the few already risen; or second, that it would better the unrisen to pull the risen down.

There must be teachers, and teachers of teachers, and to attempt to establish any sort of a system of common and industrial school training without first (and I say first advisedly) without first providing for the higher training of the very best teachers, is simply throwing your money to the winds. School houses do not teach themselves--piles of brick and mortar and machinery do not send out men. It is the trained, living human soul, cultivated and strengthened by long study and thought, that breathes the real breath of life into boys and girls and makes them human, whether they be black or white, Greek, Russian or American. Nothing, in these latter days, has so dampened the faith of thinking Negroes in recent educational movements, as the fact that such movements have been accompanied by ridicule and denouncement and decrying of those very institutions of higher training which made the Negro

public school possible, and make Negro industrial schools thinkable. It was Fisk, Atlanta, Howard and Straight, those colleges born of the faith and sacrifice of the abolitionists, that placed in the black schools of the South the 30,000 teachers and more, which some who depreciate the work of these higher schools are using to teach their own new experiments. If Hampton, Tuskegee and the hundred other industrial schools prove in the future to be as successful as they deserve to be, then their success in training black artisans for the South, will be due primarily to the white colleges of the North and the black colleges of the South, which trained the teachers who today conduct these institutions.

I would not deny, or for a moment seem to deny, the paramount necessity of teaching the Negro to work, and to work steadily and skillfully or seem to depreciate in the slightest degree the important part industrial schools must play in the accomplishment of these ends, but I do say, and insist upon it, that it is industrialism drunk with its vision of success, to imagine that its own work can be accomplished without providing for the training of broadly cultured men and women to teach its own teachers, and to teach the teachers of the public schools.

What is the chief need for the building up of the Negro public school in the South? The Negro race in the South needs teachers today above all else. This is the concurrent testimony of all who know the situation. For the supply of this great demand two things are needed--institutions of higher education and money for school houses and salaries.

Even at this point, however, the difficulties were not surmounted. In the first place modern industry has taken great strides since the war, and the teaching of trades is no longer a simple matter. Machinery and long processes of work have greatly changed the work of the carpenter, the ironworker and the shoemaker. A really efficient workman must be today an intelligent

man who has had good technical training in addition to thorough common school, and perhaps even higher training.

Thus, again, in the manning of trade schools and manual training schools we are thrown back upon the higher training as its source and chief support. There was a time when any aged and wornout carpenter could teach in a trade school. But not so today. Indeed the demand for college-bred men by a school like Tuskegee, ought to make Mr. Booker T. Washington the firmest friend of higher training. Here he has as helpers the son of a Negro senator, trained in Greek and the humanities, and graduated at Harvard; the son of a Negro congressman and lawyer, trained in Latin and mathematics, and graduated at Oberlin; he has as his wife, a woman who read Virgil and Homer in the same class room with me; he has as college chaplain, a classical graduate of Atlanta University; as teacher of science, a graduate of Fisk; as teacher of history, a graduate of Smith,--indeed some thirty of his chief teachers are college graduates, and instead of studying French grammars in the midst of weeds, or buying pianos for dirty cabins, they are at Mr. Washington's right hand helping him in a noble work. And yet one of the effects of Mr. Washington's propaganda has been to throw doubt upon the expediency of such training for Negroes, as these persons have had.

Men of America, the problem is plain before you. Here is a race transplanted through the criminal foolishness of your fathers. Whether you like it or not the millions are here, and here they will remain. If you do not lift them up, they will pull you down. Education and work are the levers to uplift a people. Work alone will not do it unless inspired by the right ideals and guided by intelligence. Education must not simply teach work--it must teach life. The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this work and Negro colleges must train men for it. The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men.

## BOOKER T. AND W.E.B. (1952)

"It seems to me," said Booker T.,  
 "It shows a mighty lot of cheek  
 To study chemistry and Greek  
 When Mister Charlie needs a hand  
 To hoe the cotton on his land,  
 And when Miss Ann looks for a cook,  
 Why stick your nose inside a book?"

"I don't agree," said W.E.B.,  
 "If I should have the drive to seek  
 Knowledge of chemistry or Greek,  
 I'll do it. Charles and Miss can look  
 Another place for hand or cook.  
 Some men rejoice in skill of hand,  
 And some in cultivating land,  
 But there are others who maintain  
 The right to cultivate the brain."

"It seems to me," said Booker T.,  
 "That all you folks have missed the boat  
 Who shout about the right to vote,  
 And spend vain days and sleepless nights  
 In uproar over civil rights.  
 Just keep your mouths shut, do not grouse,  
 But work, and save, and buy a house."

"I don't agree," said W.E.B.,  
 "For what can property avail  
 If dignity and justice fail.  
 Unless you help to make the laws,  
 They'll steal your house with trumped-up clause.  
 A rope's as tight, a fire as hot,  
 No matter how much cash you've got.  
 Speak soft, and try your little plan,  
 But as for me, I'll be a man."

## TEACHING IN A RURAL SCHOOL (1903)

Once upon a time I taught school in the hills of Tennessee, where the broad dark vale of the Mississippi begins to roll and crumple to greet the Alleghanies. I was a Fisk student then, and all Fisk men thought that Tennessee--beyond the Veil--was theirs alone, and in vacation time they sallied forth in lusty bands to meet the country school-commissioners. Young and happy, I too went, and I shall not soon forget that summer, seventeen years ago.

First, there was a Teachers' Institute at the county-seat; and there distinguished guests of the superintendent taught the teachers fractions and spelling and other mysteries,--white teachers in the morning, Negroes at night. A picnic now and then, and a supper, and the rough world was softened by laughter and song. I remember how-- But I wander.

There came a day when all the teachers left the Institute and began the hunt for schools. I learn from hearsay (for my mother was mortally afraid of firearms) that the hunting of ducks and bears and men is wonderfully interesting, but I am sure that the man who has never hunted a country school has something to learn of the pleasures of the chase. I see now the white, hot roads lazily rise and fall and wind before me under the burning July sun; I feel the deep weariness of heart and limb as ten, eight, six miles stretch relentlessly ahead; I feel my heart sink heavily as I hear again and again, "Got a teacher? Yes." So I walked on and on--horses were too expensive--until I had wandered beyond railways, beyond stage lines, to a land of "varmint" and rattlesnakes, where the coming of a stranger was an event, and men lived and died in the shadow of one blue hill.

I secured the school. I remember the day I rode horseback out to the commissioner's house with a pleasant young white fellow who wanted the white school. The road ran down the bed of a stream; the sun laughed and the water jingled, and we rode on. "Come in," said the commissioner,--"come in. Have a seat. Yes, that certificate will do. Stay to dinner. What do you want a month?" "Oh," thought I, "this is lucky"; but even then fell the awful shadow of the Veil, for they ate first, then I--alone.

The schoolhouse was a log hut, where Colonel Wheeler used to shelter his corn. It sat in a lot behind a rail fence and thorn bushes, near the sweetest of springs. There was an entrance where a door once was, and within, a massive rickety fireplace; great chinks between the logs served as windows. Furniture

was scarce. A pale blackboard crouched in the corner. My desk was made of three boards, reinforced at critical points, and my chair, borrowed from the landlady, had to be returned every night. Seats for the children--these puzzled me much. I was haunted by a New England vision of neat little desks and chairs, but alas! the reality was rough plank benches without backs, and at times without legs. They had the one virtue of making naps dangerous,--possibly fatal, for the floor was not to be trusted.

It was a hot morning late in July when the school opened. I trembled when I heard the patter of little feet down the dusty road, and saw the growing row of dark solemn faces and bright eager eyes facing me. First came Josie and her brothers and sisters. The longing to know, to be a student in the great school at Nashville, hovered like a star above this child-woman amid her work and worry, and she studied doggedly. There were the Dowells from their farm over toward Alexandria,--Fanny, with her smooth black face and wondering eyes; Martha, brown and dull; the pretty girl-wife of a brother, and the younger brood.

There they sat, nearly thirty of them, on the rough benches, their faces shading from a pale cream to a deep brown, the little feet bare and swinging, the eyes full of expectation, with here and there a twinkle of mischief, and the hands grasping Webster's blue-back spelling-book. I loved my school, and the fine faith the children had in the wisdom of their teacher was truly marvellous. We read and spelled together, wrote a little, picked flowers, sang, and listened to stories of the world beyond the hill. At times the school would dwindle away, and I would start out. I would visit Mun Eddings, who lived in two very dirty rooms, and ask why little Lugene, whose flaming face seemed ever abaze with the dark-red hair uncombed, was absent all last week, or why I missed so often the inimitable rags of Mack and Ed. Then the father, who worked Colonel Wheeler's farm on shares, would tell me how the crops needed

the boys; and the thin, slovenly mother, whose face was pretty when washed, assured me that Lugene must mind the baby. "But we'll start them again next week." When the Lawrences stopped, I knew that the doubts of the old folks about book-learning had conquered again, and so, toiling up the hill, and getting as far into the cabin as possible, I put Cicero "pro Archia Poeta" into the simplest English with local applications, and usually convinced them--for a week or so.

# 47

COTTON PLUS STEEL EQUALS SCHOOLS, 1900-1930 (1939)

Up to the first decade of the twentieth century Negroes found a place in Alabama industrial development only as laborers furnishing unskilled work. Skilled occupations were regarded as the natural province of white workers. When great national accumulations of capital entered the Alabama area the larger industrial concerns, especially in coal and iron, changed their policy to allow Negroes to reach slightly higher occupational levels.

The educational implications of this changed policy are illustrated by the self-conscious planning for industrial development in Alabama instituted by the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company in its history since 1906 as a subsidiary of United States Steel. The principal labor in the mines was formerly furnished by Negro convicts, farmed out to private companies by the State of Alabama. With no "decent houses, no decent schools," the situation was described as "terrible" for George Crawford, installed as managing president, "who had a complicated metallurgical and developing problem thrust upon him and who needed steady, trustworthy labor if he was to succeed." The large industrial corporations were also faced with the problem of labor trouble; and the elevation of the Negro in the industrial scale seemed to promise, in the Birmingham area, a respite from a continuation of such difficulties in Northern centers.

The Tennessee Company began at once to build up complete industrial and housing units, fitted with hospitals, welfare centers, and schools, by which means it was frankly hoped to regularize the uncertain Negro labor. It was officially stated that this was not a philanthropic movement: "The Steel Corporation is not an eleemosyary (charitable) institution," and its first object was "to make money for its stockholders."

The peculiar racial situation of the Alabama workers permitted the development of a paternalism unmatched elsewhere in the country. While a semblance of self-control was permitted the inhabitants of company towns in Minnesota, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, it was "necessary for the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company to manage directly the affairs of the settlements of its workers." In those localities "where municipal, county or state educational facilities are poor," in the words of a less hard-headed eulogist, "it has gladly assumed the burden." The paramount difficulty which the Tennessee Company found, after its acquisition by United States Steel, was the ignorance, and poor educational facilities of Negro workers. Especial attention was given to "dilapidated buildings" in Jefferson County, and to the "inadequate pay offered teachers (which) failed to attract men and women competent to train the youthful mind."

The Tennessee company made an agreement with the authorities of Jefferson county by which the company was to build and equip a sufficient number of school houses in the neighborhood of its plants and mines. The county authorities agreed to turn over to the company the annual appropriations received from the State for teachers' salaries. The result was that the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company was able to operate an educational system for its workers, using State funds, but supplementing them, free of any regulation from local school officials. A self-appraisal of results is not exaggerated: "The instructors in charge are of a high average type and the schools are recognized as having no equals in the South."



The educational system of the T.C.I. interests was joined to an extensive program of community service and welfare work. The Company generally preferred to establish towns for workers entirely owned by it. One of the "model" examples of such company-owned communities was Westfield, Alabama where houses equipped with modern conveniences, a community house, athletic fields, and school houses have been constructed by the Company within a kind of general compound which has no equal in the South for the comfort of living provided for industrial workers.

The policies of the United States Steel Corporation in Alabama with reference to employer's welfare have admittedly been taken in self-interest, and have not escaped severe criticism. Confessedly not "an eleemosynary" institution, it is probably true that "in building 'model' company towns, the companies have one leading motive, namely, to cut down labor turnover while at the same time continuing to pay low wages." It is further alleged that the policies of the Corporation in giving decent living and educational quarters to Negroes were in line with a careful long-range policy to keep Negro and white workers apart, and labor subordinated, by exalting the Negroes as competitors of the whites. From this view, the welfare work for Negroes was "a deliberate policy of flattering the Negro workers," by building Negro schools from the same plans as the white schools, and admitting Negroes to "the pretentious base hospital at Fairfield on payment of the usual fee, and of course strictly on a Jim-Crow basis." In contrast to the glowing accounts of magnanimity in the descriptions of Tarbell and Cotter, Davis says the company "achieved its aim, cut down turn-over, and wages of laborers in the Alabama steel industry remained at a level of about 60 per cent of that of the steel industry in Chicago and Pittsburgh."

Comparative scores indicated a considerable superiority for the children of the T.C.I. system by comparison with the Negro children enrolled generally

both in the other county and city schools and in the South at large. The average educational score made by the third grades in the T.C.I. schools was the normal score for that grade.

One interesting reflection of the status of the Negro as indicated by educational opportunities provided in the T.C.I. schools is the fact that the system provided education only up to the high school level. Apparently it was believed that this moiety of education sufficed for the industrial purposes to which the Company intended to set its Negro labor.

FROM THE MAKING OF MEN TO THE MAKING OF MONEY-MAKERS

**48**

The mass migration of Negroes from the South during and following the first World War affected the education of the Negro as it did other phases of his life. When hundreds of thousands of Negroes who had migrated to northern cities gained access to the same education as whites, the controversy concerning the relative merits of industrial education and higher education lost its significance. In the South, where industrialization was making rapid progress, school boards began to show a willingness to have the less expensive classical courses, such as Latin, taught in Negro high schools while instituting technical and vocational courses in white high schools. There was also a change in the attitudes of southern whites toward college education for Negroes, but Negro institutions of higher education continued to receive only a small fraction of the State appropriation for higher education.

The philanthropic foundations in the North responded quickly to the changing situation and began to give millions of dollars to the higher education of Negroes. While these changes were occurring in the attitude of the South and the philanthropic foundations toward the higher education of the Negro, the Negro was beginning to assume greater control of his education. In 1926, the first Negro was elected president of Howard University. The Atlanta University

system was set up under a Negro president. Negro students as well as teachers were demanding that their schools be placed under Negro administrators. The election of Negro administrators in Negro colleges represented to a certain extent a revolt against missionary education. But the transformation which was occurring indicated something more fundamental than a change from white to Negro administration.

The entire orientation and aim of higher education of Negroes was changing. It was natural that as the result of the revolt against missionary education, these institutions would lose much of their piety. Dancing, card playing, and smoking ceased to be deadly sins and requirements concerning chapel attendance were modified. Only in the smaller and isolated schools did the tradition of piety linger. Then there was less talk about thrift and the dignity of labor. The change which occurred at Tuskegee Institute which was devoted to industrial education for the Negro masses, is a measure of the extent of the transformation. Tuskegee Institute began to grant academic degrees and the students began to wear the academic cap and gown as was the custom in the institutions of higher education. Moreover, in all the institutions, the canons of respectability were undergoing a radical change. Respectability became less a question of morals and manners and more a matter of the external marks of a high standard of living.

As the children of the Negro masses have flooded the colleges, it was inevitable that the traditional standards of morals and manners would have to give way. These children of peasants had no particular interest in learning to speak correctly nor in cultivating the gentility of their predecessors who had come under the strict discipline of northern missionaries. Many of them, having come from a background of disorganized family life, were strangers to the traditional puritanical morality of these schools. A chance for a college education represented for them the chief means of achieving social and economic

mobility. The colleges had to make concessions to their poor educational and social backgrounds. But the children of the Negro masses were not primarily responsible for the change in the character of the Negro college. The outlook and aims of the colleges changed in response to the aspirations and values of the second generation of Negro college students and their Negro teachers who were imbued with middle-class values.

Unlike the missionary teachers, the present teachers have little interest in "making men," but are concerned primarily with teaching as a source of income which will enable them to maintain middle-class standards and participate in Negro "society." It appears that the majority of them have no knowledge of books nor any real love of literature. Today many of the teachers of English and literature never read a book as a source of pleasure or recreation. They go through a dull routine of teaching literature or other college subjects to listless students, many of whom cannot read.

The second and third generations of Negro college students are as listless as the children of peasants. The former are interested primarily in the activities of Greek letter societies and "social" life, while the latter are concerned with gaining social acceptance by the former. Both are less concerned with the history or the understanding of the world about them than with their appearance at the next social affair. The girl with a peasant or working-class background may be irritated by her mother's inability to buy an expensive "party" dress. But what can be expected when the dean of women has instructed her to tell her mother that she must have the dress at any sacrifice? So teachers and students alike are agreed that money and conspicuous consumption are more important than knowledge or the enjoyment of books and art and music.

That the teachers are as imbued with the same middle-class values as their students is indicated by their whole style of life. Some idea of the values and style of life of the present-day Negro teacher in the Negro college may be

gained from an illuminating analysis by a white teacher of the reasons why the Negro and white teachers on a Negro college campus could not talk, laugh, or relax together. On this college campus the white teachers were not missionaries but were liberal white couples who had accepted positions at the college because they were interested in teaching and in breaking down racial barriers. But they found that it was impossible to associate freely with their colored colleagues because the latter had a different style of life and a different set of values.

The white couples were pacifists and were interested in co-operatives. They were enthusiastic about folk dancing and were committed to internationalism and interracialism. Although a few Negro teachers shared these interests, none of them had a pattern of life similar to that of their white colleagues. The Negro teachers had accepted their teaching positions because of the social status and economic security which the positions provided. Unlike their white colleagues, they were conservative and against pacifism and had no interest in social questions. Conversation and books had no place in their recreation, which consisted in playing cards, drinking, movies, and "parties." Their interest was in automobiles, furniture, and household appliances, the same values as the rising white middle class. Even on informal social occasions they would not sit on the floor as their white colleagues did. Their intense devotion to their Greek letter societies appeared to be their raison d'etre. While their white colleagues were inclined to return to religion, the Negro teachers were fleeing from religion. From the standpoint of their values the Negro teachers could have found more congenial association with the prejudiced white middle class than with white liberals. In fact, in their struggle to attain American middle-class ideals, they gave the impression of being super-Americans.

The majority of the graduates of Negro colleges, including the land-grant colleges and vocational schools, have entered professional occupations. The

majority of present-day college students still aspire to the same field of activity. In recent years, however, Negro colleges have increasingly instituted courses in education for business. When a survey of Negro business and education for business was made nearly a decade ago, there were sixteen Negro colleges offering courses in business education, and other colleges were planning to institute such courses. Only 5 per cent of the fathers of the students who were pursuing courses in business education were engaged in business, while the majority of their fathers were unskilled workers. Many of these students, coming from poor homes and with inadequate academic preparation, have undoubtedly seized upon business education as a means to rise to middle-class status. They have also been told that by becoming money-makers they would help the Negro to achieve economic independence in American life.

Thus it has turned out that Negro higher education has become devoted chiefly to the task of educating the black bourgeoisie. The United Negro College Fund, which was started in 1944, provides the small sum of about two million dollars for thirty-two Negro colleges. This is a gesture on the part of white America, expressing its approval of middle-class education for Negroes behind the walls of segregation. Sometimes the appeal to white America is made on the sentimental grounds that the schools receiving financial support are educating the "children of slaves" who are thirsting for "knowledge" which will enable them to become "men." But the present generation of Negro college students (who are not the children but the great grand-children of slaves) do not wish to recall their past. As they ride to school in their automobiles, they prefer to think of the money which they will earn as professional and business men. For they have been taught that money will bring them justice and equality in American life, and they propose to get money.

## HISTORY OF CHICAGO SCHOOL SEGREGATION TO 1953

The first free schools in Illinois, authorized by the state legislature in 1825, were open only to white children. Racial distinctions in education were sanctioned by state statute until after the Civil War. In this period, segregation was common in Illinois, and Negroes were forbidden to vote. Discrimination in education was practiced against the small numbers of Negroes who resided in Chicago at this time, although it is difficult to determine the exact nature and extent of the procedure. An ordinance passed in 1863 required that Negro and mulatto children attend a separate school. In opposition to school segregation, the Negro community of Chicago organized a successful sit-in movement with tactics very similar to those employed in Chicago today. This law was repealed in 1865 and the administrators of the school system claimed the Black School was eliminated shortly thereafter.

After the abolition of the Black School, Chicago's Negro children most likely attended schools that were largely integrated. The Southside Community was forming at this time. It was a long narrow ribbon, a few blocks either side of State Street and did not fit into any one neighborhood. A high percentage of Negro families lived in small colored neighborhoods dispersed in many areas of the city, and schooling generally took place on an integrated basis.

The Ghetto and Residential Segregation. It was only after the great migration during World War I that the Southside Negro Community took in whole neighborhoods. During this period, de facto segregation became an important phenomenon, for the Ghetto, as an extended area of almost exclusive Negro population, was formed by practices of the Chicago Real Estate Board and the use of restrictive covenants.

By 1920, Chicago's Negro population was 109,000 persons, two and one-half

times what it had been a decade before. But in 1920, de facto segregation was far less widespread than today's; forty years ago, between one-third and one-half of the Negro children attended integrated schools.

The prosperous times of the Twenties meant increased employment. Since overseas immigration was sharply limited by law, large numbers of Southern Negroes continued to come to the Chicago labor market. The Negro population of Chicago doubled between 1920 and 1930 with almost all of the increase taking place on the Southside. A large number of neighborhoods that had been racially mixed became virtually all-Negro. Accordingly, de facto segregation in education increased.

Increasing School Segregation. As late as 1930, overcrowding of schools was not a practice confined to the Negro Ghetto. Most of the double-shift schools were in the outlying white areas of new construction. By 1940, however, the jamming had shifted to Negro neighborhoods where 13 out of the 15 double-shift schools were then located. The white school population had declined while the Negro school population, confined within virtually the same area that it had occupied in 1930, increased 88 per cent from 1929 to 1943. School boundaries as drawn acted to contain Negro pupils within Negro schools. Some white schools now had under-used space.

New school construction was concentrated in the Southside Ghetto. The building program failed to keep pace with the growing pupil population. It did serve to keep the Negro children in overcrowded Negro schools. The Board of Education was able to freeze the school boundaries along the edge of the Ghetto and rearrange the attendance areas within the Ghetto.

Administrative procedures adopted by the Board of Education abetted the segregated character of the school system. Transfers were freely given to white children living in neighborhoods with Negroes to attend under-utilized white schools. Negro applicants were denied transfers. This transfer policy was



widespread at the high school level. Most Negro elementary schools were districted so that their graduates went to Negro high schools. For example, in 1961, the neighborhood around the A. O. Sexton Elementary School, which had recently become a Negro area, was transferred out of the Hyde Park High School district. In reverse, white elementary schools were not districted into nearby Negro high schools.

Another technique to increase segregation was that of decreeing neutral areas. The same geographic area would be placed in the district of two or more schools. The children were given the ostensible option of attending either school. Frequently, this was a device by which white children were sent to a white school and Negro children sent to a Negro school.

Organized Protest. By 1939, organized community protest began to seek changes in these conditions. Studies made at that time showed that double-shifts were almost all in Negro schools, many of which are still overcrowded today. As a result, 76 per cent of the Negro children spent less time in school than white children. Inexperienced teachers were concentrated in the Negro schools. Expenditures per pupil showed a racial differentiation. A sample study reported that in 1937-38, the Board of Education spent \$86.07 per pupil in white schools; \$82.02 per pupil in integrated schools; and \$74.02 in Negro schools.

The Citizens School Committee, the Better Schools Committee, and the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs were among the groups most active in this campaign against inequality and segregation in Chicago schools. Alderman Earl B. Dickerson continually presented the matter before the Chicago City Council. In at least one instance, Negro parents kept their children out of school to protest a redistricting which would have increased segregation.

Deliberate Segregation. The notorious and corrupt administration of Board of Education President James McCahey and General Superintendent William

Johnson (1936 to 1947) was publicly accused of cooperating with the Chicago Real Estate Board in creating these horrible conditions for Negro pupils. McCahey boasted of the School Board's record in "caring for these young people." He attempted to prove his point by showing that the Negro schools in Chicago were better than those in Mississippi. The existence of vacant classroom space was denied as fallacious. McCahey also claimed that the school building program would solve the problem in the immediate future.

This defense was most dubious, for the Board and the Superintendent refused to give out information on facilities and overcrowding. A committee of the National Education Association investigating the McCahey-Johnson regime noted that the failure to make records public impeded a satisfactory inquiry.

However, the NEA Committee studied this area as best it could. It concluded:

Among the Negro children who, because of inadequate education elsewhere and problems of adjustment in a large city, are especially in need of careful teaching, overcrowding of classrooms is at its worst. There is little or no excuse for overcrowded classrooms in Chicago at the present time. . . . Instead of making adequate reductions in class sizes and prohibiting the existence of excessively large classes, the school board has unduly reduced the number of teachers employed, apparently as an economy measure.

In certain overcrowded areas inhabited largely by Negroes, the school board has instituted double-shift schools which limit the educational opportunities of these children to four hours a day. Even in these double-shift, short-hour classes, there is excessive overcrowding. It is important to Chicago as well as to the country that Negro children be given the best possible education. This cannot be done in double-shift schools or overcrowded rooms.

A Trend of Improvement. Public protest forced William Johnson out as General Superintendent of Schools in 1947. He was succeeded by Herold Hunt, who brought about a great improvement in race relations. Hunt did not attack the institution of de facto segregation head on, but in cooperation with Professor Louis Wirth and the Committee on Education, Training and Research in Race Relations of the University of Chicago, the new superintendent eliminated many of

the most glaring inequities. A special Technical Advisory Committee on Inter-group Relations of the Chicago Public Schools was established under Wirth's leadership. This committee was given access to all school records, advised the staff of the Board of Education, and worked with parents to prevent friction in schools that became integrated.

Boundaries of 102 elementary schools were altered for the specific purpose of relieving some forty-four overcrowded schools. A large number of neutral areas was eliminated. The basis for this redistricting was essentially an impartial application of the neighborhood school policy. The standards used for setting boundaries were: equal usage of school facilities and a minimum of distance and hazard for the children in going to school. The race of the students was not taken into account. So, in effect the policy was operating on a "color-blind" principle.

While integration was not a direct objective of this program, the rectification of the biased way in which the neighborhood school policy had been applied resulted in the desegregation of some schools. Disparities between Negro and white schools in class size, and the use of rooms for auxiliary purposes were lessened. The number of surplus classrooms was lowered in interracial schools, but not in white schools.

Professor Wirth's committee also developed a plan to alleviate unequal usage of the high schools. Before these proposals could be implemented, Superintendent Hunt left the Chicago school system and was succeeded in 1953 by Benjamin C. Willis. Although he received the reports of this committee, Willis has not acted upon them; nor has he reactivated such a committee.

In order to eliminate discrimination we must recognize the racial disabilities that exist in American life and design programs to counter-act their multifold effects. In other words, we must become positively "color-conscious." For its day, the policy developed by Professor Wirth's committee was one of the

most enlightened on the districting of Negro pupils in the country. However, since that time, it has become widely recognized that "color-blind" policies will not eliminate segregation. Racial barriers are so entrenched in the fabric of our society that very often policies that are not intended to discriminate do have discriminatory results. The neighborhood school policy is a case in point.

# 50

THE SCHOOL SEGREGATION CASES: LEGAL CHALLENGE TO "SEPARATE BUT EQUAL" (1953-54)

NAACP Brief (Summary of Argument). These cases consolidated for argument before this Court present in different factual contexts essentially the same ultimate legal questions.

The substantive question common to all is whether a state can, consistently with the Constitution, exclude children, solely on the ground that they are Negroes, from public schools which otherwise they would be qualified to attend. It is the thesis of this brief, submitted on behalf of the excluded children, that the answer to the question is in the negative: The Fourteenth Amendment prevents states from according differential treatment to American children on the basis of their color or race. Both the legal precedents and the judicial theories, discussed in Part I hereof, and the evidence concerning the intent of the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment and the understanding of the Congress and the ratifying states, developed in Part II hereof, support this proposition.

Denying this thesis, the school authorities, relying in part on language originating in this Court's opinion in Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537, urge that exclusion of Negroes, qua Negroes, from designated public schools is permissible when the excluded children are afforded admittance to other schools especially reserved for Negroes, qua Negroes, if such schools are equal.

The procedural question common to all the cases is the role to be played, and the time-table to be followed, by this Court and the lower courts in directing

an end to the challenged exclusion, in the event that this Court determines, with respect to the substantive question, that exclusion of Negroes, qua Negroes, from public schools contravenes the Constitution.

The importance to our American democracy of the substantive question can hardly be overstated. The question is whether a nation founded on the proposition that "all men are created equal" is honoring its commitments to grant "due process of law" and "the equal protection of the laws" to all within its borders when it, or one of its constituent states, confers or denies benefits on the basis of color or race.

Supreme Court Opinion on Segregation Laws. (Mr. Chief Justice Warren delivered the opinion of the Court.) These cases come to us from the States of Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. They are premised on different facts and different local conditions, but a common legal question justifies their consideration together in this consolidated opinion.

In each of the cases, minors of the Negro race, through their legal representatives, seek the aid of the courts in obtaining admission to the public schools of their community on a nonsegregated basis. In each instance, they have been denied admission to schools attended by white children under laws requiring or permitting segregation according to race. This segregation was alleged to deprive the plaintiffs of the equal protection of the laws under the Fourteenth Amendment. In each of the cases other than the Delaware case, a three-judge federal district court denied relief to the plaintiffs on the so-called "separate but equal" doctrine announced by this Court in Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537. . . . Under that doctrine, equality of treatment is accorded when the races are provided substantially equal facilities, even though these facilities be separate. In the Delaware case, the Supreme Court of Delaware adhered to that doctrine, but ordered that the plaintiffs be admitted to the white schools because of their superiority to the Negro schools.

The plaintiffs contend that segregated public schools are not "equal" and cannot be made "equal," and that hence they are deprived of the equal protection of the laws. Because of the obvious importance of the question presented, the Court took jurisdiction. Argument was heard in the 1952 Term, and re-argument was heard this Term on certain questions propounded by the Court.

In approaching this problem, we cannot turn the clock back to 1868 when the Amendment was adopted, or even to 1896 when Plessy v. Ferguson was written. We must consider public education in the light of its full development and its present place in American life throughout the Nation. Only in this way can it be determined if segregation in public schools deprives these plaintiffs of the equal protection of the laws.

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal education opportunities? We believe that it does.

In Sweatt v. Painter, *supra*, in finding that a segregated law school for

Negroes could not provide them equal educational opportunities, this Court relied in large part on "those qualities which are incapable of objective measurement but which make for greatness in a law school." In McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents, *supra*, the Court, in requiring that a Negro admitted to a white graduate school be treated like all other students, again resorted to intangible considerations: ". . . his ability to study, to engage in discussions and exchange views with other students, and, in general, to learn his profession." Such considerations apply with added force to children in grade and high schools. To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. The effect of this separation on their educational opportunities was well stated by a finding in the Kansas case by a court which nevertheless felt compelled to rule against the Negro plaintiffs:

Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of the child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system.

Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of Plessy v. Ferguson, this finding is amply supported by modern authority. Any language in Plessy v. Ferguson contrary to this finding is rejected.

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. This disposition makes unnecessary any discussion whether

such segregation also violates the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

## RACISM AS JUSTICE

# 51

Racism and reform are not mutually exclusive. In the American situation, racism and reform are intertwined in an extremely complicated and important dialectical way. The 1954 decision of the Supreme Court in the school desegregation cases has aspects of both. Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), constitutes a major revision or reform of American jurisprudence on questions of race. Brown modernized the racist ideology of white supremacy. Under the guise of integration, a legal basis was created for the relaxation and adjustment of racist practices with respect to public education, transportation, parks and playgrounds, and hotels and restaurants.

In the post-World War II era, continued strict observance of the grossest forms of racism in places of general public intercourse had become inimical to America's internal security as well as its hegemony as the world's leading and strongest imperialist power. Brown was a judicial attempt to deal with the apparent contradictions and conflicts between the much touted melting pot theory and the actuality of enforced racial separation, but without disturbing the basic white supremacy ideology, which holds sway over the Nation's institutions.

To understand the relationship between racism and reform and appreciate the import of present trends, it is necessary to consider and analyze very closely significant old and new decisions of the Supreme Court relating to the human and civil rights of Black people. The portent is one of extreme intensifications of social conflict between the most conscious and oppressed elements of the Black masses and the most reactionary elements of the white ruling class. . . . By the time Plessy reached the Court, state and federal laws which sought to protect Black rights had been emasculated. Blacks had become pinioned in the



judicial systems of resurgent and un-Reconstructed state regimes.

Plessy involved a statute of the State of Louisiana which required Blacks and whites to be transported in separate but equal railroad cars. On occasions when Blacks and whites were to be transported in the same car, the statute provided that a partition be drawn between the two races. Mr. Plessy, who was seven-eighths white and one-eighth African blood with no discernible trace of African ancestry, decided that he would test this statute. In 1892, he bought a ticket from New Orleans to a place within the State of Louisiana. He attempted to ride in the car reserved for whites. The conductor promptly ejected him. Plessy sued out a writ of prohibition in the Supreme Court of Louisiana against John L. Ferguson, the Judge before whom he would be tried without a right of appeal. Mr. Plessy claimed that the Louisiana statute violated both the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. The Supreme Court upheld the validity of this statute and sanctioned separate but equal. More about Plessy later on.

Brown approached the question as though it were a mixed one of law and fact. This treatment may yet result in the judicial restoration of Plessy's dictum that enforced racial separation is a badge of inferiority "solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it."

If Brown may be read as being grounded upon a factual showing of a demonstrable injury to Black children, the appointment of justices with a decided anti-Black animus could lead to the re-segregation of Blacks and a national disaster in their race relations, for the factual predicate is not well-established.

The hypothesis between the proven existence of inferiority in Black school children and racial separation in public schools had and has not been established. See Clark, K. B., Prejudice and Your Child, Appendix 4 and 5 (Beacon Paperback) (1963). Kenneth Clark's finding of damaged personalities in racially

segregated Black school children has not been isolated "from the total social complexity of racial prejudice, discrimination, and segregation." The inferiority found in Black children attending all-Black schools was arguably as much the product of Black children being reared in a racist society and culture as it was the exclusive product of separate schools.

Notwithstanding the null hypothesis between separate schools and racial inferiority, the Supreme Court found that such separation damaged Black children. In one of the most humanistic passages in American legal literature, the Court rhapsodized, "To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status, in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." Yet, the Courts lacked the mettle to order the immediate remedy of so monstrous an injury. Brown v. Board of Education, 349 U.S. 294 (1955). There was absolutely no constitutional warrant for the gradual implementation of the Fourteenth Amendment in the area of public education. It was a rank concession to white racism.

The successes in the area of public facilities and accommodations which quickly followed in the wake of the impetus which Brown gave to the relaxation of racism made it virtually impossible, if not treasonable, to find fault with that decision. But, circumstances now compel a realistic assessment of Brown.

The primary circumstance is the emergence of Black Power in June of 1966. Black and Blackness are no longer thought of as pejoratives. They are now sources of great pride. Not only is Black Beautiful, but it is also "So Beautiful to Be Black." In other words, Black People have radicalized their thinking about themselves and their experience. If Black people ever did, it is clear now that they no longer accept the assumption that there is nothing of value in the Black community and that Blacks can create nothing of value. A fundamental change in the subjective conditions upon which the struggle between Blacks and whites will continue and intensify has occurred.

The fault of Brown is the same as that found in Dred Scott and Plessy v. Ferguson. Each of these decisions assumes that whites are racially superior to Blacks. Brown is bottomed on the assumption that white schools are superior to Black schools, and that Black schools cannot ever be made equal to those attended by whites. Brown accepts without questioning white domination of the institutional life of the Nation. The measure of justice under Brown, as it was under Plessy, is the equal treatment of Blacks on the basis of white standards and values, not Black ones. Equality between Blacks and whites can never be achieved in such an over-simplified manner by hypothesizing a racial peer group towards which all other races must be mystically lifted. The equality to which Blacks are entitled can only be attained by dealing affirmatively with them on the basis of their manifest needs. Blacks are different from all other races and minority groups in America. Blacks alone bear the scars and still festering sores of chattel slavery. No other group in America has been legally relegated to the non-human status of a chattel. Thus, to the extent that the concept of equality found in Brown is based upon mere racial parity, Brown is but the modern analogue of separate but equal.

Both integration and enforced racial segregation are irrelevant for Blacks. However, integration is preferable to an enforced racial separation to the same extent that prolonged illness is preferred to sudden death. The fight for integration has been a necessary one. It was imperative that all overt symbols and manifestations of white superiority and the imposed limitations on the individual and collective freedom of Black people be destroyed. But beyond that limited goal, the class nature of the integration movement made it an inadequate instrument for the liberation of a people whose relations to the productive forces approximate those found among colonized peoples. Integration is a way of siphoning off "qualified" Blacks into white America and exploiting their labor. It gives rise to the phenomena of "tokenism,"

invariably strengthening white America as it weakens and confuses Black America.

Control is and should be the paramount concern for Black people. Only by the attainment of effective and legal control over all institutions affecting their lives can Black people become social equals and equally free to enjoy and exercise their equality. Whether under conditions of integration or segregation the lack of control is the aspect that makes for the social inferiority of the Black experience. Implications of the struggle for control are revolutionary because without the making of a distinct Black - led revolution, there can be no qualitative change in the Black situation and there can be no socially significant control by Blacks without revolution. Of course, there can and will be quantitative changes of a reformist nature, more and better jobs, houses, education, and health care, etc., but the basic fact of white domination of the Nation's institutions will remain unchanged.

The emerging demand of Black people for the limited and just right to control the institutions within their own communities has already provoked the Supreme Court to cut back in a drastic way the thrust toward the elimination of vestiges of the slave system. . . . The difference between the cases which may be considered setbacks and those considered to be advances is critical to an understanding of the direction that future Supreme Court decisions will take. On questions that will result in dispersal of the ghetto and weakening of nationalistic feelings among Blacks, the Supreme Court by a slim majority for the next two or three terms will continue to give favorable answers. However, on issues which tend to undermine white racism by freeing Blacks from subtle forms of white domination, the Court will, over an occasional dissent, give unfavorable decisions.

This means that the Court will become irrelevant to the Black Liberation Struggle, except for its negative effects. Blacks cannot and will not wait on the appointment of liberal justices and for another period of judicially led

reform. Brown has made it clear that even if the Court wanted to it could not free Blacks from their oppression. Blacks now know that only through self-reliance and solidarity in the continuing struggle can they attain freedom, justice, and equality.

# 52

COMMUNITY CONTROL OF THE SCHOOLS IN BLACK COMMUNITIES (1969)

The essence of the struggle at Intermediate School 201 was to actively communicate to the Black and poor residents in Harlem that they had to build their own dreams and that the system, in the last analysis, was organized for the protection of others--not Black Americans. Intrinsic to the struggle was the potential for convincing the students at I.S. 201 that they could be Black and successful!

In a meeting with members of the New York City Board of Education in April, 1966, the I.S. 201 activists, a group of parents and community leaders, sought to elicit the Board's agreement to conduct an experiment in community control. Their proposal suggested that the principal be selected by the parents and not by the school system. Beyond the Superintendent of Schools, the interest was minimal or nonexistent, as indicated by the evasive and perfunctory responses. One member raised a question which has not escaped memory. He wondered how one could bring about change in an entire system by selecting one piece of that system for special treatment.

The Board of Education, appointed by the Mayor and expected to represent all of the people, has an established and unwritten policy which requires a consensus; for example, its publicly announced decisions have reflected a minority position in only three instances known to this observer. A consensus, in most cases, guarantees that the interests of the poor will be overlooked. The exceptions are those instances when an issue of particular significance to the poor has been entertained. Only one of the nine members of the Board is Black;

none is Puerto Rican. The pupil population is over 50 per cent Black and Puerto Rican.

The public school system, while not the manufacturer of the system described herein, has become a sophisticated purveyor of the pattern. It has been established fairly conclusively that on the basis of ethnic composition, performance, scores, per capita expenditures, teacher turnover and assignments, and the effective upgrading of minority group staff, many large urban complexes have dual school systems: one white and one Black but both controlled by whites. Beyond this, an expanding body of evidence suggests that residential segregation, the track system, and dropout patterns are less the accident of good intentions gone sour than they are deeply ingrained "gentlemen's agreements" which are stacked against the best interests of Black and poor youth.

The Hobson v. Hansen court proceeding in Washington, D.C., brought to public visibility the deliberateness with which Black students were assigned to the slower track, often on the basis of visual evidence alone. Skin color was used to teach Black kids to learn slowly. The judge ruled that the track system deprived: ". . . the poor and the majority of the Negro students in the District of Columbia of their constitutional right to equal educational opportunities. Children are classified in the tracks not according to ability to learn but according to color and class factors extraneous to innate ability."

The study of malperformance in high schools suggested that the dropout problem was mainly a fault of the system--not of the students who quit. The system responded most effectively to white middle class students; it tuned out the Black and poor. Factors such as the sanctioning procedures, the record systems, and teacher perspectives converted Black and poor students into "push-outs." Once defined as a "malperformer," the student had an indelible label.

And the white-oriented middle class teacher could salve her guilt by steadily fulfilling the prophecy of failure for Black and poor youth.

The thrust for control over ghetto schools represents a shift in emphasis by Black and poor people from a concern with replicating that which is American to a desire for reshaping it to include their concerns. There is less concern with social integration than there is with effective education. Recall that Blacks have been the major proponents of school integration; whites have been the major opponents. The conflict around school integration is only another example of the distorted configuration of Black-white relations. Blacks have sought quality education via school integration; whites have assumed that this was a ruse leading to intermarriage or residential integration. Even as Blacks sought to be brothers to their white counterparts, whites feared that Blacks wanted to become their brothers-in-law.

On the other hand, Blacks have begun to recognize that the educational system probably has no intention of educating Black Americans to promote their own agendas. The system's preference is for Americans of color to develop pride in white America. What is really feared is collective action by Blacks in the economic and political spheres.

The thrust, then, for control of schools serving Black communities is essentially a surge by Black people to have their concerns incorporated into this society's agenda. Any honest examination of the school system will reveal that social class and social caste factors operate to keep Black and poor students uneducated.

Restructuring the relationships between school and community is the key to the thrust for change. It is an attempt to modify the role of the school from that of prosecutor of Black and poor students to that of defender and advocate for Black students. Two inseparable outcomes will mark the success of this venture: the degree to which Black and poor kids invest themselves in the learning

process (instead of allowing themselves to be taught that they are slow learners) and the degree to which the local school unit becomes an agent for local community change (not just changing students).

# 53

## THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK STUDENTS (1975)

There has been a significant change in the student sector of the Black community during the last 60 years. This change reflects basic changes in the structure of the Black community. In 1916 the Office of Education reported 2,132 students at 31 Black colleges. The significance of this group can be easily seen when one recognizes that the 1910 census reported 30.4 per cent of Black people as illiterate, 90 per cent living in the South, and 60 per cent of Black men employed in agriculture. By 1940, the number of students had increased to 58,000 at 118 Black colleges. This increase followed the mass migrations to Southern cities and the industrial North. In 1940, 34 per cent of Black people had moved to central cities, but still "over three-fourths of all Blacks lived in the South, close to two-thirds lived in rural areas there, and just under half were still engaged in agriculture." By 1964 there were about 200,000 Black college students, and over triple this ten years later in 1974. By 1969, the U.S. Census reported that 55 per cent of Blacks lived in central cities, about half lived in the North and only 4 per cent remained employed in agriculture.

In sum, the increase in the number of Black college students reflects fundamental changes in U.S. society and Black people's situation in it. The demand for Black students must be understood as a sub-category of the demand for Black labor, merely more skilled labor. Combining the mechanization of agriculture with the blood-thirsty industrialization of a war economy, monopoly capitalism created the demand for Black students in the interest of the bourgeoisie.

This demand, however, was not based on one need only, but has changed.



historically with the needs of monopoly capitalism. Private schools were set up in the 1850's and 1860's to serve the task of producing a Black petty bourgeois elite, particularly in the fields of education, religion, social work, law, medicine, and business. Of all Black college graduates in 1900, 37 per cent were teachers, 11 per cent were ministers, 4 per cent were doctors, 3 per cent were lawyers, and only 1.4 per cent were engaged in farming. This was the "Talented Tenth" DuBois spoke of. While these schools were the only avenue for higher education at one time, they now account for only 12 per cent of all Black students. Integration which began in 1950's with a few isolated cases has resulted in 8 per cent of all Black students. Integration which began in 1950's with a few isolated cases has resulted in 8 per cent of all Black students being enrolled at previously all-white private schools.

Another group of schools were set up in the 1890's as a result of the second Morrill Act of Congress that set up the land-grant college system to decentralize technological innovation and training to aid U.S. agricultural production. This was also the heyday of Booker T. Washington's vocational education philosophy. By 1940, while 22.3 per cent of Black college students were still majoring in education, 23 per cent were also majoring in agriculture; industrial arts, and home economics. But the situation changed after the war: by 1955-56, over two-thirds of graduates from the publicly-controlled Black colleges were graduating with degrees in education. Another change is reflected in the late 1960's with degrees in education falling to 50 per cent in 1967 and social sciences (social work) rising to 17 per cent and business to 9 per cent. In 1974, 22 per cent of Black college students go to public Black schools, and 26 per cent go to public previously all-white ones.

The newest educational form is the urban community and junior college. While previously for the city dweller there was no nearly universal education beyond high school, the community college was created due to advances in skill

requirements for the job market. The para-professional, clerical and technical jobs needed more than high-school trained persons. This reflected both the inadequacy of high schools and the special skills needed for jobs. These schools actually began after World War I, but it wasn't until the late 1960's that they boomed. While the boom for students in general resulted in 18 per cent of all U.S. students being enrolled in community colleges, it resulted in 32 per cent of all Black students being enrolled in them.

So far we have examined the aggregate growth of Black students, and the development of three types of educational institutions. We have summed up the form of education but only touched on its essence. Its essence is based on the national oppression and class exploitation of the masses of Black people. On the one hand, higher education has served the need of monopoly capital to have Black managers (overseers) for the Black community to administer Black institutions, public agencies, and serve as role models for Black youth to emulate. On the other hand, higher education serves to prepare Black youth for more skilled working class jobs in order to accelerate production and increase their exploitation.

In discussing these class destinations of Black students we must directly raise the question of what class students are in. The concept class is based on one's relationship to the means of production. In the capitalist mode of production, the Bourgeoisie (capitalist) owns the means of production and the Proletariat's (working class) relation to them is based on the need for workers to sell their labor power for wages in order to survive. Students are members of the intellegentsia, a strata that has no direct role in production, but nevertheless serves one class or another. But students, on the whole, are a social group within the intellectual strata that are consumers of education rather than producers of knowledge. So, (1) students have a concrete class origin-- for the most part working class: "37.4 per cent of students at Black land-grant

colleges come from families making less than \$4,000 a year. In general, a student going to a Southern school, be it private or public, now comes from homes where the medium income is \$3,900 and only 17 per cent of all Black college students come from families over \$10,000." And, (2) the class destination of students is either the Black petty bourgeois service professional or managerial sector, or the skilled working class clerical sector. (3) While in school, Black students are a social group in transition within the intellectual strata consuming education while preparing to play a role in the society. (This, of course, does not take into consideration the students who work while going to school and work during the summer.)

This class essence of Black higher education is a function of the dynamic antagonistic clash of classes struggling in a battle to the death. And with the crisis of imperialism intensifying in this period of inflation, overproduction, unemployment, trade wars, and government corruption crises throughout nearly all capitalist countries, the class life of Black students has been radically changed. The U.S. Labor Department admitted that the unemployment rate of Black workers reached 11.7 per cent in November, 1974, and it was reportedly as high as 30-40 per cent in some big cities. So the class origin (parents) of Black students is under attack. This also is an attack on the class destination of Black students (future jobs) since job offers are no longer easily picked up in the traditional professional fields and the working class is facing unemployment. Yes, it is possible to get a B.A. and be unemployed, seasonally employed, underemployed, or only part-time employed. Moreover, the current institutional home of Black students is under attack as well. Federal funds to higher education are being cut back, endowments are being plundered, faculty/student ratio's are increasing by cuts in the faculty and increasing student enrollments, Afro-American Studies programs are being cut, tuition fees are being raised, and tolerance for all forms of political radicalism is rapidly diminishing. The conditions of Black students are in a definite crisis.

## UNEQUAL EDUCATION AND THE REPRODUCTION OF THE SOCIAL DIVISION OF LABOR

The ideological defense of modern capitalist society rests heavily on the assertion that the equalizing effects of education can counter the disequalizing forces inherent in the free-market system. That educational systems in capitalist societies have been highly unequal is generally admitted and widely condemned. Yet educational inequalities are taken as passing phenomena, hold-overs from an earlier, less enlightened era, which are rapidly being eliminated.

The record of educational history in the United States, and scrutiny of the present state of our colleges and schools, lend little support to this comforting optimism. Rather, the available data suggest an alternative interpretation. In what follows I argue (1) that schools have evolved in the United States not as part of a pursuit of equality, but rather to meet the needs of capitalist employers for a disciplined and skilled labor force, and to provide a mechanism for social control in the interests of political stability; (2) that as the economic importance of skilled and well-educated labor has grown, inequalities in the school system have become increasingly important in reproducing the class structure from one generation to the next; (3) that the U.S. school system is pervaded by class inequalities, which have shown little sign of diminishing over the last half century; and (4) that the evidently unequal control over school boards and other decision-making bodies in education does not provide a sufficient explanation of the persistence and pervasiveness of inequalities in the school system. Although the unequal distribution of political power serves to maintain inequalities in education, the origins of these inequalities are to be found outside the political sphere, in the class structure itself and in the class subcultures typical of capitalist societies. Thus, unequal education has its roots in the very class structure which it serves to legitimize and reproduce. Inequalities in education are part of the web of

capitalist society, and are likely to persist as long as capitalism survives.

The structure of education reflects the social relations of production. For at least the past 150 years, expansion of education and changes in the forms of schooling have been responses to needs generated by the economic system. The sources of present inequality in American education were found in the mutual reinforcement of class subcultures and social-class biases in the operations of the school system itself. The analysis strongly suggests that educational inequalities are rooted in the basic institutions of our economy. Reconsideration of some of the basic mechanisms of educational inequality lends support to this proposition. First, the principle of rewarding academic excellence in educational promotion and selection serves not only to legitimize the process by which the social division of labor is reproduced. It is also a basic part of the process that socializes young people to work for external rewards and encourages them to develop motivational structures fit for the alienating work of the capitalist economy. Selecting students from the bottom or the middle of the achievement scale for promotion to higher levels of schooling would go a long way toward equalizing education, but it would also jeopardize the schools' capacity to train productive and well-adjusted workers. Second, the way in which local financing of schools operates to maintain educational inequality is also rooted in the capitalist economy, in this case in the existence of an unequal distribution of income, free markets in residential property, and the narrow limits of state power. It seems unwise to emphasize this aspect of the long-run problem of equality in education, however, for the inequalities in school resources resulting from the localization of finance may not be of crucial importance in maintaining inequalities in the effects of education. Moreover, a significant undermining of the principle of local finance may already be underway in response to pressures from the poorer states and school districts.

Of greater importance in the perpetuation of educational inequality are differential class subcultures. These class-based differences in personality, values, and expectations, I have argued, represent an adaptation to the different requirements of adequate work performance at various levels in the hierarchical social relations of production. Class subcultures, then, stem from the everyday experiences of workers in the structure of production characteristic of capitalist societies.

It should be clear by this point that educational equality cannot be achieved through changes in the school system alone. Nonetheless, attempts at educational reform may move us closer to that objective if, in their failure, they lay bare the unequal nature of our school system and destroy the illusion of unimpeded mobility through education. Successful educational reforms--reducing racial or class disparities in schooling, for example--may also serve the cause of equality of education, for it seems likely that equalizing access to schooling will challenge the system either to make good its promise of rewarding educational attainment or to find ways of coping with a mass disillusionment with the great panacea.

Yet, if the record of the last 150 years of educational reforms is any guide, we should not expect radical change in education to result from the efforts of those confining their attention to the schools. The political victories of past reform movements have apparently resulted in little if any effective equalization. My interpretation of the educational consequences of class culture and class power suggests that these educational reform movements have apparently resulted in little if any effective equalization. My interpretation of the educational consequences of class culture and class power suggests that these educational reform movements failed because they sought to eliminate educational inequalities without challenging the basic institutions of capitalism.

Efforts to equalize education through changes in government policy will at best scratch the surface of inequality. For much of the inequality in American education has its origin outside the limited sphere of state power, in the hierarchy of work relations and the associated differences in class culture. As long as jobs are defined so that some have power over many and others have power over none--as long as the social division of labor persists--educational inequality will be built into society in the United States.

# 55

## TO BLACK STUDENTS: POEM

BLACK STUDENTS UNITE. BLACK STUDENTS UNITE! UNITE OR PERISH IN THE ACADEMIC DOOM OF TOM UNIVERSITIES. RENAME YOUR UNIVERSITIES AND FREAK FACTORY COLLEGES. TEACH BLACK. REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE GREAT WHITE FATHER NAMES. LINCOLN. HOWARD. SPELMAN. ALL UNRELATED TO YOUR LIVES. RENAME YOUR SCHOOLS: NAT TURNER UNIVERSITY. CHARLIE PARKER INSTITUTE. LUMUMBA COLLEGE. KICK JIVE NEGRO PROFESSORS IN THE MOUTH. IN THE SOUTH, MAKE SUCH CHAOS SO AS TO TURN WHITEY'S MONEY AWAY. TEAR DOWN THOSE WHITE FAGGOT PHILANTHROPIST STATUES, TEAR DOWN THOSE STALE PORTRAITS OF ANDREW CARNEGIE AND ROCKEFELLER LINING YOUR HALLWAYS. TEACH TEACH TEACH. RUN IT DOWN. RUN IT DOWN. SOCK IT TO 'EM.

## EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE:

### THE CONTINUING FIGHT FOR BLACK STUDIES (1977)

# 56

The historical development of Black Studies and its struggle for survival must remain at the center of any discussion of Black people in higher education. While almost one million Blacks are engaged in post-secondary school education, and oppression and exploitation continue to exist for nearly all Black people, Black Studies remains a battle front for justice and equality, an arena in which to link the fight for reforms with the fight for revolution.

Our general summary is that Black Studies has gone through three stages of development. The stages of this national trend are:

- a. Innovation: the social incidents that challenged the status quo and initiated the process of bringing Black Studies into being;
- b. Experimentation: the theoretical and practical struggle to set and

- achieve initial goals, and the setting of new goals based on concrete experience;
- c. Crisis of Development: the intensification of attacks against Black Studies that seriously challenge its continued existence.

Innovation: The initial thrust for Black Studies was a turbulent experience, one that continued the unexpected outbursts of rebellion and resistance that characterized the 1960's. The middle 60's was a high tide of resistance for the Black liberation movement; militancy was a common posture. A key act was the brutal slaying of Martin Luther King in the Spring of 1968, because it unleashed an outburst of violence in 110 cities, resulting in 39 deaths, over 2,500 injuries, over 14,000 arrests, and over 2,600 fires. The U.S. government repressed this spontaneous action with 45,000 National Guardsmen and 21,000 Federal Troops.

The key social force in this spontaneous violence were those young, working class Black people who were being kept out of productive jobs, and kept out of institutions that they felt could help them improve their lives. For these young people, the only real options seemed to be jail or the armed services. But after this thrust of spontaneous violence (1963-1967), a large sector of this youth population was coopted into higher education, purportedly "to civilize the natives and quell the unrest." According to government statistics, Black college enrollment increased to 370,000. This represents an increase over the previous year of 88,000, 11 times the increase of 1966 over 1965. But things didn't work out for this scheme of bourgeoisification, i.e., the muting of working class militancy with the petty bourgeois privilege of the college campus and the subsequent benefits from a white collar job. This plan backfired and these students became a militant social force inside the university by disrupting the normal state of affairs (meaning racism, elitism, and other forms of reaction); they demanded Black Studies by any means necessary.

This is how one discussion sums up what happened. Note how similar this



is to the above description of what happened after King was murdered:

. . . The early programs clearly and simply signified a yielding to student pressure, threats and violence; in 1968-69, according to one estimate, 43 institutions experienced fires, 80 experienced wrecking of buildings or breaking of furnishings, 45 experienced personal injuries, at least 24 officials were held captive, and at least 8 people were killed.

In a very concrete sense we can conclude from the data that it was this militant struggle inside the university that forced the initial change, the essence of this first stage of innovation. For example, one study of two-year colleges reports this data on course offerings:

Increase in Community Colleges Offering Black Studies Courses

1966 or before	23
1967-68	24
1968-69	100
1969-70	92

Experimentation: The rapid increase in courses and programs brought with it a broad pattern of experimentation regarding all aspects of Black Studies. Nick Aaron Ford reports in Black Studies: "For the 200 programs upon which this study is based, approximately 200 objectives are listed with enough variation in wording to be considered different." Moreover, about 75 per cent of these programs were interdisciplinary and, for the most part, characterized by a hodge-podge of faculty interests and backgrounds, shaped by the history of racist scholarly neglect and discrimination in faculty hiring practices.

To anyone vaguely familiar with Black Studies programs over the last nine years, an obvious conclusion is that there has emerged no established pattern of intellectual content, administrative organization, or standard of academic excellence and social responsibility for faculty and students. Moreover, when the militant students who fought for and won Black Studies left the campus, or were bought off, the fire of the initial thrust began to dwindle. One ex-student sums it up this way: "When we left, Black Studies lost its political cutting edge. It was taken over by either poverty pimp-type hustlers, or straight traditional academic types. Either way, that's not what we fought for."

However, this period of experimentation has by no means been a total loss, although this has often been the assessment of both the ultra-conservatives (e.g., Bayard Rustin, Martin Kilson, etc.) and the ultra-left student anarchists (e.g., many of the student activists who founded Student Organization for Black Unity, SOBU). The material basis for this position is their common middle class outlook. Both groups negate the objective reality of the rapid increase in Black participation in higher education. The conservatives openly declare their allegiance to elitism, while the "infantile leftists," failing to grasp the relationship of reform to revolution, negate the militant fight for the democratic right to quality higher education.

Out of this period of every flower blooming, however, there is now beginning to emerge a clear direction forward. The current task at hand is to clarify lessons learned, divide the good from the bad, consolidate gains won by uniting with all progressive forces, determine new goals, and continue to fight for change.

Crisis of Development: When we speak of crisis in this context, we refer to two levels of analysis: (1) The deepening of the crisis of U.S. capitalism, and (2) the specific features of how this crisis impacts on higher education. The crisis of capitalism has sharpened and, coupled with the winds of revolutionary national struggle blowing throughout the third world, there is a major realignment of forces on the world scene. The threat of an unjust war to re-energize the imperialist systems of the two super-powers--the United States, old and dying, and the Soviet Union, young and growing--is a menace to all of the world's people.

Here in the USA the attacks on working people, Black people, and all oppressed nationalities are growing sharper every day. The carrot of Kennedy-Johnson has been replaced by the stick of Nixon-Ford-Rockefeller. This fascist-prone regime, wildly striving to maintain the rule of the USA imperialist

class, went beyond the existing ruling class consensus and faltered on the corruptions of Watergate and the CIA-FBI debacle. But the resulting revelations and expose spoke more to questions of form than of essence. Now we have the old con game with Carter, the white country preacher with a grin, trotted out with the verbal rap of an F.D.R. and similar bandaid solutions. For example, with war preparations underway, Carter appoints a non-violent Black preacher to be the mouthpiece of the ruling class in the United Nations. And with over eight million workers unemployed, he proposes a so-called jobs program for fewer than a million of them at a less than adequate wage.

The economic picture is bleak indeed. The Gross National Product declined in 1974, 1975 and much of 1976; housing starts have been down, and basic industry like steel continues to operate at less than capacity. And, similar to the Great Depression, large numbers of bankruptcies have occurred, including the billion-dollar W. T. Grant Company and eleven large banks--this during 1976 alone!

Now does this mean that the fat cats, the corporate ruling class, are taking the loss? NO! In manufacturing, from 1974 to the first half of 1976 there was a 5.5 per cent decrease in the number of production workers, but during this same period profits went up 72.9 per cent to \$63.8 billion. This means that more and more profit is being squeezed out of fewer and fewer workers. This attack on working people continues with the real value of income (measured in 1967 dollars) declining nearly 2 per cent between 1974 and 1975. In straight inflation terms, the Consumer Price Index went up 11 per cent in 1974, and over 9 per cent in 1975.

The crisis goes deeper as we all see and live it in our communities every day. Corporate profits are protected by governmental policies of increased taxes and massive cutbacks in social services--hospitals and libraries are closing in nearly every major city, public transportation is being cut back, and public health programs are deteriorating. There have also been major cutbacks in

the area of education. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education (May 17, 1976), corporate gifts to colleges and universities declined by 3.5 per cent in 1975 and gifts from leading foundations declined from \$12.1 billion in 1974 to \$2.01 billion. The Ford Foundation reduced its expenditures by \$81 million. Their aim is to maintain shrinking profits in corporate treasuries. Moreover, the costs of one year of education for each four-year student went up 42 per cent in the past ten years--from \$2,167 to \$3,070.

The net result of this deepening crisis for Blacks in higher education is alarming, and those of us in this area of work must seize upon it as a call to arms. Consider these reversals:

Increased Dropout Rate: Because of the cutback in support services--which have never been well financed and organized--the drop-out rate among Black students will increase. Only 40.9 per cent of the number of Blacks who entered as freshmen in 1971 were enrolled as seniors by 1974. And this compares with only 55.8 per cent for white freshmen, so the crisis is really an attack on the masses of everybody.

Decline in Enrollment: The percentage of Blacks entering as first year students declined in 1973 for the first time in years. Since a peak increase of 30 per cent in the number of Blacks among all students in college, the increase was only 7 per cent between 1971 and 1972, and declined by 6 per cent between 1972 and 1973. Since the big increase in 1971, the rate of increase has slowed considerably: there was only a 0.6 per cent increase between 1971 and 1973, and between 1971 and 1974, a 20 per cent increase. This compares with a 65 per cent increase between 1969 and 1974 and a 110 per cent increase between 1964 and 1969. Many institutions have recently revised entrance requirements, reduced financial aid, and raised tuition which will further restrict enrollment.

Reversal of Affirmative Action: The courts have become the focal point for the counter-attack of the ruling class to reverse the gains that Black people won through militant struggle. Three major court cases--in Washington (Defunis), New York (Alevy), and California (Bakke)--have all involved charges of "reverse discrimination" by white students who were denied admission to professional schools. In each case, Blacks and other minority students who had lower scores on biased "objective" tests were admitted in efforts to overcome past discrimination, increase the access of oppressed nationalities to medical education, and improve the quality of health care available in minority communities. The future ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in the Bakke case from California will have a major impact on overturning the legal basis for affirmative action--in education and on jobs--which was established after the mass struggles of the late 1960's and early 1970's.

#### Black Studies: Study and Struggle

We have pointed to a history of struggle for Black Studies and the increasing attacks against it. Essentially we have been discussing the democratic rights of Black people and our task is to raise up a program for the continued survival of Black Studies. We hinge our view on the dual concepts of study and struggle. Moreover, we base our theoretical view on concrete experience, a history that results in a fighting spirit and not the whimpering of a weak, insecure, newly-arrived (or arriving) Black professional class of teachers and students. Our view is that it is precisely in the face of this deepening crisis that it is possible to mount an offensive, however small at first, that will eventually link together the vast majority of Black Studies faculty and students in a fight for substantial and fundamental social change.

## THE SUPREME COURT ON THE BAKKE DECISION: IGNORING A HISTORY OF RACISM (1978)

While I applaud the judgment of the Court that a university may consider race in its admissions process, it is more than a little ironic that, after several hundred years of discrimination against Negroes, the Court is unwilling to hold that a group remedy for that discrimination is permissible. In declining to so hold, today's judgment ignores the fact that for several hundred years Negroes have been discriminated against, not as individuals, but rather solely because of the color of their skins. It is unnecessary in 20th century America to have individual Negroes demonstrate that they have been victims of racial discrimination; the racism of our society has been so pervasive that none, regardless of wealth or position, has managed to escape its impact. The experience of Negroes in America has been different in kind, not just in degree, from that of other ethnic groups. It is not merely the history of slavery alone but also that a whole people were marked as inferior by the law. And that mark has endured. The dream of America as the great melting pot has not been realized for the Negro; because of his skin color he never even made it into the pot.

These differences in the experience of the Negro make it difficult for me to accept that Negroes cannot be afforded greater protection under the Fourteenth Amendment where it is necessary to remedy the effects of past discrimination. In the Civil Rights Cases, the Court wrote that the Negro emerging from slavery must cease "to be the special favorite of the laws." We cannot in light of the history of the last century yield to that view. Had the Court in that case and others been willing to "do for human liberty and the fundamental rights of American citizenship, what it did . . . for the protection of slavery and the rights of the masters of fugitive slaves," we would not need now to permit the recognition of any "special wards."

Most importantly, had the Court been willing in 1896, in Plessy v. Ferguson,

to hold that the Equal Protection Clause forbids differences in treatment based on race, we would not be faced with this dilemma in 1978. We must remember, however, that the principle that the "Constitution is color-blind" appeared only in the opinion of the lone dissenter. The majority of the Court rejected the principle of color blindness, and for the next 60 years, from Plessy to Brown v. Board of Education, ours was a Nation where, by law, an individual could be given "special" treatment based on the color of his skin.

It is because of a legacy of unequal treatment that we now must permit the institutions of this society to give consideration to race in making decisions about who will hold the positions of influence, affluence and prestige in America. For far too long, the doors to those positions have been shut to Negroes. If we are ever to become a fully integrated society, one in which the color of a person's skin will not determine the opportunities available to him or her, we must be willing to take steps to open those doors. I do not believe that anyone can truly look into America's past and still find that a remedy for the effects of that past is impermissible.

It has been said that this case involves only the individual, Bakke, and this University. I doubt, however, that there is a computer capable of determining the number of persons and institutions that may be affected by the decision in this case. For example, we are told by the Attorney General of the United States that at least 27 federal agencies have adopted regulations requiring recipients of federal funds to take "affirmative action to overcome the effects of conditions which resulted in limiting participation . . . by persons of a particular race, color, or national origin." I cannot even guess the number of state and local governments that have set up affirmative action programs, which may be affected by today's decision.

I fear that we have come full circle. After the Civil War our government started several "affirmative action" programs. This Court in the Civil Rights

Cases and Plessy v. Ferguson destroyed the movement toward complete equality. For almost a century no action was taken, and this nonaction was with the tacit approval of the courts. Then we had Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Acts of Congress, followed by numerous affirmative action programs. Now, we have this Court again stepping in, this time to stop affirmative action programs of the type used by the University of California.





SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS FOR EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

1. Hoarce Mann Bond, Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel, 1939.
2. Henry A. Bullock, A History of Negro Education in South: From 1619 to the Present, 1967.
3. Martin Carnoy (ed.) Schooling in a Corporate Society: The Political Economy of Education in America, 1972.
4. Frederick Chambers, Black Higher Education in the United States: A Selected Bibliography, 1978.
5. Chicago Committee for a Free Africa, Sell The Stock: The Divestiture Struggle at Northwestern and Building The Anti-Imperialist Movement, 1978.  
available from Peoples College Press, P.O.Box 7696 Chicago, IL 60680.
6. Robert L. Crain, Gerald A. McWorter, et. al., The Politics of School Desegregation: Comparative Case Studies of Community Structure and Policy-Making, 1968.
7. W.E.B. DuBois, The Education of Black People, 1906-1910: Ten Critiques, 1973.
8. Robert L. Green (ed.), Racial Crisis in American Education, 1969.
9. David N. Smith, Who Rules The University. 1976
10. Thomas L. Webber, Deep as the River: Education in The Slave Quarter Community,



Howard University in Washington, D.C., was shut down for several days in 1968 when students demonstrated to force radical changes in program and administration.

# Chapter 13

## BLACK WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the triple oppression of Black women? Illustrate this concept using historical examples and statistics.
2. Discuss the historical development of the Black family in the slavery rural agricultural, and urban industrial periods.
3. How have Black women been involved in the struggle against their special oppression?
4. What is the major difference between the oppression of Black women and the oppression of white women? What two political positions have emerged in the struggle of Black women for liberation and the feminist trend in the women's liberation movement?

### KEY CONCEPTS

Equal pay for equal work

Family

Feminism/women's liberation movement

Male supremacy sexism

Marriage/divorce

Matriarchy/patriarchy

Motherhood

Sterilization/abortion

Triple oppression

Women's suffrage movement



The particular problems and concerns of Black women must be discussed not as an isolated question, but as a part of the problems faced by all Black people. Over 52% of all Black people in the U.S. are women. Women play a special role in bearing children and in the family and increasingly are becoming sole heads of households. However, Black women face greater discrimination than any other group in this society--in income, in job opportunities, in education, in holding political office, and in other areas of social life.

The oppression of Black women has its historical roots in the foundation and development of capitalism and imperialism in the United States. This special oppression is based on three things:

(1) Most Black women are workers and are subjected to economic (class) exploitation at the hands of the rich. Black women have always worked and this more than anything else has shaped the experience of Black women in the U.S. In fact, the work experience of Black women make their concerns somewhat different from those of the women's liberation movement which seeks to get white women into the workplace. Both Black and white women, however, share the demand of equal pay for equal work.

(2) Black women, as do the masses of Black people, suffer from many forms of racist national oppression like job discrimination and the denial of basic democratic rights because of racism.

(3) Black women, like all women, face male supremacy (sexism) which attempts to put women into subordinate roles in a male dominated society. This is based on the role of women in the Black family. In short, the oppression of Black women grows out of the same system of capitalist oppression that exploits and oppresses the masses of Black people and everybody else in this society. Of course, as we have previously discussed, the particular content of this oppression has

been transformed as the experiences of Black people have changed from slavery to the rural experiences to the urban experience. These three periods provide the historical framework for our analysis of Black women and the family.

SLAVERY. There was full employment for Black Black people during slavery. This included Black women whose labor was exploited in the three main sectors of the economy: (a) field slaves: this was the main activity for slaves who produced the crops which were pivotal to the early development of the U.S., first tobacco and sugar and later cotton. It is estimated that 50% of the slaves in the U.S. in 1860 were women. (b) house slaves: women were more often found as domestic servants, keeping the slaveowners' houses, cooking their food, and raising their children. (c) industrial slaves: women were also exploited in many industries in the South. In the view of many factory owners, women cost less to maintain and because they could work faster in certain jobs, they produced more than men in industries like textiles. For women who were field slaves and industrial slaves, long hours of housework (cooking, sewing, etc.) were usually added to a full day of production work.

The necessity of (forced) work left little time to raise a family. However, stable family relations did develop among slaves, but these were always subject to the economic dictates of the slave system. The common plight of oppression and exploitation suffered by slave men and slave women created a concrete basis for equality, as well as developing strong and independent Black women. Some slave owners respected the mother/father/child relationship because this often increased the slave family's economic efficiency (and discouraged rebellious male slaves from running away). Many, however, broke up families in order to profit from the sale of slaves. Despite these difficulties, however, the slave family played an essential role. As Blassingame concluded in The Slave Community: "the slave family was primarily responsible for the slaves' ability to survive on the planta-

tion without becoming totally dependent and submissive."

Two main forms of oppression based on sex were suffered by slave women:

(a) As Black women, female slaves were subjected to the grossest sexual abuse. According to Frederick Douglass, "the slave woman is at the mercy of the fathers, sons, or brothers of her master," not to mention the slaveowners themselves. Forcing Black women to become "breeders" to reproduce the supply of slave labor, especially after the end of the slave trade, was the most extreme form of this sexist oppression.

(b) Black female slaves who were forced to work in production could spend very little time with their families. As house slaves, many a slave woman was forced to become a "mammy" to the children of her oppressors while her own children were neglected.

Black women were actively engaged in the struggle to overturn slavery and to end the special oppression of women. (a) Struggle against slavery. There were women like Harriet Tubman who was called the "Black Moses" because of her role as a leader in the underground railroad, a secret escape route to the North used by many slaves. Free Black women like Frances Ellen Watkins Harper were active in the abolitionist movement in the North, traveling and speaking to mobilize support for the struggle against slavery. Thousands of other Black women undoubtedly played active roles in this struggle whose contributions have yet to be recorded. (b) Struggle against the oppression of women. Many white women were inspired by the fight against slavery. The same arguments regarding the human rights of slaves were applied by women in the struggle against their own oppression, especially as they demanded the right to vote and full equality in politics, education, employment, and marriage. Thus, the struggle against slavery and the women's rights movement had a common enemy and Black women who were militant anti-slavery activists also played active roles in the women's movement.

RURAL PERIOD. In the rural period, Black women assumed roles in the system of agricultural production that were similar to that of Black men: as sharecroppers under the tenant system that emerged to replace slavery. Freed from the restraints of slavery, Northern industrial capital rapidly expanded into Southern railroads, lumber, and cotton and tobacco manufacturing. Because of racist exclusion, job opportunities outside the tenant system were severely limited for Black men and only 3.1% of Black women were employed as workers in manufacturing and mechanical trades (and 55% of these women were dressmakers not in factories). The main jobs of Black women outside of agriculture were in traditional areas of "women's work": 43% of Black women were employed in domestic service and almost all of the remainder--52% were employed in agriculture.

The end of slavery caused significant changes in the Black family. (a) New economic conditions in the rural South gave the Black family a boost of a strange sort. The survival of the family now depended on its own ability to produce under the brutal tenant system: for Black men this meant directing the family as an economic unit and exercising more leadership and authority in the family than was possible under slavery. (b) The Black family also developed a set of values and ideas to meet their new conditions. Ideas about sexual relations, illegitimacy, and marriage reflected the legacy of an oppressive slavery and the immediate social needs which existed. As Johnson reports in Shadow of the Plantation (1934), many "marriages," for example, were quite stable as economic and social units, but many Blacks saw no need to seek the legal sanctions which had not been necessary under slavery. Neither was illegitimacy a recognized concept. All children "born out of wedlock" were accepted without stigma and treated on an equal basis by family and community.

Part of the oppression of Black women during this period grew out of the conditions of rural life. Because every available hand was necessary for economic survival, large families were the rule in the rural South. This imposed a tre-

mendous and oppressive burden on Black women. Black women continued as full time field hands and as full time housewives and mothers. Because these women received no wage payments directly, the resulting economic dependency on men was and still is the concrete basis for the development of ideas about male supremacy (or chauvinism) which developed then and exist today in this society. The male supremacist idea held by men (and accepted by many women) that because females are child-bearers, "a woman's place is in the home," meant that the burdens of childrearing and housework were not equally shared. Unfortunately, this rule did not also state that "a woman's place is not in the field," (though Black women were probably less involved as field workers in the rural period than during slavery).

Because of the continuing oppression of Black people throughout the rural period, Black women were active in many aspects of the struggle for freedom.

(a) Against lynching: Between 1900 and 1914, there were more than 1,079 recorded lynchings of Blacks in the South. Women like Ida Wells Barnett crusaded against lynching. As a newspaper editor in Memphis, she wrote an anti-lynching pamphlet called The Red Record (1895) which resulted in attacks on her newspaper. Her life was threatened and she was eventually forced to leave Memphis, but not before defending herself and going about her work with a six-shooter strapped to her side. She went to Chicago where she continued to work for her people's freedom.

(b) Social uplift programs. Women like Mary McLeod Bethune dedicated their careers to improving the social conditions of Black people. She was an educator and during the Depression served as an administrator and advisor on Black youth programs under Roosevelt's "New Deal."

(c) Black liberation movement. During this period, the struggle for Black liberation increased its level of organization: The Niagara Movement (1905) led to the NAACP (1909) and the Urban League was formed in 1911. Organizations of Black women like the National Association of Colored Women, formed in 1896, played

an important role in founding the Niagara Movement and were important forerunners of other freedom organizations.

URBAN PERIOD. World War I, which spurred the migration of Black people from the rural South to the city, also pulled Black women off the farms and into the industrial workforce. Service and industrial work began to replace agricultural and domestic work as main areas of work. By 1930, still only 5.6 % of all Black women were employed in manufacturing and mechanical industry (as compared to 25% for Black men). But more Black women had moved into the service sector: over 64% in 1930. This was still the prevailing pattern in 1970: of the 2.7 million Black women in the labor force, 25% are service workers (maids, etc.) 21% are clerical workers like office clerks and secretaries, 16% are operatives like factory workers, and 18% are private household workers like maids and cooks. The special oppression of Black women (as compared to white women) is revealed in statistics showing the overrepresentation of Black women in certain occupations (and underrepresentation in certain others): only 11.4% of the female workforce, Black women comprise 65% of all maids, 63% of all household cooks, 41% of all housekeepers, and 34% of all cleaning service workers. Conversely, Black women represent only 4% of all women lawyers and doctors and 5.5% of all women college teachers. Clearly, as have Black people in general, Black women have provided U.S. capitalism with essential labor in some of the hardest, lowest-paying and dirtiest jobs of all-the necessary shit work of an advanced capitalist society.

We can use similar statistics to illustrate the triple oppression of Black women. Class (economic) exploitation, racism, and sexist oppression have combined to put Black women at the bottom rung on most measures of social equality: below white males, Black males, and white females. The following table illustrates this:



THE TRIPLE OPPRESSION OF BLACK WOMEN (1974)

How Class, Racist, and Sexist Oppression Combine to Put Black Women at the Bottom of the Social Ladder

	White Males	Black Males	White Females	Black Females
<u>INCOME</u>				
Median Income (1974)	12,434	8,705	7,021	6,371
<u>EDUCATION</u>				
College Enrollment, Ages 18-24	28%	20%	22%	16%
% with 4 or more Years of college	25%	8.8%	17.2%	7.6%
<u>UNEMPLOYMENT</u>				
	3.5%	7.3%	5.0%	8.7%



P. M. O'Sullivan

The integration of Black women into the urban economy has had a dramatic impact on her role as a worker and on her role in Black family life. (1) The necessity of working reduces the time that Black women have to discharge their role as parents. This is even moreso with Black women who are single heads of households. (2) The urban economy has provided Black women with the economic basis of their independence. This has freed many Black women from their traditional dependence on Black men that emerged during the rural period. But this has also increased competition between Black men and Black women. The historical and continuing male supremacy ideology and the objective economic independence of Black women have also had a negative influence on male-female relationships among Black people.

Black women (and women in general) are punished by existing sexist practices because of their role in the biological division of labor relating to childbirth. For example, an adequate system of sex education, birth control, and family planning is not provided in this society (witness the debate over sex education in the schools and the use of Federal funds for abortions). Many young Black women have also been irreversibly sterilized without their knowledge as the price for seeking abortions or family planning assistance! An adequate system of paid maternity leaves is not available though males are often given leaves for many injuries. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1977 that such paid leaves would cost the corporations too much of their profits! Neither are lowcost or free daycare facilities available. The point here is that the resources of this society are not allocated to meet the special needs of Black women or women in general, needs which are essential to the very functioning of the society.

Any analysis of the relationship between Black women and Black men must also take into account the historical imbalance in the ratio of Black women to Black men, especially in the urban period. At every census ince 1840, an excess of females is found in the Black population. In 1970, there were 1.1 million more Black

women than men. The pattern for any particular region, state, or city is a function of the demand for Black labor in that locale, and the available employment opportunities. For example, the ratio of Black men to Black women in Chicago dropped from 104.5:100 in 1920 to 88.7:100 in 1940 as the demands for Black women workers increased leading up to World War II.

There has been considerable controversy over the concept of the Black matriarchy, or female-dominated family. As we have pointed out, concrete conditions have given rise to the increasing independence of Black women, but the concept of "Black Matriarch" has been overemphasized and often discussed without attention to important details. The fact is that most Black families consist of both parents as do most white families and are not matriarchical. For Black families which earn less than \$3,000, 30% are headed by females as compared to 20% for whites. For families earning over \$8,000, the figure is 10% for Blacks and 6% for whites. This means that 70% and 90% are two parent families respectively.

The continuing oppression of Black women and of Black people has meant that Black women have continued to be on the front lines of all aspects of the Black liberation struggles throughout the urban period. In the 1930's, Black women were active organizers for CIO unions like the Steelworkers and were active in organizations like the National Negro Congress. Many militant protests and demonstrations against unemployment, against discrimination in housing and jobs, and for social welfare legislation were led by Black women. During the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s, women like Fannie Lou Hamer of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party inspired oppressed people all over the world by standing up to racist political repression in the South and fighting for her rights. Unheralded, but persistent women like Ella Baker were active in such organizations as the NAACP and SCLC (The Southern Christian Leadership Conference); she was a veteran Civil Rights worker who guided the spontaneous student sit-in movement toward or-

ganizing the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1960.

As the more radical orientation of the Black liberation movement emerged, women were active militants in such organizations as the Black Panther Party, in community struggles, in organizing opposition to war in Vietnam, and in building anti-imperialist support among Black people for the liberation struggles in Africa. Black women have played and are continuing to play leading roles in developing the anti-imperialist and revolutionary orientation of the Black liberation struggle in the United States.

Currently, there are significant developments that must be taken into account in discussing Black women and the family. There is an increase in the number of families headed by Black women. In 1977, 1 of every 3 Black families (33%) was headed by a woman as compared to 1 of every nine (11%) for whites. In 1974, 39% of all children under 18 were in families headed by Black women (as compared to 10% for whites). In 1977, over 50% of all new born Black children were born into families headed by females. Black women and these families suffer a greater share of oppression in terms of income and employment. In 1974, the average income of Black families headed by women was \$5,069 as compared to \$8,226 for whites. Unemployment was 16.4% for these Black women who were heads of households and 8.1% for white women.

In addition, the social decay characteristic of advanced capitalism in crisis is increasing the divorce rate among Blacks as well as increasing homosexuality and new life styles. All of these forces are beginning to undermine the possibility of strong family relationships. This is especially serious in view of the historical role that the Black family has played in the survival and struggle of Black people for liberation.

The same social crisis, however, also contains its positive seeds. It is creating among Black women who bear a disproportionate burden of the current cri-

sis a greater objective need for and interest in the struggle for Black liberation and social change. The crisis is laying the basis for a collective approach to solving problems that more and more Black women are experiencing along with the entire society.

It is becoming increasingly clear to Black women that their liberation cannot be achieved under capitalism nor in isolation from the masses of Black people. This is a fundamental difference which distinguishes the struggle of Black women from the feminists in the women's liberation movement. Many women in the feminist movement (both Black and whites) say that all men are the enemy and see the integration of a few women into the existing system of exploitation and oppression as equals to men as their final goal. This is not how the masses of Black women have analyzed their situation and plotted the course of their struggle.

Thus, Black women face conditions of oppression and mounting problems as do most Black people. But Black women will also continue to go forward to uphold their rich historical legacy as active fighters for full freedom of all Black people and an end to their own special "triple oppression."



