

EXPERIMENTAL  
FOURTH  
EDITION

INTRODUCTION TO

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STUDIES

## PREFACE-1978

This printing of the fourth edition of INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES is a major advance toward accomplishing our goal of developing a text for the basic standardized course in Black Studies. We have obtained cooperation from the authors of our selected readings. We plan to make even greater efforts to effectively test the text in the classroom to identify any weaknesses and revise the text accordingly. Several questions have been asked about the text that we would like to answer here.

The first question has involved the ideological and political stance of INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES. Every book has an ideological and political stand. More often than not, this stand is concealed by the writer and left to the wits of the reader to draw the perspective out. We have clearly stated our assumptions and positions in the first chapter. We believe that only a scientific approach to history will serve our purpose of arriving at historical truth and fighting for freedom in this society.

Secondly, we have put forward a major theoretical concept on which this entire text is based--the periodization of Afro-American history. The thesis is that Black people's history in the United States has developed in a dialectical (i.e. dynamic) fashion--moving from one period of relative social cohesion to another, separated by periods of transition and social disruption. The main periods of the Afro-American experience are the slave period, the (rural) agricultural period, and the (urban) industrial period. The periods of transition are the Reconstruction period between the slave and rural periods and the period of migrations between the rural and urban periods. When these periods are used in studying economy, politics, society, culture and other aspects, we thus have the analytical framework for studying the Black experience. As you will note, this framework is employed throughout INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES.

Finally we want to emphasize that since this book is a cooperative project of people in the Black Studies Movement, we have to count on the readers of this text to be its advocates so that the word will spread to other people. All funds from the sale of this text are being used to keep it in print in the face of rising publication costs and to carry out additional work to strengthen Black Studies. Little is left for advertisement. If you find this text useful, then advocate its use. Tell bookstores and libraries to order it. Suggest that teachers use it in their classes. Pick up a pen and write a review of it or send us a letter. We need each other's support if Black Studies is to be saved!

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# PREFACE

INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES provides a systematic introduction to the historical and current experiences of Black people in the United States. It is a continuation of the dynamic process of study and struggle that emerged during the fight for Black Liberation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which also spurred the struggle for Black Studies.

This textbook was first developed four years ago as a course outline for freshmen students. It has been revised several times and has been used as a course in colleges and universities in California, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. The general aim is to develop a standardized course, a general introduction to the experiences of Black people in the United States, that can be used in Afro-American Studies Programs throughout the United States and the world.

This is an experimental 4th edition of INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES being tested during the 1977 - 78 academic year. This is the first edition, for example, that has included all of the Required Readings. By 1978 - 79, we will have a more permanent 5th edition, improved because you will have used it this year and will, we hope, share your response to it with us before it is revised.

Therefore, in taking this course and using INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES, you are making an important contribution to its further development. Many students have made suggestions that have improved this textbook considerably. We are certain that you will accept the challenge and join us in making this textbook better contribute to the education of those who will use it after you and contribute to the struggle to build a better world free from all the economic and social problems that Black people and most people in this society are suffering from.

This course of study will not answer all of the questions that you will have about Afro-American people. It will answer some basic ones. But more importantly, this textbook will help those who undertake it to more sharply formulate the key questions and direct you to how and where to get the answers. Lastly, everyone must recognize that it is possible to get out of study only

as much as the time and effort put into it. This requires a critical approach to reading the required material (and as much supplementary material as possible), participation in class/study group discussion (based on the principle "no investigation, no right to speak"), and in writing papers (based on your own ability to use the concepts to interpret the material studied). The key to learning is in using the beliefs you start with to systematically criticize all new material. Only then can you really find out if the new knowledge is better and more accurate, and therefore must be believed in place of the old, inadequate beliefs.

But 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. By practice we mean that we should all increase our study of history to include the on-going struggle of Black people for liberation (freedom, justice and equality), and that we should also increase our involvement in these current struggles. STUDY AND STRUGGLE! STRUGGLE AND STUDY!

\* \* \*

#### 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 movement.

The authors 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 78 readings in this volume, about 80% were written by Black people and Black organizations. Over 60% of these selections were written in three decades: 25% in the 1970s, 20% in the 1930s, and 17% in the 1940s. Another 17% were written before 1860.

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 what INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES a step further!

# 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 Theory of History

Ideology

Materialist Approach vs Idealism

Periods of Historical Development

Ownership of Wealth/Power

Social Institutions

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 its 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 its 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.

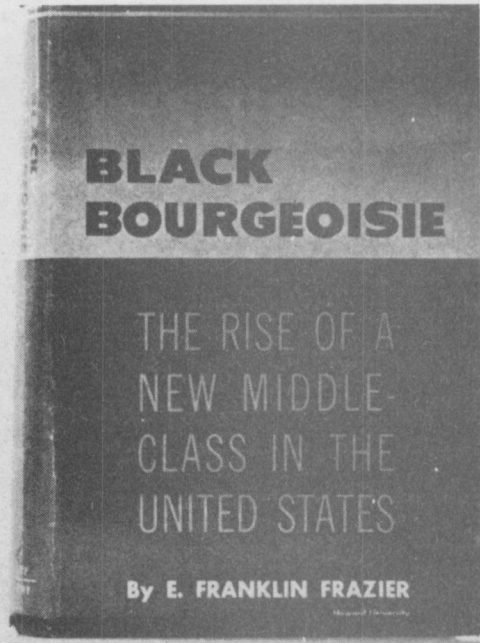
Therefore, Black Studies should be an important part of your course of study -- regardless of what your major is or whatever you ultimately plan to do in life. Our goal in this textbook is to challenge every person to be a serious and full participant in this society -- knowledgeable about herself/himself and the society in which she/he lives and committed to making the world a better place to live in.



W.E.B. DuBois

## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 1

- |  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| 1. PURPOSE: SCIENTIFIC SCHOLARSHIP (1935)                  | W.E.B. Dubois                           | 8  |
| 2. COMMITMENT: "FOR MY PEOPLE" (1942, poem)                | Margaret Walker                         | 8  |
| 3. CHALLENGE: THE FAILURE OF THE NEGRO INTELLECTUAL (1962) | E. Franklin Frazier                     | 10 |
| 4. RESPONSE: A DECLARATION AGAINST IMPERIALISM (1975)      | Pull The Covers Off Imperialism Project | 22 |



**E. Franklin Frazier**, brilliant black sociologist, authored several pioneering studies on black experience, including *Black Bourgeoisie*. His study of black middle class was center of controversy in the 50s. Book detailed rise of white-collar workers. Frazier, who died in 1962, was Chairman of Department of Sociology at Howard University.

**1**

PURPOSE: SCIENTIFIC SCHOLARSHIP (1935)

If history is going to be scientific, if the record of human action is going to be set down with accuracy and faithfulness of detail which will allow its use as a measuring rod and guidepost for the future of nations, there must be some set of standards of ethics in research and interpretation.

"If, on the other hand, we are going to use history for pleasure and amusement, for inflating our national ego, and giving us a false but pleasurable sense of accomplishment, then we must give up the idea of history either as a science or as an art using the results of science, and admit frankly that we are using a version of historic fact in order to influence and educate the new generation along the way we wish."

"In the first place, somebody in each era must make clear the facts with utter disregard to his own wish and desire and belief. What we have got to know, so far as possible, are the things that actually happened in the world. Then with that much clearer and open to every reader, the philosopher and prophet has a chance to interpret these facts; but the historian has no right, posing as a scientist, to conceal or distort facts; and until we can distinguish between these two functions of the chronicler of human action, we are going to render to it easy for a muddled world out of sheer ignorance to make the same mistake ten times over."

**2**

COMMITMENT: FOR MY PEOPLE (1942)

For my people everywhere singing their slave songs repeatedly:  
 their dirges and their ditties and their blues and jubilees,  
 praying their prayers nightly to an unknown god, bending  
 their knees humbly to an unseen power;

For my people lending their strength to the years: to the gone  
 years and the now years and the maybe years, washing  
 ironing cooking scrubbing sewing mending hoeing plow-  
 ing digging planting pruning patching dragging along  
 never gaining never reaping never knowing and never  
 understanding.

For my playmates in the clay and dust and sand of Alabama  
backyards playing baptizing and preaching, and doctor  
and jail and soldier and school and mama and cooking  
and playhouse and concert and store and Miss Choomby  
and hair and company;

For the cramped bewildered years we went to school to learn  
to know the reasons why and the answers to and the  
people who and the places where and the days when, in  
memory of the bitter hours when we discovered we were  
black and poor and small and different and nobody won-  
dered and nobody understood;

For the boys and girls who grew in spite of these things to  
be Man and Woman, to laugh and dance and sing and  
play and drink their wine and religion and success, to  
marry their playmates and bear children and then die of  
consumption and anemia and lynching;

For my people thronging 47th Street in Chicago and Lenox  
Avenue in New York and Rampart Street in New Orleans,  
lost disinherited dispossessed and HAPPY people filling  
the cabarets and taverns and other people's pockets need-  
ing bread and shoes and milk and land and money and  
Something - Something all our own;

For my people walking blindly, spreading joy, losing time  
being lazy, sleeping when hungry, shouting when bur-  
dened, drinking when hopeless, tied and shackled and  
tangled among ourselves by the unseen creatures who  
tower over us omnisciently and laugh;

For my people blundering and groping and floundering in the  
dark of churches and schools and clubs and societies,  
associations and councils and committees and conven-  
tions, distressed and disturbed and deceived and devoured  
by money-hungry glory-craving leeches, preyed on by  
facile force of state and fad and novelty by false prophet  
and holy believer;

For my people standing staring trying to fashion a better way  
 from confusion from hypocrisy and misunderstanding,  
 trying to fashion a world that will hold all the people all  
 the faces all the adams and eves and their countless  
 generations;

Let a new earth rise. Let another world be born. Let a bloody  
 peace be written in the sky. Let a second generation full  
 of courage issue forth, let a people loving freedom come  
 to growth, let a beauty full of healing and a strength of  
 final clenching be the pulsing in our spirits and our  
 blood. Let the martial songs be written, let the dirges  
 disappear. Let a race of men now rise and take control!

# 3

CHALLENGE: THE FAILURE OF THE NEGRO INTELLECTUAL (1962)

During the past forty years the relations of Negroes to American society have undergone fundamental changes. The tempo of these changes has been accelerated during the past two decades. The changes in the relationships of Negroes to American society have been the result of changes in the economic and social organization of American life which have in turn had their repercussions upon the Negro community and its institutions.

As a result of the changes in the character of the Negro community all the platitudes and cliches about Negroes and race relations have lost their meaning and relevance. The changes in the Negro community and American society have reached a stage where we are beginning to see in rather clear outlines the real problem of Negroes in American Society.

There can be no question at the present time that the Negro must be integrated into the American community. But the integration of the Negro into the economic and social organization of American life is only an initial stage in the solution of some of the problems of the Negro.

There still remains the problem of the assimilation of the Negro, which is a more important and more fundamental problem. It is with this second problem that I am primarily concerned. But in order to clarify the issue it



will be necessary to make clear the distinction between integration and assimilation....

It is relevant at this point to say something concerning integration and the Negro community...In the generally accepted meaning of the term, integration involves the acceptance of Negroes as individuals into the economic and social organization of American life. This would imply the gradual dissolution of the Negro community, that is, the decline and eventual disappearance of the associations, institutions and other forms of associated life in what constitutes the Negro community.

We do not expect anything approaching this to occur in our lifetime. Moreover, any discerning person will be aware of the fact that certain aspects of the organized aspects of Negro community life will be affected sooner and more fundamentally than other aspects.

For example, Negroes have always been forced to depend upon the economic institutions in the American community for employment and a living. Despite the vain hopes that Negroes have had concerning Negro business as a means to economic salvation and independence, the integration of Negroes into the industry and as white collar workers into the manufacturing and commercial institutions of the country has increased the economic welfare of Negroes and provided them with more business experience than all the so-called Negro business enterprise in the country.

On the other hand, there are certain cultural institutions such as the church and the fraternal organizations that will not dissolve or disappear. However, it has already appeared that in those sections of the country where newspapers carry news about Negroes as normal human beings and Negro reporters are employed, the circulation of Negro newspapers is declining.

I mention these facts concerning the Negro community because it is necessary to emphasize the fact that integration involves more than individuals, but the organized life of the Negro community vis-a-vis the organized white community....

How does integration differ from assimilation? Assimilation involves, of course, integration for it is difficult to see how any people or group can become assimilated without being integrated into the economic and social organization of a country.

But assimilation involves integration into the most intimate phases of the organized social life of a country. As a consequence, assimilation leads to complete identification with the people and culture of the community in which the social heritages of different people become merged or fused.

In 1908, Charles Francis Adams stated in a lecture in Richmond that the theory of the complete assimilation and absorption of all peoples because of the absence of fundamental racial differences had broken down in the case of the Negro.

The Negro, according to Adams, could only be partially assimilated or, in our language, integrated but not assimilated. When he spoke of absorption he was evidently referring to amalgamation.

In recent years there has been much talk about the integration of the Negro but hardly any attention has been given to his assimilation. There have been some wild guesses about the amalgamation or absorption of the Negro and his disappearance in 300 to 500 years. It is to the question of the assimilation of the Negro that I want to devote the remainder of this talk.

It may seem strange if I tell you that the question of integration and assimilation of the American Negro has not been considered or raised by American Negroes but by African intellectuals. Only recently at a luncheon in Washington an African intellectual spoke on the subject and afterwards asked me to write an article on the subject. But the contrast between the attitude and orientation of American Negro intellectuals and African intellectuals was revealed most sharply at the congress of Negro writers held in Paris in 1956 and in Rome in 1959.

At these congresses the African, and I might add the West Indian intellectuals, were deeply concerned with the question of human culture and personality and the impact of western civilization on the traditional culture of Negro peoples. It was to be expected that African intellectuals would be concerned with such questions.

But the amazing thing was that American Negro intellectuals who were imbued with an integrationist point of view were not only unconcerned with this question but seemingly were unconscious of the implications of the important question of the relation of culture and personality and human destiny.

I insist that these are the fundamental questions with which all thinkers should be concerned and that it is unfortunate that Americans have not concerned themselves with these questions. The lack of interest in this important question or lack of understanding of it is responsible for much of the confusion in regard to integration which is changing the entire relationship of the Negro to American society.

As far as I have been able to discover, what Negro intellectuals have had to say concerning integration has been concerned with the superficial aspects of the increasing participation of Negroes in the economic and social and political organization of American society.

Practically no attention has been directed to the rather obvious fact that integration involves the interaction of the organized social life of the Negro community with the wider American community.

Moreover, there has been an implied or unconscious assimilationist philosophy, holding that Negroes should enter the mainstream of American life as rapidly as possible leaving behind their social heritage and becoming invisible as soon as possible. This has been due, I think, to the emergence of a sizeable new middle class whose social background and interests have determined the entire intellectual orientation of educated Negroes.

In my Black Bourgeoisie I have considered this phenomenon and it is unnecessary to go into the question here. There are certain phases of this phenomenon which are relevant to this discussion.

The first aspect is that the new Negro middle class is the stratum of the Negro population that is becoming integrated most rapidly because of its education and its ability to maintain certain standards of living. In its hope to achieve acceptance in American life, it would slough off everything that is reminiscent of its Negro origin and its Negro folk background.

At the same time integration is resulting in inner conflicts and frustrations because Negroes are still outsiders in American life. Despite integration, the middle class, in escaping from its sheltered and privileged position in the Negro community, has become more exposed to the contempt and discriminations of the white world. Thus, the new Negro middle class is confronted with the problems of assimilation and their intellectuals have not provided them with an understanding of the problems.

This lack of understanding on the part of the so-called intellectual fringe of the new middle class is due partly to the general anti-intellectualism of this class and partly to the desire to achieve acceptance in American life by conformity to the ideals, values, and patterns of behavior of white Americans.

This is no speculation on my part. Every study that has been made reveals that they think very much the same as white Americans, even concerning Negroes.

Moreover, so-called Negro intellectuals continue to repeat such nonsense as "No race has made as much progress as the American Negro in the same period" and that "his remarkable progress has been due to oppression."

Yet, anyone knows that after 250 years American Negro intellectuals cannot measure up to African intellectuals.

It was the white scholar, Buell Gallagher, in his book, Color And Conscience, who showed clearly that Negroes in every part of the world where they enjoyed freedom had achieved more intellectually and artistically than the American Negro. All of this drive towards conformity to dominant beliefs and values is implicit or unconscious striving of the middle class to become assimilated.

The great difference between the orientation of the African intellectual and the American Negro intellectual is striking when one considers their starting point in their analysis of the position of the people for whom they are supposed to provide intellectual leadership.

All African intellectuals begin with the fact of the colonial experience of the African. They possess a profound understanding of the colonial experience and its obvious effects upon not only their traditional social organization, but of the less obvious and more profound effects upon the culture and the African personality.

The American Negro intellectual goes his merry way discussing such matters as the superficial aspects of the material standard of living among Negroes and the extent to which they enjoy civil rights. He never begins with the fundamental fact of what slavery has done to the Negro or the group which is called Negroes in the United States.

Yet it is as necessary for the American Negro intellectual to deal with these questions as it is for the African intellectual to begin with the

colonial experience.

The American Negro intellectual is even more remiss in his grasp of the condition and fate of American Negroes. He has steadily refused to recognize what has been called the "mark of oppression." It was the work of two white scholars that first called attention to this fundamental aspect of the personality of the American Negro. Moreover, it was the work of another white scholar, Stanley M. Elkins, in his recent book on Slavery, who has shown the psychic trauma that Negroes suffered when they were enslaved, the pulverization of their social life through the destruction of their clan organization, and annihilation of their personality through the destruction of their cultural heritage.

Sometimes I think that the failure of the American Negro intellectual to grasp the nature and the significance of these experiences is due to the fact that he continues to be an unconscious victim of these experiences. After an African intellectual met a group of Negro intellectuals, he told me that they were really men who were asleep.

All of this only tends to underline the fact that educated Negroes or Negro intellectuals have failed to achieve any intellectual freedom. In fact, with the few exceptions of literary men, it appears that the Negro intellectual is unconscious of the extent to which his thinking is restricted to sterile repetition of the safe and conventional ideas current in American society.

This is attributable in part, of course, to the conditions under which an educated and intellectual class emerged in the American society. This class emerged as the result of white American philanthropy. Although the situation has changed and the Negro intellectuals are supported through other means, they are still largely dependent upon the white community. There is no basis of economic support for them within the Negro community. And where there is economic support within the Negro community it demands conformity to conservative and conventional ideas.

Witness, for example, the vote of the National Medical Association in New York City against placing medical care for the aged under social security. The action of this group might be attributable partly to ignorance and what they conceived to be their economic interests; nevertheless, it was

done under the domination of the American Medical Association which ignored the whining complaints of Negro doctors against racial discrimination.

I could cite other examples which more clearly represent the absence of intellectual freedom in regard to national and international issues. Most Negro intellectuals simply repeat the propaganda which is put out by people who have large economic and political interests to protect.

Of course, Negro intellectuals are in a different position from the standpoint of employment. If they show any independence in their thinking they may be hounded by the F.B.I. and find it difficult to make a living. At the present time many of them find themselves in the humiliating position of running around the world telling Africans and others how well-off Negroes are in the United States and how well they are treated.

One is reminded of the words of Langston Hughes in his recent book, Ask Your Mama, where he says that the African visitor finds that in the American social supermarket blacks for sale range from intellectuals to entertainers. Thus, it appears that the price of the slow integration which the Negroes are experiencing must be bought at the price of abject conformity in thinking.

One of the most important results of the lack of freedom on the part of Negro intellectuals has been their failure to produce men of high intellectual stature who are respected by the world at large.

We have no philosophers or thinkers who command the respect of the intellectual community at large. I am not talking about the few teachers of philosophy who have read Hegel or Kant or James and memorized their thoughts. I am talking about men who have reflected upon the fundamental problems which have always concerned philosophers such as the nature of human knowledge and the meaning or lack of meaning of human existence.

We have no philosophers who have dealt with these and other problems from the standpoint of the Negro's unique experience in this world. I am not talking about the puerile opportunistic rationalizations of the Negro's effort to survive in a hostile world. The philosophy implicit in the Negro's folklore is infinitely superior to the opportunistic philosophy of Negro intellectuals who want to save their jobs and enjoy material comforts.

The philosophy implicit in the folklore of the Negro folk is infinitely superior in wisdom and intellectual candor to the empty repetition of platitudes concerning brotherly love and human dignity of Negro intellectuals who

are tyrants within the Negro world and never had a thought in their lives.

This brings me to say something of what Negro intellectuals or scholars have failed to accomplish as the intellectual leaders of Negroes.

They have failed to study the problems of Negro life in American in a manner which would place the fate of the Negro in the broad framework of man's experience in this world. They have engaged in petty defenses of the Negro's social failures. But more often they have been so imbued with the prospect of integration and eventual assimilation that they have thought that they could prove themselves true Americans by not studying the Negro.

Since integration has become the official policy of the country they have shunned more than ever the study of the Negro. They have remained intellectually sterile while propounding such meaningless questions as: Should Negro scholars study the Negro? Should Negro painters paint Negro subjects? Should Negro writers and playwrights write Negro novels and plays about Negroes?

This is indicative of the confusion among Negro intellectuals. But more important still, it has meant that Negro intellectuals have cut themselves off from a vastly rich source of human experience to which they had access.

It is scarcely believable that the only significant studies of Negroes in politics have been the work of white scholars. I have already mentioned other fields of interest in which scholars have made significant contributions. Of course, some of this failure has been the result of ignorant administration of Negro schools which have refused the intelligent proposals of Negro scholars.

Let us take the case of Conant's book, Slums and Suburbs, which deals with the tragic position of Negroes in America. As long as 25 years ago I pointed out that urbanization had changed the entire relationship of Negroes to American society and that comprehensive and fundamental research should be done on Negroes in cities. But those Negroes who have controlled the destiny of Negro intellectuals ignored this and even today no Negro college or university is concerned with this fundamental problem.

Conant's book, which reveals the poverty, ignorance and social disorganization of Negroes, emphasizes a phase of the integration and assimilation

of Negroes to which I have only vaguely referred. It deserves special attention in what I am undertaking to discuss.

Not only has Conant devoted attention to the position of Negroes in slums, but I have noted that Ashmore has published a book dealing with this problem and the frustrations of the Negro middle class.

The significance of the large proportion of unemployed, impoverished and socially and personally disorganized Negroes in cities for our discussion can not be overemphasized. It shows clearly that whereas a relatively large middle class is emerging in our cities, at the same time a large degraded proletariat is also appearing.

It reveals the wide economic and social cleavage which is becoming more manifest between the middle class and the masses of Negroes.

These Negroes have little education, practically no skills, and what is more, they have never known a normal family life. Because of their lack of socialization, they can hardly take advantage of the educational institutions, they are unprepared for employment in an industrial society, and they are unfit for normal social life.

Conant is afraid that they will become susceptible to Communist propaganda, but he does not know Negroes. If they were to become Communist their lives would be organized about objectives and goals which would have some stabilizing influence.

But most of these Negroes will become the victims of liquor, dope, and disease and they will engage in all forms of crime and anti-social behavior. Those who seek an escape from their frustration and bewilderment will not join communist movements; they will join all types of religions sects and cults, some of which will have nationalistic or racial aims.

In fact, the growth of the Black Muslim movement represents disillusionment on the part of Negroes concerning integration and a repudiation of the belief in assimilation which is so dear to the middle classes.

Recently we have been hearing about the revolt against the leaders of the Negro. The most significant symptom of this revolt has been the revolt of Negro youth against the old respectable and conventional leadership which acted as mediators between the Negro community and the white community.

The most dramatic aspect of the revolt has been the "sit-in" movements which are a direct attack upon segregation. The aim is integration and



ultimately assimilation, if I gauge correctly the aims of the leaders. This seems to emphasize the failure of Negro intellectuals. They can only see assimilation beyond integration. But there are problems of American life that Negroes will have to meet in becoming integrated and assimilated and they concern the economic and social organization of American life.

I pointed out at the beginning that whatever change had occurred in the status of Negroes was due to changes in the economic and social organization of American life. American Negro intellectuals seem to be unconscious of this fact and seemingly believe that integration and ultimate assimilation will solve the problems of the Negro.

It is very important for our discussion on integration and assimilation that the leaders of the non-violence technique have gone to India for philosophical and ideological justification of their revolt against segregation and discrimination in American society.

That the technique should be non-violent is natural since Negroes, who are outnumbered by whites and threatened by the armed might of whites, could not resort to violence or revolutionary tactics.

I do not think that it represents any moral superiority on their part. Moreover, I do not think that Gandhism is really applicable to the Negro's situation in the United States.

Nevertheless, I recognize that it achieves a certain moral respectability because of its religious basis. This is especially important where Negroes confront the guilt-ridden respectable white middle classes. In analyzing the movement and in seeking its religious and moral inspiration, we should recognize that it has its roots in the religious experiences and culture of the Negro folk.

The leaders may speak in philosophical and ideological terms that are drawn from an alien culture but the dynamics of the movement are to be found in the religious experiences of the Negroes. When Negroes are forced to face hostile white mobs, they do not sing Indian hymns, they sing Negro Spirituals and the hymns of their fathers which embodied the faith of their fathers in a hostile world.

That the Negro leaders should turn to an alien culture for the philosophical and ideological justification of their revolt shows the extent to which Negro intellectuals are alienated from the masses. It is also an

indication of the failure of the intellectual leaders to perform their role in relation to the Negro. They have failed to dig down into the experiences of the Negro and provide the soul of a people.

With exceptions, and I will name Langston Hughes as a conspicuous example, they have tried to escape from the Negro heritage. It was their duty to put this heritage in history books, in novels and in plays, in painting and in sculpture.

Because of their eagerness to be accepted as Americans or perhaps sometimes because of their fear, they have written no novels and plays about Denmark Vesey, Harriet Tubman or Shields Green who went with John Brown. They have accepted supinely as heroes the Negroes whom white people have given us and told us to revere. Even today they run from DuBois and Paul Robeson.

In view of the Negro's history, the Negro intellectual and artist had a special opportunity and special responsibility. The process by which the Negroes were captured and enslaved in the United States stripped them of their African culture and destroyed their personality. Under the slavery regime and for nearly a century since emancipation everything in American society has stamped the Negro as subhuman, as a member of an inferior race that had not achieved even the first steps in civilization.

There is no parallel in human history where a people have been subjected to similar mutilation of body and soul. Even the Christian religion was given them in a form only to degrade them. The African intellectual recognizes what colonialism has done to the African and he sets as his first task the mental, moral, and spiritual rehabilitation of the African.

But the American Negro intellectual, seduced by dreams of final assimilation, has not regarded this as his primary task.

I am aware that he has carried on all sorts of arguments in defense of the Negro but they were mainly designed to protect his own status and soothe his hurt self-esteem.

I am talking about something entirely different. I am referring to his failure to dig down into the experience of the Negro and bring about a transvaluation of that experience so that the Negro could have a new self-image or new conception of himself.

It was the responsibility of the Negro intellectual to provide a positive identification through history, literature, art, music and the drama.

The truth of the matter is that for most Negro intellectuals, the integration of the Negro means just the opposite, the emptying of his life of meaningful content and ridding him of all Negro identification. For them, integration and eventual assimilation means the annihilation of the Negro - physically, culturally, and spiritually.

Guy Johnson has written recently that in the next 25 years there will be more integration but far less than the Negro hopes for, and as a consequence there will be much frustration. Moreover, as Park once wrote, the Negro will be treated as a racial minority rather than a racial caste.

I am inclined to agree on the whole with this prediction, especially for the South. But even in the North where Negroes will achieve greater integration, I can not envision any assimilation in the foreseeable future. The best evidence of this is the manner in which the centennial of the Civil War is being celebrated. The important fact about the Civil War is the emancipation of the Negro and Lincoln's achievement of worldwide immortality as the Emancipator - not as the savior of the Union, which was a local political event.

Yet, the nation has ignored and repudiated the central fact which is the most important element in the boosted moral idealism of the United States. The Negro is left out of the celebration both physically and as a part of the heritage of America.

The Civil War is supposed to have been the result of a misunderstanding of two brothers, white brothers, of course, and the Emancipation of the Negro is forgotten.

Confronted with this fact, the Negro intellectual should not be consumed by his frustrations. He must rid himself of his obsession with assimilation. He must come to realize that integration should not mean annihilation - self-effacement, the escaping from his identification.

In a chapter entitled, "What can the American Negro Contribute to the Social and Economic Life of Africa" in the book, Africa Seen by American Negroes, I pointed out that the American Negro had little to contribute to Africa but that Africa, in achieving freedom, would probably save the soul of the American Negro in providing him with a new identification, a new self-image, and a new sense of personal dignity.

I want to emphasize this by pointing out that if the Negro is ever assimilated into American society his heritage should become a part of the American heritage, and it should be recognized as the contribution of the Negro as one recognizes the contributions of the English, Irish, Germans and other people.

But this can be achieved only if the Negro intellectual and artist frees himself from his desire to conform and only if he overcomes his inferiority complex.

It may turn out that in the distant future Negroes will disappear physically from American Society. If this is our fate, let us disappear with dignity and let us leave a worthwhile memorial - in science, in art, in literature, in sculpture, in music - of our having been here.

**4**

RESPONSE: A DECLARATION AGAINST IMPERIALISM (1975)

Today the world is plunging head long into crisis. The prosperity and world domination of the USA has been ended and exposed as the center of an exploiting imperialist system. This exploitation has shaped the historical experience of Black people since European colonization and chattel slavery, and pinpoints the target of the Black liberation movement over the last century of struggle. 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 US imperialism and unites our work with the movement for Black liberation.

Imperialism is a dying system that is based on intense economic exploitation, social oppression, political repression, and cultural domination. The development of the world imperialist system has led the entire world into a general crisis affecting all aspects of society, leaving no nation, country, or people free of its destructive impact. However, where there is exploitation and oppression there is resistance and struggle. Countries want independence, nations want liberation and people want revolution. This is the trend of world history, and Black people in the USA are no exception.

As the USA moves toward the Bicentennial celebration of its existence it is the historical responsibility of Black intellectuals to prevent distortions, lies and deception by exposing US imperialism. Over 100 years ago (on July 4, 1852 in Rochester, New York) Frederick Douglass set the pace when he

clearly exposed "the great sin and shame of America":

"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 impudence; 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."

The exposure of the "revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy" of the US imperialism must be adopted today as the main objective of the historical task of Black intellectuals.

The economic crisis of the world capitalist system is intensifying, and adds up to an all-sided attack on the living standards of the people in the USA, especially the working class and the oppressed nationalities. The attack is led by run-away inflation and unemployment, while corporate profits reach all time highs. Moreover, the ruling class representatives meet in high level conferences to smooth over this crisis situation by proposing piecemeal reforms, in the manner of Herbert Hoover prior to the Great Depression in 1929. Our task is to expose the essence of this crisis by demonstrating who benefits from imperialism and who is exploited by imperialism—how and why, and how all the reforms now under discussion have historically failed to be more than short term measures that deal with symptoms of the economic crisis and not its fundamental cause.

One of the main manifestations of the world character of imperialism is the striving of the US ruling class for hegemony in every region of the world. The US government and corporations, aided by the foundations, universities and mass media, have extended to all corners of the globe so that the sun never sets on US imperialism. But just as when the description was applied to the British empire and was ended by the forces of national liberation after WWII, so the forces of liberation and revolution are bringing down US imperialism as demonstrated by the victorious war won by the heroic Vietnamese people

and the defeat of U.S.-backed Portuguese colonialism in Africa. The role of Black intellectuals, literally located within the belly of U.S. monopoly capitalism, is to turn the character of U.S. imperialism inside out, pulling off the covers that conceal it, and attacking it on its ideological front.

As the Black liberation movement spreads and reflects the revolutionary aspirations of the masses of Black people, there also develops a great need for politically relevant Black intellectuals. This is a crucial mandate for all students, teachers, journalists, professionals, artists, and writers. But a Black intellectual cannot be defined simply by an occupational role or by formal education. A Black intellectual is a person who has developed adequate theoretical skill and has access to sufficient practical experience to be able to sum up the concrete conditions of a problem by discovering the logical pattern and main aspects of the problem; to integrate this summation with established theoretical principles, and creatively apply the lessons learned to solve the problems that Black people face and which exist for the entire society. The storehouse of these established theoretical principles--the history of revolutionary scientific theoretical work, including Black intellectuals like W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, and Paul Robeson--must be inventoried and systematically summed up as a point of departure as we undertake our task in this period.

Moreover, our theory must not only be rooted in a scientific approach to understanding the complex nature of U.S. society and the historical development of U.S. imperialism, but also in a commitment to use theory as a weapon in the ideological struggle against imperialism. This includes refuting the theories of racial inferiority being put forward by professors in major U.S. universities, intellectual justifications for anti-peoples programs constituting "benign neglect", educational programs that shift from academic education to vocational training in order to slow down the intellectual advancements of the masses of people, and piecemeal reformist community development schemes.

Therefore, Black intellectuals must gather ourselves together and forge unity around our common historical condition, and the intellectual, moral, and political imperatives for our work:

WE DECLARE that the main task of Black intellectuals is to study the character and historical development of U.S. imperialism, especially its impact on Black people, and to promote this study throughout schools, publica-

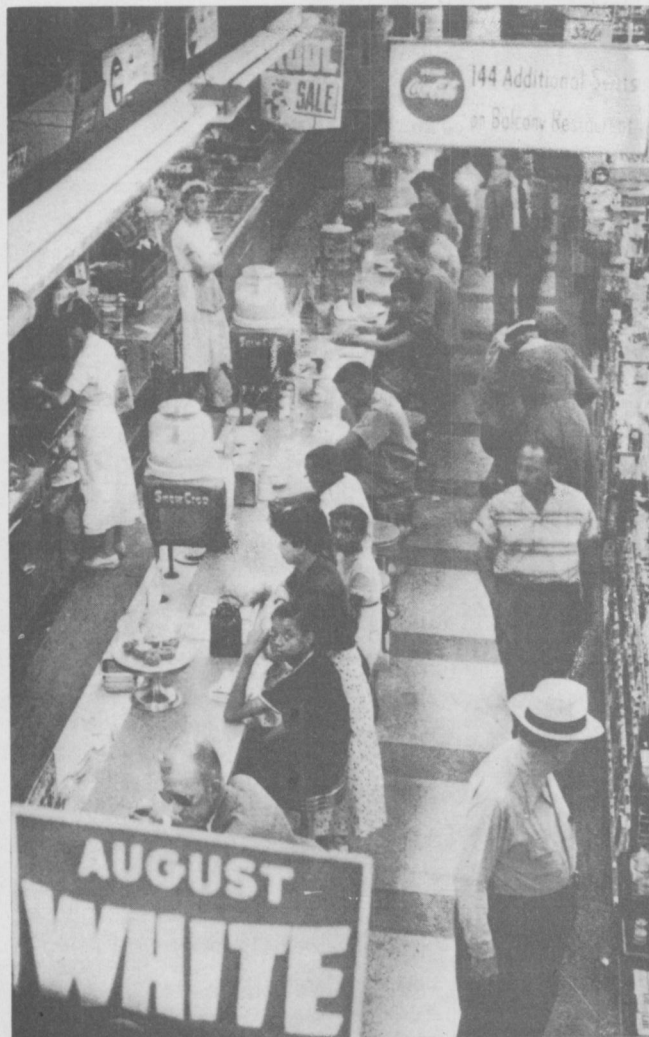
tions, conferences, and organizations;

WE DECLARE that the main objective of our study must be to expose the essence of imperialism and provide the intellectual tools necessary for combatting every imperialist assault on the people;

WE DECLARE 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.

FURTHER THE ANALYSIS THROUGH  
STUDY!

HEIGHTEN THE CONTRADICTION THROUGH  
STRUGGLE!



Sit-in students marked new phase in the maturation of black students

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING FOR CHAPTER 1

## On the Rise of Black Studies

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3. Joyce Ladner, The Death of White Sociology, 1973.
4. Armstead Robinson, Black Studies in the University, 1969.
5. Black Scholar, special issues on "Black Education: The Future of Black Studies," September, 1974 (especially Allen, Poussaint, McClendon, and Peoples College).

## On Methodology

6. Mortimer Adler, How to Read a Book, 1972.
7. Leo Huberman, "How to Spread the Word," Monthly Review, December, 1967.
8. C. Wright Mills, "On Intellectual Craftsmanship," in Sociological Imagination, 1959.
9. North American Congress on Latin America, (NACLA, P.O.Box 57, Cathedral Park Station, New York, N.Y., 10025 and P.O.Box 226, Berkeley, Ca. 94701) Research Methodology Guide, 1970.
10. Mao Tse Tung, Four Essays on Philosophy, especially "On Practice," "Where Do Correct Ideas Come From," and "On Contradiction," 1957.



Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.



## PART II

**CHAPTER 2**

## AFRICA BEFORE AND AFTER THE SLAVE TRADE: THE AFRO-AMERICAN HERITAGE OF CULTURE AND STRUGGLE

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Describe the geographical make-up of the African continent: its size, population and natural wealth.
2. Discuss life in pre-colonial Africa using six key aspects of social life in all societies: production (food, clothing & shelter), politics, religion, education, women and the family, and culture.
3. What was the impact of the slave trade on Africa?
4. What is the relationship between imperialism and colonialism? What role did racism play in colonial policy? What are the current liberation struggles in Africa all about?

## KEY CONCEPTS

African Continent

African Heritage

Anti-Imperialist Struggle

Capitalism/Imperialism

Colonialism

Communalism

Depopulation

Middle Passage

Racism

Slave Trade

Hardly a day passes without some prominent mention of Africa in the newspapers, radio and television.. "Liberation Fighters Score New Victories in Southern Africa." "Superpowers--USA and USSR--Increase Arms Shipments to African Countries." "OPEC Members Raise Oil Prices." "Andy Young's Plea for Nonviolence as Path to African Liberation Rejected."

But such prominent discussion of Africa--especially about the struggle for independence, liberation, and revolution has not always been the case. Prior to the liberation struggles of the late 1950s, the most widely presented image of Africa in the mass media and in the textbooks was that seen in Tarzan movies---"primitive" and "savage" people who ate nice white missionaries (and each other) but who were so inferior that they could always be beaten single-handedly by Tarzan. Of course this view was symbolic of the colonial domination of Africa. Many Black people accepted this myth of Africa's inferiority and refused to identify with the continent of their ancestors.

Today, however, this has changed considerably. The upsurge of Africans for liberation was linked to the struggle of Black people for freedom in the U.S., and most Black people today accept the rich heritage of their ancestral continent-- a heritage of culture and struggle. The task today, however, is to approach the study of Africa scientifically and not fall victim to any analysis which replaces the old set of myths and distortions with a new set. This chapter will present some basic issues regarding the African heritage of Afro-American people.

#### Africa: The Continent and Its People.

Africa has a long, long history. It is widely accepted by scholars that it is the continent where human beings first evolved. Archaeologists (scientists who study early societies using artifacts like skeletons, kitchen utensils, and tools uncovered through excavations or digging) and anthropologists (scientists who study the origin and nature of man) have provided evidence of human-like beings in Africa that are millions of years old. But these details of African history are not the central theme of Introduction to Afro-American Studies. We are interested in taking up those aspects of Africa which are most immediately connected to the lives of those African masses, the ancestors of Afro-Americans, who were brought as slaves to the United States. This is our point of departure in this course, though a detailed introduction to African history is also an important course of study that should be pursued. In addition, we are concerned with the contemporary situation on the African continent--the struggles for liberation which have a great significance for our current lives.

Africa is the second largest continent in size in the world, second only to Asia. Including its larger islands, Africa is three times the size of Europe, four times the size of the United States; and the whole of Europe, India, China, and the United States could be held within its borders. It is about 5,000 miles long (from North to South) and about 4,600 miles wide. Its 11,700,00 square miles covers one-fifth of the total land surface of the world. The equator cuts across the middle of Africa and the entire continent falls mainly within the warmer tropics. It is bound on the North by the Mediterranean Sea, on the West by the Atlantic Ocean, on the East by the Red Sea and the Indian Oceans.

Africa is one of the world's richest continents, a fact which highlights its long history of being ripped off or exploited since today its people are among the world's poorest. It produces over one-fifth (20%) of ten of the world's most important minerals-- 77% of the world's diamonds, 67% of the gold and 35% of the platinum. These minerals are especially needed by the industrially advanced countries--the United States, the Soviet Union, and other lesser imperialist powers. For that reason, Southern Africa is a focal point for imperialist rivalry primarily because much of the rich mineral resources of Africa are concentrated in this region. For example, South Africa ranks first in the world's production of chrome, silver, and manganese and second in diamonds; Zaire is first in diamonds and fifth in copper, tin, and silver; Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) is second in the production of chrome, silver, and copper; and Zambia is third in the world's production of copper.

Africa is underpopulated, in large measure because of the impact of the slave trade. Its population in 1975 was about 401 million people or just over 10% of the world's population. That the continent of Africa is not a single unit but is a continent of great cultural and certainly political diversity is indicated by the fact that the number of separate and distinct African languages ranges between 800 and 1000. The fact that European languages such as English, French, and Portuguese are spoken widely in Africa and are often "official" national languages sharply illustrates the impact of European colonialism on the continent.