*Ann Wood and the other teenagers drive off the slavecatchers.*

## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 13

58.	SLAVE OF A SLAVE NO MORE: BLACK WOMEN IN STRUGGLE (1975)	Frances Beale	209
59.	BLACK FAMILY IN AMERICA (1949)	E. Franklin Frazier	214
60.	SELLING A MOTHER'S CHILD: A SLAVE AUCTION (1941)	Solomon Northrup	219
61.	"FIGHT, AND IF YOU CAN'T FIGHT, KICK!" AN EX-SLAVE REMEMBERS HER MOTHER (1930)		220
62.	SLAVE WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN INDUSTRY (1970)	Robert Starobin	223
63.	"WE DO AS MUCH, WE EAT AS MUCH, WE WANT AS MUCH" (1853, 1867)	Harriet Tubman	226
64.	THE IDEAL WIFE: THE OPPRESSION OF BLACK WOMEN IN THE RURAL PERIOD (1934)	Charles S. Johnson	227
65.	AT THE HANDS OF A MOB: A BLACK WOMAN FIGHTS LYNCHING (1971)	Ida B. Wells	229
66.	"WHEN MALINDY SINGS"	Paul Laurence Dunbar	232
67.	NEGRO WOMEN WORKERS: THE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD	Eugene Gordon Cyril Briggs	234
68.	MOTHER TO SON: LIFE NO CRYSTAL STAIR	Langston Hughes	236
69.	THE SPECIAL PLIGHT AND THE ROLE OF BLACK WOMEN (1971)	Fannie Lou Hamer	237
70.	THE BLACK WOMAN TODAY (1972)	Joyce Ladner	240
71.	"THE NEGRO MOTHER (1931)	Langston Hughes	243
	SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS		244

## SLAVE OF A SLAVE NO MORE: BLACK WOMEN IN STRUGGLE (1975)

Since her arrival on these alien shores, the Black woman has been subjected to the worst kinds of exploitation and oppression. As a Black, she has had to endure all the horrors of slavery and living in a racist society; as a worker, she has been the object of continual exploitation, occupying the lowest place on the wage scale and restricted to the most demeaning and uncreative jobs; as a woman she has seen her physical image defamed and been the object of the white master's uncontrollable lust and subjected to all the ideals of white womanhood as a model to which she should aspire; as a mother, she has seen her children torn from her breast and sold into slavery, she has seen them left at home without attention while she attended to the needs of the offspring of the ruling class.

Today, the Afro-American woman sees her children afflicted by dope addiction, the lack of a decent education and subjected to attacks by a racist society, legal lynchings, cannon fodder for America's imperialist wars of aggression, populating the prisons of this nation, etc. In addition, besides suffering the common fate of all oppressed and exploited people, the Afro-American woman continues to experience the age-old oppression of woman by man. In the home, she becomes the "slave of a slave." By giving men a false feeling of superiority in the home or in relationships with women, certain aspects of capitalist tension are alleviated. Men may be cruelly exploited and subjected to all sorts of dehumanizing tactics on the part of the ruling class, but at least they can take out their frustration on someone else--their women.

### History of Resistance

Two strains run through Black history that we might mention here--accommodation and resistance. While there have been Blacks who have tried to come to terms with the capitalist system and have struggled to enter that system on an equal basis with whites, the major thread that runs through Afro-American history has been the thread of resistance. It is in this arena that the important role of the Afro-American woman can be seen.

During Reconstruction, Black women played an important role in the Freedmen's Bureaus. Many Black women came South during this period, as their sisters were to do 100 years later, to offer their services in the schools and

other institutions which were being founded to assist the newly freed slaves.

The second half of the 19th century was to see the consolidation of the Northern industrialist class and its abandonment of the Afro-American. The rise of the KKK and the gradual re-enslavement of blacks as serfs in the South was only accomplished by the collusion of the federal government. During this period, many people spoke out against the terrorist tactics used against the Afro-American population and Ida B. Wells Barnett became an international figure denouncing lynching and discrimination against our people.

The decade of the 1960's again witnesses the Black woman in the forefront of the struggle for human dignity in this country. Who can forget the courage of Rosa Parks when she refused to move to the back of the bus, setting off the Montgomery Bus Boycott and long time activist, Ella Baker, who amongst other achievements, was responsible for the founding of SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee).

Fannie Lou Hamer and Unita Blackwell are but two of the Mississippi women who braved attack and death in their fight to gain the right to vote. Thousands of Black women were involved in the civil rights movement and played an important role in raising the consciousness of the whole nation to the feudal conditions still existing in the South. SNCC was the first civil rights organization to link up the struggle against racism at home with the war in Vietnam and women played an important role in that organization.

The Civil Rights Movement, the Black rebellions in cities and the blossoming of militant Black organizations like the Black Panther Party provided women an opportunity to continue to struggle against basic injustices in this country and inspired women of all nationalities to take a more militantly active part in political struggles. And this great tradition continues today. You will find Black women in the midst of all the ongoing struggles against racism, repression and exploitation in this country.

What then are the realities of the Afro-American woman's life? The United States being a highly industrialized, technological country, the overwhelming majority of its women are members of the working class. This is particularly true of the Black woman who in addition to class oppression has had to suffer over the years under the double yoke of racial and sexual discrimination and abuse. Some 55 to 60 per cent of Black women are workers. There are some historical factors which account for the great number of Black women workers.

Under the domination of the planter class in the southern part of the



United States, the Afro-American woman along with men constituted a cheap source of labor power for the plantation owners. In addition to her economic importance as a participant in the production process, she carried the added burden of reproducing the next generation of workers for the slavocracy.

The emancipation of the slaves didn't fundamentally change this dual role. An American form of feudalism was established in the South after the defeat of Reconstruction and as sharecropper and tenant farmer, the Afro-American woman was subjected to a continuing life of oppression and exploitation as an agricultural worker. A few Black women were hired to do the dirty work in the tobacco industry and canneries; the higher paying cleaner, industrial jobs were reserved for whites.

As northern industry expanded, more and more Blacks began what was to become a massive migration to the northern and western industrial centers in an attempt to escape the fascist-like political climate as well as the economic wretchedness and misery that was the lot of the vast majority of southern citizens. For the most part, however, up until World War I, Black women were denied access to the factories and most of them worked as domestics in private households or on farms.

The outbreak of the war cut off the supply of immigrant labor that had been flowing into the United States to supply the ever growing need for workers. In addition, a reduction in the labor force was created by men going off to fight. The need to replace these sources of manpower caused a change in labor patterns and women were incorporated into the work force in large numbers. All types of restrictions that had been in mode gave way in response to the need for workers in heavy industry. For the first time, industrial jobs were open to Black women and they left domestic service and farm jobs in droves. These jobs, however, only lasted for so long as the war did, and once the men returned the women were turned out to make room for the returning veterans.

Black women were active in the union organizing drives of the 1930's in spite of racist, sexist policies of the high executives of the A.F.L. which ignored Black workers for the most part. The C.I.O. was a much more progressive organization and did a lot to dispel some of the anti-union propaganda that was being propagated by the ruling class politicians and their lackeys, some petty-bourgeois Negro "Leaders" of the time.

Little by little, Black women began to find their way off the farm and

out of the kitchen. World War II aided this process. Once again a labor shortage was created and there was a need to fall back on the reserve army of workers--Blacks and women. Thousands of Afro-American women were hired during World War II by Goodyear Rubber Company and by aircraft and other industrial plants, but once again, many were dropped once the war was over.

In spite of this, courageous struggles were carried out against racist-sexist policies of both corporations, businesses and labor unions which tended to relegate Black women to a fringe relationship as workers and as a cheap source of labor to be called upon when needed either as strike breakers or to meet the demands of a temporary need for additional labor power.

The Afro-American woman has had jobs in steam laundries and worked in various menial and low paid occupations--sweepers, cleaners, rag-pickers, pressors, in fruit peeling and processing, labeling, etc. Today, more and more Black women have found their way into clerical jobs and along with service jobs, this remains the principal area where Black women are employed.

For the most part then, Black women are in the proletarian class. They own no means of production and therefore must sell their labor power to the bosses. Those who do not work outside the home can still be counted amongst the ranks of the working class. Although some theorists object to defining a woman's class by her husband's relationship to the productive process, this remains a workable procedure. There are several instances recorded where the wives of workers have participated in labor struggles and supported strikes by taking to picket lines and organizing women's auxiliaries to support their working men's fights. Therefore, their class interest is linked to that of their husband or father or brother and the women can surely be counted amongst the workers' ranks.

These are the characteristic features of Afro-American women in the past: from the earliest times, a participant in social production as well as responsibility for home and family life. This helps explain why the struggle for democratic rights of Black people included in its ranks many outstanding women fighters. The struggle against slavery, lynching, segregation, economic exclusion and institutional racism over the past century have all underscored the important role of women.

To be told to sit home and have babies for the revolution and not become involved in the political struggle may be an ideal theory for the capitalist class, but it hardly has a place in organizations and groups that are serious

about bringing an end to exploitation and oppression in this country. Not only are these ideas theoretically unsound, but they are in direct contradiction to the reality of the Black woman's life, both historically and at present. As women it is important to study in order to understand how the role of the Black woman in the home and in society fits into the general picture of third world people in this country and to fully understand how our struggle fits into the struggle of the working class forces against exploitation and oppression of all peoples.

But even more important, it is essential for women to take part in changing the reality of their lives. Theory alone doesn't do anything to change our daily existence. If we want to understand revolution, we have to take part in revolution.

The history of our people in this country portrays clearly the prominent role that the Afro-American woman has played in the on-going struggle against racism and exploitation. As mother, wife and worker, she has witnessed the frustration and anguish of the men and women and children in her community and on the job. As revolutionary, she will take an active part in changing this reality. The slave of a slave is a creature of the past. I doubt very seriously, given our history of resistance and struggle whether working class and poor Afro-American women are going to exchange a white master for a Black one.



## BLACK FAMILY IN AMERICA (1949)

Black Family in Slavery. Under favorable conditions the family as a natural organization developed considerable stability during slavery. The first requirement for stable family life among the slaves was, of course, that the family groups should not be broken up through sale or arbitrary action on the part of the masters. Where the plantation became a settled way of life and a social as well as an economic institution, the integrity of the slave family was generally respected by the masters. Moreover, the social relations which grew up facilitated the process by which the Negro took over the culture of the whites. The close association between whites and Negroes, often from childhood, enabled the slaves to take over the language, manners and ideas of the masters. These close contacts were enjoyed by the slaves who worked in and about the master's house. On many plantations the masters provided religious and moral instruction for the slaves. The moral supervision included, in some cases at least, the chaperonage of the female slaves. It was through those channels that the white man's ideas and sentiments in regard to sex and family relations were communicated to the slaves. These cultural advantages, which were restricted mainly to the house servant, became the basis of social distinctions among the slaves. The house servants enjoyed a certain prestige in the slave society which grew up about the Negro quarters.

The development of family life described above represents the development of the slave family under the most favorable conditions. Among the vast majority of slaves, the Negro mother remained the most stable and dependable element during the entire period of slavery. Despite a benevolent master, the slave family was often dispersed when the plantation was sold or an estate was settled. With indifferent or cruel masters the slave family was constantly being broken up and its members scattered. But in either case some regard had to be shown for the bond between the Negro mother and her children. The masters' economic interest in the survival of the children caused them to recognize the dependence of the young children upon the mother. Then, too, the master, whether out of humanity or self-interest, was compelled to respect the mother's often fierce attachment to her children. Wherever the charge that slave mothers were indifferent to their offspring has any factual support it

can be explained by the forced pregnancies and harsh experiences attending motherhood. Most of the evidence indicates that the slave mother was devoted to her children and made tremendous sacrifices for their welfare. She was generally the recognized head of the family group. She was the mistress of the cabin, to which the "husband" or father often made only weekly visits. Under such circumstances a maternal family group took form and the tradition of the Negro woman's responsibility for her family took root.

The Family Among the Free Negroes. It was among the free Negroes that the family first acquired an institutional character. This was possible primarily because the free Negroes were able to establish family life on a secure economic foundation. In the southern cities the free Negroes had a secure position in the economic organization. Partly on the basis of wealth and occupation, a class system emerged among the free Negroes. Among the wealthier free colored families in Louisiana and in Charleston, some of whom were themselves slaveholders, the family was similar to that of the white slaveholders. It was patriarchal in organization and the status of women was similar to that of the women among the white slaveholding class. Moreover, these families were founded upon traditions which had been built up over several generations. Those traditions were a measure, in a sense, of the extent to which the Negro had assimilated the American cultural heritage.

Civil War and Emancipation. The Civil War and emancipation created a crisis in the family life of the Negro. This crisis affected the free Negro as well as the slave family. It tended to destroy whatever stability the slave family had achieved under the slave regime. It tore the free Negro family from its moorings in a society where it occupied a privileged position. The distinction between slave and free was wiped out. How did the Negro family meet this crisis? How was its organization and stability influenced by its new relation to American culture? How, specifically, was its role or function in mediating American culture to the Negro affected by the Negro's new relation to American life?

When conditions became settled in the South the landless and illiterate freedman had to secure a living on a modified form of the plantation system. Concessions had to be made to the freedman in view of his new status. One of the concessions affected the family organization. The slave quarters were broken up and the Negroes were no longer forced to work in gangs. Each family

group moved off by itself to a place where it could lead a separate existence. In the contracts which the Negroes made with their landlords, the Negro father and husband found a substantial support for his new status in family relations. Sometimes the wife as well as the husband made her cross for her signature to the contract, but more often it was the husband who assumed responsibility for the new economic relation with the white landlord. Masculine authority in the family was even more firmly established when the Negro undertook to buy a farm. Moreover, his new economic relationship to the land created a material interest in his family. As the head of the family he directed the labor of his wife and children and became concerned with the discipline of his children, who were to succeed him as owners of the land.

In the world of the Negro folk in the rural areas of the South, there grew up a family system that met the needs of the environment. Many of the ideas concerning sex relations and mating were carried over from slavery. Consequently, the family lacked an institutional character, since legal marriage and family traditions did not exist among a large section of the population. The family groups originated in the mating of young people who regarded sex relations outside of marriage as normal behavior. When pregnancy resulted, the child was taken into the mother's family group. Generally the family group to which the mother belonged had originated in a similar fashion. During the disorder following slavery a woman after becoming pregnant would assume the responsibility of motherhood. From time to time other children were added to the family group through more or less permanent "marriage" with one or more men. Sometimes the man might bring his child or children to the family group, or some orphaned child or the child of a relative might be included. Thus the family among a large section of the Negro population became a sort of amorphous group held together by the feelings and common interests that might develop in the same household during the struggle for existence.

From the standpoint of marriage statistics the rural Negro population has shown a large percentage of illegitimacy. But these statistics have little meaning if they are not related to the folkways regarding sex and marriage relations which have grown up in those isolated rural areas. The type of sex and marital relations which have been described does not indicate that sex relations have been promiscuous and free from controls. There has been, in the first place, the general recognition of the obligation of the mother to her children. In fact, pregnancy has been regarded as a phase of the maturing or

fulfillment of the function of a woman. On the other hand, marriage meant subordination to a man or the formation of a new type of relationship. Often, therefore, when a girl became pregnant and the man wanted to marry her, the girl's mother objected. Later the girl might marry the father of her child or some other man. But this meant forming a partnership in working a farm together and assuming other obligations. In a society of this type the mother continued to occupy a dominant position in the family. The grandmother enjoyed an even more important position and has always been a leading figure in the Negro family.

The progressive stabilization of Negro family life continued throughout the nineteenth century and during the first decade of the twentieth. This process was associated with a gradual increase in home and landownership and has involved the intermarriage of the stable elements among the descendants of free Negroes with the more ambitious and successful freedmen with a background of slavery. The descendants of the free Negroes brought to these unions a rich cultural heritage, and the ambitious descendants of slaves brought new aspirations and a new outlook on life. Out of this process there emerged a class stratification of the Negro population which was based largely upon social distinctions, the principal one of which was the tradition of a stable and conventional family life. In placing a high value upon a stable and conventional family life, these elements in the Negro population were safeguarding the chief means through which the gains of the Negro in civilization were preserved and transmitted to future generations.

Urbanization and Negro Family Life. In the hundreds of towns and cities of the South, the Negro family had taken shape and the rural folk culture was attempting to adjust itself to new conditions. Many Negro women had been attracted to these urban areas because of the chance to gain a living in domestic service. Sometimes they carried their illegitimate as well as their legitimate offspring with them. The freedom from familial and community controls sometimes meant the sloughing off of the responsibilities of motherhood, and the sexual freedom of the rural areas lost much of its harmless character. Sex expression tended to become a purely individualistic affair in which the hedonistic element became the chief end. Yet the family continued to survive among the majority of the population in these towns and cities. Here its maternal character was even more conspicuous than among the rural folk, not only as a result of the high rate of illegitimacy but also because of

desertion on the part of the male head of the family. Amid the general demoralization of family life in these urban areas, there were enclaves of families which because of deeply rooted traditions maintained conventional family life and held themselves aloof from the masses.

The effects of an urban environment upon the Negro family were accentuated among the masses who migrated to the metropolitan areas of the North. The inadequacy of the sex and familial folkways and mores which had given stability to life in the rural South was revealed in the problems of the Negro family in the city. First, there was the problem of illegitimacy. As we have seen, illegitimacy was not necessarily a social problem among the isolated folk in the rural South. It did not violate the mores and the ideal of motherhood, for there women enjoyed a certain social sanction in any case. In an urban environment sex and motherhood were given a new social definition. The bearing of children was an economic burden which placed a handicap upon the mother as well as upon the family group in the severe struggle for existence. Then, too, the community, through neighbors, schoolteachers, social workers and others, frowned upon unmarried motherhood and defined it as immoral. As a consequence the unmarried mother's behavior lost its naive character. Her growing sophistication with the ways of city life, together with the economic burden of childbearing and the moral disapproval of the community, changed her attitude toward motherhood. Although this resulted in much demoralization, it should not be overlooked that the new stimuli of the city awakened the imagination of men and women, and the romantic element became involved in the sex experience.

The character of the Negro family during the various stages of its development has been affected by the social isolation of Negroes in American society. The lack of opportunity for the Negro male to participate freely in the economic organization and his subordination to whites as well as the general exclusion of Negroes from political activities have all affected the organization and the functioning of the Negro family. This has entailed a waste of human life and human energy. It represents in a sense the price which the Negro has been forced to pay in order to survive in American society. But this survival has not been the survival of a biological group but of a sociologically defined group. And it has been the family which has assured the survival of the Negro in American society.





**\$1200**  
TO  
**1250 DOLLARS!**  
**FOR NEGROES!!**

THE undersigned wishes to purchase a large lot of NEGROES for the New Orleans market. I will pay \$1200 to \$1250 for No. 1 young men, and \$850 to \$1000 for No. 1 young women. In fact I will pay more for likely

**NEGROES,**

Than any other trader in Kentucky. My office is adjoining the Broadway Hotel, on Broadway, Lexington, Ky., where for my Agent can always be found.

**WM. F. TALBOTT.**

LEXINGTON, JULY 2, 1853.



SELLING A MOTHER'S CHILD: A SLAVE AUCTION (1841)

**60**

During the day . . . a number of sales were made. David and Caroline were purchased together by a Natchez planter. They left us, grinning broadly, and in a most happy state of mind, caused by the fact of their not being separated. Sethe was sold to a planter of Baton Rouge, her eyes flashing with anger as she was led away.

The same man also purchased Randall. The little fellow was made to jump, and run across the floor, and perform many other feats, exhibiting his activity and condition. All the time the trade was going on, Eliza was crying aloud, and wringing her hands. She besought the man not to buy him, unless he also bought herself and Emily. She promised, in that case, to be the most faithful slave that ever lived. The man answered that he could not afford it, and then Eliza burst into a paroxysm of grief, weeping plaintively. Freeman

[owner of the slave-pen] turned round to her, savagely, with his whip in his uplifted hand, ordering her to stop her noise, or he would flog her. He would not have such work--such snivelling; and unless she ceased that minute, he would take her to the yard and give her a hundred lashes. Yes, he would take the nonsense out of her pretty quick--if he didn't might he be d--d. Eliza shrunk before him, and tried to wipe away her tears, but it was all in vain. She wanted to be with her children, she said, the little time she had to live.

All the frowns and threats of Freeman could not wholly silence the afflicted mother. She kept on begging and beseeching them, most piteously, not to separate the three. Over and over again she told them how she loved her boy. A great many times she repeated her former promises--how very faithful and obedient she would be; how hard she would labor day and night, to the last moment of her life; if he would only buy them all together. But it was of no avail; the man could not afford it. The bargain was agreed upon, and Randall must go alone. Then Eliza ran to him; embraced him passionately; kissed him again and again; told him to remember her--all the while her tears falling in the boy's face like rain.

Freeman damned her, calling her a blubbering, bawling wench, and ordered her to go to her place, and behave herself, and be somebody. He swore he wouldn't stand such stuff but a little longer. He would soon give her something to cry about, if she was not mighty careful, and that she might depend upon.

The planter from Baton Rouge, with his new purchase, was ready to depart.

"Don't cry, mama. I will be a good boy. Don't cry," said Randall, looking back, as they passed out of the door.

What has become of the lad, God knows. It was a mournful scene indeed. I would have cried myself if I had dared.

"FIGHT, AND IF YOU CAN'T FIGHT, KICK!" AN EX-SLAVE REMEMBERS  
HER MOTHER (1930)

# 61

My mother was the smartest Black woman in Eden. She was as quick as a flash of lightning, and whatever she did could not be done better. She could do anything. She cooked, washed, ironed, spun, nursed and labored in the field. She made as good a field hand as she did a cook. I have heard Master Jennings say to his wife, "Fannie has her faults, but she can outwork any nigger in the country. I'd bet my life on that."

My mother certainly had her faults as a slave. She was very different in nature from Aunt Caroline. Ma fussed, fought and kicked all the time. I tell you, she was a demon. She said that she wouldn't be whipped, and when she fussed, all Eden must have known it. She was loud and boisterous, and it seemed to me that you could hear her a mile away. Father was often the prey of her high temper. With all her ability for work, she did not make a good slave. She was too high-spirited and independent. I tell you, she was a captain.

The one doctrine of my mother's teaching which was branded upon my senses was that I should never let anyone abuse me. "I'll kill you, gal, if you don't stand up for yourself," she would say. "Fight, and if you can't fight, kick; if you can't kick, then bite." Ma was generally willing to work, but if she didn't feel like doing something, none could make her do it. At least, the Jennings couldn't make, or didn't make her.

"Bob, I don't want no sorry nigger around me. I can't tolerate you if you ain't got no backbone." Such constant warning to my father had its effect. My mother's unrest and fear of abuse spread gradually to my father. He seemed to have been made after the timid kind. He would never fuss back at my mother, or if he did, he couldn't be heard above her shouting. Pa was also a sower of all seeds. He was a yardman, houseman, plowman, gardner, blacksmith, carpenter, keysmith and anything else they chose him to be.

I was the oldest child. My mother had three other children by the time I was about six years old. It was at this age that I remember the almost daily talks of my mother on the cruelty of slavery. I would say nothing to her, but I was thinking all the time that slavery did not seem so cruel. Master and Mistress Jennings were not mean to my mother. It was she who was mean to them.

One day my mother's temper ran wild. For some reason Mistress Jennings struck her with a stick. Ma struck back and a fight followed. Mr. Jennings was not at home and the children became frightened and ran upstairs. For half hour they wrestled in the kitchen. Mistress, seeing that she could not get the better of ma, ran out in the road, with ma right on her heels. In the road, my mother flew into her again. The thought seemed to race across my mother's mind to tear mistress' clothing off her body. She suddenly began to tear Mistress Jennings' clothes off. She caught hold, pulled, ripped and tore. Poor mistress was nearly naked when the storekeeper got to them and pulled ma off.

"Why, Fannie, what do you mean by that?" he asked.

"Why, I'll kill her, I'll kill her dead if she ever strikes me again."

I have never been able to find out the why of the whole thing. My mother was in a rage for two days, and when pa asked her about it and told her that she shouldn't have done it, it was all that Aunt Caroline could do to keep her from giving him the same dose of medicine.

"No explaining necessary. You are chicken-livered, and you couldn't understand." This was all ma would say about it.

Pa heard Mr. Jennings say that Fannie would have to be whipped by law. He told ma. Two mornings afterwards, two men came in at the big gate, one with a long lash in his hand. I was in the yard and I hoped they couldn't find ma. To my surprise, I saw her running around the house, straight in the direction of the men. She must have seen them coming. I should have known that she wouldn't hide. She knew what they were coming for, and she intended to meet them halfway. She swooped upon them like a hawk on chickens. I believe they were afraid of her or thought she was crazy. One man had a long beard which she grabbed with one hand, and the lash with the other. Her body was made strong with madness. She was a good match for them. Mr. Jennings came and pulled her away. I don't know what would have happened if he hadn't come at that moment, for one man had already pulled his gun out. Ma did not see the gun until Mr. Jennings came up. On catching sight of it, she said, "Use your gun, use it and blow my brains out if you will."

Master sent her to the cabin and he talked with the man for a long time. I had watched the whole scene with hands calmly clasped in front of me. I felt no urge to do anything but look on.

That evening Mistress Jennings came down to the cabin. She stopped at the door and called my mother. Ma came out.

"Well, Fannie," she said, "I'll have to send you away. You won't be whipped, and I'm afraid you'll get killed. They have to knock you down like a beef."

"I'll go to hell or anywhere else, but I won't be whipped," ma answered.

"You can't take the baby, Fannie, Aunt Mary can keep it with the other children."

Mother said nothing at this. That night, ma and pa sat up late, talking over things, I guess. Pa loved me, and I heard him say, "I'm going too, Fannie. About a week later, she called me and told me that she and pa were

going to leave me the next day, that they were going to Memphis. She didn't know for how long.

"But don't be abused, Puss." She always called me Puss. My right name was Cornelia. I cannot tell in words the feelings I had at that time. My sorrow knew no bound. My very soul seemed to cry out, "Gone, gone, gone forever." I cried until my eyes looked like balls of fire. I felt for the first time in my life that I had been abused. How cruel it was to take my mother and father from me, I thought. My mother had been right. Slavery was cruel, so very cruel.

Thus my mother and father were hired to Tennessee. The next morning they were to leave. I saw ma working around with the baby under her arms as if it had been a bundle of some kind. Pa came up to the cabin with an old mare for ma to ride, and an old mule for himself. Mr. Jennings was with him.

"Fannie, leave the baby with Aunt Mary," said Mr. Jennings very quietly.

At this, ma took the baby by its feet, a foot in each hand, and with the baby's head swinging downward, she vowed to smash its brains out before she'd leave it. Tears were streaming down her face. It was seldom that ma cried, and everyone knew that she meant every word. Ma took her baby with her.

With ma gone, there was no excitement around the place. Aunt Mary was old and very steady in her ways; Aunt Caroline was naturally quiet, and so were all the rest. I didn't have much to do around the place, and I thought about ma more than anyone around there knew. Yes, ma had been right. Slavery was chuck full of cruelty and abuse. During this time I decided to follow my mother's example. I intended to fight, and if I couldn't fight I'd kick; and if I couldn't kick, I'd bite. The children from the big house played with my brothers, but I got out of the bunch. I stopped playing with them. I didn't care about them, so why play with them. At different times I got into scraps with them. Everyone began to say, "Cornelia is the spit of her mother. She is going to be just like Fannie." And I delighted in hearing this. I wanted to be like ma now.

SLAVE WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN INDUSTRY (1970)

# 62

It is well known that southern industrialization lagged behind that of the North and of Great Britain. . . . The most interesting means by which Southerners attempted to raise the quality and reduce the cost of their products

was the use of industrial slave labor in several specific ways. First, southern businessmen extensively exploited slave women and children (and sometimes superannuates [the elderly]). . . .

Slave women and children comprised large proportions of the work forces in most slave-employing textile, hemp and tobacco factories. Florida's Arcadia Manufacturing Company was but one example of a textile mill run entirely by 35 bondswomen, ranging in age from fifteen to twenty years, and by six or seven young slave males. Young slaves also operated many Kentucky and Missouri hemp factories. One visitor entered a ropewalk's "long apartment, where there were 18 or 20 boys, of from eight to 15 years old, spinning the 'filling.'" As early as 1820, Fayette County, Kentucky, hemp factories alone employed 135 slave children to work with 199 slave men. Four decades later, Missouri hemp factories employed 100 slave children to help 125 bondsmen. Slave women and children also worked at "light" tasks in most tobacco factories; one prominent tobacco manufacturer, who employed twenty slave women "stemmers," six boys and a few girls, used for the arduous task of "pressing" the tobacco only ten mature slave males in the entire factory.

Slave women and children sometimes worked at "heavy" industries such as sugar refining and rice milling. "All along the endless carrier [the conveyor belt connecting the outside yard with the inside sugar milling machinery]," wrote one observer, "are ranged slave children, whose business it is to place the cane upon it, when it is conveyed through the shed into the main building, where it falls between the rollers, [and] is crushed." . . . During the height of the rice milling season, one large steam rice mill added fifty bondswomen to the normal work force of forty-eight bondsmen, while another steam rice mill supplemented twelve slave men with ten boys and girls.

Other heavy industries such as transportation and lumbering used slave women and children to a considerable extent. In 1800, slave women composed one-half of the work force at South Carolina's Santee Canal. Later, women often helped build Louisiana levees. Many lower South railroads owned female slaves, who worked alongside the male slaves. Two slave women, Maria and Amelia, corded wood at Governor John A. Quitman's Mississippi woodyard. The Gulf Coast lumber industry employed thousands of bondswomen.

Iron works and mines also directed slave women and children to lug trams and to push lumps of ore into crushers and furnaces.

Slaveowners used women and children in industries in several ways in

order to increase the competitiveness of southern products. First, slave women and children cost less to capitalize and to maintain than prime males. John Ewing Colhoun, a South Carolina textile manufacturer, estimated that slave children cost two-thirds as much to maintain as adult slave cotton millers. Another Carolinian estimated that the difference in cost between female and male slave labor was even greater than that between slave and free labor. Evidence from businesses using slave women and children supports the conclusion that they could reduce labor costs substantially.

Second, in certain light industries, such as manufacturing, slave women and children could be as productive as prime males, and sometimes they could perform certain industrial tasks even more efficiently. This was especially true in tobacco, hemp and cotton manufacturing, where efficiency depended more upon sprightliness and nimbleness than upon strength and endurance. The smaller hands and agile fingers of women and children could splice cotton or hempen threads more easily than the clumsy fingers of males. Delicate palms and dexterous digits processed tobacco more carefully.

Third, industrialists used slave women and children in order to utilize surplus slaves fully. "Negro children from ten to fourteen years of age are now a heavy tax upon the rest of the planter's force," editorialized the Jackson Mississippian. "Slaves not sufficiently strong to work in the cotton fields can attend to the looms and spindles in the cotton mills," concluded a visitor to a cotton mill where 30 of 128 slaves were children, "and most of the girls in this establishment would not be suited for plantation work." Placing Negroes in cotton mills "render[s] many of our slaves who are generally idle in youth profitable at an early age," observed a textile promoter. "Feeble hands and children can perform this work," concluded a rice miller, "leaving the effective force for improvements or to prepare for another crop."

The intention of industrialists to utilize slave capital fully by employing women and children extensively is confirmed by an analysis of the manuscript census schedules. This study reveals that almost one-half of the slave population was in the labor force--a figure which is close to, if not at, the maximum possible participation rate. Since 44 per cent of the slaves were under fourteen years of age and 4 per cent were adults over sixty, then most slave women, most teen-age slaves, many slave children, as well as most adult males seemed to be at work. Moreover, the slave participation rate in the labor force was 60 per cent greater than the white participation rate. This

suggests that slaves of all age groups were forced to labor more extensively than whites.

# 63

"WE DO AS MUCH, WE EAT AS MUCH, WE WANT AS MUCH" (1853, 1867)

I come to you, citizens of New York, as I suppose you ought to be. I am a citizen of the state of New York; I was born in it, and I was a slave in the state of New York; and now I am a good citizen of this State. I was born here, and I can tell you I feel at home here. I've been lookin' round and watchin' things, and I know a little mite 'bout Woman's Rights, too. I come forth to speak 'bout Woman's Rights, and want to throw in my little mite, to keep the scales a-movin'. I know that it feels a kind o' hissin' and ticklin' like to see a colored woman get up and tell you about things, and Woman's Rights. We have all been thrown down so low that nobody thought we'd ever get up again; but we have been long enough trodden now; we will come up again, and now I am here. . . .

My friends, I am rejoiced that you are glad, but I don't know how you will feel when I get through. I come from another field--the country of the slave. They have got their liberty--so much good luck to have slavery partly destroyed; not entirely. I want it root and branch destroyed. Then we will all be free indeed. I feel that if I have to answer for the deeds done in my body just as much as a man, I have a right to have just as much as a man. There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored women; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before. So I am for keeping the thing going while things are stirring; because if we wait till it is still, it will take a great while to get it going again. White women are a great deal smarter, and know more than colored women, while colored women do not know scarcely anything. They go out washing, which is about as high as a colored woman gets, and their men go about idle, strutting up and down; and when the women come home, they ask for their money and take it all, and then scold because there is no food. I want you to consider on that, chil'n. I call you chil'n; you are somebody's chil'n, and I am old enough to be mother of all that is here. I want women to have their rights. In the courts women have no right, no voice; nobody speaks for them. I wish woman to have her voice there among the



pettifoggers. If it is not a fit place for women, it is unfit for men to be there.

I am above eighty years old; it is about time for me to be going. I have been forty years a slave and forty years free, and would be here forty years more to have equal rights for all. I suppose I am kept here because something remains for me to do; I suppose I am yet to help to break the chain. I have done a great deal of work; as much as a man, but did not get so much pay. I used to work in the field and bind grain, keeping up with the cradler; but men doing no more, got twice as much pay. . . . We do as much, we eat as much, we want as much. I suppose I am about the only colored woman that goes about to speak for the rights of the colored women. I want to keep the thing stirring, now that the ice is cracked. What we want is a little money. You men know that you get as much again as women, when you write, or for what you do. When we get our rights, we shall not have to come to you for money, for then we shall have money enough in our own pockets; and maybe you will ask us for money. But help us now until we get it. It is a good consolation to know that when we have got this battle once fought we shall not be coming to you any more. . . .

I am glad to see that men are getting their rights, but I want women to get theirs, and while the water is stirring I will step into the pool. Now that there is a great stir about colored men's getting their rights is the time for women to step in and have theirs.

# 64

THE IDEAL WIFE: THE OPPRESSION OF BLACK WOMEN IN THE  
RURAL PERIOD (1934)

Young men when they marry want someone whose labor can help them "get on their feet." Middle-aged men want younger women who can combine this labor with some of the feminine graces. Old men want companionship. A good woman, it is conceded, can be of moral assistance to a man.

I always tell my old lady that every man ought to have a good woman to 'courage and help him. My old lady and me always says the young married folks gets along better. She and me, we don't have no difficulties, but Lordy, you ought to a see that chile I married first! She was a pretty little thing, but she up and died and never had no chilluns.

A man of thirty-five, still unmarried, stipulated three conditions which a woman should meet before he would be willing to marry. She must be able to work,

she must be nice looking, and she must be willing to acknowledge him as the head of the house.

The most desirable mates for girls in those families ambitious to maintain a stable unit are men who can assure further stability. Unfortunately for romantic love, the economic arrangement under which they live does not develop many eligibles for daughters of such families, and family authority is exerted, sometimes to the point of physical force, to keep the girls from marrying at all, because it would seriously disturb the economic balance of the original family unit. Elopements have been a means of escaping these complications.

Me and my husband was courtin' a long time, and we jest 'cided to git married. Hit was on a Wednesday night and me and my brother went down ter my cousin's to carry a turkey hen, and I seed a light of a car and we got in the car and drove home. We stayed home 'bout half a hour, and I had done got my clothes and carried them over ter my girl friend's house, then to my grandma's home. I set up till all went to bed. So I pretended I was going to set on the front porch, and I got my coat and started running. He was up the road. I got scared after I got out of the house 'cause I knowed papa would know my clothes wasn't home, and if I went back he'd kill me. We got married, and I didn't have time to drink no wine and cake, and we went over to his mother's house. We heard the horn coming and runned in the house, and sho' nuff it was papa, and he axed my husband's mother, "Is my little Gracey here?" He had a shot gun and he was so mad my husband's mother told him I wasn't there, and he left. Reason I didn't ask papa, I knowed he wouldn't give me away. Mamma done said it was all right with her, but papa always said no, 'cause he wouldn't give my two oldest sisters away.

The conflict here is between the basic requirement of the family group for the added value of the services of its grown children, the prospect of transferring this service to another family and the imperatives of romantic love.

Hodman Speeks was a widower about fifty-eight years old, and reputed to have saved some money over the years. He owned his home and was now ready to marry again, and felt that he could afford to select a wife without being bound by the usual economic considerations. He was not particular about the women of his community. He had seen too much of them. They not only were a disappointment, but failed also to respect sufficiently his own valuation of the advantages which he, as a husband, could bring. But if a young and attractive woman came in from the outside he would attire himself in his old Prince Albert coat, a cane and a high collar, and begin a round of visits in the neighborhood.

I'm looking for a good woman right now [he confided to a visitor to the neighborhood]. You know a man gits filled with betterment after he gits

a good wife. Now, I tells you, I'm this kind of a man. I feels that 'tain't a man's place to slave a woman to death. I'm going to take care of a wife. When my other wife got taken sick I had a doctor to her in less than fifteen minutes. I owns this home, but 'tain't fit for a woman. I got some money and I'd build a new house. I know something 'bout telephones, too. I'd see that they git a telephone put in here. My wife could have her own little patch and we'd be right happy together--she'n me. 'Tain't meant for a man to be all alone in the world --reckon he gits too reckless with hisself.

Neither the young women of the country nor the old ones, however, were much impressed with the widower. As he passed the house of one of his neighbors a woman remarked, "Here comes that old man Speeks. He ain't got good sense. He got more land than he knows what to do with, but he's so mean and foolish nobody goes near him."

# 65

## AT THE HANDS OF A MOB: A BLACK WOMAN FIGHTS AGAINST LYNCHING

Mr. Fortune met me in Jersey City, according to agreement. He greeted me with "Well, we've been a long time getting you to New York, but now you are here I am afraid you will have to stay." "I can't see how that follows," said I. "Well," he said, "from the rumpus you have kicked up I feel assured of it. Oh, I know it was you because it sounded just like you."

"Will you please tell me what you are talking about?" I asked. "Haven't you seen the morning paper?" he replied. I told him no. He handed me a copy of the New York Sun where he had marked an Associated Press dispatch from Memphis. The article stated that, acting on an editorial of the Commercial Appeal of the previous Monday morning, a committee of leading citizens had gone to the office of the Free Speech that night, run the business manager, J.L.Fleming, out of town, destroyed the type and furnishing of the office, and left a note saying that anyone trying to publish the paper again would be punished with death. The article went on to say that the paper was owned by Ida B. Wells, a former schoolteacher, who was traveling in the North.

Although I had been warned repeatedly by my own people that something would happen if I did not cease harping on the lynching of three months before, I had expected that happening to come when I was at home. I had ought a pistol the first thing after Tom Moss was lynched, because I expected some cowardly retaliation from the lynchers. I felt that one had better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog or a rat in a trap. I had already determined to

sell my life as dearly as possible if attacked. I felt if I could take one lyncher with me, this would even up the score a little bit. But fate decided that the blow should fall when I was away, thus settling for me the question whether I should go West or East. My first thought after recovering from the shock of the information given me by Mr. Fortune was to find out if Mr. Fleming got away safely. I went at once to the telegraph office and sent a telegram to B.F.Booth, my lawyer, asking that details be sent me at the home address of Mr. Fortune.

In due time telegrams and letters came assuring me of Mr. Fleming's safety and begging me not to return. My friends declared that the trains and my home were being watched by white men who promised to kill me on sight. They also told me that colored men were organized to protect me if I should return. They said it would mean more bloodshed, more widows and orphans if I came back, and now that I was out of it all, to stay away where I would be safe from harm.

Because I saw the chance to be of more service to the cause by staying in New York than by returning to Memphis, I accepted their advice, took a position on the New York Age, and continued my fight against lynching and lynchers. They had destroyed my paper, in which every dollar I had in the world was invested. They had made me an exile and threatened my life for hinting at the truth. I felt that I owed it to myself and my race to tell the whole truth.

So with the splendid help of T. Thomas Fortune and Jerome B. Peterson, owners and editors of the New York Age, I was given an opportunity to tell the world for the first time the true story of Negro lynchings, which were becoming more numerous and horrible. Had it not been for the courage and vision of these two men, I could never have made such headway in embalzing the story to the world. These men gave me a one-fourth interest in the paper in return for my subscription lists, which were afterward furnished me, and I became a weekly contributor on salary.

The readers will doubtless wonder what caused the destruction of my paper after three months of constant agitation following the lynching of my friends. They were killed on the ninth of March. The Free Speech was destroyed 27 May 1892, nearly three months later. I thought then it was the white southerner's chivalrous defense of his womanhood which caused the mob to destroy my paper, even though it was known that the truth had been spoken. I know now that it was an excuse to do what they had wanted to do before but had not dared because they had no good reason until the appearance of that famous editorial.

For the first time in their lives the white people of Memphis had seen earnest, united action by Negroes which upset economic and business conditions. They had thought the excitement would die down; that Negroes would forget and become again, as before, the wealth producers of the South--the hewers of wood and drawers of water, the servants of white men. But the excitement kept up, the colored people continued to leave, business remained at a standstill, and there was still a dearth of servants to cook their meals and wash their clothes and keep their homes in order, to nurse their babies and wait on their tables, to build their houses and do all classes of laborious work.

Besides, no class of people like Negroes spent their money like water, riding on streetcars and railroad trains, especially on Sundays and excursions. No other class bought clothes and food with such little haggling as they or were so easily satisfied. The whites had killed the goose that laid the golden egg of Memphis prosperity and Negro contentment; yet they were amazed that colored people continued to leave the city by scores and hundreds.

In casting about for the cause of all this restlessness and dissatisfaction the leaders concluded that the Free Speech was the disturbing factor. They were right. They felt that the only way to restore "harmony between the races" would be to get rid of the Free Speech. Yet they had to do it in such a way as not to arouse further antagonism in the Negroes themselves who were left in town, whom they wished to placate.

Months passed after the lynching before the opportunity came in which they appeared to be "defending the honor of their women" and therefore justified in destroying the paper which attacked that honor. I did not realize all this at that time, but I have come to know since that that was the moving spirit which dominated the mob in destroying my paper.

Like many another person who had read of lynching in the South, I had accepted the idea meant to be conveyed--that although lynching was irregular and contrary to law and order, unreasoning anger over the terrible crime of rape led to the lynching; that perhaps the brute deserved death anyhow and the mob was justified in taking his life.

But Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell, and Lee Stewart had been lynched in Memphis, one of the leading cities of the South, in which no lynching had taken place before, with just as much brutality as other victims of the mob; and they had committed no crime against white women. This is what opened my eyes to what lynching really was. An excuse to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property and thus keep the race terrorized and "keep the nigger down."

## 66

## WHEN MALINDY SINGS

G'way an' quit dat noise, Miss Lucy--  
 Put dat music book away;  
 What's de use to keep on tryin'?  
 Ef you practise twell you're gray,  
 You cain't sta't no notes a-flyin'  
 Lak de ones dat rants and rings  
 F'om de kitchen to de big woods  
 When Malindy sings.

You ain't got de nachel 'ogans  
 Fu' to make de soun' come right,  
 You ain't got de ru'ns an' twistin's  
 Fu' to make it sweet an' light.  
 Tell you one thing now, Miss Lucy,  
 An' I'm tellin' you fu' true,  
 When hit comes to raal right singin',  
 'T ain't no easy thing to do.

Easy 'nough fu' folks to hollah,  
 Lookin' at de lines an' dots,  
 When dey ain't no one kin sence it,  
 An' de chune comes in, in spots;  
 But fu' real melojous music,  
 Dat jes' strikes yo' hea't and clings,  
 Jes' you stan' an' listen wif me  
 When Malindy sings.

Ain't you nevah hyeahd Malindy?  
 Blessed soul, tek up de cross!  
 Look hyeah, ain't you jokin', honey?  
 Well, you don't know whut you los'.  
 Y' ought to hyeah dat gal a-wa'blin',  
 Robins, la'ks, an' all dem things,  
 Heish dey moufs an' hides dey faces  
 When Malindy sings.

Fiddlin' man jes' stop his fiddlin',  
 Lay his fiddle on de she'f;  
 Mockin'-bird quit tryin' to whistle,  
 'Cause he jes' so shamed hisse'f.  
 Folks a-playin' on de banjo  
 Draps dey fingahs on de strings--  
 Bless yo' soul--fu'gits to move em,  
 When Malindy sings.

She jes' spreads huh mouf and hollahs,  
 "Come to Jesus," twell you hyeah  
 Sinnahs' tremblin' steps and voices,  
 Timid-lak a'drawin' neah;  
 Den she tu'ns to "Rock of Ages,"  
 Simply to de cross she clings,  
 An' you fin' yo' teahs a-drappin'  
 When Malindy sings.

Who dat says dat humble praises  
 Wife de Master nevah counts?  
 Heish yo' mouf, I hyeah dat music,  
 Ez hit rises up an' mounts--  
 Floatin' by de hills and valleys,  
 Way above dis buryin' sod.  
 Ez hit makes its way in glory  
 To de very gates of God!

Oh, hit's sweetah dan de music  
 Of an edicated band;  
 An' hit's dearah dan de battle's  
 Song o' triumph in de lan'.  
 It seems holier dan evenin'  
 When de solemm chu'ch bell rings,  
 Ez I sit an' ca'mly listen  
 While Malindy sings.

Towsah, stop dat ba'kin', hyeah me!  
 Mandy, mek dat chile keep still;  
 Don't you hyeah de echoes callin'  
 F'om de valley to de hill?  
 Let me listen, I can hyeah it,  
 Th'oo de bresh of angels' wings,  
 Sof' an' s weet, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,"  
 Ez Malindy sings.

## NEGRO WOMEN WORKERS: THE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD

In a society based on production for profit, to be both a woman worker and a Negro is to suffer a double handicap.

The Negro woman worker is doubly victimized. She suffers both from the general discriminations against women workers and from her identity as a member of a nationality singled out by the ruling class for special plundering, persecution and oppression.

As a woman worker she feels the general inequalities--lower wages, longer hours, bad working conditions, etc., imposed upon women in a society based on private ownership of public wealth and resources, private control of the social means of production.

As a Negro, she is paid even less than her exploited white sister, made to work under even harder conditions, longer hours, etc., and is systematically excluded from all but the heaviest and dirtiest jobs. She is barred from promotion, as a rule. On her lower wages, she must meet the discriminative higher rentals extracted from Negro workers by piratical landlords, both Negro and white, in the segregated ghettos into which she and her family are forced to live by Jim Crow laws or practices. Thus the dirty deal that falls to all working women in capitalist society falls heaviest upon the Negro woman worker.

For 300 years, under both chattel slavery and wage slavery, Negro women had worked on the plantations as laborers and in upper class households as domestics and personal servants. They were almost solely limited to these occupations up to 1910. From that year, however, the reports of the U.S. Department of Labor show that Negro women have been following the general shift from the farm into the industrial centers.

The entry of Negro women into industry was facilitated by the World War. In the early days of that bloody conflict when American participation was limited to furnishing loans and war material to the Allies, the expansion of the war industries and allied industries created a demand for extra labor. Immigration being at a low ebb because of the war, the northern industrialists turned to the Southern plantations for Negro labor. Recruiting agents scoured the South, offering the Negro share-croppers and peons "work and freedom" in the North. The economic base was thus afforded for a mighty mass migration of Negroes from the South. Hundreds of thousands came North, seeking political



freedom, decent wages and working and living conditions, and educational facilities for their children; eager to escape the terror-ridden South with its new slavery of peonage and share-cropping.

In 1917, when the rulers of the United States demanded the conversion of white and Negro workers into cannon fodder to protect the loans of the House of Morgan to the Allies, women were used to replace men, either wholly or partly, in many industries. White women so employed were paid less than the men had been getting, while Negro women received still lower wages. In addition, the Negro women were assigned to the heaviest and most hazardous jobs in the war industries, and to the more menial and grueling work in other lines, such as textiles and clothing factories, food industry, wood-product manufacture, etc.

"The census of 1920, taken immediately after the war period, showed that Negro women in the manufacturing and mechanical industries had increased by over one-half," a Labor Department bulletin reports.

Negro women, tormented by the memory of the drudgery and humiliations of farm and domestic service, happily imagined themselves firmly planted in the industries, with their relatively better conditions. Then came the end of the World War, the collapse of war-time "prosperity" which, because of the correspondingly high cost of living, was confined mainly to the munition barons and other war profiteers and 100 per cent "patriots." The crisis of 1921 led to wholesale firing of workers, with the women, and particularly the Negro women workers, the first to be discharged. Hand in hand with the mass firing went the slashing of wages for those still employed, and the replacement of women workers with the demobilized men at greater speed-up and a resultant increase of profits for the employers.

Only in the laundry industry, notorious for its high speed-up, low pay and terrible working conditions, and in certain departments of textiles, etc., with similarly bad reputations, were the Negro women able to hold their own. In these low-pay, unskilled industries, the employers can employ workers new to industry and therefore lacking in the traditions of organized labor. The Negro women fitted this bill. In addition to their inexperience in labor organizations, the bosses find it possible to isolate them from the white workers in the plants by the chauvinist poison of race hatred and prejudice which is carefully instilled into the minds of the white workers by the capitalist press, schools and other institutions, both governmental and private.

### Fought for Better Conditions

But the Negro women workers were not slow to protest against conditions. In some instances they even forced a betterment of the conditions in the industries. The history of labor struggles in the last two decades affords abundant proof that Negro women and men workers are among the best fighters for the interests of the working class and against capitalist oppression. Negro women participated in many strike struggles, and in several instances (Chicago and St. Louis nut-pickers' strikes) carried out militant strikes in factories where mostly Negro women were employed.

Confining Negro workers to "the more menial, the lower paid, heavier and more hazardous jobs," not only enables the bosses to subject them to greater exploitation, but to use them to depress the wages of all workers. All the tricks at the disposal of the white ruling class are used to force the Negro into a lower position, to create antagonism and hatred between Negro workers and white workers, and thus to hamper united effort for better conditions.

Only where discrimination against Negroes is vigorously combatted and the unity of all workers forged in joint struggles can the working class better its conditions. It is up to the white women workers, themselves the victims of wage and other discriminations, to realize the necessity to struggle for, and with the Negro women workers, for equal rights, equal pay for equal work, and an end to intolerable working conditions. The white working women, in their own interests, must stand at the head of the struggle for improved conditions for the Negro working women. The same is true of the white men workers whose own interests demand that they conduct the sharpest fight against all practices of sex and racial discrimination. They, too, must demand equal pay for equal work and the right to all categories of jobs for women, white and Negro, and the youth, which also suffers special discrimination at the hands of the exploiters of labor.

MOTHER TO SON

# 68

Well, son, I'll tell you:  
 Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.  
 It's had tacks in it,  
 And splinters,  
 And boards torn up,  
 And places with no carpet on the floor--

Bare.  
 But all the time  
 I'se been a'climbin' on,  
 And reachin' landin's,  
 And turnin' corners,  
 And sometimes goin' in the dark  
 Where there ain't been no light.  
 So, boy, don't you turn back.  
 Don't you set down on the steps  
 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.  
 Don't you fall now--  
 For I'se still goin', honey,  
 I'se still climbin',  
 And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

# 69

## THE SPECIAL PLIGHT AND ROLE OF BLACK WOMEN (1971)

The special plight and the role of Black women is not something that just happened three years ago. We've had a special plight for 350 years. My grandmother had it. My grandmother was a slave. She died in 1960. She was 136 years old. She died in Mount Bayou, Mississippi.

It's been a special plight for the Black woman. I remember my uncles and some of my aunts--and that's why it really tickled me when you talked about integration. Because I'm very Black, but I remember some of my uncles and some of my aunts was as white as anybody in here, and blue-eyed, and some kind of green-eyed--and my grandfather didn't do it, you know. So what the folks is fighting at this point is what they started. They started unloading the slave ships of Africa, that's when they started. And right now, sometimes, you know I work for the liberation of all people, because when I liberate myself, I'm liberating other people. But you know, sometimes I really feel more sorrier for the white woman than I feel for ourselves because she been caught up in this thing, caught up feeling very special, and folks, I'm going to put it on the line, because my job is not to make people feel comfortable--(drowned out by applause). You've been caught up in this thing because, you know, you worked my grandmother, and after that you worked my mother, and then finally you got hold of me. And you really thought, people--you might try and cool it now, but I been watching you, baby. You thought that you was more because you was a woman, and especially a white woman, you had this kind of angel feeling that you were untouchable. You know that? There's nothing under the sun that made you believe that you was just like me, that under this white pigment of skin

is red blood, just like under this black skin of mine. So we was used as Black women over and over and over. You know, I remember a time when I was working around white people's house, and one thing that would make me mad as hell, after I would be done slaved all day long, this white woman would get on the phone, calling some of her friends, and said, "You know, I'm tired, because we have been working," and I said, "That's a damn lie." You're not used to that kind of language, honey, but I'm gone tell you where it's at. So all of these things was happening because you had more. You had been put on a pedestal, and then not only put on a pedestal, but you had been put in something like a ivory castle. So what happened to you, we have busted the castle open and whacking like hell for the pedestal. And when you hit the ground, you're gone have to fight like hell, like we've been fighting all this time.

In the past, I don't care how poor this white woman was, in the South she still felt like she was more than us. In the North, I don't care how poor or how rich this white woman has been, she still felt like she was more than us. But coming to the realization of the thing, her freedom is shackled in chains to mine, and she realizes for the first time that she is not free until I am free. The point about it, the male influence in this country--you know the white male, he didn't go and brainwash the Black man and the Black woman, he brainwashed his wife too. . . . He made her think that she was a angel. You know the reason I can say it, Folks, I been watching. And there's a lot of people been watching. That's why it's such a shock wherever we go throughout this country, it's a great blow. White Americans today don't know what in the world to do because when they put us behind them, that's where they made their mistake. If they had put us in front, they wouldn't have let us look back. But they put us behind them, and we watched every move they made. . . .

And this is the reason I tell the world, as I travel to and fro, I'm not fighting for equal rights. What do I want to be equal to [Senator] Eastland for? Just tell me that. But we are not only going to liberate ourselves. I think it's a responsibility. I think we're special people, God's children is going to help in the survival of this country if it's not too late. We're a lot sicker than people realize we are. And what we are doing now in the South, in politics, in gaining seats for Black people and concerned whites in the state of Mississippi, is going to have an effect on what happens throughout this country. You know, I used to think that if I could go North and tell people about the plight of the Black folk in the state of Mississippi,

everything would be all right. But traveling around, I found one thing for sure: it's up-South and down-South, and it's no different. The man shoot me in the face in Mississippi, and you turn around he'll shoot you in the back here [in New York]. We have a problem, folks, and we want to try to deal with the problem in the only way that we can deal with the problem as far as Black women. And you know, I'm not hung up on this about liberating myself from the Black man, I'm not going to try that thing. I got a Black husband, six feet three, two hundred and forty pounds, with a 14 shoe, that I don't want to be liberated from. But we are here to work side by side with this Black man in trying to bring liberation to all people.

We have a job as Black women, to support whatever is right, and to bring in justice where we've had so much injustice. Some people say, well, I work for \$24 per week. That's not true in my case, I work sometimes for \$15 per week. I remember my mother working for 25 and 30 cents per day. But we are organizing ourselves now, because we don't have any other choice. Sunflower County is one of the few counties in the state of Mississippi where in that particular area we didn't lose one Black teacher. Because . . . I went in and told the judge, I said, "Judge, we're not going to stand by and see you take a man with a master's degree and bring him down to janitor help. So if we don't have the principal . . . there ain't gonna be no school, private or public." These are the kinds of roles.

A few years ago throughout the country the middle-class Black woman--I used to say not really Black women, but the middle-class colored women, c-u-l-l-u-d, didn't even respect the kind of work that I was doing. But you see now, baby, whether you have a Ph.D., D.D., or no D, we're in this bag together. And whether you're from Morehouse or Nohouse, we're still in this bag together. Not to fight to try to liberate ourselves from the men--this is another trick to get us fighting among ourselves--but to work together with the Black man, then we will have a better chance to just act as human beings, and to be treated as human beings in our sick society.

## THE BLACK WOMAN TODAY (1972)

Black women in contemporary American society have been influenced by the conditions which characterize the history of Black people in Africa and the New World. The "matriarchy" has become a popular symbol that is used by many to describe Black womanhood, although this label is probably most often invalid. Today Black women play highly functional and sometimes autonomous roles within the family and society because the same economic and social conditions which allowed for the emergence of a female-dominated society during slavery still perpetuate this type of family structure. The female-headed household is assumed to be the predominant family form although less than one quarter of all Black families in the United States are headed by a woman. (In 1965, 21 per cent of the families were female-headed.) The popular Moynihan report (The Negro Family: The Case for National Action) aroused national fervor in 1965, when its author asserted that the Black family had reached a stage of breakdown because of the high percentage of female-headed households. Little consideration was given to the fact that this almost one-fourth broken families included those ruptured by death, desertion, separation, divorce, as well as a perhaps higher percentage of common-law arrangements which are not considered in the marriage statistics as a legitimate form. Another consideration is that the very close conjugal relationship that, ideally, comes with legal marriages is not as strongly a part of the traditions of poor Black people. Legal marriage is a decided choice, but not necessarily the unquestionable preference for all adult males and females.

Given the highly unsuitable conditions to which the Black family has been subjected, one would expect the number of female-headed households to be considerably higher. On this point, Erik Erikson asks the question:

Why do we hear so much about the absent father and so little about the present father--although the majority of fathers are present? Why do we hear so little about the presence of the mother and what she has achieved against staggering odds? If it were not for the magnificent strength of low-income Negro mothers, surely the family would have disintegrated by now. Why is so little said about the strengths of low-income families, and so much about their weaknesses?

It has been argued that the so-called matriarchy is a myth because the Black family and the Black woman have never functioned in the manner in which proponents of the matriarchy thesis propose. The matriarchy has been defined as: ". . . a society in which some, if not all, of the legal powers relating to

the ordering and governing of the family—power over property, over inheritance, over marriage, over the house are lodged in women rather than men." The standards which have been applied to the so-called Black matriarchy depart markedly from this definition. In fact, it has been suggested that no matriarchy (defined as a society ruled by women) is known to exist in any part of the world.

The highly functional role that the Black female has historically played has caused her to be erroneously stereotyped as a matriarch, and this label has been quite injurious to Black women and men. It has caused a considerable amount of frustration and emasculation within Black men because it implies that they are incapable of fulfilling the responsibilities for the care and protection of their families. It has also caused certain added responsibilities to be placed on the shoulders of the Black woman because the larger societal expectation of her was in conformance with this stereotyped conception.

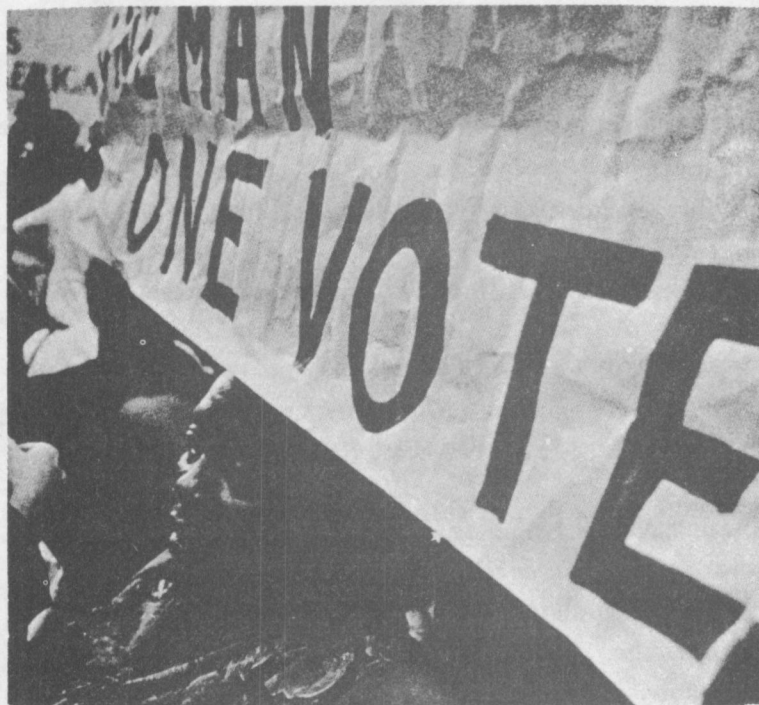
The conceptions and expectations that the larger society holds about the Black woman have a strong impact on the entire Black community, and notably affect her relationship with Black men. A popular theme projected by social scientists and in the popular literature is that Black men have been psychologically castrated because of the strong role Black women play in the home and community. Moreover, it is often assumed that the male's inability to function as the larger society expects him to is more a function of his having been emasculated by the woman than the society. Although the scars of emasculation probably penetrated the Black man more deeply than the injustices inflicted upon the woman, there has, however, been an overemphasis upon the degree to which the Black man has been damaged. Some writers on the subject would have us believe that the damage done is irreparable. They also refuse to place the responsibility on the racist society, but rather insist that it is caused by the so-called domineering wife and/or mother. Few will accept the theory that much of the damage is done outside the male-female relationship and that it is within the home that his failure is reinforced because it is there that he is reminded of his inability to function as a productive member of the society and to his fullest capacity in his home. Robert and Staples [in The Black Scholar, Jan.-Feb. 1970] have suggested that this alleged conflict between Blacks has been deliberately advanced:

It has been functional for the white ruling class, through its ideological apparatus, to create internal antagonisms in the black community between black men and women to divide them and to ward off effective attacks on the external system or white racism. It is a mere manifestation of the divide-and-conquer strategy, used by most ruling classes through the annals of man, to continue the exploitation of an oppressed group.

This position is quite relevant to many young Black men and women who tend to view frustrations and tensions in their relationships as having originated internally rather than to the external forces which have historically impinged upon them.

Black women must utilize those survival techniques in the larger struggle for the liberation of Black people. Even the middle-class Black woman must redefine her role. No longer must she view herself as an independent professional woman devoid of the burdens of race prejudice and discrimination, simply because she had the opportunity to be socially mobile. Her destiny is intricately related to those of poor women, and her commitment to survival must also be the same.

Black women must join all Black people in the process of defining who they are, what their goals are to be, who their prophets and heroes--past and present--are and what the strategies of survival will be; whether we will allow ourselves to become assimilated into the mainstream on the oppressor's terms or whether we will fight the ominous extermination that is already taking a toll on the lives of college students, political activists and anyone else who defies the social system in ways which have been forbidden.



MRS. FANNIE LOU HAMER  
AT THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION, 1964



Children, I come back today  
 To tell you a story of the long dark way  
 That I had to climb, that I had to know  
 In order that the race might live and grow.  
 Look at my face--dark as the night--  
 Yet shining like the sun with love's true light.  
 I am the child they stole from the sand  
 Three hundred years ago in Africa's land.  
 I am the dark girl who crossed the wide sea  
 Carrying in my body the seed of the free.  
 I am the woman who worked in the field  
 Bringing the cotton and the corn to yield.  
 I am the one who labored as a slave,  
 Beaten and mistreated for the work that I gave--  
 Children sold away from me, husband sold, too.  
 No safety, no love, no respect was I due.  
 Three hundred years in the deepest South:  
 But God put a song and a prayer in my mouth.  
 God put a dream like steel in my soul.  
 Now, through my children, I'm reaching the goal.  
 Now, through my children, young and free,  
 I realize the blessings denied to me.  
 I couldn't read then. I couldn't write.  
 I had nothing, back there in the night.  
 Sometimes, the valley was filled with tears,  
 But I kept trudging on through the lonely years.  
 Sometimes, the road was hot with sun,  
 But I had to keep on till my work was done:  
 I had to keep on! No stopping for me--  
 I was the seed of the coming Free.  
 I nourished the dream that nothing could smother  
 Deep in my breast--the Negro mother.  
 I had only hope then, but now through you,  
 Dark ones of today, my dreams must come true:  
 All you dark children in the world out there,  
 Remember my sweat, my pain, my despair.  
 Remember my years, heavy with sorrow--  
 And make of those years a torch for tomorrow.  
 Make of my past a road to the light  
 Out of the darkness, the ignorance, the night.  
 Lift high my banner out of the dust.  
 Stand like free men supporting my trust.  
 Believe in the right, let none push you back.  
 Remember the whip and the slaver's track.  
 Remember how the strong in struggle and strife  
 Still bar you the way, and deny you life--  
 But march ever forward, breaking down bars.  
 Look ever upward at the sun and the stars.  
 Oh, my dark children, may my dreams and my prayers  
 Impel you forever up the great stairs--  
 For I will be with you till no white brother  
 Dares keep down the children of the Negro mother.

## Supplementary Readings for Black Women and the Family

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2. John Bracey, et. al. The Black Matriarchy: Myth or Reality, 1971
3. Johnetta Cole, "Black Women in America: An Annotated Bibliography," Black Scholar, December 1971.
4. Lenwood G. Davis, The Black Woman In American Society: A Selected Annotated Bibliography, 1975.  
 —, The Black Family in Urban Areas in The United States: Bibliography (Council of Planning Librarians,) 1975.
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6. Herbert Gutman; The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1976.
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8. Gerda Lerner, Black Women in White America, 1973.
9. John Scanzoni, The Black Family in Modern Society: Patterns of Stability and Security, 1977.
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# Chapter 14

## BLACK CULTURE AND THE ARTS

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the impact of European colonialism imperialism, and racism on the the culture of traditional Africa.
2. How does "creolization" explain the transformation of Black culture from African to Afro-American? How did the conditions of slavery influence this process?
3. What social forces shaped Black culture and art during the rural agricultural period?
4. Discuss the three arts movements which emerged among Afro-American people in the urban period. Why did they emerge during the urban period and not in the slavery or rural periods?

### KEY CONCEPTS

African survivals/Africanisms

Art

Assimiliation

Creolization

Culture

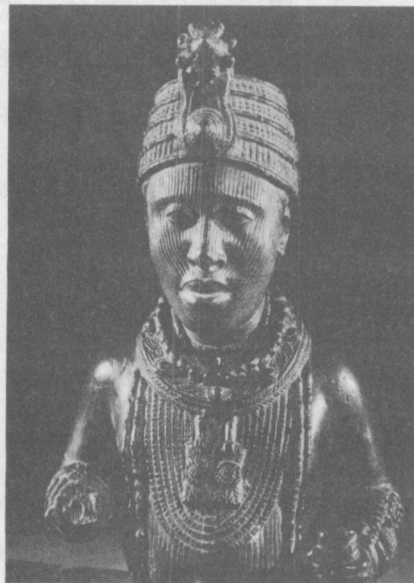
Cultural aggression/cultural resistance

Black Arts Movement

Harlem Renaissance

Jazz/bebop

Tradition/



Black culture is of major significance in the study of the Afro-American experience. Historically, considerable controversy has existed around the question of the origins and content of Black culture. Even in this period of the deepening social, political, and economic crisis of monopoly capitalism, Black culture continues to be a significant source of cohesion among Black people.

In general, culture is the sum of values and behavioral preferences that make up a people's life style and approach to the activities of everyday life. The most profound manifestation of culture is in the common and routine daily activities such as talking and communicating, childrearing, cooking, dressing, recreation, etc. When this daily activity and values/behavioral preferences are concentrated in a conscious process of creative expression, it becomes cultural form of the highest order--what we will call the arts--music, literature, sculpture, painting, dance, photography, etc.

Black culture is the dynamic product of a nation of people--the Afro-American nation. Its development reflects both the similarities and differences between Black people and the entire society, and the similarities and differences that exist among different groups of Black people, especially based on class differences.

Culture (in form and content) is historical and Black culture is no exception. Just as the historical stages of the Black experience reflect changes in the mode of material (economic) production, so cultural change reflects related changes in the mode of cultural production. In other words, similar factors are involved in how Black culture is produced: What technology is used? What numbers of people with what kinds of skills are involved? Who owns what? And who works for or with whom? So the mode of cultural production is dependent on the mode of material production. Furthermore, the historical development of Black culture reflects the same historical periods as all other aspects of the Black experience. It is especially important to begin with Africa.

Traditional African culture. The development of Afro-American culture has its

roots before slavery in Africa. The pattern of cultural development in Africa reflects both diversity and similarity. Compared with other cultures inside Africa, the culture of various groups varied considerably. This was mainly a function of the concrete conditions in which the cultures developed and the stage of development of each particular group. However, the pattern of cultural development in Africa was broadly similar when compared to the cultures of Europe. Most African societies were pre-literate (had no formal written language and relied more on oral history). African societies were relatively small and therefore generally developed strong social codes to regulate behavior in such areas as sexual relations and property rights. These patterns were quite different among the more technologically developed societies of Europe.

The level of cultural development among different groups in Africa varied according to the level of technological development. Some societies in Africa were among those with the highest level of technology in the world. For example, research recently reported in Science (October, 1978) indicates that an advanced method of forging iron existed in East Africa a thousand years before the process was discovered in Europe in the 19th Century. Of course, the main point is that African material development was always part of the world development. What is also important is that this level of technological development was reversed by European domination so that African societies were reduced to a lower level and eventual dependency on European technology.

The main point here is that African culture was more advanced and more developed before the colonial aggression of Europeans than after. Examples of this are the "cultural borrowing" that took place between Europe and Africa. A notable example is the impact of West African sculpture on 20th century modern art. The art of the Dan, Bakota, and Baule (among others) were discovered by the modern artists in the first showing of "primitive" art in Paris. This exposure had a major impact on the development of the cubist school of art (led by Picasso and others). How-

ever, the colonial domination of European societies has reversed this trend so that the development and flowering of African culture is only now beginning again in the independent African countries, especially the ones who have or are fighting a war of national liberation. Now, however, it is not limited to the pre-colonial "tribe," but reflects the emergence of new national culture. For example, instead of separate "tribal" cultures, we now have the emergence of new Mozambican culture.

There has been considerable discussion about the current necessity of reconstructing "traditional" African culture. A study of the current developments in Africa, however, will reveal two important questions regarding culture: (1) the continuing role of cultural aggression and cultural genocide as part of imperialist domination in Africa; (2) the role of cultural resistance as a weapon in the fight to end imperialism and the use of culture in consolidating new post-colonial African nations. This involves creating a genuine national culture, a new national unity that transcends the many religious, ethnic, geographical, and other differences that imperialism has been able to use to further divide and weaken African peoples.

In sum, therefore, Africa had a rich cultural heritage that constituted one aspect of what the African people brought with them to the Americas during the slave trade. Africa thus provided the basis for what was to develop as Afro-American culture.

Slavery. Afro-American culture which emerged under slavery, however, was not based solely on African cultural tradition. Those who hold such a position today fail to reflect on the fundamental transformation of Africans becoming Afro-Americans, a new people with profound historical and symbolic links to Africa, but with a new material reality and a new cultural reality.

Cultural creolization best describes this process of transformation. Creolization is a process in which two people and two cultures interact with one people taking

on the characteristics of the resulting (cultural) synthesis. For Black people in the U.S., this cultural creolization has involved two complex and dynamic aspects.

(1) Among Africans themselves a creolization process developed as Africans captured from different places and from different cultural backgrounds were forced to live together under the conditions of the slave trade and slavery. A process of mutual cultural exchange and synthesis took place.

(2) Almost simultaneously, this dynamic mixture of African cultures was interacting and exchanging with European cultures, which were themselves varied because of the different national identities and cultural patterns of the oppressive slave traders and plantation owners (British, French, etc.)

Thus, this process of creolization or cultural transformation (which Africans were going through within the institution of slavery in the Americas) has two distinct yet inter-related dimensions, two ways in which Africans were being transformed into Afro-Americans: (a) one way was the loss or continued survival of African cultural traits; (b) the other was the adoption and internalization of the new cultural expression in the Americas, the development of Afro-American culture.

This process of creolization, however, was determined by the conditions of forced labor and total social control under slavery. Thus, we can identify a continuum that reflects degrees of creolization or cultural transformation among Black people during slavery based on structural features of the slave system.

(1) Runaway slave communities: The maroons of Jamaica and the "geeche" or "gullah" people of the Sea Islands off the Georgia and South Carolina coast preserved African cultural traits to the most significant degree. However, creolization still characterized these areas, but because of historical isolation, these areas have appeared to be "most African" over the years. This was the main point proved by the work of linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner and anthropologist Melville Herskovitz.

(2) Field Slaves: The conditions of working from "can't see in the morning to

can't see at night," terror of the overseer's whip, and segregated social life on the plantation led to three key cultural developments: A distinct Afro-American culture began to develop in this context that had two opposite problems: one aspect was the violence used to bring about the cultural transformation, and the other was the resulting anarchy of a people without the strong bonds of cultural unity and therefore self-imposed social control.

(3) House Slaves: These conditions were conducive to the greatest degree of cultural assimilation, meaning that so much of the slave owner's culture was borrowed by the house slaves that they became the most "Euro-Americanized" of all Afro-Americans.

(4) Urban Slaves: The city was the center of cosmopolitan and dynamic cultural interaction, and the slaves were no exception. There was a great deal more freedom of movement for the slaves in the city, and two lines of cultural development took place, the sacred and the profane, or the culture rooted in the church and that rooted in the barroom.

The best example of this typology of Black cultural diversity during the slave period is with music. Many other aspects of material cultural life (sculpture, use of African languages, practicing traditional African religious rituals, etc.) were prohibited and were penalized. Many communities of runaway slaves maintained the drum and the basic features of traditional African music. The field slave was the collective author of many of the spirituals which we might refer to as the Africanization of Christian cultural expression based on the painful experience of being a slave. House slaves were frequently used to entertain the slave master, and for this reason were taught to perform European music as white people did it. Urban slaves were caught in the dynamic cultural explosion and began to develop the rudiments of jazz.

The Rural Period. The vast majority of Black people during slavery could be categorized as field slaves. After the Civil War and Reconstruction, a dis-



tinct national culture emerged that unified the Afro-American people, in the Black Belt South especially. This new national culture of the Afro-American people was conditioned by the structural constraints of the new historical period. This economic and political repression of the rural tenancy period kept Black people poor, uneducated, and relatively stationary on the land. In this sense, it was a restrictive and limited social world. On the other hand, it was not slavery, and the intimate control of plantation life by slaveowners and overseers did not exist. There was some degree of freedom.

The oppressive character of the economic and political structures of Black rural life and the little freedom that did exist provided the context in which Black culture developed in the rural period. A two-sided, dialectical character to the Black experience developed: (1) the individual tenant farmer's family life that revolved around the yearly cycle of farming, and (2) the collective life of the community on Saturday (market day) and Sunday (church). The main form in which this existed was the contradiction between the isolated individual life on the farm and the collective cultural experience for the entire community on Sunday at church. Everyday cultural life was molded by the poverty of subsistence farming, while collective cultural development took place around the church and included food preparation, music, recreation, moral training, ritual observance of life stages (christening, baptism, marriage, and funerals), etc. In general, then, the family was associated with both aspects of this dialectical cultural existence: it reflected the necessities and freedom of tenant farming and rural life.

The development of a nation has generally reflected the drive of an emerging bourgeois class to control its own market, to run its own turf, so to speak, and facilitate its own development. Correspondingly, national culture is dominated by this class as well. Imperialism and racism stunted the development of the Afro-American nation, especially in blocking the development of a Black bour-

geoisie. Because of this, the Black church, as a social institution that did develop, has played a very important role in the Afro-American nation. The Black preacher emerged as a personification of the cohesiveness and national unity of Black people and was one of the main vehicles for the spread of Afro-American culture and Afro-American national consciousness, especially among the Black middle class or petty bourgeoisie. In addition, the church was the basis for the collective expression of Afro-American national development in the area of economic life because it was through the church that mutual aid societies and the like developed. This role of the church in Afro-American national development is the basis for the continued pivotal role of the church among Black people.

The above represents the dominant aspect of Black culture during this period: the Black church was the main expression of the rising bourgeois cultural domination over the Black community. However, this was not the only cultural dimension. The masses of people were not all socially organized into families that participated in the "morally righteous" context of the church. There were the unattached individuals whose cultural lives revolved around the more immediate pleasures and emotions of the beer hall, cafe, and brothel. Here we might sum this up as the contradiction between Saturday night and Sunday morning, with a significant number of people (especially males and especially before marriage) participating in both. One cultural contradiction in the rural period can be summed up as that between gospel music and the blues, both of which fully emerge in this period.

Urban Period. The urban period was a decisive qualitative change in the economic and political conditions of Black people and represented a basis for new developments in Afro-American culture. Not only were there changes in the general cultural life of Black people, but for the first time, full blown self-conscious arts movements developed among Black people as the most concentrated expressions of the new experiences. How was the urban experience different from the rural period such that new cultural forms could emerge? First, there did exist the

seeds of Black urban culture during slavery and the rural period. However, the mode of cultural production was limited by the overall class relation, social context, and technological possibilities. The urban period begins around World War I and gave Black culture greater access to the American mainstream and the mainstream greater access to it. Second, when Blacks moved en masse to the city, there was no immediate transition, but rather one that was generational in nature. The first generation of migrants to the city and to some extent remnants of it can even be found today especially in the major cities like Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and New York. There were three major forces which operate to transform Black culture during this period.

(1) Migration and Urbanization. World War I caused mass migrations of Blacks out of the South and led to the concentration of Black into ghettos of Northern urban centers. City life was less centralized and less intimate than rural life had been and Black culture reflected this greater variety. Through the radio, movies, night clubs, and just being in the city meant that Black people had more access and were more influenced by the cultural patterns of other nationalities ( and in turn exercise considerable influence on other cultures).

(2) Proletarianization: The daily work experience of Black people was transformed from mainly agricultural work on the farm to factory work in large industries alongside white workers, and in the urban service sector (as maids, pullman porters, etc.). The new conditions and the newer forms of struggle which emerged provided a new content on which Black culture could develop and new experience on which the cultural and artistic creativity could draw. In addition, industry's need for a better trained labor force meant that Black people had greater access to education. A more literate population and cultural artists who were skilled in various crafts resulted.

(3) Commercialization. Black culture and the arts ceased to be something

developed by Blacks for their own personal consumption and enjoyment. Its products became commodities, products of the capitalist system available to anybody who had money enough to pay. With soul food, the commercialized form was the restaurant. With dance, it was night clubs. With music, there were the big bands, night clubs, and the recording industry. And with writing, an outpouring of poems, novels, short stories, books, and magazines. In the slavery period, Black culture was essentially underground. During the rural period, it was isolated and intimate. In both periods, it was rejected by whites because of the racism and oppression that Black people faced. In the urban period, however, Black culture was seized by capitalism and subjected to the impersonal forces of the market over which Black cultural artists nor the masses of Black people have had little control.

Music, literature, painting, etc, as we have said, represent the most concentrated forms of cultural expression-- the arts. An art movement consists of artists and patrons (supporters) who are united by sharing common interests, themes, and general social rapport. The unity is ideological (how they view the world) and political (how they apply these beliefs in analyzing their concrete problems), and sometimes organizational as well.

Three art movements have emerged among Black people during the urban period reflecting the impact of the changes outlined above. Also, these powerful cultural arts movement among Black people have always developed in the context of the most intensive period of Black people's struggle for liberation. How well any particular movement reflected the sentiment and aspirations of the struggling masses must be investigated, however, and not assumed. The Harlem Renaissance emerged during the post-migration post-war period of radical nationalist protest, the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and the Be Bop period developed amidst the revolutionary turbulence of the Great Depression and World War II, and the Black Arts Movement developed on the heels of the Black Power Movement in the 1960s.

Let us briefly assess these arts movements by analyzing the concrete conditions in which they emerged, their content and form, and their relationship, appeal, and impact on the masses of Black people.

THE 20S: THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE: The 1920s were prosperous times. After a brief period of post-war decline, the U.S. economy soared high off the immense profits earned off the first imperialist war. Black people, as recent arrivals in Northern industrial centers, enjoyed this prosperity as well, though the post-war riots and numerous lay-offs revealed that the city was not free from oppression for Blacks.

As a concept, the "New Negro" accurately sums up what was happening to Black people. "New" described the migration out of the South and urbanization of Black people into Northern ghettos, and the proletarianization of rural Southern Black farmers. "New Negro" also described a wide range of new subjective and ideological developments. There was greater social class stratification of Black people, including the emergence of a new more assertive middle class which was critical of the accommodationism of the "old Negro" (e.g. Booker T. Washington's leadership). There was the tremendous flowering of the organized struggle of Black people for liberation with the NAACP, the Urban League and the Garvey movement all emerging between 1909 and 1917.

Thus, "New Negro" became the credo of the movement of Black writers, artists musicians, actors, intellectuals, and their patrons which emerged during this period. The cultural expression of this "New Negro" was authentic and widespread. No longer was Black cultural expression isolated and shunned. Artists like Langston Hughes were encouraged and inspired to expose the life and culture of Black people in a way that had not been done before.

The Harlem Renaissance was not only a movement of the city, but a particular city--New York, the country's biggest and most cosmopolitan city. This was the first modern art movement of the Afro-American and as such it had as a major

task to defeat the racist notion that Blacks were culturally inferior . To accomplish this the new Black artists had to also declare themselves not bound by the reaction of the masses to their task of artistic creativity and production. This was petty bourgeois elitism at its height. On the other hand, the artist had to face the capitalist market with his work. Publishing companies and other cultural businesses bought up the products, mass-produced them and circulated them. Increasingly, this contradiction between the work of the artist and the work of the culture business began to transform Black art into a more commercial product. The mediating social organization was the salon gathering of artists and patrons, or the parties "downtown" frequented by the literary establishment to which some young Black artists would be invited. In this setting, wealthy patrons would meet young Black artists whom they would sponsor thus providing them with income other than what they were paid from competing in the market place.

The Harlem Renaissance was the work of a few talented and highly educated Black people, their white publishers and promoters, and a few others who could afford "Black culture." Thus, while it had an impact on this key sector of the Black population, the Harlem Renaissance was practically unknown to the vast majority of Black people and had little direct impact on solving the problems with which they were most concerned.

The 30s and 40s: The WPA Artists and the BeBop Musicians: The Great Depression laid bare the racist rule of the rich and threw most working people out on the street to starve and die. All working people suffered, but Black people suffered even more so because they were the very last hired and the very first fired. This was devastating proof that the North offered no sanctuary from racism and class exploitation. Rather, life in the northern cities merely represented another, perhaps even more vicious, manifestation of oppression because it held out the hope of being different. In this context, the Black artist was affected as well since the income derived from selling his art "products" dried up like everything

else. This shattered the social organization of the artists that grew up during the Harlem Renaissance. This was not limited to New York, but was spread from coast to coast.

Two forces external to the Black community had a tremendous impact on the development of the arts movement of this period: (a) the Federal Government set up an unprecedented welfare program under Franklin D. Roosevelt which included the hiring of artists. Black artists in every part of the country got WPA jobs. This changed the social relations of cultural production: from the individual production of the artist, possibly supported by a sponsor, with the commercial aspect taken over by a large capitalist firm as the set of key relationships, under the WPA, artists began working collectively (often with social scientists), with the government as the employer (actually acting as a large impersonal employer in the name of the entire country). Many people got work and a lot of work got done. (b) The overall condition of the masses of people led to a rapid increase in revolutionary political activity, including a significant (at that particular time) being played by the Communist Party, USA. A major development was the unionization of Black workers into the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organization), the organization of the unemployed in the Unemployed Councils, and militant Black-White unity in the Black belt south (Southern Negro Youth Congress, Southern Tenant Farmers Union, and the Sharecroppers Union). This raised economic and revolutionary change as the fundamental questions facing both Blacks and Whites, and this was a political question that made a profound impact on artists.

Whereas Locke could say that the New Negro in the 1920s was "radical on race matters, conservative on others," Black people in the 1930's and 1940's were increasingly radical on all matters. Black people and their artists began to understand that racist discrimination was a product of capitalism and imperialism. Thus, they became active as leaders and participants in campaigns for radical and

revolutionary changes. These themes of revolutionary class struggle pervaded the work of many Black artists. The best examples of this new proletarian consciousness among Black writers were Richard Wright and Langston Hughes. As cultural artists, they sought (1) to apply the theory, insights and lessons of the world revolutionary struggles to the concrete problems of Black people; (2) to expose the experiences of Black people in the U.S. with racism and poverty, and to relate this to the common problem of exploitation facing the entire working class, thereby developing the cultural basis for unity of action among Blacks and whites; (3) to contribute to the development of a united front of all exploited and oppressed peoples for the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism as a necessary step in the total liberation of Black people.

Thus, the cultural artists of the Depression era were much more in touch with the sentiment and aspirations of the masses of Black people. They pointed out that a total restructuring of American society was necessary if Black people were to be free, and they actively lent their talent and skills to achieve these aims.

The key aspect of the Bebop experience was that it was a cultural revolt. The "hipster" was a man in revolt: beard, dark glasses, even at night, beret, esoteric speech, a militant political attitude, spiced with a love for "art." This was a Black man who had been emancipated from the South, and who was bitter about being kept from realizing his full humanity. While living in this society, his cultural revolt really represented both withdrawal into closed little circles, and a new cultural energy that swept through the arts and won Afro-American culture and art respect throughout the world. This is true of no one more than the musician Charlie "Bird" Parker, the father of Bebop:

Parker spoke through his horn like a man who, after getting along for years on a diet of basic English, had suddenly swallowed the dictionary, yet miraculously managed to digest every page. Where others had played in and around arpeggios on a single chord for four beats, he would involve two, three, or four; where they had



given an impression of brisk motion with their little flotillas of eight notes, Parker would play sixteenths. Where tonal discretion had been the better part of their technical valor, Parker threw conventional tonal beauty out of the window to concentrate more fully on matter rather than manner.

Bebop improvisation was a cultural parallel to the theory of relativity and Bird's voice had an impact like the atomic bomb .

1960's: The Black Arts Movement. The Civil Rights movement and its underlying cultural goal of assimilation was aborted by the reactionary repression Blacks received in the form of assassination, imprisonment, and racist ideological attacks. The Civil Rights movement had been the hope of a large and developing number of aspirants to middle class life. When it failed, many of these young middle class youth became a social base for a new nationalist movement against America. While this had a political aspect, it also had a cultural aspect. Black Power became a rallying cry for the new born nationalist who began to defect from the Civil Rights movement, particularly after the death of Malcom X and Martin Luther King. In this context the Black Arts Movement was born.

But the Black Power concept and the Black Arts Movement reflected the particular plight of the Black middle class that was previously revealed during the Harlem Renaissance. It desired and had fought for full integration into the "mainstream," but having been barred by pervasive racism, it was forced to become more nationalist and seek its advancement in ambivalent unity with the masses of Black people.

Black power fell short of pointing out that the problems of Black people resulted from racist oppression and capitalist exploitation. Similarly, the Black Arts movement defined the problems of Black people more as the result of "European American cultural insensitivity" and not primarily as the result of the operations of the capitalist system. The solution proposed by the Black Arts Movement (and Black power) was essentially reformist: "A cultural revolution in arts and ideas,"

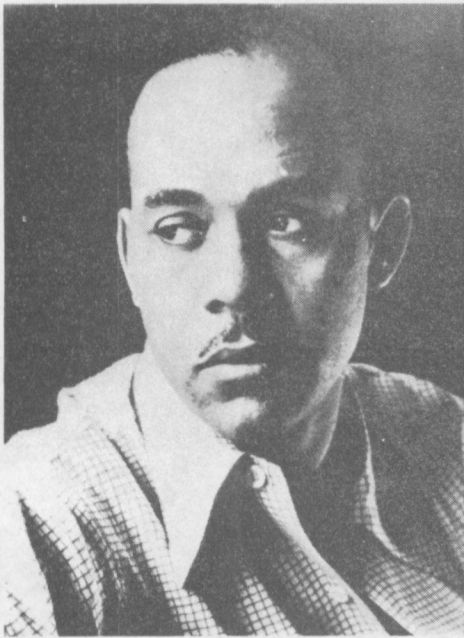
not understanding that such a cultural revolution was not possible without a revolutionary change in the existing capitalist economic and political system. Thus, the Black Arts movement was more like the Harlem Renaissance than the arts movement of the Depression. In fact, Alain Locke's description of the Renaissance in the 1920s, "radical in form but not in purpose," comes close to an accurate description of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s.

It is important to note that as Black cultural expression has increased in quantity and artists have become more expert, there has also been a tremendous increase in the appeal of Black art. The major single feature that has contributed to this dissemination of Black culture in the last 50 years has been, of course, the mass media: advertising, radio, television, film. Through the mass media, the various forms of Black cultural expression become accessible to the broad masses of people, although it is clear that the content of this expression is very tightly controlled by imperialism. Hence, Black cultural expression as it is presented to us today--via theatre, film, music, newspapers, magazines, paperback novels--as popular as it is, is almost entirely devoid of any social content. That is, on the whole, it lacks a concrete analysis of the real content and cause of the problems facing Black people and any orientation toward struggle to change these conditions.

In order to understand why this is so, it is necessary to understand the growth of monopoly capitalism and imperialism, and its effect on Black people and Black culture. The selection on "Imperialism and the Black Media," provides a clear statement in this regard.

In discussing Black culture and art, we must remember one thing, that imperialism cannot afford for such an important aspect of the lives of the masses of people to be outside the realm of its control. Hence, we must understand Black culture and art in two ways: (1) its relationship to the concrete experiences of

the masses of people, a history of racist oppression and exploitation; and (2) continuous manipulation and control by imperialism. It is this analysis that can correctly explain in a comprehensive way the development of the culture of Black people in the United States and make it a component part of the struggle for liberation.



*Two great writers of the second Black Renaissance: (left) Ralph Ellison and (right) Richard Wright.*



*Langston Hughes. He preferred the parties used by Harlem's poor to raise rent money to the fancy face Harlem put on for its many white visitors during the 1920's.*

## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 14

72.	THE MANY SOURCES OF AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE (1967)	Robert Blauner	263
73.	AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE: THE SLAVE PERIOD (1972)	John Blassingame	264
74.	AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE: THE RURAL PERIOD (1934)	Charles Johnson	270
75.	AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE: THE URBAN PERIOD (1965)	St. Clair Drake	275

THE ARTS AND ARTS MOVEMENTS

76.	THE 1920's: THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE - THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE: ENTER THE NEGRO (1923)	Alain Locke	282
77.	BACKGROUND TO THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE (1972)	George Kent	285

THE 1930's AND 1940's: THE WPA AND BEBOP

78.	THE DEPRESSION DÉCADE (1948)	Hugh Gloster	289
79.	BLUEPRINT FOR NEGRO LITERATURE	Richard Wright	293
80.	THE TASK OF NEGRO WRITERS	Langston Hughes	300

THE 1960's: THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

81.	THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT (1968)	Larry Neal	302
82.	REVOLUTIONARY ART / BLACK LIBERATION (1965)	Black Panther Party	305
83.	THE NEW MUSIC (1968)	A.B. Spellman	307
84.	IMPERIALISM AND THE BLACK MEDIA (1973)	Peoples College	313
	SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS		320

## THE MANY SOURCES OF AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE (1967)

Afro-American culture is an ethnic as well as a class culture because the history of Black people in the United States has produced a residue of shared collective memories and frames of reference. It is because Black Americans have undergone unique experiences in America, experiences that no other national or racial minority or lower-class group have shared, that a distinctive ethnic culture has evolved. Though this culture is overwhelmingly the product of American experience, the first contributing source is still African. Herskovits undoubtedly exaggerated the power of African continuities, but it seems plausible that some aesthetic and linguistic principles that underline Negro-American music and dialect (as well as possibly some movement patterns and religious orientations) have their origins in those peoples, tribes and kingdoms that furnished the slave trade. However, the importance of African patterns for American Negro ethnicity was greatly reduced by the fact that these orientations had to be transmitted largely on the subliminal level rather than that of conscious awareness and identification. Recently of course, with the emergence of independent African nations, a concern with this continent has become more prominent in the cultural symbolism of the Black community and presumably also in the personal identities of many individual Negroes.

The first great source of Black culture in America is slavery. Here under seriously restricting conditions, American Negroes began developing their own quasi-communities and their own codes of conduct. Here certain prevailing patterns such as ecstatic religion, mother-led families, anti-white attitudes, and the yearning for freedom and autonomy got their start. More negative adaptations and character-types, for example, the submission, timidity, fear and manipulation embedded in the "Uncle Tom" orientation, also owe their origins to slavery. It is these kinds of cultural adaptations that many nationalist leaders are trying to stamp out in their attacks on "the slave mentality."

Related to slavery as a second great source of Negro ethnicity is the subculture of the American South. Ralph Ellison and more recently Calvin Hernton have pointed out how much of the Black man's attitudes and cultural styles reflect the patterns of this region. Much (but not all) of Negro

religion, "soul food," and language is similar to poor-white counterparts. But the Black man also assimilated some of the values and the style of the Southern ruling classes, though he was not always in a position to emulate them. Ellison has attributed the general aristocratic flavor of ghetto lifestyles to this origin, as well as the American Negro's apparent lack of passion for business entrepreneurship.

A further source was Emancipation: the promises, the betrayals, and the frustrations that followed upon release from servitude. There may be much in Negro American patterns that still reflects a "freedman's culture"; I refer to the great mobility, the moving about and restlessness that characterizes the life patterns of an important minority (especially male) within this great minority group. This mobility, the promise of the North, the attractions of industry, and the push from a depleted Southland, set the stage for ghetto life in the urban North. This is the source of Black culture which is most clearly tied to poverty and lower-class existence. And yet the Negro ghetto is different from the ethnic ghettos of the Irish, Jews or Chinese because it comes out of a different history, that of slavery, Southern Jim Crow, and northern migration rather than from a transoceanic search for a better life. It is also different in its cultural impact because it exists in a racist society which makes no serious move to assimilate Black Americans. For this reason the Negro ghettos have served more as the setting for the flowering of a distinctive ethnicity, whereas the immigrant ghettos were actually way-stations in the process of acculturation and assimilation.

# 73

AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE: THE SLAVE PERIOD (1972)

Antebellum Black slaves created several unique cultural forms which lightened their burden of oppression, promoted group solidarity, provided ways for verbalizing aggression, sustaining hope, building self-esteem, and often represented areas of life largely free from the control of whites. However oppressive or dehumanizing the plantation was, the struggle for survival was not severe enough to crush all of the slave's creative instincts. Among the elements of slave culture were: an emotional religion, folk songs and tales, dances and superstitions. Much of the slave's culture--language, customs, beliefs and ceremonies--set him apart from his master. His thoughts,

values, ideals and behavior were all greatly influenced by these processes. The more his cultural forms differed from those of his master and the more they were immune from the control of whites, the more the slave gained in personal autonomy and positive self-concepts.

The social organization of the quarters was the slave's primary environment which gave him his ethical rules and fostered cooperation, mutual assistance and Black solidarity. The work experiences which most often brought the slave in contact with whites represented his secondary environment and was far less important in determining his personality than his primary environment. The slave's culture or social heritage and way of life determined the norms of conduct, defined roles and behavioral patterns and provided a network of individual and group relationships and values which molded personality in the quarters. The socialization process, shared expectations, ideals and enclosed status system of the slave's culture promoted group identification and a positive self-concept. His culture was reflected in socialization, family patterns, religion and recreation. Recreational activities led to cooperation, social cohesion, tighter communal bonds, and brought all classes of slaves together in common pursuits.

The few periods of recreation the slave enjoyed and his religious beliefs gave him some hours of joy and a degree of hope amid his sufferings. Since his recreation was less supervised than his labor, these hours were especially important to him. Leisure time and religious activities broke the monotony of daily toil and permitted the slave to play roles other than that of the helpless dependent driven to his tasks. During his leisure hours the slave could take out his anger towards whites in physical contests with other slaves or seek relief in religious devotion by turning to One more powerful than his earthly master. Religious and recreational activities and the differences between the slave's and the master's customs prevented his total identification with the slaveholder's interests and gave him some respite from constant toil.

Slaves spent their Sundays fishing, hunting, wrestling, running races, strumming the banjo, singing, dancing, playing marbles, recounting tales, fiddling, drinking whiskey, gambling or simply visiting and conversing with friends. With or without their master's permission, they often organized dances and parties to which all of the slaves in the neighborhood were invited.

The social leaders at many of these affairs were the house slaves to whom the field slaves looked "as a pattern of politeness and gentility." At one of the balls, Austin Steward recalled that the domestic servants came dressed in their masters' cast-off clothing and brought some of their owners' silverware, table cloths, wine and food for the guests who were dancing to the tunes played by a slave fiddler. Anderson reported that his overseer once even permitted the slaves to use his master's house for a dance when the master and his family went visiting.

Apparently the European reels, minuets and schottishes were too sedate and formalized for the slave. In the quarters the dance was more often a test of physical endurance, a means of winning praise and expressing the slave's inner feelings. Often openly lascivious, the dances involved wild gyrations to a furious rhythm. . . . The unrestrained exhibitions gave the slave some escape, some temporary relaxation from toil and refreshed his spirit.

In addition to these activities, several other customs prevented the slaves from identifying with the ideals of their masters. Because of their superstitions and belief in fortune tellers, witches, magic and conjurers, many of the slaves constructed a psychological defense against total dependence on and submission to their masters. Whatever his power, the master was a puny man compared to the supernatural. Often the most powerful and significant individual on the plantation was the conjurer.

Among the most important distinctive cultural forms in the quarters were folk songs and tales. . . . The secular songs told of the slave's loves, work, floggings, and expressed his moods and the reality of his oppression. On a number of occasions he sang of the proud defiance of the runaway, the courage of the Black rebels, the stupidity of the patrollers, the heartlessness of the slave traders and the kindness and cruelty of masters. . . .

Closely allied with the secular songs was the practice of "patting juba." When slaves had no musical instruments they achieved a high degree of rhythmic complexity by clapping their hands. Solomon Northup, an accomplished slave musician, observed that in juba the clapping involved "striking the hands on the knees, then striking the hands together, then striking the right shoulder with one hand, the left with the other--all the while keeping time with the feet, and singing. . . ." Often the rhythmic patterns used in juba were little short of amazing. . . .



The slaves also used a great variety of musical instruments. Most of these were either made by the slaves themselves or given to them by their masters. The musical instruments they used included fiddles, clarinets, fifes, tambourines, triangles, flutes, castanets and banjos. The favorites were the banjo, fiddle and the drum (often made from hollowed-out logs). The effect of castanets was obtained by beating two hollowed-out sticks together or on the floor. Individually or in bands these musicians performed both for the slaves and the master.

Secular music played an especially large role in the life of plantation Blacks. The songs expressed their feelings and desires, gave them solace and lightened their daily burdens. Those slaves who had some special musical skills won the praise of Blacks and whites, achieved a degree of self-esteem, and could relieve themselves of sorrow. . . .

The mass of slaves, of course, played no instrument. Their solace came from singing. Robert Anderson asserted that the "steady rhythm of the marching songs carried many a slave across the tobacco and hemp fields ahead of a slave driving overseer, when their tired muscles refused to budge for any other stimulent than that of the rhythm of song, while the weird and mysterious music of the religious ceremonies moved old and young alike in a frenzy of religious fervor."

Primarily a means of entertainment, the [folk] tales also represented the distillation of folk wisdom and were used as an instructional device to teach young slaves to survive. A projection of the slave's personal experience, dreams and hopes, the folk tales allowed him to express hostility to his master, to poke fun at himself, and to delineate the workings of the plantation system. At the same time, by viewing himself as an object, verbalizing his dreams and hostilities, the slave was able to preserve one more area which whites could ~~not~~ control. While holding on to the reality of his existence, the slave gave full play to his wish fulfillment in the tales, especially in those involving animals. Identifying with the frightened and helpless creatures, so similar in their relations to the larger animals to the relationship of the slave to the master, the slave storytellers showed how the weak could survive. Especially in the Brer Rabbit tales, the hero, whether trickster or braggart, always defeated the larger animals through cunning. On occasion the weaker animals (slaves?) injured or killed the stronger ones (masters?). Although it is obviously possible to read too

much into these tales, the slave's fascination with weakness overcoming strength cannot be discounted.

The existence and content of the folk tales and secular songs can be interpreted in many ways. In the first place, the mere existence of these cultural forms is proof that the rigors of bondage did not crush the slave's creative energies. Through these means the slave could view himself as an object, hold on to fantasies about his status, engender hope and patience, and at least use rebellious language when contemplating his lot in life. The therapeutic value of this should not be dismissed lightly. Not only did these cultural forms give the slave an area of life independent of his master's control, they were important psychological devices for repressing anger and projecting aggressions in ways that contributed to mental health, involved little physical threat and provided some form of recreation. By objectifying the conditions of his life in the folk tales, the slave was in a better position to cope with them. The depersonalization of these conditions did not, however, distort the slave's sense of the brutal realities of his life.

The slave found some hope of escape from the brutalities of his daily life in conventional religion. His exposure to conventional religious beliefs depended partly, however, on the piety of his master. When planters were non-believers or when they felt that religion spoiled good workers, they tried to prevent their slaves from attending services. One slaveholder, for instance, informed his slaves that "negroes have nothing to do with God" and forbade them to attend church. Fearing insurrectionary plotting, such planters flogged or ran slave preachers off of their estates and broke up religious meetings of the slaves.

The more pious masters often attempted to develop religious principles in their slaves and encouraged them to attend their own churches. Some slaves, however, refused to do this because of their master's actions between Sabbaths. For instance, Moses Roper reported that when his master's slaves learned that he was a Baptist they, "thinking him a very bad sample of what a professing Christian ought to be, would not join the connexion he belonged to, thinking they must be a very bad set of people.

The slaves acquired many of their religious ideas at the camp meetings they attended with their masters. They, of course, enjoyed the conviviality of these great social gatherings and often sold whiskey and food to both

Black and white communicants. Many of the slaves, viewing the business opportunities such gatherings provided, cared nothing at all about salvation. William Webb acted the typical businessman at one camp meeting when he made \$42 selling ginger cakes and whiskey.

Many of the slaves imitated their master's shouting at both the camp meetings and at their own religious services. Slave preachers often could virtually reproduce the emotional sermons delivered by the white ministers they heard. Frequently attended by all of the Blacks in the neighborhood, the slaves' services were similar in many ways to those of their masters: they served as meeting places for friends and sweethearts, furnished avenues for exercising responsibility and leadership, and opportunities for socializing, releasing pent-up emotions or simply getting drunk.

Shouting, singing and preaching, the slaves released all of their despair and expressed their desires for freedom. Their expression of the latter was restricted because discreet whites occasionally attended their meetings. Henry Clay Bruce recalled that one old slave preacher once forgot about the white man who was present at the meeting and in his enthusiasm prayed: "Free indeed, free from death, free from hell, free from work, free from white folks, free from everything." Although the preacher was upbraided by the white man later, he had expressed the sentiments of most of his fellows.

The sentiments of the slave often appear in the spirituals. Songs of sorrow and hope rather than of protest, and derivations from Biblical lore, the spirituals rarely contain direct references to slavery. As a consequence of the similarities of themes in the Black spirituals and white hymns, a number of scholars contend that the slaves borrowed their songs from whites. While it would be almost as logical to argue the opposite, it must be admitted that the songs the slaves heard in white churches did have a limited influence on the spirituals. For the most part, however, the white hymns were too cold and static to allow for the full expression of the slave's religious sentiments.

The emphases, words, phrases, structure and call-and-response pattern of the spirituals differ so strikingly from the songs of whites, that one must look outside the white church to discover their origin. According to a number of antebellum white observers, the spiritual was the unique creation of Black slaves.

Religious services and recreational activities provided the slave with welcome respites from incessant labor. They not only gave him joy and companionship, they also permitted him to gain some status in the quarters and gave him some hope. By engaging in religious activities, the slave could, for a while, shift his mind from his hopeless immediate condition to the bright future awaiting him. In his daily tribulations, he could turn either to the conjurer or to God for succor.

Having a distinctive culture helped the slaves to develop a strong sense of group solidarity. They united to protect themselves from the most oppressive features of slavery and to preserve their self-esteem. Despite their weakness as isolated individuals, they found some protection in the group from their masters. The code of the group, for example, called for support for those slaves who broke plantation rules. The most important aspect of this group identification was that slaves were not solely dependent on the white man's cultural frames of reference for their ideals and values. As long as the plantation Black had cultural norms and ideals, ways of verbalizing aggression and roles in his life largely free from his master's control, he could preserve some personal autonomy, and resist infantilization, total identification with planters, and internalization of unflattering stereotypes calling for abject servility. The slave's culture bolstered his self-esteem, courage and confidence, and served as his defense against personal degradation.

# 74

## AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE: THE AGRICULTURAL PERIOD (1934)

The deadening routine of the daily labor and the seasonal stress in farming lend high importance to the leisure time. There are few who do not in course of the year have periods free from work. The community had provided for itself certain forms of diversion, as follows:

The Church. Regular Sunday services, camp meetings and revivals, funerals, wakes, prayer meetings, are definite recreations, particularly for the older people. These pleasures are occasionally combined with more secular fun: "Church is all the entertainment I has; every meeting Sunday"; "I go to church jest a little; hunting is 'ginst the law."

The Saturday Trip to Town. This is the occasion for a good time. It is sometimes combined with a certain amount of marketing. Old friends meet in

town, gossip, eat peanuts and drink soda pop and not infrequently corn whiskey, shop about, and, if they have any money, buy things for the family. There is a moving-picture show for Negroes in Tuskegee which some of them attend. Once a month is the usual frequency of visits of this sort. It sometimes affords recreation for older men to go down to the country store, or to the highway, or to the small railway station, to sit and talk, on the chance of some excitement.

Sports. There are notable conflicts in the community with respect to certain sports. The most common diversions like ball-playing, frolics, and cards, being under the ban of the church, can be indulged in only by defying the regulations of the community's strongest institution. This happens, nevertheless, on a large scale. The Saturday ball game during the summer is one of the most popular diversions. Next in importance is fishing. Men and women, young and old, find this a sport both pleasant and useful since it also provides a meal for the family. Fishing, however, has been condemned as a lazy man's sport and likewise requires a license. Still another form of recreation is hunting. This could be as useful as fishing, but hunting comes under the regulation of the state. There is a hunting season and the requirement of a license. The possession of guns by the Negroes is not looked upon favorably by the white community. As a result, most of the hunting is done covertly. The people are aware of the law, but violate it occasionally, as much for food as for sport. "I had 'chicken' for supper today. I have to call it 'chicken' 'cause it's 'g'inst the law to hunt rabbits now."

Church Suppers. Church suppers are both the answer of the church to the secular parties and a means of indirect taxation of members. A favorite form of entertainment is the box supper and picnic, in which each family brings its own basic food while they purchase lighter refreshments; and the old folks' parties--"tackie parties," they are sometimes called--where the fun consists in seeing how ludicrously one can dress himself. "The folks all dress up and looks ugly, puts moss all on they heads and paint they faces, and then charge five cents for you to come up and look. That's how I raised three dollars for my church last year. I put on the concert all by myself." These parties, however, have taken on many of the features of a secular frolic, and older members have been discouraged from attending, quite as much out of fear of getting hurt as of dissatisfaction with the secular trend of the proceedings.

The Frolic. This is the great feature of the rural recreation. These affairs begin as dances where refreshments are sold and wind up, frequently, in the most wanton merrymaking. In this respect they are characteristic of all peasant merrymaking, a reaction to, and escape from, the other extreme of their life-cycle. The frolics and "parties," held on Saturday nights, were mentioned by practically all the younger members of the community. The churches inveighed against them as an incident of the evil of dancing. They are held from house to house; there is usually an abundance of corn whiskey available, and they not infrequently end in violence. The houses are small and ill lighted and couples make little secret of the character and intensity of their love-making under the wide-flung blanket of darkness. One old woman referred thus to these affairs: "Now my son, he had lots of entertainment. He goes to all dem dances on Saturday nights. I ain't feeling so favorable to that. Dere's so much cutting and killing going on, but he's got to look out for hisself now; he's a man like everybody else, I 'spects." Church members are not expected to attend these affairs on penalty of expulsion, but many of them do, and in listing their recreations included frolics along with the church.

The murder of the young woman at one of the frolics, which was mentioned during the early period of this study, was not wholly surprising. At that affair the drinking had reached the point of an orgy. "They was all so drunk they spit all on the bed. Then they got tired and run around spitting up and down the mantel. . . . What I likes most is to drink a little corn but you can't find none now. The sheriff's been here so much folks is scared to keep it, but they brings it up from Montgomery."

There was, occasionally, the franker listing by individual men of sexual intercourse as their relaxation. Two unmarried women said that they liked to "pleasure themselves with men" when they were not too tired. A more polite way of referring to this form of entertainment by men was "setting around playing with womens."

Aside from the conventional outlets there are other means of using leisure time which, while perhaps less harmful than the frolics and parties, yet contributed little to the cultural development of the community. There is practically no reading and no concerts or lectures, apart from those offered in connection with church programs. Those who do not like what is offered by the community may "piddle around the house," "set on the porch and rock," "lay

down and sleep," "wallow around the house," "play with the cat," "walk about and visit," or "jest set down."

The winter period, which is free from active outside farming, offers miscellaneous duties for the men: chopping wood and "fixing things." The women sew and quilt, and this is sometimes listed as recreation. Changes in the material culture of the community have brought new, though somewhat limited, forms of diversion. One of these is automobile riding. A few families possessed automobiles, but joy rides, interestingly enough, encountered conservative opposition on the part of the community. Men objected to having their women ride in automobiles and quite serious results have followed the indulgence.

Lodges and Societies. The tradition of the burial society hangs on in the mutual organization which, though concerned chiefly with death benefits, build up and hold their membership on the strength of the social features. In a situation under which families were losing such insurance as they had, the burial societies were gaining in strength.

Some of the insurance companies operating in the neighborhood have adjusted their methods to community habits, and instead of collectors they attempt to organize the people into lodges. Of these there is a considerable variety, from the "Love and Do Well," to the "Sons and Daughters of I Will Arise." There has been a loss of confidence in most of these recently, owing to frequent financial failures, the inability to meet sickness and death payments, and the widespread exploitation by both whites and Negroes from the outside. . . . Actually these companies were at times within the law in their refusal to pay certain benefits, but it was as hard to convince their policyholders that they were within their rights in refusing payment as it was easy to sell them a policy which they could not read and which actually promised them nothing. Some of the stipulations made it impossible to pay unless there was illness or death from diseases which were as rare in Macon County as Asiatic cholera.

There are no radios, but 76 families had victrolas, bought on the installment plan from agents in the community. There was but one banjo in the entire 612 families. This musical instrument is never so invariably associated with the Negro in actual life as it is on the stage. There were twenty-one organs and three pianos in the families, and most of these were out of repair; but playing provided some amusement. Both the organs and the pianos were in the homes of owners.

There is being introduced, with some prospect of better control, a new form of recreation centering around the schools, where these are at all active. School closings with commencements, school parties, and festivals offer perhaps the most wholesome forms of recreation now obtainable in the community for children and adults.

Diet. The chief foods are listed, as a simple indication of food habits. These items of food in winter are salt meat, corn or flour bread, and syrup or sorghum. Few vegetables are eaten. There is a common belief that "greens are feverish." Milk is sometimes used, but few have cows. Sweet potatoes are used when available. The meals vary little, even during the day. "I don't eat no supper 'cause I git tired of the same thing all the time." Breakfast consists commonly of corn bread and syrup. A heavy meal with meat is eaten for supper. The fortunate ones are those who have been able to put away potatoes for the winter and who have a "shoat" to kill at Christmas. A large number of families--sometimes for reasons of taste, sometimes for lack of money--did not eat vegetables in either winter or summer. Occasionally a chicken is killed for Sundays. It was difficult to get accounting of the items of food even of the day before. A list was made of the foods of the current day. Gardens were drying up and food was scarce, but such accounts as the following were among the most common:

We get a 24-pound sack of flour and that will last us two weeks. These boys won't eat nothing but flour bread, if I don't make 'em, so I buy a peck of meal once in a while and make them eat some corn bread. Then I buy ten or fifteen cents' worth of beans or cabbage sometimes and once in a while a can of "ramatoes." I eat oatmeal regularly. The boys don't like it, but I like it and when I can't get milk, I just put sugar and water on it and eat it.

An old couple at the dinner meal sat on the front porch eating beans out of a rusty pan with their bread crumbled up in a bucket top. The bread was of corn meal and had been cooked several days. It was cold, as were the beans which they were eating. The wife was drinking milk along with her portion. They were slowly eating with their fingers. "We buy 'bout a peck of meal and it costs 40 cents a peck. I buys a dime's worth of sugar 'bout once a week." Other food habits were such as the following:

We country people have to eat rough food. They won't even let us have fertilizer. We ought to have oatmeal, grits and things like that to eat but we can't get it.

The baby have to eat what we have and that ain't much. I got one old rooster. I wanted to kill him but I ain't got no grease to cook him wid.



No, I don't eats chicken. I like 'em all right but I has to put 'em up in a coop for two weeks 'fore I can get 'em clean enough. I can't eat 'em right out de yard.

If the rations give out 'fore Saturday we just don't eat nothing 'till Saturday evening. Mostly we use is white meat and bread and white lard. I ain't got no taste for it 'cause I was raised on plenty vegetables. Sometimes we have peas. If it don't rain these people ain't going to have nothing to eat.

I know how much groceries us buy every two week, but I ain't never stopped to figure it up. We always buys one bushel of meal, two pounds of flour, and five pounds of meat. Sometimes rice and sugar and like dat.

In the hunting season they may shoot a squirrel, and in the summer they fish. The families of larger means raise their own meat and vegetables and can fruits.

We always had plenty meat, we kill our own meat, we'll have good meat this year. I reckon I'll be able to put me up some berries if I can get some rubbers and tops--first time I ever bought tops. . . . You know we don't suffer in the meat line but our bread's out.

My husband makes a plenty something to eat all the time. . . . We got fifteen cows here and I could run a dairy if I wanted to. We use about three gallons of milk a day. We are crazy about milk. I really don't like corn bread 'cause it will give you the pellagacy. I just can't enjoy corn bread somehow or other. Don't leave fresh meat out 'cause I love it. With five of us here we can drink all the milk we get.

On the Saturday trips to town they may be seen sitting around chatting and munching peanuts, bananas and frankfurters and drinking soda pop. These are a part of the excitement of the journey but contribute little to the dietary deficiencies everywhere so manifest. The Red Cross has provided yeast for many of the families, and this has been salutary where its purpose has been understood sufficiently to insure consistent use. The people die, and with good reason.

FOLKWAYS AND CLASSWAYS WITHIN THE BLACK GHETTO: THE  
INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1965)

# 75

Black Ghettos in America are, on the whole, "run down" in appearance and overcrowded, and their inhabitants bear the physical and psychological scars of those whose "life chances" are not equal to those of other Americans. Like the European immigrants before them, they inherited the worst

housing in the city. Within the past decade, the white "flight to the suburbs" has released relatively new and well-kept property on the margins of some of the old Black Belts. Here, "gilded ghettos" have grown up, indistinguishable from any other middle-class neighborhoods except by the color of the residents' skin. The power mower in the yard, the steak grill on the rear lawn, a well stocked library and equally well stocked bar in the rumpus room--these mark the homes of well-to-do Negroes living in the more desirable portions of the Black Belt. Many of them would flee to suburbia, too, if housing were available to Negroes there.

But the character of the Black Ghetto is not set by the newer "gilded," not-yet run down portions of it, but by the older sections where unemployment rates are high and the masses of people work with their hands--where the median level of education is just above graduation from grade school and many of the people are likely to be recent migrants from rural areas.

The "ghettoization" of the Negro has resulted in the emergence of a ghetto subculture with a distinctive ethos, most pronounced, perhaps, in Harlem, but recognizable in all Negro neighborhoods. For the average Negro who walks the streets of any American Black Ghetto, the smell of barbecued ribs, fried shrimps and chicken emanating from numerous restaurants gives olfactory reinforcement to a feeling of "at-homeness." The beat of "gut music" spilling into the street from ubiquitous tavern juke boxes and the sound of tambourines and rich harmony behind the crude folk art on the windows of store-front churches give auditory confirmation to the universal belief that "We Negroes have 'soul.'" The bedlam of an occasional brawl, the shouted obscenities of street corner "foul mouths," and the whine of police sirens break the monotony of waiting for the number that never "falls," the horses that neither win, place nor show, and the "good job" that never materializes. The insouciant swagger of teen-age drop-outs (the "cats") masks the hurt of their aimless existence and contrasts sharply with the ragged clothing and dejected demeanor of "skid-row" types who have long since stopped trying to keep up appearances and who escape it all by becoming "winoes." The spontaneous vigor of the children who crowd streets and playgrounds (with Cassius Clay, Ernie Banks, the Harlem Globe Trotters and black stars of stage, screen and television as their role models) and the cheerful rushing about of adults, free from the occupational pressures of the "white world" in which they work, create an atmosphere of warmth and

superficial intimacy which obscures the unpleasant facts of life in the overcrowded rooms behind the doors, the lack of adequate maintenance standards, and the too prevalent vermin and rats.

This is a world whose urban "folkways" the upwardly mobile Negro middle class deplores as a "drag" on "The Race," which the upper classes wince at as an embarrassment, and which race leaders point to as proof that Negroes have been victimized. But for the masses of the ghetto dwellers this is a warm and familiar milieu, preferable to the sanitary coldness of middle-class neighborhoods and a counterpart of the communities of the foreign-born, each of which has its own distinctive subcultural flavor. The arguments in the barbershop, the gossip in the beauty parlors, the "jiving" of bar girls and waitresses, the click of poolroom balls, the stomping of feet in the dance halls, the shouting in the churches are all theirs--and the white men who run the pawnshops, supermarts, drug stores and grocery stores, the policemen on horseback, the teachers in blackboard jungles--all these are aliens, conceptualized collectively as "The Man," intruders on the Black Man's "turf." When an occasional riot breaks out, "The Man" and his property become targets of aggression upon which pent-up frustrations are vented. When someone during the Harlem riots of 1964 begged the street crowds to go home, the cry came back, "Baby, we are home!"

But the inhabitants of the Black Ghetto are not a homogeneous mass. Although, in Marxian terms, nearly all of them are "proletarians," with nothing to sell but their labor, variations in "life style" differentiate them into social classes based more upon differences in education and basic values (crystallized, in part, around occupational differences) than in meaningful differences in income. The American caste-class system has served, over the years, to concentrate the Negro population in the low-income sector of the economy. In 1961, six out of every ten Negro families had an income of less than \$4000.00 per year. This situation among whites was just the reverse: six out of every ten white families had over \$4000.00 a year at their disposal. (In the South, eight out of ten Negro families were below the \$4000.00 level.) This is the income gap. Discrimination in employment creates a job ceiling, most Negroes being in blue-collar jobs.

With 60 per cent of America's Negro families earning less than \$4000.00 a year, social strata emerge between the upper and lower boundaries of "no earned income" and \$4000.00. Some families live a "middle-class style of

life," placing heavy emphasis upon decorous public behavior and general respectability, insisting that their children "get an education" and "make something out of themselves." They prize family stability, and an unwed mother is something much more serious than "just a girl who had an accident"; pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations, if indulged in at all, must be discreet. Social life is organized around churches and a welter of voluntary associations of all types, and, for women, "the cult of clothes" is so important that fashion shows are a popular fund raising activity even in churches. For both men and women, owning a home and going into business are highly desired goals, the former often being a realistic one, the latter a mere fantasy.

Within the same income range, and not always at the lower margin of it, other families live a "lower-class life-style" being part of the "organized" lower class, while at the lowest income levels an "unorganized" lower class exists whose members tend always to become disorganized--functioning in an anomic situation where gambling, excessive drinking, the use of narcotics and sexual promiscuity are prevalent forms of behavior, and violent interpersonal relations reflect an ethos of suspicion and resentment which suffuses this deviant subculture. It is within this milieu that criminal and semi-criminal activities burgeon.

The "organized" lower class is oriented primarily around churches whose preachers, often semi-literate, exhort them to "be in the 'world' but not of it." Conventional middle-class morality and Pauline Puritanism are preached, although a general attitude of "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" prevails except among a minority fully committed to the Pentecostal sects. They boast, "We live the life"--a way of life that has been portrayed with great insight by James Baldwin in Go Tell it on the Mountain and The Fire Next Time.

Young people with talent find wide scope for expressing it in choirs, quartets and sextets which travel from church to church (often bearing colorful names like The Four Heavenly Trumpets or the Six Singing Stars of Zion) and sometimes traveling from city to city. Such groups channel their aggressions in widely advertised "Battles of Song" and develop their talent in church pageants such as "Heaven Bound" or "Queen Esther" and fund-raising events where winners are crowned King and Queen. These activities provide fun as well as a testing ground for talent. Some lucky young church people eventually find their fortune in the secular world as did singers Sam Cooke and Nat King Cole, while others remain in the church world as nationally known gospel singers or famous evangelists.

Adults as well as young people find satisfaction and prestige in serving as ushers and deacons, "mothers," and deaconesses, Sunday-school teachers and choir leaders. National conventions of Negro denominations and national societies of ushers and gospel singers not only develop a continent-wide nexus of associations within the organized lower class, but also throw the more ambitious and capable individuals into meaningful contact with middle-class church members who operate as role models for those talented persons who seek to move upward. That prestige and sometimes money come so easily in these circles may be a factor militating against a pattern of delaying gratifications and seeking mobility into professional and semi-professional pursuits through higher education.

Lower-class families and institutions are constantly on the move, for in recent years the Negro lower class has suffered from projects to redevelop the inner city. By historic accident, the decision to check the expansion of physical deterioration in metropolitan areas came at a time when Negroes were the main inhabitants of substandard housing. (If urban redevelopment had been necessary sixty years ago immigrants, not Negroes, would have suffered.) In protest against large-scale demolition of areas where they live, Negroes have coined a slogan, "Slum clearance is Negro clearance." They resent the price in terms of the inconvenience thrust upon them in order to redevelop American cities, and the evidence shows that, in some cities, there is no net gain in improved housing after relocation.

At the opposite pole from the Negro lower class in both life styles and life chances is the small Negro upper class whose solid core is a group in the professions, along with well-to-do businessmen who have had some higher education, but including, also, a scattering of individuals who have had college training but do not have a job commensurate with their education. These men and their spouses and children form a cohesive upper-class stratum in most Negro communities. Within this group are individuals who maintain some type of contact--though seldom any social relations--with members of the local white power elite; but whether or not they participate in occupational associations with their white peers depends upon the region of the country in which they live. (It is from this group that Negro "Exhibit A's" are recruited when white liberals are carrying on campaigns to "increase interracial understanding.") They must always think of themselves as symbols of racial advancement as well as individuals, and they often provide the basic

leadership at local levels for organizations such as the N.A.A.C.P. and the Urban League. They must lend sympathetic support to the more militant civil rights organizations, too, by financial contributions, if not action.

The life styles of the Negro upper class are similar to those of the white upper middle class, but it is only in rare instances that Negroes have been incorporated into the clique and associational life of this group or have intermarried into it. (Their participation in activities of the white upper class occurs more often than with those whites who have similar life styles because of Negro upper-class participation as members of various civic boards and interracial associations to which wealthy white people contribute.) Living "well" with highly developed skills, having enough money to travel, Negroes at this social level do not experience victimization in the same fashion as do the members of the lower class. Their victimization flows primarily from the fact that the social system keeps them "half in and half out," preventing the free and easy contact with their occupational peers which they need; and it often keeps them from making the kind of significant intellectual and social contributions to the national welfare that they might make if they were white. (They are also forced to experience various types of nervous strain and dissipation of energy over petty annoyances and deprivations which only the sensitive and the cultivated feel. Most barbershops, for instance, are not yet desegregated, and taxi drivers, even in the North, sometimes refuse Negro passengers.)

The Negro upper class has created a social world of its own in which a universe of discourse and uniformity of behavior and outlook are maintained by the interaction on national and local levels of members of Negro Greek-letter fraternities and sororities, college and alumni associations, professional associations and civic and social clubs. It is probable that if all caste barriers were dropped, a large proportion of the Negro upper class would welcome complete social integration, and that these all-Negro institutions would be left in the hands of the Negro middle class, as the most capable and sophisticated Negroes moved into the orbit of the general society. Their sense of pride and dignity does not even allow them to imagine such a fate, and they pursue their social activities and play their roles as "race leaders" with little feeling of inferiority or deprivation, but always with a tragic sense of the irony of it all.

The Negro middle class covers a very wide income range, and whatever

cohesion it has comes from the network of churches and social clubs to which many of its members devote a great deal of time and money. What sociologists call the Negro middle class is merely a collection of people who have similar life styles and aspirations, whose basic goals are "living well," being "respectable," and not being crude. Middle-class Negroes, by and large, are not concerned about mobility into the Negro upper class or integration with whites. They want their "rights" and "good jobs," as well as enough money to get those goods and services which make life comfortable. They want to expand continuously their level of consumption. But they also desire "decent" schools for their children, and here the degree of victimization experienced by Negroes is most clear and the ambivalence toward policies of change most sharp. Ghetto schools are, on the whole, inferior. In fact, some of the most convincing evidence that residential segregation perpetuates inequality can be found by comparing data on school districts in Northern urban areas where de facto school segregation exists.

Awareness of the poor quality of education grew as the protest movement against de facto school segregation in the North gathered momentum. But while the fight was going on, doubt about the desirability of forcing the issue was always present within some sections of the broad Negro middle class. Those in opposition asked, "Are we not saying that our teachers can't teach our own children as well as whites can, or that our children can't learn unless they're around whites? Aren't we insulting ourselves?" Those who want to stress Negro history and achievement and to use the schools to build race pride also express doubts about the value of mixed schools. In fact, the desirability of race consciousness and racial solidarity seems to be taken for granted in this stratum, and sometimes there is an expression of contempt for the behavior of whites of their own and lower income levels. In the present period one even occasionally hears a remark such as, "Who'd want to be integrated with those awful white people?"

Marxist critics would dismiss the whole configuration of Negro folkways and classways as a subculture which reinforces "false consciousness," which prevents Negroes from facing the full extent of their victimization, which keeps them from ever focusing upon what they could be because they are so busy enjoying what they are--or rationalizing their subordination and exclusion. Gunnar Myrdal, in An American Dilemma, goes so far as to refer to the Negro community as a "pathological" growth within American society. Some

novelists and poets, on the other hand, romanticize it, and some Black Nationalists glorify it. A sober analysis of the civil rights movement would suggest, however, that the striking fact about all levels of the Negro community is the absence of "false consciousness," and the presence of a keen awareness of the extent of their victimization, as well as knowledge of the forces which maintain it. Not lack of knowledge but a sense of powerlessness is the key to the Negro reaction to the caste-class system.

Few Negroes believe that Black Ghettos will disappear within the next two decades despite much talk about "open occupancy" and "freedom of residence." There is an increasing tendency among Negroes to discuss what the quality of life could be within Negro communities as they grow larger and larger. At one extreme this interest slides over into Black Nationalist reactions such as the statement by a Chicago Negro leader who said, "Let all of the white people flee to the suburbs. We'll show them that the Black Man can run the second largest city in America better than the white man. Let them go. If any of them want to come back and integrate with us we'll accept them."

It is probable that the Black Belts of America will increase in size rather than decrease during the next decade, for no city seems likely to commit itself to "open occupancy" (although a committee in New York has been discussing a ten-year plan for dismantling Harlem). And even if a race-free market were to appear Negroes would remain segregated unless drastic changes took place in the job ceiling and income gap. Controlled integration will probably continue, with a few upper- and upper-middle-class Negroes trickling into the suburbs and into carefully regulated mixed neighborhoods and mixed buildings within the city limits. The basic problem of the next decade will be how to change Black Ghettos into relatively stable and attractive "colored communities." Here the social implications of low incomes become decisive.

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE: ENTER THE NEW NEGRO (1923)

**76**

In the last decade something beyond the watch and guard of statistics has happened in the life of the American Negro and the three norms who have traditionally presided over the Negro problem have a changeling in their laps. The Sociologist, the Philanthropist, the Race-leader are not unaware of the New Negro, but they are at a loss to account for him. He simply cannot be swathed



in their formulae. For the younger generation is vibrant with a new psychology; the new spirit is awake in the masses, and under the very eyes of the professional observers is transforming what has been a perennial problem into the progressive phases of contemporary Negro life.

Could such a metamorphosis have taken place as suddenly as it has appeared to? The answer is no; not because the New Negro is not here, but because the Old Negro had long become more of a myth than a man. The Old Negro, we must remember, was a creature of moral debate and historical controversy. His has been a stock figure perpetuated as an historical fiction partly in innocent sentimentalism, partly in deliberate reactionism. The Negro himself has contributed his share to this through a sort of protective social mimicry forced upon him by the adverse circumstances of dependence. So for generations in the mind of America, the Negro has been more of a formula than a human being--a something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be "kept down," or "in his place," or "helped up," to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden. The thinking Negro even has been induced to share this same general attitude, to focus his attention on controversial issues, to see himself in the distorted perspective of a social problem. His shadow, so to speak, has been more real to him than his personality.

The day of "aunties," "uncles" and "mammies" is equally gone. Uncle Tom and Sambo have passed on, and even the "Colonel" and "George" play barnstorm roles from which they escape with relief when the public spotlight is off. The popular melodrama has about played itself out, and it is time to scrap the fictions, garret the bogeys and settle down to a realistic facing of facts.

First we must observe some of the changes which since the traditional lines of opinion were drawn have rendered these quite obsolete. A main change has been, of course, that shifting of the Negro population which has made the Negro problem no longer exclusively or even predominantly Southern. Why should our minds remain sectionalized, when the problem itself no longer is? Then the trend of migration has not only been toward the North and the Central Midwest, but city-ward and to the great centers of industry--the problems of adjustment are new, practical, local and not peculiarly racial. Rather they are an integral part of the large industrial and social problems of our present-day democracy. And finally, with the Negro rapidly in process of class differentiation, if it ever was warrantable to regard and treat the

Negro en masse it is becoming with every day less possible, more unjust and more ridiculous.

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No sane observer, however sympathetic to the new trend, would contend that the great masses are articulate as yet, but they stir, they move, they are more than physically restless. The challenge of the new intellectuals among them is clear enough--the "race radicals" and realists who have broken with the old epoch of philanthropic guidance, sentimental appeal and protest. But are we after all only reading into the stirrings of a sleeping giant the dreams of an agitator? The answer is in the migrating peasant. It is the "man farthest down" who is most active in getting up. One of the most characteristic symptoms of this is the professional man himself migrating to recapture his constituency after a vain effort to maintain in some Southern corner what for years back seemed an established living and clientele. The clergyman following his errant flock, the physician or lawyer trailing his clients, supply the true clues. In a real sense it is the rank and file who are leading, and the leaders who are following. A transformed and transforming psychology permeates the masses.

Each generation, however, will have its creed, and that of the present is the belief in the efficacy of collective effort, in race cooperation. This deep feeling of race is at present the mainspring of Negro life. It seems to be the outcome of the reaction to proscription and prejudice; an attempt, fairly successful on the whole, to convert a defensive into an offensive position, a handicap into an incentive. It is radical in tone, but not in purpose and only the most stupid forms of opposition, misunderstanding or persecution could make it otherwise. Of course, the thinking Negro has shifted a little toward the left with the world-trend, and there is an increasing group who affiliate with radical and liberal movements. But fundamentally for the present the Negro is radical on race matters, conservative on others, in other words, a "forced radical," a social protestant rather than genuine radical. Yet under further pressure and injustice iconoclastic thought and motives will inevitably increase. Harlem's quixotic radicalisms call for their ounce of democracy to-day lest to-morrow they be beyond cure.

The Negro mind reaches out as yet to nothing but American wants, American ideas. But this forced attempt to build his Americanism on race values is a unique social experiment, and its ultimate success is impossible except

through the fullest sharing of American culture and institutions. There should be no delusion about this. American nerves in sections unstrung with race hysteria are often fed the opiate that the trend of Negro advance is wholly separatist, and that the effect of its operation will be to encyst the Negro as a benign foreign body in the body politic. This cannot be-- even if it were desirable. The racialism of the Negro is no limitation or reservation with respect to American life; it is only a constructive effort to build the obstructions in the stream of his progress into an efficient dam of social energy and power. Democracy itself is obstructed and stagnated to the extent that any of its channels are closed. Indeed they cannot be selectively closed. So the choice is not between one way for the Negro and another way for the rest, but between American institutions frustrated on the one hand and American ideals progressively fulfilled and realized on the other.

# 77

## BACKGROUND TO THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE (1972)

. . . Powerful personalities and areas of distinctive achievement were preparing the way for a Renaissance in which Blacks would attempt to move with a more secure possession of self. It is necessary now to record some non-literary events whose ferment helped to produce a Black consciousness of sufficient magnitude to support the turn in the road which Harlem Renaissance writers were engaged in making.

By 1910 the NAACP had been established, with Du Bois as director of publicity and editor of The Crisis, a magazine which was to provide a conservative, but fighting, nationalism and a mass-circulation forum for Black writers of the 1920's. In the following year the National Urban League came into being, and in 1923 its organ, Opportunity, was established to provide an outlet for Black writers. Besides representing organizational growth, these groups thus afforded what earlier Black writers could not depend upon: outlets sympathetic to their bent and aims.

From 1916 to 1919 the great migration of Southern Blacks to Northern urban areas was in progress. By 1918, one million Blacks were estimated to have left the South, although the North and West in public census showed a net gain of only 333,000. World War I, of course, and the country's closing of the doors to immigrants, made for a labor demand which Northern industry attempted

to fill by persuading and encouraging Black Southerners to emigrate, an act made easier of fulfillment because of injustice in Southern courts, lynchings discrimination, a severe labor depression in 1914 and 1915, which brought wages down to seventy-five cents per day and less, and 1915 floods, which left thousands homeless.

The Pennsylvania Railroad alone brought 12,000 to work on its tracks--all but 2000 from Georgia and Florida. Nearly 27,000 Blacks found jobs in shipbuilding, 75,000 in coal mines, 300,000 on railroads. Other industries represent large figures. One additional dramatic change is represented in the fact that 21,547 Black women were employed in 75 different tasks in typical industrial plants.

Then World War I provided a large number of Black men with an experience abroad in which they seemed, for the first time, to be respected simply as men, when white Americans weren't busy corrupting the minds of the French.

The period had its built-in devices for disillusionment. Few Black workers were accepted in labor unions. The end of World War I saw extraordinary violence inflicted upon Blacks, as whites became uneasy as to how Blacks were going to adjust to postwar "normalcy." Thus, in what is known as the red summer of 1919, race riots occurred in twenty-five cities--North, South, East and West. Some of the cities: Washington, D.C.; Chicago; Knoxville, Tennessee; Omaha, Nebraska; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Elaine, Arkansas. During the first year of post-World War I, whites lynched seventh Blacks--ten of the group being soldiers still in uniform. Fourteen Blacks were publicly burned--eleven while still alive.

There were, of course, other discouraging matters that were helping to re-form the consciousness of a people into one against which a Black writer could test his own. This formation was itself a positive thing. As Alain Locke, a chief mentor of the Renaissance, has pointed out, Blacks heretofore had common problems without a common consciousness.

This consciousness was to acquire further substance through the coming forth of a West Indian nationalist, Marcus Garvey, who was to build a huge mass movement which would give to the ordinary Black man greater psychological security in his sense of selfhood and a strong feeling of identity. Asserting that racial prejudice was endemic to a white man's civilization and that appeals for justice were therefore futile, advocating the establishment of a Black state, pride in all things Black, self-help, racial purity, separatism

and confidence in a glorious African past, Marcus Garvey claimed a Black following that numbered in the millions. He also collected millions of dollars, built institutions for his programs, and posed a threat internationally before he was cut down and deported by the United States government, under dubious procedures. His impact on Blacks and the Renaissance was strong, even where poets merely wrote literary versions of an African homeland.

A new assertiveness was abroad. In the riots, more than ever before, the shedding of Black blood cost the shedding of white blood. The NAACP had begun to accumulate a string of landmark victories in the courts and to emerge as powerful propagandist and national lobbyist. Out of the greater freedom space provided by the North and the foregoing experiences came the tensions mingling in consciousness, which provided both disillusionment and greater hope--and the birth of the Black Renaissance. . . .

The array of personalities in the literary area is startling. Few were born in New York, although we speak of a Harlem Renaissance. Claude McKay, one of the movement's ornaments, was born in Jamaica; Eric Walrond, short-story writer, in British Guiana. Others, such as Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, represent Kansas and Louisiana and California.

Most bore credentials of a talented tenth, though some were able to allow the credentials to hang very loose. The older shepherds, mentors and sometime contributors brought both formal credentials and a cosmopolitanism that few Americans could match. W. E. B. DuBois, scholar, and editor of The Crisis, reflected an old-time Yankee New England upbringing, a Fisk-Harvard American education, with a Ph.D. as his terminal degree, and study in European universities. By the time of the Renaissance, he was already a scholar and intellectual leader of world stature.

Alain Locke who was to provide brilliant criticism and interpretation. Harvard Ph.D. and Rhodes Scholar, a most cosmopolitan man.

Charles S. Johnson, editor of Opportunity: educational background--the University of Chicago; eventually a distinguished scholar in the social sciences and President of Fisk University.

James Weldon Johnson, product of a cultivated family and Atlanta University, a composer, novelist, poet, educator, diplomat. Again, a most cosmopolitan man.

In the younger group, there was also the evidence of considerable formal education, and cosmopolitan experience through travel and varied cultural

contacts. Claude McKay derived from a very British-oriented school system and further study at Tuskegee and Kansas State University. It should be added of course that McKay had an across-the-board contact with both the masses and advanced political and literary circles, as reflected in his autobiography, A Long Way From Home.

Langston Hughes, who perhaps had the greatest range of contact with the masses and all manner of men, was eventually a graduate of Lincoln University. Both Hughes and McKay had lived the lives they sang of in their songs. But McKay's apartness is always clearly evident, and his role as the cultivated bohemian and radical is carried with a flourish. Hughes seems easily to exemplify a natural identification with the masses, to be a sort of born "everyman." But it is also to be noted that a reading of his autobiographies, The Big Sea and I Wonder As I Wander, does not exactly unlock the privacy of his soul.

Rudolph Fisher, B.A. and M.A., Brown University, M.D., Howard University, specialist in roentgenology, exemplified in his novels and short stories a very intimate and sophisticated contact with the range of Blacks and whites of the period.

Perhaps a greater rigidity of class background is exemplified by Jean Toomer, a product of the University of Wisconsin, with further study at City College, New York; and by Jessie Fauset, the novelist devoted to the more secure group of Blacks, who was a graduate of Cornell, with further study in France. However, Toomer's Cane reveals both the exiled narrator and a considerable grasp of a broad range of Black characters. Certainly, in Cane, his own difference from his characters seems to provide just the right tension for insight, although it may also be a source of excessive poeticizing.

Now one can continue to run down college degrees and special cultivation with a large number of the stars of the Renaissance: Fenton Johnson, Arna Bontemps, Frank Horne and especially Countee Cullen--Cullen because the symbols of middle-class respectability do seem awesome and controlling, from the elaborate religious background through such matters as the New York University-Harvard education and his social-register marriage to W. E. B. DuBois's daughter. The marriage, as described by Blanche Ferguson in Countee Cullen and the Negro Renaissance, seems a special kind of flight from reality.

But my point is not a simple putdown of Renaissance figures as "bourgeois," lacking relevance to the people whose struggles and qualities they

were to portray. I am simply trying to get into one basket the sense of variety of tensions modifiable by highly individual personalities.

On the positive side, their status gave them a certain psychological poise--a perspective from which they could not easily be overawed by definitions of Black realities provided by American and Western culture. As Blacks active during the 1920's their education would not automatically separate them from other Blacks. Indeed, the 1920's provided still a solid racial boxing-in that required that if a Black was to get away from other Blacks, he would have to work at it, make a special job of it.

# 78

## THE DEPRESSION DECADE (1948)

The stock market crash of October, 1929, wrought sweeping changes in American life. Huge fortunes vanished like mist. Machines and men became idle. Relief agencies and breadlines multiplied. Traditionally the last to be hired and the first to be fired, Negroes felt economic dislocation perhaps more acutely than any other group in the country. Bereft of employment and bearing the double burden of color and caste, they endured disadvantage and privation in all sections of the United States. In the South they winced under a vicious sharecropper and tenant-farmer system; and in the North, where they had prospered during the boom period, they fell into the clutch of overcrowding, poverty, crime and disease.

The depression accelerated the extension of proletarian ideology in the United States. Left-wing propagandists--arguing that competitive and monopolistic capitalism inevitably usurps advantage and produces a working class subject to exploitation, unemployment, poverty, disease, war and degradation, and that this group must organize to achieve the classless society of tomorrow--had been active in the country since the early 1920's. It was not until the organization of The New Masses in 1926, however, that a vigorous and concentrated appeal was made to the workers themselves. Members of the staff of The New Masses were James Rorty, Joseph Freeman, Edmont Arens and Michael Gold, the last-named soon becoming the dominant spirit in the magazine, which aggressively undertook to encourage social protest from the proletarian viewpoint. Chiefly through the efforts of The New Masses in the creative field and of The Modern Quarterly in criticism, the Marxist point of view was disseminated throughout the country during the depression years.

"The decade 1929-39," as Van Doren has noted, "saw a widespread and searching revision of the picture of American life which American fiction had been drawing since the earliest days." This observation is doubtless correct, for the depression decade witnessed a rapid expansion of the proletarian tradition in American letters. In the left-wing movement literature was expected to serve as partisan polemic contributing to the destruction of private property and the establishment of social control of the instruments of production. Joseph Freeman voiced the conventional revolutionary concept when he said that "art, an instrument in the class struggle, must be developed by the proletariat as one of its weapons." As a result of this theory there developed an oft-repeated proletarian novel pattern which Carl Van Doren has described as follows:

The action was likely to come to its head in a strike, and it took for granted an essential class conflict between the owners and the landless, propertyless workers. The heroes, in a time of unprecedented unemployment, were men desperately looking for work or trying to keep their jobs. The strongest virtue celebrated in the novels was proletarian solidarity. The future, the novelists insisted, lay with the proletariat, which must and would develop a working-class culture.

Left-wing fiction stressed interracial action. In Scott Nearing's ironically titled Free-Born (1932), which Sterling Brown labels "the first revolutionary novel of Negro life," the hero, whose parents have been lynched and whose sweetheart has been ravished and killed, joins the proletariat in the crusade for "a free world under working class control." Though snubbed by labor leaders and imprisoned, he tenaciously struggles for the liberation of those "who never were freed . . . who keep your high and mighty world a-go'in'." Myra Page endorses the co-operation of white and Black workers in Gathering Storm (1932), while in A Sign for Cain (1935) Grace Lumpkin relates the experiences of a young organizer who undertakes to bring together toilers of both races. In Jordanstown (1937) Josephine Johnson, whose Now in November (1934) and Winter Orchard (1935) depict the misery of the Negro masses, presents a colored woman who advocates workers' solidarity: "She sits in those evenings with her gaunt hands in her great lap, staring at nothing, the hard thoughts marching through her mind, considering not My people or My race, but Us." Proletarian fiction was re-enforced by other literary forms, particularly by such plays as Frederick Schlick's Bloodstream (1932), John Wexley's They Shall Not Die (1934), and Paul Peters and George Sklar's Stevedore (1934).

The chief influence of the depression and proletarianism upon the Negro



was to guide his thinking from racial to class channels. Immediately after World War I the Negro took pride in his color and in his African background. The Garvey Movement extolled Blackness and the Dark Continent, and colored intellectuals enthusiastically pointed to the excellencies of primitive African art. Negro writers strove above all else to be racial and, generally speaking, their protest was likewise racial. After 1929, however, economic conditions in the nation forced the Negro to think in terms of class. Although continuing to feel the heaviest impact of the economic blow, he found that while toilers showed increasing willingness to join him in the campaign for higher wages and union recognition. During the depression strikers and demonstrators of both races banded together to demand relief and jobs. Even in such states as Arkansas and Mississippi Black and white tenants and sharecroppers, kept apart in earlier years by race-baiting demagogues, sometimes collaborated in spite of threats, violence and accusations of "Red Russianism." In December, 1930, three thousand workers, two-thirds of whom were Negroes, demanded employment or relief in Birmingham; and during the same month interracial hunger marches were staged in Toledo, Charlotte and Denver. In numerous cities Negro consumers refused to spend where they could not get work and, with white assistance in certain instances, obtained jobs at firms which had previously drawn racial lines in giving employment. The Herndon and Scottsboro cases drew national attention.

The interracial plank of the Communist Party found a degree of support among prominent Negroes. James W. Ford, having joined the Communist Party in 1926, became its candidate for the vice-presidence of the United States in 1932 and 1936 on a platform which included "equal rights for Negroes." Richard Wright and Langston Hughes, two of the leading Negro creative writers of the time, sympathized with the left-wing movement. Also manifesting the proletarian outlook, Paul Robeson, one of America's foremost actors and singers, made the following comment after his shift from the fashionable West End stage to the Workers' Unity Theatre in London:

"When I sing 'Let My People Go,' I want it in the future to mean more than it has before. It must express the need for freedom not only of my own race. That's only part of the bigger thing. But of all the wroking class--here, in America, all over. I was born of them. They are my people. They will know what I mean."

As a result of the class-consciousness, liberalism and humanitarianism of the depression years, Negro writers increasingly tended to examine the life

of their people from a universal rather than an ethnocentric point of view. To authors primarily concerned with human values both racial exhibitionism, such as the jungle pose of certain writers of the Renaissance, and assertive Negrophile propaganda, such as that of most Negro fictionists before World War I, were anathema. The devotion to research which characterized the period stimulated literature dealing with the racial past, while an increased interest in the life of the masses encouraged works about folk on the farms and in the factories. Although most colored writers continued to use their own race as subjects, their ideology, as the following chapter will show, was not entirely race-motivated. This broadening of literary outlook from a restrictively racial to a broadly human point of view is the tendency which chiefly distinguishes Negro writing of the 1930's from that of earlier years. "The stock market crash of October, 1929," as Benjamin Brawley pointed out in discussing the transition from the Renaissance to the depression decade, "was as important to literature as to economics.

#### Negro Fiction of the Depression

The 1930's saw sweeping changes in the authorship of American Negro fiction. . . . Only Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes held on [from the Renaissance of the 1920's] and produced volumes of fiction during the decade from 1933 to 1942. Bontemps deserted the Harlem Jazz School to write historical novels, while Hughes moved toward proletarian analysis and protest. Although Zora Neale Hurston was a participant in the Renaissance, her first book of fiction did not appear until 1934, when the fervor of the gay 'twenties had disappeared. Chief among Negro novelists who made their debut during the 1930's were Miss Hurston, George Wylie Henderson, George W. Lee, Waters Edward Turpin, Richard Wright and William Attaway. Other new fiction writers of the period were Mercedes Gilbert, John H. Paynter, Victor Daly, John H. Hill and O'Wendell Shaw.

When the depression struck in 1929, the fad of adulating and patronizing things Negro began to subside. No longer buttressed by white devotees of the heyday of the Renaissance, Negro writers turned more and more to materials which genuinely interested them rather than to sensuous and bizarre themes which delighted American readers during the boom years. In general, the fiction of the depression period may be regarded neither as propagandistic nor exhibitionist. In the main, the important novels and short stories of the decade avoided stereotypes and drew characters from real life. Self-preening

and assertive racialism is conspicuous by its absence. Increasingly the Negro was considered as a member, rather than as an outcast, of the American family, and his difficulties as merely a special phase of general social maladjustment. Not a single novel by a Negro between 1933 and 1942 is devoted to the theme of passing, and more interest is shown in the problems of the masses than in the culture of the bourgeoisie. The death knell was sounded for the Harlem vogue. As early as 1931 Alain Locke perceived that the much exploited Harlem literary revival "was after all a product of the expansive period we are now willing to call the period of inflation and overproduction," and from a long-range view in 1939 he recognized that the participants were writers who "went cosmopolite when they were advised to go racial, who went exhibitionist instead of going documentarian, who got jazz-mad and cabaret-crazy instead of getting folk-wise and sociologically sober."

# 79

## BLUEPRINT FOR NEGRO LITERATURE

### The Minority Outlook

Somewhere in his writings Lenin makes the observation that oppressed minorities often reflect the techniques of the bourgeoisie more brilliantly than some sections of the bourgeoisie themselves. The psychological importance of this becomes evident when one recalls that oppressed minorities, and especially petty bourgeois sections of oppressed minorities, strive to assimilate the virtues of the bourgeoisie in the assumption that by doing so, they can lift themselves into a higher social sphere. But not only among the oppressed petty bourgeoisie does this occur. The workers of a minority people also strive to forge organizational forms of struggle to better their lot and they manifest the same restlessness. Lacking the handicaps of false ambition and property, they have access to a wide social vision and a deep social consciousness. They display a greater freedom and initiative in pushing their claims upon civilization than even the petty bourgeoisie. Their organizations show greater strength, adaptability and efficiency than any other group in society.

That Negro workers have demonstrated this consciousness and mobility for political and economic action there can be no doubt. But has this consciousness been reflected in the work of Negro writers? Has it been manifested in Negro writing in the same degree as it has been in the Negro workers' struggle to free the Scottsboro boys, in the struggle to free Herndon in the fight

against lynching? Have they as creative writers taken advantage of their unique minority position? The answer decidedly is no. Negro writers have lagged sadly, and the gap between the militant Negro workers and the Negro writers widens relentlessly.

#### The Role of Negro Writing: Two Definitions

Generally speaking, Negro writing in the past has been confined to humble novels, poems and plays, decorous ambassadors who go a-begging to white America. They entered the Court of American Public Opinion dressed in the kneepants of servility, curtsying to show that the Negro was not inferior, that he was human, and that he had a life comparable to that of other people. These were received as poodle dogs who have learned clever tricks.

White America never offered them any serious criticism. The mere fact that a Negro could write was astonishing. Nor was there any deep concern on the part of white America with what role Negro writing should play in American culture; and if there was any role, it was through accident rather than intent or design. It crept in through the kitchen in the form of jazz and jokes.

On the other hand, these often technically brilliant performances by Negro writers were looked upon by the majority of literate Negroes as something to be proud of. At best, Negro writing has been external to the lives of educated Negroes themselves. That the productions of their writers should have been something of a guide in their daily living is a matter which seems never to have been raised seriously. Negro writing became a sort of conspicuous ornamentation. In short, Negro writing on the whole has been the voice of the educated Negro pleading with white America. Rarely has the best of this writing been addressed to the Negro himself, his needs, his sufferings and aspirations. Through misdirection Negro writers have been far better to others than they have been to themselves. And the mere recognition of this places the whole question of Negro writing in a new light and raises a doubt as to the validity of its present direction.

There is, however, a culture of the Negro which has been addressed to him and him alone, a culture which has, for good or ill, helped to clarify his consciousness and create emotional attitudes which are conducive to action. This culture has stemmed mainly from two sources: (1) the Negro church; and (2) the fluid folklore of the Negro people.

It was, however, in a folklore moulded out of rigorous and inhuman conditions of life that the Negro achieved his most indigenous expression. Blues,

spirituals and folktales. . . these formed the channels through which the racial wisdom flowed.

One would have thought that Negro writers, in their last century of striving at expression, would have continued and deepened this last effort, would have tried to create a more intimate and yet more social system of artistic communication between them and their people. But the illusion that they could escape, through individual achievement, the harsh lot of their race swung Negro writers away from any such path. Two separate cultures sprang up: one for the Negro masses, crude, instinctive, unwritten and unrecognized; and the other for the sons and daughters of a rising Negro bourgeoisie, bloodless, petulant, mannered and neurotic.

Today the question is: Shall Negro writing be for the lives and consciousness of the Negro masses, moulding those lives and that consciousness toward new goals, or shall it continue begging the question of the Negroes' humanity?

#### The Problem of Nationalism in Negro Writing

In stressing the difference between the role Negro writing failed to play in the lives of the Negro people, and the role it should play in the future if it is to serve its historic function, in pointing out the fact that Negro writing has been addressed in the main to a small white audience rather than to a Negro one, it should be known that no attempt is made to propagate a specious and blatant nationalism. Yet, the nationalist character of the Negro people is unmistakable. Psychologically this nationalism is reflected in the whole of Negro culture, and especially in folklore.

The social institutions of the Negro are imprisoned in the Jim Crow political system of the South, and this Jim Crow political system in turn is built upon a plantation feudal economy. Hence, it can be seen that the emotional expression of group-feeling which puzzles so many people and leads them to deplore what they call "Black chauvinism" is not a morbidly inherent trait of the Negro, but instead is the reflex expression of a life whose roots are imbedded deeply in Southern soil.

Negro writers must accept the nationalist implications of their lives, not in order to encourage them, but in order to change and transcend them. They must accept the concept of nationalism because in order to transcend it they must possess and understand it. And a nationalist spirit in Negro writing means a nationalism carrying the highest possible pitch of social

consciousness. It means a nationalism that knows its limitations, that is aware of the dangers of its position, that knows its aims are unrealizable within the framework of capitalist America; a nationalism whose reason for being lies in the simple fact of self-possession and in the consciousness of the interdependence of people in modern society.

For Negro writers, even more so than for Negro politicians, nationalism is a bewildering and vexing question, the full ramifications of which cannot be touched upon in a paper of this sort. But among the Negro workers and the Negro middle class the spirit of nationalism is rife in a hundred devious forms; and a simple literary realism, which seeks to depict the lives of these people, devoid of wider social connotations, devoid of nationalist tendencies, devoid of the revolutionary significance of even its nationalist tendencies, must of necessity do a rank injustice to the Negro people and alienate their possible allies in the struggle for liberation. If there are writers, white or Black, whose social consciousness is so barren that they cannot see the significance of the lives of the Negro people even though those lives are couched in national forms, then the meaning of the lives of the Negro people will remain obscure even to themselves. One of the great tasks of Negro writers of the future will be to show the Negro to himself; it will be, paraphrasing the language of James Joyce, to forge in the smithy of our souls the uncreated conscience of our race.

#### Social Consciousness and the New Responsibility

Naturally, all of this places upon Negro writers, who seek to function within their race as purposeful agents, a new and fearful responsibility. In order to do justice to their subject matter, in order to depict Negro life in all of its manifold and intricate relationships, a deep, informed and complex consciousness is necessary, a consciousness which draws for its strength upon the fluid lore of a great people, and moulds this lore with the concepts that move and direct the forces of history today. Every short story, novel, poem and play should carry within its lines, implied or explicit, a sense of the oppression of the Negro people, the danger of war, of fascism, of the threatened destruction of culture and civilization; and too, the faith and necessity to build a new world.

This mandate, and it is nothing less than that, raises the inescapable question of the personality of the writer. It means that in the lives of Negro writers must be found those materials and experiences which will create

in them a meaningful and significant picture of the world today. Many young writers have grown to believe that a Marxist analysis of society presents such a picture. It creates a picture which, when placed squarely before the eyes of the writer, should unify his personality, organize his emotions and buttress him with a tense and obdurate will to change the world. And yet, for the writer, Marxism is but the starting point. No theory of life can take the place of life. After Marxism has laid bare the skeleton of society, there remains the task of the writer to plant flesh upon those bones out of the plenitude of his will to live. He may, with disgust and revulsion, say no and depict the horrors of capitalism encroaching upon the human being. Or he may, with hope and passion, say yes and depict the faint stirrings of a new and emerging life. But in whatever social voice he chooses to speak, whether positive or negative, there should always be heard or overheard his faith, his necessity. And this faith and necessity should not be simple or rendered in primer-like terms; for the life of the Negro people is not simple as some dyspeptic intellectuals contend. The presentation of their lives should be simple, yes; but all the complexity, the strangeness, the magic wonder of life that plays like a bright sheen over even the most sordid existence, should be there.

#### The Problem of Perspective

What vision must Negro writers have before their eyes in order to feel the impelling necessity for an about-face? What angle of sight can show them all the forces of modern society in process, all the lines of economic and political development converging toward a distant point of hope? Must they believe in some "ism"?

They may feel that only dupes believe in "isms"; they may feel with some measure of justification that another commitment means only disillusionment, but any one destitute of a theory about the structure, direction and meaning of modern society is a lost victim in a world he cannot understand or control.

But even if Negro writers found themselves through some "ism," how would that influence their writing? Are they being called upon to "preach"? To be "salesmen"? To "prostitute" their art? What is the relationship between "something to believe in" and artistic expression? Must they "sully" themselves? Must they write "propaganda"? No. It is a question of awareness, of consciousness, it is, above all, a question of perspective.

Perspective is that part of a poem, novel or play which writers never put

directly upon paper, but which is sensed in every line of the work. It is that fixed point in intellectual space where writers stand to view the struggles, hopes and sufferings of their people. There are times when they may stand too close and the result is a neglect of important things. Of all the problems faced by writers who as a whole have never allied themselves in act or thought with world movements, perspective is the most difficult of solution. At its best perspective is a pre-conscious assumption, something which writers take for granted, something which they win through their living.

A Spanish writer recently spoke of living in the heights of one's time. Surely, perspective means just that.

It means that Negro writers must learn to view the life of a Negro living in New York's Harlem or Chicago's South Side with the consciousness that one sixth of the earth's surface belongs to the working class. It means that Negro writers must create in their readers' minds a relationship between a Negro woman hoeing cotton in the South and the men who loll in swivel chairs in Wall Street and take the fruits of her toil.

Perspective is the frame in which the picture is hung; it is the invisible brake or accelerator upon the tempo of a poem; it is that part of a novel that is remembered long after the story is forgotten.

Perspective for Negro writers will come when they have looked and brooded so hard and long upon the harsh lot of their race and compared it with the hopes and struggles of minority peoples everywhere that the cold facts have begun to tell them something.

#### The Problem of Judgment and Criticism

As can be seen from the Negro writer's subject matter and theme, his rebellion will be not only against the exploiting whites, but against all of that within his own race that retards decisive action and obscures clarity of vision. And his loyalties will be toward all those forces which help to shape the consciousness of his race toward a more heroic cast. His will be the task to arrange into significant artistic patterns all the experiences of his people, those experiences which converge toward death as well as those that converge toward life, and stamp them with his judgment of hate or love.

Hitherto, a cowardly sentimentality has deterred Negro writers from launching crusades against the evils which Negro ignorance and stupidity have spawned. Negro writers should not hesitate to tell the truth about their people for fear of harming them, or for fear that these truths may be used



by belligerent whites against them. The problem of judgment for Negro writers is bound up with the problem of their becoming whole men, human beings.

There is but one searchlight that can help Negro writers to walk along this rocky ledge, and that is the pitiless glare of a criticism whose frame of reference is historical, political and economic as well as aesthetic. Over and above all their achievements, Negro writers should never feel that their goal has been reached; always ahead should be the sense of areas of experience to be conquered; problems to be framed, pondered and solved, always in them should reside the sense of becoming. And out of this sense will, should, grow the need for criticism.

Only when Negro writing is bathed in the white light of a constant and responsible criticism and only when that criticism has become the conscience of Negro writing, can it be said that Negro writing has come of age.

To recapitulate: We are writers of a minority people whose working class is pushing militantly forward. We have the choice of writing for Negro and white "Society" or for our working class and the cause of social justice it represents. If we choose to stand on the side of social progress, then our artistic expression must shape the (folk-national) aspirations of our people. This necessitates a basic realignment, ideologically and aesthetically, on our part. It calls for a new consciousness and a new responsibility. Negro writers must live on the heights of their time and weave their subject matter into artistic patterns and suffuse these patterns with their will to live. Their resurgence against the bulwarks that stand in front of them might necessitate a resurgence against those obstacles within their own group which retard them.

Writers faced with such tremendous tasks can have no possible time for malice and jealousy. The conditions for the growth of each writer depend too much upon the good work of other writers. Every first-rate novel, poem or play lifts the level of consciousness higher. When we start, we start not from the beginning, but from the height reached by the last aspirant. Every contribution fertilizes the soil out of which we as writers grow. We need one another.

## THE TASKS OF NEGRO WRITERS (1935)

There are certain practical things American Negro writers can do through their work.

We can reveal to the Negro masses from which we come, our potential power to transform the now ugly face of the Southland into a region of peace and plenty.

We can reveal to the white masses those Negro qualities which go beyond the mere ability to laugh and sing and dance and make music, and which are a part of the useful heritage that we place at the disposal of a future free America.

Negro writers can seek to unite blacks and whites in our country, not on the nebulous basis of an interracial meeting, or the shifting sands of religious brotherhood, but on the solid ground of the daily working-class struggle to wipe out, now and forever, all the old equalities of the past.

Furthermore, by way of exposure Negro writers can reveal in their novels, stories, poems, and articles:

The lovely grinning face of Philanthropy--which gives a million dollars to a Jim Crow school, but not one job to a graduate of that school; which builds a Negro hospital with second-rate equipment, then commands black patients and student-doctors to go there whether they will or no; or which, out of the kindness of its heart, erects yet another separate, segregated, shut-off Jim Crow Y.M.C.A.

Negro writers can expose those white labor leaders who keep their unions closed against Negro workers and prevent the betterment of all workers.

We can expose, too, the sick-sweet smile of organized religion--which lies about what it doesn't know, and about what it does know. And the half-vooodoo, half-clown, face of revivalism, dulling the mind with the clap of its empty hands.

Expose, also, the false leadership that besets the Negro people--bought and paid for leadership, owned by capital, afraid to open its mouth except in the old conciliatory way so advantageous to the exploiters.

And all the economic roots of race hatred and race fear.

And the Contentment Tradition of the O-lovely-Negroes school of American fiction, which makes an ignorant black face and a Carolina head filled with superstition, appear more desirable than a crown of gold; the jazz-band; and

the O-so-gay writers who make of the Negro's poverty and misery a dusky funny paper.

And expose war. And the old My-country-'Tis-of-Thee lie. And the colored American Legion posts strutting around talking about the privilege of dying for the noble Red, White and Blue, when they aren't even permitted the privilege of living for it. Or voting for it in Texas. Or working for it in the diplomatic service. Or even rising, like every other good little boy, from the log cabin to the White House.

White House is right.

Dear colored American Legion, you can swing from a lynching tree, uniform and all, with pleasure--and nobody'll fight for you. Don't you know that? Nobody even salutes you down South, dead or alive, medals or no medals, chevrons or not, no matter how many wars you've fought in.

Let Negro writers write about the irony and pathos of the colored American Legion.

"Salute, Mr. White Man!"

"Salute, hell!...You're a nigger."

Or would you rather write about the moon?

Sure, the moon still shines over Harlem. Shines over Scottsboro. Shines over Birmingham, too, I reckon. Shines over Cordie Cheek's grave, down South.

But there are certain very practical things American Negro writers can do. And must do. There's a song that says, "the time ain't long." That song is right. Something has got to change in America--and change soon. We must help that change to come.

The moon's still shining as poetically as ever, but all the stars on the flag are dull. (And the stripes, too.)

We want a new and better America, where there won't be any poor, where there won't be any more Jim Crow, where there won't be any lynchings, where there won't be any munition makers, where we won't need philanthropy, nor charity, nor the New Deal, nor Home Relief.

We want an America that will be ours, a world that will be ours--we Negro workers and white workers! Black writers and white!

We'll make that world!

## THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT (1968)

The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. Black Art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America. In order to perform this task, the Black Arts Movement proposes a radical reordering of the western cultural aesthetic. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique and iconology. The Black Arts and the Black Power concept both relate broadly to the Afro-American's desire for self-determination and nationhood. Both concepts are nationalistic. One is concerned with the relationship between art and politics; the other with the art of politics.

Recently, these two movements have begun to merge: the political values inherent in the Black Power concept are now finding concrete expression in the aesthetics of Afro-American dramatists, poets, choreographers, musicians and novelists. A main tenet of Black Power is the necessity for Black people to define the world in their own terms. The Black artist has made the same point in the context of aesthetics. The two movements postulate that there are in fact and in spirit two Americas--one Black, one white. The Black artist takes this to mean that his primary duty is to speak to the spiritual and cultural needs of Black people. Therefore, the main thrust of this new breed of contemporary writers is to confront the contradictions arising out of the Black man's experience in the racist West. Currently, these writers are re-evaluating western aesthetics, the traditional role of the writer, and the social function of art. Implicit in this re-evaluation is the need to develop a "Black aesthetic." It is the opinion of many Black writers, I among them, that the Western aesthetic has run its course: it is impossible to construct anything meaningful within its decaying structure. We advocate a cultural revolution in art and ideas. The cultural values inherent in western history must either be radicalized or destroyed, and we will probably find that even radicalization is impossible. In fact, what is needed is a whole new system of ideas. Poet Don L. Lee expresses it:

. . . We must destroy Faulkner, Dick, Jane and other perpetrators of evil. It's time for DuBois, Nat Turner and Kwame Nkrumah. As Frantz Fanon points out: destroy the culture and you destroy the people. This must not happen. Black artists are culture stabilizers; bringing back old values, and introducing new ones. Black Art will talk to the people and with the will of the people stop impending "protective custody."

The Black Arts Movement eschews "protest" literature. It speaks directly to Black people. Implicit in the concept of "protest" literature, as Brother Knight has made clear, is an appeal to white morality:

Now any Black man who masters the technique of his particular art form, who adheres to the white aesthetic, and who directs his work toward a white audience is, in one sense, protesting. And implicit in the act of protest is the belief that a change will be forthcoming once the masters are aware of the protestor's "grievance" (the very word connotes begging, supplications to the gods). Only when that belief has faded and protestings end, will Black art begin.

Brother Knight also has some interesting statements about the development of a "Black aesthetic":

Unless the Black artist establishes a "Black aesthetic" he will have no future at all. To accept the white aesthetic is to accept and validate a society that will not allow him to live. The Black artist must create new forms and new values, sing new songs (or purify old ones); and along with other Black authorities, he must create a new history, new symbols, myths and legends (and purify old ones by fire). And the Black artist, in creating his own aesthetic, must be accountable for it only to the Black people. Further, he must hasten his own dissolution as an individual (in the Western sense)--painful though the process may be, having been breast-fed the poison of "individual experience."

When we speak of a "Black aesthetic" several things are meant. First, we assume that there is already in existence the basis for such an aesthetic. Essentially, it consists of an African-American cultural tradition. But this aesthetic is finally, by implication, broader than that tradition. It encompasses most of the usable elements of Third World culture. The motive behind the Black aesthetic is the destruction of the white thing, the destruction of white ideas and white ways of looking at the world. The new aesthetic is mostly predicated on an Ethics which asks the question: whose vision of the world is finally more meaningful, ours or the white oppressors'? What is truth? Or more precisely, whose truth shall we express, that of the oppressed or of the oppressors? These are basic questions. Black intellectuals of previous decades failed to ask them. Further, national and international affairs demand that we appraise the world in terms of our own interests. It is clear that the question of human survival is at the core of contemporary experience. The Black artist must address himself to this reality in the strongest terms possible. In a context of world upheaval, ethics and aesthetics must interact positively and be consistent with the demands for a more spiritual world. Consequently, the Black Arts Movement is an ethical movement. Ethical, that is, from the viewpoint of the oppressed. And much of the oppression

confronting the Third World and Black America is directly traceable to the Euro-American cultural sensibility. This sensibility, anti-human in nature, has, until recently, dominated the psyches of most Black artists and intellectuals; it must be destroyed before the Black creative artist can have a meaningful role in the transformation of society.

It is this natural reaction to an alien sensibility that informs the cultural attitudes of the Black Arts and the Black Power movement. It is a profound ethical sense that makes a Black artist question a society in which art is one thing and the actions of men another. The Black Arts Movement believes that your ethics and your aesthetics are one. That the contradictions between ethics and aesthetics in western society is symptomatic of a dying culture.

The term "Black Arts" is of ancient origin, but it was first used in a positive sense by LeRoi Jones:

We are unfair  
 And unfair  
 We are black magicians  
 Black arts we make  
 in black labs of the heart  
  
 The fair are fair  
 and deathly white  
  
 The day will not save them  
 And we own the night

There is also a section of the poem "Black Dada Nihilismus" that carries the same motif. But a fuller amplification of the nature of the new aesthetics appears in the poem "Black Art":

Poems are bullshit unless they are  
 teeth or trees or lemons piled  
 on a step. Or black ladies dying  
 of men leaving nickel hearts  
 beating them down. Fuck poems  
 and they are useful, would they shoot  
 come at you, love what you are,  
 breathe like wrestlers, or shudder  
 strangely after peeing. We want live  
 words of the hip world, live flesh &  
 coursing blood. Hearts and Brains  
 Souls splintering fire. We want poems  
 like fists beating niggers out of Jocks  
 or dagger poems in the slimy bellies  
 of the owner-jews . . .