The best way to get a handle on something is to approach it historically. This is certainly the case with Africa since we have to expose the distortions and lies about it, and because our experiences in the United States have been so different. To facilitate this brief historical sketch we will use the narrative of Gustavas Vassa, a West African who was captured and shipped as a slave to Barbados. In using this narrative, we do not intend to suggest that all of pre-colonial Africa was as Vassa describes. Certainly it was not. This narrative

is, however, one of the few first-hand accounts that provides insights into the African roots of Afro-American people. We will look at pre-colonial Africa using six categories that you will notice are the themes of some of the chapters in this introductory course: the production of food, clothing and shelter, politics, religion, education, women and the family, and culture.

PRODUCTION. Agriculture was the basis of life in Africa and therefore had a determining influence on all aspects of society. Agricultural work was a communal or collective undertaking in which everyone was expected to contribute to and share the products on an equitable basis. Production, though done collectively, was still on a lower level technologically because there were no modern agricultural tools or machines like tractors. Manufacturing did not develop as rapidly as in Europe and other places. Manufacture consisted of cloth, pottery, jewelry, and art, weapons and agricultural tools.

There was trade. Markets existed where traders came and brought firearms, gunpowder, hats, beads, and dried fish in exchange for perfume, salt and slaves. Cattle was used instead of money which was not used widely because most of what was needed was self-produced and not purchased.

One of the notable things about Vassa's narrative is his often and casual mention of slaves in early African society. During the recent period, the African past has often been glorified to the extent of making slavery and the slave trade purely a consequence of Europeans in Africa, thus substituting myth for fact. Africans did have slaves, e.g., the pyramids of Egypt were built with slave labor. But Vassa also describes how slavery in Africa was different and less harsh than that in the West Indies and in the United States--a slave was treated as a human being. It was when slavery became a tool of capitalism in which goods are produced for sale on the market and not just for personal use that slavery assumed the brutal and inhumane character as in the United States.

POLITICS. Vassa's narrative also provides some insights into the political life of early Africa. His mention of Benin as a large slave trading kingdom noted for the power of its king and its readiness to fight is important. Because politics reflect the stage of economic development, there was political organization throughout Africa but large kingdoms arose only where there was a great deal of wealth accumulated. There were several large and significant centralized governments in Africa like those of Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Songhay. The governments of these kingdoms were used to collect taxes and mobilize armies. They were also important in increasing the capacity to produce food, clothing, and shelter, and in stimulating manufacture and trade. In general, as in Benin, the real power often rested with elders or chiefs of each local village and not with the king.

In addition, the family of class or kinship group was usually the basis of government or political authority. This goes along with the fact that governments or states were not as needed in early Africa because they were societies where the exploitation of one group of people by another had not developed to a significant extent and political power was not needed to rule over the exploited.

RELIGION. African religion was a complex and all-encompassing social institution that involved philosophical views, magic, superstition, and real-life experiences. It was a pervasive aspect of life. Religion played both a positive and a negative role in African society. On the one hand, it was an integral part of the social life of the people and facilitated the cooperation and discipline needed to aid the group's survival. On the other hand, it exercised a conservative influence on social development since it changed slowly, if at all. According to Walter Rodney, religion slowed down the development of African's capacity to produce food, clothing, and shelter: "Belief in prayer and in the intervention of ancestors and various Gods could easily be a substitute for innovations designed to control the impact of weather and environment." Rodney is referring to the religious practice called ancestor-worship, a belief that the spirits of dead relatives are always around to protect and provide; food and drink were always put on the ground for these spirits before it was consumed. As in other societies, this belief in some other-worldly or supernatural force with power over weather, life and death, health, and everything else reflects the lack of a scientific understanding of nature and society.

EDUCATION. While Vassa does not comment on education directly much research has been done on education in pre-colonial Africa. Education reflected the needs of African society. The process of education took place with groups of young people under the supervision of older age groups. Boys and girls were separately taught those practices and customs important for their assuming the responsibilities of adults. The high point of the educational process came with their initiation into adulthood, or the "rites of passage." Thus, the main aspect of this education process is that it was based on the accumulated practical experience of the people and passes from generation to generation by the oral tradition and apprenticeship relationships. There were also formal institutions of education. The universities of Timbuktu were renowned intellectual centers to which scholars from other parts of Africa, Asia and Europe came for study, and this also reflects the advanced

development of political states with power to mobilize surplus wealth for education.

WOMEN AND THE FAMILY. Vassa states that the role of women in early African society was as an equal to men, even in armed battle. "Even our women are warriors, and march boldly out to fight along with the men." This observation is identical to what one would find in the current liberation struggles in Africa. Between men and women, however, there was a division of labor. Men were usually the hunters and farmers. Women also engaged in agricultural work, and when not working with the men in this, engaged in weaving and spinning cotton, dying the cloth, and making clothing. It is important to note, however, that Vassa does point out several ways in which women were oppressed in early Africa. The "council of elders" was made up exclusively of men. Men did not have to obey the same strict rules as women in relationships with members of the opposite sex. Men, according to Vassa, were even assigned more living space in the household. These kinds of practices undoubtedly led to attitudes and practices of male supremacy against which women and men, especially in the contemporary African liberation movements, have struggled to abolish.

The family was the basis of social organization in pre-colonial Africa, performing essential economic and political functions. Often families grouped together in clans for cooperation in various aspects of social life, like farming or war. Communalism existed in some parts of Africa, that is, a society at a low stage of technological development in which there were no classes and a collective approach to production and distribution of the food, clothing, and shelter. However, a class structure was developing in Africa, as the Vassa narrative points out. The main classes at this time were Africans who owned slaves and the slaves themselves, and those who were part of the privileged "royal family" and comprised a privileged elite in relationship to the African masses.

CULTURE. As a total cultural tradition and way of life, Africa has long inspired Black people in the United States. This is reflected in many ways. Historically, many names of early Black institutions symbolized the link with Africa as in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Creative artists have often written about Africa as in Countee Cullen's poem "Heritage" ("What is Africa to Me") and Langston Hughes' "I've known Rivers." More recently, artists like Gil Scott-Heron have taken up the theme of struggle with songs like "What's the Word --Johannesburg." about the liberation struggle in South Africa. Music, literature, dance and sculpture are concentrated expressions of a people's culture. Thus, they are

usually prominent in most societies. As Vassa says, "we are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets." Every great event was reflected and communicated in artistic performances, especially in dance and song. Musical instruments such as drums, xylophones, harps, and others developed in Africa.

The bronze sculptures of Benin, Vassa's home, have been widely recognized for their greatness and in fact were later copied by such artists as Picasso of France.

The research of such scholars as linguist Lorenzo Turner and anthropologist Melville Herskovitz has demonstrated that Africans brought with them this rich cultural heritage to America. Once here, this cultural pattern interacted with the culture of other peoples. Under the new conditions a new cultural pattern emerged, one that contributed to Black people's struggle for survival under very challenging conditions.

THE PENETRATION OF EUROPE. With such a rich history, one must wonder how European slave traders and colonizers were able to penetrate the continent of Africa. The key to understanding this is that Africa and Europe were at different stages of social development. Despite the fact that Africa was more advanced than Europe at an earlier period, Europe by the beginning of the slave trade had surpassed Africa, especially in the capacity of its economy to produce goods like ships and guns. When a stronger economic system comes into contact with a system at an earlier and weaker stage of development, the weaker economy will suffer. This is what happened when Europe penetrated into Africa.

Initially, Africa interacted with Europe on the basis of trade, not of slaves, but of other goods. This was the first step in "how Europe underdeveloped Africa." Briefly, because Europe was a capitalist society using manufacturing and large-scale machine production, its capacity to produce was greater. The manufacture of cloth is a good example. During the 18th century new inventors like the power-loom and the use of water power revolutionized cloth production in Europe. This enabled Europe to produce enough cloth to supply its own needs and to export large quantities, to Africa and elsewhere.

European manufacturers even copied and produced colorful African cloth patterns and flooded Africa with this cloth. African cloth producers were unable to compete with this cheaper, machine-produced cloth since they were still producing by hand. Thus, Africans turned to mining gold, securing slaves, and producing other

goods that could be traded for cloth produced in Europe. As a result African manufacturing was neglected and the process of technological advancement was slowed in cloth production and in many other sectors of the economy (like iron manufacture). Continued trade only pushed Africa further behind Europe.

When we discuss the stunting of technological development in Africa, this is not to suggest that there were no significant achievements. The pyramids of Egypt and the granite stone buildings of Zimbabwe are outstanding examples of skill and technological capacity. There are many other examples of early African superiority in culture and technology. The key point is that only the continued development of Europe's system of production into its capitalist stage--and not race or genetic inferiority--led to Africa's being dominated by Europe. In other words, conquest by Europe using the gun eventually overcame the fierce resistance of Africa using the spear.

The most destructive trade, however, was the slave trade. Millions of the continent's most productive men and women were carried off to produce goods and services that would benefit neither themselves nor Africa. The social disruption caused by the many years of the slave raids and slave trade left long-lasting damage to African societies.

There is considerable controversy about the impact of the slave trade on Africa, especially regarding the number of slaves exported from Africa. Estimates of the number exported to the New World range from one hundred million to a few million. Recent estimates of ten million tend to underestimate the extent of the slave trade. Just as the number of slaves exported from Africa is underestimated, so too are the mortality rates--the numbers of Africans who died on the the voyage from Africa to the Americas. While some recent studies suggest that only 9 out of every 100 died, earlier studies of the slave trade show that the number of slaves who died was as high as 33 out of every 100! If we take into account the number of Africans who died in slave raids and of foreign diseases imported to Africa by slave traders, any estimate of the number of slaves imported into the Americas must be multiplied several times to be accurate about the depopulation of Africa.

Most of the slaves exported came from coastal West Africa--from the areas then called Senegambia, Sierra Leone, Windward Coast, Gold Coast, Bight of Benin, and Bight of Biafra. One study indicates that 81% of the slaves exported by the British between 1660 and 1807 came from this area. There were some important



variations, however. For example, 40% of the slaves imported into South Carolina between 1733 and 1807 came from Angola in Southern Africa.

How were the slaves secured? Outright kidnapping of slaves by Europeans and African traders occurred at the beginning of the slave trade and lasted throughout its 450 year history. But very early after the first raids, the slave became more of a trade than a raid. That is, Africans, especially chiefs, cooperated with Europeans in securing other Africans to be taken away as slaves. The key to understanding this is as Walter Rodney states: the Africans who sold other Africans were a privileged class who "joined hands with the Europeans in exploiting the African masses." Thus, the slave trade furthered the development of classes in Africa by enabling a small elite group of Africans to accumulate wealth, luxury, and power (including firearms) at the expense of the masses of African peoples. European countries even established trading forts on the West Coast of Africa like that at Elmina where slaves could be brought from the interior and stored until slave ships arrived to make their purchases.

The prices paid for slaves reflected the different systems of production in Africa and in Europe. This is important to keep in mind when we read that slaves were often purchased for a few bars of iron or a few yards of brightly colored cloth. In 1695, for example, a healthy African could be purchased for 8 guns or 600 pounds of iron. This may seem cheap but not when we consider that such large quantities of iron could not be produced without considerable time and expense and that guns could not be manufactured at all. Thus, the price that was obtained for slaves was really a reflection of how long it took Africans to produce the goods that were traded for slaves and not how much it cost to manufacture in Europe.

We must also note the impact of firearms on Africa. If one state obtained firearms in exchange for slaves, it was stronger than its neighbor. A neighboring state was often forced into slave trading into order to secure guns to protect itself. Thus, it is correct to assess the full impact of the European penetration into Africa by including these patterns of violence and disruption introduced by the slave trade.

Who were the major slave trading countries? England carried 44.6% of all slaves as compared to 29% carried by Portugal and 16% carried by France. The United States carried 5% of the total while Holland carried 3.4% and Denmark carried 1.7%. Thus the capitalist countries of Europe were the principal slave

traders. This is an important fact that will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. In East Africa, Arab traders carried out a slave trade secondary in importance to the European trade.

Where were Africans taken as slaves? Phillip Curtin in The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census calculated that between 1701 and 1807 42% of all the slaves imported from Africa went into the Caribbean Islands and 49% went into South America. The most significant finding is that less than 5% of the total imports came to the U.S. The bulk of these 430,000 slaves between 1730 and 1770--before most settlers from Europe.

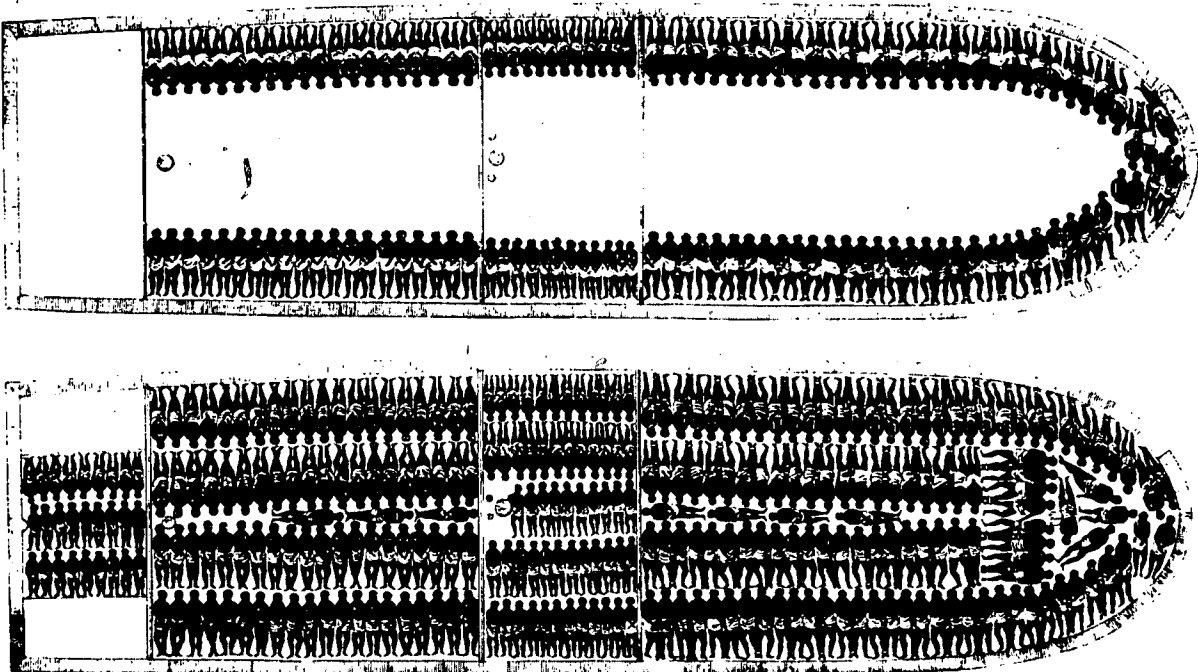
COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA. As capitalism continued to develop in Europe and in the United States, its need for slaves decreased. After the Industrial Revolution, Europe became more interested in the valuable raw materials of Africa, like rubber and the various food crops that could be grown there. This was why Europe's relationship to Africa shifted from slave-trading to colonialism. Kwame Nkrumah put it correctly: "colonialism is the policy by which the colonial power binds foreign territory to itself by political ties with the primary object of promoting its own economic advantages." He goes on to point out how the development of imperialism in advanced capitalist countries gave rise to this kind of colonialism. Briefly, imperialism is a stage of capitalism in which the wealth (factories, banks, land, etc.) in a country is owned or monopolized by a few capitalists. Because they have exhausted all of the most profitable investments at home, these monopolists can only expand their profits by turning to the rich raw materials, land, and people of other parts of the world. The main reason for this is that advanced capitalist countries because of the constant struggle for profits cannot continue to develop based on its own resources. Hence, these countries are forced into a new kind of struggle with each other in which they annex overseas territory as part of their "empire."

The impact of imperialism and colonialism on the people it colonizes was very destructive. Economically, the people were forced, often at gunpoint, to work in imperialist owned mines, plantations, and factories for starvation wages. Politically, imperialist nations arbitrarily drew political boundaries and instituted a system of political rule using its own administrators or indigenous puppets to guarantee that power remained in the hands of the "mother country." Socially, the culture and social life of the indigenous people was virtually destroyed. Missionaries and educators played key roles in consolidating imperialist colonial domination.

One of the most significant tools of colonialism was racism. Colonialism usually involved Europeans as the colonizers and people of color as the colonized. Thus, as a rationalization for exploitation and oppression, the ideology of racism was developed which branded the colonized people as racially inferior and subhuman, having no rights that the colonizers had to respect. The only right was economic right, in the eyes of the imperialists.

It is against this long history of exploitation and oppression by colonialism, imperialism and racism that we must understand the daily discussion in the U.S. mass media regarding Africa. While it is not often presented to us like it really is, Amilcar Cabral, an assassinated leader of the African revolution, points to the real story behind the headlines we read about and hear: "the destruction of colonialism and the struggle against imperialism constitutes one of the outstanding features of our times." It is this struggle against an international system of imperialism and such evils as colonialism and racism that are caused by it that, says Cabral, links the struggle of the African peoples to the struggle of freedom-loving and justice-loving people all over the world. It is partly because of their rich heritage of culture and struggle that Afro-American people are profoundly interested in, influenced by, and indeed, form an integral part of this same struggle now being valiantly fought in Africa.

This plan of a slave ship shows the inhuman conditions under which slaves were shipped to America.



## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 2

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| 5. MEMORIES OF AFRICA BEFORE THE SLAVE TRADE (1789) | Gustavus Vassa | 39 |
| 6. THE SLAVE TRADE'S IMPACT ON AFRICA (1972)        | Walter Rodney  | 49 |
| 7. COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA (1947)     | Kwame Nkrumah  | 54 |
| 8. RACISM AND IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA (1936)          | Ralph Bunche   | 59 |
| 9. THE DEATH PANGS OF IMPERIALISM (1961)            | Amilcar Cabral | 63 |



## MEMORIES OF AFRICA BEFORE THE SLAVE TRADE (1789)

...That part of Africa known by the name of Guinea, to which the trade for slaves is carried on, extends along the coast above 3400 miles, from Senegal to Angola, and includes a variety of kingdoms. Of these the most considerable is the kingdom of Benin, both as to extent and wealth, the richness and cultivation of the soil, the power of its king, and the number and warlike dispositions of the inhabitants. It is situated nearly under the line, and extends along the coast about 170 miles, but runs back into the interior part of Africa to a distance hitherto, I believe, unexplored by any traveller; and seems only terminated at length by the empire of Abyssinnia, near 1500 miles from its beginning. This kingdom is divided into many provinces or districts: in one of the most remote and fertile of which, I was born, in the year 1745, situated in a charming fruitful vale, named Essala. The distance of this province from the capital of Benin and the sea coast must be very considerable: for I had never heard of white men or Europeans, nor of the sea; and our subjection to the king of Benin was little more than nominal; for every transaction of the government, as far as my slender observation extended, was conducted by the chief or elders of the place. The manners and government of a people who have little commerce with other countries, are generally very simple; and the history of what passes in one family or village, may serve as a specimen of the whole nation. My father was one of those elders or chiefs I have spoken of, and was styled Embrench; a term, as I remember, importing the highest distinction, and signifying in our language a mark of grandeur. This mark is conferred on the person entitled to it, by cutting the skin across at the top of the forehead, and drawing it down to the eye-brows: and while it is in this situation applying a warm hand, and rubbing it until it shrinks up into a thick weal across the lower part of the forehead. Most of the judges and senators were thus marked; my father had long borne it: I had seen it conferred on one of my brothers, and I also was destined to receive it by my parents. Those Embrench or chief men, decided disputes and punished crimes; for which purpose they always assembled together. The proceedings were generally short: and in most cases the law of retaliation prevailed. I remember a man was brought before my father, and the other judges, for kidnapping a boy; and, although he was the son of a chief or senator, he was condemned to make recompense by a man or woman slave. Adultery, however, was sometimes punished with slavery or death; a punishment which I believe is

inflicted on it throughout most of the nation of Africa: so sacred among them is the honor of the marriage-bed, and so jealous are they of the fidelity of their wives. Of this I recollect an instance - a woman was convicted before the judges of adultery, and delivered over, as the custom was, to her husband, to be punished. Accordingly he determined to put her to death: but it being found, just before her execution, that she had an infant at her breast; and no woman being prevailed on to perform the part of a nurse, she was spared on account of the child. The men, however, do not preserve the same constancy to their wives, which they expect from them; for they indulge in a plurality, though seldom in more than two. Their mode of marriage is thus: both parties are usually betrothed when young by their parents, (though I have known the males to betroth themselves.) On this occasion a feast is prepared, and the bride and bridegroom stand up in the midst of all their friends, who are assembled for the purpose, while he declares she is henceforth to be looked upon as his wife, and that no other person is to pay any addresses to her. This is also immediately proclaimed in the vicinity, on which the bride retires from the assembly. Some time after, she is brought home to her husband, and then another feast is made, to which the relations of both parties are invited: her parents then deliver her to the bridegroom, accompanied with a number of blessings, and at the same time they tie round her waist a cotton string of the thickness of a goose-quill, which none but married women are permitted to wear: she is now considered as completely his wife; and at this time the dowry is given to the new married pair, which generally consists of portions of land, slaves, and cattle, household goods, and implements of husbandry. These are offered by the friends of both parties; besides which the parents of the bridegroom present gifts to those of the bride, whose property she is looked upon before marriage; but after it she is esteemed the sole property of her husband. The ceremony being now ended, the festival begins, which is celebrated with bonfires, and loud acclamations of joy, accompanied with music and dancing.

We are almost a nation of dancers, musicians and poets. Thus every great event, such as a triumphant return from battle, or other cause of public rejoicing, is celebrated in public dances, which are accompanied with songs and music suited to the occasion. The assembly is separated into four divisions, which dance either apart or in succession, and each with a character peculiar

to itself. The first division contains the married men, who in their dances frequently exhibit feats of arms, and the representation of a battle. To these succeed the married women, who dance in the second division. The young men occupy the third: and the maidens the fourth. Each represents some interesting scene of real life, such as a great achievement, domestic employment, a pathetic story, or some rural sport; and as the subject is generally founded on some recent event, it is therefore ever new. This gives our dances a spirit and variety which I have scarcely seen elsewhere. We have many musical instruments, particularly drums of different kinds, a piece of music which resembles a guitar, and another much like a stickado. These last are chiefly used by betrothed virgins, who play on them on all grand festivals.

As our manners are simple, our luxuries are few. The dress of both sexes is nearly the same. It generally consists of a long piece of calico, or muslin, wrapped loosely round the body, somewhat in the form of a highland plaid. This is usually dyed blue, which is our favorite color. It is extracted from a berry, and is brighter and richer than any I have seen in Europe. Besides this, our women of distinction wear golden ornaments, which they dispose with some profusion on their arms and legs. When our women are not employed with the men in tillage, their usual occupation is spinning and weaving cotton, which they afterwards dye, and make into garments. They also manufacture earthen vessels, of which we have many kinds. Among the rest, tobacco pipes, made after the same fashion, and used in the same manner, as those in Turkey.

Our manner of living is entirely plain; for as yet the natives are unacquainted with those refinements in cookery which debase the taste; bullocks, goats, and poultry, supply the greatest part of their food. These constitute likewise the principal wealth of the country, and the chief articles of its commerce. The flesh is usually stewed in a pan; to make it savory we sometimes use also pepper, and other spices, and we have salt made of wood ashes. Our vegetables are mostly plantains, cadas, yams, beans, and Indian corn. The head of the family usually eats alone; his wives and slaves have also their separate tables. Before we taste food we always wash our hands: indeed our cleanliness on all occasions is extreme; but on this it is an indispensable ceremony. After washing, libation is made, by pouring out a small portion of the drink on the floor, and tossing a small quantity of the food in a certain place, for the spirits of departed relations, which the natives suppose

to preside over their conduct, and guard them from evil. They are totally unacquainted with strong or spirituous liquors; and their principal beverage is palm wine. This is got from a tree of that name, by tapping it at the top, and fastening a large gourd to it; and sometimes one tree will yield three or four gallons in a night. When just drawn it is of a most delicious sweetness; but in a few days it acquires a tartish and more spirituous flavor: though I never saw any one intoxicated by it. The same tree also produces nuts and oil. Our principal luxury is in perfumes; one sort of these is an odoriferous wood of delicious fragrance: the other a kind of earth; a small portion of which thrown into the fire diffuses a most powerful odor. We beat this wood into powder, and mix it with palm oil; with which both men and women perfume themselves.

In our buildings we study convenience rather than ornament. Each master of a family has a large square piece of ground, surrounded with a moat or fence, or enclosed with a wall made of red earth tempered: which, when dry, is as hard as brick. - Within this, are his houses to accommodate his family and slaves; which, if numerous, frequently present the appearance of a village. In the middle, stands the principal building, appropriated to the sole use of the master, and consisting of two apartments; in one of which he sits in the day with his family, the other is left apart for the reception of his friends. He has besides these a distinct apartment in which he sleeps, together with his male children. On each side are the apartments of his wives, who have also their separate day and night houses. The habitations of the slaves and their families are distributed throughout the rest of the enclosure. These houses never exceed one story in height: they are always built of wood, or stakes driven into the ground, crossed with wattles, and neatly plastered within and without. The roof is thatched with reeds. Our day-houses are left open at the sides; but those in which we sleep are always covered, and plastered in the inside, with a composition mixed with cow-dung, to keep off the different insects, which annoy us during the night. The walls and floor also of these are generally covered with mats. Our beds consist of a platform, raised three or four feet from the ground, on which are laid skins, and different parts of a spungy tree, called plantain. - Our covering is calico or muslin, the same as our dress. The usual seats are a few logs of wood; but we have benches, which are generally perfumed to accommodate strangers: these



compose the greater part of our household furniture. Houses so constructed and furnished, require but little skill to erect them. Every man is a sufficient architect for the purpose. The whole neighbourhood afford their unanimous assistance in building them, and in return receive, and expect no other recompense than a feast.

As we live in a country where nature is prodigal of her favors, our wants are few and easily supplied; of course we have few manufactures. They consist for the most part of calicoes, earthen ware, ornaments, and instruments of war and husbandry. - But these make no part of our commerce, the principal articles of which, as I have observed, are provisions. In such a state, money is of little use; however, we have some small pieces of coin, if I may call them such. They are made something like an anchor; but I do not remember either their value or denomination. We have also markets, at which I have been frequently with my mother. These are sometimes visited by stout mahogany-colored men from the south-west of us: we call them Oye-Eboe, which term signifies red men living at a distance. - They generally bring us fire-arms, gunpowder, hats, beads, and dried fish. The last we esteemed a great rarity, as our waters were only brooks and springs. These articles they barter with us for odoriferous woods and earth, and our salt of wood ashes. They always carry slaves through our land but the strictest account is exacted of their manner of procuring them before they are suffered to pass. Sometimes indeed, we sold slaves to them, but they were only prisoners of war, or such among us as had been convicted of kidnapping, or adultery, and some other crimes, which we esteemed heinous. This practice of kidnapping induces me to think, that, notwithstanding all our strictness, their principal business among us was to trepan [trick, lure] our people. I remember to, they carried great sacks along with them, which not long after, I had an opportunity of fatally seeing applied to that infamous purpose.

Our land is uncommonly rich and fruitful, and produces all kinds of vegetables in great abundance. - We have plenty of Indian corn, and vast quantities of cotton and tobacco. Our pine apples grow without culture; they are about the size of the largest sugar-loaf, and finely flavored. We have also spices of different kinds, particularly pepper; and a variety of delicious fruits which I have never seen in Europe; together with gums of various kinds, and honey in abundance. All our industry is exerted to improve these blessings

of nature. Agriculture is our chief employment; and every one, even the children and women, are engaged in it. Thus we are all habituated to labor from our earliest years. Every one contributes something to the common stock, and, as we are unacquainted with idleness, we have no beggars. The benefits of such a mode of living are obvious. The West India planters prefer the slaves of Benin or Eboe, to those of any other part of Guinea, for their hardiness, intelligence, integrity, and zeal. Those benefits are felt by us in the general healthiness of the people, and in their vigor and activity; I might have added, too, in their comeliness. Deformity is indeed unknown amongst us, I mean that of shape. Numbers of the natives of Eboe now in London, might be brought in support of this assertion: for, in regard to complexion, ideas of beauty are wholly relative. I remember while in Africa to have seen three negro children who were tawny, and another quite white, who were universally regarded by myself, and the natives in general, as far as related to their complexions, as deformed. - Our women, too, were in my eye at least, uncommonly graceful, alert, and modest to a degree of bashfulness; nor do I remember to have heard of an instance of incontinence amongst them before marriage. - They are also remarkably cheerful. Indeed, cheerfulness and affability are two of the leading characteristics of our nation.

Our tillage is exercised in a large plain or common, some hours' walk from our dwellings, and all the neighbors resort thither in a body. They use no beasts of husbandry; and their only instruments are hoes, axes, shovels, and beaks, or pointed iron, to dig with. Sometimes we are visited by locusts, which come in large clouds, so as to darken the air, and destroy our harvest. This, however, happens rarely, but when it does, a famine is produced by it. I remember an instance or two wherein this happened. This common is often the theatre of war; and therefore when our people go out to till their land, they not only go in a body, but generally take their arms with them for fear of a surprise; and when they apprehend an invasion, they guard the avenues to their dwellings, by driving sticks into the ground, which are so sharp at one end as to pierce the foot, and are generally dipt in poison. From what I can recollect of these battles, they appear to have been irruptions of one little state or district on the other, to obtain prisoners or booty. Perhaps they were incited to this, by those traders who brought the European goods I mentioned, amongst us. Such a mode of obtaining slaves in Africa is common; and

I believe more are procured this way, and by kidnapping, than any other. When a trader wants slaves, he applies to a chief for them, and tempts him with his wares. It is not extraordinary, if on this occasion he yields to the temptation with as little firmness, and accepts the price of his fellow creatures' liberty, with as little reluctance as the enlightened merchant. - Accordingly he falls on his neighbors, and a desperate battle ensues. If he prevails and takes prisoners, he gratifies his avarice by selling them; but, if his party be vanquished, and he falls into the hands of the enemy, he is put to death; for, as he has been known to foment their quarrels, it is thought dangerous to let him survive, and no ransom can save him, though all other prisoners may be redeemed. We have fire-arms, bows and arrows, broad two-edged swords and javelins: we have shields also which cover a man from head to foot. All are taught the use of these weapons; even our women are warriors, and march boldly out to fight along with the men. - Our whole district is a kind of militia: on a certain signal given, such as the firing of a gun at night, they all rise in arms and rush upon their enemy. It is perhaps something remarkable, that when our people march to the field a red flag or banner is borne before them. I was once a witness to a battle in our common. We had been all at work in it one day as usual, when our people were suddenly attacked. I climbed a tree at some distance, from which I beheld the fight. There were many women as well as men on both sides; among others my mother was there, and armed with a broad sword. After fighting for a considerable time with great fury, and many had been killed, our people obtained the victory, and took their enemy's Chief a prisoner. He was carried off in great triumph, and though he offered a large ransom for his life, he was put to death. A virgin of note among our enemies, had been slain in the battle, and her arm was exposed in our marketplace, where our trophies were always exhibited. - The spoils were divided according to the merit of the warriors. Those prisoners which were not sold or redeemed, we kept as slaves: but how different was their condition from that of the slaves in the West Indies! With us, they do no more work than other members of the community, even their master; their food, clothing and lodging were nearly the same as theirs, (except that they were not permitted to eat with those who were free-born;) and there was scarce any other difference between them, than a superior degree of importance which the head of a family possesses in our state, and that authority which,

as such, he exercises over every part of his household. Some of these slaves have even slaves under them as their own property, and for their own use.

As to religion, the natives believe that there is one Creator of all things, and that he lives in the sun, and is girted round with a belt that he may never eat or drink; but, according to some he smokes a pipe, which is own favorite luxury. They believe he governs events, especially our deaths or captivity; but, as for the doctrine of eternity, I do not remember to have ever heard of it: some, however, believe in the transmigration of souls in a certain degree. Those spirits, which are not transmigrated, such as their dear friends or relations, they believe always attend them, and guard them from the bad spirits or their foes. For this reason they always before eating, as I have observed, put some small portion of the meat, and pour some of their drink, on the ground for them; and they often make oblations of the blood of beasts or fowls at their graves. I was very fond of my mother, and almost constantly with her. When she went to make these oblations at her mother's tomb, which was a kind of small solitary thatched house, I sometimes attended her. - There she made her libations, and spent most of the night in cries and lamentations. I have been often extremely terrified on these occasions. The loneliness of the place, the darkness of the night, and the ceremony of libation, naturally awful and gloomy, were heightened by my mother's lamentations; and these concurring with the doleful cries of birds, by which these places were frequented, gave an inexpressible terror to the scene.

We compute the year, from the day on which the sun crosses the line, and on its setting that evening, there is a general shout throughout the land; at least, I can speak from my own knowledge, throughout our vicinity. The people at the same time make a great noise with rattles, not unlike the basket rattles used by children here, though much larger, and hold up their hands to heaven for a blessing. It is then the greatest offerings are made; and those children whom our wise men foretell will be fortunate, are then presented to different people. I remember many used to come to see me, and I was carried about to others for that purpose. They have many offerings, particularly at full moons; generally two, at harvest, before the fruits are taken out of the ground: and when any young animals are killed, sometimes they offer up part of them as a sacrifice. These offerings, when made by one of the heads of a family, serve for the whole. I remember we often had them at my father's and my uncle's, and

their families have been present. Some of our offerings are eaten with bitter herbs. We had a saying among us to any one of a cross temper, 'That if they were to be eaten, they should be eaten with bitter herbs.'

We practised circumcision like the Jews, and made offerings and feasts on that occasion, in the same manner as they did. Like them also, our children were named from some event, some circumstance, or fancied foreboding, at the time of their birth. I was named Olaudah, which in our language signifies vicissitude, or fortunate; also, one favored, and having a loud voice and well spoken. I remember we never polluted the name of the object of our adoration; on the contrary, it was always mentioned with the greatest reverence; and we were totally unacquainted with swearing, and all those terms of abuse and reproach which find their way so readily and copiously into the language of more civilized people. The only expressions of that kind I remember were, 'May you rot, or may you swell, or may a beast take you.'

I have before remarked that the natives of this part of Africa are extremely cleanly. This necessary habit of decency, was with us a part of religion, and therefore we had many purifications and washing, indeed almost as many, and used on the same occasions, if my recollection does not fail me, as the Jews. Those that touched the dead at any time were obliged to wash and purify themselves before they could enter a dwelling-house. Every woman, too, at certain times was forbidden to come into a dwelling-house, or touch any person, or any thing we eat. I was so fond of my mother I could not keep from her, or avoid touching her at some of those periods, in consequence of which I was obliged to be kept out with her, in a little house made for that purpose, till offering was made, and then we were purified.

Though we had no places of public worship, we had priests and magicians, or wise men. I do not remember whether they had different offices, or whether they were united in the same persons, but they were held in great reverence by the people. - They calculated our time, and foretold events, as their name imported, for we called them Ah-affoe-way-cah, which signifies calculators or yearly men, our year being called Ah-affoe. They wore their beards, and when they died, they were succeeded by their sons. Most of their implements and things of value were interred along with them. Pipes and tobacco were also put into the grave with the corpse, which was always perfumed and ornamented, and animals were offered in sacrifice to them. None accompanied their

funerals, but those of the same profession or tribe. They buried them after sunset, and always returned from the grave by a different way from that which they went.

These magicians were also our doctors or physicians. They practised bleeding by cupping; and were very successful in healing wounds and expelling poisons. They had likewise some extraordinary method of discovering jealousy, theft, poisoning; the success of which no doubt, they derived from the unbounded influence over the credulity and superstition of the people. I do not remember what those methods were, except that as to poisoning; I recollect an instance or two, which I hope it will not be deemed impertinent here to insert, as it may serve as a kind of specimen of the rest, and is still used by the negroes in the West Indies. A young woman had been poisoned, but it was not known by whom; the doctors ordered the corpse to be taken up by some persons, and carried to the grave. As soon as the bearers had raised it on their shoulders, they seemed seized with some sudden impulse, and ran to and fro, unable to stop themselves. At last, after having passed through a number of thorns and prickly bushes unhurt, the corpse fell from them close to a house, and defaced it in the fall; and the owner being taken up, he immediately confessed the poisoning.

The natives are extremely cautious about poison. When they buy any eatables, the seller kisses it all round before the buyer, to show him it is not poisoned; and the same is done when any meat or drink is presented, particularly to a stranger. We have serpents of different kinds, some of which are esteemed ominous when they appear in our houses; and these we never molest. I remember two of those ominous snakes, each of which was thick as the calf of a man's leg, and his color resembling a dolphin in the water, crept at different times into my mother's night-house, where I always lay with her, and coiled themselves into folds, and each time they crowed like a cock. I was desired by some of our wise men to touch these, that I might be interested in the good omen, which I did, for they were quite harmless, and would tamely suffer themselves to be handled; and then they were put into a large earthen pan,<sup>o</sup> and set on one side of the high-way. Some of our snakes, however, were poisonous; one of them crossed the road one day as I was standing on it, and passed between my feet without offering to touch me, to the great surprise of many who saw it; and these incidents were accounted by the wise men, and likewise by my mother and the rest of the people, as remarkable omens in my favor.

## THE SLAVE TRADE'S IMPACT ON AFRICA (1972)

Many things remain uncertain about the slave trade and its consequences for Africa, but the general picture of destructiveness is clear, and that destructiveness can be shown to be the logical consequence of the manner of recruitment of captives in Africa. One of the uncertainties concerns the basic question of how many Africans were imported. This has long been an object of speculation, with estimates ranging from a few millions to over one hundred million. A recent study has suggested a figure of about ten million Africans landed alive in the Americas, the Atlantic islands and Europe. Because it is a low figure, it is already being used by European scholars who are apologists for the capitalist system and its long record of brutality in Europe and abroad. In order to white-wash the European slave trade, they find it convenient to start by minimising the numbers concerned. The truth is that any figure of Africans imported into the Americas which is narrowly based on the surviving records is bound to be low, because there were so many people at the time who had a vested interest in smuggling slaves (and withholding data). Nevertheless, if the low figure of ten million was accepted as a basis for evaluating the impact of slaving on Africa as a whole, the conclusions that could legitimately be drawn would confound those who attempt to make light of the experience of the rape of Africans from 1445 to 1870.

On any basic figure of Africans landed alive in the Americas, one would have to make several extensions - starting with a calculation to cover mortality in transshipment. The Atlantic crossing or 'Middle Passage', as it was called by European slavers, was notorious for the number of deaths incurred, averaging in the vicinity of 15% to 20%. There were also numerous deaths in Africa between time of capture and time of embarkation, especially in cases where captives had to travel hundreds of miles to the coast. Most important of all (given that warfare was the principal means of obtaining captives) it is necessary to make some estimate as to the number of people killed and injured so as to extract the millions who were taken alive and sound. The resultant figure would be many times the millions landed alive outside of Africa, and it is that figure which represents the number of Africans directly removed from the population and labour force of Africa because of the establishment of slave production by Europeans.

The massive loss to the African labour force was made more critical because it was composed of able-bodied young men and young women. Slave buyers preferred their victims between the ages of 15 and 35, and preferably in the early twenties; the sex ratio being about two men to one woman. Europeans often accepted younger African children, but rarely any older person. They shipped the most healthy wherever possible, taking the trouble to get those who had already survived an attack of smallpox, and who were therefore immune from further attacks of that disease, which was then one of the world's great killer diseases.

Absence of data about the size of Africa's population in the 15th century makes it difficult to carry out any scientific assessment of the results of the population outflow. But, nothing suggests that there was any increase in the continent's population over the centuries of slaving, although that was the trend in other parts of the world. Obviously, fewer babies were born than would otherwise have been the case if millions of child-bearing ages were not eliminated. Besides, it is essential to recognize that the slave trade across the Atlantic Ocean was not the only connection which Europeans had with slaving in Africa. The slave trade on the Indian Ocean has been called the 'East African slave trade' and the 'Arab slave trade' for so long that it hides the extent to which it was also a European slave trade. When the slave trade from East Africa was at its height in the 18th century and in the early 19th century, the destination of most captives was the European-owned plantation economies of Mauritius, Réunion and Seychelles - as well as the Americas, via the Cape of Good Hope. Besides, Africans labouring as slaves in certain Arab countries in the 18th and 19th centuries were all ultimately serving the European capitalist system which set up a demand for slave-grown products, such as the cloves grown in Zanzibar under the supervision of Arab masters.

No one has been able to come up with a figure representing total losses to the African population sustained through the extraction of slave labour from all areas to all destinations over the many centuries that slave trade existed. However, on every other continent from the 15th century onwards, the population showed constant and sometimes spectacular natural increase; while it is striking that the same did not apply to Africa. One European scholar gave the following estimates of world population (in millions) according to continents:



	1650	1750	1850	1900
Africa	100	100	100	120
Europe	103	144	274	423
Asia	257	437	656	857

- None of the above figures are really precise, but they do indicate a consensus among researchers on population that the huge African continent has an abnormal record of stagnation in this respect, and there is no causative factor other than the trade in slaves to which attention can be drawn.