Poetry is a concrete function, an action. No more abstractions. Poems are

physical entities: fists, daggers, airplane poems and poems that shoot guns. Poems are transformed from physical objects into personal forces:

. . . Put it on him poem. Strip him naked  
to the world. Another bad poem cracking  
steel knuckles in a jewlady's mouth  
Poem scream poison gas on breasts in green berets . . .

Then the poem affirms the integral relationship between Black Art and Black people:

. . . Let Black people understand  
that they are the lovers and the sons  
of lovers and warriors and sons  
of warriors Are poems & poets &  
all the loveliness here in the world

It ends with the following lines, a central assertion in both the Black Arts Movement and the philosophy of Black Power:

We want a black poem. And a  
Black World.  
Let the world be a Black Poem  
And let All Black People Speak This Poem  
Silently  
Or LOUD

The poem comes to stand for the collective conscious and unconscious of Black America--the real impulse in back of the Black Power movement, which is the will toward self-determination and nationhood, a radical reordering of the nature and function of both art and the artist.

## 82

### REVOLUTIONARY ART/BLACK LIBERATION (1965)

Besides fighting the enemy, the Black Panther Party is doing propaganda among the masses of Black people--

The form of propaganda I'm about to refer to is called art, such as painting, sketching, etc.--

#### Art As Revolution

The Black Panther Party calls it revolutionary art--this kind of art enlightens the party to continue its vigorous attack against the enemy, as well as educate the masses of Black people--we do this by showing them through pictures--"The Correct Handling of the Revolution."

#### Bridges Blown Up

We, the Black Panther artists, draw deadly pictures of the enemy--pictures that show him at his death door or dead--his bridges are blown up in

our pictures--his institutions destroyed--and in the end he is lifeless--

We try to create an atmosphere for the vast majority of Black people--who aren't readers but activists--through their observation of our work, they feel they have the right to destroy the enemy.

To give you an example of where revolutionary art began--we must focus on a particular people, our brothers, the Vietnamese. In the beginning stages of their struggle against U.S. Imperialism--so as to determine the destiny of their own community--they had no modern technical equipment, such as, tanks, automatic weapons or semiautomatic weapons, etc.

In these days of struggle for Black Liberation, here in America--we have no modern technical equipment compared to that of our oppressor--going back to Vietnam, as time progressed, the Vietnamese people have the same kind of technical equipment as the U.S. imperialists which also is made by the same manufacturer--

#### One Bullet, 40 Pigs

So, here is where we began to create our revolutionary art--we draw pictures of our brothers with stoner guns with one bullet going through forty pigs taking out their intestines along the way--another brother comes along, rips off their technical equipment; brothers in tanks guarding the Black house and the Black community--also launching rockets on U.S. military bases--Minister of Justice H. Rap Brown burning America down; he knows she plans to never come around; Prime Minister of Colonized Afro-America Stokely Carmichael with handgrenade in hand pointed at the Statue of Liberty; preaching we must have undying love for our people; LeRoi Jones asking, "Who will survive America?" "Black people will survive America"--taking what they want--Minister of Defense Huey P. Newton defending the Black community--two pigs down two less to go.

#### Standard Oil Molotovs

We draw pictures that show Standard Oil in milk bottles launched at Rockefeller with the wicks made of cloth from I Magnin and J Magnin--pictures of Chinese fire works in gunpowder form aimed at the heart of the enemy--Bank of America--pictures of pigs hanging by their tongues wrapped with barbed wire connected to your local power plant.

This is revolutionary art--pigs lying in alley ways of the colony dead with their eyes gouged out--autopsy showing cause of death: "They fail to see that majority rules." Pictures we draw show them choking to death from



their inhuman ways--these are the kinds of pictures revolutionary artists draw--

The Viet Cong stabbing him in his brain--Black people taking the hearts of the enemy and hanging the hearts on the wall (put one more notch on our knife) skin them alive and make rugs out of them--

We must draw pictures of Southern cracker Wallace with cancer of the mouth that he got from his dead witch's uterus--

Pictures that show Black people kicking down prison gates--sniping bombers shooting down helicopters police mayors governors senators assemblymen congressmen firemen newsmen businessmen Americans--

"We shall conquer without a doubt"--

revolutionary artist--Emory

## 83

### THE NEW MUSIC (1968)

. . . The New Music is an abstract extension of the historical forms of jazz. A cursory comparison of the New Music with its most immediate antecedent, bebop, reveals a general disregard on the part of the New Musicians for the rules of improvisation that were established in the bebop era, though this was indeed a period of great musical liberation. Charlie Parker, who was twenty years ahead of his time, remains the father of modern saxophone playing, though few of the new reed men play Bird licks, as the cool and hard boppers always did. In fact, the New Musicians often refer to Bird as much as a teacher of life, as of music. It was Parker's revolutionary approach to self, society and existence that illuminates those brilliant arpeggios and lays the basis of his genius. Thus, it was considered hip and honorable to "live like Bird," even if this allowed for a certain self-indulgence and self-destructiveness, since, as we shall later see, this hipster life style one-upped those elements of society that thought they were on top.

It is a similarly revolutionary impulse, though different in style and identity, which colors the highly emotive sound and techniques of the New Music. As a movement, it can be seen as the latest in a fifty-year series of all-pervading shake-ups of the jazz esthetic. Some critics, anxious to tie jazz to European music, have divided jazz into primitive, baroque, rococo, classical, romantic and atonal periods. The approach that this writer will take is that the New Music is the artistic signal of the imminent maturation

and self-assertion of the Black man in an oppressive American society.

To begin at the beginning, the frenetic religiosity of Afro-American slave music was clearly an attempt at establishing a vocabulary of release by a people whose languages were conscientiously taken from them by slave owners, who even went so far as to destroy their drums, a major means of communication. It is from this perspective that the development of Afro-American music must be viewed: as the progressive refinement of a sublimated vocabulary, wherein that which is most heartfelt is stated loudly and clearly but never directly, never in so many dangerous words. If the New Jazz is abstract, if it defies notative analysis, the same could be said of slave music.

. . . The most important and most negative aspect of Black folk music up until the jazz musician achieved the role of vanguard artist in the 1940's [is] that only exceptional Negroes ever felt free to describe the oppression that was foremost on their minds. Many of our parents, particularly in the South, could not conceive of political action, but those who were musicians could channel all those energies into song.

Apart from the total irrelevancy of most criticism as exemplified by the ongoing search for white hopes who will "prove that jazz is everyone's music," this has been the fatal flaw in white appreciation of Black art. The music has been seen too much as art for art's sake and devoid of anything other than mildly liberal social significance. Samuel Charters puzzled over the question of why racial subjugation had not been the subject of more blues, when Bessie Smith was able to sing a song as socialistic as:

Mr. Rich Man, Mr. Rich Man, open up your heart and mind.  
 Mr. Rich Man, Mr. Rich Man, open up your heart and mind.  
 Give the poor man a chance, help stop these hard, hard times.  
 While you living in your mansion, you don't know what hard  
 times mean.  
 While you living in your mansion, you don't know what hard  
 times mean.  
 Poor working man's wife is starving, while your wife is living like a  
 queen.

The obvious answer to Mr. Charters' question is that you could get damned shot up for attacking the south's racial institutions, while Bessie, by restricting her subjects, could at least be assured of dying a natural nigger's death. This is why LeRoi Jones' hero in Dutchman tells his white lady antagonist, "If Bessie Smith had killed a few white people she wouldn't have had to sing the blues." He was talking about the sublimation of the true

meaning of Afro-American, about the attempt to accomplish through music what only action can accomplish.

But there are specific references to white racism in the Black music in pieces such as Lightnin' Sam Hopkins' The Black Man Told The Devil, in which a Black man being chased by a devil (obviously not another Black man) looks back over his shoulder facetiously and tells the devil, "You can't run, we sho having a lot of fun." Billie Holiday's description of a lynch scene in the song, Strange Fruit, is another example.

Contemporary musicians, given the contest of a large mass political movement, have been excellent on such artistically dangerous projects as Max Roach's ballet, We Insist On Freedom Now and Archie Shepp's Malcolm, Malcolm Semper Malcolm, in which jazz word and jazz sound deliver a clear political message. The New Musicians also use their titles in wordless works to carry the listener's ear in a given social direction, as in Roach's Garvey's Ghost, Coltrane's Alabama and Africa, Omette Coleman's Old Black Joe (which turns that image completely around), and many others; trumpeter-composer Bill Dixon even named a series of concerts that he produced, The October Revolution in Jazz.

The true value of the New Music is in the expression of the whole man, the whole Black man, in a society that affords him no comparable release. Roberto Matta, the Chilean Surrealist painter who has spent most of his life working toward an art that would facilitate the total liberation of the human potential, heard tenor Pharaoh Saunders at a SNCC benefit, and described him as "an incredibly generous man, exactly what an artist should be!", meaning that Pharaoh was giving a lot of himself in performance and that there is no other artistic gift possible. That self becomes, in performance, a less private sector of the artist's being.

We live in a time of massive social breakdown, and this breakdown is related in the breakdown of the forms of art. European art forms have afforded the Black artist useful media of expression, and all European forms, creative and performing, have been mastered to the point of excellence by at least a few Black artists. However, all of the writings of Ellison, Jones, Baldwin, et al., all of the paintings of Lawrence, do not weigh as much as one John Coltrane solo in terms of the force of its thrust, the honesty of its statement and in the originality of its form.

The reason is that poem, play, novel and canvas are, for us, learned

forms. We may find useful parallels in our culture which may add a certain amount of originality to our use of those forms, but they remain, after all, the forms of European culture, meaningful to Europeans and to non-Europeans with European values. This is not the exclusive predicament of the Afro-American artist--the exponents of negritude in Africa and the Indies have spent years dealing with it. Novelist Eduard Glissant of Martinique had an extremely difficult time reorienting his style to develop a fictional form that conformed more to the oral folk tale than to the French novel. Glissant's compatriot, poet Aimé Césaire, feeling trapped in a European language, went back into Surrealism to find an anti-French French, which would, in a sense, punish the colonialists for forcing him to write in a European language. There is a school of young African painters who have seen a European painting and who refuse to be shown one.

The problems of Afro-American painters and poets is that they are hunting for a form which relates to their traditions in a useful way. Poets have blues, true, but the difference between the concept of poetry and the concept of blues is that poetry is conceived as a permanent record, etched in stone, while the blues is the literature of performance, the great body of it sung to the breeze, and then gone. Lightnin' Hopkins claims that he never remembers his words from one performance to the next, and that he always makes up new ones. The African tradition of sculpture might perhaps have been transmuted into some Afro-American form as original as jazz had not the artisans of New Orleans, Charleston and other Southern cities been replaced by whites and then by immigrants after Reconstruction. This is conjecture, of course, but it must be remembered that jazz developed as a form of work, as a job. I imagine the painters of the Italian Renaissance must have regarded their commissions in much the same way.

For the Afro-American, however, music was a weapon of survival ever since that unnamed Dutch frigate landed (the year before the Mayflower, for what that's worth) at Jamestown, Virginia, with a cargo of African slaves. We are too poor a people to have a culture of literacy, but music is rescue and release, and the slaves proved it was possible to dance in chains.

So, when America takes credit for jazz as its only indigenous art form, it is only flattering itself for its ongoing slave-holder tradition. The work song was as functional for the master as for the slave, as it improved the quality and quantity of the work. The same is true of blues and

religious music--if you deprive a man of both testicles, he can no longer procreate, and you will have no more baby slaves.

The context in which jazz had to survive is germane, here. If it were not for the unbelievable sexual depravity of the white aristocracy in New Orleans, there would have been no Storeyville. Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong would never have had a gig to play and nurture their music on. Likewise, the extreme alcoholism of the Twenties provided a modicum of security for Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Fletcher Henderson and all of the geniuses whom they employed. Now, these were not shallow men, and they must have had strong feelings about their working conditions, though their biographers would have you think that they thought that everything was just hunky-dory. Even if this was so, there was a great deal of frustration among these pre-bop musicians about the actual form that was forced on their music so that it would satisfy its social function. Duke was always writing suites, ballets and concerti of various kinds; Fletcher Henderson adapted Liszt; James P. Johnson wrote an opera, and so on. The point is that, perverse as it may seem, frustration fructifies the music in so far as it gives the musician something to blow about.

The bebop revolution saw the jazz musician adopting an entirely different social posture. As LeRoi Jones wrote in Blues People (unquestionably the best book on jazz yet written), "The young Negro musician of the Forties began to realize that merely by being a Negro in America, one was a non-conformist." Here, for the first time, a Black artistic vanguard assumed whole styles of comportment, attire and speech which were calculated to be the indicia of a group which felt that its own values were more sophisticated than, if not superior to, the mores of the American society at large. The music and the manner developed concomitantly, which indicates that the musicians were aware that each musical innovation was a new way of commenting on the world around them. Their alienation was cultivated to the extent that many of them, emulating Charlie Parker, adopted a drug (heroin) which blots out all interaction of self and outer world. When the high hipster played "Out Of This World," he wasn't just whistling "Dixie." (whew!)

Bebop was, then, the beginning of a realization on the part of the jazz musicians that if they wanted to be artists in America, and not just entertainers, they would have to accept the lot of the artist in industrial society--as if they needed another handicap. This meant the sacrifice of any

financial security they might have had, as the music was not the best for social dancing and would ultimately prove to be unsuitable for promoting the sale of alcohol.

All that's sufferable, but, unfortunately, alienation is a part of the artist's situation in capitalist industrial society. For the Black musician, it meant alienation from his Black brothers, since he was born alienated from whites. The emergence of the white hipster as an important market for the music, created, in New York, a neutral turf, first in Midtown and then in Greenwich Village. This was probably an inevitability. There simply are no institutions set up in the ghetto to facilitate the growth of Black art, no matter how relevant that art is to the conditions of ghetto life, no matter how much brotherhood is felt by the musicians for the family of Black men.

The twin problems of alienation and economic control of jazz by white men, are the two most distressing problems confronting the New Music. It would not be such a drag that white America has not accepted the music if Black America loved it; it would not be so horrible that there's so little money to be made if the musicians themselves had control of such money as there is. The most rewarding feature of the New Music is that it has so much to say about the dignity of man, and it is the Black man who most needs this message. But the reality is that it was Greenwich Village which heard the evolution of the New, not Harlem. The man standing in line for the Otis Redding show at the Apollo almost certainly never heard of tenor saxophonist Albert Ayler, and wouldn't have the fuzziest idea of what he was doing if he did hear him. Yet the roots of Ayler's music are largely the same as Otis Redding's.

This is the kind of problem which characterizes Black America at this stage of its development. Though our condition hasn't changed that much, we have come a long way as a people since Miss McKim tried to figure out just how those colored people sang that weird music. But there is still that missing chord that will tie together the various dynamic elements of our community. The man who strikes it will be a major mover.

## IMPERIALISM AND THE BLACK MEDIA (1973)

Most recent discussions of the Black media have focused on how Black people are portrayed in the mass media, how we are kept out of employment and ownership in the media, how the Black community can utilize what limited access to media that is available to us, or how cable television will drastically alter our plight. These discussions describe the symptoms of the problem we face with the media, but do not explain the fundamental cause of the problem itself. . . . [A] focus on mass media, especially the Black media, especially the Black media, and its relationship to imperialism and Black liberation . . . will help us to better understand the context in which the mass media operates and the role of Blacks in the media in creating a new mass media that serves the interests of Black people and the masses of people of this society.

The first step in dealing with imperialism and the Black media is to understand the precise character of U.S. imperialism--the principle obstacle to the liberation of all exploited and oppressed people. Imperialism is monopoly capitalism on a world scale, the domination of the world economy by large monopoly corporations. Imperialism developed from capitalism. Capitalism is a system which organizes the production and distribution of goods and services, including basic necessities like food, clothing and shelter. Under capitalism, the masses of the people are exploited; they are collectively engaged in production of these goods but receive a wage just large enough to purchase their necessities. The largest amount of goods produced in this collective process, however, are taken and the profits from their sale are consumed by a small group of capitalists who claim "private ownership" over the factories and other means that were used in the collective process of production. This leads to great wealth for the few capitalists, on the one hand, and subsistence living for the masses of working people, on the other. . . .

Who Owns the Media?

Another essential question that has been underemphasized in discussions of Black media is who owns the most important and the most powerful media outlets in the U.S. The answer to this question will reveal in whose interest the mass media industry operates. In brief, the pattern of ownership of the mass media is identical to the pattern of monopoly capitalism in the U.S.

economy. Ownership is characterized by "media monopolies" and is concentrated among a few large corporations. Heavily represented in the ownership of media are large financial institutions, that serve to bring the mass media under the ownership and control of the same elite U.S. ruling class that owns the rest of the economy.

Newspapers. Frederick Lundberg a well-respected scholar of U.S. economic power, wrote in his Sixty Families about the concentration of press ownership.

The American press, it should be plainly stated is owned and controlled by the wealthiest families of American finance capitalism. This press is primarily influenced neither by advertising control, not by unconscious plutocratic modes of thoughts arising from the established social system. It is directly responsive, like a shadow, to those individuals that derive the greatest profits from society. It represents huge investments, but functions constantly, whether it is commercially profitable or not because it serves a specific class objective.

This class objective of increasing its power and its profits are further revealed by two present-day trends in newspapers ownership: the increasing development of local newspaper monopolies and the growth of newspaper "groups" and "chains" which are putting the ownership of newspapers into the hands of fewer and fewer people.

Whereas in 1880, only 38.3 per cent of the daily cities had a single paper, and only one city had a morning-evening combination under single ownership, today the single daily cities are 85.6 per cent of the total. If the 171 cities with two dailies under single ownership are added to the 1,284 single daily cities, the number with a local "monopoly" (i.e., no locally competing dailies) rises to 1,455 or 97 per cent of the total.

The total number of "chains"--conglomerates--of daily newspapers has grown from a total of 13 chains with 828 papers in 1968. The average size of these chains is now 5.2 newspapers, up from 4.8 in 1945 and rapidly increasing during this current flurry of mergers and acquisitions. The top ten chains conglomerates include such powerful syndicates as Scripps-Howard, Hearst, Knight, Gannet, Cowles and the Chicago Tribune group (the largest)--own 124 daily newspapers with a circulation of over 100 million. Their power is even more extensive: Scripps Howard own 17 newspapers and 95 per cent of United Press International (UPI) and television stations in Cleveland, Memphis and Cincinnati, for example.

Broadcasting. The Disclosure of Corporate Ownership report of the



United States Senate [1973] gives a concise summary of the position of U.S. monopoly capitalism as the dominant force in the U.S. economy and in the broadcasting industry. After giving the holdings of such banks as Chase-Manhattan, First National City and Bankers Trust in the media, the report concludes:

Broadcast companies are often subsidiaries of companies that are not primarily engaged in broadcasting--Avco, Dunn and Bradstreet, Westinghouse, General Electric, Kaiser, Pacific Southwest Airlines. . . .

Eleven banks have voting rights to 38.1 per cent of the common stock in CBS. Eight banks have voting rights to 34.1 per cent of the common stock in ABC. Chase Manhattan and Bankers Trust together have voting rights to 19.8 per cent of the stock in CBS and 17.4 per cent of the stock of ABC. A third New York bank, Bank of New York, has voting rights to 7.2 per cent of the stock in ABC and 3.3 per cent of the stock in CBS.

Part I of this report shows that these same banks have significant holdings--not all of them necessarily including voting rights--in a broad spectrum of the economy, including energy, transportation, manufacturing and retailing. Part II of this report shows that a few unnamed banks had sole voting rights within those same major categories and others. Now Part III shows how these banks identified above, have major voting position in broadcasting as well.

We see that banks and other financial institutions are very important in keeping the economy under the control of a few members of the ruling class, and at the same time control much of the broadcasting industry--65 per cent of the voting shares of ABC, 30 per cent of the voting shares of NBS and 47 per cent of the voting shares of CBS. Let us briefly review the magnitude of these networks.

ABC: Controlled mainly by the Morgan finance capital group. It owns ABC TV network with 168 affiliates, five television stations and four ABC radio networks with 1,254 affiliates. It is the largest motion picture distribution chain in the U.S., owning over 434 Paramount Theatres. It owns ABC records and publishes several journals. ABC International has controlling interests in 16 foreign companies operating television stations in 26 countries and its ABC World division directly owns 64 foreign television stations.

NBC: Controlled jointly by the Rockefeller and Morgan finance capital groups. RCA owns all of NBC and is one of the 20 largest corporations in the world. RCA produces 12,000 products in more than 60 manufacturing plants. RCA owns NBC television network with 215 affiliates, NBC radio network with 220 radio affiliates, and five television, six AM and six FM stations. It also owns Random House, RCA records and Hertz Rent-A-Car. RCA is also a leading supplier of electronics equipment for the military and police.

CBS: Controlled by the Rockefeller and Morgan finance capital groups. CBS owns CBS TV network with 247 affiliates, CBS radio network with 246

affiliates, five television and 14 radio stations, and Viacom Cable TV. It also owns the largest record company in the world--CBS Records--and Fender Guitar, Holt and Dryden publishers, Field and Stream Magazine, Creative Playthings, Memorex. CBS produces commercial films and tapes and CBS Labs has developed special techniques for police surveillance and chemical-bacteriological warfare.

Cable television follows the same general pattern of being controlled by large U.S. monopoly corporations which long ago snapped major franchises or now have the large pools of capital to wire major areas. CBS was the largest operator of cable television in the Western hemisphere until a federal ruling that networks could not own CATV. RCA is developing a cable home information center/television to get around the ruling. Time-Life, Inc., owner of Time, Fortune and Sports Illustrated, also have substantial cable television interests. Huge corporations like TelePrompster Cox, and Warner Communications dominate cable television.

From the above analysis, we see that the U.S. mass media is owned and controlled by U.S. monopoly capitalism and mainly by the two dominant finance capitalist groups: Morgan and Rockefeller. This control is strengthened by the fact that these same corporations provide the advertising revenues to make the media a very profitable business--\$10.8 billion in newspaper, magazine, radio and television ads in 1968 and \$4 billion in television alone in 1972. Briefly, what does this control of the mass media by a small U.S. ruling class mean? Clearly it influences the kind of information we receive over the media. One study reports that 60 per cent of all newspaper space, 52 per cent of all magazine space, 25 per cent of all radio airtime and 22 per cent of all television air time is taken up by advertising. Another states that only 20 per cent of the typical daily newspaper consists of local, national and international news.

There have been many discussions of the impact of the mass media on the Black community. In a recent position paper from the Congressional Black Caucus it was stated, for example:

The mass media have failed miserably in reporting accurately and honestly the day by day news emanating from the Black community. The media have failed miserably to adequately and accurately portray Black people and Black perspectives. The media and its allies also have failed to allow equal access to information necessary for full participation in a democratic society.

Another study suggests that Black people have gone through three stages with television: non-recognition, ridicule and regulation. The above discussion

of who owns and who controls the mass media in this country--the monopoly corporations of U.S. imperialism--should make it even clearer why the mass media has performed and continues to perform as it does. It is not in the interest of U.S. monopoly capitalism and imperialism to allow a true picture of the lives of the masses of people--Black, Asian, Chicano, Native American, Puerto Rican, white--be presented in this country. Such truth would provide too great a push to the already on-going struggle of the people to end their exploitation and oppression at the hands of U.S. imperialism.

### The Black Media

There are two aspects to Black media, both reflecting the racism that is an inherent component of the rule of U.S. imperialism: Black employment in the mass media and Black ownership of mass media outlets. Black people--and women and other Third World people--are clearly excluded from employment and ownership in the media. The position paper of the Congressional Black Caucus has summed up the documentation on the question of employment. It reports that in the newspaper industry only 4.2 per cent of all employees were Black, and only 1.5 per cent at the professional level (reporters, etc.). In periodicals, only 7.3 per cent are Black with 2.5 per cent at the professional level. Minority employment in public television dropped to 8 per cent in 1971 from 12 per cent in 1970. In the broadcast industry, Blacks constitute only 2 per cent of all officials and managers, 6 per cent of all professionals, 3 per cent of all technicians, 2 per cent of all sales workers, but 15 per cent of the laborers and 46 per cent of the service workers.

In terms of Black ownership of media outlets, an identical pattern emerges. "There are about 225 Black newspapers in the U.S., only four dailies. Most are weeklies, and about 15 per cent publish less than once a week." Of the 7,350 radio stations licensed in the U.S., just over 20 are Black owned (in 1972) and about 360 are white-owned but "Black format" or "Black-oriented." (For example, arch-conservative William F. Buckley recently bought control of three Black-oriented stations: WBOK in New Orleans, WLOK in Memphis and KYOK in Houston. Until recently, no Blacks have owned or controlled any of the 900 commercial television stations. Black groups in Detroit, Nashville, Washington and other cities have now gained ownership or control of television channels. Black groups have also gained control of cable television franchises in cities like Gary and E. Orange, N.J., and are battling for others.

Many people emphasize the role of the various supervisory and regulatory agencies of the U.S. government in changing the pattern of access and ownership. While minimal gains can be anticipated (crumbs!), the history of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Federal Communication Commission and the White House Office of Tele-Communications Policy, the various Congressional committees, and other governmental agencies does not indicate that they are operating in the interest of the people. To the contrary, their past practice suggests that they are nothing but committees charged with managing and protecting the mass media interests of the large U.S. monopoly corporations who dominate the U.S. economy and the mass media. To rely on these agencies of the state to bring about justice for Black people or for any people excluded from the mass media is just like relying on a thief to guard a bank!

#### What Can Black Journalists Do?

The Year to Pull the Covers Off Imperialism Project has issued "A Declaration Against Imperialism" (see Chapter 1). The opening paragraph of "A Declaration Against Imperialism" ends: "Once again it is time for Black intellectuals to speak out--to raise our voices in a rising chorus that lays bare the true character of U.S. imperialism and unites our work with the movement for Black liberation." As Black people professionally engaged in the collection and dissemination of information on events in the world, the collective voice of Black journalists can play a decisive role in bringing to the masses of people an accurate picture of the current crisis--its impact, its underlying causes and the struggles of people to find the correct path to improve their conditions. In order to perform this important role, Black journalists broaden and strengthen three aspects of our work:

1. We must study. It is essential that we have the fullest and most accurate knowledge of the concrete conditions of the people and understand the meaning of events as they develop. It never has been and certainly now is not enough to simply re-write UPI or Reuters, making sure our spelling and pronunciation are correct. We must know and understand in order to present the clearest possible message.

2. We must expose the nature of the present crisis. Truth is our most potent weapon. Imperialism is tearing apart every aspect of life in the United States and the world and people are struggling against it. We must provide accurate information as a necessary tool in the struggle.

3. We must struggle. Richard Hatcher, Mayor of Gary, has sounded the call for the struggle of those of us engaged as workers in the media:

In the media, as well as elsewhere, you who are young, especially you who are young, must work at reviving the fervor of the sixties if we are to gain anything. Entry to the white media will continue to be denied us unless we demand it. Furthermore, once we gain that entry into the media--if we gain it--it will go for nothing if we do not recognize that it is on behalf of the still-suffering, still-poor majority of our people that we seek entry, and not in order to feather our own nests and improve our own bank accounts. What I am urging you towards is struggle--struggle to gain to the white media, yes, struggle to build our own Black media, yes--but struggle for the sake of the Black population in the nation, and indeed for the sake of the entire disadvantaged population--poor Blacks and browns, and even, yes, poor whites.

The Black liberation movement is an integral part of the world anti-imperialist struggle. This is not the "idea" of any one person but a conclusion which flows from scientific analysis of the concrete conditions facing Black people and underlying cause of these conditions. As Black intellectual workers in the mass media, Black journalists must become more consciously anti-imperialist. We must oppose the rule of a few monopoly corporations and their destruction of all our lives. The alternative is to serve the interests of U.S. imperialism which is escalating its exploitation and oppression of all people, especially its attacks against Black people in the United States. As Black workers in the mass media, we must join with other Black intellectual workers and seek to further demonstrate through our thought and our work that "our goal is to establish a new relationship between Black intellectuals and the Black liberation movement in which intellectuals function to serve the interests of the people with humility based on compassion, strength based on science and a revolutionary optimism that the people will triumph over all enemies and prosper."



*Editorial offices of The Crisis, official publication of the NAACP. The man standing in the foreground is W. E. B. DuBois, editor of what was going to be one of the most important organs of Negro expression in the United States.*

## Supplementary Readings for Black Culture and the Arts

## A. Major Literary Anthologies

1. Sterling Brown et.al., Negro Caravan, 1941.
2. Langston Hughes, Good Morning Revolution!, 1976.
3. Leroi Jones and Larry Neal, Black Fire, 1968.
4. Alaine Locke, The New Negro, 1925
5. Richard Wright Reader, 1978.

## B. Visual Arts

6. David Driskell, Two Centuries of Black Art, 1976.
7. Harlem On My Mind
8. James Porter, Modern Negro Art, 1943
9. Judith Wragg, Afro-American Arts and Crafts

## C. Music

10. Leroi Jones, Blues People, 1963
11. Charles Keil, Urban Blues
12. Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans: A History, 1971.
13. A.B. Spellman, Four Lives in the BeBop Business, 1966

## D. History

14. Stephen Henderson, The Militant Black Writer
15. Nathan Huggins, Voices of the Harlem Renaissance
16. Jerry Mangione, The Dream and The Deal on the WPA
17. Smithsonian Institute, Publications of the Folk History Project

## E. General

18. Geneva Smitherman, Talkin' and Testifyin', 1977
19. Sekou Toure, "The Dialectics of Black Culture"; Black Scholar, November 1969.
20. Mao Tse-tung, On Literature and Art, 1960

# Chapter 15

## CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the origins and the initial programs of the five (5) major organizations to emerge during the modern civil rights movement. What are the main similarities and differences?
2. Compare and contrast the social composition, organizational development, and political orientation of the NAACP and SNCC.
3. Discuss the three phases in the development of the Civil Rights Movement. Compare the strategy and tactics during each phase.
4. Describe in detail some of the major campaigns of struggle waged by the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s. What are the lessons to be learned from for future struggles?

### KEY CONCEPTS

Bourgeois democracy

Civil rights/democratic rights

Electoral politics

Legal action

Mass Action

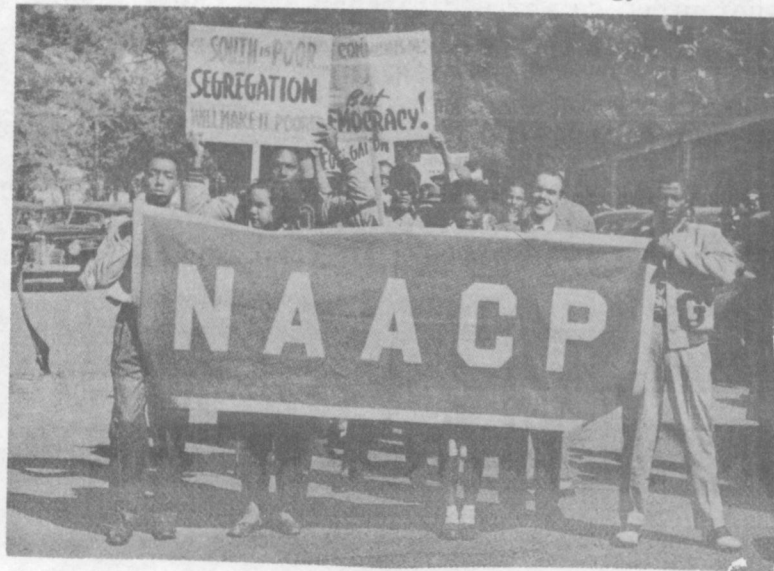
"Jail no bail"

Mississippi Summer Project

Niagara Movement

Sit-in Movement

Strategy/tactics



The fight for Civil Rights is a struggle for the democratic rights guaranteed by the principles of the U.S. Constitution. Civil rights are politically defined freedoms, laws that stipulate what groups and individuals can do to fully participate in the society. The Civil Rights movement is a fight for just laws in principal and practice that serve to maximize full participation for all people in society. Overall, the historical basis for the Civil Rights movement should be understood in the context of the three main historical periods of Afro-American history--slavery, rural and urban. (See Introduction to Afro-American Studies, Vol 1, chapters 4, 5, and 6 ). The post-Civil War constitutional amendments (the 13th, 14th, and 15th) established the abstract legal conditions for Black citizenship and also set up the legal basis for the Civil Rights movement. Once a legal framework was established that included Black people as citizens, then a Civil Rights movement could be focused on protecting those laws and fighting to have additional laws implemented and enforced. (Chapter 10, Black Power and the American Political System should be reviewed in this context.)

Thus, the Civil Rights movement focuses its attention on the government. It is a fight for consistent democracy, a fight against "second class citizenship", against the government's denying Black people the same political and civil rights that are guaranteed to white citizens. The Civil Rights struggle keys on the contradiction between what the government says in theory (as put forth in documents like the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, etc.) and what the government actually does in practice. For example, the statement " we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal," is found in the declaration of Independence. But it was written in part by slaveowners in the midst of slavery. And when the United States successfully fought a revolution to "free itself" from British colonialism, Black people were kept in bondage as slaves! Such has been the history of the U.S. Government, historically



playing an important role in the oppression and exploitation of Afro-American People.

Our major interest in this chapter is on the Civil Rights movements of the 20th century. This is the time span that includes the rise of monopoly capitalism the migration of Blacks to the cities, and the two world wars in which Blacks fought "to save the world for democracy." The material (economic) contradiction providing the driving force is that the masses of Black people from 1910 to 1970 have been split between two ways of life, between two different conditions of oppression. There was a great deal more "civil rights freedom" in the urban industrial North, while in the rural agricultural South, particularly the Black Belt, the white minority used the fascist terror of the lynch mob to force Blacks into submission. This is the main political difference between these two periods of history, the rural agricultural and the urban industrial periods.

In sum: The victory of the north (capitalism) over the slave system of the antebellum (pre-Civil War) south was consolidated in law, especially the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. These amendments, along with the Bill of Rights established the political basis for the Civil Rights Movement. However, the actual movement did not develop until the 20th century when Blacks began consolidating in Black urban communities.

In assessing any movement, it is important to sum up the strategy and tactics of that movement. Strategy is the formulation of the main long-range goal that the movement should fight for at a particular stage of development to achieve its main objective. Tactics are the activities which the movement must undertake to respond to the day-to-day ups and downs of the struggle. Thus, for Black people, while the forms or tactics of struggle may change from day to day or year to year (e.g., mass demonstrations vs. petitions), the overall strategy of the movement, how it expects to achieve total Black liberation, will remain unchanged until this main objective has been accomplished (if that strategy is

correct).

(1) Strategy. The strategy of the Civil Rights Movement in the 20th century is reformist and not revolutionary (though the struggle for civil rights was revolutionary during slavery). It seeks to solve the problems facing Black people under the existing system using mechanisms which the system has deemed legitimate and acceptable to use. In essence, the Civil Rights Movement views the U. S. government as positive. "The reason that the government has historically acted against the interests of Black people," the argument goes, "is not because the whole system is rotten and racist, and is manipulated by the dominant economic interests which established it. Rather, racist policies result because good leaders have not been sensitive enough to the moral implications of the system's discrimination against Black people. We need only a few reforms or to elect better individual politicians." Thus, the Civil Rights Movement rules out the need for revolutionary change, a complete and total restructuring of the society which would end the dominant role played by the rich in the economy and government. This revolutionary change is not necessary to solve the problems faced by Black people, they argue.

(2) Tactics. The tactics of the Civil Rights Movement or any movement must be understood within the context of its strategy. The tactics of the Civil Rights Movement, its day-to-day activity, are reformist as defined by the reformist strategy of the movement. That is, its tactics operate within the confines of accepting the legitimacy of the existing political and economic system and using ways defined by the system in seeking to bring about and protect the civil rights of Black people. Its action has been to work both within the system (e. g. lawyers in courts) and "outside" (protest marches without permits), to mobilize elites (leaders) and the masses of people, through spontaneous short-run actions and through bureaucratic organizations plodding along in a protracted manner.

The tactics of the Civil Rights Movement have gone through three phases of development, each characterized by a main tactic. All tactics have been used at all times, but the following order has been the main (chronological) trend:

(A) Legal action, like court challenges, was the main tactic during the first phase of the modern civil rights struggle, from the emergence of the NAACP through the 1950's.

(B) Mass action was the main tactic employed during the second phase, which began with the urbanization of Black people during World War II and reached a high point in the 1960's.

(C) Electoral politics has been the main tactic which has emerged in the 1970's for the middle class activists in the Civil Rights Movement.

(A) LEGAL ACTION. The favorite method of struggle for civil rights has revolved around persuading or forcing the legal system (courts, legislatures, etc.) to recognize and support the "inalienable rights" of Black people. Two organizations developed during the almost forty years (1910-1945) when this legal action was the main tactic of the Civil Rights Movement.

(1) The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed in 1910 through the merger of two motions:

(a) The Niagara Movement was organized by W. E. B. DuBois, William Monroe Trotter, Ida Wells Barnett, and other middle class but militant Black intellectuals. It was a repudiation of the conservative and stifling leadership of Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Machine. During its four years, the Niagara movement carried out a militant program of protest and struggle against all forms of racist discrimination, especially against lynching.

(b) Neo-abolitionist white liberals: Upset at the escalation of racist attacks on Black people (lynchings), a group of whites, some of whom were descendants of abolitionists, joined with several blacks and issued a call to

a conference on Lincoln's birthday in February, 1909. The document highlighted discrimination against Blacks by the U. S. government and its citizens. This group was not as militant as the Niagara Movement but spoke to the same liberal concerns and wanted to do something. Many Black people, including William Trotter and Ida Barnett, were strongly critical of the dominating role that whites played in the formation of the NAACP.

The NAACP has long been one of the major arms of the Black petty-bourgeois (middle class) elites--as jobs for lawyers and social welfare professionals, as positions of status for others to speak for the entire Black population, and in fighting for the kind of "integration" that has expanded opportunities especially for the middle class. In its early days it led many heroic and courageous struggles against many forms of brutal oppression against Black people. Its legal defense arm has saved many Black people from being legally lynched. The major national accomplishments of the NAACP have been in filing court briefs and lobbying for legislation. During the 1960's this was their aspect of the struggle and almost everyone else was out in the streets mobilizing the masses. But in the 1950's the mass movement was just emerging and the success of the NAACP in the 1954 Supreme Court Decision struck a responsive cord and stirred the hopes and aspirations of the masses of Black people. By 1962, it had 471,000 members in the 1500 branches in 48 states. Within the Civil Rights Movement, this makes it by far the largest--the organization with the most resources and the most developed bureaucracy to ensure its ongoing organizational work.

(2) URBAN LEAGUE. The other organization to emerge during this period was the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes in 1911, a coordinating council of three organizations which was later called the National Urban League. It reflected the increased migrations of Black people to the cities of the South and North and concern by members of the ruling class that the problems of these new migrants were not to get out hand. The Urban League was composed of the

same kinds of people as the NAACP--the Black middle class, white liberals, and key representatives of the ruling class. Its first chairperson was the wife of a leading railroad capitalist who was one of the main financial supporters of Booker T. Washington. In fact, the Urban League was an obvious attempt to counter the militancy of the NAACP with the conservative political line of Booker T. Washington and his ruling class supporters. The Urban League carefully avoided the real political issues facing Black people--lynching, the struggle against disenfranchisement, etc. It developed itself as a social service organization--finding jobs, training social workers, and advocating better schools, housing, hospitals, and other facilities for the Black community. But the Urban League did not have a program of struggle and failed to have mass appeal and to develop a following among large numbers of Black people. Because of its ruling class connections, however, it was always one of the civil rights organizations called into consult during "crisis" (e. g. when Kennedy wanted to stop or coopt the 1963 March on Washington).

(B) MASS STRUGGLE. By World War II, Black people were firmly consolidated into the city and into the industrial workforce. The mass protests during the depression and the preparation of the U. S. to fight another war to make the world safe for democracy laid the basis for the second stage of major tactical development in the Civil Rights Movement: mass struggle.

(1) Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). The first new organization to emerge during this stage of mass struggle was CORE. The early history of CORE is rooted in middle class idealism, the reformist approach to "applying Gandhian techniques of . . . nonviolent direct action to the resolution of racial and industrial conflict in America." The parent group was the Christian Pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation, and it grew out of student life at the University of Chicago. After an initial experience with direct action in 1941, a sit-in at a segregated restaurant, a group of 50 people met and formed "a permanent

interracial group committed to the use of nonviolent direct action opposing discrimination."

CORE has gone through three main stages of development: (a) 1942-1960: CORE was an organization led by an interracial group of integrationists which fought discrimination using nonviolent direct action (sit-ins, etc.). (b) 1960's: After the militant "Freedom Ride" campaigns in which CORE members were attacked and beaten and had their buses burned as they protested segregated bus depots in the South, CORE's membership became majority Black for the first time. Its leadership also shifted to Black people who pursued a more militant version of the previous nonviolent direct action campaigns. (c) Late 1960's and 1970's: CORE's leadership has remained Black and middle class but it has developed into a Black nationalist organization. It has downplayed mass action and has concentrated on Black capitalism and government-sponsored community development programs (and was very close and supportive of Richard Nixon). It has also tried to recruit Black mercenaries to fight against revolutionaries in Africa.

(2) Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Following the successful bus boycott in Montgomery in 1955, the SCLC was formed to "facilitate coordinated action of local community groups" in the campaigns of struggle that were spreading throughout the South. The main social base for SCLC was the Black church and its main source of leadership were Black preachers in the South. Thus, SCLC was based in the most powerful social institution in the Black community. Led by Martin Luther King, SCLC followed the general strategy of all civil rights organizations: "achieving full citizenship rights, equality and the integration of the Negro in all aspects of American life." To achieve this aim, SCLC adopted some of the tactics used by CORE: nonviolent direct action, voter registration drives and civil disobedience. SCLC is perhaps best known for several campaigns it waged in cities like Birmingham, Albany, and Selma. These campaigns mainly focused on local governments which denied Black people

access to public facilities. In the late 1960's, SCLC organized a massive march to Washington called the Poor People Campaign, and later took up the fight against racism in northern cities like Chicago.

While SCLC came out of the church, in retrospect it was anchored more around the charisma of Martin Luther King than the institutional church. Therefore, rather than SCLC surviving as a major force, when King was killed, the lieutenants of King moved on down separate paths competing with each other for the authenticity of King's leadership and legacy.

(3) Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). SNCC emerged in 1960 as the organizational consolidation of the spontaneous student sit-in movement. SNCC was initially under the ideological and political leadership of King and SCLC. It advocated "the philosophical or religious ideal of non-violence" as the basis of its orientation and action and its goal was intergration. The students were initially based on the campuses in the South. However, SNCC activists soon left college campuses and went into the Black Belt rural South. They directly confronted what remained of the lynching mob terror by forming solid links with the rural masses and engaging in direct action.

SNCC went through three stages: (a) SNCC was based in the South and developed militant campaigns to end the racist repression of Black people especially in the rural areas. Its sit-in tactics spread to more than 140 places and set the tone for all civil rights activity during this period. (b) 1963-1964: SNCC's Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party taught Black people an important lesson: that the Democratic Party could not be relied upon to contribute to the liberation of Black people. (c) 1965: BLACK POWER was SNCC's battle cry, and that of the youthful militant thrust of the Black liberation movement, SNCC developed an anti-imperialist stand on many international issues. But its reliance on personalities and its failure to develop a correct strategy and tactics led SNCC away from deepening its ties with the masses of Black people and building

mass struggle as the key road forward for the Black liberation struggle.

(C) ELECTORAL POLITICS. The third stage in the tactical development of the Civil Rights Movement is a logical and expected outcome of the previous stages. Two factors laid the basis for this stage: (a) Because of the reformist nature of the Civil Rights movement--that is, operating within the existing political system--voting and voter registration were key tactics. The ruling class, through various foundations, private and public agencies, pumped millions of dollars into the voter registration projects. Black registration in the South almost doubled to a total of about 2 million between 1962 and 1964. (b) The power of the Black vote was established. In 1960, for example, the election of Kennedy was determined by Black voters. Increasingly, Black people sought political office especially in urban areas, where the Black vote was concentrated. The result is a significant increase in Black elected politicians and an increase in the number of appointed officials and white politicians of both parties seek to influence and win over Black voters.

Thus, the leadership of the struggle for Civil Rights has increasingly shifted away from those advocating mass action and to those whose faith is in electoral politics. Such organizations as the Congressional Black Caucus, the National Black Political Assembly, and the National Association of Black Local Elected Officials are manifestations of the new electoral tactic.

This is important because it identifies another aspect of the ruling class strategy to diffuse the militancy of mass struggle among Black people. Many of those who were leaders in the mass campaigns of the 1960's have been coopted into the system as legislators, (Julian Bond of Georgia), mayors, (Marion Barry of Washington, D. C.), and even ambassadors, (Andy Young, United Nations). On the other hand, established Civil Rights groups that have historically advocated mass action are under the leadership of politicians. These leaders have adopted the



view that Black people have passed the stage of mass protests and "being in the streets" is no longer the main tactic in the Black liberation movement. Just as the sell-out leadership of the trade union movement has been trying to sell out the workers' right to strike, so have these new Civil Rights leaders tried to keep Black people "under control" and off the streets.

In summation, the main strength of the Civil Rights Movement during its phase of mass action in the 1950's and 1960's was its orientation toward struggle. Because the masses of Black people took their demands to the streets, many concrete gains were scored. On the federal, state, and local level in all branches of government--executive, legislative, and judicial--laws and policies were adopted which brought the government's practice more in line with its promises regarding equality of treatment regardless of race.

Conversely, it is this turn away from struggle that is the real weakness of the current electoral politics phase of the Civil Rights Movement. The masses of Black people are now being told that "Blacks have outgrown the need for street demonstrations; we have become more sophisticated. Electing Black politicians and relying on them is the most effective path to achieving Civil Rights."

This is not the first time that such a course of action has been advocated. In fact, it is on this question of strategy, of understanding the reformist character of a struggle for civil rights under capitalism, that has been the historical weakness of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Commenting on the "extreme faith" that Black people place in the courts, the ballot, and other instruments of government, the distinguished Black political scientist Ralph Bunche has observed (in Chapter 10 of this book):

...The inherent fallacy of this belief rests in the failure to appreciate the fact that the instruments of the state are merely the reflections of the political and economic ideologies of the dominant group, that the political arm of the state cannot be divorced from its prevailing economic structure, whose servant it must inevitably be....The Constitution...cannot be

anything more than the controlling elements in the American society wish it to be.

The 1978 ruling by the U. S. Supreme Court in the Bakke case has again verified that Bunche was correct: the dismantling of affirmative action programs serves only the interest of the U. S. ruling class. This most recent attack on Black people is based on the same constitutional provisions which established the programs in the first place, indicating that the U. S. Constitution is no guarantee of the equal rights of Black people.

Thus, as we approach the 1980's, Black people have even more rights on paper than ever before. But still there is not first class citizenship and no equal rights. In fact, there are increased attacks against The Civil Rights gains of the last few decades.

Because the present strategy of electoral politics is failing to solve these problems (just as it failed during Reconstruction), Black people will again take to the streets in mass protests and demonstrations. This time around, however, more people will understand that a reformist strategy is insufficient to secure the democratic rights of Black people. While the struggle for reforms (e.g., equal access to jobs and education) will be a necessary part of the struggle, only a revolutionary strategy seeking fundamental change in the American political and economic system will guarantee Black people full enjoyment of the democratic rights they have fought for consistently since slavery.

## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 15

KEY ORGANIZATIONS OF STRUGGLE: DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

- |     |  |                        |     |
|-----|--|------------------------|-----|
| 85. | THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCE-<br>MENT OF COLORED PEOPLES (NAACP) |                        | 334 |
|     | A. THE NIAGARA MOVEMENT: FORERUNNER OF<br>THE NAACP (1905)                   |                        |     |
|     | B. CALL FOR A NATIONAL NEGRO CONFERENCE<br>(1909)                            |                        |     |
|     | C. CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS: THE NAACP<br>FORMED (1909)                        |                        |     |
| 86. | THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE (1911)   |                        | 338 |
| 87. | THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY -CORE<br>(1942)                              |                        | 340 |
| 88. | THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CON-<br>FERENCE - SCLC (1957)              |                        | 344 |
| 89. | THE STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING<br>COMMITTEE - SNCC (1960)              |                        | 347 |
| 90. | A CHRONOLOGY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVE-<br>MENT IN THE DEEP SOUTH (1955-1968) |                        | 348 |
| 91. | A SONG OF THE STRUGGLE: WE SHALL OVERCOME                                    |                        | 350 |
| 92. | THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON: I HAVE A DREAM<br>(1963)                            | Martin Luther King Jr. | 351 |
| 93. | THE "FARCE" ON WASHINGTON: ANOTHER<br>VIEW (1964)                            | Malcolm X              | 354 |
| 94. | CASE STUDY: THE NAACP AND THE<br>BLACK ESTABLISHMENT (1964)                  | Lerone Bennett         | 357 |
| 95. | CASE STUDY: THE STUDENT NON-VIOLENT<br>COORDINATING COMMITTEE (1976)         | Abdul Alkalimat        | 365 |

CAMPAIGNS OF STRUGGLE

- |      |   |  |     |
|------|---|--|-----|
| 96.  | THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT (1955-56)                  |  | 371 |
| 97.  | THE ALBANY CAMPAIGN (1961-62)                         |  | 374 |
| 98.  | THE SIT-IN CAMPAIGN: GREENSBORO<br>AND ATLANTA (1960) |  | 375 |
| 99.  | THE BIRMINGHAM CAMPAIGN (1963)                        |  | 378 |
| 100. | THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER<br>CAMPAIGN (1964)     |  | 382 |
|      | SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS                                |  | 385 |

## THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE (NAACP--1909)

A. The Niagara Movement: Forerunner of the NAACP (1905)

The members of the conference, known as the Niagara Movement, assembled in annual meeting at Buffalo, July 11th, 12th and 13th, 1905, congratulate the Negro-Americans on certain undoubted evidences of progress in the last decade, particularly the increase of intelligence, the buying of property, the checking of crime, and uplift in home life, the advance in literature and art, and the demonstration of constructive and executive ability in the conduct of great religious, economic and educational institutions.

At the same time, we believe that this class of American citizens should protest emphatically and continually against the curtailment of their political rights. We believe in manhood suffrage; we believe that no man is so good, intelligent or wealthy as to be entrusted wholly with the welfare of his neighbor.

We believe also in protest against the curtailment of our civil rights. All American citizens have the right to equal treatment in places of public accommodation according to their behavior and deserts.

We especially complain against the denial of equal opportunities to us in economic life; in the rural districts of the South this amounts to peonage and virtual slavery; all over the South it tends to crush labor and small business enterprises; and everywhere American prejudice, helped often by iniquitous laws, is making it more difficult for Negro-Americans to earn a decent living.

We refuse to allow the impression to remain that the Negro-American assents to inferiority, is submissive under oppression and apologetic before insults. Through helplessness we may submit, but the voice of protest of ten million Americans must never cease to assail the ears of their fellows, so long as America is unjust.

Any discrimination based simply on race or color is barbarous, we care not how hallowed it be by custom, expediency or prejudice. Differences made on account of ignorance, immorality or disease are legitimate methods of fighting evil, and against them we have no word of protest; but discrimination based simply and solely on physical peculiarities, place of birth, color of skin, are relics of that unreasoning human savagery of which the world is and ought to be thoroughly ashamed.

Especially are we surprised and astonished at the recent attitude of the

church of Christ--on the increase of a desire to bow to racial prejudice, to narrow the bounds of human brotherhood, and to segregate black men in some outer sanctuary. This is wrong, unchristian and disgraceful to the twentieth century civilization.

Of the above grievances we do not hesitate to complain, and to complain loudly and insistentlly. To ignore, overlook or apologize for these wrongs is to prove ourselves unworthy of freedom. Persistent manly agitation is the way to liberty, and toward this goal the Niagara Movement has started and asks the cooperation of all men of all races.

At the same time we want to acknowledge with deep thankfulness the help of our fellowmen from the abolitionist down to those who today still stand for equal opportunity and who have given and still give of their wealth and of their poverty for our advancement.

And while we are demanding, and ought to demand, and will continue to demand the rights enumerated above, God forbid that we should ever forget to urge corresponding duties upon our people:

The duty to vote.

The duty to respect the rights of others.

The duty to work.

The duty to obey the laws.

The duty to be clean and orderly.

The duty to send our children to school.

The duty to respect ourselves, even as we respect others.

This statement, complaint and prayer we submit to the American people, and Almighty God.

#### B. Call for a National Negro Conference (1909)

The celebration of the centennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, widespread and grateful as it may be, will fail to justify itself if it takes no note of and makes no recognition of the colored men and women to whom the great emancipator labored to assure freedom. Besides a day of rejoicing, Lincoln's birthday in 1909 should be one of taking stock of the nation's progress since 1865.

How far has it lived up to the obligations imposed upon it by the Emancipation Proclamation? How far has it gone in assuring to each and every citizen, irrespective of color, the equality of opportunity and equality before the law, which underlie our American institutions and are guaranteed by the Constitution?

If Mr. Lincoln could revisit this country in the flesh, he would be disheartened and discouraged. He would learn that on January 1, 1909, Georgia had rounded out a new confederacy by disfranchising the negro, after the manner of all the other Southern States. He would learn that the Supreme Court of the United States, supposedly a bulwark of American liberties, had refused every opportunity to pass squarely upon this disfranchisement of millions, by laws avowedly discriminatory and openly enforced in such manner that the white men may vote and Black men be without a vote in their government; he would discover, therefore, that taxation without representation is the lot of millions of wealth-producing American citizens, in whose hands rests the economic progress and welfare of an entire section of the country.

He would learn that the Supreme Court, according to the official statement of one of its own judges in the Berea College case, has laid down the principle that if an individual State chooses, it may "make it a crime for white and colored persons to frequent the same market place at the same time, or appear in an assemblage of citizens convened to consider questions of a public or political nature in which all citizens, without regard to race, are equally interested."

In many States Lincoln would find justice enforced, if at all, by judges elected by one element in a community to pass upon the liberties and lives of another. He would see the Black men and women, for whose freedom a hundred thousand of soldiers gave their lives, set apart in trains, in which they pay first-class fares for third-class service, and segregated in railway stations and in places of entertainment; he would observe that State after State declines to do its elementary duty in preparing the negro through education for the best exercise of citizenship.

Added to this, the spread of lawless attacks upon the Negro, North, South and West--even in the Springfield made famous by Lincoln--often accompanied by revolting brutalities, sparing neither sex nor age nor youth, could but shock the author of the sentiment that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Silence under these conditions means tacit approval. The indifference of the North is already responsible for more than one assault upon democracy, and every such attack reacts as unfavorably upon whites as upon blacks. Discrimination once permitted cannot be bridled; recent history in the South shows that in forging chains for the Negroes the white voters are forging chains for

themselves. "A house divided against itself cannot stand"; this government cannot exist half-slave and half-free any better today than it could in 1861.

Hence we call upon all the believers in democracy to join in a national conference for the discussion of present evils, the voicing of protests, and the renewal of the struggle for civil and political liberty.

C. Conference Resolutions: The NAACP Formed (1909)

The Conference, after considerable discussion, then adopted the following resolutions:

"We denounce the ever-growing oppression of our 10,000,000 colored fellow citizens as the greatest menace that threatens the country. Often plundered of their just share of the public funds, robbed of nearly all part in the government, segregated by common carriers, some murdered with impunity, and all treated with open contempt by officials, they are held in some States in practical slavery to the white community. The systematic persecution of law-abiding citizens and their disfranchisement on account of their race alone is a crime that will ultimately drag down to an infamous end any nation that allows it to be practised, and it bears most heavily on those poor white farmers and laborers whose economic position is most similar to that of the persecuted race."

"The nearest hope lies in the immediate and patiently continued enlightenment of the people who have been inveigled into a campaign of oppression. The spoils of persecution should not go to enrich any class or classes of the population. Indeed persecution of organized workers, peonage, enslavement of prisoners, and even disfranchisement already threaten large bodies of whites in many Southern States."

"We agree fully with the prevailing opinion that the transformation of the unskilled colored laborers in industry and agriculture into skilled workers is of vital importance to that race and to the nation, but we demand for the Negroes, as for all others, a free and complete education, whether by city, State or nation; a grammar school and industrial training for all; and technical, professional and academic education for the most gifted."

"But the public schools assigned to the Negro of whatever kind or grade will never receive a fair and equal treatment until he is given equal treatment in the Legislature and before the law. Nor will the practically educated Negro, no matter how valuable to the community he may prove, be given a fair return for his labor or encouraged to put forth his best efforts or given the chance

to develop that efficiency that comes only outside the school until he is respected in his legal rights as a man and a citizen."

"We regard with grave concern the attempt manifest South and North to deny to Black men the right to work and to enforce this demand by violence and bloodshed. Such a question is too fundamental and clear even to be submitted to arbitration. The late strike in Georgia is not simply a demand that Negroes be displaced, but that proven and efficient men be made to surrender their long followed means of livelihood to white competitors."

"As first and immediate steps toward remedying these national wrongs, so full of peril for the whites as well as the Blacks of all sections, we demand of Congress and the Executive:

(1) That the Constitution be strictly enforced and the civil rights guaranteed under the Fourteenth Amendment be secured impartially to all.

(2) That there be equal educational opportunities for all and in all the States, and that public school expenditure be the same for the Negro and white child.

(3) That in accordance with the Fifteenth Amendment the right of the Negro to the ballot on the same terms as other citizens be recognized in every part of the country."

The committee on permanent organization in its report proposed a resolution providing for "the incorporation of a national committee to be known as a Committee for the Advancement of the Negro Race, to aid their progress and make their citizenship a reality, with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto." It presented also a resolution calling for a committee of forty charged with the organization of a national committee with power to call the convention in 1910.

#### THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE (1911)

# 86

The National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes is in a sense a new organization, for it came into existence on October 16, 1911. Its constituent parts are, however, much older, for it is a combination--organized to secure co-operation, efficiency and united action--of three organizations working among Negroes, namely, the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, the Committee for Improving the



Industrial Condition of Negroes in New York. An equal number of representatives from each of these form the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, the executive committee of which has "power of supervision and recommendation as to general plans, policies, budgets and financial appeals" of each of the constituent bodies.

This means that instead of three distinct and separate organizations, acting independently of each other, duplicating each other's work, and burdening the public with financial appeals, there is now constituted one central body directing and supervising the work of all, issuing appeals to the public for all, and to which the public may look for responsibility.

The Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of Negroes in New York was organized in 1906. It grew out of a general recognition of the serious industrial and economic handicap under which the Negro labors, not only by reason of race discrimination, but also by reason of lack of industrial training and efficiency. The committee consists of representative white and colored men and women, and provides for mutual conference, consultation and the sharing of the experience and knowledge of both races, in order that the sympathy and helpfulness of the white people, and the deliberate will and sense of need of the Negroes may be expressed. The principal activities of the committee include the encouragement of trade and technical education, the organization and assistance of Negro mechanics, the opening and finding of positions for colored workers. Most of the work of the committee is carried on through sub-committees, the names of which indicate their fields of activities--Tradesmen, Craftsmen, Trade School, Employment and Welfare. The committee employs a secretary for half time.

The National League for the Protection of Colored Women was organized in 1906. An investigation of employment agencies in several Northern cities had revealed abuses connected with the emigration of Negro women from the South to Northern cities where large opportunities were promised. These women were the easy prey of dishonest and immoral persons, both on their journey and after arriving at their destinations. The purposes of the League are, first to check the emigration of Negro women from the South, and, second, to direct those who do emigrate to proper lodgings in the strange city and to assist them in finding suitable employment and wholesome recreation. In order to accomplish these purposes, the League sends information into the South by means of ministers, school teachers, women's clubs, etc., concerning the

dangers and difficulties and training needed for the journey to and the life in the North. The League also maintains workers at Norfolk, Philadelphia, Memphis, Baltimore and New York, who meet travelers on incoming boats and trains. A list of reliable employment agencies is maintained, several recreational and social clubs have been organized, and in Philadelphia a home is maintained for those needing temporary shelter.

Probably the most urgent needs of social work among Negroes are the need for cooperation--to work in harmony and to prevent duplication--and the need for trained Negro social workers. The Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes was established in October, 1910. Its membership included representatives from many institutions and organizations, and apostles of many points of view. The purposes of the organization are expressed in the constitution, as follows:

1. The study of social and economic conditions among Negroes in cities with a view to securing cooperation among all agencies seeking to better urban conditions among Negroes.
2. The development of other agencies if necessary
3. The training of Negro social workers.

Professor George E. Haynes is the director of the work, and is located at Nashville, Tennessee, where he holds the chair of Social Science at Fisk University. The committee also maintains a New York office in charge of Mr. Eugene K. Jones.

It should be carefully noted that the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes is composed of the three organizations whose work has been briefly described. The National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes takes over the national features of the work of the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes at once, and will do so for the National League for the Protection of Colored Women as rapidly as possible; it supervises the work of the three organizations and presents their financial appeals to the public.

CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY (CORE--1942)

# 87

CORE Statement of Purpose

CORE has one purpose--to eliminate racial discrimination.

CORE has one method--inter-racial, non-violent direct action.

CORE asks its members to commit themselves to work as an integrated, disciplined group:

by abiding by all democratic group decisions and accepting CORE discipline for all projects in which the individual participates;

by renouncing overt violence in opposing racial discrimination and using the method of non-violent direct action: which refuses to cooperate with racial injustice;

which seeks to change existing practices by using such techniques as negotiation, mediation, demonstration and picketing;

which develops a spirit of understanding rather than antagonism.

CORE members find a unique field of action:

in working against discrimination in public places such as schools, restaurants, churches, etc.

in attempting to attack the more basic social, economic and political problems of discrimination as they are manifested in such forms as the restrictive covenant system.

CORE relates itself to other organizations and individuals on a basis of friendly cooperation with the possibility of mutual action on particular occasions. CORE welcomes the participation of individual members of other groups in specific projects, providing they accept the group discipline.

#### CORE Action Discipline

CORE and Non-Violence. The Congress of Racial Equality is a national federation of local interracial groups committed to the goal of erasing the color-line through methods of direct non-violent action. All groups affiliated with national CORE agree to follow to the best of their ability the non-violent procedure in all action which they sponsor. The discipline which is set forth here, and which has been approved by the national convention, is simply meant to make explicit what seems to be implicit in the non-violent method. This method consists of relatively undeveloped techniques for solving social conflicts, but it has great possibilities for good. It makes two assumptions. First of all, it assumes that social conflicts are not ultimately solved by the use of violence; that violence perpetuates itself, and serves to aggravate rather than resolve conflict. Moreover, it assumes that it is suicidal for a minority group to use violence since to use it would simply result in complete control and subjugation by the majority group. Secondly, the non-violent method assumes the possibility of creating a world in which non-violence will

be used to a maximum degree. In working for this type of world, it confronts injustice without fear, without compromise and without hate. The type of power which it uses in overcoming injustice is fourfold: (1) the power of active good will; (2) the power of public opinion against a wrong-doer; (3) the power of refusing to cooperate with injustice, such non-cooperation being illustrated by the boycott and the strike; and (4) the power of accepting punishment if necessary without striking back, by placing one's body in the way of injustice.

Below are listed some of the implications for action of the non-violent method.

Guarantees of the individual to the group:

1. A CORE member will investigate the facts carefully before determining whether or not racial injustice exists in a given situation.
2. A CORE member will seek at all times to understand the social situation which engendered the prejudiced attitude of the perpetrator of racial injustice.
3. A CORE member will seek to understand, without compromising his principles, the attitude of the person responsible for a policy of racial discrimination by discussing the problem through with him.
4. A CORE member will harbor no malice or hate toward any individual or group of individuals.
5. A CORE member will maintain an attitude of humility, and will be willing to admit his own inadequacies.
6. He will suffer the anger of any individual or group in the spirit of good will and creative reconciliation.
7. In suffering such anger, he will submit to assault and never retaliate in kind, either by act or word. He will not submit out of personal fear of embarrassment or punishment.
8. If a CORE member faces arrest, he will submit willingly to such arrest by a legally constituted official. He will not, however, voluntarily retreat before the threats of legal or non-legal personages. At the same time, he will never violate his pledge of non-violence.
9. The CORE member will never use malicious slogans or labels to discredit any opponent.
10. If in the course of non-violent action any person is violently

assaulted, the CORE member will non-violently defend such person even at the risk of his own life.

11. A member will never patronize knowingly an institution which practices discrimination, where there is a choice of places to patronize, except in the event of learning facts, or of participating in action toward elimination of discrimination.

12. A member will never engage in any action in the name of the group except when authorized by the group or one of its action units.

13. When in an action project a CORE member will cheerfully obey the orders issued by the authorized leader or spokesman of the project, whether these orders please him or not. If he does not approve of such orders, he shall later refer the criticism back to the group or back to the committee which was the source of the project plan.

14. No member, after once accepting the discipline of the group for a particular action project, shall have the right of withdrawing from that discipline.

15. No person who is not a recognized member of the group or an accepted participant in a particular project shall be allowed to act as a participant in an action project.

16. No personal family, or other consideration shall divert a member from his group discipline if he once agrees to a particular project.

Guarantees from the group to the individual:

17. Each member has the right to dissent from any group decision, and if dissenting, shall not participate in the specific action planned. A person who dissents, however, shall continue to have a voice in the discussion of the project.

18. Each member shall understand that all decisions on general policy shall be arrived at only through democratic group discussion.

19. If a member gets in trouble carrying out the work of CORE, he shall receive the uncompromising support of CORE, financially and otherwise, as he faces the difficulty.

## THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (SCLC--1957)

In 1957 Martin Luther King established the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to coordinate local non-violent direct-action protest movements that were appearing in various parts of the South. The objectives, philosophy and major activities of SCLC are set forth in This Is SCLC, a leaflet that has gone into several editions.

Aims and Purposes of SCLC

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference has the basic aim of achieving full citizenship rights, equality and the integration of the Negro in all aspects of American life. SCLC is a service agency to facilitate coordinated action of local community groups within the frame of their indigenous organizations and natural leadership. SCLC activity revolves around two main focal points: the use of non-violent philosophy as a means of creative protest; and securing the right of the ballot for every citizen.

Philosophy of SCLC

The basic tenets of Hebraic-Christian tradition coupled with the Gandhian concept of satyagraha--truth force--is at the heart of SCLC's philosophy. Christian non-violence actively resists evil in any form. It never seeks to humiliate the opponent, only to win him. Suffering is accepted without retaliation. Internal violence of the spirit is as much to be rejected as external physical violence. At the center of non-violence is redemptive love. Creatively used, the philosophy of non-violence can restore the broken community in America. SCLC is convinced that non-violence is the most potent force available to an oppressed people in their struggle for freedom and dignity.

SCLC and Non-Violent Mass Direct Action

SCLC believes that the American dilemma in race relations can best and most quickly be resolved through the action of thousands of people, committed to the philosophy of non-violence, who will physically identify themselves in a just and moral struggle. It is not enough to be intellectually dissatisfied with an evil system. The true non-violent resister presents his physical body as an instrument to defeat the system. Through non-violent mass direct action, the evil system is creatively dramatized in order that the conscience of the community may grapple with the rightness or wrongness of the issue at hand. . . .

### SCLC and Voter-Registration

The right of the ballot is basic to the exercise of full citizenship rights. All across the South, subtle and flagrant obstacles confront the Negro when he seeks to register and vote. Poll taxes, long form questionnaires, harassment, economic reprisal and sometimes death, meet those who dare to seek this exercise of the ballot. In areas where there is little or no attempt to block the voting attempts of the Negro, apathy generally is deeply etched upon the habits of the community. SCLC, with its specialized staff, works on both fronts: aiding local communities through every means available to secure the right to vote (e.g. filing complaints with the Civil Rights Commission) and arousing interest through voter-registration workshops to point up the importance of the ballot. Periodically, SCLC, upon invitation, conducts a voter-registration drive to enhance a community's opportunity to free itself from economic and political servitude. SCLC believes that the most important step the Negro can take is that short walk to the voting booth.

### SCLC and Civil Disobedience

SCLC sees civil disobedience as a natural consequence of non-violence when the resister is confronted by unjust and immoral laws. This does not imply that SCLC advocates either anarchy or lawlessness. The Conference firmly believes that all people have a moral responsibility to obey laws that are just. It recognizes, however, that there also are unjust laws. From a purely moral point of view, an unjust law is one that is out of harmony with the moral law of the universe, or, as the religionist would say, out of harmony with the Law of God. More concretely, an unjust law is one in which the minority is compelled to observe a code which is not binding on the majority. An unjust law is one in which people are required to obey a code that they had no part in making because they were denied the right to vote. In the face of such obvious inequality, where difference is made legal, the non-violent resister has no alternative but to disobey the unjust law. In disobeying such a law, he does so peacefully, openly and non-violently. Most important, he willingly accepts the penalty for breaking the law. This distinguishes SCLC's position on civil disobedience from the "uncivil disobedience" of the racist opposition in the South. In the face of laws they consider unjust, they seek to defy, evade and circumvent the law, BUT they are un-willing to accept the penalty for breaking the law. The end result of their defiance is anarchy and disrespect for the law. SCLC, on the other hand, believes that civil

disobedience involves the highest respect for the law. He who openly disobeys a law that conscience tells him is unjust and willingly accepts the penalty is giving evidence that he so respects the law that he belongs in jail until it is changed. . . .

#### SCLC and Segregation

SCLC is firmly opposed to segregation in any form that it takes and pledges itself to work unrelentingly to rid every vestige of its scars from our nation through non-violent means. Segregation is an evil and its presence in our nation has blighted our larger destiny as a leader in world affairs. Segregation does as much harm to the segregator as it does to the segregated. The segregated develops a false sense of inferiority and the segregator develops a false sense of superiority, both contrary to the American ideal of democracy. America must rid herself of segregation not alone because it is politically expedient, but because it is morally right!

#### SCLC and Constructive Program

SCLC's basic program fosters non-violent resistance to all forms of racial injustice, including state and local laws and practices, even when this means going to jail; and imaginative, bold constructive action to end the demoralization caused by the legacy of slavery and segregation--inferior schools, slums and second-class citizenship. Thus, the Conference works on two fronts. On the one hand, it resists continuously the system of segregation which is the basic cause of lagging standards; on the other hand, it works constructively to improve the standards themselves. There MUST be a balance between attacking the causes and healing the effects of segregation.

#### SCLC and the Beloved Community

The ultimate aim of SCLC is to foster and create the "beloved community" in America where brotherhood is a reality. It rejects any doctrine of black supremacy for this merely substitutes one kind of tyranny for another. The Conference does not foster moving the Negro from a position of disadvantage to one of advantage for this would thereby subvert justice. SCLC works for integration. Our ultimate goal is genuine intergroup and interpersonal living --integration. Only through non-violence can reconciliation and the creation of the beloved community be effected. The international focus on America and her internal problems against the dread prospect of a hot war, demand our seeking this end



## THE STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE (SNCC--1960)

When the college student sit-in demonstrators of 1960 formed their Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) it was to Martin Luther King and his philosophy that they at first looked. Later, for reasons of personality and tactics, SNCC and SCLC drifted apart. But the statement of purpose adopted at SNCC's founding convention, with its spirit of moral idealism and its emphasis on love and conscience, is a statement clearly based on the lofty principles expressed by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Statement of Purpose

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of non-violence as the foundation of our purpose, presupposition of our faith and the manner of our action. Non-violence as it grows from Judaic-Christian traditions seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. Integration of human endeavor represents the crucial first step towards such a society.

Through non-violence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regard cancels enmity. Justice for all overthrows injustice. The redemptive community supersedes systems of gross social immorality.

Love is the central motif of non-violence. Love is the force by which God binds man to Himself and man to man. Such love goes to the extreme; it remains loving and forgiving even in the midst of hostility. It matches the capacity of evil to inflict suffering with an even more enduring capacity to absorb evil, all the while persisting in love.

By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, non-violence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

December 1, 1955--Mrs. Rosa L. Parks is arrested for violating the bus-segregation ordinance in Montgomery, Alabama.

December 5, 1955--The Montgomery Bus Boycott begins, and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., 26, is elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association.

December 21, 1956--Montgomery's buses are integrated, and the Montgomery Improvement Association calls off its boycott after 381 days.

January 10-11, 1957--The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is founded, with Dr. King as president.

June 11, 1963--Alabama Gov. George Wallace stages his "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door" in an unsuccessful effort to block integration of the University of Alabama.

June 12, 1963--NAACP leader Medgar Evers is shot to death at his home in Jackson, Mississippi.

September 15, 1963--Four black children die in the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Freedom Summer

June, 1964--Freedom Summer begins as hundreds of volunteers arrive in Mississippi to work in the Mississippi Summer Project organized by SNCC, CORE, SCLC and NAACP.

July 2, 1964--President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawing segregation in public accommodations.

August 4, 1964--After a six-week search, the bodies of three missing Summer Project workers are found buried under an earthen dam near Philadelphia, Mississippi.

December 10, 1964--Dr. King receives the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Selma March

March 7, 1965--"Bloody Sunday." Alabama troopers and Dallas County deputies beat and gas voting-rights marchers in Selma.

March 15, 1965--In his "We Shall Overcome" speech, President Johnson responds to the events in Selma by announcing that he is submitting a Voting Rights Bill to Congress.

March 21-25, 1965--Dr. King leads marchers from Selma to Montgomery. After the march, Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, a marcher from Detroit, is shot to death by nightriders.

### The Student Sit-Ins

February 1, 1960--Four Black students sit in at the Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C., starting a wave of student protest that sweeps the Deep South.

April 15, 1960--The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) is founded at Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C.

October 19-27, 1960--Dr. King is jailed during a sit-in at Rich's Depart Store in Atlanta and subsequently transferred to a maximum security prison. Democratic presidential nominee John F. Kennedy telephones Mrs. King to express his concern.

### The Freedom Rides

May 4, 1961--The Freedom Riders, led by James Farmer of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), leave Washington, D.C., by bus.

May 14, 1961--A white mob burns a Freedom Rider bus outside Anniston, Ala. Riders aboard a second bus are beaten by Klansmen in Birmingham.

May 20, 1961--Freedom Riders are beaten at the Montgomery terminal. Whites riot outside a church where Dr. King, Farmer and the Riders are meeting.

May 21, 1961--The Freedom Riders leave Montgomery under National Guard protection and are imprisoned immediately upon arriving in Jackson, Mississippi.

October 1, 1962--James Meredith becomes the first Black man to attend class at the University of Mississippi.

### The Birmingham Demonstrations

April 3, 1963--CLC launches Project "C" (for confrontation) to protest segregation of lunch counters and rest rooms in downtown Birmingham.

April 12, 1963--Dr. King arrested on Good Friday for defying a state court's injunction against protest marches. While confined over Easter weekend, he writes the "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

May 2-7, 1963--SCLC organizes the "children's crusade," recruiting elementary and high school students for its marches. Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor retaliates with police dogs, fire hoses and mass arrests that fill the jails.

May 10, 1963--Dr. King and Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth announce that Birmingham's white leaders have agreed to a desegregation plan. That night King's motel is bombed, and Blacks riot until dawn.

# We Shall Overcome

Words & music arranged by Zilphia Horton, Frank Hamilton, Guy Carawan and Pete Seeger. © 1960, 1963 by Ludlow Music, Inc.

This modern adaptation of the old Negro church song, *I'll Overcome Someday*, has become the unofficial theme song for the freedom struggle in the South. The old words were: I'll be all right . . . I'll be like Him . . . I'll wear the crown . . . I will overcome.

Negro Textile Union workers adapted the song for their use sometime in the early '40s and brought it to Highlander Folk School. It soon became the school's theme song and associated with Zilphia Horton's singing of it. She introduced it to union gatherings all across the South. On one of her trips to New York, Pete Seeger learned it from her and in the next few years he spread it across the North. Pete, Zilphia and others added verses appropriate to labor, peace and integration sentiments: We will end Jim Crow . . . We shall live in Peace . . . We shall organize . . . The whole world around . . . etc.

In 1959, a few years after Zilphia died, I went to live and work at Highlander, hoping to learn something about

folk music and life in the South and to help carry on some of Highlander's musical work in Zilphia's spirit. I had no idea at that time that the historic student demonstrations would be starting in the next few years and that I would be in a position to pass on this song and many others to students and adults involved in this new upsurge for freedom.

G. C.

"One cannot describe the vitality and emotion this one song evokes across the Southland. I have heard it sung in great mass meetings with a thousand voices singing as one; I've heard a half-dozen sing it softly behind the bars of the Hinds County prison in Mississippi; I've heard old women singing it on the way to work in Albany, Georgia; I've heard the students singing it as they were being dragged away to jail. It generates power that is indescribable."

Wyatt Tee Walker

Author's royalties from this composition are being contributed to the freedom movement under the trusteeship of the writers.

*With quiet determination*

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (F major/D minor). It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with the tempo marking 'With quiet determination' and the first chord 'C'. The lyrics 'We shall o - ver - come, — we shall o - ver -' are written below the first staff. The second staff continues the melody with lyrics 'come, — We shall o - ver - come some-day' and includes chords C, F, Am, D7, G, and D7. The third staff has lyrics 'oh, — deep in my heart (I know that)' and includes chords G, F, and Em. The fourth staff concludes with lyrics 'I do be - lieve (oh —) we shall o - ver - come some-day.' and includes chords F, G7, Am, C, F, C, G7, and C.

We are not afraid, we are not afraid,  
We are not afraid today.  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We shall overcome someday.

We are not alone, . . . (today)  
The truth will make us free . . .

We'll walk hand in hand . . .  
The Lord will see us through. . .

(the last two lines are the same in every verse)

## THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON: "I HAVE A DREAM" (1963)

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's Capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check--a check that will give up upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of Democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. 1963 is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the Nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our Nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights. "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some

of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our modern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "we hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little Black boys and Black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plains, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone

of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvacious peaks of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and mole hill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, Black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! thank God almighty, we are free at last!"

# 93

## THE "FARCE" ON WASHINGTON (1964)

Not long ago, the Black man in America was fed a dose of another form of the weakening, lulling and deluding effects of so-called "integration." It was that "Farce on Washington," I call it.

The idea of a mass of Blacks marching on Washington was originally the brainchild of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters' A. Philip Randolph. For twenty or more years the March on Washington idea had floated around among Negroes. And, spontaneously, suddenly now, that idea caught on.

Overalled rural Southern Negroes, small town Negroes, Northern ghetto



Negroes, even thousands of previously Uncle Tom Negroes began talking "March!"

Nothing since Joe Louis had so coalesced the masses of Negroes. Groups of Negroes were talking of getting to Washington any way they could--in rickety old cars, on buses, hitch-hiking--walking, even, if they had to. They envisioned thousands of Black brothers converging together upon Washington--to lie down in the streets, on airport runways, on government lawns--demanding of the Congress and the White House some concrete civil rights action.

This was a national bitterness; militant, unorganized and leaderless. Predominantly, it was young Negroes, defiant of whatever might be the consequences, sick and tired of the Black man's neck under the white man's heel.

The white man had plenty of good reasons for nervous worry. The right spark--some unpredictable emotional chemistry--could set off a Black uprising. The government knew that thousands of milling, angry Blacks not only could completely disrupt Washington--but they could erupt in Washington.

The White House speedily invited in the major civil rights Negro "leaders." They were asked to stop the planned March. They truthfully said they hadn't begun it, they had no control over it--the idea was national, spontaneous, unorganized and leaderless. In other words, it was a Black powder keg.

Any student of how "integration" can weaken the Black man's movement was about to observe a master lesson.

The White House, with a fanfare of international publicity, "approved," "endorsed" and "welcomed" a March on Washington. The big civil rights organizations right at this time had been publicly squabbling about donations. The New York Times had broken the story. The N.A.A.C.P. had charged that other agencies' demonstrations, highly publicized, had attracted a major part of the civil rights donations--while the N.A.A.C.P. got left holding the bag, supplying costly bail and legal talent for the other organizations' jailed demonstrators.

It was like a movie. The next scene was the "big six" civil rights Negro "leaders" meeting in New York City with the white head of a big philanthropic agency. They were told that their money-wrangling in public was damaging their image. And a reported \$800,000 was donated to a United Civil Rights Leadership council that was quickly organized by the "big six."

Now, what had instantly achieved Black unity? The white man's money. What string was attached to the money? Advice. Not only was there this donation, but another comparable sum was promised, for sometime later on, after the March . . . obviously if all went well.

The original "angry" March on Washington was now about to be entirely changed.

Massive international publicity projected the "big six" as March on Washington leaders. It was news to those angry grass-roots Negroes steadily adding steam to their March plans. They probably assumed that now those famous "leaders" were endorsing and joining them.

Invited next to join the March were four famous white public figures: one Catholic, one Jew, one Protestant and one labor boss.

The massive publicity now gently hinted that the "big ten" would "supervise" the March on Washington's "mood," and its "direction."

The four white figures began nodding. The word spread fast among so-called "liberal" Catholics, Jews, Protestants and laborites: it was "democratic" to join this Black March. And suddenly, the previously March-nervous whites began announcing they were going.

It was as if electrical current shot through the ranks of bourgeois Negroes--the very so-called "middle-class" and "upper-class" who had earlier been deploring the March on Washington talk by grass-roots Negroes.

But white people, now, were going to march.

Why, some downtrodden, jobless, hungry Negro might have gotten trampled. Those "integration"-mad Negroes practically ran over each other trying to find out where to sign up. The "angry Blacks" March suddenly had been made chic. Suddenly it had a Kentucky Derby image. For the status-seeker, it was a status symbol. "Were you there?" You can hear that right today.

It had become an outing, a picnic.

The morning of the March, any rickety carloads of angry, dusty, sweating small-town Negroes would have gotten lost among the chartered jet planes, railroad cars, and air-conditioned buses. What originally was planned to be an angry riptide, one English newspaper aptly described now as "the gentle flood."

Talk about "integrated"! It was like salt and pepper. And, by now, there wasn't a single logistics aspect uncontrolled.

The marchers had been instructed to bring no signs--signs were provided. They had been told to sing one song: "We Shall Overcome." They had been told how to arrive, when, where to arrive, where to assemble, when to start marching, the route to march. First-aid stations were strategically located--even where to faint!

Yes, I was there. I observed that circus. Who ever heard of angry revolutionists all harmonizing "We Shall Overcome . . . Suum Day . . ." while

tripping and swaying along arm-in-arm with the very people they were supposed to be angrily revolting against? Who ever heard of angry revolutionists swinging their bare feet together with their oppressor in lily-pad park pools, with gospels and guitars and "I Have A Dream" speeches?

And the Black masses in America were--and still are--having a nightmare.

These "angry revolutionists" even followed their final instructions: to leave early. With all of those thousands upon thousands of "angry revolutionists," so few stayed over that the next morning the Washington hotel association reported a costly loss in empty rooms.

Hollywood couldn't have topped it.

In a subsequent press poll, not one Congressman or Senator with a previous record of opposition to civil rights said he had changed his views. What did anyone expect? How was a one-day "integrated" picnic going to counter-influence these representatives of prejudice rooted deep in the psyche of the American white man for four hundred years?

The very fact that millions, Black and white, believed in this monumental farce is another example of how much this country goes in for the surface glossing over, the escape ruse, surfaces, instead of truly dealing with its deep-rooted problems.

What that March on Washington did do was lull Negroes for a while. But inevitably, the Black masses started realizing they had been smoothly hoaxed again by the white man. And, inevitably, the Black man's anger rekindled, deeper than ever, and there began bursting out in different cities, in the "long, hot summer" of 1964, unprecedented racial crises.

#### THE NAACP AND THE BLACK ESTABLISHMENT (1964)

# 94

Race relations in America are relations between ruling elites. Issues are resolved, boundaries are marked off, favors are granted and pleas are denied by men of substance and power on both sides of the racial line.

Negroes and whites in America, Gunnar Myrdal observed, deal with each other, like two foreign countries, "through the medium of plenipotentiaries." What is also true, and more to the point, is that Negroes and whites deal with each other through the medium of competing power structures.

Like two foreign countries, like hostile and suspicious strangers, Negroes and whites negotiate treaties and truces through separate but not quite equal

power blocs. The white power structure has been endlessly annotated and analyzed. But little or no attention has been given to the Negro power structure as a group of self-conscious moulders and shapers of racial policy.

The importance of the Negro power structure can hardly be overemphasized. It is, in fact, a parallel government which fills the vacuum that exists between Negro citizens and the state. Plenipotentiaries of this shadow government--which we shall call the Black Establishment--have negotiated with the League of Nations and addressed formal notes to the United Nations. During World War II, the NAACP--the offensive arm of the Establishment--negotiated with the government of England and addressed formal letters to Sir Winston Churchill.

In times of crisis--and it has always been a time of crisis for the Negro--Black men ask not what their country can do for them but what the Black Establishment can do for them.

The Black Establishment, oddly enough, is not all-Black. It is a group of Negroes and whites who command the power lines in the Negro community: the executive secretaries, the board chairmen (often white), the presidents (often white), and board members (Negro and white) of protest and improvement associations; the bishops of Negro denominations and the pastors of the largest and most influential churches (the two are not necessarily synonymous); the editors and publishers of major Negro newspapers and periodicals; the leading educators, business and professional men.

The key members of this group from the standpoint of racial policy are the executive officers and board of directors of the protest and improvement association and the leading editors and publishers. It helps enormously if a new departure in the Negro community is sanctioned by these structures of power. On the other hand, it is difficult, though not impossible, to carry new ground if the Black Establishment says no.

Although the power and influence of the Establishment ranges over the whole theater of Negro life, the focal points are concentrated in five cities. Washington, Atlanta and Nashville are important as centers of ideas, programs and recruits. New York and Chicago, on the other hand, are control centers. The importance of being a New Yorker is dramatized by the board of one protest organization. Eighteen of the twenty-three national board members come from New York City and environs.

What are the prerequisites for membership in the group?

Money helps, but many moneyed men are not members, and many members are not moneyed men. As in the white world, control of a major institution--a protest group, a major business or a church--is extremely important.

For our purposes then, an Establishment member (and we are concerned here only with the national Establishment) is a person who holds a key office (president, executive vice-president, secretary, treasurer, board chairman or board membership) in a major educational, business, defense or improvement association.

These men and women are the decision makers in the Negro community. But there are men who decide for the decision makers, elites, in other words, within the elite. A member of the inner core of power holds an independent base of power and membership on the governing boards of one or more key national institutions.

How does one recognize an Establishment man?

By the boards he acquires. Here is a power profile of Channing Heggie Tobias, one of the least known and most powerful Negroes in recent history. Note particularly the signs of Establishment grace: membership on governing boards.

Channing H. Tobias (1882-1961), social worker, educator, national decision maker. Student secretary, International Commission of YMCA, 1911-23; Senior secretary for colored work of YMCA of USA, 1923-46; Director, Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1946-52; Member, President Truman's Civil Rights Committee, 1946-47; Alternate delegate, United Nations, 1951-52; Member, governing boards (board of directors or board of trustees) of following organizations and institutions: NAACP (chairman), Marshall Field Foundation, Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, Liberia Company, Hampton Institute, Howard University, Paine College, Palmer Memorial Institute, National Council of Churches of Christ in USA, and the Commercial State Bank and Trust Company of New York.

The important thing to note in this power profile is what sociologists call "the accumulation of advantages," an unnecessarily obscure phrase for the admirably simple biblical rule: "To them that hath, more will be given." What this means in terms of national Negro power is that influence in one sphere can be transferred to influence in another sphere. Prominent educators and bishops, for example, often serve on the boards of directors of major business and protest and defense organizations. And powerful businessmen, in turn, often serve on the boards of trustees of educational and philanthropic organizations. . . .

. . . The heart of the matter [is] continuous service in Establishment circles. Board members in every organization come and go. The names that turn up year after year are important; they indicate centers of power and influence. More importantly, they point to the hierarchies within the hierarchy.

The governing boards of Establishment organizations change periodically, but the surface changes hide a steel core of continuity. There is, as Professor N. P. Tillman, Jr., pointed out in a study of the NAACP, an inner core of men who hold board seats for years and then, dying, hand over the torch to another core. In a study of the 186 persons elected to the board through 1954, Professor Tillman focused on "the nuclei of active minorities which dominated the Board in the two periods, 1910-29 and 1929-55." He concluded: "Between 1910 and 1929, the nucleus appears to have consisted of: John Milholland (d., 1922), Walter Sachs (1912-15), Joel Spingarn, Arthur Spingarn, William E. Walling, John H. Holmes, Mary Ovington, Oswald Villard, and W. E. B. Du Bois. . . . All but the first carried over into the second period, both as Board members and general officers, thus providing continuity of personnel and policy. In the second period they were joined by others, predominantly Negro (5-2), namely: Louis Wright, Charles Toney, Allan Chalmers, Alfred Lewis, Channing Tobias, Theodore Spaulding and perhaps Robert Weaver. Meanwhile, some of the holdovers died or resigned among whom only Du Bois was forced out (in 1934) for 'the good of the Association.'"

What emerges from all this is the power of Establishment boards and the relative weakness of men, whatever their local power or influence, who do not participate in the informal give-and-take that precedes decision and the formal voting that ratifies it. The only exceptions to this are major publishers who can make their weight felt without formal entree into board rooms. Oftentimes, in fact, radical departures in Negro policy are cleared in advance with key publishers. Before a white administrator was named to head an Establishment agency, the appointment was cleared by long-distance calls to a handful of men across the country. But this exception proves the rule. The men who received long-distance calls were not asked to vote on the appointment (the board had already voted); they were asked to close ranks behind an Establishment fait accompli.

We return then to the major premise. Men remote from the board rooms do not vote; and men who do not vote in the small groups where one vote makes a difference do not generally count. This is not to say that national boards are

the final arbiters of racial policy. The ruling boards of the Establishment are free to decide policy within certain limits prescribed by other institutions within the family of power in the Negro world. Of vast importance in this connection are Negro educational institutions. Negro educators have always exerted tremendous influence on racial policy. The nature of this influence was dramatized by the sit-ins which led to the expulsion of hundreds of students and the firing of scores of teachers.

The family of power includes not only Negro organizations but white organizations. Racial policy is subtly shaped and diluted by the expectations, priorities and fears of liberal, labor, religious, and minority groups. From this white liberal nexus, the Establishment seeks allies and donations. The most talented of these allies have definite ideas about the goals and direction of Negro policy. And it is not always possible to accept the donations without accepting the donor's program.

Among the leading organizations in this shadow cabinet of the shadow cabinet are the UAW and other liberal unions, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress, the race relations departments (under various names) of the YWCA, YMCA, the National Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the American Friends Service Committee.

Another layer of hidden power on the fringes of the Establishment centers in philanthropic organizations and their representatives. The Rosenwald Foundation, the American Missionary Association of the Congregationalist Church, the Rockefeller foundations and the Harmon Fund have played huge roles in shaping and braking Negro policy. Of crucial importance in the context of current power realities are the Taconic Foundation and the Phelps-Stokes Fund.

These organizations and their representatives are part of the formal and informal network of power surrounding the core organizations of the Establishment. Some of these groups send white delegates to the Establishment. Some groom specially selected Negroes who represent them in the inner councils of power.

White delegates to the Establishment should not be confused with bona fide members of the Establishment. Certain positions in the Establishment are apparently reserved for white men. The NAACP, the National Urban League and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund have never had a Negro president or a Negro treasurer. Nor for that matter have many other Negro institutions of power. Final control

(chairman of the board) and financial control (treasurer and chairman of the financial and investment committees) of Negro colleges are generally vested in white hands. One Eastern investment banker, for instance, is chairman of the board of one Negro college, president and treasurer of the board of another and a member of the investment and executive committee of a third. Although this trustee holds enormous power in the Negro world, his name seldom, if ever, appears in a Negro newspaper.

Analysis of white power in the Black world is complicated by primogenital relationships. No Negro family, for example, has exerted greater influence on Negro policy than the Baldwins, the Rosenwalds or the Spingarns.

William H. Baldwin the elder was a close and influential advisor of Booker T. Washington. His wife, Ruth Standish Baldwin, was a founder of the National Urban League. Lester Granger said she did more than any other person to shape the basic philosophy of the Urban League. Since that time, there has always been a Baldwin on the Urban League board.

The Spingarns have made a great contribution to Negro welfare and they have held power positions commensurate with their contributions. Dr. Joel E. Spingarn an erudite professor of English, served as treasurer and chairman of the board of the NAACP before assuming the presidency which he held from 1929 to his death in 1939. He was succeeded as president by his brother, Arthur (1878- ), and as a board member by his widow, Amy.

The Spingarns are to the NAACP what the Baldwins are to the Urban League. In other words, there has always been a Spingarn on the NAACP board. In fact, for almost fifty years, there have been two Spingarns on the NAACP board. Arthur Spingarn, the current NAACP president, was chairman of the legal committee for more than twenty years. He was also a founder, incorporator and first president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

Other influential and well-heeled whites (poor whites, like poor Negroes, are democratically excluded) shape Negro policy and exercise veto power on new issues through their positions as board members and patrons and links to the white power structure.

The counterparts of the white friends in power are Roy Wilkins (1901- ), an ex-newspaper editor who is executive secretary of the NAACP; Whitney Young, Jr. (1921-72), a former social worker and educator who is executive director of the National Urban League and co-chairman of the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership. Also influential on the national scene, though not in the limelight, are:



Frederick Douglass Patterson (1901- ), New York City, veterinarian, educator, foundation executive. President of Phelps-Stokes Fund; president of National Business League; president-emeritus of Tuskegee Institute; founder and former president of the United Negro College Fund; board of trustees, Bennett College, Bethune-Cookman College, Hampton Institute, Palmer Memorial, Southern Educational Foundation.

Ralph Johnson Bunche (1904- ), New York City, political scientist, UN official. Board of directors, NAACP; Phelps-Stokes Fund; Board of Higher Education, New York; Fund for Advancement of Education; Rockefeller Foundation; Harvard University Board of Overseers.

Members of the Establishment are, by and large, men who look out on life from the same vantage point. As managers of men and/or material and as holders of real estate and stocks and bonds, Establishment men are moulded by the same forces and respond to events with the same style. Like their contemporaries in the white world, like men of place and power and property everywhere, they tend to fear men and issues that rock the boat.

The Establishment is linked not only by formal and informal ties but also by common backgrounds. Most members of the current Establishment are lineal and, according to their critics, spiritual descendants of house slaves and the free Negro elite. Not a few sprang from the Black Puritan class which placed a high premium on respectability, responsibility and the middle-class values of thrift, sobriety and steadiness. Almost all of them were marked, for ill or good, by strong men and women who desperately, almost fanatically, dedicated themselves to proving--to themselves and to others--that they were not Negroes.

A common educational background also links the power structure. A significantly large percentage of top-level leadership has come from Ivy League colleges. Many more, however, came from a handful of Negro colleges which form a sub-Ivy League league. Howard University, for example, has served as a kind of post-graduate school for Harvard postgraduates. The number of Negro leaders who studied or taught at Howard (Bunche, Hastie, Thurgood Marshall, Charles E. Thompson, James Nabrit, Carl Murphy), is impressive. From these men came some of the Establishment's best thinking--pro and con. The successful legal campaign was mapped at Howard. The pioneer thinking on non-violence came largely from Howard (Mordecai Johnson, James Farmer, Howard Thurman, W. S. Nelson). And the thinking for several beyond-the-Establishment

organizations (the National Negro Congress, the Negro Sanhedrin) was hammered out there.

Atlanta and Nashville have been equally important as Establishment nurseries. The Southern branch of the Ivy League consists of Atlanta University (James Weldon Johnson, Walter White), Virginia Union (Eugene Kinckle Jones), Lincoln (Thurgood Marshall), Morehouse (Martin Luther King, Jr., James Nabrit, Jr., Mordecai Johnson) and Fisk (W. E. B. Du Bois, J. Finley Wilson, Charles Wesley).

The Black Puritan background, the tutelage of white Puritans in New South missionary schools and New England universities, the proving of self and race against the standards of white power, the postgraduate training in and around Howard, Fisk, Morehouse and the leadership factories of Chicago, New York and Washington: this was the common womb from which came men imbued with a stern sense of duty and responsibility, men driven and set apart, tragically separated from their white peers who patronized them and the Negro masses whom they patronized. This background, plus Du Bois' ideology of the Talented Tenth, sent forth leaders with a rather aristocratic and not altogether realistic concept of noblesse oblige--men who felt they were responsible for the masses and discharged that responsibility at a safe distance.

There was a mark on the brow of such men.

By the mark they recognized each other and excluded interlopers. In their time, and in their place, they made important contributions. It was not their fault, really, that they were products of their time and their place. It was not their fault--or was it, really?--that they learned caution with duty, that they learned to value order and respectability in the same places that taught them the desirability and the inevitability of social change. They were, on the whole, a remarkable lot. Though not rebels themselves, they tilled the ground and prepared the way for the bitter harvest.

Almost everyone knows that the white power structure is threatened by the Negro rebellion. What is not noted often enough is that Negro men of power are also on trial, not for the decisions they made but for the decisions they did not make, not for the battles they lost but for the battles they did not fight.

## STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE (1977)

The militant upsurge of Black youth throughout the country, particularly Black college students in the South, is probably best represented by the developments of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. This is the organization that fired the imagination of thousands of students, put forth political lines that gave real leadership to the student movement (including the white students and the development of Students for a Democratic Society or SDS), and developed internal contradictions that serve as a precedent for the developments that unfold in the struggles in the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) in the 1970's.

After the rise of the Montgomery (Alabama) Bus Boycott movement in 1955, the student movement developed. The forecast of the motion to come was reflected by two marches: "Youth marches for integrated schools," that brought 8,000 in 1958 and 25,000 in 1959 to Washington, D.C. On February 1st, 1960, four young Black students from North Carolina A&T sat in a 5 & 10¢ store in Greensboro, N.C., to protest a segregationist policy and sparked the sit-in movement that led to SNCC, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.

SNCC was the most dynamic organization in the Black liberation movement in the 1960's and from its experience there are many lessons to be learned. SNCC moved through three stages: (1) 1960-63, SNCC was based in the South, and focused its attention on fighting the denial of democratic rights to Black people particularly in the rural areas. This was a period of petty bourgeois, religious-inspired idealism. SNCC wrote in its founding statement:

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of non-violence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our belief, and the manner of our action . . . through non-violence, courage displaces fear. Love transcends hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice, hope ends despair. Faith reconciles doubt. Peace dominates war. Mutual regards cancel enmity. Justice for all overwhelms injustice. The redemptive community supersedes immoral social systems.

Moreover, it was not the system of American society (USA) that was rejected but the rejection of Blacks by the system that SNCC fought against. SNCC folks believed in the American Dream. One militant wrote:

What was the source of my belief? It was based on my assurance that in this country there was room for everybody, that for every man there was, or soon would be, some place where he could be free to explore and employ the creative potential within him. . . . In short, I believed in guaranteeing everyone freedom, equality and democracy as the means of living

full lives, and I thought that the rest of the country believed in these things too.

But unlike the now bureaucratic reformists that dominated the old civil rights organizations (Urban League and NAACP) or the new church-based motion (SCLC), SNCC was militant and bold in its desire to resolve injustice with direct action, changing reality by confronting whatever danger was there.

The sit-ins hit this country like a bomb shell and spread like a prairie fire. In a year's time more than 50,000 students were involved in over 140 places in this revitalized tactic of struggle--the sit-in. Actually, it was spread through the mass media, as newspaper articles were read like handbooks of struggle. While Martin Luther King had ideological hegemony over students, it was Ghandian tactics that guided the struggle. The students also had the Black colleges' commitment to bourgeois political idealism for their ideological foundation. Stephen Wright, former president of Fisk University, said at the time, "Students have been exposed all of their lives to the teachings of the great American scriptures of democracy, freedom and equality, and no literate person should be surprised that they reflect these teachings in their conduct." This ideological basis fit the rising petty bourgeois aspirations of Black students so that the initial level of participation was broad and far reaching.

Tactically, the sit-ins were a model of dedication, commitment and discipline. People were instructed to absorb whatever violence came, but not to retaliate: "You may choose to face physical assault without protecting yourself, hands at the sides, unclenched; or you may choose to protect yourself, making plain you do not intend to hit back." The sit-inners faced tear gas, police dogs, burning cigarettes on their flesh, beatings, jailings and suspension or expulsion from colleges. Throughout it all, their discipline, dedication and commitment was a source of moral strength that pierced deep into the Black community and eventually led to winning the sympathy if not support of the masses of Black people.

The sit-ins led to the freedom rides initiated by CORE, and SNCC moved in when mob violence had temporarily halted them by burning a bus in Anniston, Alabama. Students from Nashville and Atlanta went to Birmingham and rode busses into Jackson, Mississippi.

After the sit-ins and freedom rides, students began to voluntarily leave school to work full time for SNCC. They plunged deep into the South. One group focused on the struggle to desegregate public accommodations, and the other

stressed the need to register voters and struggle for change at the ballot box.

The second period of SNCC's development is really a period of transition (1963-64). In these two years SNCC used the momentum of the previous three years of oft-times isolated struggle in the deep rural South to seize a national platform, and also pull the nation's attention toward the deep South. In 1963 SNCC was a key participant in the March on Washington in which 250,000 people went to demonstrate in the Capital, the seat of state power. SNCC was regarded as a brash young militant organization and was forced to delete part of John Lewis' speech. He was supposed to say:

We march today for jobs and freedom, but we have nothing to be proud of. . . . We must have legislation that will protect the Mississippi sharecropper who is put off his farm because he dares to register to vote. We need a bill that will provide for the homeless and starving people of this nation. We need a bill that will ensure the equality of a maid who earns \$5 a week in the home of a family whose income is \$100,000 a year. We must have a good FEPC bill.

Let us not forget that we are involved in a serious social revolution. By and large, American politics is dominated by politicians who build their careers on immoral compromises and ally themselves with open forms of political, economic and social exploitation. There are exceptions, of course. We salute those. But what political leader can stand up and say, "My party is the party of principles?" The party of Kennedy is also the party of Eastland. The party of Javits is also the party of Goldwater. Where is our party. . . . We cannot depend on any political party, for the Democrats and Republicans have betrayed the basic principles of the Declaration of Independence.

The time will come when we will not confine our marching to Washington. We will march through the South, through the heart of Dixie, the way Sherman did. We shall pursue our "scorched earth" policy and burn Jim Crow to the ground--non-violently. We shall fragment the South into a thousand pieces and put them back together in the image of democracy.

After much struggle, in February, 1964, SNCC sent out a call for Black and white students throughout the nation to come to work in Mississippi for the summer. Nearly 1,000 volunteers worked in Mississippi that summer. During those months six people were killed, 80 beaten, 35 churches burned, and 30 other buildings bombed. But the slogan that fits SNCC's posture was, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Us Around." The nation was forced to look at the swamp that is Mississippi, a state dripping with the venom of racism, falling near the bottom of every index of social development with a population 43 per cent Black. SNCC had long since dropped its college appearance and had adopted the denim overalls of the rural Mississippi sharecropper as its uniform for struggle.

During this same period SNCC groups had been developing in Northern

cities and had moved beyond simply support work for the Southern struggle. The Chicago group sparked a united front effort to fight defacto segregation of schools. This resulted in two school boycotts, 225,000 students in 1963, 180,000 in 1964.

This period sparked a reconsideration of non-violence. Bob Moses, a leading SNCC militant in Mississippi, said of Martin Luther King's philosophy:

We don't agree with it, in a sense. The majority of the students are not sympathetic to the idea that they have to love the white people that they are struggling against. But there are a few who have a very religious orientation. And there's a constant dialogue at meetings about non-violence and the meaning of non-violence. . . . For most of the members it is a question of being able to have a method of attack rather than to be always on the defensive.

The great political lesson during this period was learned when SNCC tried to upset the domination of the regular Mississippi Democratic Party with the organization of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. After holding legal precinct, district and state elections with full legal documentation, the MFDP went to the Democratic convention in Atlantic City. In addition to the MFDP delegates and scores of SNCC militants, SNCC brought the burned remains of the car driven by Chaney, Goodman and Swerner, the first three civil rights workers killed earlier in the summer. Although they had a sound case, the political maneuvering of vice-presidential hopeful Hubert Humphrey, on President Lyndon Johnson's instructions, set up a compromise for the MFDP to accept representative seating with no voice or vote. All established civil rights leaders urged acceptance of this compromise: King, Wilkins, Rustin, etc. But SNCC said that we had to put some principles in politics, and rejected it. The grass roots MFDP delegates swung with SNCC, the youthful militants who had walked with them down the dusty roads to register to vote. They had marched with too many sacrifices to compromise their principles. This was a political lesson of the highest order. And it was this political lesson that propelled SNCC into its third period. One militant put it this way:

In retrospect, I think that in our hearts we knew our flawless arguments would fall on deaf ears. We were aware, at least subconsciously that no group of white people was going to send some of its own packing in order to make room for us. No matter that that group had said to the world that it regarded all people as equals and no matter that we had a right to representation in that group. It took a few more turns at knocking our heads against stone walls (walls that, according to our society, did not exist) before we became fully conscious that this was the case.

In this experience can be seen one of the origins of the call for Black power, which I consider the other side of the coin of Black consciousness. One cannot exist without the other. Imagine the MFDP's 1964 experience repeated hundreds of times in hundreds of conventions and back room meetings. Imagine that in every corner of the United States Black people are coming face to face with the fact, never before so widely or so publicly acknowledged that it is through the exercise of power that decisions are made, and that those decisions have little or nothing to do with morality. The next logical step is the call for Black power.

The third period lasted from 1965 to 1967. A trip to Africa by a SNCC leadership delegation, discussions with and about Malcolm X, and growing alienation between Blacks and whites inside SNCC, was capped by the Watts riot of August, 1965. By May, 1966, at a SNCC staff meeting in Nashville, Stokely Carmichael was elected chairperson of SNCC. During the June march in Mississippi started by James Meredith, SNCC militants set off another spark that resulted in a prairie fire--BLACK POWER. What this did was ignite motion in every aspect of U.S. society. In light of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1964 another tactic to attack the system was necessary. And while the initial response of white liberals and bureaucratic Civil Rights leaders was to charge "racism in reverse," SNCC gained great popularity among the masses of people. The latent nationalism of Black people who had childhood roots in the rural South, still have relatives living there and continue to experience national oppression in the North, surged forward. However, SNCC still had not developed a scientific analysis of this society, and did not have a systematic program. Therefore, this new prairie fire was guided away from revolution to reform by a reformist petty bourgeois elite who used the movement to promote its own class interests. SNCC moved to form local political parties like the Lowndes County Freedom Party, and in fact included the revolutionary weapon of armed self defense. But the petty bourgeoisie pushed a nationalist program of reform with themselves at the helm.

By 1967 the Black liberation movement was at an all time high. And it is at this time that SNCC began to move away from its independent organizational impact on the movement and began to count more on its leading personalities, the media, and its influence on other organizational forms.

During this year, 1967, H. Rap Brown, formerly a Southern University student, was elected chairperson of SNCC. He and Stokely Carmichael became household names in the USA. The riots and repression in Newark and Detroit reached an all time high for national coverage of racial violence. In all there were 164 incidents of violence in the U.S. in 1967, 89 deaths and nearly

600 million dollars in property loss. The ideologies of the new nationalist posture congregated in Newark at the first National Black Power Conference. But for SNCC, 1967 signalled a new focus: "In May 1967, SNCC formally declared that it was no longer a Civil Rights organization but a Human Rights organization interested not only in human rights in the U.S. but throughout the world. It declared its support of those liberation groups struggling to free people from racism and exploitation." SNCC sent delegations to a peace conference in Japan, to Vietnam representing the Bertrand Russell International War Crimes Tribunal, to the Latin American Solidarity Organization in Havana, then to Vietnam, Algeria, Syria, Egypt, Guinea, Tanzania and Europe. Moreover, SNCC spoke at a UN conference on Apartheid in Zambia, and again in New York on foreign investments in Southern Africa. This new posture led to a position on the Palestinian problem after the June War in the Middle East. SNCC held that "the basic issue of the conflict was aggressive, expansionist Zionism backed by U.S. imperialism." SNCC alienated itself once and for all from the liberal philanthropists who had financed the civil rights movement. The leadership then turned to the Black Panther Party as a new organizational form, but their relationship was short-lived. SNCC continued, but the staff was tired, disillusioned and demoralized with the lack of organization, strategy and most of all, a systematic, coherent, ideological and political line.

This has been only a sketch of SNCC, but it is possible to sum up some of its most important shortcomings and strengths. The major weakness was its consistent lack of a unified line and political education, which made it more difficult to move forward. This resulted in great gaps developing between the rank and file militants in local projects and its central leadership. Moreover, it made it difficult for SNCC to consolidate and make shifts of position when necessary. This is the basis for the other problems: (1) SNCC lacked a revolutionary strategy so on each campaign raised ultimate hopes only to lead to great disappointments, disillusion and anger; (2) SNCC's organization revolved more around key personalities rather than on organizational structure and process. Therefore many SNCC leaders appeared larger than life. This led to many problems that resulted from the fact that the actual weaknesses of these brothers and sisters became magnified liabilities for the entire organization; (3) SNCC's program was characterized by bowing to spontaneity, a process of seizing on the objective motion of the people



and calling that revolutionary. Moreover, sometimes a major campaign would start accidentally and be allowed to disrupt ongoing work; (4) and last, all of what's just been said was complicated by SNCC militants not having the discipline of relating to each other in the most principled way. This was true in general, but particularly in interpersonal relations.

These shortcomings were glaring not because SNCC was a total failure, for it had some measure of success; but SNCC did not survive, and we need to learn the reasons well. Its strengths were based on an honest and quite serious attempt to change this society. The Black students and youth of SNCC were committed to the masses of Black people, and had no hesitancy in sinking deep roots among them. If integrating with the masses is a revolutionary trait for students, then surely it is clear that SNCC had a revolutionary style of work. SNCC reflected this in its ability to develop slogans that were adopted by the masses, its use of songs to mobilize and raise the spirit of the masses, its projection of symbols that fired the imagination of the Black masses and generally its use of records, still photography, films and newspapers in carrying propaganda work deep among the masses. And SNCC was a bold, fearless army of militant Black youth. In every state SNCC sought out the most dangerous area to show Black people that it was possible to fight oppression and win. The theme song of the Mississippi project was, "We'll never turn back," and in many ways while SNCC was active it didn't.

## THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT (1955-56)

# 96

### A. Rosa L. Parks

I had had problems with bus drivers over the years, because I didn't see fit to pay my money into the front and then go around to the back. Sometimes bus drivers wouldn't permit me to get on the bus, and I had been evicted from the bus. But as I say, there had been incidents over the years. One of the things that made this get so much publicity was the fact the police were called

in and I was placed under arrest. See, if I had just been evicted from the bus and he hadn't placed me under arrest or had any charges brought against me, it probably could have been just another incident.

I had left my work at the men's alteration shop, a tailor shop in the Montgomery Fair department store, and as I left work, I crossed the street to a drugstore to pick up a few items instead of trying to go directly to the bus stop. And when I had finished this, I came across the street and looked for a Cleveland Avenue bus that apparently had some seats on it. At that time it was a little hard to get a seat on the bus. But when I did get to the entrance to the bus, I got in line with a number of other people who were getting on the same bus.

As I got up on the bus and walked to the seat I saw there was only one vacancy that was just back of where it was considered the white section. So this was the seat that I took, next to the aisle, and a man was sitting next to me. Across the aisle there were two women, and there were a few seats at this point in the very front of the bus that was called the white section. I went on to one stop and I didn't particularly notice who was getting on the bus, didn't particularly notice the other people getting on. And on the third stop there were some people getting on, and at this point all of the front seats were taken. Now in the beginning, at the very first stop I had got on the bus, the back of the bus was filled up with people standing in the aisle and I don't know why this one vacancy that I took was left, because there were quite a few people already standing toward the back of the bus. The third stop is when all the front seats were taken, and this one man was standing and when the driver looked around and saw he was standing, he asked the four of us, the man in the seat with me and the two women across the aisle, to let him have those front seats.

At his first request, didn't any of us move. Then he spoke again and said, "You'd better make it light on yourselves and let me have those seats." At this point, of course, the passenger who would have taken the seat hadn't said anything. In fact, he never did speak to my knowledge. When the three people, the man who was in the seat with me and the two women, stood up and moved into the aisle, I remained where I was. When the driver saw that I was still sitting there, he asked if I was going to stand up. I told him, no, I wasn't. He said, "Well, if you don't stand up, I'm going to have you arrested." I told him to go on and have me arrested.

He got off the bus and came back shortly. A few minutes later, two policemen got on the bus, and they approached me and asked if the driver had asked me to stand up, and I said yes, and they wanted to know why I didn't. I told them I didn't think I should have to stand up. After I had paid my fare and occupied a seat, I didn't think I should have to give it up. They placed me under arrest then and had me to get in the police car, and I was taken to jail and booked on suspicion, I believe. The questions were asked, the usual questions they ask a prisoner or somebody that's under arrest. They had to determine whether or not the driver wanted to press charges or swear out a warrant, which he did. Then they took me to jail and I was placed in a cell. In a little while I was taken from the cell, and my picture was made and fingerprints taken. I went back to the cell then, and a few minutes later I was called back again, and when this happened I found out that Mr. E. D. Nixon and Attorney and Mrs. Clifford Durr had come to make bond for me. . . .

B. E. D. Nixon

I've known times for years and years I was the only person in Montgomery saying anything about the mistreatment of Negroes--to the end that it got to the place that most people looked on me as a leader, even though I wasn't never designated as such, because I could call a meeting. Say it was necessary that we have a meeting, I bet you I could call forty ministers at that time, at least thirty would be present. And I could appoint a meeting at any church. See, people think because Rev. King was selected and the meetings started at his church, that he done it, but I selected the spot. I called the people together, and I told them we was going to meet at that Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. . . . If we'da met on the suburbs, insurance mens and doctors and things who were working downtown wouldn't leave the office to go away out. But with it right downtown in the heart there wasn't no question they could walk right around the corner to it, and that's why the meeting was set up there, but a whole lot of people don't know that. They just think Rev. King come in, organized the Montgomery Improvement Association at his church and all. That isn't true. But the question is--we're not arguing the point, I'm just giving you the facts--that the job was done and that's the important thing.

How Did the Bus Boycott Get Started? First of all, we'd talked about a bus boycott all the year. We had three other people prior to Mrs. Parks arrested who reported their incidents to us, but you couldn'ta found nobody in

Montgomery would agree to have a bus boycott--and I'm not patting myself on the shoulder--unless it was approved by E. D. Nixon. The first one was a minister's daughter. Her name was Mrs. Wayne. After I talked to her I discovered that she would not make a good litigant. Now you are on the outside here. You think that anybody that got arrested would be good. Now you would think that, the average person would think that, but my training with NAACP and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters taught me different. I've handled so many cases that I know when a man would stand up and when he wouldn't. So after I talked to her, I told the group, "No use in me going to court with this case, we can't win it. . . ."

# 97

## THE ALBANY (GA.) CAMPAIGN (1961-62)

Albany (Ga.) Turmoil. An intensive drive to get city officials to discuss desegregation of city public facilities was undertaken by Negroes in Albany, Ga. following the jailing July 10 of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. . . .

Opposing the drive were the city commissioners. Mayor Asa D. Kelley Jr. (who said July 16 the city would not "deal with law violaters") and Police Chief Laurie S. Pritchett, who, with his city police reinforced by county and state officers, appeared at virtually every mass protest and jailed many of the demonstrators. About 346 arrests were made in July, about 1,100 since the protest movement began in Oct. 1961.

Pres. Kennedy, who had directed July 21 the Attorney General to report on the controversy, said at his news conference Aug. 1 that the refusal of Albany officials to negotiate with Negro leaders was "wholly inexplicable." He said the federal government would "try to provide a satisfactory solution for the protection of the Constitutional rights of the people of Albany." Kelley, in reply to the President's remarks, said there was no prospect for negotiation until "outside agitators" (King and other integrationists) left the city. (Other nonresidents of Albany who appeared there during the controversy included Robert Shelton of Tuscaloosa, Ala., imperial wizard of the United Klans, Inc., Calvin Craig of Atlanta, the Georgia Klans' grand dragon and three representatives of the American Nazi Party.)

King and three other Negroes, including the Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, treasurer of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, had been

convicted July 10 of violating a public assembly ordinance by failing to get a permit when they led a Dec. 1961 demonstration in which more than 700 persons were arrested. King and Abernathy were given the choice of paying fines of \$178 each or serving 45-day sentences. They were jailed after refusing to pay the fine. A mass protest meeting was held at the Shiloh Baptist Church July 11, and 32 Negroes led by the Rev. C. K. Steele of Tallahassee, Fla., marched from the church to city hall, where they were arrested. Four Negroes were arrested for picketing on a downtown street. A mass meeting was held at the church that night, and Negroes outside the church threw bricks and bottles at police. Negro leaders at the church then helped Pritchett calm the crowd. King and Abernathy were released from jail July 12 after an unidentified Negro paid their fines without their knowledge or consent. After this the situation in Albany appeared to have been eased somewhat although small groups of Negroes continued vainly to seek admission to a segregated library, a pool and stores and bus terminals in a series of moves largely led by the Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker, executive director of King's Leadership Conference, and by Joseph Charles Jones, a field secretary of the student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.

Anderson notified the city July 20 that 300-500 Negroes would demonstrate peacefully July 21 in front of city hall, and demonstrators showed up July 21 despite a federal court order barring the demonstration. 160 Negroes and a white person were arrested July 21, and 39 were arrested July 24 in mass marches on city hall. After the latter arrests a crowd of about 2,000 Negroes jeered police and pelted them with bricks and rocks without police retaliation.

On learning of the crowd's behavior, King declared a day of penance for the violence and toured the city's Negro district to appeal against further outbreaks. He said neither the demonstrators nor members of the Albany Movement were involved in the outbreak. . . .

## THE SIT-IN CAMPAIGN (1960)

# 98

### A. Greensboro

On January 31, 1960, a Negro college freshman in Greensboro, North Carolina, Joseph McNeill, tried to get something to eat at the bus terminal in downtown Greensboro. Like other Negroes at other lunch counters throughout the South and through much of the border area, he was turned down: We do not serve Negroes. But the humiliation that so many others had experienced for so long this time set off a spark.

That night, in his dormitory, McNeill asked his roommate, Ezell Blair, Jr., "What can we do?" Then he answered his own question: "Let's have a boycott. We should go in and ask to be served and sit there until they do."

The next day McNeill, Blair and two of their classmates, David Richmond and Franklin McCain, sat down at the lunch counter in Woolworth's. When they were not served, they continued to sit there. When they finally left after several hours, they had still not had a cup of coffee, but they did not feel let down. McNeill told the others that he thought the idea would spread.

The four students drew no national attention that first day. But when they returned to Woolworth's the next morning, the wire services began to take notice. The New York Times carried this United Press International story:

A group of well-dressed Negro college students staged a sit-down strike in a downtown Woolworth store today and vowed to continue it in relays until Negroes were served at the lunch counter.

"We believe, since we buy books and papers in the other part of the store, we should get served in this part," said the spokesman for the group.

The store manager, C. L. Harris, commented: "They can just sit there. It's nothing to me."

He declined to say whether it was the policy of the store not to serve Negroes.

The Negroes, students at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College here, arrived shortly after ten A.M. and sat at two sections of the lunch counter. At twelve-thirty P.M., the group filed out of the store and stood on the sidewalk in this city's busiest downtown area. They formed a tight circle, threw their hands into a pyramid in the center and recited the Lord's Prayer.

The spokesman said that "another shift" of students would carry forward the strike and it would continue "until we get served."

By the fourth day the four young men were joined by other students, Negro and white, men and women, from the Greensboro area. And outside of Greensboro the power of what they were doing began to be recognized. Other students sat at other lunch counters, and a movement was born. It was an extraordinary movement, displaying as really nothing else had the suffering in the soul of the Negro. When young people, without money or influence, risked literally everything to demonstrate for equal treatment as human beings, it was impossible for the South to talk convincingly about "outside agitators" or northern politicians or the Supreme Court as the source of the "trouble."

The sit-ins were an immediate success. In some of the more cosmopolitan communities of the southern and border states only a small psychological push was needed to topple segregation at lunch counters. It took just six months to open the counter at Woolworth's in Greensboro to all races. Hundreds of

other stores began serving Negroes by the end of 1960 and hundreds more in succeeding years. Demonstrations also focused on other targets--hotels, movie theatres, amusement parks. And the sit-ins gave rise to a companion movement against segregation in transportation, the freedom rides.

## B. Atlanta

### Julian Bond and Lonnie King: An Unmatched Pair

In Black Atlanta, they came from opposite sides of the tracks.

Julian Bond was educated in a Pennsylvania prep school, where he was the only Black student. His late father, an Atlanta University dean, was one of the nation's preeminent Black scholars.

As for Lonnie King, "My mother was a maid and I lived in an alley, grew up in an alley."

They were physical and temperamental opposites, as well.

Julian Bond, slender, light-skinned, fragilely handsome, was a jazz buff and aspiring poet.

Lonnie King, dark, bull-like, a punishing boxer, was four years older than Julian Bond. And madder. He had signed for a four-year navy hitch to escape the South, his poverty, Atlanta--where he had been fired from a YMCA job for whipping the son of a socially prominent Black family. Even so, "I told a friend of mine in Hong Kong in '57 that I was coming back to Atlanta when I got out, and this is the corny part. I told him that I believe one thing, that there's going to be a revolution in the South, and I want to be there, be a part of it."

Lonnie King: First of all, I met Julian Bond when I came back to Atlanta in '57. He was coming to Morehouse, and I was coming back to Morehouse, and believe it or not, Julian and I were in the line together to pay our money to the people over there. And they were long lines, so we talked and talked and talked, and we never really talked any more--just ever so often, "Hello." But never really anything, and finally in 1960, when that thing broke out in North Carolina, we happened to have been in the drugstore together, and I went up to him and talked to him and another guy named Joe Pierce about doing some things in Atlanta. . . . Julian was reluctant. He probably could explain his reluctance maybe a lot better than I can. All I know is that he was reluctant, and we kept pushing. We pushed him, not because we saw any great messiah kind of thing where we have to have Julian. It's just that you need certain kinds

of personalities to make things go. Julian had a reputation for being an excellent writer, and my feeling was that the Movement's point of view had to be articulated by young people in as logical and coherent a fashion as possible. He had been a Time magazine intern and came from a pretty good family and had been around books all of his life. . . .

Julian Bond: On about the third day of February, 1960, I was sitting in what was then Yates and Milton's Drugstore at the corner of Fair and Chestnut streets which was sort of a student hangout and served the function of a coffeehouse for Atlanta University Center students. Sitting in the back there, just doing nothing, I guess, by myself. A fellow came over whom I knew to be Lonnie King. I knew him because he was a football player and had just run a touchdown against someone, a spectacular touchdown. Morehouse didn't have a good team. And he came up to me and he showed me a copy of the Atlanta Daily World which at that time was a daily paper. I know it was the third or fourth of February because the headline said, "Greensboro Student Sit-In, Third Day."

He said, "Have you seen that?" And I was sort of irritated and I said, "Yeah, you know, I read the papers." And he said, "What do you think about it?" And I said, "Well, it's all right, pretty good stuff." And he said, "Don't you think it ought to happen here?" And I said, "It probably will." And he said, "Let's make it happen." And I should have said, "What do you mean, let's?" [Laughs] But I didn't. You know, Lonnie's a very persuasive guy, and I didn't know him at all except by reputation as an athlete. And he said, "You take this side of the drugstore and I'll take the other and we'll call a meeting for Sale Hall Annex [a building on the campus] for noon today to talk about it." So I took half the drugstore, and he took half, and we had a meeting of a small group of people, about twenty people. And the next day enlarged it to more and more, and that began the student movement. . . .

# 99

## THE BIRMINGHAM CAMPAIGN (1963)

### A. Ed Gardner, Birmingham Minister ("I Wasn't Saved to Run")

Everything in Birmingham was segregated. You could go downtown there in one department [of a store] and spend a thousand dollars and go to the lunch counter and be put in jail. Or you go uptown and get on the elevator that was marked White Only, and get put in jail.



Everything. Everything from top to bottom was segregated. And then the eating places . . . had two doors. They had to have a sign on there, Colored and White, and then the owner had to have a wall inside there seven feet high so the Black and white couldn't see each other. . . . [Laughs]

Well, the Black community was fed up with segregation, and only they were waiting to get a leader to lead out. At that time, any man that attempted to lead out here in Birmingham, well, he was put out of business, see. If he had a business, he couldn't operate, because the city would take his license, and the Ku Klux Klan came in, and the police would harass him. If he was in his car, they would charge him with running a stop sign when there was no stop sign. They would charge him with running a red light when there was no red light. . . . We couldn't hardly get a man in business to lead out in the fight, because he knew that his business was gone when he identified himself with the struggle. So we had to get a man that couldn't lose nothing but his life, and we found Fred Shuttlesworth.

On June 5, 1956, four days after Ruby Hurley was forced to close her NAACP office, he and fellow minister Shuttlesworth called the first meeting of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights.

That night cars were lined up about six blocks long trying to get into the building, because we felt that John Patterson's scheme was to continue to maintain segregation and discrimination. And anything looked like it was pointing to destroy segregation and discrimination, he sought to put it out of business. So he clamped down on the N-Double A-C-P and put 'em out of business for eight long years. So the Alabama Christian Movement took up where N-Double-A-C-P left off and we carried the fight on. . . . We saw it was going to be a fight to the finish and therefore when we started out, we tried to sit down and talk and to get the whites to voluntarily . . . get these segregation laws off the books. But at that time they refused to talk to us.

The [local] news people wouldn't give us any coverage . . . they played it down. Those five hundred people went to jail; they didn't publicize it. They acted as though nothing was happening, the town was quiet. "Just a few rabble-rousers was agitating and the folks was satisfied and if we can get these few rabble-rousers out of here, there will be good race relations as always been in Birmingham. . . ."

Then we had Black informers and we had white informers and people were

afraid. They lived under fear, and so our struggle in the fifties was very light, but we kept moving. . . . Then, when we got to the sixties, we decided that these folks wasn't going to give in one inch, and we decided that Birmingham was the Johannesburg of South Africa and that "Bull" Connor was determined whatever scheme he could use, he was gon' use it to maintain segregation. And he says to us, "You all can't fill up my jail. I got enough room for all of you."

So we proved to "Bull" Connor that we could fill his jail up. We gave him a big surprise, the surprise of his life. . . . We invited Dr. Martin Luther King and all his staff into Birmingham and we set up workshops and got these people orientated into what we had in mind and into the doctrine of love and non-violence. These people were to march, go to jail, and whatever the case might occur in our struggle, they were never to fight back, whatever happened. And those who weren't willing to undertake such an undertaking we eliminated, because at that time the segregationists was armed to the teeth. They were prepared for violence and they could handle violence. But we caught 'em off guard with non-violence. They didn't know what to do with non-violence, see.

We went out to test all the segregation laws, because when we went to court, we had to prove that we were segregated and discriminated against. And the only way we could prove it, we had to try and get put in jail. If we hadn't been willing to go to jail, then the segregation laws would have stood. Because if no one had tried it, then you couldn't prove it in court, even if the judge himself knew it himself, see. . . . The weight of responsibility was on us to prove that we were segregated and discriminated against.

When Dr. King came to us, he said, "Now what we're going to have to do, we're going to have to center all our forces here in Birmingham, Alabama, because Birmingham is the testing ground. If we fail here, then we will fail everywhere, because every segregated city and every segregated state is watching which way Birmingham goes. We got to, whatever it takes, break the back of segregation here. We got to do it." He instructed all of us to be ready to pay the price. He said, "Some gon' die, but this is the cost. It'll be another down payment on freedom."

So we had these marches. They were tremendous marches. We would have these mass meetings, and then we would leave these mass meetings and march all through the city, one and two o'clock in the morning. Well, the city

couldn't rest. It couldn't rest, because the town was stirred up, and "Bull" tried to put out the fire. Those pictures up there show you where he brought his dogs out. He thought the dogs was going to run 'em in. But the dogs just drew a bigger crowd for our marches, and every act he would put on would draw a bigger crowd. . . . Everything that Eugene "Bull" Connor attempted to do, it backfired on him.

You see, they had passed a city ordinance that if three people would gather out there on a sidewalk, he could jail them. Three would constitute a march, even though they were just talking. So when the judge--Judge Jenkins was the presiding judge--issued the order that we couldn't march, Dr. King called a meeting at Room 30 at the Gaston Motel and said, "Now, we got a court order here just served by the deputies that we can't march, but if we obey this order we are out of business. We got to violate it."

B. Andrew Marrisett, an SCLC Staffer Recruited Off the Streets of Birmingham

I used to drive the church bus. It was on a Sunday, and I was driving the bus, and I just happened to detour to go down by the park where the demonstrators would always be. What really sticks in my mind then and sticks in my mind now is seeing a K-9 dog being sicced on a six-year-old girl. I went and stood in front of the girl and grabbed her, and the dog jumped on me and I was arrested. That really was the spark. I had an interest all along, but that just took the cake--a big, burly two-hundred-and-eighty-five-pound cop siccing a trained police dog on that little girl, little Black girl. And then I got really involved in the Movement.

That changed my whole way of thinking. I was born a great Baptist. All my life I'd been through the Sunday School thing and the Bible School and church on Sunday morning and in the afternoon and at night and prayer meetings and choir rehearsals and traveling around. I was into that Christian thing, like most of my people are now, where they're so blindly engrossed, . . . not really looking at what was going on around them. Like at that time, Birmingham was the most segregated city of its size in the nation.

This is the old cliché, but I'm going to say it because it's true with me. . . . While we were downtown at Kresse's or Pizitz or Loveman's and I had to use the restroom, I would have to be taken out in the alley. That is an old cliché, but that held true in Birmingham. "Bull" Connor ran that city.

I mean, he totally ran it. The mayor didn't have no say, the sheriff, the council. . . .

I knew something was wrong, but . . . I didn't have any idea of the value of being able to go to every counter in the store, including the lunch counter. I had read about Greensboro. I knew about the sit-ins when they started here, but it just didn't ring no bell. So I always tell people that dog incident really rung my bell.

# 100

## THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER CAMPAIGN (1964)

It has become evident to the civil rights groups involved in the struggle for freedom in Mississippi that political and social justice cannot be won without the massive aid of the country as a whole, backed by the power and authority of the federal government. Little hope exists that the political leaders of Mississippi will steer even a moderate course in the near future (Governor Johnson's inaugural speech notwithstanding); in fact, the contrary seems true: as the winds of change grow stronger, the threatened political elite of Mississippi becomes more intransigent and fanatical in its support of the status quo. The closed society of Mississippi is, as Professor Silver asserts, without the moral resources to reform itself. And Negro efforts to win the right to vote cannot succeed against the extensive legal weapons and police powers of local and state officials without a nationwide mobilization of support.

A program is planned for this summer which will involve the massive participation of Americans dedicated to the elimination of racial oppression. Scores of college students, law students, medical students, teachers, professors, ministers, technicians, folk artists and lawyers from all over the country have already volunteered to work in Mississippi this summer--and hundreds more are being recruited.

Why a project of this size?

1. Projects of the size of those of the last three summers (100 to 150 workers) are rendered ineffective quickly by police threats and detention of members.
2. Previous projects have gotten no national publicity on the crucial issue of voting rights and, hence, have little national support either from public opinion or from the federal government. A large number of students from the North making the necessary sacrifices to go South

would make abundantly clear to the government and the public that this is not a situation which can be ignored any longer, and would project an image of cooperation between Northern and white people and Southern Negro people to the nation which will reduce fears of an impending race war.

3. Because of the lack of numbers in the past, all workers in Mississippi have had to devote themselves to voter registration, leaving no manpower for stopgap community education projects which can reduce illiteracy as well as raise the level of education of Negroes. Both of these activities are, naturally, essential to the project's emphasis on voting.
4. Bail money cannot be provided for jailed workers; hence, a large number of people going South would prevent the project from being halted in its initial stages by immediate arrests. Indeed, what will probably happen in some communities is the filling of jails with civil rights workers to overflowing, forcing the community to realize that it cannot dispense with the problem of Negroes' attempting to register simply by jailing "outsiders."

Why this summer?

Mississippi at this juncture in the movement has received too little attention--that is, attention to what the state's attitude really is--and has presented COFO with a major policy decision. This summer's work in Mississippi was sponsored by COFO, the Council of Federated Organizations, which includes the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the NAACP, as well as Mississippi community groups. Either the civil rights struggle has to continue, as it has for the past few years, with small projects in selected communities with no real progress on any fronts, or there must be a task force of such a size as to force either the state and the municipal governments to change their social and legal structures, or the federal government to intervene on behalf of the constitutional rights of its citizens.

Since 1964 is an election year, the clear-cut issue of voting rights should be brought out in the open. Many SNCC and CORE workers in Mississippi hold the view that Negroes will never vote in large numbers until federal marshals intervene. At any rate, many Americans must be made to realize that the voting rights they so often take for granted involve considerable risk for Negroes in the South. In the larger context of the national civil rights movement, enough progress has been made during the last year that there can be no turning back. Major victories in Mississippi, recognized as the stronghold of racial intolerance in the South, would speed immeasurably the breaking down of legal and social discrimination in both North and South.

The project is seen as a response to the Washington March and an attempt to assure that in the Presidential election year of 1964 all American citizens are given the franchise. The people at work on the project are neither working at odds with the federal government nor at war with the State of Mississippi. The impetus is not against Mississippi but for the right to vote, the ability to read, the aspirations and the training to work.



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# Chapter 16

## NATIONALISM AND PAN-AFRICANISM

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between Nationalism and Pan-Africanism? For each historical period, analyze whether or not Nationalism was based on materialism or idealism. (See Chapter 1 for a discussion of these two concepts.)
2. Is it correct to say that during slavery Pan-Africanism or the desire to return to Africa was just and legitimate? Why would this change with the overthrow of slavery? Was there an opposing view regarding a return to Africa which also emerged during slavery? How would you assess these two political lines (positions)?
3. Compare the Pan-Africanism of W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey. What impact (positive and negative) did they have on the struggle for Black liberation?
4. Why is the "colonial analogy" or the "internal colony" model often applied to the situation of Black people in the U.S.? What are some of the shortcomings of this approach?

### KEY CONCEPTS

All-Black Town Movement

Back to Africa Movements

Chauvinism/National Oppression

Diaspora

Emigrationism

Internal Colony

Nation, Nationality, National  
Minority

Pan-Africanism

Reactionary Nationalism vs.  
Revolutionary Nationalism

Self-Determination



Afro-American nationalism and Pan-Africanism have been historically legitimate responses by Black people to racist oppression. Both of these political lines (positions) can be progressive, but will not lead to the liberation of Black people. In fact, nationalism and Pan-Africanism have at times led Black people away from the fight for freedom, just as at other times they have made important contributions to the struggle for Black liberation. In the final analysis, both are ideologically inadequate in and of themselves to solve the problems Black people face in the United States.

Nationalism seeks a solution to the problems faced by Black people as its first priority. It focuses primarily on Black people in the U.S. Some Black nationalists view all white people as the enemies of Black people and argue that only complete separation of Blacks from whites will solve the problems that Black people face. In general, nationalists make a distinction between the problems facing Blacks and whites, and the solutions for each. In fact, many nationalists argue that a separate Black solution is needed even for a problem that Blacks share with whites.

Pan-Africanism is similar to nationalism; it holds that all Black people share common historical links to Africa, that the liberation of Black people is closely tied to the liberation of Africa, and that Black people should support the freedom struggle of African people. More recently, some Pan-Africanists have claimed that freedom for Black people in the U.S. cannot be won (and should not be our major goal) until the liberation of Africa has been completed. The extreme of this view states that all Black people in the U.S. should go to Africa.

The historical basis for Black Nationalism is the historical experience of Black people and has two basic aspects:

(1) Black people were molded into a distinct nation in the rural Black Belt South during the slave experience. In this sense, the Black Belt South is the national homeland of the Afro-American people. The material (economic) basis for this had two opposite aspects: (a) the common Black experience was tenancy, a semi-free, semi-slave experience in which Blacks had control over the work process itself, but did not control the products of their work. A tenant farmer would operate like an owner (control the land, set his own schedule, etc.), but have to give up the fruits of his labor because of the tenant-landowner relationship of economic exploitation. (b) The social life of the

Black community had at its core the practice of economic cooperation. This was mainly centered around the church and took the form of mutual aid societies, burial societies, etc. These are the main two ways that Black people developed a common economic life that served as the material basis for their national existence. Moreover, it is here that Black people developed a distinct dialect (speech pattern) common to Blacks, though basically rooted in the English language, and also developed a common culture. (See Chapter 14 for a discussion of the creolization process and Afro-American culture) It is in the Black Belt South that Black people have national rights that can be exercised if the masses of Black people make such demands in order to solve the problems they face in the USA.

(2) Black people have faced a brutal and vicious racism. The main defense, though it has taken many different forms, has been Black unity. This unity is frequently a call for Black nationalism, meaning that Black people should unite as Black people to fight against their own oppression, and not a call for Black people to unite with people of other nationalities who are also committed to fighting against the oppression facing Black people.

On the other hand, Afro-American nationalism is fundamentally different from white nationalism. Black nationalism is the nationalism of an oppressed nationality and expresses the desire of Black people to be free. White nationalism is national chauvinism, includes racism, and is never a progressive force. Black nationalism can be positive or negative, but white nationalism is always reactionary.

The historical basis for Pan-Africanism among Afro-Americans is in the USA and conditioned by events in Africa. The positive reasons for this Pan Africanism are two-fold: (1) African countries and personalities have been shining examples of Black achievement in a world dominated by white racism, colonialism and capitalist exploitation. The most important person and country in this respect is the late President Kwame Nkrumah and Ghana. President Nkrumah was trained by Afro-Americans W.E.B. DuBois and Horace Mann Bond, got his political orientation from the decisive 5th Pan-African Congress (Manchester, England in 1945), led Ghana to independence (the first Black African country to do so) and led independent Africa in founding the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Many Afro-Americans went to Ghana to help in the development of this newly independent nation. Nkrumah will always be an important symbol of Pan-Africanism in the middle of the 20th century.

(2) The second basis for Pan-Africanism among Afro-American people is that

Africa offers opportunity for enterprising Blacks from the USA. Black people in the USA have acquired technical training and skills which can be of critical importance in the development of Africa. This cuts two ways: while the African countries could use these technical skills, Blacks from the USA who go there with these skills could also seek to satisfy their own individual self-interest (and U.S. multi-national corporations they frequently represent).

The third and most negative reason for the influence of Pan-Africanism among Black people in the USA is that the vicious racism and repression that is a common everyday experience leads to the view that there can be no major change in the U.S.A. and that life can be no better. The turn to Pan-Africanism becomes particularly acute when there is a downturn in the economy and a rise in political repression.

Overall, Nationalism has been much more a force than Pan-Africanism. Further every Pan-Africanist is a Nationalist (of sorts), but not every Nationalist is a Pan-Africanist. Therefore, our main concentration will be on the issue of Black Nationalism.

How can we assess the impact and potential of Nationalism as an ideology and strategy in the struggle for Black liberation and social change? This ideology and political line has changed as the historical experiences of Black people have changed, but we must ask of any ideology how it sees the main problem that is faced by Black people. The authors of this text view the main problem facing Black people as that of racism and economic exploitation caused by capitalism and imperialism. Thus, there are three possible positions and each position calls for a different response from Black people engaged in the struggle for freedom.

(1) Nationalism can oppose U.S. imperialism, and actively fight for the liberation of Black people. This is a positive position that correctly sums up what is needed by Black people, emphasizes struggle to achieve it, and relies on the masses of people (as opposed to "great" leaders) for decisive action.

(2) Nationalism can retreat from struggle and confrontation with imperialism; it thereby, directly or indirectly, suggests that Black liberation will not come through struggle, but through some other means (health foods, astrology, prayer, and Jimmy Carter, are among a few recent alternatives). This is a defeatist, dead-end view of self-cultivation which must be neutralized and prevented from replacing the need for political struggle. Those who hold this view should be won over to support the struggle for Black liberation and to get involved in it.

(3) Nationalism can openly support U.S. imperialism against the interests

of Black people. This position must be exposed, and those holding it must be defeated in their attempts to destroy the struggle or to lead the struggle astray.

Our political summation of these three types of nationalism can be put into the categories of Reaction, Reform, and Revolution:

(1) Reaction: Reactionary politics lead some misguided nationalists to openly support very conservative pro-capitalist politics. Recent examples of this include support for Richard Nixon, and deep involvement in various Black capitalism schemes. The most blatant example of this is the consistent advertisement of "the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as an equal opportunity employer," in the Black nationalist oriented magazine the Black Collegian (distributed "free" throughout the U.S.).

(2) Reform: Some Nationalists argue that freedom for Black people is possible by leaving the system as it is (either staying within it or leaving it). Many of the solutions proposed by Nationalists--separate states in the South, Black political and economic control of cities and Black communities, large and influential Black businesses which serve the interests of the masses of Black people, and even mass emigration back to Africa-- will be granted by the U.S. ruling class, they argue, or will be allowed to develop without its domination.

(3) Revolution: Revolutionary nationalists think that the solution to the oppression of Black people will only come through the revolutionary defeat of monopoly capitalism in the U.S. Indeed, defeating U.S. imperialism at home is also the most significant contribution that Black people in the U.S. can make to the African liberation struggles. Revolutionary nationalists view the interests of the ruling class in the U.S. as exactly opposite the interests of Black people. Thus, while revolutionaries do fight for reforms that serve the immediate needs of the masses of Black people (e.g. community control of schools, daycare facilities, end to discrimination in hiring and college admissions, etc.), they recognize that these struggles must be qualitatively transformed to a struggle to defeat imperialism if Black people are to gain their freedom. What makes this revolutionary is that it aims at the source which causes exploitation and oppression of everyone in the society.

This sums up the ideological and political character of Nationalism and Pan-Africanism. It is necessary to have a general understanding of these two positions so that their continued recurrence can be understood within their specific historical context. The historical development of these ideological and political stands can be traced best in the context of the three fundamental stages of historical development of the Black experience.

SLAVERY. During slavery, Nationalism and Pan-Africanism focused on two main trends: (1) Emigration: Some Black people advocated leaving the U.S. and going to Africa, but only a handful succeeded. Given the totally oppressive conditions of the slave system and the fact that many slaves were born in Africa or had direct links, this sentiment was a legitimate response. The main criticism of this position is that it left the institution of slavery intact and thus served the interests of only a few Blacks, mainly "middle class" free Blacks who could make the trip. Various emigrationist schemes were also pushed by the ruling class, notably the American Colonization Society, though Blacks protested against them.

(2) Stay here and fight: The main trend during slavery was to stay in the U.S. and fight for the overthrow of the slave system. This was the revolutionary way out of slavery. This position was held by such people as Henry Highland Garnett (See Reading #19 in Volume I of Introduction to Afro-American Studies). The many slaves who sabotaged production, plotted slave revolts, escaped to the North and later joined the Union Army in armed struggle to defeat the slave system was even better testimony to the revolutionary aspirations of the masses of Black slaves.

It must also be understood that during the period of slavery there was the initial beginning of the urban experience although under very peculiar circumstances. In this context, free Blacks in the North faced rejection by the white society, and were forced to concentrate on developing separate Black social institutions. This created a race consciousness based on organized Black unity, particularly in churches, fraternal societies, businesses, and publications. In sum, Black Nationalist and Pan-Africanist thoughts and actions began as direct responses to racist oppression.

It is important to point out the difference here between race consciousness and nationalism. During the slave period, the main thing was race consciousness -- Black versus white--with the historical identity of being an African accepted as a possible alternative to being a slave in America. Only after several generations did this break down, and then begin to have the material and subjective basis for a "national" identity.

RURAL. There has always been a consistent pattern of emigrationism developing as a response to an upsurge of repression and hard times. On the other hand, during good times there is the tendency for bourgeois aspirations to dominate a sector of the petty bourgeoisie, often called middle class (and eventually those who became full-fledged capitalists). During this period the emigrationist posi-

tion was best represented by Chief Sam of Oklahoma and Bishop Henry Turner of Georgia.

The "bourgeois" Black nationalist position is reflected by Booker T. Washington and those who organized the National Negro Business League in 1900. In sum, when times are bad the conditions are ripe for some form of Pan-Africanism and when times have been good there is an upsurge of Black nationalist thought and action.

However, there are particular aspects to the rural period. Here our concern is with the masses of Black people and not simply a small though influential group of leaders. The two distinct forms of action during the rural period were the formation of the all-Black towns and the development and consolidation of national institutions.

Emigration ("back to Africa") was a resettlement scheme, and so was the Black town movement. This movement was led by enterprising and ambitious people who wanted to use the all-Black town as the basis for economic and political power. Moreover, it was in collective unity that there was protection from racist oppression. His father had been a prosperous farmer and former slave of Jefferson Davis. Around the turn of the century Edwin P. McCabe organized a movement of Black people to Oklahoma. Over 25 Black towns were founded there including Langston (the first) and Bowie. He had visions of making Oklahoma an all-Black state and being its governor or senator. An earlier movement to Kansas (by "exodusters" as they were called) was led by a Pap Singleton. This was a major attempt to escape repression in the South; the Black population of Kansas increased from 650 to 43,000 between 1860 and 1880.

The other development during the rural period was the rise of Black social institutions. During slavery, there was a clearly defined limit to Black social life, based on (1) the objective limitations of life requiring long hours of forced labor and (2) the legal-violent methods of social control to keep Black people powerless and unable to collectively deal with problems. The social life that did develop was minimal and quite limited. After the Civil War, however, there was a new situation and the conditions allowed for a collective social life. In this context Black people discovered that there was strength in unity: both the negative reason to protect oneself from enemies, and the positive reason that it was meaningful to unite with people whose cultural tastes and behavioral preferences were the same as one's own. Here the best examples are the church and fraternal organizations.

Simultaneous with intensifying oppression of Black people in the U.S. after

1877, Africa was increasingly under attack by imperialist colonialism. In 1876, only 10% of Africa was under the control of imperialism. By 1900, this had increased to about 90%. Thus, Black people learned very early the valuable lesson that African liberation meant fighting against imperialist oppression; simply emigrating to Africa does not solve the problem; it misses the main point since imperialism had to be faced whether in Africa or in the U.S.

The first major political manifestation of Pan-Africanism during the 20th century was based on the historical links of Black people to Africa and was a reaction to the rising imperialist plunder of Africa. The Pan-African Congresses, initiated by DuBois and other middle class intellectuals in 1919 provided key support for the struggle for African liberation.

The Fifth Congress (1945) was most important because for the first time it was composed of a majority of African delegates; it took a militant anti-imperialist stand that laid the basis for the African independence struggle in the 1950s and 1960s, and for the African liberation movements today. After the Fifth Congress, African students, intellectuals, and trade union leaders returned to Africa and helped to intensify the anti-colonial struggle, while their Afro-American comrades took up the struggle to force changes in U.S. policy toward Africa.

URBAN. The urban period of the Afro-American experience resulted from the migration of Black people to the cities of the North and South and their concentration into factory jobs. The racist attacks during and after World War I on the gains made by Black people, the general crisis of adjusting to a new life in the city, and a war "to make the world safe for democracy" in which many Black people participated all laid the basis for the biggest mass-based nationalist movement among Black people. Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) founded in 1914 in Jamaica and transplanted to New York in 1916, rapidly grew to several hundred chapters and a following estimated by some at several million.

There were two sides to the Garvey movement. (1) Garveyism helped to crystallize the national consciousness of Black people. It sparked a greater interest and appreciation for the history and culture of Black people, and undoubtedly inspired many Black people to set their aims higher to equal the past achievements of Black people that were very much a part of the UNIA doctrines. (2) Garvey's emigrationist Back-to-Africa plans which became the main aspect of his program did not speak to the problems facing the masses of Black people in the U.S. Domestically, Garvey argued for Booker T. Washington's policies of accommodationism. He branded political struggle for full equality as impossible and dangerous and

asked the ruling class to reject the "aggressive" program of DuBois and accept his "reasonable" program of taking Black people back to Africa. Eventually, his capitulation and support for U.S. imperialism was made clear when he urged Black people to believe that "white capitalists are Black people's best friends," and to stay out of trade unions.

The UNIA was a movement built with the middle class of the city and the Southern sharecropper recently moved to the city. Its objective was a nation-state, and since the objective reality of the Black Belt provided that foundation for Black social and political life, the UNIA attracted a following of nationalist minded people. However, as a result of all of the migrations, and the resulting dominance of the urban experience for all Black people in the USA, the objective reality of the Black Belt has ceased playing such a dominant role in Black life. Greater economic concentration is in the cities and the reaction of the ruling class is to Blacks in the city. In addition, the thrust of most Black political movements has been in the city and this includes the latest stage of the Nationalist-Pan-Africanist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

The most recent explosion of the Nationalist and Pan-Africanist movement came on the heels of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. In this case, the nationalist movement came first and was followed by a Pan-Africanist movement. This nationalism was based on two converging trends: (1) the rising Black middle class who reaped the rewards of the Civil Rights protests, and who were further encouraged by the Nixon-backed program of Black capitalism, and (2) the dispossessed Blacks who saw their dreams shattered with the assassination of Martin Luther King and a betrayal of their faith in the benevolent role of the Federal Government. The middle class saw in nationalism a way to further their self-interest: they needed the masses of Black people to make money and gain more power. The masses of poor Black people, at the same time, saw in nationalism collective protection from a hostile racist environment.

There are six major issues that should be discussed in summing up the major trends of Nationalism and Pan-Africanism since the 1960s.

(1) The Role of Malcolm X. The most important ideologue of Nationalism during this period was Malcolm X. Malcolm went through important personal and political changes that paralleled the growth and development of the Black liberation struggle. From a hustling pimp and drug dealer, he was transformed in prison by the teachings of the Nation of Islam, but later broke with the stand-on-the-sidelines policies of Elijah Muhammad. He was attempting to organize a non-sectarian Organization of Afro-American Unity when he was assassinated in 1965.



Malcolm provided insistent opposition to the non-violent, passive resistance philosophy of Martin Luther King, proposing armed self-defense as the alternative. He was an articulate spokesman for the view that all white people were the enemies of Black people (until the last year of his life). He was opposed to capitalism and imperialism and set the pace for the development of revolutionary nationalism among young Black people. Malcolm's complete identification with and commitment to serving the needs and aspirations of Black people provided a positive model that many Black people sought to emulate.

(2) Politics. The politics of Nationalism can be reformist or revolutionary. (a) Reformism. "Black Power," the most significant slogan to emerge in the Nationalist movement of the 1960s, sounded revolutionary, but was essentially reformist in content. The phrase was first popularized by Stokely Carmichael of SNCC during a march to urge Black voter registration in Mississippi. This reformism was further elaborated in Carmichael and Hamilton's Black Power (1967):

This book presents a political framework, an ideology which represents the last reasonable opportunity for this society to work out its racial problems short of prolonged destruction and guerilla warfare.

Similarly, the Black Power Conferences of 1967 (Newark) and 1968 (Philadelphia) proposed no fundamental changes in the American political and economic system. The main aim of all of these efforts was to get for Black people a bigger piece of the existing American capitalist pie. In fact, the first conference was chaired by an Episcopalian priest and invitations were mailed out on "Miss Clairol" stationary, obviously borrowed from the company where his brother was employed.

(b) Revolutionary. There were also revolutionary aspirations among the nationalists of this period. The Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), officially organized in 1963, sought "to free Black people from colonial and imperialist bondage everywhere and to take whatever steps necessary to achieve that goal." The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, centered in Detroit's auto industry, attempted to organize Black workers as the leading revolutionary vanguard. According to spokespersons: "The League of Revolutionary Black Workers is dedicated to waging a relentless struggle against racism, capitalism, and imperialism. We are struggling for the liberation of Black people in the confines of the US as well as to play a major revolutionary role in the liberation of all oppressed people in the world."

(3) Culture and Art. An important characteristic of a nation and of nationalism is a common cultural orientation which manifests itself in common values and behavioral preferences. This has been a key aspect of Black Nationalism. Thus, a key slogan which emerged during the 1960s was "Black is Beautiful." This slogan was part of the process which raised the political consciousness of Black people. It was not color alone that was being spoken of, but a common historical development, a history of common oppression (of which racism was an essential component), and collective resistance and struggle. The Black Arts Movement also developed during the Black Power period and through cultural expression, also served to instill and deepen a collective consciousness among Black people (see Chapter 14, "Black Culture and the Arts). The rebellion after the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968 revealed the depth of this collective or national consciousness among Black people.

On the other hand, "Black is Beautiful" was a convenient cover for small time (and some big time) hustlers in the Black community who tried to cash in on the newly developing national market for African dashikis, Afro-combs, and hair conditioners, and other products and artifacts that were in demand as the impact of the Nationalist and Pan-Africanist movement spread. "Buy Black!" became their rallying cry.

(4) The Black Nation. The national question, which we will discuss in the next chapter, treats the relationship between the oppression of nations (like the Afro-American nation) and the exploitation of classes (like the working class of all nations). The key aspect of this question is what is the correct solution to the particular problems that Black people have faced under capitalism, problems like racism that have not affected white people in the same way. A separate and independent nation with the right of self-determination (or self-rule) has been a key demand in the program of some Nationalists. This was the meaning of the slogan put forward in the late 1960s and early 1970s--"What Time Is It? It's Nation Time!" But there have been different views concerning the concrete existence of this nation. The Nation of Islam (Black Muslims) and the Republic of New Africa made common territory a criteria and argued for five states in the Black Belt South, the historical national homeland of the Afro-American people. Stokely Carmichael's All-African Peoples Revolutionary Party (AAPRP) holds the view that "the quickest place we can obtain land is Africa." For the Congress of African People (CAP), a Pan-Africanist organization led by Imamu Baraka which emerged in 1972 and replaced the nationalist Black Power Conferences, a separate land base was not the basis for the Black Nation. For CAP, a nation was more a cultural entity to which all Black

people would belong regardless of location. This "cultural nation" was something less than the demand for the full political self-determination that was included in the call for a separate national territory.

Despite this lack of clarity over the concrete basis of the Black nation, or whether it even existed, the slogan, "It's Natiomtime!" provided a programmatic orientation for the nationalists of the Black middle class. For example, the Black Studies movement and the Black caucus movement within predominantly white professional associations (e.g. American Sociological Association, African Studies Association, etc.) represented the consolidation of middle class interests; they were primarily intended to open up new jobs and programs and protect the ones which had been won by the struggle of the masses. In fact, one group of nationalists started a business called Natiomtime, Inc., which manufactured products adorned with red, black, and green--the colors of the Black nation's flag that had been resurrected from the Garvey movement. In Chicago, for example, this flag is flown next to the American flag by the owners of several large Black businesses.

(5) Two Lines on Pan-Africanism in Africa. Pan-Africanism historically has had its greatest impact on the African continent. It was a unifying ideology during the days of Kwame Nkrumah that galvanized Africa in the fight against colonial domination. Today, however, Pan-Africanism is undergoing careful analysis in Africa. Some African countries (like Nkrumah's Ghana) secured their independence from British colonialism through negotiations. Since the mid-1960s, however, it is clear that the path to genuine national liberation is the armed struggle led by militant liberation organizations.

On the one hand, Pan-Africanism, through such organizational forms as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), can still unite Africa in its struggle against imperialism and superpower intervention. On the other hand, within Africa, there are Pan-Africanists who are cooperating with imperialism against the people of Africa in order to serve their own selfish interests. Thus, freedom fighters in Africa have recognized that Pan-Africanism can serve as a tool of imperialism just as it can serve as a tool for African liberation. (Similarly, imperialism will use Black people from the U.S. who may be well received because they are Black) The main progressive form of Pan-African unity is emerging in contexts like Southern Africa where the liberation fighters have united in the conduct of armed struggle against white minority rule, imperialism, and sell-out Africans. This is very different from the previous situation where Pan-Africanism was more the result of paper declarations. It is in this context of anti-imperialist struggle that revolutionary patriots will decide the future of Pan-Africanism on the

continent of Africa.

(6). Two Lines on Pan-Africanism in the United States. "We are an African People " emerged as the key slogan of the Pan-Africanist movement in the 1970s. There were two types of Pan-Africanists, however. (a) All for Africa: Some like Stokely Carmichael and the AAPRP argue for the "core of the Black liberation in Africa" (which they attribute to the late Kwame Nkrumah.) This view suggests that the struggle for Black liberation in the U.S. should not be the main concern of Black people living in the U.S. (b) Fight the Oppression of Black People in the U.S.A. and in Africa. Imperialism is an international system headquartered in the U.S. which exploits Black people "at home and abroad." The view held by other Pan-Africanists and Nationalists believes precisely what Carmichael criticizes: that "the primary objective of Black Revolutionaries in America is the transformation of American society." Defeating U.S. imperialism at home, they argue, is the basis for the liberation of Black people in the U.S. and a contribution to the liberation of Africa, as well as Black people throughout the "diaspora" (Yiddish term which means "to scatter" and refers to Black people dispersed by the slave trade from Africa throughout the world).

In summation, Nationalism will remain a force in the Black liberation struggle. This is so because of the escalating racist oppression that Black people will continue to suffer under U.S. capitalism. In addition, Nationalism will continue to be the ideological prop of the aspiring Black middle class who need the masses of Black people as allies in their quest for individual advancement-- as customers, as voters, as militant foot soldiers who can "shake up the establishment."

The main question is whether Black Nationalism will be reactionary, reformist, or revolutionary. We have the lessons of history to understand that the political character of Black Nationalism can change. Nationalism started out as reformist. The spontaneous rebellion of the masses during the 1960s led to the development of revolutionary nationalism (though a few turned toward reactionary politics). The repression of the Black liberation movement in the early 1970s led to Pan-Africanism and again reformism.

Black people today face a deepening social, economic, and political crisis. There is an increasing need to escalate the struggle against the oppression of Blacks. The future will reveal whether Black Nationalism will return to the forefront of the revolutionary struggle for Black liberation and social change or be swept aside as incapable of contributing to the total liberation of Black people.

## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 16

101. EARLY PAN-AFRICANISM: BACK TO AFRICA VERSUS SUPPORT FOR AFRICAN LIBERATION (1977)	John Henry	400
102. THE FIVE PAN-AFRICAN CONGRESSES	W. E. B. DuBois	404
103. AIMS AND OBJECTS OF THE UNIVERSAL NEGRO IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION (1923)	Marcus Garvey	409
104. THE GARVEY MOVEMENT: A CRITIQUE	Cyril V. Briggs	413
105. SEPARATISM OF THE SO-CALLED NEGROES FROM THEIR SLAVEMASTERS CHILDREN IS A MUST	Elijah Muhammad	416
106. CHANGING VIEWS ON BLACK NATIONALISM: INTERVIEW (1963)	Malcolm X	418
107. ON PAN-AFRICANISM AND BLACK POWER (1968)	Kwame Nkrumah	420
108. THE CORE OF THE BLACK REVOLUTION IS IN AFRICA (1969, 1973)	Stokely Carmichael	424
 <u>CULTURE</u>		
109. THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES (NGUZO SABA) AND THOUGHTS ON BLACK CULTURAL NATIONALISM (1966)	M. Ron Karenga	426
110. THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES AND PANAFRICANISM (1972)	Imamu Baraka	427
110a A BLACK VALUE SYSTEM: WHY THE NGUZU SABA? (1973)	Haki Madhubuti	428
 <u>POLITICS</u>		
111. PHILOSOPHY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ACTION MOVEMENT (1964)	Muhammad Ahmad	430
112. THE BLACK REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (1969)	James Boggs	431
113. THE STRUGGLE IS FOR LAND (1972)	Republic of New Africa	435
114. BLACK POLITICS IN THE 1970s (1972)	Richard Hatcher	439
 <u>ECONOMICS</u>		
115. BLACK BUSINESS IS THREATENED: BUY BLACK (1978)	Chicago Defender	441
116. DODGE REVOLUTIONARY UNION MOVEMENT: VANGUARD OF THE BLACK REVOLUTION (1969)	D.R.U.M.	443
117. THE BLACK COMMUNITY AS COLONY: AN ARGUMENT FOR (1970)	James Turner	445
118. THE BLACK COMMUNITY AS COLONY: AN ARGUMENT AGAINST (1971)	Donald Harris	447
119. PAN-AFRICANISM AND MARXISM (1977)	John Henry	454
(Omit 120)		
SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS		465

EARLY PAN-AFRICANISM: BACK-TO-AFRICA SCHEMES VS. SUPPORT FOR  
AFRICAN LIBERATION (1977)

Pan Africanism has two tendencies which have emerged and both must be understood historically in order to sort out the class forces involved, and to determine its political character. The first major trend focused on emigration. There were various schemes to relocate Black people some place outside of the United States, usually in Africa.

The desire to emigrate to Africa has never been the main trend among Afro-Americans. The main trend has always been a struggle to survive and resist oppression within the U.S.A. But it is necessary to examine this secondary aspect, because it can become the main trend under certain conditions if not handled correctly. Indeed, it became a major force with the "Back to Africa" Garvey movement from 1920 to 1923.

Under the propulsion of a newly developing capitalist system the Atlantic slave trade became a fundamental source of capital accumulation that financed the industrial revolution. This, along with the dispossession of small farmers and other petty producers and their exploitation as workers, transformed the American economy from a colonial economy based largely on commerce into an advancing capitalist economy based on industrial production. The main wave of the slave trade lasted from 1701 to 1810. Estimates range from 10 million slaves up to the 100 million by W. E. B. DuBois. The main point is that Africans were being imported legally as slaves until 1808 (and then illegally smuggled through 1870). But after 1808 the main source of slave labor was domestic, natural population growth and the transfer of 35 per cent of the slave population from border states to the lower South between 1820 and 1860. So the slave population developed in two stages, the first period being the active use of African labor, the second being the use of the offspring of this African labor. Of course, this is a fundamental aspect of how Africans were transformed into Afro-Americans over a 200 year period.

Some, from among both of these types of slaves, and those that had achieved freedom, made emigrationist efforts. The most famous case of successful resistance during the slave trade occurred on board the slave ship *Amistad* off the coast of Cuba. In 1839, the slaves on this ship, led by Cinque, seized

the ship and attempted to navigate it back to Africa. After two months they ended up in Long Island, and continued to fight for their freedom in the courts. Their case, supported by the abolitionist John Quincy Adams, was argued before the Supreme Court and won in 1841. This was obviously a just fight to escape the brutal condition of slavery and return "home."

But even earlier than this the emigrationist movement had taken on many organizational forms, mostly in centers of abolitionism. Some Black free men and women expressed a desire to escape from the dangers of slavery and "establish a homeland" in Africa or somewhere else. The main expectation for this new homeland was that the bourgeois democratic promise of America, an illusion for most whites and openly denied to Blacks, would be achievable in Africa for Black people. This sentiment was expressed by a prospective emigrant in an 1818 letter from Illinois:

I am a free man of colour, have a family and a large connection of free people of colour residing on the Wabash, who are all willing to leave America whenever the way shall be opened. We love this country and its liberties, if we could share an equal right in them; but our freedom is partial, and we have no hope that it ever will be otherwise here; therefore we had rather be gone, though we should suffer hunger and nakedness for years. Your honour may be assured that nothing shall be lacking on our part in complying with whatever provision shall be made by the United States, whether it be to go to Africa or some other place; we shall hold ourselves in readiness, praying that God (who made man free in the beginning, and who by His kind providence has broken the yoke from every white American) would inspire the heart of every true son of liberty with zeal and pity, to open the door of freedom for us also.

I am, etc.  
Abraham Camp

Within the specific historical condition of slavery in the U.S.A. this was a just and legitimate position.

But Black people were not the only source of support for emigration to Africa. In 1816, the American Colonization Society was formed by Abolitionists who held that one possible solution to the problem of slavery was the repatriation of Afro-American people to Africa. This was rationalized as a process to bring civilization and Christianity to the backward primitive condition of Blacks in Africa. But the real intent was stated by the reactionary Henry Clay of Kentucky: "to rid our country of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous portion of its population."

The prospect of slaves being "useless" was raised by the decline in slave-based agricultural production in the border states (though slave-trading

continued on a considerable scale there) and by the rise of capitalist production in the Northern states. The prospect of slaves being "dangerous" was sharply raised after the slave revolt in Virginia led by Gabriel Prosser in 1800, and this was added to by the "danger" represented by a number of free Blacks in the country, many of whom used their freedmen status to help organize against slavery. Several states passed laws supporting and funding colonization schemes.

The class essence of this program was to serve the interests of a rising capitalist class which had just completed establishing American independence from England in the War of 1812. Colonization efforts were intended to eliminate slavery as a backward fetter on industrial capitalism emerging in the North, to drain away a source of weakness for the slavocracy of the South (e.g., the slave rebellions), and to establish a beachhead in Africa for U.S. capitalist interests.

But these were not reasons that were shared by Black abolitionists. While sometimes using the resources of the Colonization Society to accomplish similar ends, they refused to accept the dictates of a "benevolent capitalist class" and struggled to maintain an independent approach to emigrationism. They drew a sharp distinction between deportation and emigration.

Through the 1800's these were more than theoretical discussions. The British counterpart to the American Colonization Society had set up the colony of Sierre Leone in 1787 by resettling 400 Africans who were freed from ships illegally trading in slaves. These settlers were joined by 1100 Black people in 1792 from Nova Scotia, and 38 in 1815, under the leadership of a Black, petty-capitalist Boston sail maker, Paul Cuffee. The American Colonization Society arranged for some former slaves to emigrate to what is now Liberia in 1822. Liberia formally became a country in 1847 and, since the Civil War period, has been a neo-colony of the U.S.

The Liberian case is important for understanding Pan Africanism in the U.S.A., because it demonstrates the futility of emigrationist schemes. Most people who went there either died, or became part of a Liberian aristocracy ("Americo-Liberians") who, in turn, forced the indigenous population into virtual slavery. On the other hand, the efforts by the U.S. ruling class, through state governments and the American Colonization Society, were reactionary because they often forced people to choose between slavery and emigration. Their efforts were not in the interest of Blacks or the working



class in the U.S., and certainly not in the interests of the people of Liberia. This is a necessary distinction because it involves the difference between the oppressor and the oppressed.

When we turn to the consequences of these emigrationist efforts we also find a similar distinction between results that further oppressed the African masses and those that were generally progressive--many who emigrated helped establish schools and social services for the African masses, and spoke out for self-rule in opposition to colonialism. In this respect, these emigrationist efforts were positive though a variety of factors led to failure. And further, the colonies of Sierre Leone and Liberia prove that colonization eventually worked in the interests of the rising capitalist classes of Britain and the United States.

All of this pre-Civil War emigrationism culminated in the National Negro Convention movement. Free Black leadership began to meet to debate alternative programs to protect the interests of Black people. By the 1850's there was considerable interest in emigration, if not to Africa, then to Canada, the West Indies, Mexico or South America. This increased support among some segments of Black people was a clear response to the growing power of the slavocracy in national politics, the rapid deterioration of the political status of free Blacks in the North, and especially the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which legitimized hunting down escaped slaves even in states where slavery was outlawed, as well as threatening all free Blacks. Even Abraham Lincoln got into the act and proposed to "save the Union" by the wholesale deportation of Black people.

Again, the main trend was different: David Walker, Henry Highland Garnett and Frederick Douglass all symbolized the militant resistance by Blacks to the conditions of slavery in the U.S. The runaway slaves, led by such fighters as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, headed North to freedom and not back to Africa.

After the Civil War, the conditions faced by Black people were determined by the laws governing the socio-economic development of a U.S. dominated by advancing capitalist relations. This period represents the forging of an Afro-American people into a nation under conditions of semi-feudal production relations and, even though the political repression of Black people was intensified to murderous proportions, the Civil War broke the fetter of slavery. From that time on it was only by resolving the contradiction between the

proletariat and the bourgeoisie through socialist revolution that the other contradictions in U.S. society, including the oppression of Black people, could be fully resolved--although the fight for democracy for Black people in the fullest sense, for equality, has been and remains a key question and a critical component part of the struggle for socialist revolution.