An emphasis on population loss as such is highly relevant to the question of socio-economic development. Population growth played a major role in European development in providing labour, markets, and the pressures which led to further advance. Japanese population growth had similar positive effects; and in other parts of Asia which remained pre-capitalist, the size of the population growth had similar positive effects; and in other parts of Asia which remained pre-capitalist, the size of the population led to a much more intensive exploitation of the land than has ever been the case in what is still a sparsely-peopled African continent.

So long as the population density was low, then human beings viewed as units of labour were far more important than other factors of production such as land. From one end of the continent to the other, it is easy to find examples that African people were conscious that population was in their circumstances the most important factor of production. Among the Bemba, for instance, numbers of subjects were held to be more important than land. Among the Shambala of Tanzania, the same feeling was expressed in the saying 'a king is people'. Among the Balanta of Guinea-Bissau, the family's strength is represented by the number of hands there are to cultivate the land. Certainly, many African rulers acquiesced in the European slave trade for what they considered to be reasons of self-interest, but on no scale of rationality could the outflow of population be measured as being anything but disastrous for African societies.

African economic activity was affected both directly and indirectly by population loss. For instance, when the inhabitants of a given area were reduced below a certain number in an environment where tsetse fly was present, the remaining few had to abandon the area. In effect, enslavement was causing

these people to lose their battle to tame the harness nature - a battle which is at the basis of development. Violence also meant insecurity. The opportunity presented by European slave dealers became the major (though not the only) stimulus for a great deal of social violence between different African communities and within any given community. It took the form more of raiding and kidnapping than of regular warfare, and that fact increased the element of fear and uncertainty.

Both openly and by implication, all the European powers in the 19th century indicated their awareness of the fact that the activities connected with producing captives were inconsistent with other economic pursuits. That was the time when Britain in particular wanted Africans to collect palm produce and rubber and to grow agricultural crops for export in place of slaves; and it was clear that slave-raiding was violently conflicting with that objective in Western, Eastern and Central Africa. Long before that date, Europeans accepted that fact when their self-interest was involved. For example, in the 17th century, the Portuguese and Dutch actually discouraged slave trade on the 'Gold Coast' for they recognised that it would be incompatible with gold trade. However, by the end of that century, gold had been discovered in Brazil, and the importance of gold supplies from Africa was lessened. Within the total Atlantic pattern, African slaves became more important than gold, and Brazilian gold was offered for African captives at Whydah (Dahomey) and Accra. At that point, slaving began undermining the 'Gold Coast' economy and destroying the gold trade. Slave-raiding and kidnapping made it unsafe to mine and to travel with gold; and raiding for captives proved more profitable than gold-mining. One European on the scene noted that 'as one fortunate marauding makes a native rich in a day, they therefore exert themselves rather in war, robbery and plunder than in their old business of digging and collecting gold.'

The above changeover from gold-mining to slave-raiding took place within a period of a few years between 1700 and 1710, when the 'Gold Coast' came to supply about 5,000 to 6,000 captives per year. By the end of the 18th century, a much smaller number of captives were exported from the 'Gold Coast', but the damage had already been done. It is worth noting that Europeans sought out different parts of West and Central Africa at different times to play the role of major suppliers of slaves to the Americans. This meant that virtually every

section of the long western coastline between the Senegal and Cunene rivers had at least a few years experience of intensive trade in slaves - with all its consequences. Besides, in the history of Eastern Nigeria, the Congo, Northern Angola and Dahomey, there were periods extending over decades when exports remained at an average of many thousands per year. Most of those areas were also relatively highly developed within the African context. They were leading forces inside Africa, whose energies would otherwise have gone towards their own self-improvement and the betterment of the continent as a whole.

The changeover to warlike activities and kidnapping must have affected all branches of economic activity, and agriculture in particular. Occasionally, in certain localities food production was increased to provide supplies for slave ships, but the overall consequence of slaving on agricultural activities in Western, Eastern and Central Africa were negative. Labour was drawn off from agriculture and conditions became unsettled. Dahomey, which in the 16th century was known for exporting food to parts of what is now Togo, was suffering from famines in the 19th century. The present generation of Africans will readily recall that in the colonial period when able-bodied men left their homes as migrant labourers that upset the farming routine in the home districts and often caused famines. Slave trading after all, meant migration of labour in a manner one hundred times more brutal and disruptive.

To achieve economic development, one essential condition is to make the maximum use of the country's labour and natural resources. Usually, that demands peaceful conditions, but there have been times in history when social groups have grown stronger by raiding their neighbours for women, cattle and goods, because they then used the 'booty' from the raids for the benefit of their own community. Slaving in Africa did not even have that redeeming value. Captives were shipped outside instead of being utilised within any given African community for creating wealth from nature. It was only as an accidental by-product that in some areas Africans who recruited captives for Europeans realised that they were better off keeping some captives for themselves. In any case, slaving prevented the remaining population from effectively engaging in agriculture and industry, and it employed professional slave hunters and warriors to destroy rather than build. Quite apart from the moral aspect and the immense suffering that it caused, the European slave trade was econo-

mically totally irrational from the viewpoint of African development.

For certain purposes, it is necessary to be more specific and to speak of the trade in slaves not in general continentwide terms but rather with reference to the varying impact on several regions. The relative intensity of slave-raiding in different areas is fairly well known. Some South African peoples were enslaved by the Boers and some North African Muslims by Christian Europeans, but those were minor episodes. The zones most notorious for human exports were, firstly, West Africa from Senegal to Angola along a belt extending about 200 miles inland and, secondly, that part of East Central Africa which today covers, Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Northern Zambia and Eastern Congo. Furthermore, within each of those broad areas, finer distinctions can be drawn.

It might therefore appear that slave trade did not adversely affect the development of some parts of Africa, simply because exports were non-existent or at a low level. However, the contention that European slave trade was an underdeveloping factor for the continent as a whole must be upheld, because it does not follow that an African district which did not trade with Europe was entirely free from whatever influences were exerted by Europe. European trade goods percolated into the deepest interior, and (more significantly) the orientation of large areas of the continent towards human exports meant that other positive inter-actions were thereby ruled out.

## COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA (1947)

# 7

Colonialism is the policy by which the 'mother country', the colonial power, binds her colonies to herself by political ties with the primary object of promoting her own economic advantages. Such a system depends on the opportunities offered by the natural resources of the colonies and the uses for them suggested by the dominant economic objectives of the colonial power. Under the influence of national aggressive self-consciousness and the belief that in trade and commerce one nation should gain at the expense of the other, and the further believe that exports must exceed imports in value, each colonial power pursues a policy of strict monopoly of colonial trade, and the building up of national power. The basic notion, that of strict political and

economic control, governs the colonial policies of Britain, France, Belgium and other modern colonial powers.

The dominant reasons for the quest for colonies and particularly the penetration into Africa by European capitalist powers were stated by Jules Ferry, the master of imperialist logic, in a statement made by him in 1885 in the Chamber of Deputies while speaking in defence of the colonial policy of the government of France, of which he was then the Premier. Ferry said: 'The nations of Europe desire colonies for the following three purposes: (i) in order that they may have access to the raw materials of the colonies; (ii) in order to have markets for sale of the manufactured goods of the home country; and (iii) as a field for the investment of surplus capital.'

Albert Sarraut, Colonial Secretary of State for France in 1923, at the Ecole Coloniale, Paris, said: 'What is the use of painting the truth? At the start, colonialization was not an act of civilization, was not a desire to civilize. It was an act of force motivated by interests. An episode in the vital competition which, from man to man, from group to group, has gone on ever-increasing; the people who set out for taking and making of colonies in distant continents are thinking primarily only of themselves, and are working only for their own power, and conquering for their own profits.' Sarraut concluded his speech with these words, and thus exposed the falsehood of the 'white man's burden', and the 'mission civilisatrice' policy in colonization: 'The origin of colonization is nothing else than enterprise of individual interests, a one-sided and egotistical imposition of the strong upon the weak.' Such is the phenomenon of European capitalist aggressiveness, one which has been rightly termed 'colonial imperialism'.

Our best illustration is the 'scramble for Africa', which began when the economic insufficiency of Great Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Italy impelled their political leaders to look beyond the seas for markets and storehouses of wealth and resources in order to consolidate their individual states and guarantee their economic security.

Thus Africa became not only the market for European goods but a field for capital investments. As British, German, French and European industry was organized the products were divided between the entrepreneur and the capitalists, who got salaries and dividends at the expense of the African labourer.

The bankers of the European colonial powers had surplus capital to invest

in competition with one another. To protect these investments they reduced the colonies to exploited subject status. It was circumstances like this that led to the rebellion of Egypt under Arabi Pasha. While the French hesitated, Great Britain crushed the revolt and thus Egypt became a British colony. Briefly, then, imperialism in Africa was a direct answer for the capitalists, bankers and financiers of the colonial powers to the problem of how to accrue for themselves super profits from their foreign investments.

The fate of the colonies changes in accordance with the results of European imperialist wars. After the first World War (1914), Great Britain received German East Africa, a quarter of Togoland and a piece of the Cameroons. France took over the remaining three-quarters of Togoland and a greater part of the Cameroons, while Belgium and Portugal got slices of German East Africa. The Union of South Africa received German South-West Africa.

Since we feel that mercantilism - as an aspect of imperialism - is the basis of colonial economics, a brief history of the term is essential here. Mercantilism is a term applied to the economic policy which had its inception in Europe just at the close of the Middle Ages. In fact, it was the next historical development of feudalism. Its doctrine, in the extreme sense, made wealth and money identical; but as the years rolled on mercantile economists based the definition of the system on money exclusively. Money was therefore regarded as the main object of a community. Thus it was held that the community must confine itself to dealing with other nations on such lines as would attract the most possible precious metals to itself. This method of trade among nations led to what is known in the realm of economics as the 'balance of trade', which meant the relationship of equilibrium between export and import.

Eventually, this system of 'balance of trade' was considered favourable when more money was received into the country than was paid out. To assure a favourable balance of trade, governments of nations resorted to certain economic and political expedients. For instance: (i) high duties on imports; (ii) exports of home manufactured goods; (iii) receiving only raw materials from other countries; (iv) restrictions on the exports of precious metals; (v) exaltations of foreign trade over domestic trade; (vi) organizing of industries and factories at home; (vii) the importance of dense population as an element of national strength to safeguard foreign trade, and last but not least; (viii) the employment of state action in furthering such ends.

Governments took great interest in these mercantile programmes because they needed money and men for the maintenance of the army and for the unification of their national states. Thus statesmen and business aristocracy conjectured that for them to further their political and economic ambitions successfully, industries and the mercantile system must prosper. Eventually, this conception of trade led to the great problem of colonization.

The purpose of founding colonies was mainly to secure raw materials. To safeguard the measures for securing such raw materials the following policies were indirectly put into action: (i) to make the colonies non-manufacturing dependencies; (ii) to prevent the colonial subjects from acquiring the knowledge of modern means and techniques for developing their own industries; (iii) to make colonial 'subjects' simple producers of raw materials through cheap labour; (iv) to prohibit the colonies from trading with other nations except through the 'mother country'. The methods employed by the imperialists today are developments of mercantilism.

Colonial economics may be traced through three main phases corresponding to its history. The mercantile period, the free-trade period and the period of economic imperialism, all being respectively dominated by merchant capital, industrial capital and finance capital. We are here mainly concerned with the last phase, economic imperialism with its dominance of finance capital.

The most searching and penetrating analysis of economic imperialism has been given by Marx and Lenin. According to the Marx-Lenin point of view, economic imperialism is not only the natural stage in the development of the capitalist system, but its highest stage in which the inner contradictions and inconsistencies of the system foreshadow its doom and demolition.

The Marxist-Leninist position may be stated thus: In the capitalist system of production labour is treated as a commodity to be bought and sold in the market like any other commodity. As such, it figures in the capitalist-producer's calculations merely as one production cost among others. But since the system is a competitive system, the capitalist-producer is compelled to keep wages down in order to keep the margin of profit high. Here it becomes obvious that the economic philosophy of high wages, even though it may operate well in special industries whose circumstances favour a combination of high wages with low wage-costs per unit of production, cannot under capitalism be applied to industry as a whole. This means that under the capitalist system

of production a point is soon reached where wages appear a necessary evil even to the capitalist-producer, who now realizes that the incomes distributed as wages from the body of the market for what he wants to sell. And since competition and the necessity of profit determine the outlook of capitalism, it cannot raise incomes 'up to the limits of productive capacity'.

The capitalist-producer, in seeking profit by limiting his wage bill, impedes his own effort to find buyers for the increasing volume of his production.

This dilemma becomes even more confounded by the introduction of combines and monopolies due to the fact that these combines and monopolies continue to compete with other combines and monopolies producing similar commodities in other countries. Thus complete elimination of competition from the capitalist system of production is not only a contradiction but an impossibility.

To find a way out of this contradiction the capitalist-producer turns his profit-seeking eyes to the colonies and dependent territories. He does so first by killing the arts and crafts in these areas through the competition of his cheaper machine-made goods (exports) and, secondly, by thrusting capital loans upon them for financing the construction of railways, harbours and other means of transportation and communication in so far as these constructions cater to his profits and safeguard his capital. Industrial capital thus fuses with finance capital.

It is when the number of the capitalist countries relying on foreign markets and fields of investment increases and the number of colonizable areas diminishes that rivalries among the colonial powers ensue, rivalries which issue first in minor wars of colonial conquests and later in the great imperialist wars of modern times. Lenin in his Imperialism the Highest State of Capitalism, summarizes the position thus:

Imperialism is capitalism in that stage of development in which the domination of monopolies and finance capital has taken shape; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world by the international trusts has begun, and in which the partition of all the territory of the earth by the greatest capitalist countries has been completed.

The effect of this type of imperialism on colonial peoples is dramatic. The stage opens with the appearance of missionaries and anthropologists, traders and concessionaires, and administrators. While 'missionaries' with



perverted 'Christianity' implore the colonial subject to lay up his 'treasures in Heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt', the traders and concessionaires and administrators acquire his mineral and land resources, destroy his arts, crafts and home industries. Since the rise of colonial industry would entail more competition and undercutting, these finance-capital-producers and their imperialist cohorts do everything in their power to prevent its development.

Economic development in the colonial areas is perverted precisely because the monopoly stage, which should come as a logical advance feature of capitalism, is introduced before even the most primitive manifestation of local capitalist development. Hence the stagnation and decay characteristic of colonial economy.

That is one of the reasons why we maintain that the only solution to the colonial problem is the complete eradication of the entire economic system of colonialism, by colonial peoples, through their gaining political independence. Political freedom will open the way for the attainment of economic and social improvement and advancement. It must be otherwise under foreign rule.

# 8

## RACISM AND IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA (1936)

Modern imperialism has given added impetus to the tendency to classify human peoples as "superior" and "inferior" for race has been a convenient device for the imperialist. Under imperialism's zone of conquest the population of the earth has been arbitrarily divided into "advanced" and "backward" races or peoples. Imperialist propaganda has taught the world to regard certain peoples as helplessly backward and incapable of keeping step with the modern industrial world. In fact, strenuous efforts are made to make these peoples think of themselves as backward. But this classification is not a mere theoretical one. It is used as the basis for justifying conquest and exploitation and for dividing the world into dominant and subdominant peoples. Thus imperialism has attempted to mask its cruelly selfish motives under high-sounding titles. Powerful industrial nations have raped Africa under the false pretense of shouldering "the white man's burden." It has been held to

be the particular mission of the dominant peoples to bring civilization to the backward peoples of the earth; to convert them to the Christian religion and to expose them to the benefits of an advanced European culture. A new "moral" philosophy is invented which holds that some peoples are naturally backward and therefore properly may be kept in a more or less permanent state of subjection to the advanced peoples. But since the backward peoples have often been reluctant to receive these blessings they have been forced to accept them at the point of the bayonet. In this way Italy is bestowing the "blessings of civilization" upon the hapless Ethiopians today. After the conquest has been completed, the backward peoples bitterly learn the "blessings" consist of brutal suppression, greedy economic exploitation of the natural and human resources of a country which is not longer their own, forced labor, the introduction of previously unknown diseases, vice and social degeneration.

More than half of the land surface of the world and over a billion human beings comprise the colonies, protectorates and "retarded" or "backward" areas dominated by a few imperialist nations. Thus approximately one-third of the human race is directly subject to imperialist domination. Powerful nations such as England, France, Italy, Japan and the United States, have been guilty of many acts of imperialist aggression. Even small countries like Belgium, Holland and Portugal exploit great colonial areas with large native populations.

The directing motive in this process is human greed. The so-called backward peoples would hold no attraction for the advanced peoples if they possessed no human or material resources which are needed by the industrial nations. The right of property is given a new twist to fit the needs of these nations. Thus the backward races are told that the natural resources of the world can no longer be regarded as the exclusive property of these peoples who happen to control them at the moment. Natural resources are now said to belong to those who demonstrate the best ability to exploit and use them. Since the backward peoples are often less concerned with the exploitation of men and resources for the purpose of creating wealth for the few, they are held to have no right to their domain. They are conquered, control of their territory is wrung from them, and they are put to work making their own resources available to the rest of the world. It also follows that the backward peoples

themselves are given little opportunity to share in the new wealth thus made available.

Imperialism is an international expression of capitalism. The rapid growth and expansion resulting from the development of industrialism and capitalism led the peoples of industrial countries to seek raw materials and new markets all over the world. This led to more general group contact, and because of the base motives of imperialism, to more widespread racial conflict. The invasion of a territory by a more powerful race results not only in racial conflict but makes more difficult the struggle for existence of the weaker race. In addition the culture and social structure of the latter race tend to be disorganised.

In Africa, with the exception of South, and more recently, East Africa, large-scale settlement of white populations has not been possible largely because of the climate. Consequently, colonisation in Africa has proven much more difficult for the white races than in either America or Australia. Moreover, the Negro demonstrates a strong power of survival. Some of the "blessings" which the European brought to Africa and the Africans were truly "in disguise." They have taken the form of the slave trade, forced labor, and dangerous diseases such as syphilis, with which the African peoples had had no previous contact. Such factors have led to great decimation of population in many parts of Africa and to the break-down of African civilization and tribal social structure. Africa is imperialism's greatest and most characteristic expression.

Africa, and particularly West Africa, may be taken as an excellent illustration of how the dominant and "superior" races of Europe have conquered peoples less expert in "civilized" methods of warfare. It also demonstrates how race has been employed as a device not only to justify the conquest to the world, but how in some instances it has proved an effective means of emotional appeal in order to make the exploitation of the conquered peoples more acceptable to them. The technique of governing subject races and minimizing racial conflict in West Africa is both revealing and fairly typical of the methods employed elsewhere in the Far East, Australia and the Caribbean.

In considering the impact of Western imperialism upon the African it must be borne in mind that the partition of the Dark Continent among the nations of Europe is an affair of only the past half-century. The penetration

of Africa actually began much earlier, but the imperialism of today is a product of modern capitalism, and the beginning of its application to Africa coincides with the deep penetration into the hinterland and the partition of the continent in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Back of this partition of Africa were the compelling economic forces of modern industrial capitalism. The need of industrial countries for expanded markets, for raw materials found in the tropics and sub-tropics, the accumulation of "surplus capital" and the resultant demand for overseas investments, all tended to force European imperialist nations to invade completely the African continent. In addition, it should be remembered that until the twentieth century the colonizing nations had little to offer Africa but imperialist exploitation in its crudest form, accompanied by greed, hostility and misunderstanding. It has been this brief but unsavory early history of Europe in Africa which has impelled some writers to indict the general effects of European policy as "almost wholly evil," and to regard the process in its entirety as one of fraud and robbery.

It should not be surprising that a defenseless people, regarded as members of an "inferior", primitive race by invading conquerors, should be as much victimized in their own country in which they are in the great majority as where they are a minority racial group, as is the case of the Negro in this country. Moreover, there is in both instances the same lack of serious effort to work out a just and intelligent policy for the government and control of these peoples.

The representatives of Western civilization in Africa from the beginning set about considering the new country mainly in relation to their own needs and interests. The fertility of the soil, the richness of natural resources, the salubrity of the climate, the industry and health of the primitive population are all important to the European only in terms of potential exploitation. Commonplace as the observation may be, seldom, if ever, has the welfare of the native population been given front rank in these considerations.

## 9

## THE DEATH PANGS OF IMPERIALISM (1961)

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 [in Russia], 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 of 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 or the antagonism among these 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.

In view of the power wielded by the principal imperialistic nations, one cannot help but ask how Portugal, an underdeveloped and backward nation, could keep its colonies in spite of the partition to which the world was subjected. Portuguese colonialism was able to survive because England supported the ambitions of Portugal, which became a virtual English colony, especially after the Treaty of Methuen (1703).

England had an interest in the Portuguese colonies, not only for the exploitation of their economic resources, but also for their occupation as bases along the route to the Orient, which enabled England to maintain absolute control over the Indian Ocean. To counter the envy of the other colonialist powers and to defend its interests in the Portuguese colonies, England took the best course of action: a defense of the "rights" of its semi-colony. Thus, for example, Portugal gave private enterprise, dominated by English capital, sovereign rights over an area corresponding to 17 percent of the territory of Mocambique. Thus, before World War II, English investments in the Portuguese colonies were evaluated at more than twenty-five million pounds sterling.

The prostitution of the African nations that Portugal dominated was a common practice instigated by a colonial policy faced with imperialist interests. Only with aid from these interests was Portuguese colonialism able to survive in Africa. Furthermore, legal plans authorizing the sale of Guine, Mocambique, Macao, and Timor for 1,250 million escudos were made, but they were rejected by the Portuguese Chamber of Deputies (1883 and 1891), proving the appetites of Portuguese colonialists. The Duke of Palmela, for example, offered the town of Lourenco Marques to England in exchange for its aid in the cause of Portuguese liberalism.

In reality, Portugal was employed by world imperialism; she was only a rather envious guardian of our countries' human and material resources. That is the real reason for the survival of Portuguese colonies in Africa. Thus, the presence of Portugal was, and still is, dependent on the presence of other colonizing powers, principally England. It is not by chance or in sympathy for the Portuguese government that the British government aids Portugal in the war of extermination being waged in Angola; it is in defense of the interests of English capital.

The progressive extinction of British and French colonialism and the

international isolation of the fascist Portuguese government augur well for the victory of our liberation struggle. Yet we must not lose sight of the fact that the forces of world imperialism, especially the capitalists directly interested in the wealth of the Portuguese colonies, are the principal support of Portuguese colonialists.

Therefore, in battling the Portuguese colonialists, we are battling imperialism. That is one of the principal reasons for the difficulty and the possible length of our struggle.

On the basis of our legitimate right to rebel against foreign domination, our peoples have unleashed a political battle of liberation that will take any form needed for its development. Our struggle is a continuation of that tradition of patriotic resistance found in the peoples of Guiné and Cape Verde. Although often overcome by the force of weapons, the spirit of resistance within the people of Guine has never ceased to manifest itself: revolts, passive resistance, mass emigrations to neighboring territories, and, in the case of our Bissagós brother of Canhabaque, total refusal to pay the Portuguese sovereignty tax. Our people have won great victories over the technical superiority of Portuguese weapons. Against colonialist troops, our people have fought courageously to the limit of their strength.

Since the period of slavery in the Cape Verde Islands, innumerable revolts have marked the hatred of the people for Portuguese domination. More than once the people have rebelled against the masters of the land and protested foreign domination by demonstrations, strikes, and revolts, principally in São Tiago, São Antão, and São Vicente. Our struggle is merely the continuation of that led by our peoples against Portuguese colonialists.

Today imperialism is plunged into the deepest contradictions; it is feeling the pangs of death. The formal changes that it is obliged to undergo are proof of its present weakness and decomposition.

As a result of the material conditions of our times, reinforced by the growing superiority of progressive forces, imperialism will be totally annihilated. Nevertheless, we may be sure that this will not occur without a struggle. By fighting against Portuguese colonialism, the peoples of Guiné and Cape Verde are making an effective contribution to hastening the total liquidation of imperialism. In this historic mission, our peoples join with other African peoples and all anti-imperialist forces in the world.

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## ARMED STRUGGLE UNTIL VICTORY

From the cover of Zimbabwe News, Official organ of Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)



# CHAPTER 3

RACISM, COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM: THE LEGACY OF CAPITALIST SLAVERY

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why was England forced to explore the "New World"?
2. From what sources did England attempt to secure labor after it had colonized America? Why was the slave trade from Africa England's successful solution to this shortage of labor?
3. What did the slave trade contribute to the development of industry and the Industrial Revolution in England? In the United States?
4. What were the similarities and differences in the way the rising capitalist class in England and in the United States were connected to the slave trade?

## KEY CONCEPTS

Capitalist Class/Bourgeoisie

Exports/ Imports

Factory Production

Feudalism

Indentured Servitude

Industrial Revolution

Mercantilism/ Commerce

Triangular Trade

Working Class/ Proletariat

Industrial Production

In 1694 the ship "Hannibal" dumped 320 of its cargo of 700 slaves overboard during the Middle Passage. This 43% of its cargo had died from the harshness and brutality of the voyage from Africa to the "New World." In 1781, the captain and crew of the ship Zong tossed 133 slaves overboard before landing because the voyage from Africa had left them too ill to bring a good price. This brutal method enabled the owners to collect the insurance. These kinds of horrors are common in most discussions of the slave trade.

The recent television series Roots has excited much interest in this phase of Afro-American history. The narrative of Gustavus Vassa, is vivid as an eyewitness account of these horrors: forced capture, a long voyage with men, women and children packed like sardines below a ship's deck, attempts to seize control of the ship punished by death, suicides as means of escape, torture, and finally induction into a life of slavery.

But why the slave trade in the first place? And of what significance was the result of the slave trade, especially the institution of slavery in the United States? Few of the presentations like Roots provide sufficient answers to these all important questions. The usual practice is to dismiss the slave trade and slavery as the result of "man's inhumanity to man"--natural events that we are now too "civilized" to practice again. Or the slave trade and slavery is blamed on the "inherent evilness of the devil--the white man." Both of these explanations fall far short of explaining what actually happened in history and why. The story is much more complex than that and in this chapter we will look at some of the factors which caused the trade in Africans. In the next chapter we will discuss the slave system of the antebellum South.

The slave trade involved several important factors. The slavers were, for the most part, European and American merchants; the source of slaves was Africa, though slaves were taken from other continents as well; and the destination to which most slaves were taken was the so-called "New World"--North and South America and the West Indies. So it is very important for us to place the slave trade in international perspective if we are to understand it properly.

As early as the 15th century, England passed from raising sheep and being a producer of wool, an agricultural activity, to a manufacturer of cloth. This signalled the beginning of capitalist production and it is here that

we can locate the basic cause of the slave trade.

Feudalism, the system that preceded capitalism, was based on the ownership of land by landlords and the exploitation of serfs who owned no land and had to work for these landowners to survive. The method of producing goods and clothing was the guild system which kept production and trade monopolized in the hands of a few skilled craftsmen and merchants. Because of the increase in international trade, production had to be carried out on a much larger scale. The guild system was not able to produce the increased amount of goods and was therefore replaced by manufacturing, a system in which many craftsmen still producing goods by hand as under the guild system were brought together in a single "manufactory" or factory. This enabled each craftsman to specialize in performing a single task in production, for example, putting the heel on all the shoes produced, instead of working on the entire shoe. As a result of this division of labor and specialization, the amount of shoes, cloth, and other goods produced increased.

But commerce and trade kept expanding, especially, overseas, and more and more goods were soon needed. Manufacturing was no longer sufficient, machines were invented to speed production and large scale industry based on the use of these newly-invented machines, steam and water power developed. It is in this historical context that we can see how Africa and the slave trade were connected to this history-making-event. The slave trade was both caused by the development of capitalism and also made an important contribution to capitalism's continued development. This contribution to capitalism's development was made on two continents--Europe (especially in England) and the United States. Let us look briefly at some of the aspects of this relationship.

(1) THE DEMAND FOR MARKETS. Merchantilism was the economic theory which guided England. This theory stated that the possession of gold, silver, and other precious metals was the basis of the wealth of nations. Therefore, trade became important as England and other nations struggled to monopolize sources of precious metals and to export (or send to other countries) more goods than it imported (or received from other countries.)

It was this need for precious metals and their shortage in Europe that led to a period of exploration and discoveries. While many historians distort the real motivation, Christopher Columbus who "discovered" America in 1492 was

very clear on why he undertook the trip: "Gold constitutes treasure, and he who possesses it has all he needs in this world and also the means of rescuing souls from Hell and restoring them to the enjoyment of Heaven." Most of the great discoveries we read about in geography and history -- Vasco da Gama, Sir Frances Drake, and even Estavanico (Little Stephen), the Black Spanish explorer who discovered New Mexico, should all be understood as part the struggle of European countries to find gold so that one nation could be stronger than another.

Later, however, as capitalism developed further and the techniques of production improved (more skilled labor, better machines, bigger ships, faster communications, electrical power, etc.) foreign lands were needed not so much for gold but as markets to sell the manufactured goods which could not be sold at home.

(2) THE STRUGGLE FOR LAND. England is a small island, about the size of New York. In order for it to develop, it needed (and still needs) both sources of raw materials for its factories and markets for the goods it produced. COLONIALISM became the key mechanism by which capitalist countries like England, France, Belgium, Germany, Portugal--and later the United States --acquired and maintained control over foreign territory and workers for exploitation. By exploitation we mean when workers are ripped off -- that is, they are paid less than their work is worth. This always happens under capitalism because, as Malcolm X put it bluntly: "show me a capitalist and I will show you a bloodsucker!"

No continent escaped the domination of British colonialism. As the British were once fond of saying (until the peoples of the colonies rose in revolution and threw off the shackles of colonialism): "The sun never sets on the British Empire." It was the colonization of America--especially the United States and the West Indies--that paved the way for capitalism's rapid development in England. These colonies were ideal for mercantilism: providing a lot of wealth but requiring very little. Colonial Virginia's tobacco, Carolina's rice, the sugar of the West Indies, and New England's timber and tar for ships were important goods that were exported exclusively to England. Further, these colonies were forbidden by England from trading with any other countries (so smuggling became popular) and from manufacturing any item that competed with a product made in England (like iron). On top of

all of this, gold and silver mined by Indians and Africans were also a great source of wealth.

Thus, in providing all of this wealth, these colonies served the mother country well. It was to break this colonial exploitation by England that the American people (as others before and after them) declared in 1776: "GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH!"

(3) THE STRUGGLE FOR LABOR. If the lands colonized in the Americas were to yield a profit, labor was needed. The ruling class of England first attempted to supply the labor from England using indentured servants, people who were given free passage to America in exchange for their pledge to work for a set number of years (usually four to seven or until they were 21). This was very similar to slavery. This source of labor, however, was insufficient. Slavery became the only answer. The first instance of slave trading and slave labor in the New World involved not Africans, but Indians. Indian slavery was started as if taking the lands of the Native Americans was not enough. Excessive labor, insufficient diet, diseases of European origin resulted in almost total genocide (the systematic killing of a national group) of the Native American population.

But it was to Africa and the slave trade that England finally turned in order to obtain the labor needed in America. Other kinds of labor proved too scarce or too costly. "The origin of Negro slavery," according to Eric Williams, "can be expressed in three words: in the Caribbean, Sugar; on the mainland, Tobacco and Cotton. The reason [for slavery] was economic, not racial; it had to do not with the color of the laborer, but the cheapness of the labor."

The population of Africa was abundant and could be purchased cheaply. And besides, racism--an elaborate set of lies and distortions that branded Black people as inherently inferior--could be developed to facilitate economic exploitation of the slaves by the capitalists. "The features of the man, his hair, color and dentifrice [teeth], his 'subhuman' characteristics so widely pleaded, were only the later rationalizations to justify a simple economic fact: that the colonies needed labor and resorted to Negro labor because it was cheapest and best." While we will return to the important issue of racism in almost every chapter in this text, there are a few ques-

tions about the slave trade that we should answer.

In addition to supplying an all important labor force for the development of the Americas, the slave trade itself yielded great profits. To one influential mercantilist in the 18th century, slaves were "the fundamental prop and support" of the English colonies; and he described the slave trade as "the first principle and foundation of all the rest, the mainspring of the machine which sets every wheel in motion." Why this glowing tribute? It was because the slave trade not only provided the population of workers for the plantations and mines of the New World, but it also made big profits for both the slave traders and those who provided them with goods and services. Eric Williams (in the reading which follows) cites many examples of ships owners making double their money in profits on the sale of slaves. The slave trade was perhaps the most abundant source of quick and substantial profits during this period of history.

The overall importance of all of this can be brought together by discussing the triangular trade. As stated in Capitalism and Slavery:

In this triangular trade England--France and Colonial America equally--supplied the exports and the ships; Africa the human merchandise; the plantations the colonial raw materials. The slave ship sailed from the home country with a cargo of manufactured goods. These were exchanged at a profit on the coast of Africa for Negroes, who were traded on the plantations, at another profit, in exchange for a cargo of colonial produce to be taken back to the home country. As the volume of trade increased, the triangular trade was supplemented, but never supplanted, by a direct trade between home country and the West Indies, exchanging home manufactures directly for colonial produce.

The triangular trade thereby gave a triple stimulus to British industry. The Negroes were purchased with British manufactures; transported to the plantations, they produced sugar, cotton, indigo, molasses and other tropical products, the processing of which created new industries in England; while the maintenance of the Negroes and their owners on the plantations provided another market for British industry, New England agriculture and the Newfoundland fisheries. By 1750 there was hardly a trading or a manufacturing town in England which was not in some way connected with the triangular or direct colonial trade. The profits obtained provided one of the main streams of that accumulation of capital in England which financed the Industrial Revolution.

Thus we see the close connection between the slave trade and the development of capitalism in Europe. Capitalism with its increased use of machinery and increased capacity to produce demanded more raw materials. This led to the colonization of the Americas to secure land and to the slave trade to supply the needed labor. The profits from the sale of slaves and slave-produced products were accumulated by merchants who later used these profits as capital to build bigger and better factories to further exploit the workers and peasants of Europe, making the rip-off of Africans and the exploitation of workers in Europe two sides of the same coin.

In addition, important inventions of the Industrial Revolution (when the use of machines in production became widespread in all industries) like Watts' Steam engine and several inventions in the textile industry were financed by slave trade profits. Huge banking fortunes like Barclays also began with the slave trade.

But most important, however, is the fact that the trade in slaves was the key aspect of the triangular trade in which the increasing demand for goods led to the expansion and further development of capitalist industry in Europe. Because of this, the historical contribution of Africans and Afro-Americans to the modern world of capitalism through the slave trade is as important to understand as any other contribution.

Capitalism and the Slave Trade in The U.S. The colonial relationship between England and America must first be emphasized before we can understand the importance of the slave trade to the development of the United States. America was colonized to serve the needs of the English ruling class. Economically, it provided England with land to grow food crops, valuable raw materials, a market for English goods, and a profitable place in which to invest. Politically, England dominated America: there was taxation without American representation and the laws were made in England to serve its own economic interests.

To make the best use of its colonial empire, English capitalism implemented a colonial division of labor which enabled each colony to specialize and produce more of certain goods. The West Indies specialized in sugar production which it shipped to England and the mainland colonies. The mainland colonies also supplied England: tobacco, cotton, rice, indigo,

grains, fish, and naval supplies, to mention a few.

As capitalism expanded in England, the demand for all of these goods increased. It was for this reason, particularly in the southern colonies and in the West Indies which were best suited for large-scale plantation agriculture, that slavery expanded, along with the slave trade which supplied slave labor.

We pointed out in the previous chapter that England and other capitalist countries in Europe were the main slave traders. But American merchants were also deeply involved in the slave trade, contrary to what many scholars say. Their involvement, however, was not as great as England because the American merchants were a young capitalist class and most had not had the time to make enough money to build the large ships required for the voyage to Africa. Thus England supplied the American colonies with most of its slaves just as it dominated other markets.

Though not extensive, the trade involving American merchants and Africa was concentrated in New England - Rhode Island and Massachusetts. For example, 93% of the exports of the American colonies to Africa between 1768 and 1772 were sent from New England. This specialization developed because New England with its harsh winters and rocky soil was less suited to plantation agriculture than other colonies and depended on shipping, shipbuilding, and fishing to pay its debts to England. Slaves became an important article of commerce in New England's trade, including a major role transporting slaves between West Indian Islands and between the West-Indies and the U.S.

New England merchants also engaged in a triangular trade: from New England, ships sailed with food--especially fish--and other goods to be exchanged in the West Indies for rum. The rum was then taken to Africa and exchanged for slaves that were brought back to the West Indies and exchanged for more sugar, rum and molasses.

Two important factors stand out in New England's involvement in the slave trade. First, the slave trade had the same impact on the development of capitalism in New England that it had in England. The slave trade stimulated the development of industries which supplied the slave traders with the goods they exchanged for slaves. The manufacture of rum, for example, became the largest business in New England before the American Revolution. Rum was so abundant and so cheap that it became the main item to be traded for slaves



on the coast of Africa, so important in fact that the prices of slaves was often stated in quantities of rum!

But New England benefitted as much from the services it provided the slave traders as from direct involvement. In addition to its rum, its ships were widely used in the trade. Because the economies of the West Indies were forced to produce sugar for England, they had little time or land to grow food; thus, fish from New England was its principal food item. As Lorenzo Green summarizes in the reading for this chapter:

"The effect of this slave trade was manifold. On the eve of the American Revolution it formed the very basis of the economic life of New England; about it revolved, and on it depended, most of her industries. The vast sugar, molasses and rum trade, ship-building, the distilleries, a great many of the fisheries, the employment of artisans and seamen, even agriculture--all are dependent on the slave traffic.

The second important contribution of the slave trade is that it provided the source of capital from which many important and wealthy Americans accumulated their fortunes and gained prestige. Senators, governors, judges, philanthropists, newspapermen, and many other were slave traders or profited from the trade. But the most important people on this list are two groups of capitalists who used the profits from their slave trade-related activity to finance the textile industry, the first industry to use machines and water-power on a large scale, and the first step of the U.S. into the age of industrial capitalism.

The Brown Family of Rhode Island was one of the leading families of merchants in the U.S., involved in shipping to all parts of the world, importing molasses and distilling it into rum, making candles which they monopolized, banking, insurance, and real estate. For its financial support, Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island was named after them.

But few people know (and those who know don't tell) that the Browns were slave trading merchants and that a part of their fortune was made by selling Africans into slavery, or by supplying goods to those who did. In 1736, Captain James Brown was the first Providence merchant to enter the slave trade. One of his sons, Moses Brown, became interested in textile manufacturing. The Brown Family money financed experiments by Samuel Slater an English mechanic, who perfected the first water-power mill using new inventions from the textile industry in Europe and pushing the United

States into the first stage of its industrial Revolution.

In 1814, Frances Cabot Lowell organized a group of New England merchants --the Cabots, Amorys, Lowells, Jacksons, Higginsons, Russels, Lees, and Lawrences--who initiated the second stage in America's Industrial Revolution. They developed the method of the big corporation which organized for mass production using machines and integrating the manufacture of cloth from the processing of raw cotton to the finished product under one roof. This new system of large-scale machine industry revolutionized cotton textile production, and the amount of cloth produced increased almost 30% between 1815 and 1833.

A few of the Boston Associates, as this group of capitalists was called, were directly involved in the slave trade. But, almost without exception, they were merchants who depended on the slave trade, selling rum, insurance, and other goods and services to the slave traders. These merchants played leading roles in the American Revolution which declared that all men were created equal, shaped the American Constitution (pre Civil War) which condoned the slavery in the antebellum South, and were key leaders in the early period of U.S. history.

One important fact to remember about the rise of capitalism is that it was during this process that the two great classes of our own time emerged: the bourgeoisie or capitalist class and the proletariat or working class. By bourgeoisie we mean the class of capitalists who own the means of producing goods and services (factories, banks, land, mass media, etc.) and employ or buy the labor-power of workers for wages. By proletariat we mean the working class of people who own no means of production of their own and who are forced to sell their labor-power for wages in order to get enough money for food, clothing, shelter and other necessities.

Why is it important to mention these two classes in a chapter on the slave trade? Because most discussions on television or radio or what we read in our textbooks and in the newspapers fail to tell us where this ruling class--capitalists like the Mellons, DuPonts, Rockefellers, Ford, etc.--came from. Did they always exist? Did they just fall from the sky? Of course not. Like everything else the ruling class in this country and in every other country in the world has a history.

Our point here is that the capitalist class that rules the U.S. has its roots in the slave trade which was one of the important sources of profits from which this class accumulated the wealth which financed the early development of the U.S.

It was the accumulation of wealth from the slave trade and other forms of exploitation (like paying workers low wages in factories and employing child labor for pennies a day) that enabled these early capitalists to build more factories, start banks, open newspapers to advertise their products and shape public opinion in their interests, support universities to train new personnel, elect presidents and Congresses, and fight wars all in an effort to build their empire, to consolidate their control and domination over the U.S. and much of the world. It is important that we understand the relationship of Black people's history to this process since any solution of today's problems must be based on an accurate and thorough assessment of this history.