## THE FIVE PAN AFRICAN CONGRESSES

# 102

### First Pan-African Congress

This Congress represented Africa partially. Of the fifty-seven delegates from fifteen countries, nine were African countries with twelve delegates. The other delegates came from the United States, which sent sixteen, and the West Indies, with twenty-one. Most of these delegates did not come to France for this meeting, but happened to be residing there, mainly for reasons connected with the war. America and all the colonial powers refused to issue special visas.

The Congress specifically asked that the German colonies be turned over to an international organization instead of being handled by the various colonial powers. Out of this idea came the Mandates Commission. The resolutions of the Congress said in part:

- (a) That the Allied and Associated Powers establish a code of law for the international protection of the natives of Africa, similar to the proposed international code for labor.
- (b) That the League of Nations establish a permanent Bureau charged with the special duty of overseeing the application of these laws to the Political, social and economic welfare of the natives.
- (c) The Negroes of the world demand that hereafter the natives of Africa and the peoples of African descent be governed according to the following principles:
  1. The land and its natural resources shall be held in trust for the natives and at all times they shall have effective ownership of as much land as they can profitably develop.
  2. Capital: The investment of capital and granting of concessions shall be so regulated as to prevent the exploitation of the natives and the exhaustion of the natural wealth of the country. Concessions shall always be limited in time and subject to State control. The growing social needs of the natives must be regarded and the profits taxed for social and material benefit of the natives.
  3. Labor: Slavery and corporal punishment shall be abolished and forced labor except in punishment for crime; and the general conditions of labor shall be prescribed and regulated by the State.

4. Education: It shall be the right of every native child to learn to read and write his own language and the language of the trustee nation, at public expense, and to be given technical instruction in some branch of industry. . . .

5. The State: The natives of Africa must have the right to participate in the Government as far as their development permits in conforming with the principle that the Government exists for the natives, and not the natives for the Government. . . .

### Second Pan-African Congress

The idea of Pan-Africa having been thus established, we attempted to build a real organization. We went to work first to assemble a more authentic Pan-African Congress and movement. We corresponded with Negroes in all parts of Africa and in other parts of the world, and finally arranged for a Congress to meet in London, Brussels and Paris, in August and September, 1921. Of the hundred and thirteen delegates to this Congress, forty-one were from Africa, thirty-five from the United States, twenty-four represented Negroes living in Europe and seven were from the West Indies. Thus the African element showed growth. They came for the most part, but not in all cases, as individuals, and more seldom as the representatives of organizations or of groups.

At the Paris meeting the original London resolutions, with some minor corrections, were adopted. They were in part:

To the World: The absolute equality of races, physical, political and social, is the founding stone of world and human advancement. No one denies great differences of gift, capacity and attainment among individuals of all races, but the voice of Science, Religion and practical Politics is one in denying the God-appointed existence of super-races, or of races, naturally and inevitably and eternally inferior.

That in the vast range of time, one group should in its industrial technique, or social organization, or spiritual vision, lag a few hundred years behind another, or forge fitfully ahead, or come to differ decidedly in thought, deed and ideal, is proof of the essential richness and variety of human nature, rather than proof of the co-existence of demi-gods and apes in human form. The doctrine of racial equality does not interfere with individual liberty: rather it fulfils it. And of all the various criteria by which masses of men have in the past been prejudged and classified, that of the colour of the skin and texture of the hair is surely the most adventitious and idiotic. . . .

What, then, do those demand who see these evils of the color line and racial discrimination, and who believe in the divine right of suppressed and backward people to learn and aspire and be free? The Negro race through their thinking intelligentsia demand:

1. The recognition of civilized men as civilized despite their race or color.
2. Local self-government for backward groups, deliberately rising as experience and knowledge grow to complete self-government under the limitation of a self-governed world.
3. Education in self-knowledge, in scientific truth, and in industrial technique, undivorced from the art of beauty.
4. Freedom in their own religion and social customs and with the right to be different and nonconformist.
5. Cooperation with the rest of the world in government, industry and art on the bases of Justice, Freedom and Peace.
6. The return to Negroes of their land and its natural fruits, and defense against the unrestrained greed of invested capital.
7. The establishment under the League of Nations of an international institution for study of the Negro problems.
8. The establishment of an international section of the Labor Bureau of the League of Nations, charged with the protection of native labor. . . .

We sought to have these meetings result in a permanent organization. A secretariat was set up in Paris and functioned for a couple of years, but it was not successful. Just as the Garvey Movement made its thesis industrial co-operation, so the new young secretary of the Pan-African movement, a colored Paris public school teacher, wanted to combine investment and profit with the idea of Pan-Africa. He wanted American Negro capital for this end. We had other ideas.

### Third Pan-African Congress

This crucial difference of aim and method between our Paris office and the American Negroes interested in the movement nearly ruined the organization. The Third Pan-African Congress was called for 1923, but the Paris secretary postponed it. We persevered, and finally, without proper notice or preparation, met in London and Lisbon late in the year.

The meeting of the Congress in Lisbon was more successful. Eleven countries were represented there, and especially Portuguese Africa. . . . Two former colonial ministers spoke, and the following demands were made for Africans:

1. A voice in their own government.
2. The right of access to the land and its resources.
3. Trial by juries of their peers under established forms of law.
4. Free elementary education for all; broad training in modern industrial technique; and higher training of selected talent.
5. The development of Africa for the benefit of Africans, and not merely for the profit of Europeans.

6. The abolition of the slave trade and of the liquor traffic.
7. World disarmament and the abolition of war; but failing this, and as long as white folk bear arms against Black folk, the right of Blacks to bear arms in their own defense.
8. The organization of commerce and industry so as to make the main objects of capital and labor the welfare of the many rather than the enriching of the few. . . .

In fine, we ask in all the world, that Black folk be treated as men. We can see no other road to Peace and Progress. What more paradoxical figure today fronts the world than the official head of a great South African state striving blindly to build Peace and Good Will in Europe by standing on the necks and hearts of millions of Black Africans?

So far, the Pan-African idea was still American rather than African, but it was growing, and it expressed a real demand for examination of the African situation and a plan of treatment from the native African point of view. With the object of moving the center of this agitation nearer other African centers of population, I planned a Fourth Pan-African Congress in the West Indies in 1925. My idea was to charter a ship and sail down the Caribbean, stopping for meetings in Jamaica, Haiti, Cuba and the French islands. But here I reckoned without my steamship lines. At first the French Line replied that they could "easily manage the trip," but eventually no accommodation could be found on any line except at the prohibitive price of fifty thousand dollars. I suspect that colonial powers spiked this plan.

#### Fourth Pan-African Congress

Two years later, in 1927, a Fourth Pan-African Congress was held in New York. Thirteen countries were represented, but direct African participation lagged. There were two hundred and eight delegates from twenty-two American states and ten foreign countries. Africa was sparsely represented by representatives from the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria. Chief Amoah III of the Gold Coast spoke; Herskovits then of Columbia, Mensching of Germany and John Vandercook were on the program. The resolution stressed six points:

- . Negroes everywhere need:
  1. A voice in their own government.
  2. Native rights to the land and its natural resources.
  3. Modern education for all children.
  4. The development of Africa for the Africans and not merely for the profit of Europeans.

5. The reorganization of commerce and industry so as to make the main object of capital and labor the welfare of the many rather than the enriching of the few.
6. The treatment of civilized men as civilized despite difference of birth, race or color.

The Pan-African Movement had been losing ground since 1921. In 1929, to remedy this, we made desperate efforts to hold the Fifth Pan-African Congress on the continent of Africa itself, and selected Tunis because of its accessibility. Elaborate preparations were begun. It looked as though at last the movement was going to be geographically African. But two inseparable difficulties intervened: first, the French Government very politely but firmly informed us that the Congress could take place at Marseilles or any French city, but not in Africa; and finally, there came the Great Depression.

#### Fifth Pan-African Congress

The Pan-African idea died, apparently, until fifteen years afterwards, in the midst of the Second World War, when it leaped to life again in an astonishing manner. At the Trades Union Conference in London in the winter of 1945 there were black labor representatives from Africa and the West Indies. Among these, aided by colored persons resident in England, there came a spontaneous call for the assembling of another Pan-African Congress in 1945, when the International Trades Union had their meeting in Paris.

After consultation and correspondence a Pan-African Federation was organized. There is no organization in the British colonial empire which has not been invited. The philosophy back of this meeting has been expressed by the West African Students Union of London in a letter to me:

The idea of a Congress of African nations and all peoples of African descent throughout the world is both useful and timely. Perhaps it is even long overdue. But we observe that four of such Pan-African Congresses had been held in the past, all within recent memory, and that the one at present under discussion will be the fifth. It is unfortunate that all these important conferences should have been held outside Africa, but in European capitals. This point is significant, and should deserve our careful attention. . . .

Our Executive Committee are certainly not in favour of this or any future Pan-African Congress being held anywhere in Europe. We do rather suggest the Republic of Liberia as perhaps an ideal choice. All considerations seem to make that country the most favourable place for our Fifth Pan-African Congress. And, especially, at a time like this when Liberia is planning to celebrate the centennial of the founding of the Republic two years hence, the holding of our Congress there seems most desirable. We have good reason to believe that the Government of Liberia would welcome this idea, and

would give us the encouragement and diplomatic assistance that might be necessary to ensure success.

The convening committee agrees that: "After reviewing the situation, we do feel, like you, that our Conference should be merely a preliminary one to a greater, more representative Congress to be held some time next year, especially as a new Government has come into being in Britain since we started planning the forthcoming Conference." But they decided to call a congress this year in Manchester, since "it is now officially announced that the World Trades Union Conference will begin on September twenty-fifth and close on October ninth, we are planning to convene the Pan-African Congress on October fifteenth. It should last a week. This will enable the colonial delegates to get from France to England between the ninth and fifteenth of October. It will also enable us to hold some informal meetings and finish off our plans."

Difficulties of transportation and passport restrictions may make attendance at this Congress limited. At the same time there is real hope here, that out of Africa itself, and especially out of its laboring masses, has come a distinct idea of unity in ideal and cooperation in action which will lead to a real Pan-African movement.

AIMS AND OBJECTS OF GARVEY'S UNIVERSAL NEGRO IMPROVEMENT  
ASSOCIATION (1923)

# 103

The Universal Negro Improvement Association is an organization among Negroes that is seeking to improve the condition of the race, with the view of establishing a nation in Africa where Negroes will be given the opportunity to develop by themselves, without creating the hatred and animosity that now exist in countries of the white race through Negroes rivaling them for the higher and best positions in government, politics, society and industry. The organization believes in the rights of all men, yellow, white and Black. To us, the white race has a right to the peaceful possession and occupation of countries of its own and in like manner the yellow and Black races have their rights. It is only by an honest and liberal consideration of such rights can the world be blessed with the peace that is sought by Christian teachers and leaders.

The following preamble to the constitution of the organization speaks for itself:

The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities'

League is a social, friendly, humanitarian, charitable, educational, institutional, constructive and expansive society, and is founded by persons, desiring to the utmost to work for the general uplift of the Negro peoples of the world. And the members pledge themselves to do all in their power to conserve the rights of their noble race and to respect the rights of all mankind, believing always in the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. The motto of the organization is: One God! One Aim! One Destiny! Therefore, let justice be done to all mankind, realizing that if the strong oppresses the weak confusion and discontent will ever mark the path of man, but with love, faith and charity toward all, the reign of peace and plenty will be heralded into the world and the generation of men shall be called Blessed.

The declared objects of the association are:

To establish a Universal Confraternity among the race; to promote the spirit of pride and love; to reclaim the fallen; to administer to and assist the needy; to assist in civilizing the backward tribes of Africa; to assist in the development of Independent Negro Nations and Communities; to establish a central nation for the race; to establish Commissaries or Agencies in the principal countries and cities of the world for the representation of all Negroes; to promote a conscientious Spiritual worship among the native tribes of Africa; to establish Universities, Colleges, Academies and Schools for the racial education and culture of the people; to work for better conditions among Negroes everywhere.

The organization of the Universal Negro Improvement Association has supplied among Negroes a long-felt want. Hitherto the other Negro movements in America, with the exception of the Tuskegee effort of Booker T. Washington, sought to teach the Negro to aspire to social equality with the whites, meaning thereby the right to intermarry and fraternize in every social way. This has been the source of much trouble and still some Negro organizations continue to preach this dangerous "race destroying doctrine" added to a program of political agitation and aggression. The Universal Negro Improvement Association on the other hand believes in and teaches the pride and purity of race. We believe that the white race should uphold its racial pride and perpetuate itself, and that the Black race should do likewise. We believe that there is room enough in the world for the various race groups to grow and develop by themselves without seeking to destroy the Creator's plan by the constant introduction of mongrel types.

The unfortunate condition of slavery, as imposed upon the Negro, and which caused the mongrelization of the race, should not be legalized and continued now to the harm and detriment of both races.

The time has really come to give the Negro a chance to develop himself to a moral-standard-man, and it is for such an opportunity that the Universal



Negro Improvement Association seeks in the creation of an African nation for Negroes, where the greatest latitude would be given to work out this racial ideal.

There are hundreds of thousands of colored people in America who desire race amalgamation and miscegenation as a solution of the race problem. These people are, therefore, opposed to the race pride ideas of Black and white; but the thoughtful of both races will naturally ignore the ravings of such persons and honestly work for the solution of a problem that has been forced upon us.

Liberal white America and race loving Negroes are bound to think at this time and thus evolve a program or plan by which there can be a fair and amicable settlement of the question.

We cannot put off the consideration of the matter, for time is pressing on our hands. The educated Negro is making rightful constitutional demands. The great white majority will never grant them, and thus we march on to danger if we do not now stop and adjust the matter.

The time is opportune to regulate the relationship between both races. Let the Negro have a country of his own. Help him to return to his original home, Africa, and there give him the opportunity to climb from the lowest to the highest positions in a state of his own. If not, then the nation will have to hearken to the demand of the aggressive, "social equality" organization, known as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, of which W. E. B. DuBois is leader, which declares vehemently for social and political equality, viz.: Negroes and whites in the same hotels, homes, residential districts, public and private places, a Negro as president, member of the Cabinet, Governors of States, Mayors of cities and leaders of society in the United States. In this agitation, Du Bois is ably supported by the "Chicago Defender," a colored newspaper published in Chicago. This paper advocated Negroes in the Cabinet and Senate. All these, as everybody knows, are the Negroes' constitutional rights, but reason dictates that the masses of the white race will never stand by the ascendancy of an opposite minority group to the favored positions in a government, society and industry that exist by the will of the majority, hence the demand of the Du Bois group of colored leaders will only lead, ultimately, to further disturbances in riots, lynching and mob rule. The only logical solution therefore, is to supply the Negro with opportunities and environments of his own, and there point him to the fullness of his ambition.

The Negro who seeks the White House in America could find ample play for his ambition in Africa. The Negro who seeks the office of Secretary of State in America would have a fair chance of demonstrating his diplomacy in Africa. The Negro who seeks a seat in the Senate or of being governor of a State in America, would be provided with a glorious chance for statesmanship in Africa.

The Negro has a claim on American white sympathy that cannot be denied. The Negro has labored for 300 years in contributing to America's greatness. White America will not be unmindful, therefore, of this consideration, but will treat him kindly. Yet it is realized that all human beings have a limit to their humanity. The humanity of white America, we realize, will seek self-protection and self-preservation, and that is why the thoughtful and reasonable Negro sees no hope in America for satisfying the aggressive program of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, but advances the reasonable plan of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, that of creating in Africa a nation and government for the Negro race.

This plan when properly undertaken and prosecuted will solve the race problem in America in fifty years. Africa affords a wonderful opportunity at the present time for colonization by the Negroes of the Western world. There is Liberia, already established as an independent Negro government. Let white America assist Afro-Americans to go there and help develop the country. Then, there are the late German colonies; let white sentiment force England and France to turn them over to the American and West Indian Negroes who fought for the Allies in the World's War. Then, France, England and Belgium owe America billions of dollars which they claim they cannot afford to repay immediately. Let them compromise by turning over Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast on the West Coast of Africa and add them to Liberia and help make Liberia a state worthy of her history.

The Negroes of Africa and America are one in blood. They have sprung from the same common stock. They can work and live together and thus make their own racial contribution to the world.

Will deep thinking and liberal white America help? It is a considerable duty.

It is true that a large number of self-seeking colored agitators and so-called political leaders, who hanker after social equality and fight for the impossible in politics and governments, will rave, but remember that the slaveholder raved, but the North said, "Let the slaves go free"; the British

Parliament raved when the Colonists said, "We want a free and American nation"; the Monarchists of France raved when the people declared for a more liberal form of government.

The masses of Negroes think differently from the self-appointed leaders of the race. The majority of Negro leaders are selfish, self-appointed and not elected by the people. The people desire freedom in a land of their own, while the colored politician desires office and social equality for himself in America, and that is why we are asking white America to help the masses to realize their objective. . . .

# 104

## THE GARVEY MOVEMENT: A CRITIQUE (1932)

Garveyism, or Negro Zionism, rose on the crest of the wave of discontent and revolutionary ferment which swept the capitalist world as a result of the post-war crisis.

Increased national oppression of the Negroes, arising out of the post-war crisis, together with the democratic slogans thrown out by the liberal-imperialist demagogues during the World War (right to self-determination for all nations, etc.) served to bring to the surface the latent national aspirations of the Negro masses. These aspirations were considerably strengthened with the return of the Negro workers and poor farmers who had been conscripted to "save the world for democracy." These returned with a wider horizon, new perspectives of human rights and a new confidence in themselves as a result of their experiences and disillusionment in the war. Their return strengthened the morale of the Negro masses and stiffened their resistance. So-called race riots took the place of lynching bees and massacres. The Negro masses were fighting back. In addition, many of the more politically advanced of the Negro workers were looking to the example of the victorious Russian proletariat as the way out of their oppression. The conviction was growing that the proletarian revolution in Russia was the beginning of a world-wide united movement of down-trodden classes and oppressed peoples. Even larger numbers of the Negro masses were becoming more favorable toward the revolutionary labor movement.

This growing national revolutionary sentiment was seized upon by the Negro petty bourgeoisie, under the leadership of the demagogue, Marcus Garvey, and diverted into utopian, reactionary, "Back to Africa" channels. There were various other reformist attempts to formulate the demands of the Negro masses and

to create a program of action which would appeal to all elements of the dissatisfied Negro people. None of these met with even the partial and temporary success which greeted the Garvey movement.

The leadership of the Garvey Movement consisted of the poorest stratum of the Negro intellectuals--declassed elements, struggling business men and preachers, lawyers without a brief, etc.--who stood more or less close to the Negro masses and felt sharply the effects of the crisis. The movement represented a split-away from the official Negro bourgeois leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People which even then was already linked up with the imperialists.

The main social base of the movement was the Negro agricultural workers and the farming masses groaning under the terrific oppression of peonage and sharecropper slavery, and the backward sections of the Negro industrial workers, for the most part recent migrants from the plantations into the industrial centers of the North and South. These saw in the movement an escape from national oppression, a struggle for Negro rights throughout the world, including freedom from the oppression of the southern landlords and for ownership of the land. To the small advanced industrial Negro proletariat, who were experienced in the class struggle, the Garvey movement had little appeal.

While the movement never had the millions organizationally enrolled that its leaders claimed . . . the movement exercised a tremendous ideological influence over millions of Negroes outside its ranks.

The movement began as a radical petty bourgeois national movement, reflecting to a great extent in its early stages the militancy of the toiling masses, and in its demands expressing their readiness for struggle against oppression. From the very beginning there were two sides inherent to the movement: a democratic side and a reactionary side. In the early stages the democratic side dominated. To get the masses into the movement, the national reformist leaders were forced to resort to demagogy. The pressure of the militant masses in the movement further forced them to adopt progressive slogans. The program of the first congress was full of militant demands expressing the readiness for struggle.

A Negro mass movement with such perspectives was correctly construed by the imperialists as a direct threat to imperialism, and pressure began to be put on the leadership. A threat of the imperialists, inspired and backed by the leadership of the N.A.A.C.P., to exclude Garvey from the country on his

return from a tour of the West Indies brought about the complete and abject capitulation of the national reformist leaders. Crawling on his knees before the imperialists, Garvey enunciated the infamous doctrine that "the Negro must be loyal to all flags under which he lives." This was a complete negation of the Negro liberation struggle. It was followed by an agreement with the Ku Klux Klan, in which the reformists catered for the support of the southern senators in an attempt to secure the "repatriation" of the Negro masses by deportation to Liberia.

While never actually waging a real struggle for national liberation the movement did make some militant demands in the beginning. However, these demands were soon thrown overboard as the reactionary side of the movement gained dominance. There followed a complete and shameful abandonment and betrayal of the struggles of the Negro masses of the United States and the West Indies. The right of the Negro majorities in the West Indies and in the Black Belt of the United States to determine and control their own government was as completely negated by the Garvey national reformists as by the imperialists. The Garvey movement became a tool of the imperialists. Even its struggle slogans for the liberation of the African peoples, which had always been given main stress, were abandoned and the movement began to peddle the illusion of a peaceful return to Africa.

At first giving expression to the disgust which the Negro masses felt for the religious illusions of liberation through "divine" intervention, etc., the Garvey movement became one of the main social carriers of these illusions among the masses, with Marcus Garvey taking on the role of High Priest after the resignation and defection of the Chaplain-General, Bishop McGuire. . . .

How completely the reactionary side came to dominate the movement is shown in (1) its acceptance of the Ku Klux Klan viewpoint that the United States is a white man's country and the Negro masses living here are rightfully denied all democratic rights; (2) the rejection by the leaders at the 1929 convention in Jamaica, B.W.I., of a resolution condemning imperialism. . . .

The recent decision of Garvey to sell the Jamaica properties of the organization (pocketing the proceeds) and take up his residence in Europe (far from the masses he has plundered and betrayed), denotes a high stage in the collapse of this reactionary movement, whose dangerous ideology, bears not a single democratic trait.

Historically, however, the movement has certain progressive achievements.

It undoubtedly helped to crystalize the national aspirations of the Negro masses. Moreover, the Negro masses achieved a certain political ripening as a result of their experience and disillusionment with this movement.

Before concluding, it is necessary to emphasize here that the Garvey movement, while in decline and on the verge of collapse, still represents a most dangerous reactionary force, exercising considerable ideological influence over large masses of Negroes. It will not do to ignore this movement which is most dangerous in its disintegration because of the desperate attempts being made by the national reformist leaders to maintain their influence over the Negro masses, either by saving the movement as it is or by luring the dissatisfied masses into other organizations under the control of the national reformists.

The situation affords considerable opportunity for the winning of the Negro masses away from the influence of the reformists which must be made one of the foremost tasks of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, specially in Africa and the West Indies.



# 105

"SEPARATION OF THE SO-CALLED NEGROES FROM THEIR SLAVEMASTERS' CHILDREN IS A MUST"

There are some efforts to celebrate a so-called "Negro History Week," and some of my people will participate. The planning of that week to teach the slave a knowledge of his past is not complete, sufficient or comprehensive enough to enable my people to learn the true knowledge of themselves. It is important that my people learn the true knowledge of self, as it means their salvation.

We are not Negroes, because God, whose proper name is Allah, has taught me

who we are. We are not "colored" people because God has taught me who the colored people are. The American Negro is without a knowledge of self. You are a so-called Negro because you are "not" a Negro. Allah has given to me our proper names, the people from whom we were taken and brought here to the shores of North America and the history of our forefathers. Allah has taught me and today I do not fear to tell you, that you can discard that name "Negro." We are not "Negroes." We are not colored! Those are some of the main things which we should remember.

It is time for us to learn who we really are, and it is time for us to understand ourselves. That true knowledge is here for you today whether you accept it or reject it. God has said that we are members of the original people or Black nation of the earth. Original means first. Historian J. A. Rogers points out in his book that beyond the cotton fields of the South and long before the white man himself was a part of our planet, we were the original people ruling the earth, and according to the Holy Qur-an, we had governments superior to any we are experiencing today. Trace over the earth. Check back 5,000, 10,000 or 20,000 years ago. Look at history. Who were those people? They were our people. Today, we are confronted with proof of who the original people are and who shall live on this earth and call it their own.

Many of my people, the so-called Negroes, say we should help the nations of Africa which are awakening. This has been said as if we owned America. We are so foolish! What part of America do you have that you can offer toward helping Africa? Who is independent, the nations of Africa or we? The best act would be to request the independent governments of Africa and Asia to help us. We are the ones who need help. We have little or nothing to offer as help to others. We should begin to help at home first.

We are 20 million strong. Many of the nations today that have their independence, and those who are getting their independence, are much smaller in number than my people in America. We are dependent on the slave-master. We do not have two feet of earth for our nation of people. You and I, here in America, are licking the boots of the slave-master, begging him for the right of independent people. Yes, we are licking his boots. "Sir, let me shine your shoes?" You have been doing that for approximately 400 years. Today, if one rises up in your midst and says, "We should not lick the slave-master's boots, we should lick our own boots," you would say, "He should be killed! He should be killed because he is teaching us to hate." My people, you are in a

dangerous position. Get that fear out of you and stand up for your people! Who are you not to die for your people? Who am I not to die for my people! If I am shot down or cut down today, who is little Elijah Muhammad to 20 million of you! If a million of us throw ourselves in the fire for the benefit of the 20 million, the loss will be small compared to the great gain our people will make as a result of that sacrifice. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims gave their lives in Pakistan to get their nation's independence. They were successful. The Black men in Africa are fighting and dying today in unity for their independence.

We sit here like pampered babies. We cannot even stand up on the floor, not to mention taking a chance of crawling out of the door. We are too careful of shedding blood for ourselves. We are willing to shed all of it for the benefit of others. I am not trying to get you to fight. That is not even necessary; our unity will win the battle! Not one of us will have to raise a sword. Not one gun would we need to fire. The great cannon that will be fired is our unity. Our unity is the best. Why are you afraid to unite? Why are you afraid to accept Allah and Islam?

It is only because the slave-master did not teach you of this! We must unite to ourselves as a nation of people.

Separation of the so-called Negroes from their slave-masters' children is a MUST. It is the only solution to our problem.

You must know that this is the time of our separation and the judgment of this world (the Caucasian), which you and I have known. Therefore, Allah has said to me that the time is ripe for you and me to accept our own, the whole planet earth. Are you waiting for the Divine Destruction? Come! Let us reason together. First, in order for us to reason, you must have a thorough knowledge of self. Who is going to teach you that knowledge of self? Who are you waiting for to teach you the knowledge of self? Surely not your slave-master, who blinded you to that knowledge of self. The slave-master will not teach you the knowledge of self, as there would not be a master-slave relationship any longer.

# 106

CHANGING VIEWS ON BLACK NATIONALISM: INTERVIEW WITH MALCOLM X (1965)

Question: How do you define Black nationalism, with which you have been identified?



Malcolm: I used to define Black nationalism as the idea that the Black man should control the economy of his community, the politics of his community, and so forth.

But, when I was in Africa in May, in Ghana, I was speaking with the Algerian ambassador who is extremely militant and is a revolutionary in the true sense of the word (and has his credentials as such for having carried on a successful revolution against oppression in his country). When I told him that my political, social and economic philosophy was Black nationalism, he asked me very frankly, well, where did that leave him? Because he was white. He was an African, but he was Algerian, and to all appearances he was a white man. And he said if I define my objective as the victory of Black nationalism, where does that leave him? Where does that leave revolutionaries in Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania? So he showed me where I was alienating people who were true revolutionaries, dedicated to overturning the system of exploitation that exists on this earth by any means necessary.

So, I had to do a lot of thinking and reappraising of my definition of Black nationalism. Can we sum up the solution to the problems confronting our people as Black nationalism? And if you notice, I haven't been using the expression for several months. But I still would be hard pressed to give a specific definition of the over-all philosophy which I think is necessary for the liberation of the Black people in this country.

Describing an OAAU meeting in Harlem, Marlene Nadle wrote that "a man stood, rocked back on his heels, and very slowly said. 'We heard you changed, Malcolm. Why don't you tell us where you're at with them white folks?' Without dropping a syllable he [Malcolm] gave a Black nationalist speech on brotherhood."

Malcolm: I haven't changed. I just see things on a broader scale. We nationalists used to think we were militant. We were just dogmatic. It didn't bring us anything.

Now I know it's smarter to say you're going to shoot a man for what he is doing to you than because he is white. If you attack him because he is white, you give him no out. He can't stop being white. We've got to give the man a chance. He probably won't take it, the snake. But we've got to give him a chance.

We've got to be more flexible. Why, when some of our friends in Africa didn't know how to do things, they went ahead and called in some German technicians. And they had blue eyes.

I'm not going to be in anybody's straitjacket. I don't care what a person looks like or where they come from. My mind is wide open to anybody who will help get the ape off our backs.

NKRUMAH ON PAN-AFRICANISM AND BLACK POWER

**107**

Pan-Africanism has its beginnings in the liberation struggle of African-Americans, expressing the aspirations of Africans and peoples of African descent. From the first Pan-African Conference, held in London in 1900, until the fifth and last Pan-American Conference held in Manchester in 1945, African-Americans provided the main driving power of the movement. Pan-Africanism then moved to Africa, its true home, with the holding of the First Conference of Independent African States in Accra in April 1958, and the All-African People's Conference in December of the same year.

The work of the early pioneers of Pan-Africanism such as Sylvester Williams, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, and H. George Padmore, none of whom were born in Africa, has become a treasured part of Africa's history. It is significant that two of them, Dr. DuBois and George Padmore, came to live in Ghana at my invitation. Dr. DuBois died, as he wished, on African soil, while working in Accra on the Encyclopedia Africana. George Padmore became my Adviser on African Affairs, and spent the last years of his life in Ghana, helping in the revolutionary struggle for African unity and socialism.

The close links forged between Africans and peoples of African descent

over half a century of common struggle continue to inspire and strengthen us. For, although the outward forms of our struggle may change, it remains in essence the same, a fight to the death against oppression, racism and exploitation.

Most of Africa has now achieved political independence. But imperialism has not been vanquished. International finance capital appearing now in its new guise of neo-colonialism seeks to maintain and extend its stranglehold over the economic life of our continent. Imperialists and neo-colonialists are resorting to every kind of stratagem to achieve their purposes. They have allied with reactionary elements in our midst to organize military coups and other forms of direct action in an attempt to halt the progress of the African Revolution. They are at the same time working in more insidious ways to undermine our morale and to divert our attention from the main purpose of our struggle--the total liberation of the African continent, an All-African Union Government and socialism.

The Organization of African Unity has been rendered virtually useless as a result of the machinations of neo-colonialists and their puppets. Yet it is being preserved as an innocuous organization in the hope that it may delay the formation of a really effective Pan-African organization which will lead to genuine political unification. Encouragement is being given to the formation of African regional economic organizations in the knowledge that without political cohesion they will be ineffective and serve to strengthen, not weaken, neo-colonialist exploitation and domination.

All manner of red herrings are being used to distract and deflect us from our purpose. There is talk of "African socialism," Arab socialism, democratic socialism, Muslim socialism and latterly, the "pragmatic pattern of development," their advocates claiming they have found the solution to our problems.

Just as there is only one true socialism, scientific socialism, the principles of which are universal and abiding, there is only one way to achieve the African revolutionary goals of liberation, political unification and socialism. That way lies through armed struggle. The time for speechifying, for conferences, for makeshift solutions and for compromise is past.

Similarly, with the emergence of Black Power in the United States of America, the liberation movement of African-Americans has become militant and armed. But as in Africa, the movement is having to be on its guard against

the internal as well as the external enemy. There must be a closing of ranks and tenacious, united effort to carry the struggle through to a successful conclusion.

With a decisiveness and force which can no longer be concealed the spectre of Black Power has descended on the world like a thundercloud flashing its lightning. Emerging from the ghettos, swamps and cotton-fields of America, it now haunts the streets, legislative assemblies and high councils and has so shocked and horrified Americans that it is only now that they are beginning to grasp its full significance, and the fact that Black Power, in other manifestations, is in confrontation with imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, exploitation and aggression in many parts of the world.

What is Black Power? I see it in the United States as part of the vanguard of world revolution against capitalism, imperialism and neo-colonialism which have enslaved, exploited and oppressed peoples everywhere, and against which the masses of the world are now revolting. Black Power is part of the world rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, of the exploited against the exploiter. It operates throughout the African continent, in North and South America, the Caribbean, wherever Africans and people of African descent live. It is linked with the Pan-African struggle for unity on the African continent, and with all those who strive to establish a socialist society.

Analysis of the United States social structure indicates that Black Americans comprise the proletariat base of the country. On their backs, their toil, sweat, enslavement and exploitation have been built the wealth, prosperity and high standard of living enjoyed by America today. Until recently, African-Americans sought to alleviate their oppression through integration into the majority white population. They demonstrated for an end of social discrimination and for "equal rights," wanting to gain access to schools and colleges, restaurants, hotels and other places from which they had been excluded. Such were the demands of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet large numbers of African-Americans had no jobs, no decent housing, and no money to enjoy the restaurants, hotels and swimming pools reserved for "whites only." The Civil Rights Movement did not speak for the needs of the African-American masses.

It was, however, thought that the plea for civil rights would be met, because the United States Constitution, with its various amendments, supports these demands. Instead, thousands of African-Americans have been jailed,

intimidated, beaten, and some murdered for agitating for those rights guaranteed by the American constitution.

The masses grasp instinctively the meaning and goal of Black Power: the oppressed and exploited are without power. Those who have power have everything, those without power have nothing: if you don't believe in guns, you are already dead.

Black Power gives the African-American an entirely new dimension. It is a vanguard movement of Black people, but it opens the way for all oppressed masses. Unfortunately, the Trade Unions in the United States are as capitalist in make-up and goals as any million dollar corporation. And the majority of white skilled workers with their well-furnished houses, two cars, televisions and long vacations are complacent. They have much more to "lose than their chains." But there are potentially revolutionary white masses in the United States. Consider the lot of the "poor whites" in the hills of Georgia, Tennessee and the Carolinas, the white share-croppers in the lowlands of Alabama and Mississippi. Too often these are written off as "poor white trash." But they, too, are dispossessed; often they are without hope. Yet "poor whites" and Blacks have not been pushed as far down as their backs will lie. When they see a way ahead for them, the oppressed and exploited do revolt. Black Power is leading the way; Black Power is already a spearhead.

Racial discrimination is the product of an environment, an environment of a divided class society, and its solution is to change that environment. This presupposes the fact that it is only under socialism in the United States of America that the African-American can really be free in the land of his birth.



Atlanta, Georgia,  
September 6, 1966.  
Atlanta's mayor, Ivan  
Allen, surrounded by  
Negroes shouting "black  
power." Moments after  
this picture was taken  
the shouting stopped,  
and a rock and bottle-  
tossing riot broke out.

## PAN AFRICANISM AND NKRUMAHISM (1969, 1973)

One of the most important things we must now begin to do, is to call our slaves "African." No matter where we may be from, we are first of all finally Africans. Africans, Africans, Africans. The same also happens to be true of North Africa. When they say "Algerians" or Egyptians," they are talking about Africans because Africa happens to be one solid continent. Among Africans there will and must be no divisions. They are just Africans--period.

...It becomes important that you have people of African descent--scattered over the Western hemisphere by Europeans, scattered across the West Indies and used so long as slaves--bound together in a unified struggle for their liberation. This is not impossible inasmuch as we have people today all over the world moving forward in the quest for liberation against their oppressors.

...It is clear now that the only position for black men is Pan-Africanism. We need a land base. We need a base. A land base. In the final analysis, all revolutions are based on land. The best place, it seems to me, and the quickest place that we can obtain land is Africa. I am not denying that we might seek land in the United States. That is a possibility, but I do not see it clearly in my mind at this time. We need land and we need land immediately, and we must go to the quickest place for it.

We need a base that can be used for black liberation, a land that we can say belongs to us. We do not need to talk too much about it. That will harm the struggle. When one needs a base one needs also to prepare for armed struggle. To seize any of the countries in Africa today that are dominated by white people who have physically oppressed us is to confront an armed struggle, a prolonged struggle.

But once we have seized a base we will be on our way. We will then have to demonstrate our willingness to fight for our people wherever they are oppressed. I believe that people basically defend their own kind, as America did during the Spanish Civil War. In the Middle East they did it even in 1967 with Israel. People who didn't have any rights in that country were flying in from all over the world to fight. There's nothing wrong with our doing the selfsame thing. It can be done and, most important, we are trying to secure a political ideology as we seek a state. We are beginning to understand our movements and to see how we can move politically, so that we begin to talk clearly and critically now about Pan-Africanism. It is a discussion that must begin.

...Nkrumahism is reality grounded in our African experience. If the African does not accept Nkrumahism we find him like our charlatan dogmatically slashing

our patient, at first cautiously, then angered at not finding the malignancy; becoming more desperate, we find him killing the very patient he professes he wants to cure.

Thus we find these groups [critics of Nkrumahism] missing the boat completely. Were they grounded in the reality of Nkrumahism, they would know the "total liberation and the unification of Africa under an all-African socialist government must be the primary objective of all Black Revolutionaries throughout the world. It is an objective which, when achieved, will bring about the fulfillment of the aspirations of Africans.... These heretics [critics] of Nkrumahism see the primary objective of Black Revolutionaries in America as the transformation of the American society; an obvious conclusion if one has an a-historical analysis.

We Black Revolutionaries, who are Nkrumahists, know that the highest political expression of Black Power is Pan-Africanism; and the highest political expression of Pan-Africanism is Nkrumahism. The pre-requisite of an Nkrumahist is knowledge and love of the ideas of Osafyefo. When these ideas "display themselves in moral theory and practice," we have an Nkrumahist. We know that any ideology concerning African people, who have been maliciously scattered all over the world, during the calculated period of the disruption of our society, must consider all the component parts while maintaining "the core of the Black Revolution in Africa." We understand the death of imperialism is certain, and as Osafyefo teaches us "it can only come under the pressure of nationalist awakening."

Brother Malcolm told us we needed Black Nationalism, and Black Nationalism is African Nationalism, because the Blackman is the African and the African is the Blackman. Thus Black Nationalism is African Nationalism which finds its highest aspiration in Pan-Africanism. The ideology must go beyond mere nationalism. It must establish a society where the principle, from each according to his ability to each according to his needs, is a reality. We know that Nkrumahism is the surest and fastest way to reach our goal.

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES (NGUZO SABA) AND THOUGHTS ON BLACK  
CULTURAL NATIONALISM (1966)

UMOJA--Unity: To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.

KUJICHAGULIA--Self Determination: To define ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

UJIMA--Collective Work and Responsibility: To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them together.

UJAMAA--Cooperative Economics: To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

NIA--Purpose: To make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

KUUMBA--Creativity: To do always as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

IMANI--Faith: To believe with all our heart in our parents, our teachers, our leaders, our people, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

\* \* \* \* \*

I reject individualism for I am of all Black men. I am Joe the share-cropper, John the janitor and Mose the miner. When they catch hell, I catch hell!

Nationalism doesn't come in a day, it doesn't come in a week, or a month, not even a year--it takes a lifetime.

A Nationalist should be a man who saves his brother from a leaking boat. But he should also teach them how to save themselves by being a good swimmer.

The "Negro" works on a two-fold economy. He buys what he wants and begs what he needs.

Why is it so difficult for Black people to say I got this from Malcolm, I got this from Fredrick Douglas, I got this from Muhammad. Why is this so difficult? You quote Shakespeare, Satre, Camus. You quote everybody but Black people.

Blacks must develop their own heroic images. To the white boy, Garvey was a failure--to us he was perfect for his time and context. To the white



boy Malcom X was a hate teacher--to us he was the highest form of Black Manhood in his generation.

You have to learn to defend Nationalism anyway it's challenged. If it's verbally--run it down; if it's intellectually--be uptight; if it's physical--fall out and duke a little.

The Seven-fold path of the Blackness is to Think Black, Talk Black, Act Black, Create Black, Buy Black, Vote Black and Live Black.

Nationalism is a belief that Black people in this country make up a cultural Nation.

The cultural nation is a people with a common past, a common present and, hopefully, a common future.

We stress culture because it gives identity, purpose and direction. It tells you who you are, what you must do and how you can do it.

The seven criteria for culture are:

1. Mythology
2. History
3. Social Organization
4. Political Organization
5. Economic Organization
6. Creative Motif
7. Ethos

Black Art must be for the people, by the people and from the people. That is to say, it must be functional, collective and committing.

Soul is extra-scientific, that is to say outside of science; therefore we will allow no scientific disproof of it.

Our creative motif must be revolution; all art that does not discuss or contribute to revolutionary change is invalid. That is why the "blues" are invalid, they teach resignation, in a word, acceptance of reality--and we have come to change reality.

We need a new language to break the linguistic straight jacket of our masters, who taught us his language so he could understand us, although we could hardly understand ourselves.

Black art initiates, supports and promotes change. It refuses to accept values laid down by dead white men. It sets its own values and re-inforces them with hard and/or soft words and sounds.

Soul is a combination of sensitivity, creativity and impulse. It is feeling and form, body and soul, rhythm and movement, in a word, the essence of Blackness.

# 110

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES AND PAN-AFRICANISM (1972)

According to Maulana Karenga, four things necessary for a movement are Ideology, Organization, Communications and Resources. . . .

[No] ideas or ideology will really make the change we seek unless they are

based on a Black Value System! The essence of such a value system is found in the Nguzo Saba, or The Seven Principles (put together by Maulana Karenga).

Their value is that they focus on specific moral qualities Black people need to liberate ourselves. But these moral qualities are also political directions and economic attitudes, necessary psychological states and critically important goals for the creation of a revolutionary culture and people.

At the base of these projections is the concept that the continent of Africa, our racial, historical, cultural, political and emotional home, must be unified as a continental state, transformed into a world power by a socialist economy, in which the political processes are in the hands of the African masses.

Such a unified independent socialist Africa would, by its own creation, have brought about self-determination, political dignity, economic development and social progress, for millions of Africans the world over. It would also speed the total liberation of Africans all over the world.

Pan-Africanism as a linking of African nations has no meaning at the grass roots level unless it can be translated as a similar kind of African Unity, linking together projects, programs, institutions and organizations for the same reasons that African nation-states must come together, to create a world-class political, economic and institutional African presence. In the United States this is the only way the many Nationalist, Pan-Africanist and other kinds of truly "Black" organizations will be able to contribute on a major scale to world Black Self-Determination, etc.

# 110a

## A BLACK VALUE SYSTEM: WHY THE NGUZO SABA?

We finally recognize that we need a value system for Africans in America. It has become increasingly clear that this value system must take into account the political, social, economic, spiritual and emotional crisis that we face in the western world. The Seven Principles of the Nguzo Saba as given to us by Maulana Ron Karenga is the most forceful beginning toward the development of a Black Value System that cuts across known religious and political systems. This is to say that if the Seven Principles are adopted, one could not be accused of being anti-religion, but Pro-Africa. One with the Nguzo Saba could not be considered anti-socialism or anti-democracy because the Seven Principles

incorporate all known religious and political systems and adopts them to our African selves.

The Nguzo Saba is based upon African tradition and reason. As Maulana puts it, "We draw from tradition our cultural foundation of values and institutions. But we realize that we cannot become activists and seek to return to a totally African past while being both in America as well as in the present. We also realize that we cannot totally transplant African Culture in an American context; therefore, we must adjust our traditions to fit and facilitate our movement in America." If we understand what Maulana is saying, this would wipe out all the premature criticism that we're totally re-adopting an African way of life without any examination or critical re-adjustment. This value system is "rational and modern enough in its orientation to allow the exchange of goods and services within the society (America) yet never become a reflection of it on the level of values and lifestyle."

The Seven Principles are the basic values of the US organization founded by Maulana Ron Karenga. The Nguzo Saba in its righteous direction and Pan-African scope has moved across this nation like honey giving energy to the brain. Of all the concepts that Maulana Karenga has initiated, the Seven Principles of the Black Value System is the most used. Most of the independent Black institutions and all of the Black nationalist organizations have used the Nguzo Saba in one way or another. However, it must be understood that the Seven Principles are only a part—a major part—of an entirely new system of revolutionary movement: Kawaida. With my limited knowledge, it is not for me, at this time, to attempt to teach the Kawaida movement. Yet, we must point out that the Seven Principles form the basic system of the values of Kawaida.

The Nguzo Saba is Pan-African in scope and values. All the values can be found in traditional African life. For the Nationalist not to recognize this and make some personal adjustments in his personal life-style tells us a great deal about him. Our communal commitment goes beyond the personal needs of one or two individuals to the needs and aspirations of the entire community. Can you adjust to that? We need a people who will think, act, live and relate to each other on a higher and much more functional level. This re-definition will by definition change our relationship to the western world. The major interference that the Nguzo Saba will cause will be to interfere with our powerlessness because we know that in the final come down,

the one thing that the white boy fears most of all is Black organization that contains identity, purpose and direction consistent with African survival. The European-American spends more money to keep us un-organized than he spends for all the model city and poverty programs in existence. Remember, the organized few can always deal with the un-organized masses (how else did the white boy get over?). Study and adjust to the Black Value System--it is a major step toward the unification and empowerment of African people.

# 111

## PHILOSOPHY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ACTION MOVEMENT

RAM philosophy may be described as revolutionary nationalism, black nationalism or just plain blackism. It is that black people of the world (darker races, black, yellow, brown, red, oppressed peoples) are all enslaved by the same forces. RAM's philosophy is one of the world black revolution or world revolution of oppressed peoples rising up against their former slave-masters. Our movement is a movement of Black people who are coordinating their efforts to create a "new world" free from exploitation and oppression of man to man.

In the world today there is a struggle for world power between two camps, the haves (Western or white capitalist nations) and the have-nots (Eastern or newly independent nations struggling for independence, socialist nations). There are two types of nationalism. One type suppresses or oppresses, that is, a nation or particular group reaps profits or advances materially at the expense, exploitation, slavery or torture of another group or nation. In this nation and in the world today, this nationalism is considered "white nationalism" or the cooperation of the white Western nations to keep the new emerging oppressed world in bondage. This is capitalist or reactionary nationalism. The other type of nationalism is to liberate or free from exploitation. That is the binding force of a nation or particular group to free itself from a group or nation that is suppressing or oppressing it. In this country and in the world, this is considered black nationalism or revolutionary nationalism.

We can see that black nationalism is the opposite of white nationalism; black nationalism being revolutionary and white being reactionary. We see also that nationalism is really internationalism today.

While defining nationalism as a force towards black liberation, we define nationalism as Black patriotism.

Nationalism is an identification and consciousness of our own kind and self. Knowledge of self is an integral part of nationalism. Knowledge of our

own history of struggle is an essential part of nationalism. Love for our own people and not for the enemy is nationalism.

RAM feels that with the rise of fascism, the black man must not only think of armed self-defense but must also think aggressively.

Our black nation is still in captivity. RAM feels that the road to freedom is self-government, national liberation and black power. Our slogan is "Unite or perish." Our definition of revolution is one group's determination to take power away from another. In ending this manifesto, we (RAM) say "Think what you wish, but we shall accomplish what we will."

## THE BLACK REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (1969)

# 112

A Black Revolutionary Party is necessary to achieve Black Revolutionary Power for the same reason that a Workers Revolutionary Party is necessary to achieve Workers Revolutionary Power in a country where the workers are the chief revolutionary social force.

The role of the Black Revolutionary Party is, first, to develop and keep before the movement, the nation and the world the real meaning and objectives of the life and death struggle in which the Black community is now engaged; second, to bring together in a disciplined national organization the revolutionary individuals who are being constantly thrown up by spontaneous eruption and the experience of struggle; third, to devise and project, in constant interaction with the masses in struggle, a long-range strategy for achieving Black Revolutionary Power in the United States.

Constant clarification of the goals of the Black revolution in the United States is especially necessary because there are no historical models for a revolution in a country as technologically advanced and as politically backward as the United States. Never before in human history has a minority people been faced with such an enormous responsibility. Never before in human history has the counter-revolution had at its disposal so many resources to confuse, corrupt and divert the revolutionary forces. Without a strong revolutionary party to establish and maintain the perspectives and overall strategy of the revolutionary struggle, the inevitable differences between various tendencies inside the Black movement can be used to divide and demoralize the masses of the Black community.

The Black Revolutionary Party must be distinguished clearly not only from the traditional civil rights organizations which have been organized to integrate Blacks into and thereby save the system, but also from the ad hoc

organizations which have sprung up in the course of struggle, arousing the masses emotionally around a particular issue and relying primarily on the enthusiasm and good-will of their members and supporters for their continuing activity. By contrast, the Black Revolutionary Party must be a cadre-type organization of politically-conscious individuals, totally committed to the struggle for Black Revolutionary Power and the building of the Black Revolutionary Party as the only solution to the problems of Black people.

A revolutionary party cannot be made up of just enthusiastic and emotionally-aroused individuals. Its essential core must be cold, sober revolutionaries who are bound together by a body of ideas, recognize the vital importance of disciplined organization and strong leadership to revolutionary struggle, and are convinced that their own future and that of Black people can be assured only through Black Revolutionary Power. Only such a cadre will be able to continue the revolutionary struggle and resist the temptation to withdraw into separatist fantasies in the wake of inevitable setbacks.

The Black Revolutionary Party must also combat the individualism which is rampant in the United States and expose the tendency to confuse individual acts of rebellion or promotion with revolutionary struggle by masses of people. Black liberation is not advanced by head-long confrontation with enemy forces, such as the police, the FBI or the CIA, any more than it is by accepting appointment into the Establishment on the theory that the higher the position the greater the service a Black leader can render to his people. It can only be advanced by revolutionary struggles in which masses of Black people increase their control over their real conditions of life.

The Black Revolutionary Party will pay special attention to the development of the political consciousness and revolutionary dedication of Black street youth. These youth have no place in the existing society except as mercenaries, preying on people of color in the far-flung imperialist armies of the United States or on their own people in the streets of the ghetto. On the other hand, under the leadership of the Black Revolutionary Party and imbued with the consciousness of the new society which Black Revolutionary Power will create, they are the best guarantee of the success of the Black revolution.

The Black Revolutionary Party will repudiate any tendency to Black male chauvinism or the tendency to relegate Black women to an inferior position in the struggle in order to compensate for the emasculation which Black men have

suffered in white America. The extraordinary fortitude which Black women have brought to the struggle for survival of Black people in America is one of the greatest sources of strength for the Black Revolutionary Party.

A Black Revolutionary Party cannot come into being ready-made. It has to be molded and shaped by hard work and the criticism and self-criticism which ceaselessly transform and develop the revolutionist and the revolutionary organization. The American racist-capitalist system has caused much backwardness, ignorance, selfishness, suspicion, deception and competition among Black people and has thereby kept them disorganized, divided and politically unaware. The alteration that is necessary to man on a mass scale can only take place through revolution. Meanwhile, in the Black Revolutionary Party, this alteration of revolutionary cadres can take place through the constant learning and teaching that are inseparable from conscious interaction with masses in revolutionary struggle.

The most difficult and challenging task is the organizing of struggles around the concrete grievances of the masses which will not only improve the welfare of the Black community but also educate the masses out of their democratic illusions and increase their consciousness that every administrative and law-enforcing agency in this country is a white power. It is white power which decides whether to shoot to kill (as in every urban rebellion) or not to shoot at all (as in Oxford, Mississippi against white mobs); to arrest or not to arrest, to break up picket lines or not to break up picket lines; to investigate and punish brutality and murder or to allow these to go uninvestigated and unpunished. It is white power which decides who eats and who goes on welfare when out of work and who does not eat and does not go on welfare; who gets medical care and who doesn't; how schools are run and how they fail to run in the Black community; who has transportation and who hasn't; who has garbage collected and who doesn't; what streets are lighted and have good sidewalks and what streets have neither lights nor sidewalks; what neighborhoods are torn down for urban renewal and what and who are to go back into these neighborhoods. It is white power which decides what people are drafted into the army to fight and which countries this army is to fight at which moment. It is white power which has brought the United States to the point where it is counter-revolutionary to and increasingly despised by the majority of the world's peoples. All these powers are in the political arena which is the key arena that must be taken over by the Black Revolutionary Party if there is to be serious Black Power.

The Black Revolutionary Party must devise strategies which give the masses of Black people a sense of their growing power to improve their conditions of life through struggle and which enable them to create dual or parallel power structures out of struggle. Struggle therefore must be on issues and terrains which enable the Black community to create a form of liberated area out of what are at present occupied areas. It is for this reason that struggles for Community Control of such urban institutions as Schools, Health, Welfare, Housing, Land and Police are such powerful steps on the road to Black Revolutionary Power.

Because of the nationalist character of the Black revolutionary struggle, the Black Revolutionary Party must be all-Black in its membership, but like all revolutionary parties the Black Revolutionary Party is by no means opposed to other sections of the population organizing for revolutionary struggles. The Black Revolutionary Party will encourage white revolutionaries to organize in their own communities, in order to create splits among whites over fundamental issues of racism, imperialist war and the urban crisis, to educate the population as to the advantages that will accrue to the entire society from Black Revolutionary Power, and, in particular, to liberate the minds of white children and youth.

Finally, the Black Revolutionary Party must at all times keep before the movement the need to support the national liberation struggles in Asia, Latin America and Africa, and the need for international support for the revolution inside the United States. No revolution was ever successful without international support. This truth, which was demonstrated in the first American revolution, is even more relevant today because of the basic unity which the Black Revolution in the United States has with the world Black revolution, because of the minority position of Blacks inside the United States, and because of the world character of the American counter-revolution.

The Black Revolution in the United States is an integral part of the world revolution against American imperialism. Racism, like imperialism, is a totalitarian system for the dehumanization of one people by another, in all ways possible and by all means necessary, economically, politically and militarily, culturally, ideologically and biologically. In order to dehumanize the oppressed people or nation, the oppressor has created a total system of dehumanization. The revolution against racism and/or imperialism, therefore, is not only to free the oppressed people or nation from the physical presence



of their oppressors but to destroy the institutions of total dehumanization and to create in their place totally new relations between people, totally new relations between people and their institutions, and totally new institutions.

# 113

## THE STRUGGLE IS FOR LAND (1972)

For three years now, as an officer of the Republic of New Africa, I have gone around America talking to captive African people here about the struggle for land. Had I been talking about the struggle of the Azanians to free South Africa from the racist whites who hold it, and them, in subjugation, or had I been talking about the struggle of the Zimbabweans against the Rhodesians, or the brothers in Guinea or Mozambique against the Portuguese, I am sure no African in America would have had a difficult time understanding that each of these struggles is fundamentally a struggle for land. But I was not talking about these struggles.

I was talking about the struggle of African people in the United States. And I was talking about this struggle in the only context in which it can be a meaningful struggle--that is to say, a struggle that results in freedom, pride, power and a good life for all our people. I was talking about this struggle in the context of land. Our struggle--no less than that of the Azanians, the Zimbabweans, the Guineans--is a struggle for land.

It is not that Africans in America who struggle for such amorphous things as our "rights" in America or "freedom," (where neither of these is connected to land) are perpetuating a fraud upon themselves and others. It is that their analysis of what is fundamentally wrong with American society misses the mark (what is wrong is that American society suffers from entrenched racism) or, upon a correct analysis, they have failed to reason through to the most feasible and logical solution: depart from American society.

Worse, the white nationalism which all people in America constantly imbibe has left many otherwise fine African minds among us functionally unable to think of land--independent land, carved out of any part of what whites now call the United States--as a real part of our struggle for that wonderful but amorphous and elusive state called FREEDOM. Land for Zimbabweans, for Anzanians, for Guineans, for all the Africans in Africa--yes! But land for Africans in America? You can't be serious!

Well, we are serious. And where yesterday Africans in America hearing me and the other New Africans talk of land, might have, with some slight justification, considered the talk a mere academic curiosity, today--with the first African capitol in the northern Western Hemisphere since Columbus, consecrated El Malik and a-building in Hinds County, Mississippi--talk of land for Africans in America is a function of a real exercise in political science. If there were doubt before that fateful consecration Sunday, March 28, 1971, there is no doubt now in the minds of Mississippi's verbose and uptight Attorney General A. F. Summer and most of the million other white folks in that state. And there ought not to be any doubt in your mind, fellow African in America: the struggle for land is, indeed and very much, on!

What is more, the struggle can be successful. A great deal, however, depends upon how fast and how completely Africans in America can un-track their minds from the inability to think about land, independent land, as not only an integral part of our struggle for freedom but as an essential primary goal. For success of the struggle depends a great deal upon the support which those of us who now opt for and are working to build an independent African nation on this soil, get from those of us who do not now choose for themselves the route of an independent nation. (We calculate that those who do not now opt for independence may number as many as two-fifths of our people.) And the support of these people must be founded upon understanding of what the New Africans are about.

Perhaps the best way for people to un-track their minds from the slaving inability to think of land as a real and legitimate goal of our struggle is to understand how a people acquires claim to land. There is, of course, what we call the bandit rule of international law: this says, essentially, that if a people steals land and occupies it for a long time, the world will recognize that land as belonging to them. This, of course, is the manner in which the United States acquired claim to most of America: white folks simply stole it and held it. As a people, we Africans in America have been cowed by this rule; we have cringed before it (and before the power of the beast) as if it were the only rule of land possession.

There is, fortunately, a civilized rule of land possession. It says that if a people has lived on a land traditionally, if they have worked and developed it, and if they have fought to stay there, that land is theirs. It is upon this rule of international law that Africans in America rest their claim for land--in America.

We have lived for over 300 years in the so-called Black Belt, we have worked and developed the land, and we have fought to stay there--against night riders and day courts, against cultural genocide and economic privation, against bad crops, and no crops, against terror and ignorance and the urgings of relatives to come North. In the Black Belt, running through the Five States that the Republic claims as the National Territory of the Black Nation (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina), we have met all the criteria for land possession required of us by international practice, international law. We have, incidentally, met these tests too in cities of the North like Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore (though our precise locations in these cities have shifted through the years).

What the Republic of New Africa says, however, is that we give up our claim to these cities as national territory (that does not mean that all Africans have to move from them) in exchange for the five states of the Deep South. In the Five States, we are outnumbered almost two to one, though once we were an absolute numerical majority, because of the persistent genocide practiced against us for 100 post-slavery years. But we remain over half the population in Mississippi and a third in Louisiana, Alabama and South Carolina, and many Black Belt counties are overwhelmingly African.

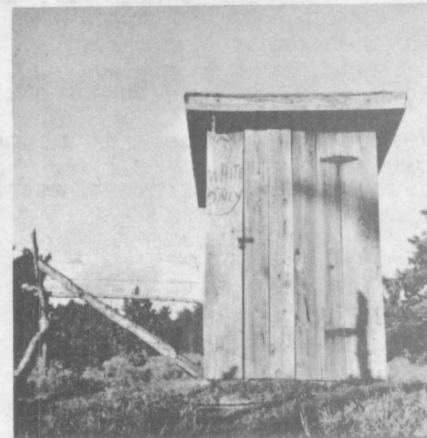
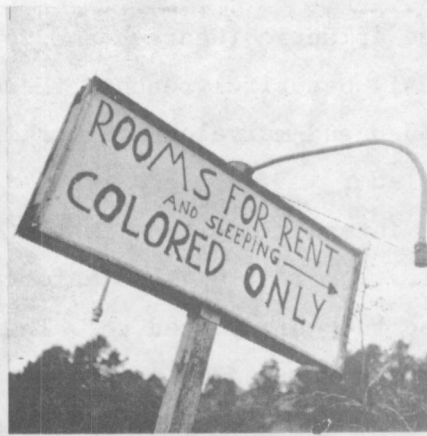
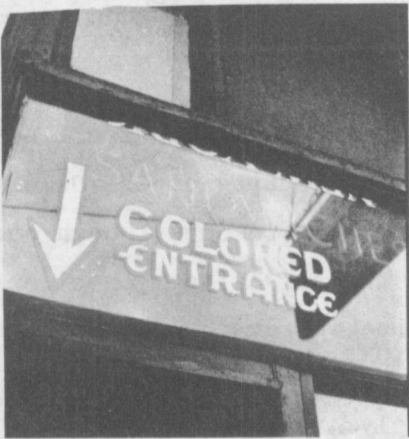
The land mass in the Five States is nearly a quarter-million square miles. There are ports on the Atlantic (Georgia and South Carolina) and on the Gulf of Mexico and wondrously beautiful beaches there. There are riches in the ground that are untapped and marvelous things in the sea, besides the abundant and abused petroleum.

The problem with international law is that there is nobody to enforce it --except the powerful. Powerful nations enforce international law only when it suits them--or when they are forced to. The essential strategy of our struggle for land is to array enough power (as in jui-jitsu, with a concentration of karate strength at key moments) to force the greatest power, the United States, to abide by international law, to recognize and accept our claims to independence and land.

The purpose of this strategy can be further simplified: it is to create a situation for the United States where it becomes cheaper to relinquish control of the Five States than to continue a war against us to take back or hold the area.

We are saying that our objective is not to overthrow the United States

but to create our own nation. More we are saying not fifty states, or twenty-five states, or even ten states--though by a rule of independence for unjust enrichment we are entitled to all the wealth of the American nation. We are saying five states, taken together, the poorest states in the nation, the states with the most Black people in them, a mere one-tenth of the states in the Union (and they say we are one-tenth of the people), the area which the white American--with some 170 million of his number living outside of the area--is most likely to give up when he is forced to the point where giving up something will be a necessity.



## BLACK POLITICS IN THE 1970S (1972)

Some of the white bourgeois news media have criticized us for welcoming all brothers and sisters. It is our convention. We shall determine who attends it. All black people are welcome. Thousands strong, we warmly embrace Angela Davis and Bobby Seale.

This convention can make history. Whether it does, will depend on what we do here today. We must emerge from this convention with an independent national black political agenda; a dynamic program for black liberation, that in the process will liberate all America from its current decadence.

Equally important, we must not leave this convention until we have built the mechanism to implement our program. Program must mesh with action. For this we must create a living organization.

And as we deliberate, as we plan, as we work--the banner waving over our heads must proclaim "unity." Without that unity, all is lost.

Yes, we support marches and demonstrations...yes, we support sit-ins... yes, we support trade union activity...yes, we support legal defense...yes, we support radical action...yes, we support all avenues to liberation. We know full well that political action is an essential part of our ultimate liberation. And it is the political question we shall pursue at this historic convention....

In our infinite patience, we have tried year after year, election after election, to work with the two major political parties. We believed the pledges, believed the platforms, believed the promises, each time hoping they would not again be sold out...hoping...hoping ...always hoping.

We are through believing. We are through hoping. We are through trusting in the two major white American political parties. Hereafter, we shall rely on the power of our own black unity.

We shall no longer bargain away our support for petty jobs or symbolic offices. If we are to support any political party, the price will now run high--very high....

No political party which represents the interests of America's giant corporations, rather than the urgent needs of the people, may enlist black political power in its support. These huge corporations, which dominate every facet of American existence, now proudly hasten to assure us that they are involved....

...Every political party must make up its mind. It cannot represent both the corporations and the people. As the party chooses, so shall we then choose the party.

Finally, we shall shun, like the plague, any political party which does not demand in unmistakable terms, the immediate return to these shores, of every single American boy from those distant Southeast Asian lands.

This horrible war, the ugliest page in our foreign history, could never have taken place without the overwhelming complicity of both political parties. And it could not continue for another day without that same complicity.

That complicity has slaughtered and maimed over 360,000 American youth and millions of Indochina, who, I need not remind you, are people of color; and people of color everywhere, no matter where they live, are our brothers and sisters.

And to what end this loathsome carnage? To prop up a cruel and corrupt tyranny in South Vietnam and to keep the mass of poor and aspiring peasants in their place. We black people know that syndrome all too well.

Our participation in that atrocious war is not an unfortunate mistake on the part of the American ruling class. Rather, it is part and parcel of an economic policy to make the world safe for American corporate penetration and to fill the coffers of the corporate treasures. That policy is designed to hold the Third World in a state of abject peonage and subjection....

...We shall never forgive the massive support that a racist American government, and rapacious American corporations, have extended to the white barbarians who reign in the Union of South Africa, Angola, Rhodesia, and Mozambique. You may be sure that the 436 million dollars our government just gave Portugal, in violation of the United Nations' embargo, will be fully used against our brothers in the guerilla movement in Mozambique and Angola.

No self-respecting Afro-American can, without a sense of profound betrayal, offer one iota of further support to any political party which does not condemn American foreign policy with abhorrence, and pledge to end our savage repression of the struggling peoples of the Third World.

This convention signals the end of hip pocket politics. We ain't in nobody's hip pocket no more!

We are through with any political party and many of us, with any political system which is not irrevocably committed to our first principles, pursued in tenacious action: The liberation of black people at home and the end of exploitation abroad.

We say to the two American political parties: This is their last clear chance; they have had too many already.

## BLACK BUSINESS IS THREATENED: BUY BLACK (1978)

Have you noticed the increasing number of white-owned beauty salon chains popping up in the black community? At the same time, more and more privately black-owned salons are closing.

George E. Johnson, president of Johnson Products Co., described the situation for the Chicago Defender, pointing out three concerns directly affecting the black community. Johnson begins:

"Let's take a look at what is happening to our beauty salons. We have white-owned corporations that are penetrating deeper and deeper into the black community.

"They use black personnel and offer beauty services to black consumers. This business is leaving the black salons and is being taken over by the chains.

Johnson said he had to admit the chains offer a better environment to the customer. "But," he noted, "that is because of their corporate foundations which put them in command of the funds to build better and to equip themselves better than the average private black beauty salon operator."

An important point to consider, Johnson said, is the fact that these chains converge on the black community but instead of using black products, they become outlets for the white manufacturers whose products have been copies from Johnson products with no measure of improvement.

"Isn't it ironic," Johnson queried, "that, at one time, these chains used to use Ultra Sheen. But now that Revlon has duplicated our product, somehow the chains are now promoters of Revlon in an Ultra Sheen community."

To the exclusion of Johnson Products salon chains list Revlon's "Realistic" relaxor and a Revlon subsidiary product called "French Perm." But no Ultra Sheen, the original product. In fact, Johnson said to his knowledge "no black products are purchased by these chains.

Johnson said the direct result of this situation is that we blacks are really feathering the nests of other communities. And to the detriment of our own.

"The dollars that go into the white-owned salons leave our community, never to return.

"Certainly, there are some temporary benefits to the black community in the salaries paid to the beauty operators by the chain management, but the real money the profits, never see the light of day in our community," he said.

On the other hand, Johnson noted that when black products are used by salon

chains there is some measure of benefit derived by the community. First, there is the salary of the black manufacturing force which is left in the community. Second, the volume of business derived from the sale of the black products also is left in the community and helps stimulate a broader economic base for the community.

"Today, we aren't doing that," Johnson said. "Instead, we are building the economic base of other communities, and we are really weakening our own economic base," he said.

While this and similar situations may have spurred Johnson toward a new plant in Nigeria, Johnson Products-Nigeria will not reduce operations at JPC-Chicago.



*Marcus Garvey  
(in uniform)*



**DRUM--VANGUARD OF THE BLACK REVOLUTION (1969)**

DRUM is an organization of oppressed and exploited Black workers. It realizes that Black workers are the victims of inhumane slavery at the behest of white racist plant managers. It also realizes that Black workers compose over 60 per cent of the entire work force at the Hamtramck assembly plant, and therefore hold exclusive power. We members of DRUM had no other alternative but to form an organization and present a platform.

The Union has consistently and systematically failed us time and time again. We have attempted to address our grievances to the UAW's procedure, but all to no avail. The UAW bureaucracy is just as guilty, and its hands are just as bloody, as the white racist management of the Chrysler Corporation. We Black workers feel that if skilled trades can negotiate directly with the Company and hold a separate contract, then Black workers have even more justification for moving independently of the UAW. While DRUM would appreciate the help of management and the UAW in abolishing the problem of racism that exists, we will put an end to it with or without your help.

Metropolitan Detroit, automobile capital of the world, is the scene of rumblings on the labor front of the Black liberation struggle. The many oppressive conditions existing in the auto factories have been steadily increasing since the racist corporations were obliged to open the door to Black labor as a result of the labor shortage during World War II. True to the American tradition the racist factory owners relegated the Black workers to the heavy and dirty low-paying jobs. Tasks performed by two white workers were assigned to one Black worker.

For the past 20 years there has been virtually no vertical movement of Black workers in the plants. Not until recently, under the pressure of the civil-rights movement, did the auto firms hire a token number of Black men for white-collar positions. And even then most of those positions were static and non-supervisory.

Union Racist Too. Although the labor union (UAW) claims to be the champion of justice and equality, it did little to check the rampant racism practiced in the factories. As a matter of fact, the union itself was guilty of racism. A casual glance at the officers in the union bureaucracy shows where their equality is at.

Thus Black workers had to confront both the union and the company. This intolerable situation at Dodge Main led to the development of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM).

On May 2, 1968 a walkout occurred at the Hamtramck assembly plant which stemmed from a gradual speed-up of the production line. The workers set up picket lines around the gates. The company then sent out photographers to take pictures of the pickets. The pictures were used as evidence against some of the pickets and were instrumental in the discharge and disciplining of certain workers who took part in the walkout and picketing. Both Black and white pickets were involved. The disciplinary action taken against them and the overall administration of punishment was overwhelmingly applied to Black workers.

Black workers were held responsible for the walkout, which was in fact caused by the negative company policy toward working conditions. This was the specific incident that gave rise to the inception of DRUM.

Black workers who were either dismissed or penalized then moved to organize the workers at Dodge Main by using a newsletter (DRUM) as an organizing tool. The contents of the Newsletter dealt with very specific cases of both racism and tomism on the job, and stressed the necessity of united action on the part of Black workers to abolish the racial aspects of the exploitation and degradation going on at the plant.

The reaction of the workers to the first issue of DRUM was general acceptance. They were somewhat astounded to see the truth in print. Most considered it a move in the right direction.

Naturally the reaction of management was hostile. They were so blinded by their racist stereotype image of the Black man that it was hard for them to believe that DRUM was written by Black workers. Management couldn't conceive of Blacks' initiating and carrying out an intelligent program.

In the second issue of DRUM several toms at the plant were blown. The brothers really dug it. DRUM had gotten over in a big way. From then on the brothers looked for DRUM every week. Amazingly, not one DRUM could be found thrown away or lying around.

After the third week the brothers began to ask about joining DRUM. Members of DRUM working in the plant proselytized and recruited brothers on the job. The strength and influence of DRUM grew vastly.

Around the sixth week the more-militant workers wanted to go for some

concrete action against Chrysler and the UAW. At this point the editors of DRUM decided to test their strength. They called for a week boycott of two bars outside the gate that were patronized by a large number of brothers. The bars didn't hire Blacks, and practiced racism in other subtle ways. DRUM received about 95 per cent co-operation. This was achieved without the use of pickets or picket signs.

As a further test of strength DRUM called for an extension of the boycott. Again DRUM received solid support, so they decided to get down.

DRUM knew that most workers would be temporarily laid off during the coming week because of the changeover, the production of the "69" models. There was also a bill-out date at which time a certain number of units had to be produced. So DRUM planned to shut down the plant right before the bill-out time and set back the schedule of the change period. Their purpose was to demonstrate their strength and to show Chrysler that DRUM was not bull-jiving or playing.

DRUM started with the first phase of their program. They listed 15 demands which dealt with the following conditions at the Hamtramck assembly plant, where about 60 per cent of the work force is Black.

- (1) 95 per cent of all foremen in the plants are white.
- (2) 99 per cent of all general foremen are white.
- (3) 100 per cent of all plant superintendents are white.
- (4) 90 per cent of all skilled tradesmen are white.
- (5) 90 per cent of all apprentices are white.
- (6) Systematically all the easy jobs in the plants are held by whites.
- (7) Whenever whites are put on harder jobs they are given helpers.
- (8) Black workers who miss a day's work need two doctors' excuses.
- (9) Seniority is a racist concept, since Black workers systematically were denied employment for years at this plant.

THE BLACK COMMUNITY AS A COLONY: THE ARGUMENT FOR (1970)

**117**

In reconstructing and defining the nature of the Black man's condition in America, the United States must be seen as a colonial oppressor and Blacks "as a colonial people within the territorial confines of the most powerful capitalist country in the world." However, in order to understand the situation of the African colony in this country, today, it is necessary to understand the nature

of colonialism. The major argument often raised against the use of the colonial analogy as a model for analyzing the oppression of Black people as an internal system in America is that the African community does not have a separate territory. But separate territory does not seem to be the most essential factor in distinguishing a colonial situation.

The author uses the term colonial people rather than colonial territory since territory may be developed while the people become less developed. There is a kind of development of underdevelopment. Throughout American history, Blacks were never given access to large amounts of land, rural or urban. The essential social relations between a colonial people and a metropolitan people preclude the development of the colonial people until the relationship is ruptured, since the colonial people do not receive enough goods, services, education, health resources, etc., to produce and reproduce themselves in a fashion that conduces to an accumulation of wealth within the colony. In fact, the separation of the people of Africa from their territory, the separation of a whole people from the means of production makes Black people in this country the archetype of a colonial society.

Roy Innis describes the peculiar character of domestic colonial oppression of Blacks as follows: "Oppression can occur in one's homeland or in the homeland of the oppressor and the latter has been suffered only by two great people--the Jews and the American Blacks." The most conspicuous and significant historical factor relating to the system of exclusion and exploitation of Black people has been the calculated design to maintain them exclusively in a property-less status. In such a position, Black people have always had to turn to and depend upon white people for every single one of their needs. This situation confirms the colonial captive position of the Black population. Without control over any significant portion of the area they occupy, and not having ownership of any capital instruments or means of production, Black people are not simply oppressed but are the victims of super-exploitation. The lack of command over land left them without any basic resources essential for self-sufficient development or the ability to exercise political influence to protect their social interests or even their lives. This situation continues on into the present. It is instructive to ask, for example, if Black people comprise 47 per cent of the population of Newark--then why don't they occupy anywhere near 47 per cent of the land? It is also important to point out that this condition is related to another peculiarity of our caste domination. That is, the police force of the urban Black reserves (ghettos) are virtually all white and completely controlled and responsible to the interests of the white community. The election of prominent "Negro politicians" to political office

in Cleveland and Washington, D.C. has not altered this pattern of relationship of Black people to land and resources and control over area occupied, such control being basic for political power and economic development.

THE BLACK GHETTO AS "INTERNAL COLONY": THE ARGUMENT AGAINST  
(1971)

# 118

At one level the idea of the ghetto as an "internal colony" can be regarded as a political slogan. It has also been put forward as an analytical proposition intended to explain the position of Blacks in America. These two aspects are of course necessarily related since any such proposition has its counterpart in political slogans. But it is only as an analytical proposition that this idea is considered here. In examining it I shall focus on the formulation developed recently by Tabb since this is perhaps the most comprehensive attempt made so far to put the economic meaning and implications of this idea on a firmer footing. [Page numbers in parenthesis refer to Tabb, in The Political Economy of the Black Ghetto.]

In appraising this formulation one is handicapped by the absence of any clear statement of what the underlying theoretical framework is that the author is using. He explicitly rejects what he calls "conventional economic analysis." He wants to examine the economic and political system as a system and the role of the Black ghetto in it. He tells us also that "the models developed and the approach taken are in the nineteenth century tradition of political economy as practiced by Ricardo, Mill and Marx" (p. 2). But as to what the particular content of this approach is, we are not told except to say that it is "interdisciplinary" which is not very helpful. The content of Marx's political economy is in any case quite different from that of the others. The reader is really left to reconstruct the framework, such as it is, from the details which are presented.

The specific idea is that: "In its relations with the dominant white society, the Black ghetto stands as a unit apart, an internal colony exploited in a systematic fashion" (p. 21). Tabb recognizes that this idea "has its limitations" though these are never clearly identified. He recommends it however as "a most useful organizing framework." Why? Because "through it, current policy alternatives may be viewed in a more meaningful perspective than heretofore" (p. 21).

The operative terms in the identification of the colonial situation are "a unit apart" and "systematic exploitation." Tabb further indicates that there are two key relationships involved: "(1) economic control and exploitation, and (2) political dependence and subjugation. Both necessitate separation and inferior status" (p. 23).

From here on the problem is treated mostly in a descriptive fashion. We are shown how Blacks are confined by segregation to ghetto housing in the "central city." They "export" their labor to the surrounding white economy and "import" a wide range of goods and services from outside. In the sale of their labor there is discrimination against Blacks through various forms of union restrictions as well as the qualifications and application procedure set up by employers. Blacks are thus "confined to . . . low-paying, hard and unpleasant jobs . . . the worse jobs the society has to offer" (pp. 26-27). Relative to their numbers, Blacks also share in unemployment to a greater extent than whites. Income per capita for Blacks is lower than for whites and (in the past decade) Blacks have accounted for an increasing percentage of "the poor." In their purchase of goods and services, Blacks have to pay higher prices than whites and, as consumers, are subject to various abusive practices by sellers and their agents.

Business in the ghetto is largely owned by whites who live outside it. Similarly, important jobs in the public sector of the local community (teachers, policemen, judges, social workers, postmen) are held by white outsiders. Black "natives" serve as minor functionaries and middlemen between other natives and the "colonist businessmen." A limited few (the "acculturated natives") are allowed into top administrative and political positions but "the vast majority are excluded from higher-status positions through a network of economic, social and political barriers" (p. 27). Elected political leaders are powerless since they are "dependent on political and economic power outside the ghetto if they are to achieve anything for their people" (p. 30). "Foreign aid" is given in return for cooperation and compromise. And finally, law and order are enforced by "a foreign army of occupation--the police."

As is evident from this description, there are undoubtedly similarities of form between the classic colonial situation and the position of Blacks in American society. Beyond this, however, there is a need to expose the basic determinants and driving forces underlying these forms. If it turns out at that level that the two situations are very close or the same, that is all well

and good. But if they are basically different then one would be mistaken in taking the similarity of form as indicative of a deeper similarity. Additionally, as a guide to action, such a mistaken view is bound to be a serious handicap. More specifically, what is required is a systematic analysis of the internal situation in America on its own terms in the light of some basic set of principles. Such principles would enable us to identify exactly what constitutes a colonial situation in terms of the crucial set of production relations as well as political and social conditions which distinguish it. In this light, we could examine to what extent the actual situation of Blacks in America corresponded to that situation.

Throughout Tabb's presentation, the relevance of the colonial analogy is sustained more by metaphor, that is to say by use of terms that evoke a metropolis-colony relationship or a "typical underdeveloped nation" (p. 23), than by a systematic analysis of the above sort. Such terms as "foreign firms," "local economy," "exports," "imports," "local native class," "neo-colonial rule," are certainly colorful and evocative. But their use begs the question of how deep the analogy really goes.

The chief advantage claimed by Tabb for adopting the colonial analogy is that "it allows the application to the ghetto of theoretical tools of analysis used in the study of developing nations" (p. 3). But there is no explicit discussion of the particular tools to which he refers. Neither does he indicate how they help to achieve his main purpose which is, explicitly, "to describe the economic factors which help explain the origins of the Black ghetto and the mechanisms through which exploitation and deprivation are perpetuated" (p. vii). What we do find, in a brief reference (p. 22) to "the development perspective," is a listing of the usual stereotyped features supposed to be characteristic of "the typical less-developed country" and taken, as Tabb admits, from the "introductory chapters of a standard development textbook." These features are then transferred to fit the situation of the ghetto in America. Thus it becomes that the ghetto is characterized by markets, shortage of local entrepreneurship, export-import imbalance and even "international demonstration effect." Needless to say, these are merely descriptive characteristics and do not by themselves explain anything.

Tabb's main theses, as summarized by him (pp. 2-3, 11), consist of the following propositions:

- (1) ". . . substantial Black deprivation, segregation, and exploitation do exist objectively."
- (2) ". . . these forms of discrimination are systematic, endemic to the form of internal colonialism that has developed in this country."
- (3) ". . . they are continued because important segments of white society profit from such arrangements. . . ."
- (4) ". . . political influence follows economic power, and those with vested interests use their power to resist progressive reform."
- (5) ". . . a great number of structural reforms are needed . . . ";  
"Such reforms are nearly impossible to bring about. . . ."
- (6) "Success in changing the living conditions in the ghetto necessitates the rupture of the colonial relationship which now exists between the ghetto and the larger society."

While one might agree with some of these points, at least in their broad outline, there still remain fundamental questions as to the correctness of the analysis upon which they are based. One such question has to do with the meaning of the term "exploitation" as used in this context. Another is whether discrimination and segregation are necessary and/or sufficient conditions for the existence of exploitation, however defined. Tabb attributes the persistence of these conditions to the fact that they satisfy the "profit motive." But how does the general category of profit motive apply to the particular circumstances of the ghetto? Who, in any case, profits or benefits from these conditions?

To this last question, Tabb provides the answer (p. 11): ". . . many people gain from the status quo: owners of ghetto housing and small businesses, privileged white workers protected from Black competition, employers who play upon each race's hatred against the other, and all who gain when society's dirty work is done cheaply by others." At one level, the empirical one, the amount and distribution of such gains are matters for further discussion. For instance, even though "many people" gain it may be that some gain much more than others. It would be interesting to know who the former are and how much is the difference that they gain. It would be interesting to know also what is the exact source of the amount which they gain. On these empirical questions, Tabb's discussion is not of much help. He does not in fact take us much beyond the general statement quoted above, except for a more detailed discussion of the case of ghetto housing (pp. 12-20) and the ghetto merchant (pp. 37-40). And from that discussion, he concludes that both the landlord and the merchant do "not appear to be making high profits." This compounds the problem of understanding what is meant by "exploitation."



At a more analytical level, we should like to know what are the mechanisms through which such gains accrue. On this score also, Tabb's discussion is not of much help. One of his chief insights on this is the claim that ". . . Blacks act as a buffer pool, keeping labor costs from rising. In this way the entire white society benefits by receiving goods and services more cheaply and white unemployment is cushioned" (p. 27). At its very best this claim begs all the important questions. At its worst, it is just bad economics by any standard. (If wages of white workers are held down how do they benefit? Why, in any case, should prices be lower merely because labor costs are kept from rising?)

What all of this points to is the need not so much for an empirical discussion as for a theoretical framework with which to carry out the analysis of the questions posed above. Accordingly in what follows I shall try to focus on certain theoretical considerations. This means that the discussion is necessarily abstract. I make no apology for this. What has been conspicuously absent from current discussions is the use of theory to understand reality. And without proper theory, we shall be hopelessly lost. The discussion is based furthermore on the presumption that it is the internal logic and laws of capitalism, as related to the particular historical conditions of America, which we need to understand. Only by such understanding can we adequately come to grips with the position of Black people in America. For this purpose, neither the terminology nor tools of standard "development economics" are of much help. . . .

There is an alternative formulation, this one in fact coming from Marx, in which the concept of exploitation has another and totally different meaning. It is this conception which is employed in the following discussion. In this framework, exploitation consists in an excess of the value, in units of labor-time, that labor produces over the value that the worker receives plus the costs of raw materials and replacement of depreciated equipment. The ratio of this surplus to the value of wages constitutes the rate of exploitation. Such a surplus exists under capitalism irrespective of the degree of competition. It arises out of the specific terms and conditions of exchange of labor, the most basic of which being the fact that the worker owns only his own labor-time (and not even that, under slavery) while the employer owns the means of production. Exploitation in this sense is derived from the conditions of "unequal exchange" of the commodity which the worker sells, his labor-time.

On this formulation, all workers, both Black and white, are "exploited" in the strict sense of this term though they may not all be equally exploited. Differences in the rate of exploitation are associated in turn with differences among workers arising from their different locations in the production system, their different historical conditions of development, the possible existence of an "aristocracy of labor," etc. These features matter insofar as they affect the conditions of exchange of labor and hence the value paid for labor. One such feature which is of crucial importance for purposes of this discussion is racial discrimination.

Enough has been said so far to indicate firm and substantive grounds for challenging the validity and usefulness of the colonial hypothesis. Essentially the grounds for this challenge have been laid by constructing an alternative framework of analysis. This framework views the economic system of American capitalism as an integrated whole, taking account of the national and international scope of the system's operation. It identifies basic elements of structural interdependence in the system consisting of intersectoral flows of surplus extracted from Black and white labor, interdependence of markets, intersectoral penetration of capitals, and the need of a "reserve army" of labor. In addition, an attempt has been made to show how the momentum of the system can be explained in this context with specific reference to the conditions that affect Black people. The mechanism of the stage hangs over all this in ways which I have not sought to analyze or explain.

It is this interdependence in terms of both structure and motion which the colonial hypothesis suppresses or ignores. Starting from the correct observation of certain elements of spatial separation and racial segregation it moves in the direction of viewing the Black ghetto as "a unit apart." Neither the factual basis nor the analytical foundation of this view has been established.

If after all that has been said here the situation of Blacks in America still cannot be sharply distinguished from classic colonial situations, this is by nature of the case. The reason is evident when one views the problem in historical perspective. The process of capitalist expansion throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was such as to make nonsense of strictly geographical or even national boundaries. The outcome of this process was to intensify the development of capitalist relations of production in colonial areas and to integrate these areas into an unevenly developed but

global capitalist system. In the case of Blacks the process also involved the physical removal of African ancestors from the territories of their birth and cultural roots to be transplanted, as slave labor, in the internal production system of the North American metropolis as well as elsewhere in the Americas and the Caribbean. It is not surprising therefore that one can hardly distinguish, on the surface at any rate, the internal situation in the capitalist metropolis from that in the colony.

Apart from a difference in the level of development and a possible difference in the rate of exploitation, the separation between colony and metropolis was, in part, merely a geographical one, as well as involving obvious cultural and ethnic differences. As far as the colonial state apparatus was concerned, even though it was ultimately responsible to and in some degree integrated into the metropolitan state apparatus, the former had a clearly identifiable role. The role was that of preserving the colonial sphere of exploitation for that particular sector of capitalists operating in the colonies. (Far from being petty-capitalists, these were actually the dominant sector of capitalists in the metropolis.) For fulfilling this role, the colonial state had to take on certain specific functions: economic, administrative, military and political, which to a degree set it apart from the metropolitan state. In the performance of these functions, however, there was a necessary interaction between the colonial and metropolitan state. This arose out of the need on the part of the entire state apparatus, in preserving the interests of the national capitals, to balance off the interests of one sector of capital against those of other sectors. A significant break in this overall state structure came about with the establishment of a certain degree of autonomous state power in the colonies after "independence," though within the framework of a basically "neo-colonial" economic structure. (One of the important contradictions in the modern era is that between the preservation of this independence of the nation state and the erosion of independence by the international expansion of capital.)

For American Blacks, geographical separation does not exist except in the very limited sense of residential segregation. As in the colonies, there are also cultural and ethnic differences between whites and Blacks. But the decisive factor in determining whether or not the colonial analogy applies must be seen to lie in considering the possibility of American Blacks, as a group, achieving a similar autonomy of state power as in the colonies. For

reasons of space, I can only assert here that this possibility is extremely remote and remains merely a matter of wishful thinking. The American system will and can obviously accept a certain amount of "integration" of Blacks into the state apparatus and into the economy at various levels. But those who hold power in this system are not about to, and can never willingly, "preside over" the breakup of the American state.

The basic point to see is that American Blacks are, and have always been, organically linked with American capitalism from its very beginning. There are some who wish to opt out of this historical condition. But the alternatives they propose have never been made very clear. As long as Blacks continue in it then the destinies of Black people are inevitably tied up with that system. The struggle to change it in such a way as to benefit the masses of Black people, as distinct from the small minority, is a difficult and protracted one. The specific historical conditions of the incorporation of Black labor into this system dictate the form and content of that struggle. And in that struggle it is of crucial importance that the categories which inform action derive from a proper scientific understanding of the conditions against which the struggle is directed.

Against this view, the colonial analogy suggests that there is some way in which Blacks as a group, regardless of whether they are owners or workers, can benefit from the breakup of a supposedly "colonial" situation. It stretches the imagination to see why, if this were indeed a possibility, Black workers should in any way be better off under Black owners than under white owners. For this reason, the colonial analogy might be seen as playing a useful ideological role for those who stand to benefit from the "transfer of power" which this is expected to bring about. It plays another role also for those whites who see the Black struggle as a vicarious means for waging their own, failing thereby to understand the nature of their own struggle as well as that of Blacks.

PAN-AFRICANISM AND MARXISM: A MARXIST CRITIQUE (1977)

**119**

An important political phenomenon in the struggles of Afro-American people is Pan Africanism. In essence, Pan Africanism serves to limit the revolutionary potential of the spontaneous Afro-American people's movement by distracting attention away from the material reality of the national oppression

and class exploitation suffered by the masses of Afro-American people. But in the midst of the current economic and political crisis of U.S. imperialism Pan Africanism is not a vital day-to-day concern of the masses.

However, the existence of Afro-American nationalism, petty bourgeois class tendencies, the existence of the Black nation, racism (white chauvinism), and the intensity of the African revolution, set the stage on which Pan Africanism among Afro-American people could grow. Therefore, in this period there is significant potential for this petty bourgeois trend to influence and divert the struggle for fundamental change. Pan Africanism must be understood and fought in order to serve the real interests of the masses in revolutionary struggle.

The essence of Pan Africanism is bourgeois ideology. As a fully developed political line, it is reformist at best, and in one way or another serves the interests of imperialism. Therefore, with regard to the revolutionary potential of the Afro-American people's struggle, Pan Africanism must be totally defeated in order to consolidate the ideological hegemony of the working class, to firmly merge the struggle of the Afro-American people with the proletariat's struggle to overthrow the capitalist order in the U.S.A. and build socialism.

On the other hand, many militant fighters will emerge in the heat of struggle against oppression who are under the influence of some variety of Pan Africanism but are not firmly consolidated to it. At this stage of our movement, and certainly for a long time to come, this will be a common experience because of the ideological hegemony exerted by the imperialists. Therefore we must approach this type of situation with an active application of materialist dialectics and struggle to win these honest elements to a revolutionary line. In short, we must avoid "left" and right errors--either killing the patient while trying to cure the illness or catching the illness while trying to unite with the patient. Our task is to cure the illness and save the patient.

In general, it is only a small few who are hard-core Pan Africanists (like Stokely Carmichael and his All-African People's Revolutionary Party) while the majority of people are honestly searching for a correct line. Therefore, with the common basis of interest between the vast majority of the Afro-American masses and the proletariat in the U.S., the general interest in Pan Africanism must be regarded as a contradiction among the people and not as an antagonistic contradiction between enemies.

### Pan Africanism: Utopian or Scientific?

Drawing out the ideological essence of Pan Africanism . . . is always a necessary task for all ideologies represent one class or another (and in today's world they generally represent either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie) and in the final analysis only the proletariat and its ideology can lead the struggle of the masses consistently forward in revolutionary struggle.

The first aspect to consider is the philosophical question: what is the relationship between the material conditions of life and ideas? The Marxist theory of knowledge shows that concrete material reality is the basis of all correct knowledge and truth, while all forms of idealism are subjective creations that misrepresent concrete reality rather than correctly reflecting it. With this in mind, we must make a fundamental distinction between Pan Africanism and Marxism-Leninism.

One form of Pan Africanism maintains that the most fundamental division of humanity is racial. Race becomes the key concept that is supposed to represent the essential category within every society in the world. This is presented as the basis for Black Unity all over the world, and fundamentally establishes "concrete" racial unity as the essential category of history.

Throughout the history of the emigrationist tendency this has been a recurring theme. Edward Blyden, drew a distinction between whites and Blacks by claiming that whites were "harsh, individualistic, competitive and combative," while Blacks were known for "the softer aspects of human nature: cheerfulness, sympathy, willingness to serve." Decades later, Garvey said, "I believe in racial purity and in maintaining the standard of racial purity." And there are some who would put forth such ridiculous claims today.

Such claims find some following because much of the history of colonialism and imperialism involves the subjugation and oppression of non-European peoples by European exploiters, because there is national oppression in the U.S., which assumes a "racial" form, because in parts of Africa--particularly southern Africa--the African masses are still subjected to oppression based on racial distinctions and because racism is promoted as a prop for all this. But the theories which make racial divisions the fundamental thing in relations between people and nations fail to explain the material basis of colonialism, imperialism, and national and racial oppression

--capitalist and other exploitive relations of production--and fail also to take into account that not every imperialist country is European (Japan certainly qualifies), that there is national oppression of Europeans by Europeans (England's domination of Ireland is one example and there are many others in the history of Europe), and that within every country (leaving aside the socialist countries) there is exploitation of one class by another. In short, such theories are based on considering only part of reality and do not even correctly reflect that part of reality they do take into account--they are based on metaphysics.

These theories are also obviously based on idealism. The category of race is used by the bourgeoisie as an ideological weapon in its arsenal. It flourished throughout the 19th century as a rationalization for slavery and the continued domination of the peoples of the world, especially Asia, Africa, Latin America and Australia, as well as many parts of Europe. The vast majority of scientists throughout the world have debunked the concept and declared that it has very limited value. Recently, bourgeois academic apologists (the likes of Stanford's Shockley and Berkeley's Jensen) have attempted to generate a genetically-based theory of racial inferiority as an ideological attempt to rationalize the current attacks on nationally oppressed people in the U.S.A. In turn, Black academics like Francis Cress Welsing (formerly of Howard University) have developed genetically-based theories of Black superiority and white inferiority.

The materialist approach to this question is the opposite of this garbage. The key concept here is racism and not race, hence the cutting edge is not biology, but ideology. Racism is used to rationalize the basic conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression. It is only in this way that it is possible to know all of the victims of racism. This includes the entire working class because a divided class is a weak class. Racism hurts white workers as well as those nationally oppressed.

Moreover, Marxist-Leninists hold that the basic categories for understanding the historical identity of Black people, as with all people, are the concepts of class and nation. These two concepts sum up the basic historically developed relations that people have with each other. The most fundamental one in every society is class. As all societies develop from primitive communalism--until they reach the stage of classless communism--there is a fundamental contradiction manifested in the struggle between an

oppressed class and the ruling class, and there is always struggle between the exploiters and laborers, class struggle. In some cases, particularly the case of colonized oppressed nations, there is the task of national liberation in which the entire oppressed nation becomes the key historical category. However, even in this case, since we know that emerging within the fight for national liberation is the class struggle over its leadership and direction, class struggle is the key strategic link to the future--to the advance toward socialism and communism. This is the lesson of the Chinese revolution, and the lessons (both positive and negative) of all movements for independence, national liberation and socialist revolution in Africa.

A second question that must be raised here is: "How has history developed?" In regard to Afro-Americans, Pan Africanism negates historical change in two major ways: it maintains that they are Africans as they have always been, and that Africa is the focus of the struggle of Black people all over the world and it has always been. This view relegates the historical struggles of Afro-American people to being misguided and misinformed, because the goal has been to transform this country into a just society for all people and not primarily to transform Africa. It must negate the obvious changes in the material existence of Afro-American people (idealism) in order to pull off this static contention that the problem is the same as it has always been (metaphysics).

Of course, from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint, the world is constantly changing, the new replacing the old. There is a fundamental difference between an African slave wanting to escape slavery and return home and an Afro-American worker seeking to make a better life at home. Afro-Americans are a distinct people, and not primarily African. Any attempt to disregard this is like the ostrich who buries his head in the sand. He leaves his butt exposed to danger though he doesn't know it, because his head is in the dark.

A popular slogan that gets at the heart of this philosophical idealism is "We are an African People." Popularized in the early 1970's around the Congress of Afrikan People led by Imamu Amiri Baraka, this slogan summed up the position that was being taken by Pan Africanists on the identity of Black people in the U.S. This slogan is based on the belief that consciousness determines being, while the Marxist-Leninist view is the opposite, that being determines consciousness. In other words, saying something is supposed to be magic. Here's how Carmichael puts it: "One of the most



important things we must now begin to do, is to call ourselves 'African.' No matter where we may be from, we are first of all and finally Africans. Africans. Africans. Africans."

As materialists, our view of this is based on the actual conditions and actions of people and not simply what they say. The concrete historical motion of the Afro-American people clearly reveals an Afro-American national identity rooted in oppression and exploitation and affirmed in struggle for democratic rights and socialism.

In sum, the philosophical basis of Pan Africanism is idealism and metaphysics, while dialectical materialism is the basis of Marxism-Leninism. One is the world view of the bourgeoisie, the other the proletariat.

Pan Africanism in the U.S. is an application of these philosophical positions, and leads to doomsday prophecy, or empty bombast, about race war, or, if it leads to struggle at all, separate (though perhaps parallel) fights by the masses of Black and white people. Specifically, this means that with the Pan Africanist position, you have the following: Africa is for the African at home (meaning in Africa) and abroad (including the U.S.). The overall strategy for this is a Black United Front led by a Black mass political party. Again, the statements of Carmichael are a good illustration of this:

When we say the African Revolution, we mean Africans scattered all over the world are to be involved in the same process at the same time.

If you accept Pan Africanism then it means that you must have an All-Black party in the United States . . . that is a tactic. What we are struggling for is to see if we can agree on a common objective (the liberation and unification of Africa) which all of us will channel our energies toward. Then we will work out specific tactics.

Black people all over the world, as all the world's people, are involved in the same worldwide struggle to destroy oppression and exploitation, but this is not the same in every concrete situation. On the African continent, while each specific country has specific conditions for its struggle, the general struggle has a national democratic character which, if led by the working class and its party, is the first stage leading to the socialist revolution. On the other hand, in the U.S. Black people are, in the main, part of the single U.S. working class and are engaged in a struggle for full democratic rights and socialism. This is the difference between a one-stage and a two-stage fight for socialism.

Also, this notion of a Black United Front and a Black political party

is divisive and reactionary because it would liquidate the revolutionary unity of the proletariat. In this sense, they are tactical devices of bourgeois nationalism. The proletarian revolutionary stand is that the United Front Against Imperialism is the strategic realignment of class forces under the leadership of the proletariat, represented by the multi-national communist party, made up of revolutionaries from all sections of society who take up and fight for the stand and interests of the working class. Thus, the strategic task is not to build a Black United Front, but the United Front, of which the solid core is the revolutionary alliance of the working class movement as a whole with the struggles of the oppressed nationalities.

### Revolution Versus Reaction

The political consequences of Pan Africanism in the U.S. today represent the actual results of the theoretical and historical developments summarized earlier. And the struggle between communism and Pan Africanism will emerge over concrete issues. It is on the basis of these concrete issues that the two ideological and political lines will sharpen, and definite lines of demarcation be drawn. The main thing is that this should be done with a correct style of work, based on the application of Marxism-Leninism and the mass line, to cure the illness and save the patient.

A major result of Pan Africanism is how it has provided "cover" for the further penetration of Africa by the U.S. imperialist class. The line that Afro-Americans are "really" Africans enables lackeys of the imperialists to operate openly in Africa and make U.S. imperialism more palatable. This had a recent manifestation when Andrew Young, chief spokesman for U.S. imperialism in the U.N., was greeted with the salutation brother when he entered the Security Council. Though it was probably done with tongue in cheek, it was portrayed in the media in such a way that Afro-Americans and all of the American people could have been misled into believing that in spite of the superpower policies of U.S. imperialism this Afro-American voice of the U.S. government could have close fraternal ties with Africans.

This brotherhood rap has also led to proposals for "dual citizenship" by which Afro-Americans would be able to maintain their U.S. citizenship and also become citizens of an African country. This proposal was agreed to by at least Liberia and Uganda. One exponent of this is Jesse Jackson of PUSH. In a typical slick rhetorical way he summed up his views on this dual citizenship proposal with this quip: "Let's start shippin', and stop lippin'."

This reveals his class essence, because he was not referring to an emigrationist scheme, but capitalist trade relations in which Black entrepreneurs profit by positing themselves as middle men in trade between African countries and U.S. corporations. Of course this profit is at the expense of African people, with the lion's share going to the imperialists.

This kind of thing has become a familiar appeal in several major Pan Africanist publications in which the major corporations openly call on Black college students and others to apply for work to see the world, especially Africa. Of course, all of this would happen while in the employ of a General Motors, IBM or a Gulf Oil. More pointedly, in the Black Collegian, published in New Orleans with a large national circulation, every major federal agency runs large ads, including the armed forces and the CIA! It is no surprise that the editor of this publication, a long-time activist in the Congress of Afrikan People, has been a major voice in the Pan Africanist attacks on Marxism over the last few years.

Another way that this penetration takes place is in the realm of culture. With this idealist view that Afro-Americans are African, and that in essence Afro-American culture is the same as African culture, the export of degenerate culture with a black face from the U.S. is rationalized as being simply African culture. This is not only an essential ideological gimmick to sell products on the African market--"soul" records sell for four times as much as here, while consumers in undeveloped areas are convinced to buy shoes with three-inch soles to walk in sand, etc. But this also serves to weaken African society with decadent bourgeois values (do your own thing, the use of drugs, sexual degeneracy, etc.). The youth wing of the leading party in Tanzania recently passed a resolution to oppose the importation of this type of culture, much of which enters via the U.S. information broadcasts and libraries and State Department sponsored tours.

The most direct and sinister way that this comes down is the use of Pan Africanism to justify the recruitment of Black mercenaries to fight in Africa on the side of reaction in unity with the South African fascist forces. This occurred during the recent Angola crisis when Roy Innis of CORE (whose official magazine is also filled with ads from the major corporations) openly recruited Black Vietnam veterans to join his scheme to serve the U.S. as superpower contention heated up. Innis got authority and a cover to do this based on participation in the OAU summit in 1973 where he was made part of the

official Ugandan delegation which put forward a racially based Pan Africanist line. Although subsequent events and superpower contention brought some parting of ways between Innis and Idi Amin, this shows that Pan Africanism as an ideology is a weapon that can be wielded by reactionaries of varying allegiances.

Another major political consequence is the roadblock Pan Africanism creates in diverting Black students away from their militant history of struggle. While the current political and economic crisis in the U.S. has a major impact on education by financial cutbacks, there are still nearly one million Black people in post-secondary education in the U.S., and over two million in the high schools. Out of the 1960's the Black studies movement became a militant battleground for the democratic right to a quality education, and as such, the struggles were "schools for war" (in some respects much like Lenin's analysis of strikes for the working class).

The general cover of Pan Africanism allows the school officials to better muddy the water so that students will get discouraged and disinterested. Most importantly it will disengage them from struggle. One ploy has been to recruit Africans and West Indians who had previously been government bureaucrats of one sort or another to run programs. (This should not be confused with the progressive forces from Africa and the West Indies whose presence is good in that the students are exposed to struggles in other parts of the world and are then more likely to develop good international awareness.) Another is to make the curriculum dull and academic, and focused mainly on Africa, ignoring or minimizing the objective need to have the U.S. and the struggles of Afro-American people the main focus of study.

Within the Black studies movement, Pan Africanism has led to a new international petty bourgeois elite, and reflects elitist disregard for the task of analyzing the historical experience and present day reality of Afro-Americans and helping to solve the concrete problems they face today. These new "leaders" have found satanic fellowship with all varieties of bourgeois nationalist forces in Africa, and openly express their desire to rid the Black movement of Marxist-Leninists. However, most of these people are very insecure in their positions as the cutbacks in education are often only one memo away from eliminating them as well. So, one of the positive developments is that they are forced to provide speakers on African liberation as a legitimating device to satisfy the hunger students have for something relevant to their lives and

their desire to change the world. Of course they hope students in turn will protect their jobs. While it is only a minority who are consolidated to a totally bankrupt line, at this point this minority plays a leading role in the Black studies movement.

But it must be made absolutely clear that all of the political consequences of Pan Africanism are not negative. There are aspects of the Pan Africanist movement that are positive and have contributed to struggle. Pan Africanism has led to the mobilization of people in support of African liberation, provided increased awareness of U.S. imperialism in Africa and promoted the will to fight it. This is clearly the case when we examine the impact of Pan Africanism on the militant Black youth, and some Black workers. But, since the essence of Pan Africanism is bourgeois ideology, the development of this movement and the consolidation of forces within it can turn into its opposite and become a force for reaction.

This is the main reason that a correct dialectical approach is necessary, to divide the good from the bad in the Pan Africanist movement, in the course of struggle building higher levels of unity around revolutionary principles. When people are in struggle, theory can be taken up in a lively way, with rapid shifts and leaps in consciousness. In this context a determined fight must be waged against the consolidated bourgeois forces, while uniting in actual battles with the struggling masses and helping them to sum up their experiences and repudiate incorrect views.

#### Communism or Pan Africanism?

The general objective of this article was to raise the question which road to Black liberation and socialist revolution, Pan Africanism or communism. In the sphere of theory, Pan Africanism is a bankrupt bourgeois trend that will retard revolutionary action, but in the practical battles of the Afro-American masses it can be a spark of struggle and in this limited way contribute to the overall movement. So our approach to Pan Africanism must be two sided.

As a consolidated line it represents the bourgeoisie and must be isolated, defeated and thrown on the junk heap of history. At every point a clear line of demarcation must be made between Pan Africanism and Marxism-Leninism. As a stimulant to mass struggle it serves a positive historical purpose and insofar as the Pan-Africanist movement takes up the struggle against imperialism it has a progressive role to play and should be united with. Through the course of the struggle against imperialism many forces who are influenced by Pan

Africanism but not wholly consolidated to it can be won over to a revolutionary road with the correct application of the mass line, and by practicing unity-criticism-unity.

On the international scale, Pan Africanism can be a positive force if it contributes to the united front against the superpowers. But the struggle is sharpening up in Africa, particularly southern Africa, and becoming more complicated. It is especially complicated because in many cases there is the task of overthrowing reactionaries in the U.S. camp while also defeating the "wizard of Oz" social-imperialists, who can bribe opportunist elements or mislead honest forces into vacillating on opposing their superpower hegemonic plans. Pan Africanism as an ideology won't provide the answers to these complex problems because it fails to correctly and concretely analyze the forces at work. It does not base itself on the analysis of different class forces within Africa, or on the fact that Africa is not an undifferentiated whole but a continent divided into countries facing some common problems but also different conditions. It also has no clear analysis of the nature of different countries, including the Soviet Union. Clearly Pan Africanism cannot lead the struggle for liberation in Africa.

And while Pan Africanism may help propel some people in the U.S. into the struggle to support the African liberation movements, it fundamentally leads away from broadening and solidifying mass support for these struggles. This is because it negates the actual material basis for unity between the struggles of the people here and those in Africa. As has been pointed out this unity is not based on all Black people being "one African People" but on common struggle against the common oppressor and exploiter, imperialism. This is true even though Afro-Americans do have roots in Africa and this does provide some basis of support for struggles there, but not the fundamental basis. This Pan Africanist line weakens struggle and support among Afro-American people as well as among the masses of American people as a whole.

Nonetheless, the fight for socialism in this country will be joined by people who have fought on many fronts. In the course of this many people will make a leap to revolutionary consciousness through ideological struggle and theoretical study. The most promising seedbed for this development is in the heat of mass struggle, where honest fighters come to the fore and can be recognized more easily and united with.

Supplementary Readings for Nationalism and Pan-Africanism

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"REVOLUTION IN OUR LIFETIME"

# Chapter 17

## MARXISM AND BLACK LIBERATION

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is Marxism? Who are its main contributors and why?
2. Describe some campaigns/events that are positive examples of Marxists building Black-white unity in the fight for Black liberation.
3. Compare the two sources of Marxist activists in the movement today: the factory and the campus.
4. What are the main aspects of a Marxist approach to the Afro-American national question?

### KEY CONCEPTS

Class Struggle

Communist Party

Cultural Revolution

Dogmatism versus empiricism

dialectical materialism/historical  
materialism

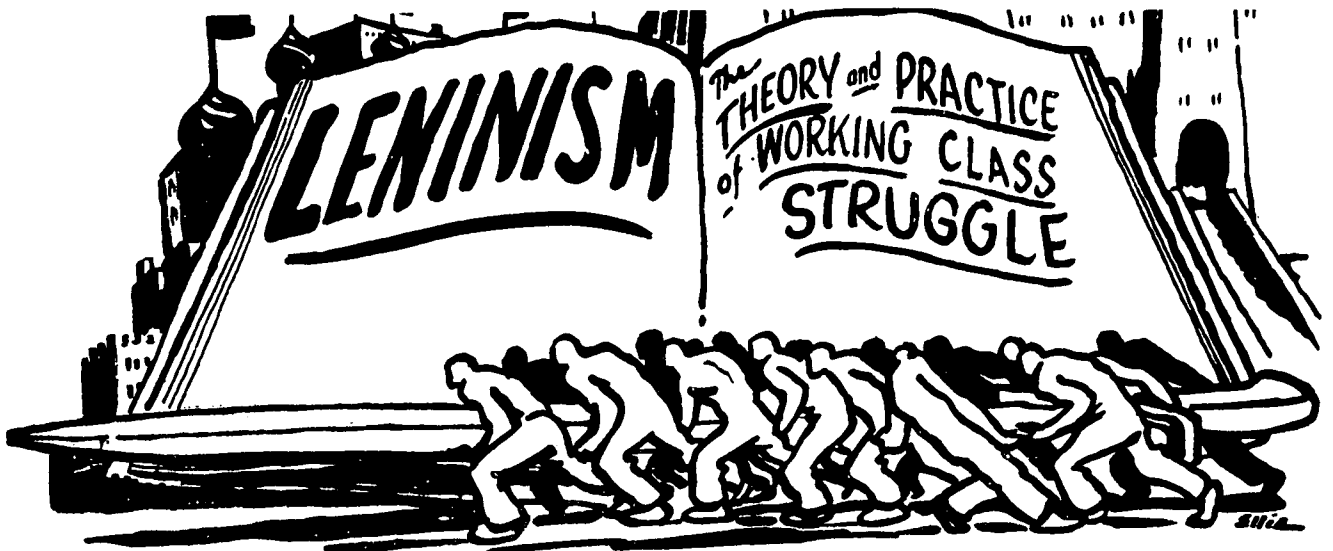
Dictatorship of the proletariat

Scientific versus utopian socialism

Self determination

Revisionism

United front



"Theory Also Becomes a Force Once It Seizes Hold of the Masses!"



## MARXISM AND BLACK LIBERATION

Marxism is a social theory and a social movement based on an analysis of the contradictions of the capitalist system. It is the science of the working class and serves as the ideological basis for its revolutionary struggle to destroy capitalism and replace it with socialism. Marxism as a theory of history provides a theoretical explanation of how a society develops. Further, as a science, Marxism guides research into the particular details of how a specific society operates. This is crucial because while Marxism had developed as an inclusive theory encompassing all available research, it is always based on and revitalized by the use of what is known in order to pursue and come to terms with what is unknown.

Two errors are made frequently by those who claim to be Marxists, but are not. Dogmatism refers to the error of holding a general theory and refusing to take into account the particular details and historical conditions of a subject. The opposite error is empiricism, holding onto specific concrete details and ignoring previous knowledge that has been summed up in general theory. In general, Marxism stresses the unity of theory and practice, study and struggle, with practice as the primary aspect of the contradiction. So any study of Marxism must combine a study of the theory with the social practice of Marxist movements.

The application of Marxism to Black liberation is a controversy that can only be fully solved with a successful revolution led by a workers party guided by the ideology of Marxism. However, this does not free us from the responsibility of taking up an analysis of how Marxism treats the problems faced by Black people; how Marxist movements in the U.S.A. have handled these problems especially building unity between Black and white workers; and where the situation stand today.

UNESCO, the United Nations Education Agency, has reported that the author whose books are read by more people in the world than any other is V.I.Lenin, the

leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Moreover, the majority of people in the world are living in societies who at least "claim" to use Marxism. These are some of the reasons we must study this question of Marxism in a very serious way.

What is Marxism? It is a collective body of theory developed by Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895) in the period of revolutionary upheavals of the industrial working classes in Europe. They continued and developed the work of classical political economy from England (especially the work of Adam Smith and David Ricardo), classical German philosophy (especially Georg Wilhelm Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach), and the Utopian socialists from France (Saint-Simon and Francois Charles Fourier). The fundamental concepts of this body of thought include dialectical and historical materialism (which is a method for studying the dynamic change and development in nature and society); the labor theory of value and class struggle (which explains how labor's exploitation is the source of profits); and the dictatorship of the proletariat (which solves a society's basic problems by putting the masses of working people in power). In 1852, Marx commented on the particular contribution that he made through his studies: "What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production; (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society..." The major works of Marx and Engels includes The Communist Manifesto, Civil War in France, Capital, German Ideology, and Anti-Duhring.

The further development of the science of the working class was carried out by Marxist theoreticians connected to the successful revolutionary struggle waged in Russia in 1917. Led by V.I. Lenin (1870-1924), the revolution in 1917 more than any other historical event brought Marxism out of the realm of theory and

speculation into the realm of accomplished historical fact. Lenin made decisive contributions to the science of Marxism. Lenin applied Marxism to understanding the laws of capitalist development in the historical epoch of imperialism, and Lenin summed up the main objective laws that govern the process of waging class war especially regarding the role of a revolutionary party. Two essential works are Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism and What Is to Be Done?

As a result of the October Revolution in 1917, Marxism spread rapidly throughout the world. This was directed by the formation of the Communist International (Comintern), an international organization of communist parties from all over the world. While the Comintern was very instrumental in educating revolutionaries and popularizing the lessons of the October Revolution, mistakes were made in dogmatically applying the lessons of the Soviet Union to other parts of the world without paying sufficient attention to the concrete details of each particular country.

The next major advance was in China. The Marxist party was formed in 1921, and 28 years later the workers and peasants seized state (political) power under the leadership of the revolutionary party and Mao Tse-Tung (1893-1976). The application of Marxism to China and the post-war developments within the international Marxist movement are significant contributions made by Mao Tse-Tung. Mao developed and successfully applied the strategic concept of the United Front in conjunction with Peoples War. He was a major fighter for Marxist principles. He fought the errors of dogmatism and empiricism (see his book Five Essays on Philosophy) and made a major contribution in fighting revisionism during the Cultural Revolution.

More than any other event since the October Revolution, the Chinese Revolution of 1949 brought dramatic focus on how Marxism treats the national colonial question, and the process of national liberation struggles by oppressed nations particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The major Marxist definition of a nation is as follows:

A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture....A nation is not merely a historical category, but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism is at the same time a process of the constitution of people into nations.

However, this cannot be applied dogmatically as there are four different types of historical experiences in the development of nations: (1) the nation-states of western Europe, (2) the multi-national states of eastern Europe, (3) the multinational states of Asia, and (4) the colonial nations created under imperialist domination in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Further, the political significance of national movements differs depending on the historical context in which it develops. The formation of nation-states in western Europe was a progressive political accomplishment led by each bourgeoisie in advancing their society by overthrowing feudalism. However, these same bourgeois classes developed and became the oppressors of colonized peoples in the third world. Therefore, the political character of the nation-states of western Europe was transformed into their opposite, from being positive to being negative. In turn, it helped create its opposite--the colonial nation and the progressive national liberation movements which developed in these nations.

Lenin was the major Marxist theoretician who summed this up and developed a revolutionary solution for it:

(a) The world is divided into two camps: the camp of a handful of civilized nations, which possess finance capital and exploit the vast majority of the population of the globe; and the camp of the oppressed and exploited peoples in the colonies and dependent countries, who comprise that majority.

(b) The colonies and the dependent countries, oppressed and exploited by finance capital, constitute a very large reserve

and a very important source of strength for imperialism.

(c) The revolutionary struggle of the oppressed peoples in the dependent and colonial countries against imperialism is the only road that leads to their emancipation from oppression and exploitation.

(d) The most important colonial and dependent countries have already taken the path of the national liberation movement, which cannot but lead to the crisis of world capitalism.

(e) The interests of the proletarian movement in the developed countries and of the national liberation movement in the colonies call for the amalgamation of these two forms of the revolutionary movement into a common front against the common enemy, against imperialism.

(f) The victory of the working class in the developed countries and the liberation of the oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism are impossible without the formation and the consolidation of a common revolutionary front.

(g) The formation of a common revolutionary front is impossible unless the proletariat of the oppressor nations renders direct and determined support to the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples against the imperialism of its "own country," for "no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations" (Marx).

(h) This support implies the advocacy, defence and carrying out of the slogan of the right of nations to secession, to independent existence as states.

(i) Unless this slogan is carried out, the union and collaboration of nations within a single world economic system, which is the material basis for the victory of socialism, cannot be brought about.

(j) This union can only be voluntary, and can arise only on the basis of mutual confidence and fraternal relations among nations.

How does this general summation of Marxist theory in the world context relate to Black people and the struggle for Black liberation in the U.S.? The historical experience of the Marxist movement in the USA concerning the question of Black people is filled with errors of all kinds, but it is also filled with shining examples of revolutionary leadership. The USA is quite

obviously an imperialist country in which the imperialists control most publishing companies, the mass media, and schools. It is usually only the negative side of the Marxist movement that is reported. Therefore, it is necessary to present both sides to clear up this confusion and enable students of Afro-American Studies to have an objective scientific grasp of these questions. This is the only way in which we can see both the positive and negative lessons to learn from the historical involvement of the Marxist movement with the Afro-American national question. (The 'Afro-American National Question' refers to the relationship between the struggle against exploitation of all workers and the struggle against the oppression of Black people.)

In his major work, Capital (1867), Marx summed up his view of the Black question in the USA:

In the United States of America, every independent movement of the workers was paralyzed as long as slavery disfigured a part of the republic. Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the Black it is branded.

However, not all socialists agreed with this. The utopian socialists who followed Robert Owen (1771-1858) and Charles Fourier (1772-1837) set up experimental model communities before the Civil War and they all segregated Black people. Moreover, they incorrectly pushed the abolition of slavery to the background in order to take up the struggle against the wage slavery of workers in the North. On the other hand, the Marxists, led by Joseph Weydemeyer (1818-1866) a close associate of Marx, set up Communist Clubs with a constitution recognizing the complete equality of all people regardless of sex or color, and many members of these clubs fought actively in the Civil War.

After the Civil War, however, the Marxist movement lost sight of the Black man in the USA. In 1864 Marx led the formation of the first international workers organization, the International Working-Men's Association (IWA). At its founding convention, the Colored National Labor Union (CNLU) voted to send a delegate to

the IWA. While all other labor organizations were invited to the 1870 congress of the IWA, the CNLU was not invited. The IWA had nothing to say about the problem of Blacks in the USA, although the USA was one of their main subjects of discussion. Further, the IWA moved to the USA in 1872 where it remained until 1876 when it was dissolved. The main leader in the USA, Friedrich Sorge, was noticeably silent on the question of Black people. In his book Socialism and the Worker written in 1876, as Reconstruction was being wiped out with a wave of racist reaction, there is not one mention of Black people.

On the other hand, it was also during this period that the first Black socialists emerged. Peter H. Clark of Cincinnati, born in 1829, emerged as a socialist speaker of the Workingman's Party in a 1877 rally to support the national railroad workers strike: "Every railroad in the land should be owned and controlled by the government. The title of private owner should be extinguished, and the ownership vested in the people." He was the principal of the Black high school and faced threats of losing his job, if he didn't reject socialism. Eventually, in 1879, he left the party not because he had lost faith in socialism, but because he was dissatisfied with the Party's treatment of the problems facing Black people.

After the turn of the century, especially after the October Revolution in 1917, the socialist movement began moving into a transition to a Communist Party. In 1919, two parties were formed and when they merged in 1921, the Communist movement was born. The initial organizations did not have a correct analysis and program for Black people and did not recruit very many. Cyril Briggs (1888-1966) was one of the first Black people to join the Communist Party. Briggs was from the West Indies. Inspired by the October Revolution and the position Lenin developed on the national-colonial question, he formed a revolutionary Black Nationalist, Pan-Africanist organization, the African Blood Brotherhood. At its height, it had about 2500 members in 56 chapters. The ABB was initially the left

wing of the Garvey movement. and later some of its membership (Richard Moore, Otto Hall, Harry Haywood, etc.) joined the Communist Party, U.S.A. Briggs put forward the notion that the liberation of Black people had to involve the formation of an independent Black state, but he lacked a materialist (concrete) analysis that grounded the national question as a question of territory. This idealism led him to various Pan-Africanist, back-to-Africa schemes.

The Communist Party faced the following situation in the 1920's. Black people were being mobilized under the banner of Black Nationalism into the Garvey movement, and the class-struggle-only line of the CP-USA did not speak to the problems that Black people faced as Black people. The development of a revolutionary position by communists on solving the problem of the oppression of Black people took place in the Communist International and was summed up into two resolutions passed during 1928 and 1930.

The essence of the new position was to recognize Black people as an oppressed nation. Prior to this, many communists negated the importance of racism and other forms of this special oppression of Black people. They dealt with the problems as if they were no different from the problems of whites, and therefore the solutions to these problems required no special program.

The recognition of Black people as a nation was the ideological basis on which the Communist Party could develop a revolutionary program for Black liberation. This program included three components for the South where the masses of Black people were concentrated in rural areas: (a) confiscating the land from white landowners and capitalists and redistributing it for use of dispossessed Black farmers; (b) establishing a single political entity--a state and a government--to encompass those areas where Black people were in the majority (which in 1930 included 190 counties in 12 states and 50% of the U.S. Black population); (c) upholding the right of self-determination, the "right of the Negro majority to exercise governmental authority...in the Black Belt..."



It was on this basis that the Communist Party, U.S.A. (CP-USA) actively sought to carry out Lenin's 1920 instruction that revolutionaries should "render direct aid to the revolutionary movements in the dependent and subject nations (for example, in Ireland, Negroes in the Americas, etc.)." As a result, the work of the Party was more effective and many Black people joined. From 200 members in March 1929, Black membership increased to over 1300 by March 1930. This reflected the appeal of the Party's revolutionary political line on the struggle for Black liberation, the impact of the economic crisis of the Great Depression on Black people, and the militant revolutionary actions that the Party carried out among the masses, including Black people.

A major battle field for the Party's work was in the South where 73% of Black people lived in 1930, mostly in rural areas. This work centered on sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and general racist terror like the Ku Klux Klan and lynching. In 1931, the Sharecroppers Union was organized in Alabama under Communist leadership. By 1936, membership had reached 12,000 with branches in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and North Carolina. In Arkansas, the Party led Black and white sharecroppers to force local planters and merchants to give them food. They fought for an emergency program calling for a 50% reduction in rents and taxes, a five-year moratorium on all debts, and mortgages, and a cash advance from the government for all small farmers.

The greatest struggle that the Communist Party carried out in the South was the fight to save the Scottsboro Boys. Nine Black youths were charged with raping two white women, a charge that one of the women later admitted she was forced to make. All were quickly tried, convicted, and eight were sentenced to die in the electric chair. For four years, the Party joined the NAACP, the American Civil Liberties Union, and others in waging an international battle which saved them from the death penalty and later resulted in their release.

Another major organization during that period was the Southern Negro Youth Congress organized in 1937 at a conference in Richmond, Virginia. The first conference was broad-based and included representatives from nearly every Black college in the country, young steelworkers from Birmingham, sharecroppers, boy and girl scouts, churches and even the YMCA. It was formed in an era of the fascist menace. Its broad united front character is reflected by the fact that Dr. Mordechai Johnson who served over 30 years as the first Black president of Howard University gave an address and said: "The greatest danger to democracy is not communists or socialism but first of all fascism. A danger not only to Black but to white men." The conference endorsed a "Proclamation of Southern Negro Youth" that spoke to the national democratic character of the movement:

We, Negro Youth of the South, know that ours is the duty to keep alive the traditions of freedom and democracy. We know that ours must be a ceaseless task, to win the status of citizenship for the Negro people.

In the North, the struggle for democratic rights centered on the organization of employed and unemployed workers especially during the Depression. Over 1.3 million workers turned out for a massive national unemployment demonstration in 1930. Black workers were very prominent in cities all across the U.S., the National Unemployed Councils were organized in 1930 with local chapters in many U.S. cities. The council fought for unemployment insurance, public work at union wages, food for school children, against home evictions, and discrimination against Black people. Over 400,000 people were mobilized on National Unemployment Insurance Day in 1932 and several thousands marched in hunger marches organized by the Councils. The U.S. ruling class was forced to establish programs like unemployment insurance as a result of these mass struggles.

Among workers who had jobs, the organization of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) in 1935 was a significant step. This union was a break with the policies of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) which excluded unskilled,

Black, and women workers. The CIO had a decisive impact on the unionization of Black workers in such industries as auto, steel, and meatpacking. In 1930, there was an estimated 100,000 Black union members. By 1950, this had increased to 1.5 million, half in the CIO and half in the AFL which did not accept Black workers until the CIO was organized. (See Chapters 6 and 7, Introduction to Afro-American Studies, Vol I, for additional discussion)

In addition, the Communist Party played a leading role in establishing other organizations which fought for Black liberation. For example, the National Negro Congress, organized in 1936, was a broad united front organization mainly but not exclusively comprised of Blacks from many different sectors of the society. The Congress condemned racist discrimination, demanded full rights for Black people, spoke out against fascism and war, and played an active role in organizing Black workers into unions like the CIO.

However, the revolutionary line and practice of the CP-USA turned into its opposite. Black people were betrayed by the CP-USA in several ways: by 1951, the entire work of the Party in the South was terminated. This was capitulation to the ruling class terror against Blacks in the Black Belt. Also, the previous high points of building broad unity in mass organizations were marred by the party cadre dominating leadership roles. For example, out of 86 leadership positions in the League of Struggle for Negro Rights formed in 1930, the Party accounted for 62 (72%). Finally, there was considerable racism among the Party rank and file membership. A particular example of this is the case of August Yokinen. He was a Finnish Communist who practiced segregation. The Party put him on public trial in Harlem, both revealing interracial problems as well as a desire to solve them.

Overall, the liquidation of a revolutionary position on the Afro-American national question was part of a general process of degeneration into a non-Marxist or revisionist stand. After Joseph Stalin (1879 -1953), Lenin's successor, died,

a new class of capitalists turned socialism around from within the Communist Party. In the USA toward Earl Browder had been leading the party toward revisionism for some time. Actually, he disbanded the Communist Party in 1944, and formed the Communist Political Association. Browderism represents the incorrect view of "American exceptionalism," meaning that the USA is a special place (unlike any other) in which capitalism is enlightened, and electoral politics is a sufficient process for the working class to achieve its aims. The national question, the focus on the particular problems of Black people as an oppressed nation and Black liberation, was formally liquidated at the 16th convention of the CP-USA in 1957.

It is important to point out that this decision in 1957 was just 3 years before the explosion of the sit-ins and a period of militant spontaneous mass struggle. The Civil Rights movement in the deep South, the Black Belt South, had no revolutionary leadership (due to the CP USA revisionism) and fell under the leadership of petty bourgeois (middle class) reformist leaders. The revisionist which CP-USA fell behind this reformist leadership which led them into the arms of the liberals in the Democratic Party. On the other hand, the major Trotskyite organization (Socialist Workers Party), was slavishly following Black nationalism and did not contribute to developing revolutionary politics in the Black liberation movement. Marxism was fine for them, but not for the masses of Black people.

A major revolutionary upsurge spread all over the world in the middle 1960s: France faced nationwide strikes by students and workers; Japan faced an upsurge of student and worker struggle; etc. The major event was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution started in China in 1966, which stirred up the revolutionary feeling among young people all over the world. The USA was no exception.

The Cultural Revolution represented the greatest effort yet in history to transform the superstructure of a society under socialism, and to fight attempts to defeat socialism from within and restore capitalism. In sum, the Cultural Revolution in China demonstrated that class struggle exists under socialism,

(and struggle against national oppression as well) and that either socialism will continue to win victories or it will be defeated.

The major symbol of the first stage of the Cultural Revolution was the Red Book of the thoughts of Chairman Mao. This book had the weakness of substituting quotes for the full texts of Marxist theory as developed within the Chinese context by the Communist Party and Mao. But it had the strength of giving concrete expression to revolutionary theory which was spread among the masses like no previous publication project in history. In the USA, the Red Book was taken up by militant Black activists, who later formed the Black Panther Party in Northern California.

Since the Panthers, there have been two main lines of development of Marxism in the Black liberation movement. Basically, Marxists came from the factory or from the campus, but both come from the militant Black Nationalist revolt of the 1960's. The major organization connected with Black workers that spread Marxism was the Black Workers Congress (BWC). In 1970, some former activists of SNCC and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (Detroit) formed the Black Workers Congress. This organization subsequently split into several organizations, with many of the activists being recruited into major multi-national Marxist organizations. While the BWC never distinguished itself in any concrete campaigns of struggle, it represented the biggest effort in recent history of organizing Black people in an explicitly Marxist organization.

The major organization which spread Marxism among Black youth was the African Liberation Support Committee (especially from 1972-1975). ALSC was a coalition of different organizations in which the most significant ideological and political struggle over Marxism was waged in the Black liberation movement since the 1930s. The main struggle was against idealism in the Pan-Africanist movement, and for consolidating a strong anti-imperialist stand under Black Marxist leadership.

The overall struggle against the revisionism of the CP-USA has resulted in the formation of several self-declared Marxist parties or national organizations all claiming to be the vanguard of the working class. However, the working class is still characterized by spontaneity and trade unionism (struggles for reforms); the national movements are still dominated by petty bourgeois (middle class) nationalists; and the national liberation support movement is dominated by liberals. Overall, there is still a vacuum on the question of revolutionary Marxist theoretical analysis of the USA. The main errors that are being made are sectarianism, walling oneself from the rest of the movement by proclaiming oneself the most correct; and right opportunism, uncritically uniting with everyone and refusing to fight for revolutionary unity on the basis of revolutionary principles. In sum, the new Marxist movement is young, and decisive events are yet to develop.

The further development of Marxist theory and the concrete activity of the Marxist movement regarding the question of Black liberation is central to the overall process of revolutionary struggle in the USA. There are several key questions:

1. Building the United Front as the strategy for making revolutionary changes. The United Front is a concept that is based on the unity of action (fighting against the same enemy) of as many different groups (classes, nationalities, etc.) as possible. in the struggle against imperialism and national oppression. Overall what is needed is more class analysis that uncovers the material basis for different classes, and the political and ideological actions of the different classes, both Black and white. Who is against U.S. imperialism and who is with it? What evidence is there that proves it one way or the other?

2. Building the Black-white unity as the condition for a strong United Front, particularly the unity of the working class. While the history of the USA stinks with the vicious odor of racism and national oppression, the most

revolutionary movements have been created by the unity of the Black and white masses in struggle, particularly in the 1930s. The ruling class tries to hold this back in many ways, and each of their schemes needs to be exposed. The backward character of white racism and Black narrow nationalism needs to be exposed. Progressive examples of unity need to be popularized. Concrete historical and contemporary basis for this unity needs to be fully explained.

3. The Black Belt and the issue of Self-Determination: The historical periodization of the Black experience requires both empirical and theoretical analysis, particularly on the question of the national character of Black people: Are Black people a nation? Is the fight for Black liberation still rooted in the Black Belt South? If not, what is the main demand of the Black liberation struggle? No slavish adherence to the Comintern resolutions and no bowing to the spontaneity of the Black struggle at any time can replace the application of Marxism to the objective content of Black history to come up with a correct and revolutionary line. This is a project of utmost importance.

4. The relationship between the Black liberation struggle against US imperialism and the African revolution. The current developments in Southern Africa against white settler colonialism are fairly easy to understand and unite people against. However, Africa will be entering a stage where the situation is not so obvious: Blacks will be running countries though they will still be dominated by foreign powers, western imperialism will be replaced by various forms of social-imperialism (socialism in words, imperialism in deeds), and some Afro-Americans will be on different sides of struggles in different countries. There will continue to be a great necessity to include the study of Africa in the context of study of the entire international situation. Black people in the USA will continue to give particular attention to Africa, so that if there is no clarity on the situation, this will have a negative effect on

the Black liberation movement.

In sum, Marxism is a theory and practice for revolutionary change. The past contributions of Black people to the revolutionary struggle in the USA is generally agreed upon. The potential in the future is even greater. But our understanding of it needs to be deepened in order to have the kind of united movement required for the current demands of the struggle for Black liberation and social change.





## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 17

121.	GOOD MORNING, REVOLUTION (1932)	Langston Hughes	484
<u>MARXIST THEORETICIANS ON BLACK PEOPLE</u>			
122.	ON SLAVERY (1842)	Karl Marx	485
123.	ON THE FORMERLY SLAVE OWNING SOUTH (1915)	V.I. Lenin	486
124.	ON LYNCHING AND THE KU KLUX KLAN (1923)	Ho Chi Minh	488
125.	SUPPORT OF THE AFRO AMERICAN STRUGGLE (1968)	Mao Tse Tung	490
<u>EARLY RESPONSE OF BLACK PEOPLE TO MARXISM</u>			
126.	SOCIALISM: THE ONLY REMEDY (1877)	Peter Clark	491
127.	WHAT THE A.B.B. IS, WHAT IT STANDS FOR, WHAT IT IS DOING (1923)	African Blood Brotherhood (A.B.B.)	492
128.	KARL MARX AND THE NEGRO (1935)	W. E. B. Dubois	495
<u>POLITICAL LINE AND PRACTICE OF THE MARXIST MOVEMENT</u>			
129.	RESOLUTION ON THE BLACK BELT NATION (1929)	Communist International	497
130.	THE NEGRO QUESTION AS A NATIONAL QUESTION (1957)	William Z. Foster	506
131.	SHARECROPPERS WITH GUNS (1978)	Harry Haywood	508
132.	COMMUNISTS AND THE BIG UNION ORGANIZING CAMPAIGN (1954)	William Z. Foster	512
<u>MARXISM AND BLACK LIBERATION TODAY</u>			
133.	ORGANIZING A BLACK REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS VANGUARD (1974)	Black Workers Congress	514
134.	THE BLACK LIBERATION MOVEMENT: WHERE IT MUST GO (1976)	Bill Epton	517
135.	TWO LINES IN THE BLACK LIBERATION MOVEMENT: RACE THEORY VS. CLASS STRUGGLE (1973)	Abdul Alkalimat	519
136.	SOCIALIST REVOLUTION AND BLACK LIBERATION (1974)	Abdul Alkalimat	525
137.	THE INTERNATIONAL: ARISE YOU WRETCHED OF THE EARTH (SONG)		531
	SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS		532

## GOOD MORNING REVOLUTION (1932)

Good morning, Revolution:

    You're the very best friend

    I ever had.

We gonna pal around together from now on.

Say, listen, Revolution:

You know, the boss where I used to work,

The guy that gimme the air to cut down expenses,

He wrote a long letter to the papers about you:

Said you was a trouble maker, a alien-enemy,

In other words a son-of-a-bitch.

He called up the police

And told 'em to watch out for a guy

Named Revolution.

You see.

The boss knows you're my friend.

He sees us hangin' out together.

He knows we're hungry, and ragged,

And ain't got a damn thing in this world--

And are gonna do something about it.

The boss's got all he needs, certainly,

    Eats swell.

    Owns a lotta houses,

    Goes vacationin',

    Breaks strikes,

    Runs politics, bribes police,

    Pays off congress,

    And struts all over the earth--

But me, I ain't never had enough to eat.

Me, I ain't never been warm in winter.

Me, I ain't never known security--

All my life, been livin' hand to mouth,

    Hand to mouth.

Listen, Revolution,

    We're buddies, see--

    Together,

    We can take everything:

    Factories, arsenals, houses, ships,

    Railroads, forests, fields, orchards,

    Bus lines, telegraphs, radios,

    (Jesus! Raise hell with radios!)

    Steel mills, coal mines, oil wells, gas,

    All the tools of production,

    (Great day in the morning!)

    Everything--

    And turn 'em over to the people who work.

    Rule and run 'em for us people who work.

Boy! Them radios--  
 Broadcasting that very first morning to USSR:  
 Another member the International Soviet's done come  
 Greetings to the Socialist Soviet Republics  
 Hey you rising workers everywhere greetings  
 And we'll sign it: Germany  
 Sign it: China  
 Sign it: Africa  
 Sign it: Poland  
 Sign it: Italy  
 Sign it: America  
 Sign it with my one name: Worker  
 On that day when no one will be hungry, cold, oppressed,  
 Anywhere in the world again.

That's our job!

I been starvin' too long.  
 Ain't you?

Let's go, Revolution!

# 122

## KARL MARX ON SLAVERY

The slavery of the Black races . . . in the southern states of North America . . . is the pivot of our industrialism today as much as machinery, credit, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton, without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given value to the colonies; it is the colonies that created world trade; it is world trade that is the necessary condition for large-scale machine industry. Also, before the slave trade in Negroes, the colonies supplied the Old World with but very few products and did not visibly change the face of the world. Slavery is thus an economic category of the highest importance. Without slavery, North America, the most progressive country, would be transformed into a primitive country. You have only to erase North America from the map of nations and you will have anarchy, the total decay of commerce and of modern civilization. But to let slavery disappear is to erase North America from the map of nations. And thus slavery, because it is an economic category, is found among all nations since the world began. Modern nations have known how to disguise the slavery in their own countries and how to import it openly into the New World. . . .

Whilst the cotton industry introduced child slavery in England, it gave in the United States a stimulus to the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery, into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact,

veiled slavery of the wageworkers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world. . . .

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in the mines of the aboriginal population (e.g., genocide against Native American populations), the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies (i.e., the plunder of Asian people), the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins (i.e., the slave trade of Africans), signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation. . . .

# 123

## V. I. LENIN ON THE FORMERLY SLAVE-OWNING SOUTH

The South of the United States was a slave-owning territory until the Civil War of 1861-65 swept slavery away. To this day the Negro population, which does not exceed 0.7 per cent to 2.2 per cent of the total population in the Northern and Western divisions, represents 22.6 to 33.7 per cent of the total population in the South. For the United States as a whole, the Negroes represent 10.7 per cent of the total population. That the Negroes are in a state of servitude goes without saying; in this respect the American bourgeoisie is no better than the bourgeoisie of other countries. Having "emancipated" the Negroes, it took good care, on the basis of "free" and republican-democratic capitalism, to restore all that possibly could be restored and to do all it possibly could to oppress the Negroes in the most shameful and despicable manner. To characterize the cultural level of the Negro it is sufficient to point to a slight statistical fact. While the proportion of illiterates among the white population of the United States in 1900 was 6.2 per cent of the population (of ten years of age and over), among the Negroes it was as high as 44.5 per cent!! More than seven times as high!! In the North and the West the proportion of illiterates was from 4 to 6 per cent of the population (1900); in the South it was 22.9 to 23.9 per cent!! One can easily imagine the sum total of facts in the sphere of legal and social relations that corresponds to this most disgraceful fact in the sphere of elementary education.

In 1910, in free, republican-democratic America, there were one and a half million share tenants; and of this number over one million were Negroes. And

the proportion of share tenants to the total number of farmers is not declining, but steadily and fairly rapidly rising. In 1880, 17.5 per cent of the total number of farmers in the United States were share tenants; in 1890, 18.4 per cent; in 1900, 22.2 per cent; in 1910, 24.0 per cent.

To characterize the South it is necessary to add that the population is fleeing from the South to other capitalist regions and towns. . . . The share-cropping region . . . in America . . . is the region of the greatest stagnation, where the toiling masses are subjected to the greatest degradation and oppression. [Immigrants to America, who play such an important part in its economic and social life, avoid the South. In 1910 the foreign-born population comprised 14.5 per cent of the total. In the South the proportion of the foreign-born population ranged from 1 per cent to 4 per cent, in the various regions; whereas for the rest of the country the proportion of the foreign-born population ranged from 13.9 per cent to 27.7 per cent (New England). Segregated, hidebound, a stifling atmosphere, a sort of prison for the "emancipated" Negroes--this is what the American South is like.]



*A meeting of an agricultural workers' union in 1936. The pain brought on by hunger cut across racial lines and united white and black workers in the new unions of the CIO.*

## ON LYNCHING AND THE KU KLUX KLAN (1924)

It is well known that the black race is the most oppressed and most exploited of the human family. It is well known that the spread of capitalism and the discovery of the New World had as an immediate result the rebirth of slavery which was, for centuries, a scourge for the Negroes and a bitter disgrace for mankind. What everyone does not perhaps know, is that after sixty-five years of so-called emancipation, American Negroes still endure atrocious moral and material sufferings, of which the most cruel and horrible is the custom of lynching.

The word "lynching" comes from Lynch. Lynch was the name of a planter in Virginia, a landlord and judge. Availing himself of the troubles of the War of Independence, he took the control of the whole district into his hands. He inflicted the most savage punishment, without trial or process of law, on Loyalists and Tories. Thanks to the slavetraders, the Ku Klux Klan, and other secret societies, the illegal and barbarous practice of lynching is spreading and continuing widely in the States of the American Union. It has become more inhuman since the emancipation of the Blacks, and is especially directed at the latter....

From 1889 to 1919, 2,600 Blacks were lynched, including 51 women and girls and ten former Great War soldier.

Among 78 Blacks lynched in 1919, 11 were burned alive, three burned after having been killed, 31 shot, three tortured to death, one cut into pieces, one drowned, and 11 put to death by various means.

Georgia heads the list with 22 victims, Mississippi follows with 12. Both have also three lynched soldiers to their credit. Of 11 burned alive, the first State has four and the second two. Out of 34 cases of systematic, premeditated and organized lynching, it is still Georgia that holds first place with five. Mississippi comes second with three.

Among the charges brought against the victims of 1919, we note: one of having been a member of the League of Non-Partisans (independent farmers); one of having distributed revolutionary publications; one of expressing his opinion on lynchings too freely; one of having criticized the clashes between Whites and Blacks in Chicago; one of having been known as a leader of the cause of the Blacks; one for not getting out of the way and thus frightening a white child who was in a motorcar. In 1920, there were fifty lynchings, and in 1923, there were twenty-eight.

These crimes were all motivated by economic jealousy. Either the Negroes in the area were more prosperous than the Whites, or the black workers would not let themselves be exploited thoroughly. In all cases, the principal culprits were never troubled, for the simple reason that they were always incited, encouraged, spurred on, then protected, by the politicians, financiers, and authorities, and above all, by the reactionary press....

The place of origin of the Ku Klux Klan is the Southern United States. In May, 1866, after the Civil War, young people gathered together in a small locality of the State of Tennessee to set up a club. A question of whiling away the time. This organization was given the name kuklos, a Greek word meaning club. To Americanize the word, it was changed into Ku Klux. Hence, for more originality, Ku Klux Klan.

After big social upheavals, the public mind is naturally unsettled. It becomes avid for new stimuli and inclined to mysticism. The KKK, with its strange garb, its bizarre rituals, its mysteries, and its secrecy, irresistibly attracted the curiosity of the Whites in the Southern States and became very popular.

It consisted at first of only a group of snobs and idlers, without political or social purpose. Cunning elements discovered in it a force able to serve their political ambitions.

The victory of the Federal Government had just freed the Negroes and made them citizens. The agriculture of the South--deprived of its black labor--was short of hands. Former landlords were exposed to ruin. The Klansmen proclaimed the principle of the supremacy of the white race. Anti-Negro was their only policy. The agrarian and slaveowning bourgeoisie saw in the Klan a useful agent, almost a savior. They gave it all the help in their power. The Klan's methods ranged from intimidation to murder....

The Klan is for many reasons doomed to disappear. The Negroes having learned during the war that they are a force if united, are no longer allowing their kinsmen to be beaten or murdered with impunity. They are replying to each attempt at violence by the Klan. In July 1919, in Washington, they stood up to the Klan and a wild mob. The battle raged in the capital for four days. In August, they fought for five days against the Klan and the mob in Chicago. Seven regiments were mobilized to restore order. In September, the government was obliged to send federal troops to Omaha to put down similar strife. In various other States the Negroes defended themselves no less energetically.

## MAO TSE-TUNG ON SUPPORT OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN STRUGGLE (1968)

The storm of Afro-American struggle taking place within the United States is a striking manifestation of the comprehensive political and economic crisis now gripping U.S. imperialism. It is dealing a telling blow to U.S. imperialism, which is beset with difficulties at home and abroad.

The Afro-American struggle is not only a struggle waged by the exploited and oppressed Black people for freedom and emancipation; it is also a new clarion call to all the exploited and oppressed people of the United States to fight against the barbarous rule of the monopoly capitalist class. It is a tremendous support and inspiration to the struggle of the people throughout the world against U.S. imperialism and to the struggle of the Vietnamese people against U.S. imperialism. On behalf of the Chinese people, I hereby express resolute support for the just struggle of the Black people in the United States.

Racial discrimination in the United States is a product of the colonialist and imperialist system. The contradiction between the Black masses in the United States and U.S. ruling circles is a class contradiction. Only by overthrowing the reactionary rule of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class and destroying the colonialist and imperialist system can the Black people in the United States win complete emancipation. The Black masses and the masses of white working people in the United States share common interests and have common objectives to struggle for. Therefore, the Afro-American struggle is winning sympathy and support from increasing numbers of white working people and progressives in the United States. 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.

In 1963, in my "Statement Supporting the Afro-Americans in Their Just Struggle Against Racial Discrimination by U.S. Imperialism" I said that "the evil system of colonialism and imperialism arose and thrived with the enslavement of Negroes and the trade in Negroes, and it will surely come to its end with the complete emancipation of the Black people." I still maintain this view.



## SOCIALISM: THE ONE REMEDY (1877)

I sympathize in this struggle with the strikers [1877 national railroad workers strike], and I feel sure that in this I have the cooperation of nine-tenths of my fellow citizens. The poor man's lot is at best a hard one. His hand-to-hand struggle with the wolf of poverty leaves him no leisure for any of the amenities of life, his utmost rewards are a scanty supply of food, scanty clothing, scanty shelter, and if perchance he escapes a pauper's grave [he] is fortunate. Such a man deserves the aid and sympathy of all good people, especially when, in the struggle for life, he is pitted against a powerful organization such as the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad or Pennsylvania Central....The blood of those men murdered at Baltimore cries from the ground against these men who by their greed have forced their men to the desperate measure of a strike, and then invoked the strong arm of the government to slaughter them in their misery.

The too-ready consent of the state and national governments to lend themselves to the demand of these wealthy corporations cannot be too severely condemned. Has it come to this, that the President of a private corporation can, by the click of a telegraphic instrument, bring state and national troops into the field to shoot down American citizens guilty of no act of violence?...

In twenty years from today there will not be a railroad in the land belonging to a private corporation; all will be owned by the government and worked in the interests of the people. Machinery and land will, in time, take the same course, and cooperation instead of competition will be the law of society. The miserable condition into which society has fallen has but one remedy, and that is to be found in Socialism....

The government must control capital with a strong hand. It is merely the accumulated results of industry, and there would be no justice should a few score bees in the hive take possession of the store of honey and dole it out to the workers in return for services which added in their superabundant store. Yet such is the custom of society.

Future accumulations of capital should be held sacredly for the benefit of the whole community. Past accumulations may be permitted to remain in private hands until, from their very uselessness, they will become a burden which their owners will gladly surrender.

Machinery too, which ought to be a blessing but is proving to be a curse to the people should be taken in hand by the government and its advantages distributed to all. Captain Cutter wrote in his song of steam:

Soon I intend ye may go and play,  
While I manage this world myself.

Had he written, ye may go and starve, it would have been nearer the truth. Machinery controlled in the interests of labor would afford that leisure for thought, for self-culture, for giving and receiving refining influences, which are so essential to the full development of character. "The ministry of wealth" would not be confined to a few, but would be a benefit to all.

Every railroad in the land should be owned or controlled by the government. The title of private owners should be extinguished, and the ownership vested in the people. All a road will need to meet will be a running and enough to replace waste. The people can then enjoy the benefit of travel, and where one man travels now, a thousand will travel then. There will be no strikes, for the men who operate the road will be the recipient of its profits.

Finally, we want governmental organization of labor so that ruinous competition and ruinous overproduction shall equally be avoided, and these commercial panics which sweep over and engulf the world will be forever prevented.

It will be objected that this is making our government a machine for doing for the citizen everything which can be more conveniently done by combined than by individual effort. Society has already made strides in the direction of Socialism. Every drop of water we draw from hydrants, the gas that illumines our streets at night, the paved streets upon which we walk, our parks, our schools, our libraries, are all outgrowths of the Socialistic principle. In that direction lies safety.

Choose ye this day which course ye shall pursue.

# 127

A WORKERS' ORGANIZATION: WHAT THE A.B.B. IS, WHAT IT STANDS FOR, WHAT IT IS DOING (1923)

The African Blood Brotherhood, (A.B.B.), is an organization of Negro workers pledged by its Constitution and Program:

To gain for Negro labor a higher rate of compensation and to prevent capitalist exploitation and oppression of the workers of the Race--Sec. 7, Art. 2, of its Constitution.

To establish a true rapprochement and fellowship within the darker races and with the truly class-conscious white workers--Sec. 9, Art. 3, of its Constitution.

Under the caption of "Higher Wages for Negro Labor, Shorter Hours and Better Living Conditions" the program of the A.B.B. declares:

To gain for Negro Labor a higher rate of compensation and to prevent exploitation because of lack of protective organization we must encourage industrial unionism among our people and at the same time fight to break down the prejudice in the unions which is stimulated and encouraged by the employers. This prejudice is already meeting the attack of the radical and progressive element among white labor union men and must eventually give way before the united onslaught of Colored and White Workers. Wherever it is found impossible to enter the existing labor unions, independent unions should be formed, that Negro Labor be able to protect its interests.

The A.B.B. seeks: To bring about cooperation between colored and white workers on the basis of their identity of interests as workers;

To educate the Negro in the benefits of unionism and to gain admission for for him on terms of full equality to the unions;

To bring home to the Negro worker his class interests as a worker and to show him the real source of his exploitation and oppression;

To organize the Negro's labor power into labor and farm organizations;

To foster the principles of consumers' cooperatives as an aid against the high cost of living;

To oppose with counter propaganda the vicious capitalist propaganda against the Negro as a race, which is aimed to keep the workers of both races apart and and thus facilitate their exploitation;

To realize a United Front of Negro workers and organizations as the first step in an effective fight against oppression and exploitation;

To acquaint the civilized world with the facts about lynchings, peonage, jim-crowism, disfranchisement and other manifestations of race prejudice and mob rule.

Towards these ends the A.B.B.: Supports a press service--the Crusader Service--for the dissemination to the Negro Press of the facts about conditions and events in the sphere of organized labor; reports of labor's changing and increasingly enlightened attitude towards the colored workers; and sends out news of general race interest, interpreted from the working class point of view. The Service is mailed twice each week and is used regularly by over a hundred Negro papers.

Sends organizers and lecturers into industrial sections to propagate the

doctrines of unionism and enlist Negro workers into the ranks of the most militant organization of Negro workers in the country.

Operates forums and classes with the aim of arousing (1) the race consciousness of the Negro workers and (2) their class consciousness. (This is the natural process.)

Guards against the use of the Negro migrants as tools for the Open Shop advocates and other unscrupulous employers who seek to break the power of Organized Labor and to destroy all those gains won for the working class during the last twenty years by those workers who had the good sense to organize for their protection.

Exposes the existence of mob-law, peonage, and other barbarisms in the South and wages relentless war against these evil conditions which force the Southern Negro to flee the South and seek employment in the industrial sections.

The Message to You: Class-conscious white worker or race-conscious Negro (and the A.B.B. has only one message for both!)--shocked by the conditions under which the Negro is forced to live in the South; the conditions which are driving him northward to create new alignments and strange problems in the industrial sections of the North--you cannot fail to realize the potentialities evoked by this steady stream of unorganized workers from the South. If you are a thinking, rational being you cannot fail to recognize THAT THIS IS YOUR FIGHT and you must help us wage it! The A.B.B. is a workers' organization. It has no source of income other than its membership and the masses. It is upon the workers it must depend. You must help us in the work of reaching the Negro masses with the message of unionism, the message of organized power, the message of united action by the workers of both races against the capitalist combinations; against the Wall Streets, the Chambers of Commerce, the Rotarian gang, the Ku Klux Klan, (the American Fascisti) and against all the tools of the interests who would keep the workers apart in order the more effectively to exploit them.

This is your fight! So help wage it! Race-conscious Negro, show that you recognize the source of your oppression! Class-conscious White worker, show that you realize the fact of the identity of the interests of the workers of all races! ...

The A.B.B. believes in inter-racial cooperation--not the sham cooperation of the oppressed Negro workers and their oppressors, but the honest cooperation of colored and white workers based upon mutual appreciation of the fact of the identity of their interests as members of the working class. This is the only inter-racial cooperation the A.B.B. believes in!

The Negro's Rock of Gibraltar! That to a large extent is what the A.B.B. is today. That is what it must be to a much greater degree tomorrow. And that is the task before every member of the A.B.B. And the way to successfully achieve our task is to organize every Negro into the A.B.B. that we possibly can. Get the intelligent and aggressive. Get the race-conscious. Get those who know the source of their oppression and are accordingly class-conscious as well as race-conscious. Get them all! Organize every Negro into the Brotherhood. Once in, it will be our duty to educate them to become effective units for waging of the Negro Liberation Struggle. Our educational machinery is functioning perfectly. It has yet to be taxed to capacity. Get them in!

# 128

## KARL MARX AND THE NEGRO (1933)

Without doubt the greatest figure in the science of modern industry is Karl Marx. He has been a center of violent controversy for three-quarters of a century, and for that reason there are some people who are so afraid of his doctrines that they dare not study the man and his work. This attitude is impossible, and particularly today when the world is so largely turning toward the Marxian philosophy, it is necessary to understand the man and his thought.

Heinrich Karl Marx was a German Jew, born in 1818 and died in 1883.

He knew something about American Negroes from his German comrades who migrated to the United States; but these emigrants were of little help so far as his final conclusions were concerned.

Then came the war and Marx began to give the situation attention.

"The present struggle between the South and the North," he wrote in 1861, "is . . . nothing but a struggle between two social systems, the system of slavery and the system of free labor. Because the two systems can no longer live peaceably side by side on the North American continent, the struggle has broken out."

Marx . . . wrote . . . Abraham Lincoln in November, 1864.

Sir:--We congratulate the American people upon your re-election by a large majority. If resistance to the Slave Power was the watchword of your first election, the triumphal war-cry of your re-election is Death to Slavery.

From the commencement of the titanic American strife the workingmen of Europe felt distinctively that the Star Spangled Banner carried the destiny of their class. The contest for the territories which opened the dire epopée, was it not to decide whether the virgin soil of immense tracts should be wedded to the labor of the immigrant or be prostituted by the tramp of the slave-driver?

When an oligarchy of 300,000 slaveholders dared to inscribe for the first time in the annals of the world "Slavery" on the banner of armed revolt, when on the very spots where hardly a century ago the idea of one great Democratic Republic had first sprung up, whence the first declaration of the Rights of Man was issued, and the first impulse given to the European Revolution of the eighteenth century, when on those very spots counter-revolution, with systematic thoroughness, gloried in rescinding "the ideas entertained at the time of the formation of the old constitution" and maintained "slavery to be a beneficial institution" indeed, the only solution of the great problem of the "relation of capital to labor," and cynically proclaimed property in man "the cornerstone of the new edifice,"--then the working classes of Europe understood at once, even before the fanatic partisanship of the upper classes, for the Confederate gentry had given its dismal warning, that the slaveholders' rebellion was to sound the tocsin for a general holy war of property against labor, and that for the men of labor, with their hopes for the future, even their past conquests were at stake in that tremendous conflict on the other side of the Atlantic. Everywhere they bore therefore patiently the hardships imposed upon them by the cotton crisis, opposed enthusiastically the pro-slavery intervention-importunities of their betters--and from most parts of Europe contributed their quota of blood to the good of the cause.

While the workingmen, the true political power of the North, allowed slavery to defile their own republic, while before the Negro, mastered and sold without his concurrence, they boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned laborer to sell himself and choose his own master, they were unable to attain the true freedom of labor, or to support their European brethren in their struggle for emancipation; but this barrier to progress has been swept off by the red sea of civil war.

The workingmen of Europe felt sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American Anti-slavery War will do for the working classes. They consider it an earnest sign of the epoch to come that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded son of the working class, to lead his country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of the enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world.

After the war had closed, in September, 1865, still another letter went to the people of the United States from the same source.

Again we felicitate you upon the removal of the cause of these years of affliction--upon the abolition of slavery. This stain upon your otherwise so shining escutcheon is forever wiped out. Never again shall the hammer of the auctioneer announce in your market-places sales of human flesh and blood and make mankind shudder at the cruel barbarism.

Your noblest blood was shed in washing away these stains, and desolation has spread its black shroud over your country in penance for the past.

Today you are free, purified through your sufferings.

A brighter future is dawning upon your republic, proclaiming to the old world that a government of the people and by the people is a government for the people and not for a privileged minority.

We had the honor to express to you our sympathy in your affliction, to send you a word of encouragement in your struggles, and to congratulate you upon your success. Permit us to add a word of counsel for the future.

Injustice against a fraction of your people having been followed by such dire consequences, put an end to it. Declare your fellow citizens from this day forth free and equal, without any reserve. If you refuse them citizens' rights while you exact from them citizens' duties, you will sooner or later face a new struggle which will once more drench your country in blood.

The eyes of Europe and of the whole world are on your attempts at reconstruction, and foes are ever ready to sound the death knell of republican institutions as soon as they see their opportunity.

We therefore admonish you, as brothers in a common cause, to sunder all the chains of freedom, and your own victory will be complete.

# 129

## RESOLUTION ON THE BLACK BELT NATION (1929)

### The Struggle for the Equal Rights of the Negroes

The basis for the demand of equality of the Negroes is provided by the special yoke to which the Negroes in the United States are subjected by the ruling classes. In comparison with the situation of the other various nationalities and races oppressed by American imperialism, the yoke of the Negroes in the United States is of a peculiar nature and particularly oppressive. This is partly due to the historical past of the American Negroes as imported slaves, but is much more due to the still existing slavery of the American Negro which is immediately apparent, for example, in comparing their situation even with the situation of the Chinese and Japanese workers in the West of the United States, or with the lot of the Filipinos (Malay race) who are under colonial repression.

It is only a Yankee bourgeois lie to say that the yoke of Negro slavery has been lifted in the United States. Formally it has been abolished, but in practice the great majority of the Negro masses in the South are living in slavery in the literal sense of the word. Formally, they are "free" as "tenant farmers" or "contract laborers" on the big plantations of the white land owners, but actually they are completely in the power of their exploiters;

they are not permitted, or else it is made impossible for them to leave their exploiters; if they do leave the plantations, they are brought back and in many cases whipped; many of them are simply taken prisoner under various pretexts and, bound together with long chains, they have to do compulsory labor on the roads. All through the South, the Negroes are not only deprived of all rights, and subjected to the arbitrary will of the white exploiters, but they are also socially ostracized, that is, they are treated in general not as human beings, but as cattle. But this ostracism regarding Negroes is not limited to the South. Not only in the South but throughout the United States, the lynching of Negroes is permitted to go unpunished. Everywhere the American bourgeoisie surrounds the Negroes with an atmosphere of social ostracism. . . .

The slogan of equal rights of the Negroes without a relentless struggle in practice against all manifestations of Negrophobia on the part of the American bourgeoisie can be nothing but a deceptive liberal gesture of a sly slave owner or his agent. This slogan is in fact repeated by "socialist" and many other bourgeois politicians and philanthropists, who want to get publicity for themselves by appealing to the "sense of justice" of the American bourgeoisie in the individual treatment of the Negroes, and thereby sidetrack attention from the one effective struggle against the shameful system of "white superiority": from the class struggle against the American bourgeoisie. The struggle for equal rights for the Negroes is, in fact, one of the most important parts of the proletarian class struggle of the United States.

The struggle for equal rights for the Negroes must certainly take the form of common struggle by the white and Black workers.

The increasing unity of the various working class elements provokes constant attempts on the part of the American bourgeoisie to play one group against another, particularly the white workers against the Black, and the Black workers against the immigrant workers, and vice versa, and thus to promote the divisions within the working class, which contribute to the bolstering up of American capitalist rule. The Party must carry on a ruthless struggle against all these attempts of the bourgeoisie and do everything to strengthen the bonds of class solidarity of the working class on a lasting basis.

In the struggle for equal rights for the Negroes, however, it is the



duty of the white workers to march at the head of the struggle. They must everywhere make a breach in the walls of segregation and "Jim-Crowism" which have been set up by bougeois slave-market morality. They must most ruthlessly unmask and condemn the hypocritical reformists and bourgeois "friends of Negroes" who, in reality, are only interested in strengthening the power of the enemies of the Negroes. They, the white workers, must boldly jump at the throat of the 100 per cent bandits who strike a Negro in the face. This struggle will be the test of real international solidarity of the American white workers. . . .

The Party must bear in mind that white chauvinism, which is the expression of the ideological influence of American imperialism among the workers, not only prevails among the different strata of the white workers in the U.S.A., but is even reflected in various forms in the Party itself. White chauvinism has manifested itself even in open antagonism of some comrades to the Negro comrades. In some instances where Communists were called upon to champion and lead in the most vigorous manner the fight against white chauvinism, they instead yielded to it. In Gary, white members of the Workers Party protested against Negroes eating in the restaurant controlled by the Party. In Detroit, Party members, yielding to pressure, drove the Negro comrades from a social given in aid of the miners' strike.

While the Party has taken certain measures against these manifestations of white chauvinism, nevertheless those manifestations must be regarded as indications of race prejudice even in the ranks of the Party, which must be fought with the utmost energy.

An aggressive fight against all forms of white chauvinism must be accompanied by a widespread and thorough educational campaign in the spirit of internationalism within the Party, utilizing for this purpose to the fullest extent the Party schools, the Party press and the public platform, to stamp out all forms of antagonism, or even indifference among our white comrades toward the Negro work. This educational work should be conducted simultaneously with a campaign to draw the white workers and the poor farmers into the struggle for the support of the demands of the Negro workers. . . .

It is the special duty of the revolutionary Negro workers to carry on tireless activity among the Negro working masses to free them of their distrust of the white proletariat and draw them into the common front of the revolutionary class struggle against the bourgeoisie. They must emphasize

with all force that the first rule of proletarian morality is that no worker who wants to be an equal member of his class must ever serve as a strike breaker or a supporter of bourgeois politics. They must ruthlessly unmask all Negro politicians corrupted or directly bribed by American bourgeois ideology, who systematically interfere with the real proletarian struggle for equal rights for the Negroes. . . .

The Struggle for the Right of Self-Determination of the Negroes in the Black Belt

It is not correct to consider the Negro zone of the South as a colony of the United States. Such a characterization of the Black Belt could be based in some respects only upon artificially construed analogies, and would create superfluous difficulties for the clarification of ideas. In rejecting this estimation, however, it should not be overlooked that it would be none the less false to try to make a fundamental distinction between the character of national oppression to which the colonial peoples are subjected and the yoke of other oppressed nations. Fundamentally, national oppression in both cases is of the same character, and is in the Black Belt in many respects worse than in a number of actual colonies. On one hand the Black Belt is not in itself, either economically or politically, such a united whole as to warrant its being called a special colony of the United States. But on the other hand, this zone is not, either economically or politically, such an integral part of the United States as any other part of the country. Industrialization in the Black Belt is not, as is generally the case in colonies, properly speaking, in contradiction with the ruling interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie, which has in its hands the monopoly of all the industry; but insofar as industry is developed here, it will in no way bring a solution to the question of living conditions of the oppressed Negro majority, nor to the agrarian question, which lies at the basis of the national question. On the contrary, this question is still further aggravated as a result of the increase of the contradictions arising from the pre-capitalist forms of exploitation of the Negro peasantry and of a considerable portion of the Negro proletariat (miners, forestry workers, etc.) in the Black Belt, and at the same time, owing to the industrial development here, the growth of the most important driving force of the national revolution, the Black working class, is especially strengthened. Thus, the prospect for the future is not an inevitable dying away of the national revolutionary

Negro movement in the South . . . but on the contrary, a great advance of this movement and the rapid approach of a revolutionary crisis in the Black Belt.

Owing to the peculiar situation in the Black Belt (the fact that the majority of the resident Negro population are farmers and agricultural laborers and that the capitalist economic system as well as political class rule there is not only of a special kind, but to a great extent still has pre-capitalist and semi-colonial features), the right of self-determination of the Negroes as the main slogan of the Communist Party in the Black Belt is appropriate. This, however, does not in any way mean that the struggle for equal rights of the Negroes in the Black Belt is less necessary or less well founded than it is in the North. On the contrary, here, owing to the whole situation, this struggle is even better founded; but the form of this slogan does not sufficiently correspond with the concrete requirements of the liberation struggle of the Negro population. Anyway, it is clear that in most cases it is a question of the daily conflicts of interest between the Negroes and the white rulers in the Black Belt on the subject of infringement of the most elementary equality rights of the Negroes by the whites. Daily events of the kind are: all Negro persecutions, all arbitrary economic acts of robbery by the white exploiters ("Black Man's Burden") and the whole system of so-called "Jim-Crowism." Here, however, it is very important in connection with all these concrete cases of conflict to concentrate the attention of the Negro masses not so much on the general demands of mere equality, but much more on some of the revolutionary basic demands arising from the concrete situation.

The slogan of the right of self-determination occupies the central place in the liberation struggle of the Negro population in the Black Belt against the yoke of American imperialism. But this slogan, as we see it, must be carried out only in connection with two other basic demands. Thus, there are three basic demands to be kept in mind in the Black Belt, namely, the following:

(a) Confiscation of the landed property of the white landowners and capitalists for the benefit of the Negro farmers. The landed property in the hands of the white American exploiters constitutes the most important material basis of the entire system of national oppression and serfdom of the Negroes in the Black Belt. More than three-quarters of all Negro farmers here are

bound in actual serfdom to the farms and plantations of the white exploiters by the feudal system of "share cropping." Only on paper and not in practice are they freed from the yoke of their former slavery. The same holds completely true for the great mass of Black contract laborers. Here the contract is only the capitalist expression of the chains of the old slavery, which even today are not infrequently applied in their natural iron form on the roads of the Black Belt (chain gang work). These are the main forms of present Negro slavery in the Black Belt, and no breaking of the chains of this slavery is possible without confiscating all the landed property of the white masters. Without this revolutionary measure, without the agrarian revolution, the right of self-determination of the Negro population would be only a Utopia or, at best, would remain only on paper without changing in any way the actual enslavement.

(b) Establishment of the state unity of the Black Belt. At the present time this Negro zone--precisely for the purpose of facilitating national oppression--is artificially split up and divided into a number of various states which include distant localities having a majority of white population. If the right of self-determination of the Negroes is to be put into force, it is necessary wherever possible to bring together into one governmental unit all districts of the South where the majority of the settled population consists of Negroes. Within the limits of this state there will of course remain a fairly significant white minority which must submit to the right of self-determination of the Negro majority. There is no other possible way of carrying out in a democratic manner the right of self-determination of the Negroes. Every plan regarding the establishment of the Negro state with an exclusively Negro population in America (and of course, still more exporting it to Africa) is nothing but an unreal and reactionary caricature of the fulfillment of the right of self-determination of the Negroes, and every attempt to isolate and transport the Negroes would have the most damaging effect upon their interests. Above all, it would violate the right of the Negro farmers in the Black Belt not only to their present residences and their land, but also to the land owned by the white landlords and cultivated by Negro labor.

(c) Right of self-determination. This means complete and unlimited right of the Negro majority to exercise governmental authority in the entire territory of the Black Belt, as well as to decide upon the relations between

their territory and other nations, particularly the United States. It would not be right of self-determination in our sense of the word if the Negroes in the Black Belt had the right of self-determination only in cases which concerned exclusively the Negroes and did not affect the whites, because the most important cases arising here are bound to affect the whites as well as Negroes. First of all, true right to self-determination means that the Negro majority and not the white minority in the entire territory of the administratively united Black Belt exercises the right of administering governmental, legislative and judicial authority. At the present time all this power is concentrated in the hands of the white bourgeoisie and landlords. It is they who appoint all officials, it is they who dispose of public property, it is they who determine the taxes, it is they who govern and make the laws. Therefore, the overthrow of this class rule in the Black Belt is unconditionally necessary in the struggle for the Negroes' right to self-determination. This, however, means at the same time the overthrow of the yoke of American imperialism in the Black Belt on which the forces of the local white bourgeoisie depend. Only in this way, only if the Negro population of the Black Belt wins its freedom from American imperialism even to the point of deciding itself the relations between its country and other governments, especially the United States, will it win real and complete self-determination. One should demand from the beginning that no armed forces of American imperialism should remain on the territory of the Black Belt. . . .