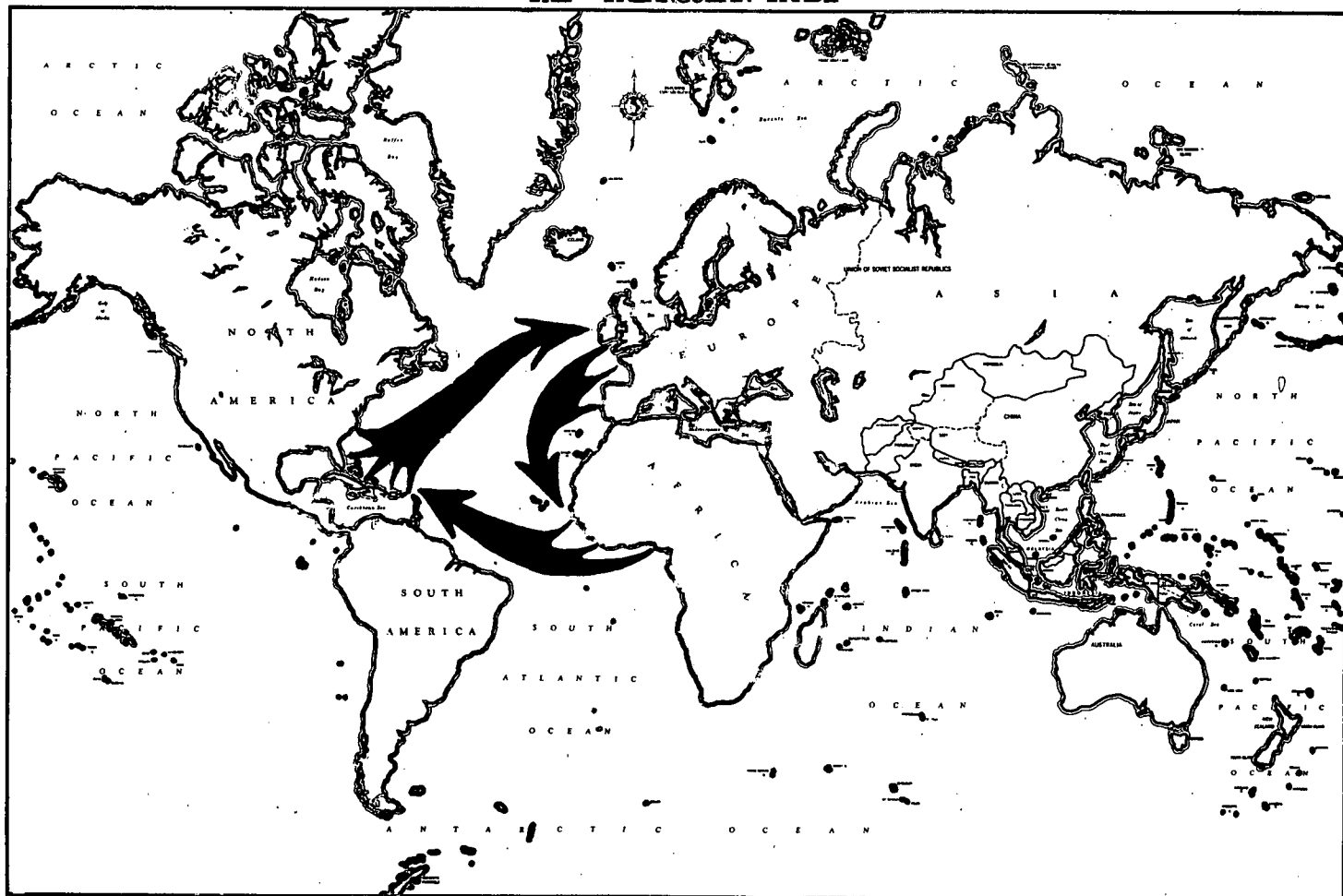
But the significance of the slave trade extends beyond these important economic factors. The slave trade was the historical act that forcibly transported millions of Africans throughout the world including concentrating a significant number in the Black Belt section of the southern United States. Thus, the slave trade set the conditions for the subsequent development of the Afro-American experience. African influences in social life (institutions like religion and the church) and cultural life (language and artistic activity like music and dance) were transported during the slave trade. The slave trade also had important ideological ramifications. Racism, a set of beliefs which sought to justify the enslavement of Black people for exploitation and oppression was born during the slave trade and nurtured during slavery in the ante-bellum South.

Thus, the Afro-American experience of which the slave trade is an integral part is a complex set of experiences with many aspects that we will systematically examine in the remaining chapters of this book.

## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 3

- |  |                |    |
|--|----------------|----|
| 10. THE MIDDLE PASSAGE (1789)  | Gustavus Vassa | 79 |
| 11. CAPITALISM AND SLAVERY (1970)  | Eric Williams  | 85 |
| 12. NEW ENGLAND MERCHANTS, THE SLAVE TRADE, AND THE DEVELOPMENT<br>OF CAPITALISM IN THE UNITED STATES (1942) | Lorenzo Greene | 96 |

THE "TRIANGULAR TRADE"



# 10

THE MIDDLE PASSAGE (1789)

...The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast, was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror, when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled, and tossed up to see if I were sound, by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions, too, differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, (which was very different from any I had ever heard) united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed, such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country. When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace of copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who had brought me on board, and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair. They told me I was not: and one of the crew brought me a small portion of spirituous liquor in a wine glass, but, being afraid of him, I would not take it out of his hand. One of the blacks therefore, took it from him and gave it to me, and I took a little down my palate, which, instead of reviving me, as they thought it would, threw me into the greatest consternation at the strange feeling it produced, having never tasted any such liquor before. Soon after this, the blacks who brought me on board went off, and left me abandoned to despair.

I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country, or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly; and I even wished for my former slavery in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo. I was not long suffered to indulge

my grief; I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste any thing. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands and laid me across, I think the wind-lass, and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced any thing of this kind before, and although not being used to the water, I naturally feared the element the first time I saw it, yet, nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water; and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut, for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself. In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men, I found some of my own nation, which in a small degree gave ease to my mind. I inquired of these what was to be done with us? they gave me to understand, we were to be carried to these white people's country to work for them. I then was a little revived, and thought, if it were no worse than working, my situation was not so desperate; but still I feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shown towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast, that he died in consequence of it; and they tossed him over the side as they would have done a brute. This made me fear these people the more; and I expected nothing less than to be treated in the same manner. I could not help expressing my fears and apprehensions to some of my countrymen; I asked them if these people had no country, but lived in this hollow place? (the ship) they told me they did not, but came from a distant one. 'Then,' said I, 'how comes it in all our country we never heard of them?' They told me because they lived so very far off. I then asked where were their women? had they any like themselves? I was told they

had. 'And why,' said I, 'do we not see them?' They answered, because they were left behind. I asked how the vessel could go? they told me they could not tell; but that there was cloth put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on; and the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they liked, in order to stop the vessel. I was exceedingly amazed at this account, and really thought they were spirits. I therefore wished much to be from amongst them, for I expected they would sacrifice me; but my wishes were vain - for we were so quartered that it was impossible for any of us to make our escape.

While we stayed on the coast I was mostly on deck; and one day, to my great astonishment, I saw one of these vessels coming in with the sails up. As soon as the whites saw it, they gave a great shout, at which we were amazed; and the more so, as the vessel appeared larger by approaching nearer. At last, she came to an anchor in my sight, and when the anchor was let go, I and my countrymen who saw it, were lost in astonishment to observe the vessel stop - and were now convinced it was done by magic. Soon after this the other ship got her boats out, and they came on board of us, and the people of both ships seemed very glad to see each other. - Several of the strangers also shook hands with us black people, and made motions with their hands, signifying I suppose, we were to go to their country, but we did not understand them.

At last, when the ship we were in, had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died - thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the

chains, now became insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily perhaps, for myself, I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters. In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much more happy than myself. I envied them the freedom they enjoyed, and as often wished I could change my condition for theirs. Every circumstance I met with, served only to render my state more painful, and heightened my apprehensions, and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites.

One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat, as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered, and the attempt procured them some very severe floggings. One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together, (I was near them at the time,) preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea; immediately, another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would have very soon have done the same, if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active, were in a moment put down under the deck, and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully, for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate, hardships which are inseparable from this accursed



trade. Many a time we were near suffocation from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. This, and the stench of the necessary tubs, carried off many.

During our passage, I first saw flying fishes, which surprised me very much; they used frequently to fly across the ship, and many of them fell on the deck. I also now first saw the use of the quadrant; I had often with astonishment seen the mariners make observations with it, and I could not think what it meant. They at last took notice of my surprise; and one of them, willing to increase it, as well as to gratify my curiosity, made me one day look through it. The clouds appeared to me to be land, which disappeared as they passed along. This heightened my wonder; and I was now more persuaded than ever, that I was in another world, and that every thing about me was magic. At last, we came in sight of the island of Barbadoes, at which the whites on board gave a great shout, and made many signs of joy to us. We did not know what to think of this; but as the vessel drew nearer, we plainly saw the harbor, and other ships of different kinds and sizes, and we soon anchored amongst them, off Bridgetown. Many merchants and planters now came on board, though it was in the evening. They put us in separate parcels, and examined us attentively. They also made us jump, and pointed to the land, signifying we were to go there. We thought by this, we should be eaten by these ugly men, as they appeared to us; and, when soon after we were all put down under the deck again, there was much dread and trembling among us, and nothing but bitter cries to be heard all the night from these apprehensions, insomuch, that at last the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us. They told us we were not to be eaten, but to work, and were soon to go on land, where we should see many of our country people. This report eased us much. And sure enough, soon after we were landed, there came to us Africans of all languages.

We were conducted immediately to the merchant's yard, where we were all pent up together, like so many sheep in a fold, without regard to sex or age. As every object was new to me, every thing I saw filled me with surprise. What struck me first, was, that the houses were built with bricks and stories, and in every other respect different from those I had seen in Africa; but I was still more astonished on seeing people on horseback. I did not know what this could mean; and, indeed, I thought these people were full of nothing

but magical arts. While I was in this astonishment, one of my fellow-prisoners spoke to a countryman of his, about the horses, who said they were the same kind they had in their country. I understood them, though they were from a distant part of Africa; and I thought it odd I had not seen any horses there; but afterwards, when I came to converse with different Africans, I found they had many horses amongst them, and much larger than those I then saw.

We were not many days in the merchant's custody, before we were sold after their usual manner, which is this: - On a signal given, (as the beat of a drum,) the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined, and make choice of that parcel they like best. The noise and clamor with which this is attended, and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers, serve not a little to increase the apprehension of terrified Africans, who may well be supposed to consider them as the ministers of that destruction to which they think themselves devoted. In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again. I remember, in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men's apartment, there were several brothers, who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion, to see and hear their cries at parting. O, ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you - Learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you? Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends, to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice? Are the dearest friends and relations now rendered more dear by their separation from their kindred, still to be parted from each other, and thus prevented from cheering the gloom of slavery, with the small comfort of being together, and mingling their sufferings and sorrows? Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, or husbands their wives? Surely, this is a new refinement in cruelty, which, while it has no advantage to atone for it, thus aggravates distress, and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.

## CAPITALISM AND SLAVERY (1970)

'There is nothing which contributes more to the development of the colonies and the cultivation of their soil than the laborious toil of the Negroes.' So reads a decree of King Louis XIV of France, on August 26, 1670. It was the consensus of seventeenth-century European opinion. Negroes became the 'life' of the Caribbean, as George Downing said of Barbados in 1645. The 'very being' of the plantations depended on the supply of Negroes, stated the Company of Royal Adventurers of England trading to African to King Charles II in 1663. Without Negroes, said the Spanish Council of the Indies in 1685, the food needed for the support of the whole kingdom would cease to be produced, and America would face absolute ruin. Europe has seldom been as unanimous on any issue as it has been on the value of Negro slave labour.

In 1645, before the introduction of the sugar economy, Barbados had 5,680 Negro slaves, or more than three able-bodied white men to every slave. In 1667, after the introduction of the sugar industry, the island, by one account contained 82,023 slaves, or nearly ten slaves to every white man fit to bear arms. By 1698 a more accurate estimate of the population gave the figures as 2,330 white males and 42,000 slaves, or a ratio of more than eighteen slaves to every white male.

In Jamaica the ratio of slaves to whites was one to three in 1658, nearly six to one in 1698. There were 1,400 slaves in the former year, 40,000 in the latter. The ratio of slaves and mulattoes to whites increased from more than two to one in Martinique in 1664 to more than three to one in 1701. The coloured population amounted to 2,434 in 1664 and 23,362 in 1701. In Guadeloupe, by 1697, the coloured population outnumbered the whites by more than three to two. In Grenada in 1700 the Negro slaves and mulattoes were more than double the number of whites. In the Leeward Islands and in St. Thomas the whites steadily lost ground.

By 1688 it was estimated that Jamaica required annually 10,000 slaves, the Leeward Islands 6,000, and Barbados 4,000. A contract of October, 1675, with one Jean Oudiette, called for the supply of 800 slaves a year for four years to the French West Indies. Four years later, in 1769, the Senegal Company undertook to supply 2,000 slaves a year for eight years to the French Islands. Between 1680 and 1688 the Royal African Company supplied 46,396 slaves to the

British West Indies, an annual average of 5,155.

The Negro slave trade became one of the most important business enterprises of the seventeenth century. In accordance with sixteenth-century precedents its organisation was entrusted to a company which was given the sole right by a particular nation to trade in slaves on the coast of West Africa, erect and maintain the forts necessary for the protection of the trade, and transport and sell the slaves in the West Indies. Individuals, free traders or 'interlopers', as they were called, were excluded. Thus the British incorporated the Company of Royal Adventurers trading to Africa, in 1668, and later replaced this company by the Royal African Company, in 1672, the royal patronage and participation reflecting the importance of the trade and continuing the fashion set by the Spanish monarchy of increasing its revenues thereby. The monopoly of the French slave trade was at first assigned to the French West India Company in 1664, and then transferred, in 1673, to the Senegal Company. The monopoly of the Dutch slave trade was given to the Dutch West India Company, incorporated in 1621. Sweden organised a Guinea Company in 1647. The Danish West India Company, chartered in 1671, with the royal family among its shareholders, was allowed in 1674 to extend its activities to Guinea. Brandenburg established a Brandenburg African Company, and established its first trading post on the coast of West Africa in 1682. The Negro slave trade, begun about 1450 as a Portuguese monopoly, had, by the end of the seventeenth century, become an international free-for-all.

The mortality in the Middle Passage was regarded merely as an unfortunate trading loss, except for the fact that Negroes were more costly than cattle. Losses in fact ran quite high, but such concern as was evinced had to deal merely with profits. In 1659, a Dutch slaver, the *St. Jan*, lost 110 slaves out of a cargo of 219 - for every two slaves purchased, one died in transit to the West Indies. In 1678, the *Arthur*, one of the ships of the Royal African Company, suffered a mortality of 88 out of 417 slaves - that is, more than 20 percent. The *Martha*, another ship, landed 385 in Barbados out of 447 taken on the coast - the mortality amounted to 62, or a little less than 15 percent. The *Coaster* lost 37 out of 150, a mortality of approximately 25 percent. The *Hannibal*, in 1694, with a cargo of 700 slaves, buried 320 on the voyage, a mortality of 43 per cent; the Royal African Company lost £10 and the owner of the vessel 10 guineas on each slave, the total loss amounting to

£6,560. The losses sustained by these five vessels amounted to 617 out of a total cargo of 1,933, that is, 32 per cent. Three out of every ten slaves perished in the Middle Passage.

The lamentations of an individual slave trader or sugar planter were drowned out by the seventeenth-century chorus of approbation. Negro slavery and the Negro slave trade fit beautifully into the economic theory of the age! This theory, known as mercantilism, stated that the wealth of a nation depended upon its possession of bullion, the precious metals. If, however, bullion was not available through possession of the mines, the new doctrine went further than its Spanish predecessor in emphasising that a country could increase its stock by a favourable balance of trade, exporting more than it imported.

National policy of the leading European nations concentrated on achieving a favourable balance of trade. Colonial possessions were highly prized as a means to this end; they increased the exports of the metropolitan country, prevented the drain of treasure by the purchase of necessary tropical produce, and provided freights for the ships of the metropolis and employment for its sailors.

The combination of the Negro slave trade, Negro slavery and Caribbean sugar production is known as the triangular trade. A ship left the metropolitan country with a cargo of metropolitan goods, which it exchanged on the coast of West Africa for slaves. This constituted the first side of the triangle. The second consisted of the Middle Passage, the voyage from West Africa to the West Indies with the slaves. The triangle was completed by the voyage from the West Indies to the metropolitan country with sugar and other Caribbean products received in exchange for the slaves. As the slave ships were not always adequate for the transportation of the West Indian produce, the triangular trade was supplemented by a direct trade between the metropolitan country and the West Indian islands.

The triangular trade provided a market in West African and the West Indies for metropolitan products, thereby increasing metropolitan exports and contributing to full employment at home. The purchase of the slaves on the coast of West Africa and their maintenance in the West Indies gave an enormous stimulus to metropolitan industry and agriculture. For example, the British woollen industry was heavily dependent on the triangular trade. A parliamentary

committee of 1695 emphasised that the slave trade was an encouragement to Britain's woollen industry. In addition, wool was required in the West Indies for blankets and clothing for the slaves on the plantations.

Iron, guns and brass also figured prominently in the triangular trade and the ancillary West Indian trade. Iron bars were the trading medium on a large part of the West African coast, and by 1682 Britain was exporting about 10,000 bars of iron a year to Africa. Sugar stoves, iron rollers, nails found a ready market on the West Indian plantations. Brass pans and kettles were customarily included in the slave trader's cargo.

Barbados was the most important single colony in the British Empire, worth almost as much, in its total trade, as the two tobacco colonies of Virginia and Maryland combined, and nearly three times as valuable as Jamaica. The time sugar island was more valuable to Britain than Carolina, New England, New York and Pennsylvania together. 'Go ahead, England, Barbados is behind you,' is today a stock joke in the British West Indies of the Barbadian's view of his own importance. Two and a half centuries ago, it was no joke. It was sound politics, based on sound economics. Jamaica's external trade was larger than New England's as far as Britain was concerned; Nevis was more important in the commercial firmament than New York; Antigua surpassed Carolina; Montserrat rated higher than Pennsylvania. Total British trade with Africa was larger than total trade with Pennsylvania, New York and Carolina. In 1697 the triangular trade accounted for nearly ten percent of total British imports and over four per cent of total British exports. Barbados alone accounted for nearly four percent of Britain's external trade.

Mercantilists were jubilant. The West Indian colonies were ideal colonies, providing a market, directly as well as indirectly, through the slave trade, of British manufactures and foodstuffs, whilst they supplied sugar and other tropical commodities that would otherwise have had to be imported from foreigners or dispensed with entirely. The West Indies thus contributed to Britain's balance of trade in two ways, by buying Britain's exports and by rendering the expenditure of bullion on foreign tropical imports unnecessary. On the other hand, the mainland colonies, Virginia and Maryland, and, to a lesser extent, Carolina excepted, where the conditions of labour and production duplicated those of the West Indies, were nuisances; they produced the same agricultural

commodities as England, gave early evidence of competing with the metropolitan countries in manufactured goods as well, and were rivals in fishing and ship-building.

The British economists enthused. Sir Josiah Child in his New Discourse of Trade in 1668, wrote:

'The people that evacuate from us to Barbados, and the other West India Plantation ...do commonly work one Englishman to ten or eight Blacks; and if we keep the trade of our said plantations entirely to England, England would have no less inhabitants, but rather an increase of people by such evacuation, because that one Englishman, with the Blacks that work with him, accounting what they eat, use and wear, would make employment for four men in England...whereas peradventure of ten men that issue from us to New England and Ireland, what we send to or receive from them, doth not employ one man in England.'

In 1690, Sir Dalby Thomas stated that every white man in the West Indies was one hundred and thirty times more valuable to Britain than those who stayed at home:

'Each white man, woman, and child, residing in the sugar plantations, occasions the consumption of more of our native commodities, and manufactures, than ten at home do - beef, port, salt, fish, butter, cheese, corn, flour, beer, cyder, bridles, coaches, beds, chairs, stools, pictures, clocks, watches; pewter, brass, copper, iron vessels and instruments; sail-cloth and cordage; of which, in their building, shipping, mills, boiling, and distilling-houses, field-labour and domestic uses, they consume infinite quantities.'

Charles Davenant, perhaps the ablest of the seventeenth-century economists, estimated at the end of the century that Britain's total profit from trade amounted to two million pounds. Of this figure the plantation trade accounted for £600,000, and the re-export of plantation produce for £120,000. Trade with Africa, Europe and the Levant brought in another 600,000. The triangular trade thus represented a minimum of 36 per cent of Britain's commercial profits. Davenant added that every individual in the West Indies, white or Negro, was as profitable as seven in England.

As a result of the triangular trade Bristol became a city of shopkeepers. It was said in 1685 that there was scarcely a shopkeeper in the city who had not a venture on board some ship bound for Virginia or the West Indies. The port took the lead in the struggle for the abrogation of the Royal African Company's monopoly, and in the first nine years of free trade shipped

slaves to the West Indies at the rate of 17,883 a year. In 1700 Bristol had forty-six ships in the West Indian trade.

The basis of this astounding commercial efflorescence was the Negro slaves, 'the strength and sinews of this western world'. In 1662 the Company of Royal Adventurers trading to Africa pointed to the 'profit and honour' that had accrued to British subjects from the slave trade, which King Charles II himself described as that 'beneficial trade...so much importing our service, and the enriching of this Our Kingdom'. According to Colbert in France, no commerce in the world produced as many advantages as the slave trade. Benjamin Raule exhorted the Elector of Prussia, on October 26, 1685, not be left behind in the race: 'Everyone knows that the slave trade is the source of the wealth which the Spaniards wring out of the West Indies, and that whoever knows how to furnish them slaves, will share their wealth. Who can say by how many millions of hard cash the Dutch West Indian Company has enriched itself in this slave trade!' At the end of the seventeenth century all Europe, and not England only, was impressed with the words of Sir Dalby Thomas: 'The pleasure, glory and grandeur of England has been advanced more by sugar than by any other commodity, wool not excepted.'

The Negro slave trade in the eighteenth century constituted one of the greatest migrations in recorded history. In 1774 the importation into Jamaica was 18,448. In fourteen of the years 1702-1775, the annual importation exceeded 10,000. Imports into Saint-Domingue averaged 12,559 in the years 1754-1768; in 1768 they were 15,279. In 1718 Barbados imported 7,126 slaves. During the nine months in which Cuba was under British occupation in 1762, 10,700 slaves were introduced. The British introduced 41,000 slaves in three years into Guadeloupe whilst they were in occupation of the island during the Seven Years' War.

These large importations represented one of the greatest advantages which the slave trade had over other trades. The frightful mortality of the slaves on the plantations made annual increments essential. Consider the case of Saint-Domingue. In 1763 the slave population amounted to 206,539. Imports from 1764 to 1774 numbered 102,474. The slave population in 1776 was 290,000. Thus, despite an importation of over one hundred thousand, without taking into account the annual births, the increase of the slave population in thirteen years was less than 85,000. Taking only importations into consideration, the



slave population in 1776 was 19,000 less than the figure of 1763 with the importations added, and the imports for one year are not available.

Economic development has never been purchased at so high a price. According to one of the leading planters of Saint-Domingue, one in every three imported Negroes died in the first three years. To the mortality on the plantations must be added the mortality on the slave ships. On the slave ships belonging to the port of Nantes in France, that mortality varied from 5 per cent in 1746 to 1774 to as high as 34 percent in 1732. For all the slave cargoes transported by them between 1715 and 1775, the mortality amounted to 16 percent. Of one hundred Negroes who left the coast of Africa, therefore, only 84 reached the West Indies; one-third of these died in three years. For every 56 Negroes, therefore, on the plantations at the end of three years, 44 had perished.

The slave trade thus represented a wear and tear, a depreciation which no other trade equalled. The loss of an individual planter or trader was insignificant compared with the basic fact that every cargo of slaves, including the quick and the dead, prepresented so much industrial development and employment, so much employment of ships and sailors, in the metropolitan country. No other commercial undertaking required so large a capital as the slave trade. In addition to the ship, there was its equipment, armament, cargo, its unusually large supply of water and foodstuffs, its abnormally large crew. In 1765 it was estimated that in France the cost of fitting out and arming a vessel for 300 slaves was 242,500 livres. The cargo of a vessel from Nantes in 1757 was valued at 141,500 livres; it purchased 500 slaves. The cargo of the Prince de Conty, of 300 tons, was valued at 221,224 livres, with which 800 slaves were purchased.

Large profits were realised from the slave trade. The King Solomon, belonging to the Royal African Company, carried a cargo worth £4,252 in 1720. It took on 296 Negroes who were sold in St. Kitts for £9,228. The profit was thus 117 percent. From 1698 to 1707 the Royal African Company exported from England to Africa goods to the value of £293,740. The Company sold 5,982 Negroes in Barbados for £156,425, an average of £26 per head. It sold 2,178 slaves in Antigua for £80,522, an average of £37 per head. The total number of Negroes imported into the British islands by the Company in these years was 17,760. The sale of 8,160 Negroes in Barbados and Antigua,

less than the total imports into all the islands, thus realised 80 percent of the total exports from England. Allowing an average price of £26 per head for the remaining 9,600 Negroes, the total amount realised from the sale of the Company's Negroes was £488,107. The profit on the Company's exports was thus 66 per cent. For every three pounds' worth of merchandise exported from England, the Company obtained two additional pounds by way of profit. It need occasion no surprise, therefore, that one of the eighteenth-century slave dealers admitted that, of all places he had lived in, England, Ireland, America, Portugal, the West Indies, the Cape Verde Islands, the Azores, and Africa, it was in Africa that he could most quickly make his fortune.

The slave trade was central to the triangular trade. It was, in the words of one British mercantilist, 'the spring and parent whence the others flow;' 'the first principle and foundation of all the rest,' echoed another, 'the mainspring of the machine which sets every wheel in motion'. The slave trade kept the wheels of metropolitan industry turning; it stimulated navigation and shipbuilding and employed seamen; it raised fishing villages into flourishing cities; it gave sustenance to new industries based on the processing of colonial raw materials; it yielded large profits which were ploughed back into metropolitan industry; and, finally, it gave rise to an unprecedented commerce in the West Indies and made the Caribbean territories among the most valuable colonies the world has ever known.

Examples must suffice. In 1729 the British West Indies absorbed one-quarter of Britain's iron exports, and Africa, where the price of a Negro was commonly reckoned at one Birmingham gun, was one of the most important markets for the British armaments industry. In 1753 there were 120 sugar refineries in England - eighty in London, twenty in Bristol. In 1780 the British West Indies supplied two-thirds of the six and a half million pounds of raw cotton imported by Britain. Up to 1770 one-third of Manchester's textile exports went to Africa, one-half to the West Indian and American colonies. In 1709 the British West Indies employed one-tenth of all British shipping engaged in foreign trade. Between 1710 and 1714, 122,000 tons of British shipping sailed to the West Indies, 112,000 tons to the mainland colonies. Between 1709 and 1787, British shipping engaged in foreign trade quadrupled; ships clearing for Africa multiplied twelve times and the tonnage eleven times.

The triangular trade marked the ascendancy of two additional European ports in the eighteenth century, Liverpool in England and Nantes in France, and further contributed to the development of Bristol and Bordeaux, begun in the seventeenth century. Liverpool's first slave ship, of 30 tons, sailed for Africa in 1709. In 1783 the port had 85 ships, of 12,294 tons, in the trade. Between 1709 and 1783, a total of 2,249 ships, of 240,657 tons, sailed from Liverpool to Africa - an annual average of 30 ships and 3,200 tons. The proportion of slave ships to the total shipping of the port was one in a hundred in 1709, one in nine in 1730, one in four in 1763, one in three in 1771. In 1752, 88 Liverpool vessels carried upwards of 24,730 slaves from Africa. Seven firms, owning 26 vessels, carried 7,030 slaves.

Liverpool's exports to Africa in 1770 read like a census of British manufactures: beans, brass, beer, textiles, copper, candles, chairs, cider, cordage, earthenware, gunpowder, glass, haberdashery, iron, lead, looking glasses, pewter, pipes, paper, stockings, silver, sugar, salt, kettles.

In 1774 there were eight sugar refineries in Liverpool. Two distilleries were established in the town for the express purpose of supplying slave ships. There were many chain and anchor foundries, and manufactures of and dealers in iron, copper, brass and lead in the town. In 1774 there were fifteen roperies. Half of Liverpool's sailors were engaged in the slave trade, which, by 1783, was estimated to bring the town a clear annual profit of £300,000. The slave trade transformed Liverpool from a fishing village into a great centre of international commerce. The population rose from 5,000 in 1700 to 34,000 in 1773. It was a common saying in the town that its principal streets had been marked out by the chains, and the walls of its houses cemented by the blood, of the African slaves. The red brick Customs House, blazoned with Negro heads, bore mute but eloquent testimony to the origins of Liverpool's rise by 1783 to the position of one of the most famous - or infamous, depending on the point of view - towns in the world of commerce.

What Liverpool was to England, Nantes was to France. Between 1715 and 1775, vessels belonging to the port exported 229,525 slaves from Africa, an annual average of 3,763. In 1751 Nantes ships transported 10,003 Negroes. Slave ships constituted about one-fifth of the total shipping of the port. But the slave trade conditioned all others. The slavers brought back sugar and other tropical produce. The number of sugar refineries declined from fifteen

in 1700 to four in 1750. But five textile factories were established by 1769, together with manufacturers of jams and sweetmeats dependent on sugar. As in Liverpool, a slave trading aristocracy developed, of big capitalists each owning four or six ships.

The West Indian trade was worth twice as much to eighteenth-century Bristol as the remainder of her other overseas commerce. In the eighties the town had 30 vessels engaged in the slave trade, and 72 in the West Indian trade. Some of its most prominent citizens were engaged in sugar refining. The Baptist Mills of Bristol produced brass manufactures for the slave trade.

As Nantes was the slave trading port par excellence of France, Bordeaux was the sugar port. In 1720, Bordeaux had 74 ships, of 6,882 tons, in the West Indian trade; in 1782, 310 ships, of 108,000 tons. In 1749 the town's trade with the West Indies exceeded 27 million livres; in 1771, at its peak, it approximated 171 millions. An enormous stimulus was given to shipbuilding: 14 ships, of 3,640 tons, in 1754; 245 totalling 74,485 tons, between 1763 and 1778. Sugar imports into Bordeaux, less than 10 million livres in 1749, attained the huge figure of 101 millions in 1780. A mere 22 livres of coffee were imported in 1724; in 1771, the figure was 112 millions. Indigo, less than 5 million livres up to 1770, amounted to 22 millions in 1772. Bordeaux, in return, exported codfish from Newfoundland, salted fish from Holland, salted beef from Ireland, flour and wine to the West Indies. There were 26 sugar refineries in the town in 1789. Population rose from 43,000 in 1698 to 110,000 in 1790.

Thus Jamaica in the eighteenth century was what Barbados had been in the seventeenth, the most important colony in the British Empire. Its exports to Britain from 1714 to 1773 were three times those of Barbados; its imports from Britain more than double. In these years one-twelfth of total British imports came from the island, one-twenty-second of British exports went to it. Jamaica's exports to Britain were ten times those of New England; the exports to the two colonies were about the same. Jamaica's exports to Britain from 1714 to 1773 were one-fifth larger than those of Virginia and Maryland combined; its imports from Britain about one-tenth less.

From 1714 to 1773 Barbados' exports to Britain were more than one quarter larger than those of Carolina, imports from Britain about one-tenth less. Antigua's exports to Britain were 15 per cent larger than those of Pennsylvania;

imports from Britain about two-fifths the figure of that mainland colony. St. Kitts' exports to Britain were seven times the figure for New York; its imports more than one-quarter those of New York. Grenada's exports to Britain in twelve years, 1762-1773, were more than five times as large as Georgia's in forty-two, 1732-1773; Grenada's imports were half as large as those of Georgia.

In 1773 total British imports from the British West Indies amounted to one quarter of total British imports, British exports to the West Indies to about one-eleventh of the total export trade. Imports from the mainland colonies were one-half the West Indian figure; exports less than double. For the years 1714-1773, British imports from the West Indies were one-fifth of the total import trade; from the mainland colonies they were slightly more than half the West Indian figure; from Africa they were half of one percent. British exports to the West Indies during the period were one-sixteenth of the total export trade; to the mainland, they were one-tenth; to Africa, one-fiftieth. For these sixty years the triangular trade accounted for 21 per cent of British imports; 8 percent of British exports; and nearly 14 percent of Britain's total external trade.

The population of the British West Indies in 1787 was 58,353 whites; 7,706 free Negroes; 461,864 slaves - a total of 527,923. The annual British export of slaves from Africa by 1783 was approximately 34,000. This was the human and social basis of one in every five pounds of British imports, one in every twelve of British exports, and one in every seven in Britain's total trade.

The situation in the French West Indies was essentially similar. In 1715 France's external trade amounted to 175 million livres - imports, 75; exports, 100. West Indian trade accounted for one-sixth of the whole, 30 millions; their imports, of 20 millions, amounted to one-fifth of France's export trade; their exports, 10 millions, constituted one-eighth of France's import trade. In 1776, though France had lost some of the smaller West Indian islands, exports from the French West Indies amounted to 200 million livres, imports to 70 millions, the total external trade of the islands representing more than one-third of total French commerce, which oscillated between 600 and 700 million livres; West Indian trade employed 1,000 ships, outward and inward cargoes in the proportion of 5 to 4. The population of the French West Indies about 1780 amounted to 63,682 whites, 13,429 free Negroes, and 437,738 slaves - a total of 514,849. France's annual export of slaves from Africa was estimated

at 20,000.

Magnum est saccharum et prevalebit! Great is sugar, and it will prevail! Mercantilists were jubilant. The colonies, wrote Horace Walpole, were 'the source of all our riches, and preserve the balance of trade in our favour, for I don't know where we have it but by the means of our colonies'. The statistics given above identify the colonies which Walpole had in mind. An annual profit of 7s per head was sufficient to enrich a country, said William Wood; each white man in the colonies brought a profit of over seven pounds, twenty times as much. The Negro slaves, said Postlethwayt, were 'the fundamental prop and support' of the colonies, 'valuable people,' and the British Empire was 'a magnificent superstructure of American commerce and naval power on an African foundation'. Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the waves. For Britons never shall be slaves.

But the sons of France arose to glory. France joined in the homage to the triangular trade. 'What commerce,' asked the Chamber of Commerce of Nantes, 'can be compared to that which obtains men in exchange for commodities?' Profound question! The abandonment of the slave trade, continued the Chamber, would be inevitably followed by the ruin of colonial commerce; 'whence follows the fact that we have no branch of trade so precious to the State and so worthy of protection as the Guinea trade'. The triangular trade was incomparable, the slave trade precious, and the West Indies perfect colonies. 'The more colonies differ from the metropolis,' said Nantes, 'the more perfect they are...Such are the Caribbean colonies: they have none of our objects of trade; they have others which we lack and cannot produce.'

NEW ENGLAND MERCHANTS, THE SLAVE TRADE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM  
IN THE U.S. (1942)

**12**

On August 3, 1713 the stepbrother of Benjamin Franklin advertised in the columns of the Boston News Letter:

Three Negro Men and two Women to be Sold and to be  
seen at the House of Mr. Josiah Franklin...in Union  
Street, Boston.

Josiah Franklin was a prosperous merchant, who not only sold Negroes at his tavern, but also permitted other slave dealers to use his place as a

show room for human chattels. The sale of Negroes by Franklin should not have been surprising to the casual reader of the News Letter in 1713. By this time Bostonians had grown accustomed to the auctioning of slaves, for advertisements listing them for sale had become commonplace - as commonplace, in fact, as the appearance of Negroes on the bustling streets of New England towns. The manner in which this traffic began and the status of the imported blacks in the society of colonial New England is the burden of this study.

Although blacks had been sold in Boston for some time, it is not definitely known when the first Negro slaves were brought into New England. Slavery, like indentured servitude, is said to have existed in New England before the settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1629 and was first identified with Massachusetts. For purposes of this study 1638 will be regarded as the year of the introduction of Negro slavery in New England.

Available data regarding the beginnings of Negro slavery are even more indefinite for the other New England colonies than for Massachusetts. Steiner tells of a Negro in Hartford, Connecticut, who was killed by his Dutch master in 1639; and it is said that blacks were employed in New Haven Colony in 1644. Negroes are first referred to in New Hampshire in 1645, the year in which the Massachusetts General Court ordered a Mr. Williams of Piscataqua (Portsmouth) to return to Boston a Negro stolen from Africa and purchased by him from a Massachusetts slave trader. The earliest mention of Negro slavery in Rhode Island occurs in the law of 1652, which laudably, but vainly, endeavored to limit involuntary servitude to ten years. As the wording of the law implies, slavery was apparently already existent in that colony at the time of the passage of the measure.

It must not be assumed from the foregoing that Negroes were the only persons held in bondage in New England. Impelled by a chronic shortage of labor, the Puritans adopted the labor patterns established by the Spaniards more than one hundred years earlier. Combined with Negro slavery in New England were the several kinds of unfree labor current in that day; white, Negro and Indian indentured servitude, Indian slavery and, in occasional instances, the slavery of white people. Of these servile groups the Indians, and not the Negroes, were the first to be enslaved in New England. Indian slavery dates from the Pequod War of 1637, when the victorious settlers

themselves enslaved the captive Pequod women and children and sold the males into West Indian bondage. In other words, apparently a year before the first black slaves were introduced into New England, the Indians had already been reduced to bondage. Indians, Negroes and white persons were either enslaved for life or held to service for a period of years throughout the entire colonial era.

While slavery of all types existed in colonial New England, this section became even more deeply involved in the slave trade. Puritan participation in the buying and selling of Negroes began at an early date. In this traffic, as in slavery, Massachusetts took the lead. It was the *Desire*, the Salem ship previously mentioned, that started the New England slave trade and thereby laid the basis for the economic interdependence of colonial New England and the West Indies. Quick to realize the almost insatiable demand in the sugar islands for Negroes, who were being supplied at considerable profit by the hated Dutch, the Puritan traders early began to engage in the Negro traffic.

The year 1644 was a momentous date in the history of the New England slave trade. Before that time, Massachusetts merchants had occasionally brought in Negroes from the West Indies, but in that year Boston traders attempted to import slaves directly from Africa, when an association of business men sent three ships there for gold dust and Negroes. One of these vessels (probably the *Rainbow*), returned to Boston in the following year with a cargo of wine, salt, sugar and tobacco, having exchanged her Negroes for these products in Barbados. The voyage of the *Rainbow* stimulated the entry of other Boston merchants into the African trade. But the Negro traffic, although apparently lucrative, was dangerous for private traders, especially during the seventeenth century. At this time an international struggle for control was being waged on the West Coast of Africa, where powerful trading combinations fought to corner the markets that supplied the slaves to the New World. Chief among these organizations were the Dutch West India Company and the English Royal African Company. Independent traders, however, such as the New England merchants, with their limited capital, could not compete with these monopolies which were backed by the armed forces of the competing nations. Fearing confiscation of their ships and cargo, should they trespass upon the rights of these companies, daring Massachusetts traders made the much longer trip to the East Coast of Africa. By 1676 Bay Colony



merchants were bringing slaves from the distant island of Madagascar. Two years later John Endicott and John Saffin of Boston were selling these Negroes in Virginia. In 1681 Saffin, merchant and jurist, was smuggling slaves overland through Rhode Island into Massachusetts. By 1700, Boston traders were supplying the other New England colonies with Negroes. In short, the New England slave trade of the seventeenth century seems to have been centered almost wholly in Massachusetts, with Boston the chief, if not the only, slave port. If New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island engaged in the Negro trade before 1700, they officially denied it when questioned by the British Committee for Trade and Foreign Plantations.

Although New England's share in the slave trade was small in the seventeenth century, her merchants had by 1700 laid the foundations of a lucrative commerce. They had already begun the triangular slave voyages and had learned that the West Indies offered the best market for Negroes. As comparatively few Negroes were brought to New England in the seventeenth century, the traders in these colonies made their profits as carriers rather than as exploiters of Negro labor. In 1700 there were probably not more than a thousand Negroes in all the Puritan colonies.

The New England slave trade attained its greatest development in the eighteenth century. Several factors stimulated its growth. The revocation by the British Parliament in 1696 of the monopoly held by the Royal African Company made it possible for all Englishmen to engage legally in the slave trade. Equally important was the Assiento of 1713, by which England wrested from Spain the privilege of supplying 4800 Negroes a year to Spanish America for thirty years. In the execution of this huge contract the participation of colonial merchants was essential. Increasing demand for Negroes in the sugar islands of the British and "foreign" West Indies, together with the growing employment of blacks in the tobacco and rice growing colonies of the South, also furthered the growth of the New England slave trade. The British government, furthermore, encouraged and protected the traffic and vetoed every attempt of the colonists to hinder or to abolish it. Increasing well-being in the colonies, and particularly in New England, gave added impetus to the slave trade. Geographic conditions also played an important role, since the New Englanders, prevented by climate and soil from reaping rich returns from agriculture, had to look elsewhere if they were to match the wealth of the landed aristocracy

of the South. For this reason, the thrifty New Englanders, attracted by the prospect of far greater profits than could possibly be drawn from the land, early began to engage in commerce, the fishing industry and in the trade in Negroes.