The struggle regarding the Negro question in the North must be linked up with the liberation struggle in the South, in order to endow the Negro movement throughout the United States with the necessary effective strength. After all, in the North, as well as in the South, it is a question of the real emancipation of the American Negroes, which has in fact never taken place. The Communist Party of the United States must bring into play its entire revolutionary energy, in order to mobilize the widest possible masses of the white and black proletariat of the United States, not by words, but by deeds, for real effective support of the struggle for the liberation of the Negroes. Enslavement of the Negroes is one of the most important foundations of the imperialist dictatorship of United States capitalism. The more American imperialism fastens its yoke on the millions-strong Negro masses, the more must the Communist Party develop the mass struggle for Negro emancipation, and the better use it must make of all conflicts which arise out of the national

difference, as an incentive for revolutionary mass actions against the bourgeoisie. This is as much in the direct interest of the proletarian revolution in America. Whether the rebellion of the Negroes is to be the outcome of a general revolutionary situation in the United States, whether it is to originate in the whirlpool of decisive fights for power by the working class, for proletarian dictatorship, or whether on the contrary the Negro rebellion will be the prelude of gigantic struggles for power by the American proletariat, cannot be foretold now. But in either contingency it is essential for the Communist Party to make an energetic beginning now--at the present moment--with the organization of joint mass struggles of white and Black workers against Negro oppression. This alone will enable us to get rid of the bourgeois white chauvinism which is polluting the ranks of the white workers in America, to overcome the distrust of the Negro masses caused by the inhumane barbarous Negro slave traffic still carried on by the American bourgeoisie--inasmuch as it is directed even against all white workers--and to win over to our side these millions of Negroes as active fellow-fighters in the struggle for the overthrow of bourgeois power throughout America. . . .

The proletarianization of the Negro masses makes the trade unions the principal form of mass organization. It is the primary task of the Party to play an active part and lead in the work of organizing the Negro workers and agricultural laborers in trade unions. Owing to the refusal of the majority of the white unions in the U.S.A., led by the reactionary leaders, to admit Negroes to membership, steps must be immediately taken to set up special unions for those Negro workers who are not allowed to join the white unions. At the same time, however, the struggles for the inclusion of Negro workers in the existing unions must be intensified and concentrated upon, special attention must be given to those unions in which the statutes and rules set up special limitations against the admission of Negro workers. The primary duty of the Communist Party in this connection is to wage a merciless struggle against the A. F. of L. bureaucracy, which prevents the Negro workers from joining the white workers' unions. The organization of special trade unions for the Negro masses must be carried out as part and parcel of the struggle against the restrictions imposed upon the Negro workers, and for their admission to the white workers' unions. The creation of separate Negro unions should in no way weaken the struggle in the old

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unions for the admission of Negroes on equal terms. Every effort must be made to see that all the new unions organized by the left wing and the Communist Party should embrace the workers of all nationalities and of all races. The principle of one union for all workers in each industry, white and Black should cease to be a mere slogan of propaganda, and must become a slogan of action. . . .

#### American Negro Question Part of World Problem

The Negro question in the United States must be treated in its relation to the Negro questions and struggles in other parts of the world. The Negro race everywhere is an oppressed race. Whether it is a minority (U.S.A., etc.), majority (South Africa) or inhabits a so-called independent state (Liberia, etc.), the Negroes are oppressed by imperialism. Thus, a common tie of interest is established for the revolutionary struggle of race and national liberation from imperialist domination of the Negroes in various parts of the world. A strong Negro revolutionary movement in the U.S.A. will be able to influence and direct the revolutionary movement in all those parts of the world where the Negroes are oppressed by imperialism.



## THE NEGRO QUESTION AS A NATIONAL QUESTION (1957)

A development of prime importance at the sixth congress was the profound discussion of the colonial question. The American delegates, as well as those of many other countries, participated deeply. Out of this discussion came the analysis of the Negro question in the United States as a national question. Whereas, the Marxists in the United States had traditionally considered the Negro question as that of a persecuted racial minority of workers and as basically a simple trade union matter, the Party now characterized the Negro people as an oppressed nation entitled to the right of self-determination. This position was developed in full in a further resolution in 1930. This new understanding of the Negro question raised the Party's work among the Negro people to a far higher Leninist level.

This view of the Negro question was founded upon the actualities of the situation of the Negro people and the principles previously evolved by Lenin and Stalin, the world's two leading authorities on the national question. Lenin, in the colonial theses of the second congress of the Comintern, which he wrote in June 1920, already recognized the position of the American Negroes as that of an oppressed nation. The theses called upon the workers of the world "to render direct aid to the revolutionary movements in the dependent and subject nations (for example, in Ireland, Negroes in America, etc.), and in the colonies." (emphasis mine--WZF).

Stalin, who is the world's greatest living expert on the subject, has defined a nation as an "historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture. These are scientific bases of nationhood. According to these criteria the Negro people in the so-called Black Belt in the American South, where they form the majority of the people, constitute an oppressed nation. Commenting upon the Negro people's development of nationhood, Allen says: "Slavery contributed a common language, a common territory, a common historical background and the beginnings of a common ideology, characterized chiefly by aspirations for freedom. In the period of capitalist development, unhindered by chattel slavery, the conditions arose which made it possible for the Negro people to develop more fully along the lines of nationhood. The Negroes were drawn more directly within the process of capitalism, thus evolving the class relationships characteristic of all modern nations. The Negroes in the North, under this general definition, are an oppressed national minority.

Haywood elaborates further: "Within the borders of the United States, and under



the jurisdiction of a single central government, there exist, not one, but two nations: a dominant white nation, with its Anglo-Saxon hierarchy, and a subject black one....The Negro is American. He is the product of every social and economic struggle that has made America. But the Negro is a special kind of American, to the extent that his oppression has set him apart from the dominant white nation. Under the pressure of these circumstances, he has generated all the objective attributes of nationhood.

The practical consequences in policy, of the Communist Party's new position on the Negro question were that, in addition to pressing as before for full economic, political and social equality in all their ramifications for the Negro people, the Party also raised the slogan that the Negro people should have the right of self-determination in the "Black Belt" of the South on the basis of the break-up of the plantation system and the redistribution of the land to the Negro farmers. The demand for self-determination did not mean, however, that the Party advocated the settling up of a "Negro republic" in the South, as its enemies asserted. But it did mean that the Party, henceforth, would insist that the Negro nation should have the right of self-determination, to be exercised by it whenever and however it saw fit to use this right... .

The tireless and resolute fight of the Communist Party during the Coolidge period won much attention and support from the masses of the Negro people. Gradually a substantial body of Negro Communists was built up. The growth of Communist influence among the Negro people was particularly marked after the Party's recognition of the national character of the Negro question and its application. At the Communist Party's sixth convention, in March 1929, Jack Stachel reported that there were about 200 Negro members, but a year later, in the membership drive beginning March 6, 1930, which brought in a total of 6,167 recruits, no less than 1,300 of these were Negroes--so rapidly was Communist sentiment growing among the Negro masses.

SHARECROPPERS WITH GUNS: A BLACK COMMUNIST ON ORGANIZING  
THE BLACK BELT (1978)

Our line, projecting the question of U.S. Blacks as essentially that of an oppressed nation, called for making the South the "center of gravity" for work among them. Though I had spent a brief period in North Carolina, it was not the deep Black Belt South, the focus of the Party's concentration. I was eager to visit the area, to see how our theory regarding the national question and the role of the "Black peasantry" were being worked out in practice....

The most dramatic struggle was the movement of tenants, sharecroppers and farm laborers centered in Tallapoosa County, southeast of Birmingham. The area bordered on the Black Belt plantation region and resembled the latter in respect to farm values, types of tenancy and racial composition. The first local of the Sharecroppers Union was organized there in 1931. That was before the Federal Relief Crop Reduction Program had been instituted. The small owners, tenants, croppers and farm laborers were hit the hardest by the crisis. Merchants and bankers had refused to "furnish" or provide them credit. Mortgages left them at the mercy of their creditors. Small operators lived under constant threat of foreclosure and eviction. The wages for farm laborers ran as low as fifty cents a day for men and twenty-five cents for women.

Local farmers sent a letter to the Southern Worker in Chattanooga, asking that organizers be sent to help them build a union. The Party responded and sent several people, among them Mack Coad, a Black steelworker. Coad, arriving at the scene, met with the Gray brothers--Ralph and Tom--and other local leaders. It was decided that a meeting should be called for July 16, at Mary's Church near Camp Hill, to protest the Scottsboro convictions. Included in the agenda of the meeting would be plans for organizing a union around the minimum demands of the tenants. The most immediate aim was to force the landlords to increase the quantity of "furnishings" through the winter, and double the wages of plantation laborers. A last minute arrangement committee of the leaders met the night before, on July 15.

The county sheriff and local gentry were aware of the defiant moods among the sharecroppers. The sheriff had been tipped off by a local stoolpigeon that an outside agitator was in the area and that radical meetings were being held. The same stoolpigeon informed them about the meeting of leaders on July 15. He and his deputies, seeking the "outside," raided the meeting. They found that they were all from Tallapoosa County, and they convinced the sheriff that the meeting

was just a harmless get-together and that they knew nothing about an outside organizer.

The next night, July 16, the sheriff and his deputies approached the meeting, where they were confronted by Ralph Gray, who had been posted as a picket. Shots were exchanged in which both Gray and the sheriff were wounded. The sheriff and his deputies fled back to town, where a posse was formed amidst cries of "communist-inspired Negro rebellion, and a manhunt began.

In the ensuing battle, five Blacks were wounded in addition to Ralph Gray. A Black cropper helped carry him to his home, where Coad and several other armed Blacks had gathered. The posse approached Gray's home and a battle ensued. The croppers, faced with overwhelming odds, decided to disperse. Gray, however, refused to be removed to safety and insisted upon "dying in his own home!" The croppers insisted that Coad must flee and helped him to escape to Atlanta. Gray's home was riddled with bullets by the posse and when they broke in, he was found dead.

In addition to the wounded, thirty more Blacks were finally rounded up and arrested in the manhunt that followed.

The brutal repression following Camp Hill did not crush the movement; the union regrouped underground and continued to grow. By spring 1932, the union claimed 500 members, mainly in Tallapoosa and Chambers Counties.

In December 1932, there were shoot-outs in Reeltown in Tallapoosa County involving Cliff James, a union leader in the area. The sheriff had tried to serve a writ of attachment on James's livestock as a result of his landlord's refusing him an extension on a year's rent.

The sharecroppers elected a committee to meet the sheriff and when the latter arrived to seize the property, he found union members armed and barricaded in the house. In the ensuing battles, the sheriff and two deputies were wounded, including James and Milo Bentley. The sharecroppers scattered through the woods. James and Bentley made it to Tuskegee Institute, where according to several accounts, a Black doctor turned them over to the sheriff. They were then taken to Kilby Prison where both men with their wounds untreated were forced to sleep on the cold floor; both subsequently died from exposure.

This shoot-out was followed by mob action and violence exceeding that of the previous year after the Camp Hill affair. A posse of more than 500 men went on a manhunt for Black farm operators and "communist agitators." Mobs raided homes

of union members; several were reported to have been killed or beaten. Many union members fled to the woods for safety and the number of Blacks killed in the four-day rioting was not known.

I was told that some white farmers had hidden Blacks in their homes during the rampages of the sheriff's mobs. At the time, I was told by someone that the racists had trouble getting enough men for their posses from Tallapoosa County and had to go outside the county to recruit vigilantes.

The bodies of the two men were laid out in Birmingham, draped in broad red ribbons decorated by the hammer and sickle. The Daily Worker reported:

Day and night, a guard of honor, composed of Negro and white workers, stood at attention by the coffins. The funeral home was filled with flowers and wreaths...Thousands of workers filed past the coffins to pay tribute to the martyred leaders of the sharecroppers.

Some 3,000 people attended the funeral, 150 of whom were whites.

Again terror failed to suppress the union. Despite the arrest of some of its most active members, union members and sympathizers pured into Dadeville (the county seat) before dawn on the day of the trial of those arrested. The courtroom was filled and the crowd overflowed into the square. On the second day of the trial, roadblocks were put up and whites filled the courthouse to prevent Blacks from attending. Nevertheless, Blacks came along the by-passes and across streams, demanding to be seated. The judge was put on the spot and requested the whites to clear half the courtroom. The trial resulted in the sentencing and conviction of those accused.

The union nevertheless continued to grow and by 1933 had 3,000 members, including a few whites. Its membership and influence was extending to neighboring counties. The shoot-outs at Camp Hill and Reeltown brought into focus the explosive character of the struggle of the region's Black soil tillers. It revealed that the fight for even the smallest demands by the sharecroppers and tenants could lead to armed conflict. In fact, any demand that would give Blacks a voice in renting and determining wages was regarded as insurrectionary by the local gentry.

It was this explosive feature which distinguished the movement of Black soil tillers from that of the white farmers in the rest of the country or even the South itself. The demands of the Blacks were more revolutionary than those of the whites for they represented the demands of the agrarian and democratic revolutions, left unfinished by the betrayal of Reconstruction....

I left ... in high spirits, more than ever convinced of the correctness of our line; that the Black Belt peasantry under the leadership of the working class

and the Communist Party was the motor of Black rebellion in the deep South. I felt that the Sharecroppers Union was definitely a prototype for the future organization of the Black, landless, debt-ridden and racially persecuted farmers of the area.



## THE COMMUNISTS IN THE UNION ORGANIZING CAMPAIGN (1954)

From the outset the C.I.O., in the formation of which the Communists played a prominent part, took a friendly attitude toward the organization of Negro workers. This, largely influenced by the Communists, was also implicit in industrial unionism which, unlike craft unionism, does not confine itself to unionizing small minorities of the workers but includes all those in a given industry. The C.I.O. early wrote the following inclusive membership clause into its national constitution: it proposed, "To bring about the effective organization of the workingmen and women of America, regardless of race, creed, color, or nationality, and to unite them for common action into labor unions for their mutual aid." All the affiliated C.I.O. unions proceeded upon this general policy....

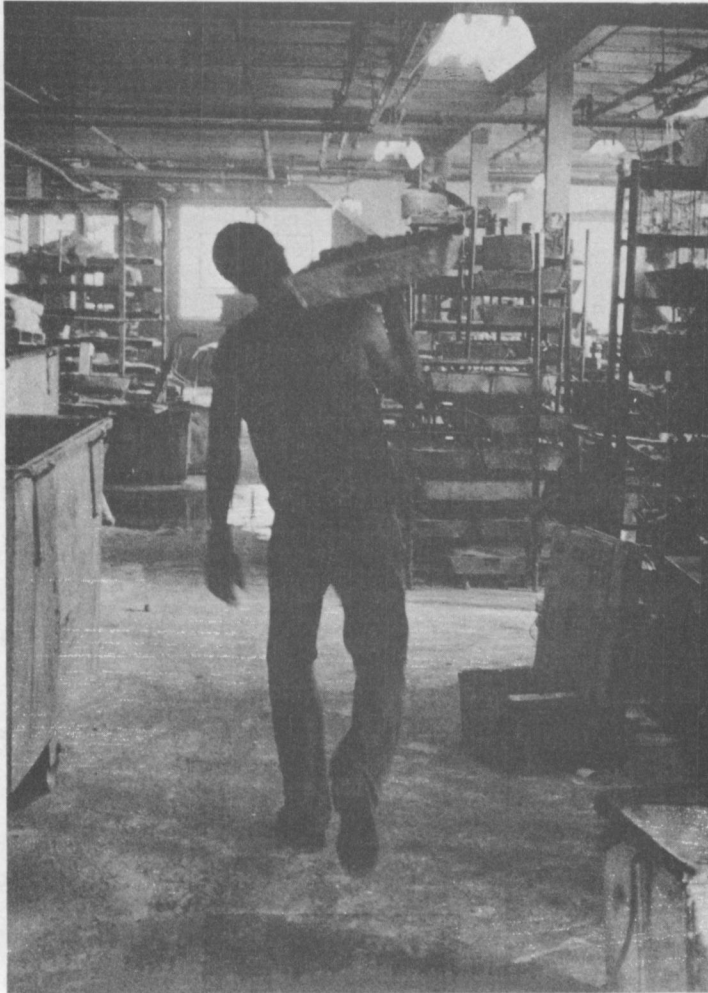
To the Communists and other left-wingers belongs a great deal of credit for the winning of the workers in the basic industries to trade unions during 1936-45, and especially for the successful unionization of the Negro workers. For many years, the Communists were ardent fighters for industrial unionism, when most of the later-to-be C.I.O. conservative leaders were altogether cold to the matter. The Communists prepared the ground for the big drive. The Communists, too, were the most militant of all in supporting the organization of the Negro workers, and at every stage of the great campaign they were on hand to see that proper attention was paid to this hitherto crassly neglected body of workers. And most valuable to the campaign, the Communist Party had long carried on work among the unemployed and other groups throughout the trustified industries, and it had its branches in hundreds of major plants. When the great campaign began, the Communists Party put all these forces at work with its well-known militancy and devotion.

This was a period of the struggle against developing world fascism; and the Communist Party worked freely in formal or informal united front movements with John L. Lewis, Philip Murray, Sidney Hillman, and many other C.I.O. leaders, who were then following a progressive pro-union building, pro-Roosevelt, anti-fascist course. The Communists and other left-wing forces became a major factor in building the C.I.O. Alinsky, semi-official biographer of John L. Lewis, says that "Then, as is now commonly known, the Communists worked indefatigably...They literally poured themselves completely into their assignments...The fact is that the Communist Party made a major contribution to the organization of the unorganized for the C.I.O." About one-third of the C.I.O. organizing staff in steel were Communists. The generally progressive position taken by the C.I.O. during these years was very

largely due to the influence of Communists and other left-wing forces in its ranks.

Characteristic of the special attention paid by the Communists to the Negro workers was the conference, principally of Negro organizations, held in Pittsburgh on February 6, 1937, to stimulate the unionization of the Negro steel workers. This important gathering was organized by the well-known Negro Communist, Benjamin L. Careathers, then a paid organizer on the staff of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. Present at the conference were 186 delegates, representing 110 organizations. Many leading national Negro figures attended. The conference was a potent factor in the successful organizing of this great industry. Similar activities were carried on in auto and the other industries involved in this historic organizing campaign.

In 1938, at the height of this movement, the Communist Party had some 75,000 members, a potent force under the circumstances. Of these 14% were Negroes. Such a large body of Negroes in a Marxist party was unique in United States history. The Party's prestige among the Negro masses may be gauged from the fact that in a recruiting campaign a few years later, in 1944, which brought in 24,000 members, about 7,000 of them were Negroes.



## ORGANIZING A REVOLUTIONARY BLACK WORKERS VANGUARD

**133**

## (A) Black Workers' Congress (1977)

The Black Workers' Congress was formed on December 12, 1970, when people who had been members of black workers' groups in various cities such as the League of Revolutionary Black Workers joined together with other black activists, students, and revolutionary intellectuals to form a black revolutionary communist organization. It was originally planned that the League should constitute one of the major components of the Congress. However, internal dissension kept the League from forming any formal ties. Cockrel, Hamlin, and Watson joined as individuals after the split in the League in June 1971. The Congress was active in organizing campaigns across the nation. They hoped that by the end of 1971 they would be in a position to build a mass anti-imperialist movement in the ghetto but they got bogged down in an internal ideological struggle. The struggle continued throughout 1972 and early 1973 limiting their ability to make headway. The Congress was initially dominated by Forman's "cadre/mass" notion in which it was to be simultaneously a cadre and a mass party. This meant that there would be uneven development within the organization. An attempt was made to build a mass organization within which were cadres of politically educated Marxists-Leninists. This was expected to be reminiscent of the League structure. In both cases the executive committee was largely, but not entirely, comprised of a politically advanced cadre while the central staff included both cadre and less politically sophisticated activists.

This concept was challenged. It was argued that excessive concern with masses of people who were not committed, aware Marxists-Leninists allowed the level of organizational activity to degenerate into mass antiwar activities. There was a demand for a restriction of membership so that the Congress would be a cadre organization in which all members had a conscious understanding of Marxism-Leninism. More and more time was taken up in endless internal discussions and less and less actual organizational work got done....

The Congress continued to evolve. In mid 1973 it came to believe that the communist movement must be a multinational movement, that some black Communists must be in multinational parties, but that there must also be separate black communist parties on the order of the Congress. The evolution continued so that by mid-1974 the Congress was itself a multinational communist party. It no longer believed that it was theoretically correct for a communist movement to organize along strictly national lines.



## (B) The Political Line of BWC (1974)

Despite oppression, exploitation and racial discrimination, the out-right murder and imprisonment of our peoples by a handful of racist-imperialists, the Black liberation movement has kept on pushing, like a powerful train headed for freedom. Through hundreds of years of unremitting struggle the Black liberation movement has been steadily maturing despite the class forces that have held the reign of leadership. In recent times the most important and significant trend has been the dramatic awakening of the Black working class in its fight for its own independent organization and ideological and political leadership of the Black struggle. The Black Bourgeoisie (Uncle Toms) has already proven to the masses of Black people that it is incapable of leading the great struggle for Black emancipation, and not only are these "Toms" incapable of leading the struggle, they themselves have proven to be one of its moral enemies.

The main forces of the Black liberation movement are the Black proletariat, Black youth, revolutionary intellectuals and students, and other revolutionary nationalists in the Black community, with the Black proletariat in the lead as the key and most thorough-going revolutionary class. The political task of the Black liberation movement is complete emancipation of Black people through a revolutionary union with the entire U.S. working class, of which it is an important part, to overthrow capitalism and imperialism in the U.S. In a word, Black liberation today means freedom for Black people through proletarian revolution.

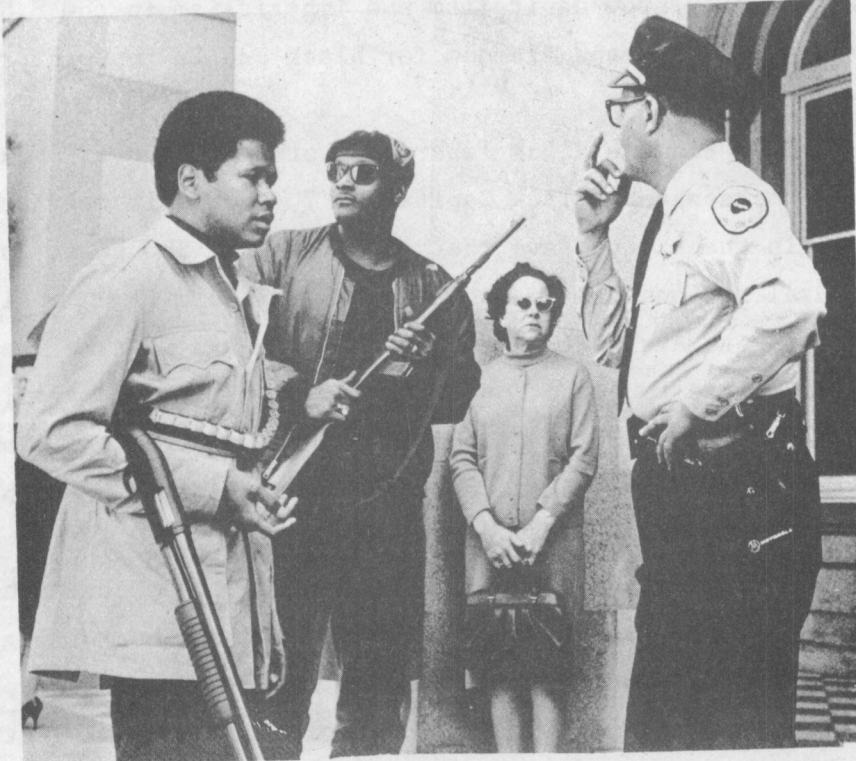
Which road should the Black liberation struggle travel? Should it take the road of Jesse Jackson and "Black Capitalism"? Should it rely on Mr. Muhammad and Allah's wheel in the sky to save the Black Masses? Should it take the "pork chop" road of cultural nationalism Imamu Barakaism? Should it dream with Stokely Carmichael of returning to Africa to "free Ghana"? Should it take the road of electing the black Bourgeoisie to puppet, show-front, positions of mayor, City-councilman, Legislators, and Congressmen? Or should it take the road of "Pan-Africanism", where the Black masses are asked to play "first aid" for the liberation struggles in Africa? Of all these "roads" which one is correct?

Anyone who takes a serious look at the world today cannot help but see that oppressed and exploited peoples are locked in a death-bed struggle against international capitalism. Who can deny that the major enemy of the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, are a gang of international imperialists, headed by the two "super-powers", the U.S. and the Soviet Union? Who are the murderers of the

miners of South Africa? The peasants and workers of Vietnam? The Attica Brothers? The people of Chile? The Indians at Wounded Knee? Who is responsible for police brutality in Detroit? In Chicago? In Atlanta? Who benefits from the high price of bread and meat? Who benefits from the lowest possible wages?

Whether we like it or not our position in the world as an oppressed people does not allow us to follow the bankrupt road of U.S. imperialism which is heading for its doom. In the present international situation, the Black masses must line up with the heroic peoples of the world who have struck blow after blow at imperialism, or we must line up with the imperialists themselves who send their puppets into the Black communities to preach "Black Capitalism." There is not their path.

Only the Black proletariat deserves to lead the Black liberation movement. As far as we are concerned, none of the other classes in the Black community can do it. If none of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois "isms" cited above is capable of lighting the road for the Black liberation struggle, then what is? We say it is Marxism-Leninism and the Thought of Mao Tse Tung. All those who genuinely (in word and deed) take up Marxism-Leninism and Mao's Thought and put it into practice are communists. Chairman Mao runs it down like this: "Communism is at once a complete system of proletarian ideology and a new social system. It is different from any other ideology and social system, and is the most complete, progressive, revolutionary and rational system in human history." (New Democracy)



Two members of the Black Panther Party on the steps of the state capitol in California.

## THE BLACK LIBERATION MOVEMENT (BLM): WHERE IT MUST GO (1976)

The struggle of black people for their liberation is a struggle in the interests of the overwhelming majority of mankind. The Black people can in no way achieve complete liberation without first overthrowing U.S. imperialism. Since 1964, the concrete conditions and the level of struggle has qualitatively changed and a leap has occurred from the bourgeois-democratic demand of civil rights to the demands of armed struggle, revolution and socialism. This is the new feature of the BLM and the general working class movement in this country.

In the process of grinding U.S. imperialism into the dirt, the entire working class and its allied will be brought into the fight and will see that they can never be fully liberated unless they give all out support to the BLM. This, of course, will tie U.S. imperialism down on its own home ground and make it less capable of sending its troops to suppress other oppressed peoples fighting for their liberation.

There is no question that the racial oppression of Black people has acted as a motive force for black people to identify with oppressed peoples of the Third World. And, to a great degree, this identity is based on color oppression. We view this identity, based on color oppression, as an integral part of the worldwide class struggle and class unity of the oppressed peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, against imperialism and colonialism. It is a positive force that has contributed to raising the class consciousness of the black masses.

It is U.S. imperialism that has taken over and developed, to a high degree, racism and white supremacy, pushed it to an international level and used it as an instrument of class and national oppression. And it is a fact that, in the contemporary world, the number one class enemy of the oppressed peoples of the world is the U.S. imperialist system, that has always been represented by a class that represents white racism.

Therefore, the struggle of the black masses is an integral part of the struggle of the revolutionary peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Because of the peculiar development of the black people in this country, their movement has characteristics of a national liberation struggle. Yet the struggle of the industrial proletariat is a struggle for the overthrow of the fascist bourgeoisie, for socialism and for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Therefore, the BLM will be a united front comprised of workers, farmers, stu-

dents, and sections of the petty-bourgeoisie. It will adopt those relevant characteristics of a national liberation movement and will be led by the entire working class and its Marxist-Leninist party.

The Black women comprise half of black population and are in a strategic position to push the revolution forward. There can be no proletarian revolution in the U.S. unless the power and strength of black women is brought into full play.

Therefore, the BLM must have as one of its major tasks the defeat of male chauvinism and the complete liberation of black women.

Because of the numerical weakness of black people and their need and desire to bring the strength of the entire working class into full play as part of its working class emancipation process, the BLM will not, by itself, attempt to defeat U.S. imperialism, even though it will play a leading role. It must organize and unite whoever it can on a principled basis.

In many respects, other oppressed minorities such as Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans and other Hispanic people have also suffered at the hands of U.S. imperialism to the same degree and in much the same way that Black people have.

Therefore, it is in the fundamental interests of the liberation of the entire working class that there be unity of all oppressed minorities. Only when the oppressed minorities can unite with the white workers can the entire working class unite and achieve its liberation.

White racism is a noose around the neck of the entire working class in the U.S. It stifles their political, economic, and social development. This racism prevents the working class from fighting as a "class-for-itself." It reduces the sharpness of the class struggle and gives U.S. imperialism a little added room to roam the globe in its attempts to oppress the peoples of the world. It is a stumbling block in the path of black people in their fight for liberation.

Therefore, one of the foremost tasks of the proletarian revolution is the defeat of white racism, and its partner, national chauvinism, through sharp class struggle, political education and ideological remoulding.

U.S. imperialism is the most vicious and ruthless system that have ever existed on the face of the earth. Its murderous drive for maximum and super profits knows no bounds. As has been demonstrated for over 300 years, it will not hesitate to maim, rape, murder and massacre to achieve its ends. The oppressed peoples of the world and the oppressed workers in the U.S. can no more "peacefully co-exist" with U.S. imperialism than a sheep with a wolf!

Therefore, the only correct strategy for the revolutionary movement is armed struggle adopted to the concrete conditions of a highly concentrated industrial country.

And finally, none of the above can be accomplished without two fundamental ingredients--the science of Marxism-Leninism, applied to the concrete conditions of the U.S. and a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary party.



TWO LINES IN THE BLACK LIBERATION MOVEMENT:

RACE THEORY VERSUS CLASS STRUGGLE

(1973)

# 135

The aftermath of our historic conference at Pann Center in Frogmore, S.C. has resulted in the sharpening of our struggle to develop a clearly stated ideological position.

In fact, this was called for in our great document unanimously adopted at the conference:

Active criticism and ideological struggle are the weapons and the way of ensuring that brothers and sisters within ALSC build strong organizational unity. Non-antagonistic contradictions within the committee can only be resolved through active ideological and political struggle based on principle. The basis of such struggle will ensure us a higher unity. Such a unity based on "unity, struggle, unity" will cement organizational unity and correct our political direction. If errors are left by themselves, organizational unity, strength and direction will not be achieved.

This struggle reached a high point at the expanded second executive committee session convened in Washington, D.C., on October 12, 1973. After an extended discussion of the ALSC Statement of Principles several criticisms of it were listed as major road-blocks to ideological unity. This paper was called for by the executive committee to respond to the criticisms and move our ideological unity to a higher level.

Two lines have emerged in ALSC: on the executive committee, in the regions, and on the local level. They represent two different theoretical positions, two different sets of concrete programs and are based on two different class realities. One is a pure race theory. The other is the theory of class struggle with a correct analysis of racial oppression, with a program of mass involvement based on the necessary leadership of the Black working class.

Race Theory. This position holds that all Black people are the same, and race is the single most important fact of life. Since history is characterized by the struggle of one race to dominate another, the racial factor is the basis of historical change. If there are any important distinctions that exist between Black people they are the degree to which Black people associate with white people. For example, the only important difference between a Black steel worker and a Black corporate attorney is that the attorney probably went to an integrated school and has become more like white people. All attempts to base an analysis on "objective" class differences is considered divisive and not in the interest of Black people, although in fact the differences do exist.

Also, this position believes that all white people are the same, equating the Rockefellers, Mellons, Morgans and DuPonts with the average white working class. The recent struggles against the war, on the campus, in the plants and the truck drivers' highway blockades, suggest that some concrete differences do exist and must be understood if we are serious about improving the lives of Black people by fundamentally changing the structure of this society.

On the question of imperialism: This race approach attacks the foreign extension of imperialism while ignoring its primary base as monopoly capitalism

in the USA. Some Black congressmen will make speeches against the role of U.S. corporations in Southern Africa, but will refuse to condemn their practices here at home and be friendly beneficiaries of campaign funds from those same corporations. Our Statement of Principles says: "The world imperialist system festers in Africa and Asia and engulfs the Western Hemisphere as well. In the United States we know it as monopoly capitalism, in Africa it is imperialism in its colonial or neo-colonial form."

According to this race approach the ALSC Statement of Principles is a divisive document, for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Because it separates Black people into classes,
2. Because it emphasizes imperialism more than racism,
3. Because it uses language that was originated by someone else and not by Black people, and
4. Because it emphasizes the USA too much and Africa not enough.

Theory of Class Struggle. This line holds that the motive force of history is the class struggle. Classes are large groups of people united by common interests based upon having the same relationship to the means of production--land and technology. Some folks own the land and technology (capitalists) while others must work for them in order to get wages to live (workers). The class struggle is based on the irreconcilable conflict of the capitalists' efforts to maintain the highest level of exploitation of the workers to reap profits, while workers struggle to increase wages and get better working conditions. Indeed, this class struggle is the basis of all struggles in this type of society because the capitalists control all the institutions (government, education, the church, mass media, etc.), and the workers are oppressed, mistreated and brutalized by these same institutions.

The capitalist mode of production has developed from its early stage of competitive capitalism to its mature stage of monopoly capitalism. This is the transition from many small capitalist firms to a few large firms dominating each industry. Monopoly capitalism is the dominant character of economic life in the USA. For example, in many industries there are four giant corporations which produce most of the products: motor vehicles--79 per cent, rubber tires--71 per cent, aircraft--67 per cent and steel--64 per cent. While there are 12,000 oil producers in the USA, eight firms account for 51 per cent of all the oil produced.

Black people are organized into classes as are all people in a capitalist

society. The small minority of Black businessmen constitute the capitalist class while the vast majority of Black people are wage-salaried workers. The Black capitalist is usually a competitive capitalist, and made to appear insignificant due to the gigantic size of the monopoly corporations. However, the objective condition is that some Black people have large enough businesses to hire and exploit five to seven hundred workers. These workers create more wealth than they receive as wages, the difference is then realized as profit. Being a little Black capitalist does not alter the situation: the profit motive is still the driving force of any capitalist, especially since increasing the exploitation of labor is the basis for increasing profits.

Moreover, class struggle takes on different forms: classes in conflict within a capitalist society, colonized peoples in conflict with a colonizing country, and oppressed nations in conflict with oppressor nations. The essence of these conflicts is the struggle against exploitation, due to the fact that racial and national factors are instruments of class exploitation. The critical issue here is how the capitalists, specifically the monopoly capitalists, are able to reap super-profits by compounding the exploitation of Black workers with racism. Racism does two things: (1) It pits the white masses against Black people because of a perceived threat to their economic security (and, due to white supremacist propaganda, because of a perceived threat to their person, children, home, etc.); (2) it pits the Black masses against all white people because racism had taken an almost "apartheid" form until the 1960's, and lingers til this day for the Black working class, including less work, less pay for harder work and poorer living conditions (education, health, housing and food). So racism pits the two broad masses of working people against each other; and in the process the ruling class profits even more by this and gets away without answering to any charges.

So our line of class struggle holds that the ALSC Statement of Principles is not a divisive document but in fact is a decisive historical document. As contrasted with the Race Theory outlined above, our line is clearly an alternative:

1. Because the only basis on which to build a united front is by recognizing the objective differences that exist within the Black community, and developing a common program that most Black people can unite around in a principled way;
2. Because it recognizes that imperialism is the basic economic structure



of advanced capitalist societies (USA, Canada, Western Europe, Japan, Israel), and is the cause of their exploitation of the third world and that racism is an ideological and societal pattern based on imperialism;

3. Because it utilizes objective scientific language that analyzes objective material reality; and
4. Because it is clear that imperialism is a worldwide system headquartered in the USA with its tentacles throughout every country in Africa and the Caribbean.

These two lines reflect the basic tendencies of the total Black liberation struggle at this time, and therefore the fundamental issue is larger than ALSC. These two lines reflect a long historical struggle that goes back over two hundred years, and involves all areas of life. There are manifestations of these lines in economics, politics, education, Africa, the world revolution, etc. Therefore we must understand each tendency and struggle to unite all who can be united. This paper is written from a position of FULL SUPPORT of the Statement of Principles, the ideological basis of our united front. We present this paper to all ALSC members for a full review in order to consolidate our united front around clearly understood principles.

[Several criticisms have been raised about the document, "Toward the Ideological Unity of the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). One is that] "the document used 'Marxist' or 'Left-Wing' language. This is a criticism that is hard to deal with since it is not entirely clear what specific language is being challenged, nor exactly for what reasons. However, it is possible to develop the discussion in a general way. The ALSC Research and Development Committee has developed a list of concepts that represent the basic content of the Statement of Principles:

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Racism                | 20. Political-Police-Military<br>Repression |
| 2. Imperialism           | 21. Cultural Aggression                     |
| 3. Monopoly Capitalism   | 22. African Liberation Struggles            |
| 4. Colonialism           | 23. Independent African<br>Countries        |
| 5. Neo-colonialism       | 24. Dialogue with South Africa              |
| 6. Portuguese Oppression |   |
| 7. Guinea-Bissau         |   |

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 8. Angola  | 25. International Crisis of Capitalism |
| 9. Mozambique  | 26. Corruption in Government           |
| 10. NATO   | 27. United Front                       |
| 11. Police State South Africa                        | 28. Unity of Theory & Practice         |
| 12. Namibia  | 29. Black Liberation Movement          |
| 13. Zimbabwe   | 30. Criticism and Ideological Struggle |
| 14. Multi-National Corporation                       | 31. Struggle for Democratic Rights     |
| 15. Resettlement Schemes                             | 32. Armed Revolutionary Struggle       |
| 16. Run-Away Shops                                   | 33. Black workers take the Lead        |
| 17. Expansionist Policies of South Africa and Israel | 34. Black Middle Strata                |
| 18. Problems on the Job                              | 35. Black Youth                        |
| 19. Cutbacks in Social Services                      | 36. Principled                         |

These terms are precise and scientific. They clearly sum up the concrete conditions lived by Black people in the USA, Canada, Africa and the Caribbean, in such a way that progressive people throughout the world would understand with no difficulty. It is important that our language be scientific and not vague, because the truth can be a weapon in the hands of the righteous but false words will always betray those who bear them.

Again, a measure of our line being correct is the unanimous use of this language by the great revolutionaries of the twentieth century. Amilcar Cabral is a good example of this:

The destruction of colonialism and the struggle against imperialism constitutes one of the outstanding characteristics of our times. The intensive development of capitalism in the second half of the nineteenth century, based on monopolies and the competition for raw materials, led to the first great partition of the globe at the turn of the century. Africa was divided among half a dozen European powers, principally England, France and Germany. Having overcome the African peoples by force, they began to steal the material and human wealth of our continent through war and the technical superiority of their means of production.

But imperialism or the monopolistic stage of capitalism, could not escape its own contradictions, and after World War I, the victorious powers proceeded to a new division of the globe, characterized in particular by strengthening of the colonial positions of England and France and by the exclusion of Germany from direct exploitation of African peoples and countries. During the final phase of that global conflict, the victory of the October Revolution, leading to the final implantation of socialism over one-sixth of the world's land area, dealt the first great blow to imperialism.

Deprived of sources for raw materials and excess profits, German financiers devoted their capital, allied with that of Italy and Japan, to an effort to solve the problem the shortest way: by colonizing the European nations themselves. Although World War II was the result of that antagonism characterizing the development of imperialism it decisively

influenced the destiny of peoples, principally of African peoples. Along with the strengthening in the socialist camp--another outstanding characteristic of our times--dependent peoples were awakened to the fight for liberation; the final phase in the liquidation of imperialism was thus begun. Since arriving at the final solution of this new conflict may take some time, there is no doubt that the outstanding characteristic--let us say, the principal motivating force--of the history being made now is something more than the class struggle in capitalist countries. That force is the fight for liberation being waged by colonial peoples; that fight, that conflict on three continents, integrates our struggle for national liberation against Portuguese colonialism.

These words are based on the same scientific language used by such heroes of humanity as Sekou Toure, Kwame Nkrumah, W. E. B. DuBois, Frantz Fanon, Julius Nyerere, Patrice Lumumba, Lenin, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro, Kim Il Sung and countless others. They do not all agree on every point, but can reach high levels of understanding based on a common scientific language.

This problem-area forces us to turn the question around. If we don't use this language [that is]

- A. Proven scientific and precise;
- B. Used by all great revolutionaries of the 20th century;
- C. And used by all of the African liberation organizations and progressive organizations in the Caribbean;

then what language do we use?

# 136

The only goal that can cure the ills of this society--this center of the capitalist system--is a socialist revolution. I believe our task is to make a socialist revolution right here in the USA. There can be no solution under capitalism, although the bourgeois ruling class will make every effort to convince us that it is possible. If that doesn't work they will encourage correct-sounding socialist ideologies that fall short of scientific socialism or consciously revise its basic tenets. All ideologies have a class character--scientific socialism serves the working class--utopian socialism can easily be used by the ruling class. Both of these schemes have been met head on, but not as decisively as we must do in the coming period.

Socialism is a social-economic formation that is designed to overcome the ills of capitalism, and results from the internal development of the laws of

capitalist motion. There develops three major aspects of the general crisis of capitalism.

1. Concentration of capital by an increasingly smaller bourgeois class who appropriates wealth privately while wealth is the social product of larger and larger groups of people. This is the class character of the crisis in the economy. More and more people get less and less of a share in the wealth produced. This leads to a degeneration of all aspects of social life--food, housing, health, education, etc.--all are attacked.

2. Militarization of the State to rule over the masses and maintain order for the ruling class. This results in foreign wars of aggression like Vietnam, and domestic fascist plots like those of Nixon, Hoover, Haldeman, Erlichman and their whole gang. Political corruption, surveillance of civilians by the armed forces, police repression, capital punishment, are all indicators of this rule by the State in the interest of the capitalist class.

3. Intensification of national oppression by which the ruling class asserts its need to separate the Black and white sectors of the working class in order to prevent the development of the unified and class conscious multinational proletariat. This takes the form of Black and white race theorists reasserting the old 19th century arguments, cut-backs in all government services in the Black community, generally more of all the evil that capitalism represents for Black people.

The solution of scientific socialism speaks directly to these three aspects of the general crisis:

1. The Abolition of Private Property by which the production and distribution of wealth would be a public ownership process, centrally planned to systematically provide for the welfare of all of the people.

2. Dictatorship of the Proletariat by which the government apparatus and all agencies, institutions and organizations would reflect the interests of the working class--the rule of the entire proletariat.

3. National liberation and the right of nations to self-determination reflects the solution to national oppression only possible under socialism. All forms of national oppression can be stopped as official policy because they serve no material interests as they did under capitalism. A divided proletariat is good for capitalism, a united proletariat is good for socialism. Lenin summed up the only correct policy possible:

For different nations to live together in peace and freedom, or to separate and form different states (if that is more convenient for them), a full democracy upheld by the working class, is essential. No privileges for any one nation or any one language, not the slightest injustice in respect of a national minority--such are the principles of working class democracy.

These are the basic aspects of scientific socialism for beginning to correct the ills of capitalism. But make no mistake about the nature of the bourgeois class--they are the greatest murderers in the history of mankind. The struggle for socialism will require a political, social, cultural, intellectual, and an armed phase before and after the seizure of power by the working class. Check out the fascist rule today in South Vietnam, and Chile, in Asia, and Latin America. Of course, we are all familiar with the barbaric rule of capital in South Africa--fascism is limited to no national identity but is always possible with imperialism.

So we must keep the true nature of our problem in focus, and also keep the maximum program of socialist revolution as our banner for decisive struggle. But it would be adventurism for us to expect immediate results in one giant leap. It could be in violation of our basic theoretical principle that historical motion forward goes through stages of development.

So our minimum program for day-to-day struggle is summed up in the key concepts of defense, democracy and development. We must defend Black workers from the attacks of monopoly capital and by so doing protect the interest of the entire Black community and the working class. We must fight for the democratic participation of rank and file Black workers inside of the trade union movement, and by so doing raise the banner of democracy for all people in the society denied their rights by the ruling class. We must work toward the development of tools of struggle, organizations that mould the Black working class into a fighting class conscious section of the proletariat, organizations that mould Black youth into a vital revolutionary force capable of giving concrete material support to the struggle of Black workers and the struggle for democratic education.

All of this must be focused at the Black working class, whether directly by uniting or indirectly by struggling in the interests of the Black workers. If Black workers' struggle moves to a higher level there will be an intensification of both working class struggle and the Black liberation struggle, because Black workers will fight simultaneously against class exploitation and national oppression.

It might be helpful to give concrete examples of what this minimum program of defense, democracy and development for the Black working class is all about.

A. On the Job: In the United Steelworkers of America Union with over 4,000 locals and 1.2 million members, the bureaucratic leadership under I. W. Abel sold out the interests of the basic steel rank and file by agreeing to a sweetheart contract with a no strike provision. This denies the rank and file of their democratic rights and leaves them virtually defenseless against the onslaught of the corporations. In Nashville, the Aladdin Industries Corporation, producers of plastic products, has Victor Johnson for a president--he is on the Board of Meharry Medical College (Black) and is a financial stalwart in Nixon's camp. This plant is organized by the Steelworkers, though they are not in basic steel. They have been out on strike ten weeks, and there is a solidarity committee giving support. They see it not as just a local shop, but as part of the struggle of all workers--Black and white in opposition to corporate interests. While the majority of workers are white, the ruling class organized students and unemployed Blacks to "scab." The Black leadership of the solidarity committee was able to effectively move against this motion and build unity between workers and students.

B. In the Community: Almost every Black community has been the object of police repression or capital punishment, particularly aimed at Black youth. This type of issue has been the active concern of ALSC in Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee. Since this type of issue normally results after a terrorist act of the police the ultimate aim of defending the Black community requires the development of an organization of struggle and a relentless campaign to make the governmental agencies of justice democratic. A good example of this is the Nashville Coalition Against Police Repression. Our line was put forward in a speech by the Coalition chairperson.

The Coalition Against Police Repression is a movement for democracy and justice in a land that has never been democratic and just. The Coalition is a peoples front, a unity movement that unites all class elements and social groups to fight the racist violent tactics of a police state apparatus. This instrument of state power has thrived on the murder of Black people, especially working class Black youth. We must have Justice and we must have it now. We must have a responsive system of police, a police system based in the community it serves, and sensitive to overcoming the horrible torture and terror of the past. We have been slaves in the past, and we continue to be treated as slaves today. We must have Justice and we must have it now.

The Coalition is a unity movement that has as its purpose advancing the struggle for democracy. When we say a unity coalition, we mean every segment of the Black community, but most of all we mean uniting the elements that have not been united, and mobilizing those that are not in motion. This means uniting the campus and the community, uniting students and workers, labor and professionals, everybody in the struggle for Justice, Peace and Freedom.

In sum, the problem of the police is the problem of class exploitation and racial oppression. The police are poor working class people who are exploited by the ruling class, although they themselves are killing us in the interest of the ruling class. The white working class failed to recognize Black people as their allies during the Reconstruction, during the great depression, and now during the reign of King Richard of Watergate there is another chance. The ruling class wanted to make the issues seem like Black and white issues--they want our movement to be based on Black hatred of white people. But we are not going to fall for it. We are not going to allow the fool mad dog cop who murdered our brother to misguide us. He is not the enemy, he too is a victim. The real enemy is the business interests, the king makers, the ruling class.

C. On the Campus: The defense of Black students is critical. In Nashville we have just had the struggle of the United Front to Save Tennessee State University in defense of the democratic rights of Black people to a college education. We developed a viable form in the Front--consisting of over 15 different organizations. The major struggle, once again, was between the ruling class making it appear as if it is a racial conflict rather than a class conflict. Our struggle was to fight against the merger of T.S.U., and for a just equitable system. It would be rational and just to preserve T.S.U. Our struggle was an integral part of the National Save and Change Black Schools Project.

We have discussed the four major questions set out at the beginning of this presentation.

1. What is our problem? The principal contradiction is the class contradiction with the dominant class relationship being the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. The key place of Black workers in the whole proletariat is the basis for the two secondary contradictions between Black and white workers, and between classes in the Black community. National oppression and class exploitation are linked in dialectical unity, as are class struggle and Black liberation.

2. Who are our friends? Who are our enemies? The functions of our answer must serve to "Unite the many to defeat the few." We see the capitalist class and their high petty bourgeois officials and lackeys as our antagonistic enemies. And we see the unity of the objective interests between the Black sector of the working class and the entire proletariat, between Black workers and the Black community. And we must struggle decisively to win over the middle strata to in-

increase the ranks of our movement.

3. What is the correct program for change?

- a. The maximum program for change is socialist revolution in which one simultaneously engages in the class struggle and the struggle for Black liberation. Neither is possible without the other.
- b. The minimum program for change is the struggle for defense, democracy and development in the interests of Black people and the working class. On every issue, in every community to do this will be to both advance the struggle of all workers and fight national oppression in the interests of all Black people.

4. What are the similarities and differences with Africa?

- a. The similarities hinge on the common enemy of imperialism, especially U.S. imperialism, and the fact that every struggle is in essence a class struggle.
- b. The differences are in the content and form of the class struggle-- especially levels of social and economic development, forms of political structure and struggle, and the character of the national oppression.

In any case, Black people in the USA have a special historical link with Africa and should always defend her interests standing with her through all her struggles against oppression and exploitation. Of course, we are the descendants of the children of Africa!

Now after that broad ideological summary of my position the last question is what do we do?

1. Always engage in a serious study of the science of revolutionary theory....
2. Build local coalitions of struggle especially to defend the interests of Black workers in the plants, communities, and schools....
3. From the local base of struggle maintain an active link to the anti-imperialist movement....
4. Build a revolutionary party of the working class, guided by the science of Marxism-Leninism and dedicated to fighting sham distortions of these principles in individuals, organizations, or pseudo-revolutionary parties.



1. A-rise, ye pris'ners of star-va-tion! A-rise, ye wretched of the earth,  
 2. We want no condescending sav-ors, To rule us from a judgment hall.

For justice thunders con-dem-na-tion, A bet-ter world's in birth.  
 We workers ask not for their fa-vors; Let us con-sult for all.

No more tru-di-tion's chains shall bind us, A-rise, ye slaves! no more in thrall!  
 To make the thief disgorge his booty, To free the spir-it from its cell,

The earth shall rise on new foundations, We has been aught, we shall be all  
 We must ourselves decide our du-ty, We must de-cide and do it well.

REFRAIN.

'Tis the fi-nal con-sult, Let each stand in his place,  
 C'est la lut-te fi-na-le Grou-pous-nous et de-main,

The in-ter-na-tional Shall be the hu-man race,  
 L'in-ter-na-tio-na-le Se-ra le genre hu-main!

'Tis the fi-nal con-sult, Let each stand in his place,  
 C'est la lut-te fi-na-le, Grou-pous-nous et de-main,

The in-ter-na-tional Shall be the hu-man race,  
 L'in-ter-na-tio-na-le Se-ra le genre hu-main!

3

The law oppresses us and tricks us,  
 Taxation drains the victim's blood;  
 The rich are free from obligations,  
 The laws the poor delude.

Too long we've languished in subjection,  
 Equality has other laws:  
 "No rights," says she, "without their duties,  
 No claims on equals without cause."

4

Behold them seated in their glory,  
 The kings of mine and mill and soil!  
 What have you read in all their story,  
 But how they plundered toil?

Fruits of the people's work are burled  
 In the strong coffers of a few;  
 In voting for their restitution  
 The men will only ask their due.

5

Toilers from shops and fields united,  
 The party we of all who work;  
 The earth belongs to us, the people,  
 No room here for the shirk.  
 How many on our flesh have fattened!  
 But if the noisome birds of prey  
 Shall vanish from the sky some morning,  
 The blessed sunlight still will stay.

## Supplementary Readings for Marxism and Black Liberation

1. China Books and Periodicals. Send for a free catalogue or visit the following locations: San Francisco - 2929 24th Street, 94110, New York - 125 5th Avenue, 10003 and Chicago - 174 West Randolph, 60606.
2. Benjamin Davis, Communist Councilman From Harlem.
3. William Z. Foster, History of the Communist Party of the United States, 1952.
4. Philip S. Foner, American Socialism and Black Americans: From the Age of Jackson to World War II, 1977.
5. Harry Haywood, Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist, 1978.
6. Angelo Herndon, Let Me Live
7. Marxism and Black Liberation: Theoretical Journal of Peoples College (P.O. Box 7696, Chicago, Illinois 60680). First issue scheduled for Spring 1979. Draft editorial available for review.
8. Party Organizer, Communist, Communist International. Three journals from the revolutionary period of the Communist Party U.S.A. Reprints available from Greenwood Press.
9. Wilson Record, The Negro and the Communist Party, 1951.
10. Harry Selsam, Reader in Marxist Philosophy, 1961.

# Chapter 18

## WHAT PROGRAM WILL LEAD TO BLACK LIBERATION?

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Compare chapter I of Introduction to Afro-American Studies (Volume I) and chapter 18 (Volume II). Describe your reaction to chapter I when you read it as opposed to now (re-reading it seventeen chapters later).
2. Discuss each of the four aspects of the ideological basis of Introduction to Afro-American Studies (Black Experience, Black History, Black Identity, Black Liberation) in terms of the Nationalism versus Marxism debate.
3. What are three key problems facing Black people and what are their historical precedents?
4. How are Black people going to win their freedom?

### KEY CONCEPTS

(list your key concepts for this chapter)

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
 5 \_\_\_\_\_

6 \_\_\_\_\_  
 7 \_\_\_\_\_  
 8 \_\_\_\_\_  
 9 \_\_\_\_\_  
 10 \_\_\_\_\_

The study of the Black experience, as with the study of all aspects of human society, requires that one be clear about basic assumptions and ideological underpinnings guiding the study. More specifically the study of the Black experience in the USA since Black people in the USA have always been exploited and oppressed as a people, requires one to take a stand, to declare a position on this situation. This text, Introduction to Afro-American Studies, is a partisan study guide based on the historical necessity of Black people to fight for their freedom. Moreover, it is designed to support this position, and to develop moral and intellectual commitment from the student, to join in this fight. In other words, the bottom line of this study program is to recruit students to join the fight for the liberation of Black people. Just as teaching national history to the youth of every society (like American History in U.S. high schools) has the function of developing national loyalties and building intellectual reinforcement to patriotism, so Black Studies has the historical task of building the ranks of an army of all nationalities that stand for the liberation of Black people.

Further, since this text is based on a materialist approach and not pie-in-the-sky idealism, it is important to clarify and spell out these problems and solutions to them. The first 17 chapters of Volume I and II do this quite well. The task of this last chapter is to provide a summation of (1) the main ideological aspects of Introduction to Afro-American Studies and (2) the main political trend in the historical development of the Black experience. In addition to these two points of summation, this last chapter will attempt to spell out a methodology for moving from theory to practice, from study to struggle. This last point is key, for as Marx quite aptly put it "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."

#### A. Ideology and Black History

To sum up the ideological orientation of this text it is necessary to ask

several questions: What is the basis of the Black experience? Is change in that experience possible? Who are Black people in the USA? Can Black people be free? These questions are the key ideological bases on which this entire analysis turns.

1. Black Experience: The concrete day-to-day reality of the masses of Black people constitute the Black experience and not what we think about that day-to-day activity. The Black experience is fundamentally grounded in a concrete experience, of all aspects of the society. However, material production (economy) is the main aspect of all society, and therefore the relationship of Black people to the system of material production in this society is the most basic aspect of the Black experience. In other words, the Black experience is an experience based on class experience. This does not mean that Blacks and whites are the same; it means that they have different forms of social existence (like cultural style, forms of social organization), but can have the same class content. An example of this is how the labor movement provided working songs that could be used in the Civil Rights movement in the deep South when the wording was modified, e.g., "Which side are you on boys, which side are you on?"

2. Black History: Everything goes through changes, including the historical experiences of Black people. The pattern of change is based on the conflict of opposing forces, liberation versus oppression, revolution versus exploitation through stages of development. During each stage there is a modal form of social cohesion, bound together by the objective necessity of the material base of the society at that time (the economy) and the political forces of the dominant class/nationality. Between each stage of historical development, there is a period of transition, a time of social disruption, in which one stage is transformed into the next stage. Afro-American History has had three modal stages of development (slavery, rural tenancy, and urban industrial) and three transitions (Atlantic slave trade, Civil War and Reconstruction, and the migration out of the rural

south). The current experience of crisis is leading into a transition during which time the fundamental existence of the capitalist foundation of the USA is being called into question more and more.

3. Black Identity: The damage done by the slave experience is beyond adequate description, but one aspect that can be pointed to is the blow to Black identity.

The application of the preceding two ideological definitions, the Black experience and Black history, provide the basis for a clear view of Black identity. This is important since it provided the focus for considerable struggle during the 1960's, and as with all spontaneous struggles that are not giving revolutionary leadership, idealist interpretations dominated.

Many diverse African peoples were captured as slaves, brought to the new world and moulded into one people, a new people, Afro-Americans. This is the objective case. Conceptually we can distinguish two aspects of identity: referential and participational. Referential identity is a subjective identity developed in relationship to other groups, e.g., in relation to Africa we are African people in the sense that we are descendents from African ancestors. Further, in relation to white people in the USA and the white racism promoted by the imperialist system, Black people exist. In this case, being African through ancestry is a historical affirmation and Black is a political statement of resistance. On the other hand, participational identity is the most important because it reflects the objective process or what one does day in and day out. This is the basis for the concept Afro-American, because Afro-American sums up the nationality factor--being part of and different from the rest of the people in this country.

4. Black Liberation. This question can also best be grasped in the context of the other ideological aspects so that we begin with the concrete experience

that changes. Black liberation is a fight against capitalism, because the basic nature of capitalism can only accommodate those few Blacks allowed to make it to the privileged classes, while the rest of the masses of Black people, just like the masses of people of all other nationalities will be used up in production and fighting imperialist wars and then thrown on the junk heap of the society. Liberation for Black people, and the end of class exploitation for everyone requires the fundamental change in the political economy (system of production) of the USA. As long as capitalism survives, then oppression and exploitation will be as common as dirt.

#### B. Political Line: Reform or Revolution

On the basis of the above summation of the ideological aspects of this text, we can clarify key questions involved in the quest for Black liberation: What problems do Black people face? What are the solutions to these problems? What is the immediate objective that the struggle should focus on? How do we get going?

1. Problems: We believe that the basic problem is capitalism. The symptoms of this basic systematic problem are unemployment, inadequate housing, health care, food, inflation and low wages, police brutality, racist discrimination, etc.

2. Solution: We believe that there are no permanent solutions to the symptoms of the current crisis (political, economic, social, etc.) as long as capitalism exists. However, the only solution is for the masses of people to own the entire society.

3. Immediate Objective: We believe it is to build a broad united front consisting of all Black people possible, people of good will from other nationalities, led by revolutionary leadership. This is the lesson of every major period of mass struggle. The struggle to unite the masses is a decisive struggle. The masses will be their own liberators, and for that they must be educated and organized.

In sum, a revolutionary stand is against capitalism while a reformist stand lets capitalism off the hook. Both fight against the immediate attacks on Black people, but only a revolutionary stand can carry this struggle to the end and transform the entire society.

### C. From Study to Struggle.

Even though someone has a great deal of information and a good heart, it doesn't mean much unless he or she can put the ideas and good intentions into some form of practical activity. In sum, what good is the study of the problems faced by Black people unless we use that study to get on with the task of solving these problems.

The most important aspect of making the transition from study to struggle is the mass line. The mass line means that the experiences of the masses of people are the stuff that we study, and in turn, only the masses can change things once a correct theory has been developed. This means that the mass line requires us to always base ourselves (while we study) with the masses, ask questions of those who have experience, ask older people, ask as many people as possible about what you are studying. Then, take all that you have gathered and add it to all that you have read in books, and analyze it in relationship to revolutionary theory and come up with results. Then go back to those people you have talked with and share with them the results of your study, and discuss how their thoughts contributed to the final analysis that you came up with. This is the kind of study program that we have to develop in order to have respect for the masses of people (avoiding the error elitism) and to unite with them (as opposed to serving a class which exploits the masses of people).

The mass line is the method of revolutionary study that we use in developing theory. There are three decisive aspects of theory: (a). theory is the summation of experience and it is only with theory that we can have an explanation of experience (class struggle, national struggle, scientific experiment, and produc-



tion, etc.); (b) theory is needed to guide the struggle, because without revolutionary theory, there will be no revolutionary movement: (c) theory only becomes a concrete reality when it is taken up by the masses and put into practice.

There are two additional aspects to this last chapter: a directory of resources for further work in Black Studies, and a questionnaire to guide the student in the initial stage of becoming active in the community. The directory should not be regarded as a static selection of books, organizations, and references. This is a list that is for active use. Most of the printed material is available in any medium-size library, and should be consulted for a great deal of useful information. In addition, the organizations listed in this directory are very interested in establishing contact with interested students of Black Studies (though we are not endorsing any). This is a necessity for building a successful movement for Black liberation. Of course, getting in touch with these organizations will also help you undertake study since they will be excellent sources of information on the current state of any issues that they deal with. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes a regular measure of labor force statistics and the Research Department of the National Urban League maintains an up-to-date criticism of government statistics on Blacks in the labor force. Every reader/student of INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES is encouraged to write to one or more of these sources and get on their mailing list. There is a lot of information for the asking. So ask!

The questionnaire is a tool for study of the local community, and a tool for action within the local community. Most of this text has been presenting you with concrete information from many different sources. The questionnaire is the beginning of your search for information about problems in the immediate world around you. Most people that live in a community don't have the answers to the questionnaire, but these answers represent the major dominant forces that run their lives. Being a student of Black Studies, a mark of your intelligence is whether

you have concrete correct information about the community you live in, and whether you have an analysis of it. By this time, you should have a good grasp of analysis, and with this questionnaire you should begin to have a good grasp of the concrete facts about your community. In sum, this questionnaire will lead you out of this book into the real world, into active discussion with the masses of people in your community. Go among the people, and with your skills and knowledge of Afro-American Studies, serve the people!

## PEOPLES COLLEGE DIRECTORY OF RESOURCES FOR BLACK STUDIES

- I. Black Studies: General
  - A. Black Studies
  - B. Black History
  - C. Selected Key Library Collections
  - D. Africa
  
- II. Political Economy and the Social Structure
  - E. Government Statistics
  - F. Social Structure
  
- III. Social Institutions and Culture
  - G. Politics
  - H. Religion
  - I. Education
  - J. Women
  - K. Culture
  
- IV. Struggle
  - L. Civil Rights
  - M. Nationalism
  - N. Marxism

**I: BLACK STUDIES: GENERAL****A. BLACK STUDIES**

1. African Heritage Studies Association  
Dr. Ronald Walters, Department of Political Science  
Howard University, Washington, D.C.
2. Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History  
1401 14th Street, N.W., Washinton, D.C.
3. Association of Black Psychologists  
7614 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C.
4. Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists  
Dr. Robert Holmes, Department of Political Science  
Atlanta University, Atlanta, Ga. 30314
5. Black World Foundation, Black Scholar and Book Club  
P.O.Box 908, Sausalito, Ca.
6. Caucus of Black Sociologists  
Dr. Wilbur Watson, Transaction Consortium  
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ 08903
7. College Language Association  
Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland
8. Institute of the Black World  
87 Chesnut Street, Atlanta, Ga. 30314
9. National Conference of Black Political Scientists  
Dr. Vernon Gray, Department of Political Science  
Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland
10. Black Economists Association  
c/o Atlanta University, Atlanta, Ga. 30314
11. National Council of Black Studies  
Dr. Joseph Russel Indiana University  
Bloomington, Indiana
12. Council of Black American Affairs  
Affiliate of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges  
Dr. Don Godbold, President  
Merrit College, Oakland, Ca.
13. Peoples College  
P.O.Box 7696, Chicago, Ill. 60680

**B. BLACK HISTORY: GENERAL SOURCES**

1. A Bibliography of Doctoral Research on the Negro, 1933-1966

**B. BLACK HISTORY: GENERAL SOURCES cont'd**

2. Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History  
1401 14th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005
3. Index to Periodical Literature By and About Negroes, 1950.
4. James McPherson, et. cl., Blacks in America: Bibliographical Essays, 1972
5. Peoples College, Working Bibliographies in Black Studies (forthcoming)  
Bibliographies on Black Studies, Black Historians, Black Sociologists,  
Black Nationalism, Black Liberation Movements.
6. Walter Schatz, ed., Directory of Afro-American Resources, 1970.

**C. SELECTED KEY LIBRARY COLLECTIONS**

1. Amistad Research Center  
Dillard University, New Orleans, Louisiana 70122  
(504) 944-0239
2. Atlanta University  
Trevor Arnett Library  
273 Chesnut Street, S.W. Atlanta, Georgia 30314  
(404) 681-0251
3. Chicago Public Library  
Vivian Harsh Collection of Afro-American History and Literature  
Carter G. Woodson Regional Library  
9525 S. Halsted St., Chicago, Ill. 60628  
(312) 881-6910
4. Fisk University, Special Collections  
Library, Nashville, Tenn. 37203  
(615) 329-8646
5. Howard University  
Moorland-Spingarn Research Center  
Founders Library, 2400 6th St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20059  
(202) 636-7239
6. New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture  
103 W. 135th St., New York, N.Y. 10030  
(212) 862-4000
7. U.S. Library of Congress  
10 First St., S.E. Washington, D.C. 20540
8. Yale University  
The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters  
The Bienecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Conn. 06520

### C. SELECTED KEY LIBRARY COLLECTIONS cont'd

10. See also: (a) E.J. Josey and Ann Allen Schockley, Handbook of Black Librarianship, 1977  
(b) Schatz, Directory of Afro-American Resources (1970) for a listing of other collections.

### D. AFRICA

1. "Africa: The Cutting Edge --A Comprehensive List of Resources on the Struggle in Southern Africa," The Guardian (newspaper), May 24, 1978.
2. American Committee on Africa  
305 E. 46th St., New York, 10017
3. American Friends Service Committee  
1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, Pa 19102
4. Peter Duigan, Handbook of American Resources of African Studies, 1967.
5. Peoples College Press, First Wave of Struggle, 1977-78; Two, Three Many Waves of Struggle, 1978-79; Sell the Stock: The Divestiture Struggle at Northwestern University and Building the Anti-Imperialist Movement, 1978; Free Zimbabwe! Campaign, 1978, 79 (summation/histories of struggles against the Krugerrand, university investments, etc.) P.O. Box 7696, Chicago
6. Southern Africa Magazine,  
156 5th Ave., New York, N.Y. 10010  
(212) 741-3480
7. South Africa Catalyst Project  
570 Oxford, Palo Alto, Ca. 94306 ; Box 177, Amherst, Mass. 01002
8. United Nations Unit on Apartheid  
United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017
9. U.S. Library of Congress, The United States and Africa: Guide to U.S. Official Documents and Government Sponsored Publications on Africa 1785-1975 (1978).

## II. POLITICAL ECONOMY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

### E. GOVERNMENT STATISTICS

1. Bureau of the Census, Negro Population and Social and Economic Status, 1974.
2. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Month Labor Review.
3. Congressional Information Service, American Statistics Index.
4. Ruth M. Davison, Government Publications on the Negro in America, 1948-1968.

## E. GOVERNMENT STATISTICS, cont'd

5. Government Printing Office, Monthly catalogue of U.S. Government Publications
6. Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970.
7. Statistical Abstract of the United States (published annually).
8. U.S. Civil Rights Commission,  
1211 Vermont Ave, Washington, D.C.

## F. SOCIAL STRUCTURE

1. Black Economic Research Center  
112 W. 120th St., New York, N.Y. 10027 (212) 666-0310
2. Black Enterprise  
295 Madison Ave, New York, N.Y. 10017. See their special monthly features, "Facts and Figures," and "Additional Information Department (AID)."
3. Black News Digest  
U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. 20210
4. National Association of Black Manufacturers  
1625 I Street, Suite 918, Washington, D.C. 20006
5. National Black Business Directory  
1115 Plymouth Ave.  
Minneapolis, Miss. 55411
6. Research Department  
National Urban League, New York, N.Y.
7. Union of Radical Political Economy  
41 Union Square, Room 901, New York, N.Y. 10003 (general crisis of capitalism, extensive course outlines, etc.)

## III. SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND CULTURE

## G. POLITICS (Chapter 10)

1. Congressional Black Caucus  
306 House Annex, No 1, Washington, D.C. 20515  
(202) 225-1691
2. Joint Center for Political Studies  
1426 H. Street, Suite 926, Washington, D.C. 20005  
National Association of Black Elected Officials, National Roster of Black Elected Officials, (annually), Focus (monthly magazine).
3. National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials  
1343 H. Street, N.W., Suite 1200, Washington, D.C. 20005  
(202) 638-4477

## G. POLITICS (Chapter 10) cont'd

4. Voter Education Project/South Regional Council  
52 Fairlie St. N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30303  
(404) 522-8764

## H. RELIGION

1. Afro-American Religious Studies: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Locations in American Libraries, Ethel L. William and Clifton Brown, 1972.
2. Black Methodists for Church Renewal, United Methodist Church  
890 Beckwith Street, S.W., Atlanta, Ga.
3. Commission of Racial Justice, United Church of Christ  
297 Park Ave, South, New York, NY. 10010
4. Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO)  
475 Riverside Dr., New York, N.Y. 10027

## I. EDUCATION

1. Frederick Chambers, Black Higher Education in the USA: A Selected Bibliography on Negro Higher Education and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 1978
2. Institute for Study of Educational Policy  
Dumbarton Oaks-Campus  
Howard University, Washington, D.C.
3. Integrated Education  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass.
4. Journal of Negro Education  
Bureau of Educational Research  
Howard University, Washington, D.C.
5. Politics and Education  
Wesleyan Station, Fisk Hall  
Middletown, CT. 06457

## J. WOMEN

1. Black Women's Community Development Foundation  
1028 Connecticut Ave. NW., Washington, D.C. 20036
2. National Committee on Household Employment  
1625 I. St.N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036
3. National Council of Negro Women  
1346 Connecticut Ave. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036  
(202) 233-2363



## J. WOMEN cont'd

4. National Hook-up  
Black Women, Inc., Washington, D.C.
5. National Welfare Rights Organization  
1424 16th St. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036

## K. CULTURE

1. Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame  
P.O.Box 12691, Oakland, Ca. 94604
2. Black Perspective in Music  
P.O.Box 149, Cambria Heights, New York 11411  
(semi-annual)
3. Chamba Notes, a Film Newsletter  
P.O.Box U , Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202
4. C. L. A. Journal  
Morgan State College, Baltimore, Md. 21239
5. First World: An International Journal of Black Thought  
1580 Avon Ave, S.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30311
6. Folkways Records  
701 Seventh Ave., New York, NY. 10036
7. Neighborhood Art Center  
Atlanta, Georgia

## IV . STRUGGLE

## L. CIVIL RIGHTS

1. Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Social Change  
Library Archives  
671 Beckwith St. S.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30314  
(404) 524-1956
2. NAACP  
1790 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10019  
(212) 245 2100
3. A. Philip Randolph Institute  
260 Park Ave, New York, NY. 10010  
(212) 533-8000

## M. NATIONALISM

1. The East  
10 Claver Place, Brooklyn, N.Y.

## M. NATIONALISM cont'd

2. Institute for Positive Education (IPE)  
7524 Cottage Grove St, Chicago, Ill. 60619  
Black Books Bulletin, Third World Press
3. Pan-African Peoples Organization  
1553 Fulton, San Francisco, Ca.

## N. MARXISM

## General:

1. Black Liberation Press  
Box 995, Harlem, N.Y. 10027  
Publications on Africa, Black liberation, Marxism, and Black people , etc.
2. Monthly Review  
New York, N.Y.
3. Marxism and Black Liberation (MAYBELL): Theoretical Journal of  
Peoples College  
P.O.Box 7696, Chicago, Ill. 60680 Forthcoming journal to be published  
several times yearly; draft editorial now available for review.

## Library Collections:

4. Hoover Institute  
Stanford University, Stanford, Ca. 94305
5. Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research  
6120 South Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90044
6. Taiment Collection (Labor History)  
New York University, New York, N.Y.
7. Wayne State University Labor Archives  
Detroit, Michigan
8. Wisconsin Historical Society  
Madison, Wisconsin

Many of the library collections listed above on page 543 have holdings on aspects of Marxism and Black Liberation.

LOCAL AREA RESEARCH GUIDE: STUDY TO STRUGGLE

PART ONE: OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

1. POPULATION	CITY		COUNTY		STATE	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Black	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
White	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Chicano	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Native American	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Puerto Rican	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Asian	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

2. ECONOMIC LIFE

A. Occupational Structure of your city	Total Employed	% Black
Professional and Technical	_____	_____
Managers, Officials, Proprietors	_____	_____
Clerical	_____	_____
Sales	_____	_____
Craftsmen & Foreman	_____	_____
Operatives	_____	_____
Service Workers	_____	_____
Private Household Workers	_____	_____
Non-Farm Laborers	_____	_____
Farmers & Farm Workers	_____	_____

B. What are the largest industrial sectors in terms of employment in the city (e.g., (auto in Detroit, Government in Washington, D.C., steel in Chicago, etc.)

Industries	Total Employed	% Black
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Industries	Total Employed	% Black
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

C. What are the largest industrial sectors in employment in the state?

Industries	Total Employed	% Black
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

D. List the top ten local employers. Type of Business Total Employed % Black

	Type of Business	Total Employed	% Black
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

E. What is the percentage of the Black population?

	City	County
Unemployed	_____	_____
On welfare	_____	_____
With family income \$10,000 or more	_____	_____
With family income \$3,000 or less	_____	_____
In prisons	_____	_____



**C. Who are the key Blacks and what positions do they hold?**

**(1) Democrats**

**Name**

**Position**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**(2) Republicans**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**(3) Independents**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**4. MAJOR BLACK ORGANIZATIONS (name, key individuals, size, power, and influence, address, and phone)**

**A. Political**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**B. Religious**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**C. Labor**

_____
_____
_____

**D. Student-Youth**

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**E. Community**

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**F. Business**

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**G. Social-Fraternal**

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**H. Civil Rights**

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**I. Nationalist**

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**J. Marxist**

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**5. LOCAL MASS MEDIA - BLACK OWNED OR ORIENTED**  
(Include key Blacks in the general media if necessary)

**A. Newspapers**

**Name**

**Description**

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**B. T.V. Programs**

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**C. Radio Stations**

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**D. Bookstores**

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**E. Journals, Magazines**

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(b) Where can you get some help? \_\_\_\_\_

(c) What is your plan of action? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Answer Yes or No:	Yes	No	Does Not Apply
(a) Are you registered to vote?	_____	_____	_____
(b) Did you vote for President in 1976?	_____	_____	_____
(c) Is there a union where you work?	_____	_____	_____
(d) Are you a union member?	_____	_____	_____
(e) Do you belong to a church?	_____	_____	_____
(f) Do you attend at least once monthly?	_____	_____	_____

\* \* \* \*

If you are interested in contributing your answers to a national summary of the above questions, mail a copy of the completed questionnaire to:

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For those readers who are interested, we have listed, in abbreviated form, the sources of the readings in Volumes One and Two. For information on unpublished sources or other questions, please contact PEOPLES COLLEGE.

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# CHAPTER 1

## WHY SHOULD WE STUDY BLACK PEOPLE AND HOW? THEORY AND METHOD IN AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is Afro-American Studies?
2. What are the different (correct and incorrect) approaches to Black Studies?
3. What are the periods of historical development of the Afro-American experience? How does this analytical framework help us to study Black people better than the "history as chronology" approach?
4. What is the relationship between Black Studies and the struggle for Black liberation?

### KEY CONCEPTS

Analytical Framework

Culture

Empirical data/facts

Great Man (or Woman) Theory of History

Ideology

Materialist Approach vs. Idealism

Periods of Historical Development

Ownership of Wealth/Power

Social Institutions

System of Production

Structure of Society

Theory

## WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

The rent. Unemployment. Food stamps are being cut back, and people are being cut off public aid. Layoffs, speedups, lousy conditions on the job, little or no pay increases, and most of the trade union leadership is more openly advocating the side of management. Racist attacks on Black people are increasing, the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi Party have raised their ugly heads again, public officials have openly started to tell Black people to stay in their place, and the police have no restraint in shooting down Black youth on the slightest suspicion of a crime. Health care costs are shooting sky high, hospitals are closing, there are very few doctors in Black neighborhoods, and when treated, many young Black girls are being sterilized illegally. Open enrollment in colleges is being stopped, affirmative action is challenged, Black Studies programs are being cut back, and Black students are being shifted into vocational education because they are told a college degree is not necessary to get a job.

Is this happening only to Black people? Only in the USA? NO! The whole damned capitalist world is in crisis, and conditions are getting bad for the masses of people, people from all nationalities. On the world level, the crisis in capitalist countries (including old ones like England and the USA, and new ones like the USSR) is making a world war more and more of a possibility. Ever since the Great Depression of the 1930s, capitalist countries have tried to escape economic and political crisis by going to war. This gets rid of the unemployed, beefs up profits by capitalist firms selling war materials to the government and, if successful, results in new countries to dominate and exploit. Indeed, the world is in great disorder.

Is this all together a bad thing? NO! The reason is that in this crisis the oppressors of Black people and the main exploiters in this society are at odds with each other. Moreover, the masses of people are waking up and beginning to organize and make concrete motion to struggle again. The old con games won't work, because of political struggles within the ruling class like the Watergate crisis, and economic problems like the oil crisis that didn't fool many people. In other words, with this crisis and disorder, change has more and more become a necessity.

## WHY AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES?

One of the responses to this over-all crisis is to deepen our commitment to understand what's going on in order to change it. This is the most important aspect of the historical development of Black Studies, and is a flame that we must keep lit. While the origin of Black Studies (in this recent period) began in the late 1960s because of the courageous fighting spirit and actual battles waged by Black students, the essential issues have remained the same. What knowledge is essential to make life better? What do we need to know to change the society we live in so that everyone has a decent chance to live, every one has an equal chance to live up to his/her potential, everyone can fully realize what it means to be human and not a beast of burden slaving for someone else's profit.

In this light, we hold that the essence of Afro-American Studies is study and struggle. Indeed, this means that not only do we have to understand the problems faced by Black people, but we must grasp hold of the solutions to those problems.

## WHERE WE'RE COMIN' FROM

1. Fact over Fiction. It is possible to look like you're studying the world as it actually is and has been, and really be discussing uninformed opinions about it; just as it's possible to watch television and not make a distinction between Walt Disney, Star Trek, and Good Times on the one hand, and what's happening in the real world on the other hand. Our approach is to cast away all illusions and study the world as it actually is in order to be able to change the world, and not simply indulge ourselves in exercises of fantasy. On the one hand, there is the approach that is founded on concrete information about the world and history (materialism), while on the other hand, there is the approach which maintains that ideas are more important than concrete facts (idealism). This textbook is based on a materialist approach.

2. The Driver's Seat of History. The materialist approach holds that all things in history, all aspects of human society, are important. However, the most important aspect of any society is the struggle over power and ownership of property. In understanding all aspects of history, we ask the question who stands to benefit and who stands to lose control over or access to economic wealth and power. This is the basic and most fundamental question.

3. Breaking it down: the Structure of Society. This fundamental question has two aspects: what is there to own (level of technology, level of economic

development, etc.), what is the pattern of ownership? But there are also other important questions that sum up the rest of society. These other aspects are covered in the following terms: social institutions (government or the state, the church, schools, etc.); culture (as expressed in literature, art, music, etc.); and ideology (the philosophical, religious, political and social beliefs of a society).

4. Knowledge for Liberation. There is an activist tradition in Black scholarship including such diverse individuals as W.E.B. Dubois, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Shirley Graham Dubois. However, the most dominant trend today is a conservatism that isolates Black Studies and teachers from struggle. We think that if this course only enabled you to better understand the experiences of Black people we would not have been a success. The main aspect of this course is to arm you with the knowledge necessary for you to organize with the masses of Black people to fight for the changes that we so desperately need in order to live decent lives.

#### INCORRECT APPROACHES TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES

In addition to spelling out the main aspects of the approach we are taking in this textbook, it is necessary to criticize some of the major ways that people often make errors. This is always an essential aspect of development, to cast aside what is incorrect and positively assert what is correct. The two cannot peacefully co-exist, one will dominate the other.

1. The Great Man theory of history. This approach focusses on individuals as the main source of historical development. In the recent period this position holds that we have to wait for another Martin Luther King or Malcolm X before Black people will ever build large mass movements again. The opposite of this is true, because the masses of people make history. When the masses of people unite in action to change the conditions in this society, then their motion will create the conditions for individuals to come forward as leaders.

2. History is mainly racial conflict. This approach attempts to reduce all historical developments to racial causes. This is incorrect because of the difficulty of defining races, and proving that race has a causal impact on social and economic affairs. Social, economic, and political patterns of development are universal and develop among all people. It is impossible to make correct generalizations about all white people compared to all Black people.

3. History is chronology of facts: This approach says that events happen one after another, so the study of history is simply the recording of events in a chronological order. This is a blind empirical approach to the world (simple data or fact collecting). History is the dynamic human process of development in which there is quantitative development (which can be counted and arranged in sequence) and qualitative development (in which there are changes on the basis of which one has to start a new list). The more important of the two is qualitative change that pushes history forward, creating stages of development within which the quantitative changes have their meaning.

Based on this approach, we are presenting the experiences of Afro-American people in the U.S. in three periods: the slave experience, the rural (agricultural) experience, and the urban (industrial) experience. The main thing is that these three periods or stages represent qualitatively different types of experiences that over-lap in time, but with one dominating at any one time. That is, while most Black people were slaves, there were some free Blacks in both the rural and urban areas. These three periods will be used to discuss how Black people have contributed to changing this society and during this process have themselves been changed. This analytical framework will enable us to systematically discuss the similarities and differences in all aspects of the lives of Black people: their work, social institutions, cultural life, and ideological beliefs.

4. Historical change is pre-determined. This approach has many manifestations, and can take the form of astrology, religion, etc. The main unifying theme is that historical change is pre-determined by some force outside of human society and individual people. This is an unprovable theory. On the other hand, the history of the world can be fully explained by examining the social, economic, political, and other historical forces that make up the world. We can arrive at a minimal level of unity with such statements as "God helps those who help themselves," but anyone who says that the freedom of Black people is not a task to take up and struggle for because it's not in the stars, or some mystical force has not yet willed it, must be rejected and struggled against.

5. History is irrelevant. Action is everything. This is the anti-intellectual view that study of the historical experiences of Black people leads nowhere, and that all we have to do is act, either collectively to change the society or (more usually) to act as individuals and just get over. We firmly reject this view. The old saying has some merit: those who don't know their his-



tory are doomed to repeat it. In other words, knowledge is based on practice, and even if study turns up the experience of failure, it is useful because it helps us learn what to avoid.

#### WHAT WILL YOU GET FROM BLACK STUDIES?

A job? Not necessarily! This relates to the important historical debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois about the purposes of educating Black people, which we will discuss in the chapter on education. We do not agree with Washington's position of training the hands first and then the mind. And we do not advocate Dubois' view of educating just "the talented tenth." The purpose of this textbook is not vocational -- to teach you all the skills necessary to go out and get a job. But this text and Black Studies will provide all of you with the information and analytical skills you need to deal with everyday life -- to confront and solve many problems you have faced, are facing, and will continue to face as long as this society is the way it is.

Therefore, Black Studies should be an important part of your course of study -- regardless of what your major is or whatever you ultimately plan to do in life. Our goal in this textbook is to challenge every person to be a serious and full participant in this society -- knowledgeable about herself/himself and the society in which she/he lives and committed to making the world a better place to live in.

**N O T E S**

# A Scientific Approach To **BLACK STUDIES**

## *Introduction to Afro-American Studies*

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