As a result of these factors the New England colonies in the eighteenth century became the greatest slave-trading section of America. There came into vogue the famous triangular slave trade, with New England, Africa and the West Indies as its focal points. From New England's many ports trim, sturdy ships, built from her own forests, carried to the West Indies much needed food and other commodities, such as surplus beans, peas, hay, corn, staves, lumber, low-grade fish, horses, dairy products and a miscellaneous assortment of goods. When the captains of these vessels were able to exchange their cargoes for rum, they would next proceed directly to Africa. There they bartered their rum for slaves whom they transported to the West Indies, where they disposed of them for rum, sugar, molasses and other tropical products or for bills of exchange. But there were necessary variations from this procedure. When rum was unobtainable in the islands, the Yankee captains gladly bartered their wares for sugar, cocoa, molasses or other products. The sugar and molasses were carried to New England, distilled into rum, and along with trinkets, bar iron, beads and light-colored cloth taken to Africa and exchanged for Negroes. The slaves who survived the terrible ordeal of the Middle Passage - as the crossing between Africa and America was called - were sold in the West Indies for more rum, sugar and molasses, or for bills of exchange.

Vital to the slave trade as well as to New England's economy were sugar, rum and molasses. The distillation of millions of gallons of molasses brought from the British islands, or smuggled from the foreign West Indies, was the basis of a liquor industry of such proportions that the making of rum became New England's largest manufacturing business before the Revolution. The number of distilleries was almost incredible, with more than thirty in Rhode Island, twenty-two of them in Newport, and in Massachusetts sixty-three, which alone produced 2,700,000 gallons of rum in 1774. Little Newburyport, a bustling ship-building and commercial town on the Merrimac River, had ten distilleries. Of Boston's eight distilleries the most modern one was credited with producing a large amount of rum of remarkable cheapness. Although vast

quantities of this rum were consumed at home, it was by no means all intended for domestic consumption. It was an almost indispensable article aboard fishing and whaling vessels, in lumber camps and for the fur industry. But primarily rum was linked with the Negro trade, and immense quantities of the raw liquor were sent to Africa and exchanged for slaves. So important was rum on the Guinea Coast that by 1723 it had surpassed French and Holland brandy, English gin, trinkets and dry goods as a medium of barter.

Merchants spared no effort to make the slave trade as profitable as possible. Slaves and commodities were carried in small undermanned ships with crews rarely exceeding eighteen men, while some vessels, like the *Nancy* and the *Betsy*, carried only six. According to Mason, most of the slave vessels ranged between forty and fifty tons until 1750, when ships up to 200 tons were used. In the early years of the trade a space three feet ten inches high was reserved between decks for the slaves, but later, by reducing its dimensions to three feet three inches, additional room was made available for carrying Negroes. Men, women and children were separated by bulkheads. With only ten to thirteen inches of surface room allotted each slave the Negroes, packed spoon-fashion and unable to stand, suffered cruelly on the trip to America. With this extreme economy in ships and men, it is remarkable that mortality on the slave ships, great as it was, failed to reach an even higher figure.

Among the New England slave trading colonies, Massachusetts and Rhode Island ranked first, with Connecticut and New Hampshire playing relatively minor roles in the traffic. Boston was preeminent as the port of departure for slave ships, with Newport, Rhode Island as its closest rival; but Salem, Newburyport, Charlestown and Kittery, Massachusetts; Providence, Bristol and Jamestown, Rhode Island; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and New London and Hartford, Connecticut all participated to a lesser extent in the Negro trade. In these towns there grew up a privileged class of slave-trading merchants whose wealth was drawn largely from the Negro traffic. They enjoyed the highest social position and held public offices of the greatest trust and responsibility. The Belchers, Waldos, Fanueils, and Cabots of Boston; the Royalls of Charlestown; the Pepperells of Kittery; and the Crowninshields of Salem, Massachusetts, were but a few of the leading slave merchants of the Bay Colony. Equally representative were the Malbones, Gardners, Ellerys, and Champlins of Newport; the

Browns of Providence, the DeWolfs of Bristol and the Robinsons of Narragansett, Rhode Island.

New England merchants sold most of their slaves in the West Indies and in the southern colonies, areas in which the great demand for Negroes to work the plantations resulted in high profits. Slaves, costing the equivalent of £4-£5 in rum or bar iron in Africa, were sold in the West Indies in 1746 at prices ranging from £30 to £88. It is not surprising, therefore, that the original destination of virtually every cargo of slaves was the sugar, or tobacco or rice colonies.

Although New England merchants were concerned chiefly with supplying the West Indian and southern markets with Negroes, they did not neglect the smaller New England market.

Slave merchants belonged to what was then known as the gentility. The names of many are famous in the annals of New England, and others are intimately associated with the history of the United States. Many were honored with private and public offices of great trust, power and responsibility. There was no stigma attached to trading in Negroes before the Revolution, for the slave trade was as honorable a vocation as lumbering or fishing. Wealthy slave merchants, like the industrial captains of the present era, were successful men - the economic, political and social leaders of their communities - and were regarded by their fellows as worthy of emulation.

John Campbell, John Saffin, and John Coleman of Boston, and Sir William Pepperell of Kittery, Massachusetts, were judges, and Campbell was for a time, also postmaster of Boston. Constant Taber and Charles Collins of Newport were collectors of ports, while Caleb Gardner and Peleg Clarke of Newport, Moses Brown and John Topham of Providence and Shearjashub Bourne of Bristol were members of the colonial Assembly. The highest offices in the gift of the colony - those of governor and lieutenant-governor - were held at times by slave traders. Jonathan Belcher of Massachusetts and four members of the Wanton family of Rhode Island held governorships, and among the lieutenant-governors were William Robinson and William Ellery of Rhode Island. Slave merchants like General William Whipple of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Nicholas and John Brown of Providence, William Vernon of Newport and John Hancock of Boston were prominent patriots during the Revolution. Slave dealers earned distinction in other fields also. Some were publishers like the

aforementioned John Campbell of Boston, founder of the first permanent newspaper in America; still others were scientists, like Joseph Brown of Providence and Abraham Redwood of Newport. There were among them philanthropists, such as Peter Fanueil, the Brown brothers, noted for their bequests to Rhode Island College (now Brown University) and the aforementioned Abraham Redwood, founder of the famous Redwood Library in Newport and celebrated also for his gifts to schools and colleges in Rhode Island. Sir William Pepperell and Sir Charles Hobby were among the few colonials knighted by the mother country. After the establishment of the United States under the Constitution, at least one slave trader, Constant Taber of Newport, served as a presidential elector, and two slave merchants became members of the United States Congress: John Brown of Providence, who served a term in the House of Representatives from 1799-1801, and James DeWolfe of Bristol, Rhode Island, who in 1801 was elected to the United States Senate.

That these merchants could engage in this now universally condemned traffic and still enjoy the esteem and respect of their fellow citizens shows the general acceptance of both slavery and the slave trade in colonial New England. The Puritans not only justified slavery, but gave it a triple sanction. Slavery was defended upon economic, spiritual and legal grounds.

The effects of this slave trade were manifold. On the even of the American Revolution it formed the very basis of the economic life of New England: about it revolved, and on it depended, most of her other industries. The vast sugar, molasses and rum trade, shipbuilding, the distilleries, a great many of the fisheries, the employment of artisans and seaman, even agriculture - all were dependent upon the slave traffic. No better statement of the importance of the Negro trade to New England's economy could be cited than the protest of her merchants against the proposed Sugar Act of 1764, which aimed to stop the smuggling of sugar and molasses as well as to raise a revenue in America. In protest the Massachusetts merchants on December, 1763, drew up an elaborate paper entitled A Statement of the Massachusetts Trade and Fisheries. Asserting that sugar and molasses were the main ingredients of the slave trade, the merchants claimed that any duty imposed upon these articles would ruin the fisheries, cause the destruction of the rum distilleries, and destroy the slave trade. Destruction of the Negro commerce would throw 5,000 seamen out of employment and would cause almost 700 ships

to rot in idleness at their wharves. Not only would it affect those immediately engaged in these industries, but its blighting effects would topple the whole dependent economic structure. Coopers, tanners, barrel makers, and even farmers would be reduced to poverty and misery, if the Act were enforced. In short, the Sugar Act, by destroying the slave trade, would stop the wheels of New England industry.

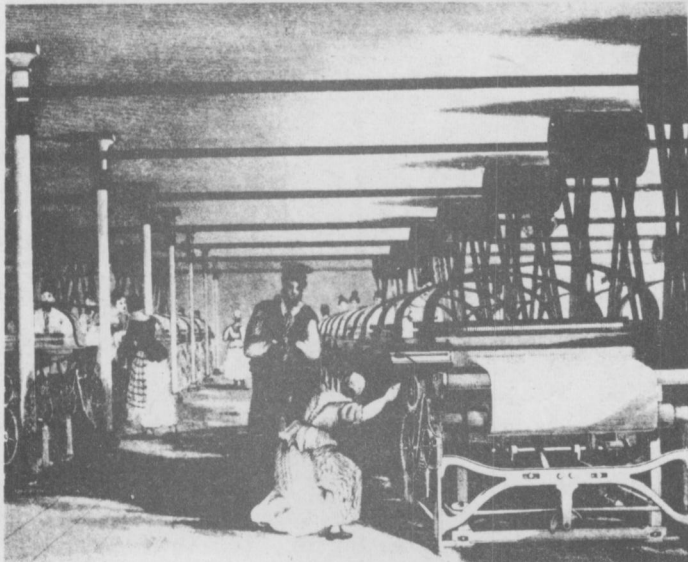
Equally gloomy were the predictions of the Rhode Island merchants. They visualized the ruin of about thirty distilleries, which constituted the very life blood of their trade, and the subsequent unemployment of "many hundreds of persons" who depended upon them for a livelihood. The closing of these distilleries would bankrupt many families, would ruin trade in general, and would permit French brandy to recapture its supremacy over rum as a medium of barter on the African Coast. Besides they claimed:

Two-thirds of our vessels will become useless, and perish upon our hands; our mechanics, and those who depend upon the merchant for employment must seek for subsistence elsewhere; and ...a nursery of seamen, at this time consisting of twenty-two hundred, in this colony only will be in a manner destroyed; and as an end will be put to our commerce, the merchants cannot import any more British manufactures nor will the people be able to pay for those they have already received.

The slave trade also helped to create a relatively large class of slave-trading merchants, like the Wantons, Channings, Waldos and Belchers, whose vested interests, as previously noted, made them the economic, political, and social leaders of their communities. While southern slaveholders like the Carrols of Maryland, the Beverlys, Washingtons, and Carters of Virginia, and the Izards, Blakes and Heywards of South Carolina, derived their wealth and position from the exploitation of Negro labor, the Fanueils, Browns, Cabots, and Pepperells of New England reaped similar rewards partly from the sale of black workers.

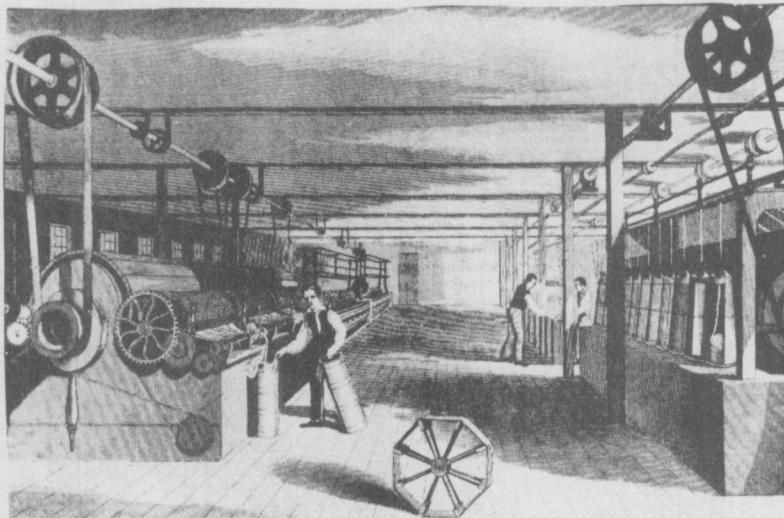
From the Negro trade, likewise, came a great part of the wealth that afforded slave trading magnates the necessary leisure for cultural and intellectual leadership. The wealth and culture of Newport and Boston reflected to a great extent the "golden harvest" reaped from the Negro traffic. In Rhode Island the Botanical Garden and the Philosophical Society, later to become the Redwood Library, were both supported by the slave trader Abraham Redwood. The architectural and scientific work of Joseph Brown, and the stimulation

given to philosophy and art by Dean Berkeley and John Smibert, philosopher and painter respectively, were but additional evidences of the cultural interest made possible by the wealth amassed from the slave trade. The fortunes built up or enlarged by the slave trade, as already indicated also encouraged philanthropy. Finally, the New England slave trade helped to destroy flourishing Negro states in Africa, contributed to the depopulation of that continent, and introduced into New England members of an alien race who were to influence the ideals and institutions of that section throughout the colonial era.



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Inside view of "the Old Slater Mill" in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. This was the first real textile mill in America and was financed by profits made in slave trading, rum manufacture for the slave trade, and other businesses of the Brown Family who started Brown Univ.



## PART III

# CHAPTER 4

## THE SLAVE EXPERIENCE: THE MELTING POT OF AFRICAN PEOPLES

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the economic, political, social and cultural forces that define slavery in the Ante-bellum South?
2. What experiences did slaves have based on different slave occupations on the plantation?
3. What are the similarities and differences in the struggle against slavery waged under the leadership of Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, John Brown, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Henry Highland Garnet.
4. Compare the relative meaning and importance of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the calls for armed slave revolt.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Abolitionism

Manumission

Black Belt

Plantation Slavery vs. Urban Slavery

Field Slaves vs. House Slaves

Slave Codes

Freedom/Liberation

Slave Revolts

King Cotton

Underground Railroad

The first Black people in North America were not slaves. Evidence indicates that prior to Columbus laying claim to the new world in the name of the Spanish Queen Isabella, African explorers crossed the oceans. In addition, several Black people were with Columbus in 1492

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.

Slavery has existed at every period in world history until very recently, but its existence has not always had the same economic character. Two questions must be answered to correctly analyze any particular case of slavery: (1) what other systems of labor exist in the society in addition to slavery? and (2) what system of labor is dominant? In this way we can make a distinction between ancient Greece and ancient Egypt in which free farmers coexisted with slaves, but slavery was dominant; and ante bellum slavery in the USA which coexisted with free farmers but was dominated by the industrially-based capitalism of the urban North. The historical dominance of capitalism in the USA made ante bellum slavery the most barbaric system of slave labor because the slaves did not only produce for the direct consumption of their owners, they were also forced to feed the gluttonous machines (textile mills) of both New England and "old" England with their products (cotton). The average productive life of slaves in cotton has been estimated at seven years during the height of King Cotton. Therefore the textile mills consumed the cotton and the plantations consumed the slaves!

Slavery in the historical experience of Black people is very important because it lasted for 250 years, and we are only 112 years away from it. Moreover, all subsequent historical experiences of Black people have been influenced by the mark of slavery. It is a difficult moral problem for Black and white people to look at slavery, but it is a necessary process if one is to have a full historical understanding of the USA. Just as we must understand the atrocities of the Vietnam war committed by the US government in order to understand life in the USA today, so must we understand the system of slavery if we are to understand the origin and initial development of the USA in general and Black people in particular.

While we are treating slavery as one of the three main historical experiences of Black people, it too developed in stages. The first stage marks a difference between slavery in the upper colonies (New England and New York) in which slaves were mainly used for domestic work and some manufacturing, while in the lower colonies there was a demand for slaves in agricultural work. The second stage marks a shift from the southeastern region where slaves produced rice, indigo and tobacco, to the fertile delta region of Mississippi, central Alabama, and southeastern Georgia where cotton was grown. The main stage of slavery occurred when cotton became King and dominated the entire economy of the South, and was a fundamental feature of the entire US economy as well. Based on this changing pattern in the demand for slave labor, the geographical distribution of slaves changed from an initial concentration in the southeastern coastal area (e.g. South Carolina and Virginia) to the western part of the South (Mississippi). This stretched the concentration of Black people in a half moon-shaped pattern creating the Black Belt South (which to some limited extent still exists today though no longer is it the main concentration of Black people).

The social organization or division of labor of slaves during the reign of King Cotton must be considered as well. On the plantation, there was a difference between house slaves and field slaves, sort of like the difference between service workers (maids, janitors, hospital orderlies, etc.) and production workers (workers who produce commodities for sale or goods for consumption like automobile and steel workers). There was also a difference between the plantation and the city, because the structure of the plantation was monolithic (all power being in the hands of the landowner) and mostly limited to what was on the plantation. However, in the city there was great diversity and density so that life was more cosmopolitan. In the city, there was a difference between the slaves owned by individuals and those owned industrially by a company, e.g. a railroad. This development of industrial slaves was quite limited, but provided the most loose form of social control, and therefore the emergence of independence or initiative by Black slaves can be seen here most clearly.

These differences were the concrete basis that led to different forms of social and cultural life. On the one hand, close, constant and brutal supervision forced field slaves to develop an "underground" social life in addition

to the few customs allowed to flourish on key holidays. House slaves were close to the social life of white people so that assimilation could take place (e.g., actual participation as slaves in the religious practices of their owners and mimicking "white folks" when going among field slaves with clothes, speech, and behavior borrowed from their owners). In the city, since the paternalism of the plantation was impossible, slaves had the time to develop limited patterns of free association in illegal institutions that developed in alleys and poorer parts of town (especially in New Orleans and Charleston).

The debate over slavery and religion among white people, and the impact of religion on Black people is a major aspect of the social and cultural experience of slavery. If slaves could be baptised then they were human beings after all, and if they were less than human they should not be brought into the "Kingdom of God." So as slaves were either baptised or got access to the Bible (which of course meant they were taught to read) they took on a new social and cultural identity. Moreover, slaves were able to express their own identity in developing forms of worship and devotion in addition to worshipping with their masters in some cases.

Thus, the church and religion provide the main basis for the independent development of Black social life:

- (1) to deal with the Bible someone had to read, usually a Black minister;
- (2) to deal with religion meant that Black people developed and/or reinforced values that dictated forms of family life, interpersonal relations, and a general sense of justice and fair play.

In other words, religion was the basis for the development of the first forms of education and indigenous forms and values regarding family life.

In analyzing the slave system of the ante bellum South, it is necessary to make a distinction between those mechanisms that held slavery together, and those that tended to weaken slavery. The slave system was held together by the dominant influence of the slave plantation owners. They had the support of the northern industrialists initially because they needed the cotton for the textile mills, as well as the capitalist powers in England who needed cotton as well. The local and state governments as well as Congress were dominated by the slave owners. In this way, the slave system was totally protected by the economic and political organization of power. Also, all social and cultural institutions served the slave system as well. Except for a few cases (mainly

the New England Quakers and the social reformers who became forces desiring the peaceful abolition of the slave system), the churches, schools, mass media, and artists joined in support of the slave system.

However, we must also be aware of the developments that tended to weaken the slave system. These included the following:

(1) Hiring out. This practice enabled the slave to find a job and pay the bulk of his wage to his owner. This developed initiative and independence in slaves and resulted in a desire for freedom. A few slaves even purchased their own freedom in this way.

(2) Industrial slavery. As pointed out, this practice was the opposite of the close paternalistic supervision of plantation life. Supervision was impersonal and allowed slaves greater freedom though not necessarily better conditions of life and a higher standard of living.

(3) Manumission. This is simply the process whereby a slave owner willfully freed a slave. Much of this was done to free the offspring of a slave owner and one of his female slaves.

(4) Running away. This was the practice of slaves secretly leaving their owners for a free state in the North or Canada. The most famous pattern was the "underground railroad," a network of people linking a slave area to a free area who would provide shelter and assistance to runaway slaves. Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth were important leaders in this form of resistance to the slave system.

(5) Race mixing. The sexual oppression of Black women was the usual form of amalgamation of Blacks and whites. This created a color status group of mulattoes who threatened the rigidity of the color line of Black people on one side and white people on the other.

(6) Slave revolts. This form of collective resistance represented an armed insurrection by the slaves themselves. Most of these were small and unsuccessful, though a few are of great historical significance, e.g. those led by Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner.

(7) Armed attacks. This form of collective resistance represented an armed attack on slavery from outside the slave system. The most famous was undertaken by John Brown, but many spoke out militantly, e.g. Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnett, and David Walker.

In sum, the historical experience of slavery is one of repression and acquiescence, on the one hand, and resistance and rebellion on the other.

## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 4

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**WHAT IS SLAVERY? (1846)**

Slavery in the United States is the granting of that power by which one man exercises and enforces a right of property in the body and soul of another. The condition of a slave is simply that of the brute beast. He is a piece of property - a marketable commodity, in the language of the law, to be bought and sold at the will and caprice of the master who claims him to be his property; he is spoken of, thought of, and treated as property. His own good, his conscience, his intellect, his affections, are all set aside by the master. The will and the wishes of the master are the law of the slave. He is as much a piece of property as a horse. If he is fed, he is fed because he is property. If he is clothed, it is with a view to the increase of his value as property. Whatever of comfort is necessary to him for his body or soul that is inconsistent with his being property is carefully wrested from him, not only by public opinion, but by the law of the country. He is carefully deprived of everything that tends in the slightest degree to detract from his value as property. He is deprived of education. God has given him an intellect; the slaveholder declares it shall not be cultivated. If his moral perception leads him in a course contrary to his value as property, the slaveholder declares he shall not exercise it. The marriage institution cannot exist among slaves, and one-sixth of the population of democratic America is denied its privileges by the law of the land. What is to be thought of a nation boasting of its liberty, boasting of its humanity, boasting of its Christianity, boasting of its love of justice and purity, and yet having within its own borders three millions of persons denied by law the right of marriage? - what must be the condition of that people?

**THE SOUTH CAROLINA SLAVE CODE: AN ACT FOR THE BETTER ORDERING AND GOVERNING OF NEGROES AND SLAVES (1712)**

Whereas, the plantations and estates of this Province cannot be well and sufficiently managed and brought into use, without the labor and service of negroes and other slaves; and forasmuch as the said negroes and other slaves brought unto the people of this Province for that purpose, are of

barbarous, wild, savage natures, and such as renders them wholly unqualified to be governed by the laws, customs, and practices of this Province; but that it is absolutely necessary, that such other constitutions, laws and orders, should in this Province be made and enacted, for the good regulating and ordering of them, as may restrain the disorders, rapines and inhumanity, to which they are naturally prone and inclined, and may also tend to the safety and security of the people of this Province and their estates; to which purpose,

I. Be it therefore enacted, by his Excellency, William, Lord Craven, Palatine, and the rest of the true and absolute Lords and Proprietors of this Province, by and with the advice and consent of the rest of the members of the General Assembly, now met at Charlestown, for the South-west part of this Province, and by the authority of the same, That all negroes, mulattoes, mustizoes or Indians, which at any time heretofore have been sold, or now are held or taken to be, or hereafter shall be bought and sold for slaves, are hereby declared slaves; and they, and their children, are hereby made and declared slaves, to all intents and purposes; excepting all such negroes, mulattoes, mustizoes or Indians, which heretofore have been, or hereafter shall be, for some particular merit, made and declared free, either by the Governor and council of this Province, pursuant to any Act or law of this Province, or by their respective owners or masters; and also, excepting all such negroes, mulattoes, mustizoes or Indians, as can prove they ought not to be sold for slaves. And in case any negro, mulatoo, mustizoe or Indian, doth lay claim to his or her freedom, upon all or any of the said accounts, the same shall be finally heard and determined by the Governor and council of this Province.

II. And for the better ordering and governing of negroes and all other slaves in this Province, Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That no master, mistress, overseer, or other person whatsoever, that hath the care and charge of any negro or slave, shall give their negroes and other slaves leave, on Sundays, holidays, or any other time, to go out of their plantations, except such negro or other slave as usually wait upon them at home or abroad, or wearing a livery; and every other negro or slave that shall be taken hereafter out of his master's plantation, without a ticket, or leave in writing, from his master or mistress, or some other person by his or her appointment, or some white person in the company of such slave, to give an



account of his business, shall be whipped; and every person who shall not (when in his power,) apprehend every negro or other slave which he shall see out of his master's plantation, without leave as aforesaid, and after apprehended, shall neglect to punish him by moderate shipping, shall forfeit twenty shillings, the one half to the poor, to be paid to the church wardens of the Parish where such forfeiture shall become due, and the other half to him that will inform for the same, within one week after such neglect; and that no slave may make further or other use of any one ticket than was intended by him that granted the same, every ticket shall particularly mention the name of every slave employed in the particular business, and to what place they are sent, and what time they return;

III. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That every master, mistress or overseer of a family in this Province, shall cause all his negro houses to be searched diligently and effectually, once every fourteen days, for fugitive and runaway slaves, guns, swords, clubs, and any other mischievous weapons, and finding any, to take them away, and cause them to be secured; as also, for clothes, goods, and any other things and commodities that are not given them by their master, mistress, commander or overseer, and honestly come by.

IV. And for the most effectual detecting and punishing such persons that trade with any slave for stolen goods, Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That where any person shall be suspected to trade as aforesaid, any justice of the peace shall have power to take from him suspected, sufficient recognizance, not to trade with any slave contrary to the laws of this Province; and if it shall afterwards appear to any of the justices of the peace, that such person hath, or hath had, or shipped off, any goods suspected to be unlawfully come by, it shall be lawful for such justice of the peace to oblige the person to appear at the next general sessions, who shall there be obliged to make reasonable proof, of whom he bought, or how he came by, the said goods, and unless he do it, his recognizance shall be forfeited.

V. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That no negro or slave shall carry out of the limits of his master's plantation any sort of gun or fire arms, without his master, or some other white person by his order, is present with him, or without a certificate from his master, mistress or overseer, for the same; and if any negro or slave shall be so apprehended or

taken, without the limits aforesaid, with any gun or fire arms as aforesaid, such arms shall be forfeited to him or them that shall apprehend or take the same; unless the person who is the owner of the arms so taken, shall in three months time redeem the arms so taken, by paying to the person that took the same, the sum of twenty shillings.

VI. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That every master or head of any family, shall keep all his guns and other arms, when out of use, in the most private and least frequented room in the house, upon the penalty of being convicted of neglect therein, to forfeit three pounds.

VII. And whereas, great numbers of slaves which do not dwell in Charlestown, on Sundays and holidays resort thither, to drink, quarrel, fight, curse and swear, and profane the Sabbath, and using and carrying of clubs and other mischievous weapons, resorting in great companies together, which may give them an opportunity of executing any wicked designs and purposes, to the damage and prejudice of the inhabitants of this Province; for the prevention whereof, Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That all and every the constables of Charlestown, separately on every Sunday, and the holidays at Christmas, Easter and Whitonside, together with so many men as each constable shall think necessary to accompany him, which he is hereby empowered for that end to press, under the penalty of twenty shillings to the person that shall disobey him, shall, together with such persons, go through all or any the streets, and also, round about Charlestown, and as much further on the neck as they shall be informed or have reason to suspect any meeting or concourse of any such negroes or slaves to be at that time, and to enter into any house, at Charlestown, or elsewhere, to search for such slaves, and as many of them as they can apprehend, shall cause be publicly whipped in Charlestown, and then to be delivered to the marshall, who for every slave so whipped and delivered to him by the constable, shall pay the constable five shillings, which five shillings shall be repaid the said marshall by the owner or head of that family to which the said negro or slave doth belong, together with such other charges as shall become due to him for keeping runaway slaves.

VIII. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That no owner or head of any family shall give a ticket to any slave to go to Charlestown, or from plantation to plantation, on Sunday, excepting it be for and

about such particular business as cannot reasonably be delayed to another time, under the forfeiture of ten shillings; and in every ticket in that case given, shall be mentioned the particular business that slave is sent about, or that slave shall be dealt with as if he had no ticket.

IX. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That upon complaint made to any justice of the peace, of any heinous or grievous crime, committed by any slave or slaves, as murder, burglary, robbery, burning of houses, or any lesser crimes, as killing or stealing any meat or other cattle, maiming one the other, stealing of fowls, provisions, or such like trespasses or injuries, the said justice shall issue out his warrant for apprehending the offender or offenders, and for all persons to come before him that can give evidence; and if upon examination, it probably appeareth, that the apprehended person is guilty, he shall commit him or them to prison, or immediately proceed to trial of the said slave or slaves. If they shall find such negro or other slave or slaves guilty thereof, they shall give sentence of death, if the crime by law deserve the same, and forthwith by their warrant cause immediate execution to be done, by the common or any other executioner, in such manner as they shall think fit, the kind of death to be inflicted to be left to their judgment and discretion; and if the crime committed shall not deserve death, they shall then condemn and adjudge the criminal or criminals to any other punishment, but not extending to limb or disabling him, without a particular law directing such punishment, and shall forthwith order execution to be done accordingly.

X. And in regard great mischiefs daily happen by petty larcenies committed by negroes and slaves of this Province, Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That if any negro or other slave shall hereafter steal or destroy any goods, chattels, or provisions whatsoever, of any other person than his master or mistress, being under the value of twelve pence, every negro or other slave so offending, and being brought before some justice of the peace of this Province, upon complaint of the party injured, and shall be adjudged guilty by confession, proof, or probable circumstances, such negro or slave so offending, excepting children, whose punishment is left wholly to the discretion of the said justice, shall be adjudged by such justice to be publicly and severely whipped, not exceeding forty lashes; and if such negro or other slave punished as aforesaid, be afterwards, by two justices of the peace, found

guilty of the like crimes, he or they, for such his or their second offence, shall either have one of his ears cut off, or be branded in the forehead with a hot iron, that the mark thereof may remain; and if after such punishment, such negro or slave for his third offence, shall have his nose slit; and if such negro or other slave, after the third time as aforesaid, be accused of petty larceny, or of any of the offences before mentioned, such negro or other slave shall be tried in such manner as those accused of murder, burglary, etc. are before by this Act provided for to be tried, and in case they shall be found guilty a fourth time, of any the offences before mentioned, then such negro or other slave shall be adjudged to suffer death, or other punishment, as the said justices shall think fitting.

XI. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That if any person shall send his negro out of this Province, that hath killed another negro or slave, such person shall pay unto the master or owner of such negro, the full value of such negro so killed as aforesaid; and in case any person shall send, or cause to be sent, his negro out of this Province, that hath killed any white person, knowing the negro to be guilty of such crime, he shall forfeit the sum of five hundred pounds, to be the executors of the person killed; to be recovered by action of debt in the court of common pleas in this Province, the action to be brought at any time within one year after the fact committed.

XII. And it is further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That if any negroes or other slaves shall make mutiny or insurrection, or rise in rebellion against the authority and government of this Province, or shall make preparation of arms, powder, bullets or offensive weapons, in order to carry on such mutiny or insurrection, or shall hold any counsel or conspiracy for raising such mutiny, insurrection or rebellion, the offenders shall be tried by two justices of the peace and three freeholders, associated together as before expressed in case of murder, burglary, etc., who are hereby empowered and required to try the said slaves so offending, and inflict death, or any other punishment, upon the offenders, and forthwith by their warrant cause execution to be done, by the common or any other executioner, in such manner as they shall think fitting; and if any person shall make away or conceal any negro or negroes, or other slave or slaves, suspected to be guilty of the before-mentioned crimes, and not upon demand bring forth the suspected offender, such



MAP II

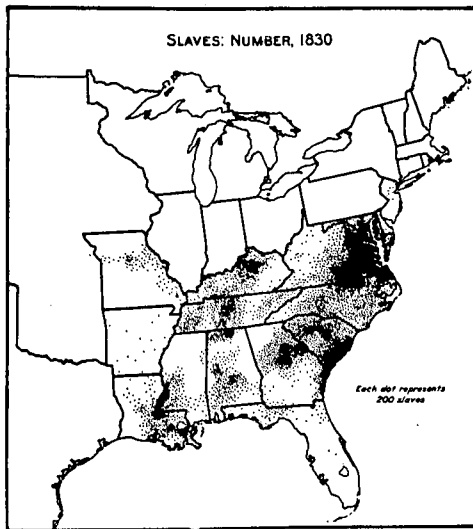
Geographic Expansion of the Slave Population in the United States: 1790.\*



MAP III

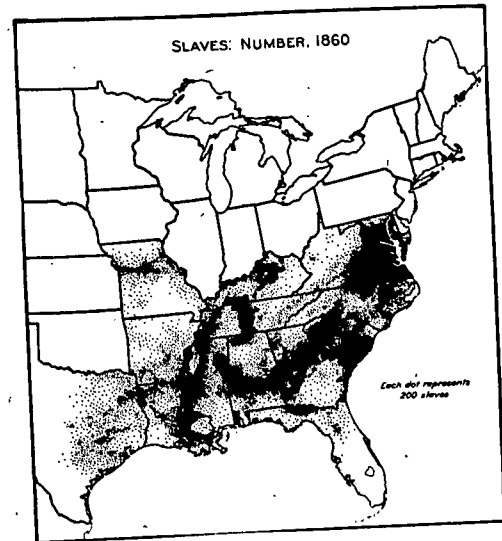
Geographic Expansion of the Slave Population in the United States: 1800.

\* Maps II, III, IV, and V were prepared in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture. They are reproduced with the permission of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and of Dr. L. C. Gray in whose *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1933), they appear on pp. 652-55.



MAP IV

Geographic Expansion of the Slave Population in the United States: 1830.



MAP V

Geographic Expansion of the Slave Population in the United States: 1860.

TABLE I

Growth of the Slave Population in the United States: 1790-1860 \*

CENSUS YEAR	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860
Number	697,624	895,602	1,191,362	1,538,022	2,009,043	2,487,355	3,204,313	3,953,760
Decennial Increase		28.1	33.3	29.1	30.6	23.8	28.8	23.4

\* *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915*, p. 55.

person shall forfeit for every negro or slave so concealed or made away, the sum of fifty pounds.

# 16

## THE HOUSE SLAVE AND THE FIELD SLAVE (1857)

In judging of the welfare of the slaves, it is necessary to distinguish the different conditions of slavery. The most important distinction, both as regards numbers and its influence on the well-being of the slave, is that between house-servants and farm or field-hands. The house-servant is comparatively well off. He is frequently born and bred in the family he belongs to; and even when this is not the case, the constant association of the slave and his master, and master's family, naturally leads to such an attachment as ensures good treatment. There are not wanting instances of devoted attachment on both sides in such cases. There is even a danger that the affection on the part of the owner may degenerate into over-indulgence. It is no uncommon thing to make pets of slaves, as we do of other inferior animals; and when this is the case, the real welfare of the slave is sacrificed to an indiscriminating attachment. I was struck with the appearance of the slaves in the streets of Charleston on a Sunday afternoon. A large proportion of them were well dressed, and of decent bearing, and had all the appearance of enjoying a holiday. I was informed they were principally house-servants belonging to the town; and there could be no doubt the control of public opinion, natural to a large city, had exercised a favourable influence on the condition of these poor people.

The position of the field-hands is very different; of those, especially, who labour on large plantations. Here there are none of those humanizing influences at work which temper the rigour of the system, nor is there the same check of public opinion to control abuse. The 'force' is worked en masse, as a great human mechanism; or, if you will, as a drove of human cattle. The proprietor is seldom present to direct and control. Even if he were, on large estates the numbers are too great for his personal attention to details of treatment. On all large plantations the comfort of the slave is practically at the disposal of the white overseer, and his subordinate, the negro-driver. There are many estates which the proprietor does not visit at all, or visits perhaps once a year; and where, during his absence, the

slaves are left to the uncontrolled caprice of the overseer and his assistants, not another white man, perhaps, being within miles of the plantation. Who can say what passes in those voiceless solitudes? Happen what may, there is none to tell. Whatever the slave may suffer there is none to bear witness to his wrong. It needs a large amount of charity to believe that power so despotic, so utterly uncontrolled even by opinion, will never degenerate into violence. It could only be so if overseers were saints, and drivers angels.

It is often said that the interest of the slave-owner is sufficient guarantee for the good treatment of the slave; that no man will voluntarily injure the value of his property. This reasoning assumes, first, that slave-owners will take an intelligent view of their own interests; and, secondly, that they will be guided by the passion of gain rather than by other passions. But we find the Cuba slave-owner working his slaves to death, at the rate of 3 percent per annum. And again, slavery is a system which evokes passions more powerful even than the love of gain. Against the action of these angry passions, the distant calculation of mere profit can avail but little with men of violent dispositions.

But even if we grant the restraint placed on the passions of the master by considerations of pecuniary interest, we cannot allow the same effect to be produced on the overseer. On the contrary, the interest of the overseer is to exhibit a large production as the result of his exertions; and the more remote consideration of being a prudent husbandman of his forces will only affect a superior mind. On this point I prefer giving the opinions of slave-owners themselves. In an article in De Bow's Review, on the management of slaves, I find some interesting remarks on this subject, in a report to a committee of slaveholders. After pointing out the interest of the owners in the good treatment of their slaves, it continues: - 'There is one class of our community to whom all the motives referred to, in to induce us to kindness to our slaves, do not apply. Your committee refer to our overseers. As they have no property in our slaves, of course they lack the check of self-interest. As their only aim, in general, is to get the largest possible crop for the year, we can readily conceive the strong inducement they have to overwork our slaves, and masters are often much to blame for inadvertently encouraging this feeling in their overseers.'

It appears, then, that nothing but high principle on the part of the

overseer could ensure the good treatment of the slave on large plantations. But all testimony concurs in representing the overseers as a very inferior class in point of character. A Virginian slave-owner used this language to Olmsted: - 'They (the overseers) are the curse of this country, sir; the worst men in the community.' Yet these are the men on whom devolves, practically, the management of the great bulk of the agricultural slave population, in the cotton, rice, and sugar districts.

# 17

THROUGH THE EYES OF A SLAVE: GROWING COTTON AND SUGAR CANE IN LOUISIANA (1853)

## ON COTTON

When "in his cups," Master Epps was a roystering, blustering, noisy fellow, whose chief delight was in dancing with his "niggers," or lashing them about the yard with his long whip, just for the pleasure of hearing them screech and scream, as the great welts were planted on their backs. When sober, he was silent, reserved and cunning, not beating us indiscriminately, as in his drunken moments, but sending the end of his rawhide to some tender spot of a lagging slave, with a sly dexterity peculiar to himself.

He had been a driver and overseer in his younger years, but at this time was in possession of a plantation on Bayou Huff Power, two and a half miles from Holmesville, eighteen from Marksville, and twelve from Cheneyville. It belonged to Joseph B. Roberts, his wife's uncle, and was leased by Epps. His principal business was raising cotton, and inasmuch as some may read this book who have never seen a cotton field, a description of the manner of its culture may not be out of place.

The ground is prepared by throwing up beds or ridges, with the plough - back-furrowing, it is called. Oxen and mules, the latter almost exclusively, are used in ploughing. The women as frequently as the men perform this labor, feeding, currying, and taking care of their teams and in all respects doing the field and table work, precisely as do the ploughboys of the North.

The beds, or ridges, are six feet wide, that is, from water furrow to water furrow. A plough drawn by one mule is then run along the top of the ridge or center of the bed, making the drill, into which a girl usually drops the seed, which she carries in a bag hung round her neck. Behind her comes a mule and harrow, covering up the seed, so that two mules, three



slaves, a plough and harrow, are employed in planting a row of cotton. This is done in the months of March and April. Corn is planted in February. When there are no cold rains, the cotton usually makes its appearance in a week. In the course of eight or ten days afterwards the first hoeing is commenced. This is performed in part, also, by the aid of the plough and mule. The plough passes as near as possible to the cotton on both sides, throwing the furrow from it. Slaves follow with their hoes, cutting up the grass and cotton, leaving hills two feet and a half apart. This is called scraping cotton. In two weeks more commences the second hoeing. This time the furrow is thrown towards the cotton. Only one stalk, the largest, is now left standing in each hill. In another fortnight it is hoed the third time, throwing the furrow towards the cotton in the same manner as before, and killing all the grass between the rows. About the first of July, when it is a foot high or thereabouts, it is hoed the fourth and last time. Now the whole space between the rows is ploughed, leaving a deep water furrow in the center. During all these hoeings the overseer or driver follows the slaves on horseback with a whip, such as has been described. The fastest hoer takes the lead row. He is usually about a rod in advance of his companions. If one of them passes him, he is whipped. If one falls behind or is a moment idle, he is whipped. In fact, the lash is flying from morning until night, the whole day long. The hoeing season thus continues from April until July, a field having no sooner been finished once, than it is commenced again.

In the latter part of August begins the cotton picking season. At this time each slave is presented with a sack. A strap is fastened to it, which goes over the neck, holding the mouth of the sack breast high, while the bottom reaches nearly to the ground. Each one is also presented with a large basket that will hold about two barrels. This is to put the cotton in when the sack is filled. The baskets are carried to the field and placed at the beginning of the rows.

When a new hand, one unaccustomed to the business, is sent for the first time into the field, he is whipped up smartly, and made for that day to pick as fast as he can possibly. At night it is weighed, so that his capability in cotton picking is known. He must bring in the same weight each night following. If it falls short, it is considered evidence that he has been laggard, and a greater or less number of lashes is the penalty.

An ordinary day's work is two hundred pounds. A slave who is accustomed to picking, is punished, if he or she brings in a less quantity than that. There is a great difference among them as regards this kind of labor. Some of them seem to have a natural knack, or quickness, which enables them to pick with great celerity, and with both hands, while others, with whatever practice or industry, are utterly unable to come up to the ordinary standard. Such hands are taken from the cotton field and employed in other business. Patsey, of whom I shall have more to say, was known as the most remarkable cotton picker on Bayou Boeuf. She picked with both hands and with such surprising rapidity, that five hundred pounds a day was not unusual for her.

Each one is tasked, therefore, according to his picking abilities, none, however, to come short of two hundred weight. I, being unskillful always in that business, would have satisfied my master by bringing in the latter quantity, while on the other hand, Patsey would surely have been beaten if she failed to produce twice as much.

The cotton grows from five to seven feet high, each stalk having a great many branches, shooting out in all directions, and lapping each other above the water furrow.

There are few sights more pleasant to the eye, than a wide cotton field when it is in the bloom. It presents an appearance of purity, like an immaculate expanse of light, new-fallen snow.

Sometimes the slave picks down one side of a row, and back upon the other, but more usually, there is one on either side, gathering all that has blossomed leaving the unopened bolls for a succeeding picking. When the sack is filled, it is emptied into the basket and trodden down. It is necessary to be extremely careful the first time going through the field, in order not to break the branches off the stalks. The cotton will not bloom upon a broken branch. Epps never failed to inflict the severest chastisement on the unlucky servant who, either carelessly or unavoidably, was guilty in the last degree in this respect.

The hands are required to be in the cotton field as soon as it is light in the morning, and, with the exception of ten or fifteen minutes, which is given them at noon to swallow their allowance of cold bacon, they are not permitted to be a moment idle until it is too dark to see, and when the moon is full, they often times labor till the middle of the night. They do not

dare to stop even at dinner time, nor return to the quarters, however late it be, until the order to halt is given by the driver.

The day's work over in the field, the baskets are "toted," or in other words, carried to the gin-house, where the cotton is weighed. No matter how fatigued and weary he may be - no matter how much he longs for sleep and rest - a slave never approaches the gin-house with his basket of cotton but with fear. If it falls short in weight - if he has not performed the full task appointed him, he knows that he must suffer. And if he has exceeded it by ten or twenty pounds, in all probability his master will measure the next day's task accordingly. So, whether he has too little or too much, his approach to the gin-house is always with fear and trembling. Most frequently they have too little, and therefore it is they are not anxious to leave the field. After weighing, follow the whippings; and then the baskets are carried to the cotton house, and their contents stored away like hay, all hands being sent in to tramp down. If the cotton is not dry, instead of taking it to the gin-house at once, it is laid upon platforms, two feet high, and some three times as wide, covered with boards or plank, with narrow walks running between them.

This done, the labor of the day is not yet ended, by any means. Each one must then attend to his respective chores. One feeds the mules, another the swine - another cuts the wood, and so forth; besides, the packing is all done by candle light. Finally, at a late hour, they reach the quarters, sleepy and overcome with the long day's toil. Then a fire must be kindled in the cabin, the corn ground in the small hand-mill, and supper, and dinner for the next day in the field, prepared. All that is allowed them is corn and bacon, which is given out at the corncrib and smoke-house every Sunday morning. Each one receives, as his weekly allowance, three and a half pounds of bacon, and corn enough to make a peck of meal. That is all - no tea, coffee, sugar, and with the exception of a very scanty sprinkling now and then, no salt. I can say, from a ten years' residence with Master Epps, that no slave of his is ever likely to suffer from the gout, superinduced by excessive high living. Master Epps' hogs were fed on shelled corn - it was thrown out to his "niggers" in the ear. The former, he thought, would fatten faster by shelling, and soaking it in the water - the latter, perhaps, if treated in the same manner, might grow too fat to labor. Master Epps was a shrewd calculator, and knew how to manage his own animals, drunk or sober.

The corn mill stands in the yard beneath a shelter. It is like a common coffee mill, the hopper holding about size quarts. There was one privilege which Master Epps granted freely to every slave he had. They might grind their corn nightly, in such small quantities as their daily wants required, or they might grind the whole week's allowance at one time, on Sundays, just as they preferred. A very generous man was Master Epps!

I kept my corn in a small wooden box, the meal in a gourd; and, by the way, the gourd is one of the most convenient and necessary utensils on a plantation. Besides supplying the place of all kinds of crockery in a slave cabin, it is used for carrying water to the fields. Another, also contains the dinner. It dispenses with the necessity of pails, dippers, basins, and such tin and wooden superfluities altogether.

When the corn is ground, and fire is made, the bacon is taken down from the nail on which it hangs, a slice cut off and thrown upon the coals to broil. The Majority of slaves have no knife, much less a fork. They cut their bacon with the axe at the wood-pile. The corn meal is mixed with a little water, placed in the fire, and baked. When it is "done brown," the ashes are scraped off, and being placed upon a chip, which answers for a table, the tenant of the slave hut is ready to sit down upon the ground to supper. By this time it is usually midnight. The same fear of punishment with which they approach the gin-house, possesses them again on lying down to get a snatch of rest. It is the fear of over-sleeping in the morning. Such an offence would certainly be attended with not less than twenty lashes. With a prayer that he may be on his feet and wide awake at the first sound of the horn, he sinks to his slumbers nightly.

The softest couches in the world are not to be found in the log mansion of the slave. The one whereon I reclined year after year, was a plank twelve inches wide and ten feet long. My pillow was a stick of wood. The bedding was a coarse blanket, and not a rag or shred beside. Moss might be used, were it not that it directly breeds a swarm of fleas.

The cabin is constructed of logs, without floor or window. The latter is altogether unnecessary, the crevices between the logs admitting sufficient light. In stormy weather the rain drives through them, rendering it comfortless and extremely disagreeable. The rude door hangs on great wooden hinges. In one end is constructed an awkward fire-place.

An hour before day light the horn is blown. Then the slaves arouse, prepare their breakfast, fill a gourd with water, in another deposit their dinner of cold bacon and corn cake, and hurry to the field again. It is an offence invariably followed by a flogging, to be found at the quarters after daybreak. Then the fears and labors of another day begin; and until its close there is no such thing as rest. He fears he will be caught lagging through the day; he fears to approach the gin-house with his basket-load of cotton at night; he fears, when he lies down, that he will oversleep himself in the morning. Such is a true, faithful, unexaggerated picture and description of the slave's daily life, during the time of cotton-picking, on the shores of Bayou Boeuf.

In the month of January, generally, the fourth and last picking is completed. Then commences the harvesting of corn. This is considered a secondary crop, and receives far less attention than the cotton. It is planted, as already mentioned, in February. Corn is grown in that region for the purpose of fattening hogs and feeding slaves; very little, if any, being sent to market. It is the white variety, the ear of great size, and the stalk growing to the height of eight, and often times ten feet. In august the leaves are stripped off, dried in the sun, bound in small bundles, and stored away as provender for the mules and oxen. After this the slaves go through the field, turning down the ear, for the purpose of keeping the rains from penetrating to the grain. It is left in this condition until after cotton-picking is over, whether earlier or later. Then the ears are separated from the stalks, and deposited in the corncrib with the husks on; otherwise, stripped of the husks, the weevil would destroy it. The stalks are left standing in the field.

The Carolina, or sweet potato, is also grown in that region to some extent. They are not fed, however, to hogs or cattle, and are considered but of small importance. They are preserved by placing them upon the surface of the ground, with a slight covering of earth or cornstalks. There is not a cellar on Bayou Boeuf. The ground is so low it would fill with water. Potatoes are worth from two or three "bits," or shillings a barrell; corn, except when there is an unusual scarcity, can be purchased at the same rate.

As soon as the cotton and corn crops are secured, the stalks are pulled up, thrown into piles and burned. The ploughs are started at the same time,

throwing up the beds again, preparatory to another planting. The soil, in the parishes of Rapides and Avoyelles, and throughout the whole country, so far as my observation extended, is of exceeding richness and fertility. It is a kind of marl, of a brown or reddish color. It does not require those invigorating composts necessary to more barren lands, and on the same field the same crop is grown for many successive years.

Ploughing, planting, picking cotton, gathering the corn, and pulling and burning stalks, occupies the whole of the four seasons of the year. Drawing and cutting wood, pressing cotton, fattening and killing hogs, are but incidental labors.

In the month of September or October, the hogs are run out of the swamps by dogs, and confined in pens. On a cold morning, generally about New Year's day, they are slaughtered. Each carcass is cut into six parts, and piled one above the other in salt, upon large tables in the smoke-house. In this condition it remains a fortnight, when it is hung up, and a fire built, and continued more than half the time during the remainder of the year. This thorough smoking is necessary to prevent the bacon from becoming infested with worms. In so warm a climate it is difficult to preserve it, and very many times myself and my companions have received our weekly allowance of three pounds and a half, when it was full of these disgusting vermin.

Although the swamps are overrun with cattle, they are never made the source of profit, to any considerable extent. The planter cuts his mark upon the ear, or brands his initials upon the side, and turns them into the swamps, to roam unrestricted within their almost limitless confines. They are the Spanish breed, small and spike-horned. I have known of droves being taken from Bayou Boeuf, but it is of very rare occurrence. The value of the best cows is about five dollars each. Two quarts at one milking, would be considered an unusual large quantity. They furnish little tallow, and that of a soft, inferior quality. Notwithstanding the great number of cows that throng the swamps, the planters are indebted to the North for their cheese and butter, which is purchased in the New Orleans market. Salted beef is not an article of food either in the great house, or in the cabin.

Master Epps was accustomed to attend shooting matches for the purpose of obtaining what fresh beef he required. These sports occurred weekly at the neighboring village of Holmesville. Fat beeves are driven thither and shot

at, a stipulated price being demanded for the privilege. The lucky marksman divides the flesh among his fellows, and in this manner the attending planters are supplied.

The great number of tame and untamed cattle which swarm the woods and swamps of Bayou Boeuf, most probably suggested that appellation to the French, inasmuch as the term, translated, signifies the creek or river of the wild ox.

Garden products, such as cabbages, turnips and the like, are cultivated for the use of the master and his family. They have greens and vegetables at all times and seasons of the year. "The grass withereth and the flower fadeth" before the desolating winds of autumn in the chill northern latitudes, but perpetual verdure overspreads the hot lowlands; and flowers bloom in the heart of winter, in the region of Bayou Boeuf.

There are no meadows appropriated to the cultivation of the grasses. The leaves of the corn supply a sufficiency of food for the laboring cattle, while the rest provide for themselves all the year in the evergrowing pasture.

There are many other peculiarities of climate, habit, custom, and of the manner of living and laboring at the South, but the foregoing, it is supposed, will give the reader an insight and general idea of life on a cotton plantation in Louisiana. The mode of cultivating cane, and the process of sugar manufacturing, will be mentioned in another place.

#### ON SUGAR

In consequence of my inability in cotton-picking, Epps was in the habit of hiring me out on sugar plantations during the season of cane-cutting and sugar-making. He received for my services a dollar a day, with the money supplying my place on his cotton plantation. Cutting cane was an employment that suited me, and for three successive years I held the lead row at Hawkins', leading a gang of from fifty to an hundred hands.

In the previous chapter the mode of cultivating cotton is described. This may be the proper place to speak of the manner of cultivating cane.

The ground is prepared in beds, the same as it is prepared for the reception of the cotton seed, except it is ploughed deeper. Drills are made in same manner. Planting commences in January, and continues until April. It is necessary to plant a sugar field only once in three years. Three crops are taken before the seed or plant is exhausted.

Three gangs are employed in the operation. One draws the cane from the rick, or stack, cutting the top and flags from the stalk, leaving only that part which is sound and healthy. Each joint of the cane has an eye, like the eye of a potato, which sends forth a sprout when buried in the soil. Another gang lays the cane in the drill, placing two stalks side by side in such manner that joints will occur once in four or six inches. The third gang follows with hoes, drawing earth upon the stalks, and covering them to the depth of three inches.

In four weeks, at the farthest, the sprouts appear above the ground, and from this time forward grow with great rapidity. A sugar field is hoed three times, the same as cotton, save that a greater quantity of earth is drawn to the roots. By the first of August hoeing is usually over. About the middle of September, whatever is required for seed is cut and stacked in ricks, as they are termed. In October it is ready for the mill or sugar-house, and then the general cutting begins. The blade of a cane-knife is fifteen inches long, three inches wide in the middle, and tapering towards the point and handle. The blade is thin, and in order to be at all serviceable must be kept very sharp. Every third hand takes the lead of two others, one of whom is on each side of him. The lead hand, in the first place, with a blow of his knife shears the flags from the stalk. He next cuts off the top down as far as it is green. He must be careful to sever all the green from the ripe part, inasmuch as the juice of the former sours the molasses, and renders it unsalable. Then he severs the stalk at the root, and lays it directly behind him. His right and left hand companions lay their stalks when cut in the same manner, upon his. To every three hands there is a cart, which follows, and the stalks are thrown into it by the younger slaves, when it is drawn to the sugar-house and ground.

If the planter apprehends a frost, the cane is winrowed. Winrowing is the cutting the stalks at an early period and throwing them lengthwise in the water furrow in such a manner that the tops will cover the butts of the stalks. They will remain in this condition three weeks or a month without souring, and secure from frost. When the property time arrives, they are taken up, trimmed and carted to the sugar-house.

In the month of January the slaves enter the field again to prepare for another crop. The ground is now strewn with the tops, and flags cut from the



past year's cane. On a dry day fire is set to this combustible refuse, which sweeps over the field, leaving it bare and clean, and ready for the hoes. The earth is loosened about the roots of the old stubble, and in process of time another crop springs up from the last year's seed. It is the same the year following; but the third year the seed has exhausted its strength, and the field must be ploughed and planted again. The second year the cane is sweeter and yields more than the first, and the third year more than the second. During the three seasons I labored on Hawkins' plantation, I was employed a considerable portion of the time in the sugar-house. He is celebrated as the producer of the finest variety of white sugar. The following is a general description of his sugar-house and the process of manufacture:

The mill is an immense brick building, standing on the shore of the bayou. Running out from the building is an open shed, at least an hundred feet in length and forty or fifty feet in width. The boiler in which the steam is generated is situated outside the main building; the machinery and engine rest on a brick pier, fifteen feet above the floor, within the body of the building. The machinery turns two great iron rollers, between two and three feet in diameter and six or eight feet in length. They are elevated above the brick pier, and roll in towards each other. An endless carrier, made of chain and wood, like leathern belts used in small mills, extends from the iron rollers out of the main building and through the entire length of the open shed. The carts in which the cane is brought from the field as fast as it is cut, are unloaded at the sides of the shed. All along the endless carrier 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, is crushed, and drops upon another carrier that conveys it out of the main building in an opposite direction, depositing it in the top of a chimney upon a fire beneath, which consumes it. It is necessary to burn it in this manner, because otherwise it would soon fill the building, and more especially because it would soon sour and engender disease. The juice of the cane falls into a conductor underneath the iron rollers, and is carried into a reservoir. Pipes convey it from thence into five filterers, holding several hogsheads each. These filters are filled with bone-black, a substance resembling pulverized charcoal. It is made of bones calcinated in close vessels, and is used for the purpose of decolorizing, by filtration, the cane juice before boiling.

Through these five filterers it passes in succession, and then runs into a large reservoir underneath the ground floor, from whence it is carried up, by means of a steam pump, into a clarifier made of sheet iron, where it is heated by steam until it boils. From the first clarifier it is carried in pipes to a second and a third, and thence into close iron pans, through which tubes pass, filled with steam. While in a boiling state it flows through three pans in succession, and is then carried in other pipes down to the coolers on the ground floor. Coolers are wooden boxes with sieve bottoms made of the finest wire. As soon as the syrup passes into the coolers, and is met by the air, it grains, and the molasses at once escapes through the sieves into a cistern below. It is then white or loaf sugar of the finest kind - clear, clean, and as white as snow. When cool it is taken out, packed in hogsheads, and is ready for market. The molasses is then carried from the cistern into the upper story again, and by another process converted into brown sugar.

# 18

PROBLEM: BURY ME IN A FREE LAND (1854)

Make me a grave where'er you will,  
 In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill;  
 Make it among earth's humblest graves,  
 But not in a land where men are slaves.

I would not rest if around my grave  
 I heard the steps of a trembling slave;  
 His shadow above my silent tomb  
 Would make it a place of fearful gloom.

I could not rest if I heard the Tread  
 Of a coffle gang to the shambles led,  
 And the mother's shriek of wild despair  
 Rise like a curse on the trembling air.

I could not sleep if I saw the lash  
 Drinking her blood at each fearful gash,  
 And I saw her babes torn from her breast,  
 Like trembling doves from their parent nest.

I'd shudder and start if I heard the bay  
 Of bloodhounds seizing their human prey,  
 And I heard the captive plead in vain  
 As they bound afresh his gallin chain.

If I saw young girls from their mothers' arms  
 Bartered and sold for their youthful charms,  
 My eye would flash with a mournful flame,  
 My death-paled cheek grow red with shame.

I would sleep, dear friends, where bloated might  
 Can rob no man of his dearest right;  
 My rest shall be calm in any grave  
 Where none can call his brother a slave.

I ask no monument, proud and high,  
 To arrest the gaze of the passers-by;  
 All that my yearning spirit craves,  
 Is bury me not in a land of slaves.

SOLUTION: "Resistance! Resistance! Resistance!" AN ADDRESS TO THE  
 SLAVES OF THE U.S. (1843)

# 19

Brethren, it is as wrong for your lordly oppressors to keep you in slavery, as it was for the man thief to steal our ancestors from the coast of Africa. You should therefore now use the same manner of resistance, as would have been just in our ancestors, when the bloody footprints of the first remorseless soul-thief was placed upon the shores of our fatherland. The humblest peasant is as free in the sight of God as the proudest monarch

that ever swayed a sceptre. Liberty is a spirit sent out from God, and like its great Author, is no respecter of persons.

Brethren, the time has come when you must act for yourselves. It is an old and true saying that, "if hereditary bondmen would be free, they must themselves strike the blow." You can plead your own cause, and do the work of emancipation better than any others. The nations of the old world are moving in the great cause of universal freedom, and some of them at least will, ere long, do you justice. The combined powers of Europe have placed their broad seal of disapprobation upon the African slave-trade. But in the slave-holding parts of the United States, the trade is as brisk as ever. They buy and sell you as though you were brute beasts. The North has done much - her opinion of slavery in the abstract is known. But in regard to the South, we adopt the opinion of the New York Evangelist - "We have advanced so far, that the cause apparently waits for a more effectual door to be thrown open than has been yet." We are about to point you to that more effectual door. Look around you, and behold the bosoms of your loving wives heaving with untold agonies! Hear the cries of your poor children! Remember the stripes your fathers bore. Think of the torture and disgrace of your noble mothers. Think of your wretched sisters, loving virtue and purity, as they are driven into concubinage and are exposed to the unbridled lusts of incarnate devils. Think of the undying glory that hangs around the ancient name of Africa: - and forget not that you are native-born American citizens, and as such, you are justly entitled to all the rights that are granted to the freest. Think how many tears you have poured out upon the soil which you have cultivated with unrequited toil and enriched with your blood; and then go to your lordly enslavers and tell them plainly, that you are determined to be free. Appeal to their sense of justice, and tell them that they have no more right to oppress you, than you have to enslave them. Entreat them to remove the grievous burdens which they have imposed upon you, and to remunerate you for the labor. Promise them renewed diligence in the cultivation of the soil, if they will render to you an equivalent for your services. Point them to the increase of happiness and prosperity in the British West-Indies since the Act of Emancipation. Tell them in language which they cannot misunderstand, of the exceeding sinfulness of slavery, and of a future judgment, and of the righteous retributions of an indignant God. Inform them that all you desire is freedom, and that nothing else will suffice. Do

this, and for ever after cease to toil for the heartless tyrants, who give you no other reward but stripes and abuse. If they then commence the work of death, they, and not you, will be responsible for the consequences. You had far better all die - die immediately, than live slaves, and entail your wretchedness upon your posterity. If you would be free in this generation, here is your only hope. However much you and all of us may desire it, there is not much hope of redemption without the shedding of blood. If you must bleed, let it all come at once - rather die freemen, than live to be the slaves. It is impossible, like the children of Israel, to make a grand exodus from the land of bondage. The Pharaohs are on both sides of the blood-red waters! You cannot move en masse, to the dominions of the British Queen - nor can you pass through Florida and overrun Texas, and at last find peace in Mexico. The propagators of American slavery are spending their blood and treasure, that they may plant the black flag in the heart of Mexico and riot in the halls of Montezumas. In the language of the Rev. Robert Hall, when addresssing the volunteers of Bristol, who were rushing forth to repel the invasion of Napoleon, who threatened to lay waste the fair homes of England, "Religion is too much interested in your behalf, not to shed over you her most gracious influences."

You will not be compelled to spend much time in order to become inured to hardships. From the first moment that you breathed the air of heaven, you have been accustomed to nothing else but hardships. The heroes of the American Revolution were never put upon harder fare than a peck of corn and a few herrings per week. You have not become enervated by the luxuries of life. Your sternest energies have been beaten out upon the anvil of severe trial. Slavery has done this, to make you subservient to its own purposes; but it has done more than this, it has prepared you for any emergency. If you receive good treatment, it is what you could hardly expect; if you meet with pain, sorrow, and even death, these are the common lot of the slaves.

Fellow-men! patient sufferers! behold your dearest rights crushed to the earth! See your sons murdered, and your wives, mothers and sisters doomed to prostitution. In the name of the merciful God, and by all that life is worth, let it no longer be a debatable question, whether it is better to choose Liberty or death.

In 1822, Denmark Veazie, of South Carolina, formed a plan for the liberation of his fellow-men. In the whole history of human efforts to overthrow

slavery, a more complicated and tremendous plan was never formed. He was betrayed by the treachery of his own people, and died a martyr to freedom. Many a brave hero fell, but history, faithful to her high trust, will transcribe his name on the same monument with Moses, Hampden, Tell, Bruce and Wallace, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Lafayette and Washington. That tremendous movement shook the whole empire of slavery. The guilty soul-thieves were overwhelmed with fear. It is a matter of fact, that at that time, and in consequence of the threatened revolution, the slave States talked strongly of emancipation. But they blew but one blast of the trumpet of freedom, and then laid it aside. As these men became quiet, the slaveholders ceased to talk about emancipation: and now behold your condition today! Angels sigh over it, and humanity has long since exhausted her tears in weeping on your account!

The patriotic Nathaniel Turner followed Denmark Veazie. He was goaded to desperation by wrong and injustice. By despotism, his name has been recorded on the list of infamy, and future generations will remember him amongst the noble and brave.

Next arose the immortal Joseph Cinque, the hero of the Amistad. He was a native African, and by the help of God he emancipated a whole ship-load of his fellow-men on the high seas. And he now sings of liberty on the sunny hills of Africa and beneath his native palm-trees, where he hears the lion roar and feels himself as free as that king of the forest.

Next arose Madison Washington, that bright star of freedom, and took his station in the constellation of true heroism. He was a slave on board the brig Creole, of Richmond, bound to New Orleans, that great slave mart, with a hundred and four others. Nineteen struck for liberty or death. But one life was taken, and the whole were emancipated, and the vessel was carried into Nassau, New Providence.

Noble men! Those who have fallen in freedom's conflict, their memories will be cherished by the true-hearted and the God-fearing in all future generations; those who are living, their names are surrounded by a halo of glory.

Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been - you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. Rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Remember that you are four millions!

It is in your powers so to torment the God-cursed slave-holders, that they will be glad to let you go free. If the scale was turned, and black men were the masters and white men the slaves, every destructive agent and element would be employed to lay the oppressor low. Danger and death would hang over their heads day and night. Yes, the tyrants would meet with plagues more terrible than those of Pharaoh. But you are a patient people. You act as though you were made for the special use of these devils. You act as though your daughters were born to pamper the lusts of your masters and overseers. And worse than all, you tamely submit while your lords tear your wives from your embraces and defile them before your eyes. In the name of God, we ask, are you men? Where is the blood of your fathers? Has it all run out of your veins? Awake, awake; millions of voices are calling you! Your dead fathers speak to you from their graves. Heaven, as with a voice of thunder, calls on you to arise from the dust.

Let your motto be resistance! resistance! resistance! No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance. What kind of resistance you had better make, you must decide by the circumstances that surround you, and according to the suggestion of expediency. Brethren, adieu! Trust in the living God. Labor for the peace of the human race, and remember that you are four millions.

## 20

NO PROGRESS WITHOUT STRUGGLE! (1857)

Let me give you a word of the philosophy of reforms. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions, yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it

never will. Find out just what people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. In the light of these ideas, Negroes will be hunted at the North, and held and flogged at the South, so long as they submit to those devilish outrages, and make no resistance, either moral or physical. Men may not get all they pay for in this world; but they must certainly pay for all they get. If we ever get free from all the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice, and, if needs be, by our lives, and the lives of others.

# 21

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SLAVERY: THE SLAVE REVOLTS (1939)

DENMARK VESEY (1822)

The conspiracy in and around Charleston, S.C., of 1822 was one of the most, if not the most, extensive in American history. It was led by a former slave, Denmark Vesey, who had purchased his freedom in 1800.

Vesey, like most of the other rebels, was deeply religious. In justifying his plans to his numerous followers he read to them "from the bible how the children of Israel were delivered out of Egypt from bondage." Anti-slavery speeches uttered in Congress during the Missouri debates of 1820-21 were also known to and encouraged the conspirators.

If Vesey's companion were to bow "to a white person he would rebuke him, and observe that all men were born equal, and that he was surprised that any one would degrade himself by such conduct; that he would never cringe to the whites, nor ought any who had the feeling of a man." He had not heeded the urgings of the slaveowners that free Negroes go to Africa, "because he had not the will, he wanted to stay and see what he could do for his fellow-creature," including his own children, who were slaves. (These quotations are from the official records of the trials and all emphases are as in the original.)



Most of the other Negroes felt as Vesey did. Two of the rebels told a slaveholders' court, "They never spoke to any person of color on the subject, or knew of any one who had been spoken to by the other leaders, who had withheld his assent." Nevertheless, the leaders feared betrayal, and it came. One of them, Peter Poyas, had warned an agent, "Take care and don't mention it to those waiting men who receive presents of old coats, etc., from their masters, or they'll betray us." The traitor was Devany, favorite slave of Colonel Priouleau.

Vesey had picked the second Sunday in July as the day to revolt. Sunday was selected because on that day it was customary for slaves to enter the city, and July because many whites would then be away. The betrayal led him to put the date ahead one month, but Vesey could not communicate this to his country confederates, some of whom were eighty miles outside the city. Peter Poyas and Mingo Harth, the two leaders first arrested, behaved "with so much composure and coolness" that "the wardens were completely deceived." Both were freed on May 31, but spies were put on their trails. Another slave, William, gave further testimony and more arrests were made. The most damaging of these was the arrest of Charles Drayton, who agreed to act as a spy. This led to complete exposure.

One hundred and thirty-one Negroes were arrested in Charleston, and forty-seven condemned. Twelve were pardoned and transported, but thirty-five were hanged. Twenty were banished and twenty-six acquitted although the owners were asked to transport eleven of these out of the state. Thirty-eight were discharged by the court. Four white men, American, Scottish, Spanish and German, were fined and imprisoned for aiding the Negroes by words of encouragement.

Although the leaders had kept lists of their comrades, only one list and part of another were found. Moreover, most of the executed slaves followed the advice of Poyas, "Die silent, as you shall see me do," and so it is difficult to say how many Negroes were involved. One witness said 6,600 outside of Charleston, and another said 9,000 altogether were implicated. The plan of revolt, comprising simultaneous attacks from five points and a sixth force on horseback to patrol the streets, further indicated a very considerable number of rebels.

The preparations had been thorough. By the middle of June the Negroes had made about two hundred and fifty pike heads and bayonets and over three

hundred daggers. They had noted every store containing arms and had given instructions to all slaves who tended or could easily get horses as to when and where to bring the animals. Even a barber had assisted by making wigs as a disguise for the slaves. Vesey had also written twice to St. Domingo, telling of his plans and asking for aid.

After the arrests of the leaders many of the slaves planned their rescue, and an attempt to revolt in the city was suppressed by state troops. It was felt necessary to bring in Federal troops during the time of executions.

There was trouble outside Charleston in July. Early that month three slaves were executed in Jacksonboro, forty miles west of the city. In August the Governor offered a reward of two hundred dollars for the arrest or killing of about twenty armed Negroes harassing the planters. In September a guarded report came of the discovery and crushing of a slave plot in Beaufort, S.C.; "The Town council was in secret session. Particulars had not transpired." They rarely did. Tighten restrictive laws, get rid of as many free Negroes as possible, keep the slaves ignorant, and your powder dry, hang the leaders, banish others, whip, crop, scourge scores, and above all keep it quiet, or, if you must talk, speak of the slaves' "contentedness" and "docility"!

The Norfolk Herald of May 12, 1823, under the heading "A Serious Subject," called attention to the activities, reaching revolt, of a growing number of pugnacious outlawed slaves in the southern part of Norfolk county, Virginia. The citizens of the region were in "a state of mind peculiarly harrassing and painful," for no one's life or property was secure. The Negroes had already obtained arms and had killed several slaveholders and overseers. Indeed, one slaveholder had received a note from these amazing men suggesting it would be healthier for him to remain indoors at night - and he did.

A large body of militia was ordered out to exterminate these outcasts and "thus relieve the neighbouring inhabitants from a state of perpetual anxiety and apprehension, than which nothing can be more painful." During the next few weeks there were occasional reports of the killing or capturing of outlaws, culminating June 25 in the capture of the leader, Bob Ferebee. It was declared that he had been an outlaw for six years. Bob Ferebee was executed on the twenty-fifth of July.

Early in September, 1826, seventy-five slaves - chained on a slave-ship

going down the Mississippi, with the boat one hundred miles south of Lexington, Kentucky - in some way broke their chains, killed four guards and another white passenger and managed to get into India. All the rebels "except one or two" were captured, five were hanged, some banished from the country and the rest sold south. The same year, twenty-nine slaves on board the domestic slave-ship, Decatur, revolted, killed the captain and mate, and commanded another white to take them to Haiti. The boat was captured and taken into New York, where in some way every one of the slaves escaped. One, however, William Bowser, was later captured and executed in New York City on December 15, 1826.

A lady in Georgia wrote, in June, 1827, that a "most dangerous and extensive insurrection of the blacks was detected at Macon a few days since." Three hundred slaves and one white man were involved, but no further particulars are known. Later that same month came the report of the destruction of a considerable group of slave outlaws in Alabama. These maroons had been exceedingly troublesome and were constantly gaining new recruits. They planned to build a fort just prior to their annihilation, and then "a great number of Negroes in the secret were to join them." In the attack, during which the Negroes "fought desperately" with what poor weapons they had, three slaves were killed, several escaped, and others were wounded and captured. One white was wounded.

The years 1829 and 1839 were filled with rebellious activities. Space permits but the barest mention of the outstanding events. Large-scale slave incendiarism was common, most notably in Augusta and Savannah, Georgia, in 1829, and in New Orleans and Cambridge, Maryland, in 1839. But, of course, the slaves did not restrict themselves to fire.

In February, 1829, slaves of several plantations forty miles north of New Orleans revolted. Militia suppressed the outbreak. At least two of the leaders were hanged. The Secretary of War wrote to the local commanding officer, Colonel Clinch, on March 17, 1829, to hold himself ready to aid the Governor of Louisiana, "on account of the insurrectionary spirit manifested by the black population in that state."

Probably in this same month a widespread conspiracy was uncovered in the neighborhood of Georgetown, South Carolina. The militia of the region was reinforced by troops and arms forwarded from Charleston. That the trouble

was serious becomes clear from a letter of April 17, sent by the Attorney-General of the state to the military commander, General Allston, on the scene. The official comments that while the proceedings were not yet "bloody" he feared the General would "hang half the country. You must take care and save negroes enough for the rice crop." The leaders of this plot, all slaves, were Charles Priouveau, Nat, Robert and Quico. Quico was banished. What became of the others is not known.

#### NAT TURNER (1831)

The terror prevalent in the South due to this rebellious activity was soon transformed into hysteria as the result of the actions of a slave named Nat Turner. He had been born October 2, 1800, and lived all his life in Southampton county, Virginia. When, in August, 1831, he led a rebellion, he was officially described as follows:

5 feet 6 or 8 inches high, weighs between 150 and 160 pounds, rather bright complexion, but not a mulatto, broad shoulders, large flat nose, large eyes, broad flat feet, rather knock-kneed, walks brisk and active, hair on the top of the head very thin, no beard, except on the upper lip and the top of the chin, a scar on one of his temples, also one on the back of his neck, a large knot on one of the bones of his right arm, near the wrist, produced by a blow.

Nat Turner was an intelligent and gifted man who could not reconcile himself to life as a slave. His religion offered him a rationalization for his rebellious feeling and, having taught himself how to read, he immersed himself in the stories of the Bible. His personality and keen mentality made him influential among his fellow-slaves and even with some neighboring poor whites.

In 1826 or 1827 he ran away, as his father had done successfully, and stayed away one month. Yet doubts overwhelmed him, and he felt that perhaps he "should return to the service of my earthly master." He did, but the other slaves "found fault, and murmured against me, saying that if they had my sense they would not serve any master in the world." In the spring of 1828 Turner, while working the fields, was finally convinced that he was to take up Christ's struggle for the liberation of the oppressed, "for the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first."

The solar eclipse of February 12, 1831, was his sign. This fact has led chauvinistic historians to ridicule the "negro intelligence" (whatever that

may mean) of Turner. The fact is that his (what would today be called) superstitious nature was common in his day among all people. Southerners still, generally, carried on agriculture according to the signs of the Zodiac. In 1833 under William Miller, a white citizen of New York, thousands of people were to be firmly convinced that the end of the world and the second coming of Christ were just around the corner. Indeed, that eclipse of 1831 itself led a white minister in New York City to prophesy that the whole city "South of Canal-Street would sink," and some folks actually moved to the upper part of the city.

Following the eclipse, Turner told four slaves it was time to prepare for rebellion. Significantly they selected July 4 as the day on which to strike for freedom. But Turner was ill on that day and he waited for another sign. This came on August 13 in the peculiar greenish blue color of the sun. A meeting was called for Sunday, August 21.

Turner arrived last and noticed a newcomer.

I saluted them on coming up, and asked Will how come he there, he answered, his life was worth no more than others, and his liberty as dear to him. I asked him if he meant to obtain it? He said he would, or lose his life. This was enough to put him in full confidence.

Such were the "bandits," as the slavocrats called them, that Nat Turner led.

In the evening of that Sunday this group of six slaves started on their crusade against slavery by killing Turner's master, Joseph Travis, together with his family. Within twenty-four hours some seventy Negroes, several mounted, had covered an area of twenty miles and had killed every human being (with an important exception) about sixty in all, that they came upon. The exception was a family of non-slaveholding poor whites who, as the Governor of Virginia sarcastically but truthfully declared, were hardly any better off than the rebels.

When within three miles of the Southampton county seat, Jerusalem (now called Courtland), there was, against Turner's advice, a fatal delay, and the Negroes - whose guns, according to the Richmond Compiler of August 29, were not "fit for use" - were overwhelmed by volunteer and state troops. Soon hundreds of soldiers, including cavalry and artillery units of the United States Army, swarmed over the county and, together with the inhabitants, slaughtered over one hundred slaves. Some, in the agony of death, "declared," to quote

an eyewitness, "that they was going happy for that God had a hand in what they had been doing." The killings and torturings ended when the commanding officer, General Eppes, threatened martial law.

Thirteen slaves and three free Negroes were immediately (and legally) hanged. According to Governor Floyd, "all died bravely indicating no reluctance to lose their lives in such a cause." Turner, himself, though he never left the county, was not captured until October 30. By November 5, after pleading not guilty, for, as he said, he did not feel guilty, he was sentenced to "be hung by the neck until you are dead! dead! dead!" on the eleventh of November. And on that day Nat Turner went calmly to his death.

The South was panic-stricken. Disaffected or rebellious slaves were, in the winter of 1831, arrested, tortured or executed in other counties of Virginia, in Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina (where at least three slaveholders died from fear!), Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The terror in the latter state was increased when it was discovered, according to Major-General Alexander Macomb, commanding officer of the United States Army, writing October 12, 1831, that "the coloured people in the (West Indian) Islands, and a correspondence with the Blacks of Louisiana, tending to further insurrectionary dispositions."

There is evidence, too, that the unrest extended to poor whites as well as Negroes, at least in Virginia and North Carolina. A letter to Governor Stokes of North Carolina, from Union county, dated September 12, 1831, declared that the slave rebels there were "assisted by some rascally whites." A militia colonel of Hyde county told the same Governor on September 25 that non-slaveholding whites were refusing to join in slave-suppression activity for they said "they have no slaves of their own and ought not to be interrupted about the slaves of others." Finally, a Baltimore newspaper of October 15, 1831, stated that so far as North Carolina was concerned the "extensive and organized plan to bring about desolation and massacre...was not altogether confined to slaves."

The Governor of Virginia, in his legislative message of December 6, 1831, darkly hinted that the unrest was "not confined to the slaves." Indeed, there exists a letter from a white man, Williamson Mann, to a slave, Ben Lee, dated Chesterfield county, August 29, 1831, which confirms this. The letter makes it clear that several whites, among whom a Methodist by the name of

Edmonds is especially mentioned, were plotting to aid the slaves. Mr. Mann hoped the anti-slavery efforts might succeed so that "we poor whites can get work as well as slaves."

## 22

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SLAVERY: ESCAPE AND ORGANIZED RESISTANCE (1859)

'You may do your mightiest, Colonel Franks. I'm not your slave, nor never was, and you know it! And but for my wife and her people.' I never would have staid with you till now. I was decoyed away when young, and then became entangled in such domestic relations as to induce me to remain with you; but now the tie is broken! I know that the odds are against me, but never mind!"

'Do you threaten me, sir! Hold your tongue, or I'll take your life instantly, you villain!'

'No sir, I don't threaten you, Colonel Franks, but I do say that I won't be treated like a dog. You sold my wife away from me, after always promising that she should be free. And more than that, you sold her because ---! and now you talk about whipping me. Shoot me, sell me, or do anything else you please, but don't lay your hands on me, as I will not suffer you to whip me!'

Running up to his chamber, Colonel Franks seized a revolver, when Mrs. Franks grasping hold of his arm exclaimed -

'Colonel! what does all this mean?'

'Mean, my dear? It's rebellion! a plot - this is but the shadow of a cloud that's fast gathering around us! I see it plainly, I see it!' responded the Colonel, starting for the stairs.

'Stop Colonel!' admonished his lady, 'I hope you'll not be rash. For Heaven's sake, do not stain your hands in blood!'

'I do not mean to, my dear! I take this for protection!' said Franks hastening down stairs, when Henry had gone into the back part of the premises.

'Dah now! dah now!' exclaimed mammy Judy as Henry entered the kitchen, 'see wat dis gwine back done foh yet! Bettah put yo' trus' in de Laud! Henry, yeh gone clean back t'de wuhl ghin, yeh knows it!'

'You're mistaken mammy, I do trust the Lord as much as ever, but I now understand him better than I use to, that's all. I don't intend to be made a

fool of any longer by false preaching.'

'Henry!' interrogated daddy Joe, who apprehending difficulties in the case, had managed to get back to the house, 'yeh gwine lose all yo' ligion! Wat yeh mean boy!'

'Religion!' replied Henry rebukingly, 'that's always the cry with black people. Tell me nothing about religion when the very man who hands you the bread at communion, has sold your daughter away from you!'

'Den yeh 'fen' God case man 'fen'yet! Take cah Henry, take cah! mine wat yet 'bout; God is lookin' at yeh, an' if yeh no' willin' trus' 'im, yeh need'n call on 'im in time o' trouble.'

'I don't intend, unless He does more for me then than he has done before. "Time of need!" If ever man needed his assistance, I'm sure I need it now.'

'Yeh, do'n know wat yeh need; de Laud knows bes.' On'y trus' in 'im, an' 'e bring yeh out mo' nah conkah. By de help o' God I's heah dis day, to gib yeh cumfut!'

'I have trusted in Him daddy Joe, all my life, as I told mammy Judy this morning, but -'

'Ah boy, yeh's gwine back! Dat on't do Henry, dat on't do!'

'Going back from what? my oppressor's religion! If I could only get rid of his inflictions as easily as I can his religion, I would be this day a free man, when you might then talk to me about "trusting."'

'Dis Henry, am one uh de ways ob de Laud; 'e fus 'flicks us an' den he bless us.'

'Then it's a way I don't like.'

'Mine how yeh talk, boy!'

"God moves in a myst'us way  
His wundahs to pehfaum," an-'

'He moves too slow for me daddy Joe; I'm tired waiting so -'

'Come Henry, I hab no sich talk like dat! yeh is gittin' rale weaked; yeh gwine let de debil take full 'session on yeh! Take cah boy, mine how yeh talk!'

'It is not wickedness, daddy Joe; you don't understand these things at all. If a thousand years with us is but a day with God, do you think that I am required to wait all that time?'

'Don't Henry, don't! de wud say "Stan' still an' see de salbation."'



'That's no talk for me daddy Joe, I've been "standing still" long enough; I'll "stand still" no longer.'

'Den yeh no call t' bey God wud? Take cah boy, take cah!'

'Yes I have, and I intend to obey it, but that part was intended for the Jews, a people long since dead. I'll obey that intended for me.'

'How yeh gwine bey it?'

'"Now is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation." So you see, daddy Joe, this is very different to standing still.'

'Ah boy, I's feahd yeh's losen yeh 'ligion!'

'I tell you once for all daddy Joe, that I'm not only "losing," but I have altogether lost my faith in the religion of my oppressors. As they are our religious teachers, my estimate of the thing they give, is no greater than it is for those who give it.'

With elbows upon his knees, and face resting in the palms of his hands, daddy Joe for some time sat with his eyes steadily fixed on the floor, while Alicey who for a part of the time had been an auditor to the conversation, went into the house about her domestic duties.

'Never mind Henry! I hope it will not always be so with you. You have been kind and faithful to me and the Colonel, and I'll do anything I can for you!' sympathetically said Mrs. Franks, who having been a concealed spectator of the interview between Henry and the old people, had just appeared before them.

Wiping away the emblems of grief which stole down his face, with a deep toned voice, upgushing from the recesses of a more than iron-pierced soul, he enquired -

'Madam, what can you do! Where is my wife?' To this, Mrs. Franks gave a deep sigh. 'Never mind, never mind!' continued he, 'yes, I will mind, and by -!'

'O! Henry, I hope you've not taken to swearing! I do hope you will not give over to wickedness! Our afflictions should only make our faith the stronger.'

'"Wickedness!" Let the righteous correct the wicked, and the Christian condemn the sinner!'

'That is uncharitable in you Henry! as you know I have always treated you kindly, and God forbid that I should consider myself any less than a Chris-

tian! And I claim as much at least for the Colonel, though like frail mortals he is liable to err at times.'

'Madam!' said he with suppressed emotion - starting back a pace of two - 'do you think there is anything either in or out of hell so wicked, as that which colonel Franks has done to my wife, and now about to do to me? For myself I care not - my wife!'

'Henry!' said Mrs. Franks, gently placing her hand upon his shoulder, there is yet a hope left for you, and you will be faithful enough I know, not to implicate any person; it is this: Mrs. Van Winter, a true friend of your race, is shortly going to Cuba on a visit, and I will arrange with her to purchase you through an agent on the day of your sale, and by that means you can get to Cuba, where probably you may be fortunate enough to get the master of your wife to become your purchaser.'...

\* \* \*

On leaving the plantation carrying them hanging upon his arm, thrown across his shoulders, and in his hands Henry had a bridle, halter, blanket, girt, and horse whip, the emblems of a faithful servant in discharge of his master's business.

By shrewdness and discretion such was his management as he passed along, that he could tell the name of each place and proprietor, long before he reached them. Being a scholar, he carefully kept a record of the plantations he had passed, that when accosted by a white, as an overseer or patrol, he invariably pretended to belong to a back estate, in search of his master's race horse. If crossing a field, he was taking a near cut; but if met in a wood, the animal was in the forest, as being a great leaper no fence could debar him, though the forest was fenced and posted. The blanket a substitute for a saddle, was in reality carried for a bed.

With speed unfaltering and spirits unflinching, his first great strive was to reach the Red River, to escape from his own state as quickly as possible. Proceeding on in the direction of the Red River country, he met with no obstruction, except in one instance, when he left his assailant quietly upon the earth. A few days after an inquest was held upon the body of a deceased overseer - verdict of the Jury, 'By hands unknown.'....

Reaching Alexandria with no obstruction, his first secret meeting was held in the hut of aunt Dilly. Here he found them all ready for an issue...

From Alexandria he passed rapidly on to Latuer's making no immediate stops, preferring to organize at the more prominent places...

In high spirits Henry left the plantation of Latuer, after sowing seeds from which in due season, he anticipated an abundant harvest. He found the old man Nathan all that could be desired, and equal to the task of propagating the scheme. His soul swelled with exultation on receiving the tidings, declaring that though nearly eighty years of age, he never felt before an implied meaning, in the promise of the Lord.

'Now Laud!' with uplifted hand exclaimed he at the conclusion of the interview; 'my eyes has seen, and meh yeahs heahn, an' now Laud! I's willin' to stan' still an' see dy salvation!'

On went Henry to Metoyers, visiting the places of four brothers, having taken those of the white planters intervening, all without detection or suspicion of being a stranger.

Stopping among the people of Col. Hopkins at Grantico summit, here as at Lateur's and all intermediate places he found the people patiently looking for a promised redemption. Here a pet female slave, Silva, espied him and gave the alarm that a strange black was lurking among the negro quarters, which compelled him to retirement sooner than intended.

Among the people of Dickson at Pine Bluff, he found the best of spirits. There was Newman, a young slave man born without arms, who was ready any moment for a strike.

'How could you fight?' said Henry; 'you have no arms!'

'I am compelled to pick with my toes a hundred pounds of cotton a day, and I can sit on a stool and touch off a cannon!' said this promising young man whose heart panted with an unsuppressed throb for liberty.

TAKING UP ARMS AGAINST SLAVERY: JOHN BROWN (1859)

# 23

Just as the War for Independence that freed America from English domination actually commenced with the death of the Negro, Crispus Attucks, in 1770, and the Boston Tea Party in 1773, so the Civil War that freed the slaves really began with John Brown's Raid.

At that point, however, there was yet no formal declaration of war

between the states. But the first shot had been fired, the first blood shed, and both whites and Negroes died on the banks of the Potomac for the sake of freedom.

Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth and many other brave black men and women had already escaped from slavery into the North, but many thousands still remained in bondage.

It occurred to old John Brown, who had already fought for freedom in Kansas, that armed revolt might be precipitated in one place and from there spread throughout the slave population of the South.

With this thought in mind, Brown gathered together a secret band of 21 faithful followers, Negro and white, and planned to seize by force the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry and then rally to his cause the slaves of Virginia and surrounding states.

In John Brown's party there were five Negroes. Dangerfield Newby, a freed slave, wanted to free his wife and seven children still held in bondage. Shields Green had learned of freedom from Frederick Douglass and left Douglass to join John Brown.

From their college classes at Oberlin had come young Lewis Sheridan Leary and John Armstrong Anderson. And Osborn Perry Anderson, a printer, had come from Pennsylvania. These men knew that they might never see their families again. And they did not tell their loved ones where they were going when they left home, or what they intended to do. But they were willing to die for freedom.

On the night of Sunday, Oct. 16, 1859, John Brown, his sons, and his little band of dedicated men successfully attacked and captured the arsenal full of arms at Harpers Ferry. But the massed might of the federal government was called out against them. At Washington President Buchanan ordered the marines and the cavalry into action.

Hundreds of troops under the leadership of no less a personage than Col. Robert E. Lee, moved into action against Brown's little band. Brown was of course defeated, taken prisoner, and hanged on the gallows, as were John Cope-land and Shields Green. Of the other men of color, Sheridan Leary and Dangerfield Newby were slain in the early fighting. But Osborn Anderson escaped, to fight again later in the Civil War. Brown's two sons were killed and he himself wounded.

But he lived to march erect up the steps of the gallows on which the government had sentenced him to die on Dec. 2, 1859, a little less than two years before the Civil War, which was to accomplish what Brown's objectives began.

John Brown's name is one of the great martyr names of all history and the men who fought with him rank high on the scrolls of freedom. Even today, the old Civil War song repeats, "John Brown's Body lies a-mouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on." When Brown was captured, he said, "You may dispose of me very easily...but this question is still to be settled - this Negro question, I mean - the end of that is not yet."

Ralph Waldo Emerson called him a "new saint who will make the gallows glorious like the cross." And when he died, the great Negro leader, Douglass, said of Brown, "To his own soul he was right, and neither 'principalities nor powers, life nor death, things present nor things to come,' could shake his dauntless spirit or move him from his ground."

This month marks one hundred years since John Brown struck his blow for freedom. On Oct. 15, 16, 17, and 18 the town of Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, is commemorating John Brown's Raid with a re-enactment of the storming of the arsenal, with a pageant, "The Prophet," and an exhibition including the photographs of the 21 men who followed Brown.

I hope that a great many Afro-Americans will attend this commemoration. Those of us who cannot attend will remember with reverence this white man, John Brown, who laid down his life that his brothers might be free.

JOHN BROWN: CHICAGO DEFENDER EDITORIAL (1959)

The centennial of John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Va., passed almost without notice. Except for a mild, silent observance of that momentous day in October 1859, by a few faithfuls, there would have been nothing to point to that landmark in American history.

Yet the raid and Brown's execution set off the power keg of emotion which rendered the moral dispute over the status of the Negro and the political conflict over states' rights insoluble by anything short of civil war.

The attack on the arsenal was the first step in Brown's plan to set up

a sovereign state in the mountains of Maryland and Virginia as a haven in which Negro slaves could find refuge.

The paradox of Brown's idealistic goals and his fearless methods are still being argued in college seminars a century later. Some would exonerate him on grounds of congenital insanity; others see him as a fanatic whose passions knew no bounds. Only a conspicuous few see him in the true perspective of history, as a martyr to a cause - human freedom.

History books are not replete with instances in which men have mounted the scaffold and placed their necks in the hangman's noose, forfeiting their lives for impersonal principles, for freedom, freedom of black men at that.

If Brown was belligerent, it was a belligerency motivated by his hatred of slavery. His deep convictions led him to work for Negro emancipation as part of his Christian duty. He was willing to free the slaves at the point of the gun. And he risked life and limb in a bold attempt to bring this resolve to pass.

This is the man whose sacrificial offering upon the altar of social justice and right earned him only a marginal place in the annals of his country. In short, history almost forgot him. Yet, John Brown's death so stirred the soul of America that a civil war was inescapable consequence. He had anticipated the course and verdict of history.

He was convinced that the slave owners would never willingly abolish an institution which was to their material benefit, and that it was necessary to fight force with force. And he was right. Now latter-day historians tell us that the Civil War was fought because many things went wrong, and that the whole conflict was a tragic mistake that could easily have been avoided if the men of the 1860's had the serene wisdom of the present-day generation.

This is quite possibly true; and yet the point does remain that the war somehow had its beginning in the simple fact that one race held another race in slavery, and beyond that there lies the fact that the owning race considered itself infinitely superior to the race that was owned. This was a rather expensive attitude, since it led to the loss of some 600,000 lives.

Even Abraham Lincoln's extraordinary judgment on Brown fell short of the mark when he said: "An enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people until he fancies himself commissioned by Heaven to liberate them. He ventures the attempt which ends in little else than his own execution."

But Lincoln was lacking in prevision, for he too, six years later, became one of the casualties of that conflict when he was felled by an assassin's bullet while watching the play, Our American Cousin, at the Ford Theater in Washington.

Brown's own words addressed to the court which was about to pronounce the death sentence upon him, are a touching vindication of his crusade against slavery. This is what he said:

"Had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great...it would have been all right. Every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment...I believe that to have interfered as I have done, in behalf of the despised Negro slaves, I did no wrong, but right.

"Now, if it deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle blood further with the blood of my children and with blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel and unjust enactments, I say, let it be done."

While John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave, his soul goes marching on. For he died to make men free.

# 24

## THE RESULT OF STRUGGLE: EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

January 1, 1863

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand-eight hundred and sixty two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. Johns, St. Charles, St. James[,] Ascension, Assumption, Terrbonne, Lafourche, St. Marry, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South-Carolina, North-Carolina, and Virginia, (except the fortyeight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth-City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk & Portsmouth [0]; and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so delared to be free to abstain



from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eight-seventh.

By the President:  
Abraham Lincoln

William H. Seward,  
Secretary of State\*

# 25

MEN OF COLOR, TO ARMS! (1863)

When first the rebel cannon shattered the walls of Sumter and drove away its starving garrison, I predicted that the war then and there inaugurated would not be fought out entirely by white men. Every month's experience during these dreary years has confirmed that opinion. A war undertaken and brazenly carried on for the perpetual enslavement of colored men, calls logically and loudly for colored men to help suppress it. Only a moderate share of sagacity was needed to see that the arm of the slave was the best defense against the arm of the slaveholder. Hence with every reverse to the national arms, with every exulting shout of victory raised by the slaveholding rebels, I have implored the imperiled nation to unchain against her foes, her powerful black hand. Slowly and reluctantly that appeal is beginning to be heeded. Stop not now to complain that it was not heeded sooner. It may or it may not have been best that it should not. This is not the time to discuss that question. Leave it to the future. When the war is over, the country is saved, peace is esta-

blished, and the black man's rights are secured, as they will be, history with an impartial hand will dispose of that and sundry other questions. Action! Action! not criticism is the plain duty of this hour. Words are not useful only as they stimulate to blows. The office of speech now is only to point out when, where, and how to strike to the best advantage. There is no time to delay. The tide is at its flood that leads on to fortune. From East to West, from North to South, the sky is written all over, "Now or never." Liberty won by white men would lose half its luster. "Who would be free themselves must strike the blow." "Better even die free, than to live slaves." This is the sentiment of every brace colored man amongst us. There are weak and cowardly men in all nations. We have them amongst us. They tell you this is the "white man's war"; that you will be no "better off after than before the war;" that the getting of you into the army is to "sacrifice you on the first opportunity." Believe them not; cowards themselves, they do not wish to have their cowardice shamed by your brave example. Leave them to their timidity, or to whatever motive may hold them back. I have not their timidity, or whatever motive may hold them back. I have not thought lightly of the words I am now addressing you. The counsel I give comes of close observation of the great struggle now in progress, and of the deep conviction that this is your hour and mine. In good earnest then, and after the best deliberation, I now for the first time during this war feel at liberty to call and counsel you to arms. By every consideration which binds you to your enslaved fellow-countrymen, and the peace and welfare of your country; by every aspiration which you cherish for the freedom and equality of yourselves and your children; by all the ties of blood and identity which make us one with the brave black men now fighting our battles in Louisiana and in South Carolina, I urge you to fly to arms, and smite with death the power that would bury the government and your liberty in the same hopeless grave. I wish I could tell you that the State of New York calls you to this high honor. For the moment her constituted authorities are silent on the subject. They will speak by and by, and doubtless on the right side; but we are not compelled to wait for her. We can get at the throat of treason and slavery through the State of Massachusetts. She was the first in the War of Independence; first to break the chains of her slaves; first to make the black man equal before the law; first to admit colored children to her common schools, and she was first to answer with her

blood the alarm cry of the nation, when its capital was menaced by rebels. You know her patriotic governor, and you know Charles Sumner. I need not add more.

Massachusetts now welcomes you to arms as soldiers. She has but a small colored population from which to recruit. She has full leave of the general government to send one regiment to the war, and she has undertaken to do it. Go quickly and help fill up the first colored regiment from the North. I am authorized to assure you that you will receive the same wages, the same rations, the same equipments, the same protection, the same treatment, and the same bounty, secured to the white soldiers. You will be led by able and skillful officers, men who will take special pride in your efficiency and success. They will be quick to accord to you all the honor you shall merit by your valor, and see that your rights and feelings are respected by other soldiers. I have assured myself on these points, and can speak with authority. More than twenty years of unswerving devotion to our common cause may give me some humble claim to be trusted at this momentous crisis. I will not argue. To do so implies hesitation and doubt, and you do not hesitate. You do not doubt. The day dawns; the morning star is bright upon the horizon! The iron gate of our prison stands half open. One gallant rush from the North will fling it wide open, while four millions of our brothers and sisters shall march out into liberty. The chance is now given you to end in a day the bondage of centuries, and to rise in one bound from social degradation to the plane of common equality with all other varieties of men. Remember Denmark Vesey of Charleston; remember Nathaniel Turner of Southampton; remember Shields Green and Copeland, who followed noble John Brown, and fell as glorious martyrs for the cause of the slave. Remember that in a contest with oppression, the Almighty has no attribute which can take sides with oppressors. The case is before you. This is our golden opportunity. Let us accept it, and forever wipe out the dark reproaches unsparingly hurled against us by our enemies. Let us win for ourselves the gratitude of our country, and the best blessings of our posterity through all time.

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# CHAPTER 5

THE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIENCE: THE EMERGENCE OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN NATION

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What was the dominant rural economic experience of Black people from the 1870s through the 1930s?
2. What were the characteristic social and cultural developments among rural Black people during this period?
3. What political and violent methods were used to control and repress Black people?
4. How did Black people fight back against their exploitation and oppression during the agricultural period?

## KEY CONCEPTS

Black Belt Nation

Black Codes

Disenfranchisement

Lynching

Migrations

Peonage

Populism

Segregation/Jim Crow

Sharecropping

Tenancy

The end of the slave period was followed by a period in which the experiences of Black people were similar to and different from what they had been. The Civil War and the reconstruction years were the years of transition in which great social, political and economic upheaval destroyed some aspects of slavery but allowed others aspects to continue (not entirely in form, but in essence). From 1870's to the 1930's the dominant experience of Black people in the USA was in the rural Black belt area of the South. In 1890, a quarter of a century after the end of the Civil War, four out of every five Black people still lived in rural areas of the United States. Ten years later in 1900, nine out of every ten were in the South. And between 1890 and 1910, three out of every five Black men worked in agriculture. This is the period in which Black people were moulded into a definite nationality, a people sharing social cultural, economic, and political experiences, as well as suffering under a brutal system of social control and repression. Of course the common experience of slavery laid the foundation for this, but it was in the rural period that the full expression of this national development and national oppression took place. However, it is necessary to emphasize that this development was stunted due to the fact that repression and social control was the major factor.

Our focus here is not on the chronological history of this period, but rather is to analyze the major aspects of the social content of this experience.

The most basic aspect of a people's experience is the way they produce and consume whatever is necessary in order to survive, or in other words, their economic life. In the rural experience Black people were "apparently" free but continued to be oppressed by an economic system that compelled them to work in virtual bondage. In theory, the tenant system was simply a contractual arrangement by which a landowner would exchange the use of land and perhaps tools, seed, and "furnishings" for either cash or a share of the profits and or produce (crops). At this level, such an economic arrangement appears to be a free exchange in which the economic partners have the freedom to enter an arrangement or to leave it. However, this is not a complete picture. Based on the legacy of slavery the economic partners were quite unequal, and rather than being partners this can be more correctly defined as the oppressor and the oppressed. The Black farmer/worker was illiterate, had a limited experience in making such contracts, and, because he owned very little, was dependent

upon the credit of the landowner for survival from crop to crop. Moreover, the economic basis for the negation of his freedom was indebtedness. The landowner was able to manipulate the farmer so that the initial credit extended to the farmer nearly always resulted in the farmer going into debt. The landowners manipulated the laws so that indebtedness became the basis for what turned out to be forced labor. This is called peonage.

The other side of this is that the rural experience did enable Black people to own some things, while in the slave period Black people were virtually propertyless. Moreover, while the rural farmer didn't own much, there was at least the possibility that he would be able to get out of debt, purchase a few pieces of farm equipment, a little land, a decent house, and even save some money. This shows that while the rural tenancy experience was in the main one of forced labor based on indebtedness (and in its most severe, form, peonage) there was also a "middle class" aspect to it that makes these people quite different from the wage worker in the industrial city (not a slave, not a worker).

Black tenants had two choices, to go into debt or to increase their property holdings. To the extent that the tenant sank into debt, the life of a tenant took on the character of a modern worker using land and tools owned by someone else to make a living. On the other hand, to the extent that the tenant was successful and was able to buy land, equipment and livestock life became more secure and independent. This type of self-employment is one of the traditional basis for the middle class in a capitalist society. Of course all of this was controlled by the repression of the southern culture of white supremacy and terror of the lynch mob. The general pattern was for the tenant to go into debt, but aspire to success, therefore while their objective conditions were approximating an agricultural working class their consciousness held out for a middle class type of life.

As will be more fully described later, the rural experience was the historical period in which the social and cultural organization of Black people was developed. This must be viewed in relationship to the economic character of the Black Belt, and to the forms and methods of social control and violent repression experienced by Black people. During the rural period the development of the Black church experience remained the major factor in the

overall development of the Black community. The church was the central social institution in which all forms of social life were organized and regulated. This included moral and social codes for family life, recreational behavior, and orientations towards the problems faced by Black people, and the solutions to those problems. This is both to the credit and discredit of the church, because while objectively it is what held Black social life together, it was most often held together for survival rather than forms of active resistance for positive social change (though this was true in some cases.). Hence, the church was simultaneously the social basis for leadership and "uncle tomism."

Under slavery the social control of Black people was total, and fully reinforced by all levels of law, from the federal government to the smallest country or town in the South. However, because the Civil War had resulted in the emancipation of the slaves, and new federal legislation had been passed giving Black people the right to vote, it was necessary to devise new tactics for the political disenfranchisement, and social repression of Black people. This led to the infamous devices like the grandfather clause, the poll tax, literacy exams, and the violent genocidal practice of lynching. Lynching was not only a specific method of murdering particular individuals, but also was the basis for developing a pervasive climate of terror and fear that became the cornerstone of the southern way of life. The logic was clear: Black people would be afraid of being lynched and therefore would observe the code of conduct informally prescribed by the dictates of white supremacy.

But as in all societies at all stages of history, where there is oppression there is resistance. Black people were not completely docile, and found many ways to resist and rebel. Throughout the Black Belt South individuals and families have resisted attacks, in some cases in courageous armed confrontation with lynch mobs. However, more significant than this is the pattern of collective resistance.

In the aftermath of the reconstruction, white farmers organized a Southern Alliance of Farmers. Since they needed Black support but refused to have open membership, white farm leadership helped organize the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union. This organization built a membership of over 1 million Black farmers. Its fate was set by the betrayal of white farm leadership. Later, a more revolutionary approach was undertaken by organizations



like the Southern Farm Tenant Union and the Sharecroppers Union most active in the 1930s and 1940s. These organizations built a membership of Black and white farmers, and were militant enough to even engage in armed struggle to protect its membership from the "southern justice" of sheriffs and lynch mobs.

In the end, however, the overall dynamic character of industrial capitalism significantly reduced the demand for agricultural labor and increased the demand for industrial labor. So particularly during World Wars I and II Black people left the South and headed North. This exodus is one of the major social disruptions of Black social life, in many ways equal to the Civil War and reconstruction.



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## WHAT IS A TENANT? (1935).

A farm tenant, in the widest meaning of the term, is any person who hires the farm which he operates, paying for the use of the land either by a share of the crop which he raises or by cash rental or both. Now the renting of land is not in itself a bad thing; it is customary in other parts of America and to a limited extent in Europe. It is a simple means of getting access to land by persons who have not capital enough to purchase farms. Normally it is regarded as a step on the road to independent ownership. The evil is not in renting land but in the traditions and practices which have grown up about it in the South.

Tenants may be divided into three main classes: (a) renters who hire land for a fixed rental to be paid either in cash or its equivalent in crop values; (b) share tenants, who furnish their own farm equipment and work animals and obtain use of land by agreeing to pay a fixed per cent of the cash crop which they raise; (c) share-croppers who have to have furnished to them not only the land but also farm tools and animals, fertilizer, and often even the food they consume, and who in return pay a larger per cent of the crop.

In considering cotton tenancy, the first group may be almost ignored. Those who have definite agreements with landlords as to exact rental prices are few in number and their status is so independent as to remove them from the system of subservient tenancy. The share tenants and share-croppers are the two great subdivisions of the dependent workers in the cotton belt. The difference between these two classes is simply one of degree. The share tenants, since they supply much of their own equipment, are able to rent the land on fairly good terms, usually on the basis of paying to the owner not more than one-fourth or one-third of the crop raised. The share-croppers, on the other hand, having almost nothing to offer but their labor, must pay as rent a higher share of the product, usually one-half of the crop. In addition, of course, both tenants and croppers must pay out of their share of the crop for all that is supplied to them in the way of seed, fertilizer, and food supplies. "Tenancy," as used in the present report and as commonly applied in the South, is a general term covering both the share tenants and the share-croppers, but not the renters. As a matter of fact, over one-third of all tenants in the South, and over half of the Negro tenants are croppers, that is, in the lowest

category of poverty and dependence.

The risk of the tenant increases, of course, in proportion to what he is able to contribute to the contract. There is almost no financial risk assumed by the share cropper who furnishes only his labor (and that of his family), who receives his equipment and supplies and even his food, from the owner. The share tenant, who supplies his own tools and work animals, assumes more risk, and in return expects a larger share of the earnings. The renter of course assumes much greater risk. In turn the landlord's potential profits increase as he assumes more and more of the risk. Therein lies a danger to the tenant. It is to the advantage of the owner to encourage the most dependent form of share cropping as a source of largest profits. And he wishes to hold in greatest dependence just those workers who are most efficient. A shiftless and inefficient cropper is of little value to the owner and is expelled, unless, in a serious labor shortage, absence of any worker is even more costly than the presence of an incompetent one. The industrious and thrifty tenant is sought by the landlord. The very qualities which might normally lead a tenant to attain the position of renter, and eventually of owner, are just the ones which make him a permanent asset as a cropper. Landlords, thus, are most concerned with maintaining the system that furnishes them labor and that keeps this labor under their control, that is, in the tenancy class. The means by which landowners do this are: first, the credit system; the second, the established social customs of the plantation order.

As a part of the age-old custom in the South, the landlord keeps the books and handles the sale of all the crops. The owner returns to the cropper only what is left over of his share of the profits after deductions for all items which the landlord has advanced to him during the year: seed, fertilizer, working equipment, and food supplies, plus interest on all this indebtedness, plus a theoretical "cost of supervision." The landlord often supplies the food - "pantry supplies" or "furnish" - and other current necessities through his own store or commissary. Fancy prices at the commissary, exorbitant interest, and careless or manipulated accounts, make it easy for the owner to keep his tenants constantly in debt.

The plight of the tenant at annual settlement time is so common that a whole folklore about it has grown up in the South.

A tenant offering five bales of cotton was told, after some owl-eyed figuring, that this cotton exactly balanced his debt. Delighted at the prospect of a profit this year, the tenant reported that he had one more bale which he hadn't yet brought in. "Shucks," shouted the boss, "why didn't you tell me before? Now I'll have to figure the account all over again to make it come out even."

Of course every story of this kind, and such stories are innumerable, can be matched by tales of unreliability and shiftlessness on the part of the tenant. The case against the system cannot be rested on any personal indictment of landlords any more than it can be vindicated by stories of the improvidence of tenants. The fact is that landlords generally act as they find it necessary to act under the system; tenants do likewise. The development of bad economic and social habits of whatever kind on the part of both landlords and tenants is direct evidence of a faulty system.

Even more than the credit system, the traditions of the region hold the tenant in thrall. The plantation system developed during slavery. It continues on the old master and slave pattern. For many years, even after Emancipation, black tenants were the rule in the cotton fields and the determination to "keep the Negro in his place" was, if anything, stronger after the Civil War than before. Although white families now form the great majority of the cotton tenants, the old "boss and black" attitude still pervades the whole system. Because of his economic condition, and because of his race, color, and previous condition of servitude, the rural Negro is helpless before the white master. Every kind of exploitation and abuse is permitted because of the old caste prejudice. The poor white connives in this abuse of the Negro; in fact, he is the most violent protagonist of it. This fixed custom of exploitation of the Negro has carried over to the white tenant and cropper. Yet it has been impossible to bring about any change, even to get the poor white workers to take a stand, since any movement for reform is immediately confused with the race issue. Because of their insistence upon the degrading of three million Negro tenants, five and a half million white workers continue to keep themselves in virtual peonage.

## TYPES OF TENANCY

Share Cropping for  
Half and HalfShare Renting For  
Third and FourthCash of Standing  
Renting

## LANDLORD FURNISHES:

Land  
House  
Fuel  
Tools  
Work Stock  
Feed for Stock  
Seed  
One half of FertilizerLand  
House  
Fuel  
One fourth or one  
third of FertilizersLand  
House  
Fuel

## TENANT FURNISHES:

Labor  
One Half of FertilizerLabor  
Work Stock  
Food for Stock  
Tools  
Seed  
Three fourths or two  
thirds of FertilizerLabor  
Work Stock  
Food for Stock  
Tools  
Seed  
Fertilizers

## LANDLORD GETS:

One half of crop

One fourth or one  
third of cropFixed amount in cash  
or cotton

## TENANT GETS:

One half of crop

Three fourths or two  
thirds of cropEntire crop less fixed  
amount

## WHAT IS PEONAGE? (1930)

Tenancy, too, manifested in its most undesirable form, gives rise to a concomitant evil generally referred to as peonage. As pointed out above the most difficult problem of the tenant area is to keep the tenants on the land. The migration of shiftless tenants from one plantation to another is the problem of the problems. Unless the tenants can be kept on the land and can be made to take some interest in its upkeep the system of agriculture based on tenancy must fail. To solve this problem the landlords of some of these plantations have resorted to force upheld by the law. This, however, was not a new idea. Immediately after the emancipation of the Negroes in 1865 the

devastated States hoped to secure labor by vagrancy laws which compelled every freedman to enter the service of some one and to remain therein for such wages as the ruling classes agreed among themselves to pay. Those freedmen who continued to loiter thereafter were arrested, condemned, and put to work on the public highways or leased to planters.

Inasmuch as this was a return to actual slavery the Federal Government interfered and reconstructed these States on the basis of free manhood suffrage which prevented the return of involuntary servitude. Upon the withdrawal of the United States troops from that area in 1876, however, the Negroes were disfranchised and eliminated from the political sphere and the return to the overlordship of the planters was made easier. Although the Thirteenth Amendment and other legislation in 1867 made peonage illegal and unconstitutional, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina enacted a generation later evasive laws which provided for involuntary servitude for debt, and the courts of these States upheld such legislation.

This, of course, was not legalizing slavery as such, but from Mexico the planters had learned how to hedge around the letter of the Constitution and laws of the United States by measures which compelled the employee to remain in the service of his employer. This was peonage. It was a form of involuntary servitude which prevailed extensively in Ucatan and especially in the Vallé Nacional where cheap labor was required in the cultivation of tobacco. The beginning of peonage in Mexico, however, has been traced as far back as the conquest by the Spaniards. Early in the history of that country the conquerors worked out a scheme by which the poor, especially the Indians, could be forced to do the work of the planters and mine operators; but it later became restricted in its meaning to those laborers who were compelled to serve their creditors to pay debts which by agreement they had pledged themselves to discharge in labor. The States referred to above, following this example, actually adopted this very system and enforced it in their rural courts. These laws penalized the failure to comply with contracts for employment, the enticement of laborers from their employers, the violation of a contract with a surety who had paid the fine of a misdemeanor, infractions of acts of vagrancy, and the operations of emigrant agents.

Peonage developed as a most natural consequence of things in the agricultural South. The large planters constitute a borrowing class. It is

customary for financial institutions to advance for a year sufficient money to cover the expenses of the landlord and his tenants, the amount being determined on the basis of one tenant for each twenty acres. The landlord, then, must hold his tenants by fair or foul means. If they desert him he is bankrupt. Authority, therefore, must be maintained with overseers using whips and guns to strike terror to the tenants who are kept down in the most debased condition. Negro women are prostituted to the white "owners" and drivers; and children are permitted to grow up in ignorance with no preparation for anything but licentiousness and crime.

The best example of peonage was furnished by the case of Bailey vs. the State of Alabama, in which the State law was declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court in 1911. This law provided that any person who made a contract in writing to perform a service for another and thereby obtained money or other personal property from such person with attempt to defraud the person, and who left his services without performing that service or refunding the money or property should be guilty of a misdemeanor. The law further provided that any person who made a contract in writing for the rent of land and obtained money or personal property from the landlord with the intention of deceiving him and left without performing such service, refunding the money, or paying for the property, should also be guilty of a misdemeanor. The penalty for the offense was a fine not exceeding \$300 and, in default of payment, imprisonment for a period of not more than twelve months. To make this law further effective it was amended so as to make the failure of any person who entered such a contract to perform the service or to cultivate the land or refund the money or restore the goods, prima facie evidence of the intent to injure his landlord or to defraud him. In the decision delivered by the Alabama Supreme Court, the accused persons should not be allowed to testify as to his intent or purpose or "to rebut a statutory presumption." Inasmuch as employers thereafter made such contracts with their laborers, when only the employer and the employee were present, it became an easy matter to enforce compliance with such contracts through minor rural courts.

"The general way of securing victims," said one investigator, "is for the employer or his agent to proceed to some town or city and to hire a lot of laborers, agreeing to pay them certain wages and their railroad fare to the place of labor, and to advance them provisions from the company store, or as it is commonly called the 'commissary.' The laborers arrive and at the outset



are indebted to the employer, who sees that they trade out their wages at the commissary, and in many instances, by a system of deductions and false entries, manages to keep the laborer perpetually in debt. If the laborer has a family, so much the better for the employer; they must live out of the commissary and if the laborer runs away his family are detained at the camp. To enforce the payment of such debts young children have been withheld from their parents. If the victim escapes the law is invoked. He is arrested under false pretenses, cheating, swindling, and false promises. There is usually no actual trial. The arresting officer in collusion with the planter induces the victim to return to work rather than go to jail," and "so he returns to bondage with a heavier load of debt to carry, for the cost of pursuit and arrest is charged to him. Often no process is issued for arrest, but the employer arrests without process, returns the prisoner to his labor camp and inflicts severe chastisement. Many of the labor contracts contain provisions to the effect that the laborer consents to allow himself to be locked in a stockade at night and at any other time when the employer sees fit to do thus." A case of South Carolina is cited in evidence to show that the contract provided not only for locking up in the stockade but for such punishment as the employer saw fit to inflict.

Peonage, then, was defined thus by a judge: "It is where a man in consideration of an advance or debt or contract, says, 'Here, take me, I will give you dominion over my person and liberty, and you can work me against my will hereafter, and force me by imprisonment, or threats of duress to work for you until that debt or obligation is paid.'" Experience has shown, too, that the judge might have added, "Until I, the planter, shall say that the debt has been paid."

The planter keeps the books and no Negro would dare dispute his word as to the record; and even if he did the minor rural court in collusion with the planter would give injustice rather than justice should he make such an appeal for his liberty. At the end of the time the employer is usually smart enough to have the employee sign some other contract by which his labor will be bartered away for another year. In case of a fine it is much easier to discover some other charge which the local justice of the peace or constable would consider justifiable for keeping the peon in his employ for additional time.

Peonage in its worst form, then, developed in the chain gang. The unusual prosperity of the country and, of course, of the South, necessitated a large labor force. To supply this need it became customary to fall back on convict labor. The first step in such peonage was the "benevolent" practice of the white men who would volunteer to pay the fines of Negroes convicted of minor crimes, and thus get them out of jail. The next step was to assure, by physical restraint, the working out of the debts thus incurred. Finally came the cooperation of justices, constables, and other officials in providing a supply of this forced labor by "law."

"Some of the whites," said an investigator, "had not outgrown the idea that in some way they were entitled to the labor of the Negro, and were justified in getting it at as small an outlay as possible. Planters even agreed to take the entire output of criminals from some minor rural courts." This number, of course, could be increased at will, for Negroes were arrested on such trivial offenses as "swearing before females, shooting across a public road, carrying razors, stealing a ride on the train, loitering in a depot, letting a master's mule bite some other man's corn, and the like." Then came the question of going to jail or working out the fine, which some interested white man stood ready to pay if the convicted person would only "touch the pen to a contract that was practically a consent to slavery."

Nowhere in the country, however, has peonage been accepted by a majority of the people except probably in the Mississippi and Red River lowlands, in middle and South Georgia, in Alabama, and in the backward parts of South Carolina, like Bamberg County. Laws which permitted it were enacted by a coterie representing the interests rather than the people. It obtained only where the rich planters thus interested could control both the political and economic forces of the community. There were counties in which most of the planters practiced peonage in some fashion, but there were not whole States where the majority of the people were thus depraved. In the course of time, too, when thinking people became thoroughly aware of the consequences of the evil they set their faces against it, and during the last generation have done much to exterminate the institution.

Peonage, however, is far from being a thing of the past. Although these laws authorizing peonage have been declared unconstitutional the Federal

Government is powerless in the South in the protection of the Negroes in the enjoyment of citizenship. The planters, moreover, are a law unto themselves. The planters enforcing peonage have gone down to such a low point in the social ladder that they do not think seriously of public opinion as a restraining force. If a man of influence in the cotton or sugar section wants to violate a law, he can usually find some way to do it. The main instrument depended upon to effect the desired reform has been education, an effort to teach men humanity and to convince them of the futility of forced labor. Such a method of attack requires time, for the persons thus engaged in the uneconomic practice will be the last to see the errors of their ways and to act in the interests of the public good rather than for selfish purposes.

# 28

## BLACK CODE OF LOUISIANA, 1876

### 1. AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR AND REGULATE LABOR CONTRACTS FOR AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana in general assembly convened, That all persons employed as laborers in agricultural pursuits shall be required, during the first ten days of the month of January of each year, to make contracts for labor for the then ensuing year, or for the year next ensuing the termination of their present contracts. All contracts for labor for agricultural purposes shall be made in writing, signed by the employer, and shall be made in the presence of a Justice of the Peace and two disinterested witnesses, in whose presence the contract shall be read to the laborer, and when assented to and signed by the latter, shall be considered as binding for the time prescribed...

Section 2. Every laborer shall have full and perfect liberty to choose his employer, but, when once chosen, he shall not be allowed to leave his place of employment until the fulfillment of his contract...and if they do so leave, without cause or permission, they shall forfeit all wages earned to the time of abandonment...

Section 9. Be it further enacted, &c., That, when in health, the laborer shall work ten hours during the day in summer, and nine hours during the day in winter, unless otherwise stipulated in the labor contract; he shall obey all

proper orders of his employer or his agent; take proper care of his work-mules, horses, oxen, stock; also of all agricultural implements; and employers shall have the right to make a reasonable deduction from the laborer's wages for injuries done to animals or agricultural implements committed to his care, or for bad or negligent work. Bad work shall not be allowed. Failing to obey reasonable orders, neglect of duty, and leaving home without permission will be deemed disobedience; impudence, swearing, or indecent language to or in the presence of the employer, his family, or agent, or quarreling and fighting with one another, shall be deemed disobedience. For any disobedience a fine of one dollar shall be imposed on and paid by the offender. For all lost time from work-hours, unless in case of sickness, the laborer shall be fined twenty-five cents per hours. For all absence from home without leave he will be fined at the rate of two dollars per day. Laborers will not be required to labor on the Sabbath unless by special contract. For all thefts of the laborer from the employer of agricultural products, hogs, sheep, poultry, or any other property of the employer, or willful destruction of property or injury, the laborer shall pay the employer double the amount of the value of the property stolen, destroyed, or injured, one-half to be paid to the employer and the other half to be placed in the general fund provided for in this section. No live stock shall be allowed to laborers without the permission of the employer. Laborers shall not receive visitors during work-hours. All difficulties arising between the employers and laborers, under this section, shall be settled by the former; if not satisfactory to the laborers, an appeal may be had to the nearest Justice of the Peace and two freeholders, citizens, one of said citizens to be selected by the employer and the other by the laborer; and all fines imposed and collected under this section shall be deducted from wages due, and shall be placed in a common fund, to be divided among the other laborers on the plantation, except as provided for above...

AGRICULTURE AND TENANCY IN ALABAMA: A CASE STUDY 1865-1900

**29**

The Freedmen's Bureau had first attempted to substitute a system of paid labor with wages paid weekly or monthly, for the slave system. This effort was foredoomed to failure. The planters had little capital, and were unable

to obtain more. With the approval of the officials of the Bureau, cotton culture fell into the only system of financing agricultural production through free labor which was left to it; the system of share-cropping, by which the laborer agreed with the owner to work a crop through the course of the year, the hire of the laborer to be paid from the anticipated returns on the crop when sold.

Since the available labor on the old plantations was totally without resources of any sort, the planter, in order to insure himself of a supply of labor throughout the year, was obliged to make "advances of such necessary farming utensils and necessities for food and clothing" as the laborer and his family might require until the crop was harvested and sold. The planter had no more capital than the laborer; as the "cropper" could furnish only his labor, the employer had only the land upon which the "cropper" might work. To obtain the necessary capital with which to "furnish" the laborer, the employer had only the land upon which the "cropper" might work. To obtain the necessary capital with which to "furnish" the laborer, the employer had to have recourse to a third person, the merchant, who advanced to the planter the supplies needed for the tenants on a plantation.

Somers reported that the share-cropping system was fully developed by 1871, and at the early date he called it a "miserable" system. The fault, he believed, lay with "the sheer excess of privilege and license" accorded to the croppers. But Somers talked principally to the planters in obtaining his information. By 1875 even an apologist for the system was conscious of the role of the merchant. "The planter usually, and I may say nine times out of ten, does not get a dime. The merchant has got him in debt, and applied [sic] the proceeds; and if there is any over - if the negroes are entitled to any - they get it."

The share-cropping system thus took on the characteristic form of pure exploitation which it has borne ever since.

The system in its incipiency had nothing in its intent discommendable, but it afterward grew into the strongest engine of power, political and civil, as turned against the colored laborer and the poor white. The profit to be derived from such an occupation, in which total ignorance had to compete with panoplied intelligence, soon caused numerous small merchants to set up small stores on every plantation cultivated. In most instances the merchant was also landlord, and in this combination commenced a system of usury, unrivalled by the Jews of Lombardy of ancient times. The poor, ignorant, colored and white man, renting small farms and relying on the merchant for advances to

make his crop, were and still are compelled to pay the exorbitant interest, frequently of fifty per cent and not unusually of seventy or ninety percent. A coat which cost the merchant one dollar, was frequently sold for two; a pound of meat that cost six cents was sold for twelve; a hat which cost fifty cents was sold for \$1.50; so likewise with shoes and other things...I have seen colored men whom (sic) having a large crop, and at the end of said year, after paying such debts to the merchants as were incurred in making said crop, not have enough money to buy a suit of clothing for anyone of the family. I have also seen the taking of all of the crop by the merchant, and also, the horse or mule and other chattels which were given as collateral security for the debt in making a crop in one year.

This exploitative system did not end with the local merchant. Holland Thompson says that "in spite of the apparently exorbitant percentage of profit, few country merchants became rich." The hazards of this precarious hierarchy of credit resulted in a banking system that charged much higher interest rates than elsewhere in America; and the banking system in turn was bound to Eastern capital by bonds as onerous as those which shackled the tenant to the planter.

To bulwark this unsound system it became necessary to have control over legislation in the State, and over the political power locally. To this end the planters and the merchants worked in the General Assembly for a system of laws by which labor could be controlled. The device which found greatest favor in Alabama was a system of crop mortgages and liens protected by law which could be enforced by the planter and merchant in courts controlled by them. These oppressive laws fomented discontent on the part of the heavily burdened Negro and white masses.

The reorganization of agriculture in Alabama after the Civil War, then, had these immediate results: (1) The development of the system of share-cropping as the basis for cotton production in the Black Belt demanded exploitation of the labor force and effective measures for its control. (2) The effects of the destruction of the old system were felt in the growing decadence of the planting class and the rise of a class of merchants to take its place. (3) The decline of the Black Belt as the center of cotton production shifted cotton culture to the uplands and brought the yeoman white farmers to the front. (4) As a result of these economic and social changes the yeoman farmers assumed an importance in the economic system which was speedily transferred to activity in political fields.

1900-1930

In 1900, 89.1 per cent of all Negroes in the State of Alabama were reported as living in rural communities. In 1930 this percentage had dropped to 71.6. The profound social change suggested by this fact has roots in forces intimately connected with the fate of the agricultural occupations in which these rural inhabitants found a livelihood. Agriculture in Alabama in 1900 meant principally the production of cotton. From 1900 to 1915 the percentage of all farm land devoted to the production of the staple in Alabama ranged from 35 to 45 per cent. In this period the great cotton producing counties of Alabama were those located in the Black Belt and in the Tennessee Valley areas, where Negroes formed an overwhelming proportion of the population.

Of paramount importance in the period was the appearance in Alabama in 1912 of the boll weevil. The weevil struck Alabama like a plague, particularly in the area of concentration of Negro farm operators, the Black Belt. Between 1912 and 1914 cotton acreage in the State was reduced from 3,770,000 to 1,970,000. The yield per acre in Alabama was cut 31 per cent as a result of the first weevil infestation.

The catastrophe was aggravated because the first onslaught of the weevil coincided with a period of low prices in cotton. For a long period the Southeastern cotton area had been on the verge of complete financial prostration. The Southwestern cotton area, first infested, was the first also to recover from the ravages of the pest; and with the destruction of the Southeastern area as a competitor came the opportunity for the expansion of the cotton area in the Southwestern states of Oklahoma and Texas.

The Southeastern area eventually recovered from the effect of the boll weevil, or developed methods of control; but from the effects of the first invasion there could be no recovery. The effects of the weevil in Alabama may be noted in (a) a shift in cotton production within subregions of the State, with the Black Belt suffering losses once more to the hill areas, apparently less susceptible to the ravages of the weevil; (b) continued financial decay of the Black Belt, and consequent decline of its political and social influence in the State; and (c) a transfer of population within subregions of the State, and between states, as the devastated areas suddenly found themselves with greatly reduced acreage and a surplus labor force.

Coupled with this domestic force in weakening the foundations of the agricultural system in Alabama and the Southeast generally, was the slow development of cotton culture in foreign countries to the point where they began to compete for the world cotton market. This factor has been more notable in the period since 1920, and its final effects cannot as yet be gauged. By 1926 foreign and Southwestern competition had made cotton culture in the Southeast a precarious enterprise affecting the lives of the millions of blacks and whites living in the area. In 1923 L.E. Long and others estimated that the cost of producing a pound of cotton in two typical Alabama counties, Madison and Chilton, was, respectively, 32 cents and 25 cents, compared to net costs of 17 cents, 13 cents, and 10 cents in three Texas counties. Differentials for cotton raised in foreign countries are probably even more decisive in favor of the latter. The net effect of such a situation is to require, for continued cotton culture, perpetuation of the thoroughly disorganized, exploitative system so far in vogue in the Southeast and in Alabama.

The effect of these forces has been to perpetuate and strengthen the grip of farm tenantry upon the Southeast. Since 1880 the number of Alabama farms operated by tenants has shown an increase at each decennial census with the exception of the period from 1910 to 1920. By 1930, 64.7 per cent of all Alabama farms were operated by tenants, as compared to 46.8 in 1880. The percentage of acreage farmed by tenants has increased from 34.2 percent of the total in 1910 to 44.5 per cent in 1930.

This general increase in tenantry has characterized both black and white in the Southeast, a fact that but recently has excited comment in the face of a general opinion that tenantry was particularly a Negro problem. In 1925, 51.1 per cent of all tenant-operated farms in Alabama were operated by white tenants, as compared to 48.9 per cent by Negro tenants. By areas the percentage of Negro tenant-operated farms ran consistently higher than that for white persons, ranging from the Black Belt where 91.9 per cent of all tenants were Negroes, to the Sand Mountain area where only 1.9 per cent of the tenants were Negroes. Paradoxically enough, the areas of highest percentage of Negro tenant-operated farms are also those highest for Negro owner-operated farms. Negroes owned 48.2 per cent of owner-operated farms in the Black Belt in 1925. The average holdings of Negro owners, however, were small, and far below the value of the holdings of white owners.



In the period to 1910 a remarkable increase in Negro land ownership was noticeable throughout the South. This fact furnished a text for Booker T. Washington's most fervent claims regarding Negro progress. Between 1900 and 1910 the land in farms owned by Negroes in Alabama increased from 1,216,813 to 1,466,719 acres. The areas of acquisition by Negroes, however, were principally in what are today classified as "submarginal" areas, either on the fringes of fertile population areas, or in the "pineywoods" section where much government land was acquired, through homestead entry, by Negroes. With depression in agricultural prices these small owners on unfruitful land speedily succumbed to the general decadence of the Southeast as a center for cotton culture. The percentage of Negro-operated farms owned by Negroes was 15.4 percent in 1910, 18.1 per cent in 1920, and 17.0 per cent, a decrease, in 1930.

Between 1920 and 1930 Negro farm owners in Alabama decreased 7.4 per cent; the land in their farms showed a decrease of 10.8 per cent; and the value of farms reported as owned by Negroes decreased 14.0 percent.

This gloomy picture where Negroes are concerned is intensified when one realizes that Negroes were a part of an agricultural system that showed the same general trends for white persons. No peculiar racial misfortune overcame them; it was the common lot of an entire region, and such institutions as Negroes possessed were subject to economic instability to the degree that the entire area was affected.

The general decadence of rural life, as a result of an almost continual state of depression, has already been described. It was not possible in the period after 1900 for the tenant farmer to advance beyond the status fixed by the system prior to that time. This condition of institutional status in tenant communities in Macon County, Alabama, in 1930, has been summarized by Charles S. Johnson as follows:

The community studied reflects a static economics not unlike the Mexican hacienda, or the condition of the Polish peasant - a situation in which the members of the group are "muffled with a vast apathy." It is unquestionably the economic system in which they live, quite as much or even more than the landlords, that is responsible for their plight.

...The social results of the economic system in this area, past and present, have been positive and unmistakable. The traditions, supported by what remains of the plantation structure, has given a measure of equilibrium to the social relations existing

within the structure. From the nature of the external conditions determining the early social organization of this group it has taken form, naturally, outside the dominant current of the American culture...The situation is one clearly of isolation and cultural lag.

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FARMS OF NEGRO OPERATORS BY TENURE - NUMBER, ACREAGE, AND SPECIFIED VALUES,  
FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1900 to 1940

(Data for 1940 and 1930 relate to April 1; for 1920 to January 1; for 1910 to April 15; and for earlier years to June 1)

	<u>1940</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1920</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1900</u>
	NUMBER OF FARMS				
Total	681,790	882,850	925,708	893,370	746,715
Owners	174,010	181,016	218,612	218,972	NA
Managers	413	923	2,026	1,434	NA
Tenants	507,367	700,911	705,070	672,964	NA

LAND IN FARMS (ACRES)

Total	30,785,095	37,597,132	41,432,182	NA	38,223,920
Owners	10,314,283	11,198,893	NA	NA	NA
Managers	153,601	249,072	NA	NA	NA
Tenants	20,317,211	26,149,167	NA	NA	NA

VALUE OF LAND AND BUILDINGS (DOLLARS)

Total	836,067,623	1,402,945,799	2,257,645,325	NA	396,145,262
Owners	251,328,726	334,451,396	NA	NA	NA
Managers	8,208,132	14,844,767	NA	NA	NA
Tenants	576,530,765	1,053,649,636	NA	NA	NA

VALUE OF BUILDINGS (DOLLARS)

Total	224,388,138	340,409,360	NA	NA	71,902,265
Owners	81,129,400	105,741,696	NA	NA	NA
Managers	1,998,971	4,023,544	NA	NA	NA
Tenants	141,259,767	230,644,120	NA	NA	NA

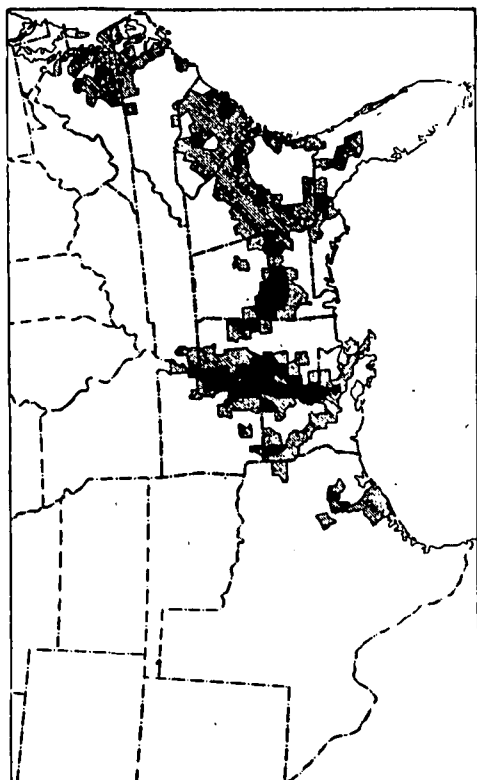
VALUES OF IMPLEMENTS AND MACHINERY (DOLLARS)

Total	40,193,537	60,327,856	NA	NA	18,859,757
Owners	15,671,208	19,784,411	NA	NA	NA
Managers	539,663	623,050	NA	NA	NA
Tenants	23,982,666	39,920,395	NA	NA	NA

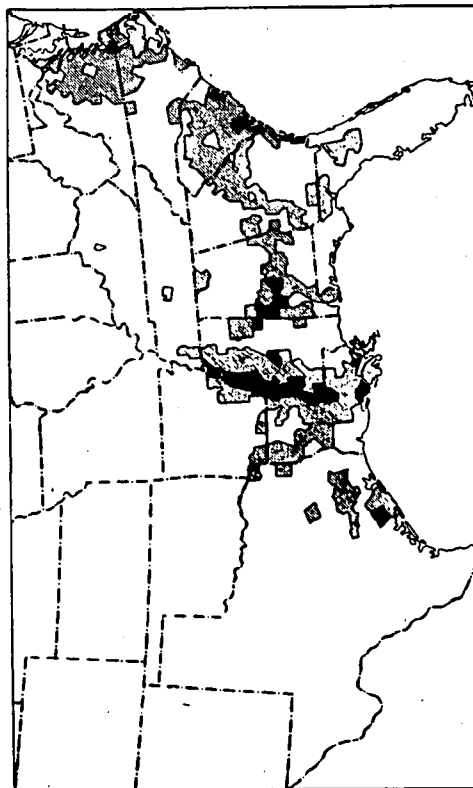
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LEAST 50 PER CENT OF THEIR POPULATION NEGRO.

1900



1880

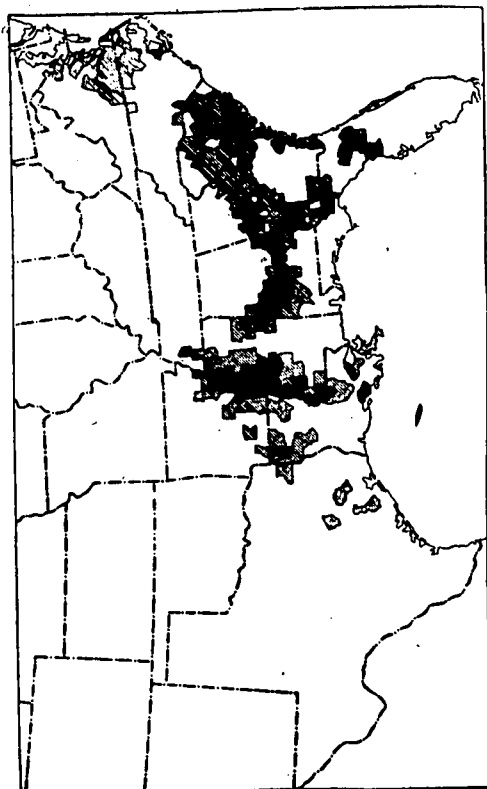


50 TO 75 PER CENT 75 PER CENT AND OVER

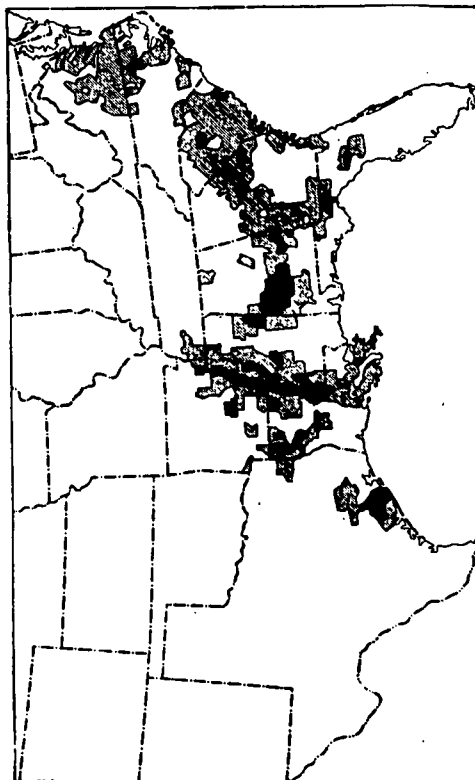
(Maps 5 and 6, Bulletin 129, U. S. Bureau of the Census.)

COUNTIES IN THE SOUTHERN STATES HAVING AT

1910

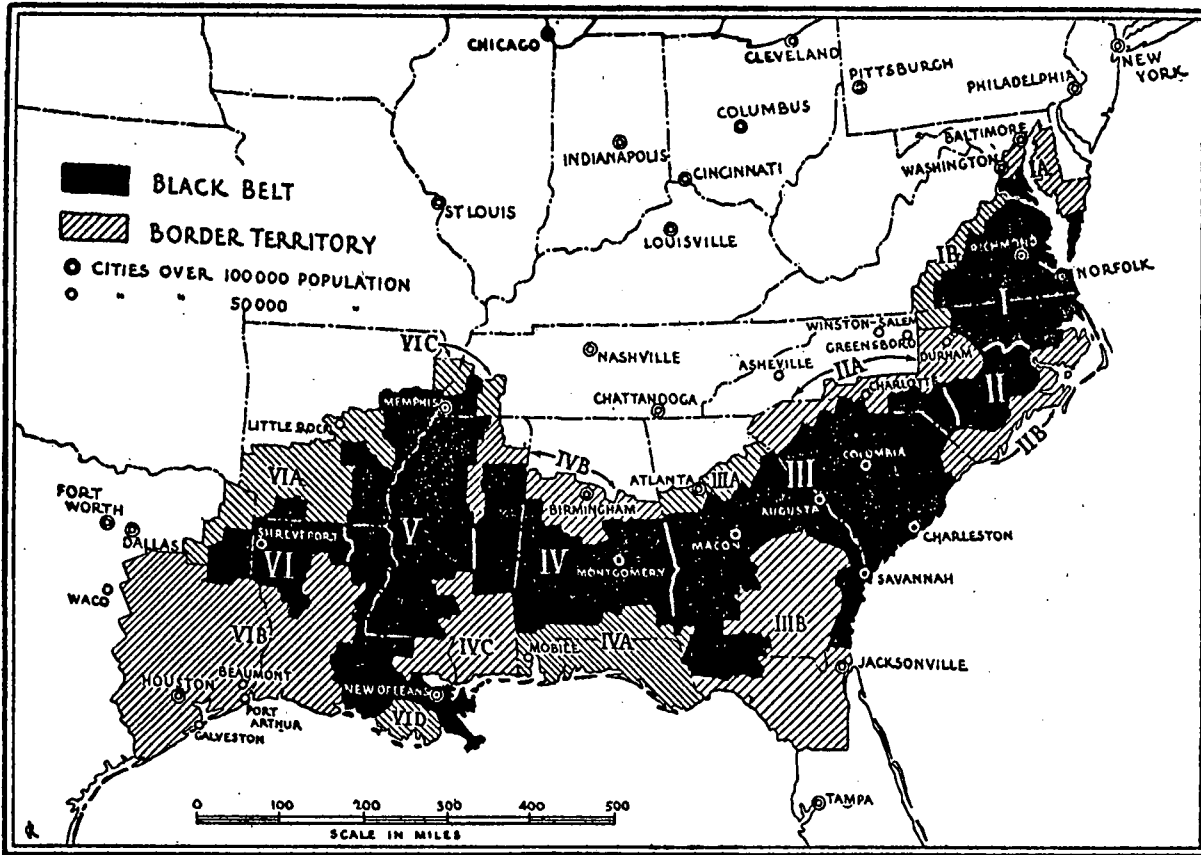


1880



50 TO 75 PER CENT 75 PER CENT AND OVER

(Maps 3 and 4, Bulletin 129, U. S. Bureau of the Census.)



BLACK BELT AND BORDER TERRITORY—1930

## THE DEFEAT OF RECONSTRUCTION: TAKING AWAY THE VOTE (1890-1908)

There were now additional reasons for dealing drastically with Negro suffrage. As long as the Negro could vote, it was argued, the whites could not hope to prevent corruption, and dared not divide along lines of natural political cleavages. The better class of politicians and citizens in both groups were altogether disgusted with the fraud that seemed necessarily involved in the franchise situation as it stood. The regular politicians were perfectly willing to cut out the expense and trouble of gathering in Negro voters if by a sort of disarmament treaty they could get their opponents to do likewise. The independents wanted administrative discretion in the application of the election laws strictly circumscribed so that these laws could not be diverted from their property use - against the Negro - and turned on them.

Negro disfranchisement thus again became a leading issue from 1890 onward. Sometimes the demand came from the white counties, seeking protection against the use of the Negro by Black Belt politicians, sometimes, where "the more responsible of the democrats" took alarm, from the Bourbon party. In Georgia and in South Carolina definite deals over Negro disfranchisement, engineered by the agrarian leaders Tom Watson and Benjamin Tillman, swung the farmers' vote back to Democratic regularity. Everywhere, after the agrarian movement as a national political force had collapsed in 1896, disfranchisement helped to reunite the South. "Political niggerism" was an issue on which the vast majority of Southerners thought alike.

There were, however, two difficulties in the way of disfranchisement: The Fifteenth Amendment still ran against overtly racial discriminations, and yet any scheme aimed at the Negro but cast in general terms must be so framed as not to exclude white citizens. We have already seen how unfavorably the poorer white electorate tended to regard the statutory election codes of the seventies, eighties, and early nineties. The new movement was indeed in part designed to safeguard more rigidly the suffrage rights of dissident whites. In the debates over new suffrage restrictions, this necessity was often pointed out, and not a few veterans of the agrarian revolt showed how double-edged a weapon disfranchisement might prove to be.

In this perplexity, God, "who," according to Senator J.Z. George of Mississippi, "raises up a servant for every great emergency," inspired one McGehee to invent several of the key devices under which it became possible for

the South to disfranchise the Negro without contravening the Federal constitution, or, on their surface, cutting out any white voters.

These were adopted by the Mississippi constitutional convention of 1890. Seven States followed Mississippi's lead between 1895 and 1910, improving, in some cases, on the early model. The others continued to rely on statutory methods.

The requirements of the eight States with disfranchising constitutions were on the whole similar. They perpetuated, in the first place, certain devices of the statutory election codes: A poll tax or other taxes must be paid by the applicant for registration. Registration was to take place months in advance of polling time, and a receipt for taxes paid must be shown to either registration or election officials, or to both. It was left to the officials, actually though not necessarily in law, to ask for these receipts, so that the Negro voter, unused to preserving documents, could often be disfranchised through sheer carelessness on his part.

Among the new features introduced was the property qualification. This ran to two or three hundred dollars. One or more alternative qualifications might be offered by the would-be voter. Crude literacy - reading and writing - was one. Another was a sort of civic "understand," tested by the ability to interpret the State or Federal constitution to the satisfaction of the election officer. "Good character" might also qualify, when supported by sworn testimonials, or by evidence of steady employment during a specified preceding period, or by an affidavit giving the names of employers for a period varying from three to five years. The property and literacy qualifications cut out large numbers of Negroes automatically; the alternatives could easily be manipulated by the officers in charge.

In addition, residence requirements were greatly extended throughout the Southern States, and the list of crimes involving disfranchisement diversified until it included petty larceny, wife-beating, and similar offenses peculiar to the Negro's low economic and social status. To safeguard whites of low intelligence or small property, the so-called "grandfather clauses" were devised. For a period of years after the adoption of the respective constitutions, permanent registration without tax or other prerequisites was secured either to persons who had the vote prior to 1861 and their descendants; or to persons who had served in the Federal or Confederate Armies or in the State

militias and to their descendants. This exemption from tests obviously ran only for whites.

From only one State - Louisiana - are reliable figures available to show what the new constitutions did. They are sufficiently impressive. For the 1896 national election, the last before the disfranchising code, there were registered in the State 130,344 Negroes; Negro registrants were in the majority in 26 parishes. For the 1900 national election, two years after the adoption of the new constitution, there were registered only 5320 Negroes, and no parishes showed a majority of Negro registrants. While Negro registration fell off by 125,000 - 96 per cent - white registration decreased by only 30,000.



*Anti-Negro violence was designed to prevent Negroes from holding office, voting, and attending schools. Federal troops seemed powerless to halt the violence.*

## THE RISE OF REPRESSION: WHAT IS LYNCHING? (1947)

The term "lynching" is becoming more and more difficult to define. At the present time, as in the past, agencies concerned about the lynching problem have not been able to come to a conclusive agreement even when using the same criteria in classifying cases of lynching.

For the past twenty-five years and more, writers of Federal anti-lynching bills have generally accepted the following definition on lynching:

"Any assemblage of three or more persons which shall exercise or attempt to exercise by physical violence and without authority of law any power of correction or punishing over any citizen or citizens or other person or persons in the custody of any peace officer or suspected of, charged with, or convicted of the commission of any offense, with the purpose of consequence of preventing the apprehension or trial or punishment by law of such citizen or citizens, person or persons, shall constitute a 'mob' within the meaning of this Act. Any such violence by a mob which results in the death or maiming of the victim or victims thereof shall constitute 'lynching' within the meaning of this Act: Provided, however, That 'lynching' shall not be deemed to include violence occurring between members of groups of law-breakers such as are commonly designated as gangsters or racketeers, nor violence occurring during the course of picketing or boycotting or any incident in connection with any 'labor dispute' as that term is defined and used in the Act of March 23, 1932 (See 2, 47 Stat. 70, H. R. 1507 - Van Nuys)."

But there are persons who are put to death by mobs under circumstances not entirely covered in what was the generally accepted definition. The difficulty here is apparent. This problem was squarely faced at a conference arranged by President Frederick D. Paterson on December 11, 1940 at Tuskegee Institute when representatives of the press, the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other interested persons met to discuss it. This conference set up criteria that would cover cases not included by specification or implication in Federal definitions. These criteria are:

1. There must be legal evidence that a person was killed.
2. The person must have met death illegally.
3. A group must have participated in the killing.
4. The group must have acted under pretext of service to justice, race or tradition.

In addition to the fact that accepted definitions do not cover all lynchings, there are borderline cases that cannot without some shadow of doubt be called



lynchings, neither can they be eliminated without reservation. The ordinary lynching can be readily recognized, but it is the marginal cases that cause concern.

Seldom now are there spectacular man hunts, with large groups participating. Mobs are more likely to be orderly and secretive and to commit few lynchings within the accepted definitions. An examination of the cases of lynchings occurring during the past ten years shows that in only a few cases are mobs composed of many persons. This change is elaborated upon the The Changing Character of Lynching by Mrs. Jessie Daniel Ames, published by the Commission on Interracial Cooperation in 1942. Cases of the quiet, unobtrusive, but very effective operation of the small group are cited:

"A man is out fishing. He discovers a body on the bank of a creek. It is clearly evident that the man was murdered. Maybe his body is riddled with bullets - his feet wired together, his hands tied behind him, his head bashed in. There have been no reports of any trouble in the county. Was he lynched or was he murdered?"

"Another man has an altercation with his employer over a lost tool, or failure to carry out orders. His body is found one day. It is evident from its condition that the man was put to death. Did he meet his death at the hands of three or more persons? Was he suspected or accused of a crime? Were the officers of the law forewarned of his danger and did they act in collusion with the killers?"

LYNCHINGS, WHITES AND NEGROES, BY PERIODS 1882-1946

<u>Period</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Negroes</u>	<u>Total</u>
1937-1946	2	42	44
1927-1936	14	136	150
1917-1926	44	419	463
1907-1916	62	608	670
1897-1906	146	884	1,030
1887-1896	548	1,035	1,583
1882-1886*	475	301	776
Totals	1,291	3,425	4,716

\*Indicates a five-year period. The other intervals are ten-year periods.

## CAUSES OF LYNCHINGS CLASSIFIED 1882-1946

<u>Causes</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Homocides	1,934	41.0
Felonious Assault	202	4.3
Rape	910	19.2
Attempted Rape	288	6.1
Robbery and Theft	231	5.0
Insult to White Persons	84	1.8
All Other Causes	1,067	22.6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,716</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Typical "lynching bee" of the 19th and 20th centuries  
in America.*

## ON LYNCHING

"I pledge allegiance to the flag" -  
They dragged him naked  
Through the muddy streets,  
A feeble-minded black boy!  
And the charge? Supposed assault  
Upon an aged woman!

"Of the United States of America" -  
One mile they dragged him  
Like a sack of meal  
A rope around his neck,  
A bloody ear  
Left dangling by the patriotic hand  
Of Nordic youth! (A boy of seventeen!)

"And to the Republic for which it stands" -  
And then they hanged his body to a tree,  
Below the window of the county judge  
Whose pleadings for that battered human flesh  
Were stifled by the brutish, raucous howls  
Of men, and boys, and women with their babes,  
Brought out to see the bloody spectacle  
Of murder in the style of '33!  
(Three thousand strong, they were!)

"One Nation, Indivisible" -  
To make the tale complete  
They built a fire -  
What matters that the stuff they burned  
Was flesh - and bone - and hair -  
And reeking gasoline!

"With Liberty - and Justice" -  
They cut the rope in bits  
And passed them out,  
For souvenirs, among the men and boys!  
The teeth no doubt, on golden chains  
Will hang  
About the favored necks of sweethearts, wives,  
And daughters, mothers, sisters, babies, too!

"For ALL"

## HOW TO STOP LYNCHING (1919)

Lynching is our chiefest problem in America today. All Negroes are agreed, and some white people also, that it is the arch crime of America and that it ought to be stopped. The only difference is that of method. The question of How?

We are also pretty well agreed that the methods adopted by Negroes on the behest of Negro leaders, in the past, are futile and valueless.

For instance, we have sent telegrams to Southern Governors only to be told in reply, that they have no power and oftentimes no inclination to stop what they are pleased to characterize as "an orderly lynching." Experience has taught us that appeal to "Big White Politicians" is simply ineffective. For even the President, Woodrow Wilson, made a pronouncement against lynching (Of course he was only interested in Robert Prager, a German who had been lynched, and especially in view of the fact that Germany had threatened to take revenge upon American citizens residing in Germany) with no visible effect upon the Southern mob.

The Messenger proposes an immediate program for Negroes. This program includes two methods. First, physical force and secondly, economic force.

## PHYSICAL FORCE

Anglo Saxon jurisprudence recognizes the law of self-defense. Our information also records that the right of self-defense is recognized in the laws of all countries. Not only is the right of self-defense recognized with respect to the person about to be injured, but it is recognized that the person about to be injured may summon others to assist him in repelling an attack. We are consequently urging Negroes and other oppressed groups confronted with lynching or mob violence to act upon the recognized and accepted law of self-defense. Always regard your own life as more important than the life of the person about to take yours, and if a choice has to be made between the sacrifice of your life and the loss of the lyncher's life, choose to preserve your own and to destroy that of the lynching mob. Recently we have had a few instances of the effect of organized self-assertion on the part of Negroes in the South. The Nation points out that on the 25th and 26th of May a mob in Memphis, Tenn., where Eli Persons was lynched a year ago, had settled upon a race riot. It

was found out, however, that Negroes were well armed and organized to meet the attack with resistance. This having been learned, the Mayor of Memphis immediately called the Chief of Police, and both together promptly called off the riot. Just a few days ago, the Negroes of Long View, Texas, held up a mob which started to lynch a Negro school teacher who had reported a lynching through the Chicago Defender. Instead of leaving the Negro school teacher to himself, to make his own defense, a group of Negroes, well armed and well organized, fired upon the advancing mob, shooting down four members of the mob, whereupon its steps were taken backward rather than forward. The Governor of Texas, as a rule, has always claimed that he had no troops and no power to stop the action of the mob but when the Negroes at Long View protected their lives with shot and shell and fire, the Governor of Texas sent militia and rangers and army planes to restore law and order in Long View. The Messenger wants to explain the reason why Negroes can stop lynching in the South with shot and shell and fire. All mobs act on the principle of pessimism. One hundred to fifteen thousand men usually take part in lynching one Negro, with the Negro handcuffed and arrested, unable to defend himself. The very numbers who engage it are evidence of the cowardice of the job. But when the mob knows that somebody is going to have to give his life, each man thinks that he may have to give his life. No one desires to make this sacrifice, and although it is perfectly certain that twenty millions of people can beat down eight millions, if the sacrifice to accomplish this is so great, it will deter the twenty million from its aim: and so with the mob. A mob of a thousand men knows it can beat down fifty Negroes, but when those fifty Negroes rain fire and shot and shell over the thousand, the whole group of cowards will be put to flight.

This may sound rather strange talk for the pacific editors of The Messenger, but we are pacific only on matters that can be settled peacefully. The appeal to the conscience of the South has been long and futile. Its soul has been petrified and permeated with wickedness, injustice and lawlessness. The black man has no rights which will be respected unless the black man enforces that respect. It is his business to decide that just as he went three thousand miles away to fight for alleged democracy in Europe and for others, that he can lay down his life, honorably and peacefully, for himself in the United States. In so doing, we do not assume any role of anarchy, nor any shadow of

lawlessness. We are acting strictly within the pale of the law and in a manner recognized as law abiding by every civilized nation. We are trying to enforce the laws which American Huns are trampling in the dust, connived in and winked at by nearly all of the American officials, from the President of the United States down.

#### ECONOMIC FORCE

Physical force is not the only weapon of the Negro. He has tremendous economic power. He constitutes one-seventh of the industrial population of the United States. In the South, his economic power is even greater. According to Professor Albert Bushnell Hart of Harvard, the Negroes in the South produce three-fifths of the wealth, that is, one-third of the population produces over one-half of the wealth. Now one of the best ways to strike a man is to strike him in the pocket-book. Cotton is the staple crop in the South. The Negroes are the chief producers of cotton. They also constitute a big factor in the South in the production of turpentine, tar, lumber, coal and iron, transportation facilities and all agricultural produce. They should be thoroughly organized into unions, whereupon they could make demands and withhold their labor from the transportation industry and also from personal and domestic service and the South will be paralyzed industrially and in commercial consternation. That state of affairs will attract the attention and interest of the whole world. Lynching will immediately be made a national and an international problem.

The problem will become national because the textile industries of the North and West are dependent upon the products of Negro labor. When Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York can no longer get cotton for the mills, the mills must close. Machinery stands idle. Men are unemployed. Discontent grows. Social unrest spreads. Revolution stares the government in the face. The building and lumber trades will also be at a standstill. Mechanics will be thrown out of work. Carpenters, masons, moulders, painters, plumbers, electricians, machinists, contractors and architects will have their work cut down. Something will then have to be done. Both capitalists and workers will become interested in abolition of lynching - the capitalists because their profits will be cut off, from the cessation of business, and the workers because

their wages will be cut off, from the cessation of work. At this time, the whole of the United States will for the first time, be interested in abolition of lynching, not because they will love the Negro any more, but because it is necessary for their own interests to stamp out this typical American injustice.

Lynching will then become an international problem, also. During the Civil War, when the Southern Blockade was on, and cotton could not be shipped to Europe, industrial paralysis was thrown into Great Britain. In Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and London, the textile industries had to be closed. Work stopped in those great industrial centers and every Englishman began to inquire about American slavery. The Englishmen wanted slavery abolished, because the fight over the institution was striking them in the pocketbook. Slavery became an international problem because cotton could not be supplied. At that time, however, only a few million bales of cotton were produced. Today over a hundred million bales are being produced each year, largely by Negroes. Now, if the hold up of a few million bales made slavery an international problem, the hold up of hundreds of millions of bales of cotton will make lynching an international problem of prime importance. If Negroes withdraw their hands from the cotton fields, the cotton will rot on the farms. The South will get on its knees, just as it was almost on its knees over the migration during the war. It did not want Negroes to leave there, not because they were hankering for Negro company but because they wanted the Negro's work - his labor power.

At the present time, those two forms of attack will suffice for Negroes to enter upon. Whenever you hear talk of lynching, a few hundred of you must assemble rapidly and let the authorities know that you propose to have them abide by the law and not violate it. Offer your services to the Mayor or the Governor, pledging him that you can protect the life of any prisoner if the State militia has no such power. Ask the Governor or the authorities to supply you with additional arms and under no circumstances should you Southern Negroes surrender your arms for lynching mobs to come in and have sway. To organize your work a little more effectively, get in touch with all of the Negroes who were in the draft. Form little voluntary companies which may quickly be assembled. Find Negro officers who will look after their direction. Be perfectly calm, poised, cool and self-contained. Do not get excited but face your work with cold resolution, determined to uphold the

law and to protect the lives of your fellows at any cost. When this is done, nobody will have to sacrifice his life or that of anybody else, because nobody is going to be found who will try to overcome that force.

Industrially, let the farmers organize farmers' protective unions. Let the lumber workers, moulders, masons, plasterers and other Negro workers on railroads and in mines organize into unions, quietly and unostentatiously. Be prepared to walk out in concert, every man and woman who does any form of work. Let it be known that we are down to plain business, free from any foolishness or play.

Let every Negro in the South, begin to work on this program by agitating for it in the lodges, churches, schools, parlor and home conversation and while at work in factory or field. Write also to us about any detail in entering upon this work. If this program is pressed, a year from now, we can call out of the fields, the factories and the mines between a million and two million Negroes, who will initiate the true work of making America a real "land of the free and home of the brave."

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM AND THE POPULIST MOVEMENT (1974)

# 37

In the aftermath of the War the black farmer was faced with even greater economic hardship than was the white farmer. Some blacks had sought to establish themselves as independent farmers. Indeed, in Georgia alone black purchased almost 7,000 farms in a period of three years. However, the vast majority of black farmers were reduced to peonage under the sharecropping system. Sharecropping consisted of the landowner granting a plot of land to a tenant to work, in return for a portion of the crop - one-half or more - as rental. Having acquired some land the impoverished black tenant would then appeal to a local merchant for supplies. With luck, the tenant would get the needed supplies - in return, of course, for a lien on his crop, with interest rates running up to 30%. Thus, before the hapless tenant turned the first furrow he frequently was already doubly in debt.

Describing the difficulties of tenant farming in Alabama in 1889, Booker T. Washington wrote:



Its evils have grown instead of decreasing, until it is safe to say that 5/6 of the colored farmers mortgage their crops every year. Not only their crops before, in many cases, they are actually planted, but their wives sign a release from the homestead law and in most every case mules, cows, wagons, plows and often all household furniture is covered by the lien... After a merchant has "run" a farmer for 5 or 6 years and he does not "pay out" or decides to try mortgaging with another merchant the first merchant in such cases usually "cleans up" the farmer, that it takes everything, mules, cows, plows, chicken's fodder - everything except wife and children.

Under such dire circumstances the black farmer shared the grievances of the white farmer, and the material basis for an alliance between the two groups was apparent.

Although there was much to recommend an alliance between black and white farmers, several historical factors had contributed to a deep rift between the two groups. In the first place, many of the poor white farmers were hostile towards blacks, tending to regard them as economic enemies. The explosive advance of the cotton plantation system in the decades prior to the Civil War had seriously undermined the independent small farmers. Unable to compete with the large planters in cotton production they were inexorably pushed out of the fertile regions or forced to emigrate to the frontier. Many of these ousted farmers became the "poor white trash," "hillbillies," and "crackers" of the mountains and other inhospitable regions of the South. The class of poor rural whites was thereby swelled by the growth of the slave plantation system. However, in the hysterical racist atmosphere cultivated by the big planters, the poor whites were prone to identify their distress not with the slave system but with the slaves themselves. The unquestioning acceptance of white supremacy demanded by the planters and their allies combined with the formers' custom of employing poor whites as harsh overseers between master and slave contributed immensely to racial antagonisms. The historic hostility between impoverished rural white and black populations thus has roots that reach back into the antebellum period.

Although the freedmen sought to ease these hostilities during the brief Reconstruction interlude, their efforts proved to be in vain. The enfranchised blacks, in possession of a measure of political power in many Southern states, used this power to pass progressive legislation that benefited both poor blacks and poor whites. For instance, the establishment of public school

systems in parts of the South can be traced directly to black Reconstruction. Nevertheless, Southern politicians and editors succeeded in stamping Reconstruction with the brand of corruption and identified it in the public mind with the Republican enemies in the North.

There was enough truth in the latter charge to drive a solid wedge between black Republicans and white Democrats in the South. Black Reconstruction was made possible because Northern businessmen and politicians supported enfranchising the ex-slaves. This, however, was an alliance of convenience in which the businessmen and politicians used black people as pawns in their attempt to consolidate the economic and political control of the white North over the white South. Black men were given the vote, not so much out of sense of racial justice as to offset the political power of the white South. After all, the North had won the war and Northern leaders were anxious to ensure that their national political hegemony was firmly established. They believed this could be accomplished by allowing the freedmen to exercise the franchise within the framework of the Republican Party. After about ten years, when the North was well on the road to achieving economic penetration of the South, black people were abandoned by their so-called friends. In the infamous Compromise of 1877 the fate of black people was handed over to the most racist elements in the South, who had already launched a campaign of terrorism designed to disfranchise blacks or subject them to the political domination of the Bourbons who controlled the Democratic Party.

A further point should be observed in this connection. While black people enjoyed a degree of political power they still had no real economic power, despite the fears of poor whites. There had been talk during the war of partitioning confiscated plantation lands among the ex-slaves and Congress passed a limited land allotment act, but President Andrew Johnson ordered all Southern lands restored to their white owners. Blacks might get the vote but they would not be given any substantial portions of land, even though the land belonged to sworn enemies of the Union. Few Republican leaders were ready to countenance such an obvious attack on property rights, especially when their business allies were looking to property-less blacks as a labor reservoir for industry. Consequently, black political power rested on the sufferance of the North; it had no independent economic base, and this made it much easier to undermine Reconstruction.

The Southern Democrats who played several roles in destroying Reconstruction and "redeeming" the South were credited with saving white supremacy from the threat of black domination. On this basis the Southern white population rallied around the Democrats and their racist idea of a "Solid South."

Relations between white and black farmers were further complicated by developments in the post-Reconstruction era. With the collapse of Reconstruction, black people were placed at the mercy of a new whitemaster class whose political arm was the Democratic Party. This produced a curious situation in the Black Belt area of the South where Negroes far outnumbered whites. According to historian Hicks:

This region was located in the relatively fertile low country that had been the head of the old plantation system and had always had a preponderance of Negroes. When the slaves were freed many of them remained in the vicinity of their old homes, and of those who did migrate not a few came back. Landlordism in the Black Belt was at its worst; here the storekeeper-landowner held his Negro tenants in a bondage extremely like slavery. Political rights were of course denied the Negroes, and the landlords, supported by the townspeople, controlled nominations and elections to office. In the hill country, where the whites were more numerous than the blacks, the free farmers and the white tenants had the numbers necessary to rule locally if they chose. But in state politics the Black Belt politicians always won, for in all party conventions the black counties were represented not in proportion to the number of actual voters but in proportion to the population. Even when the population of the Black Belt was less than that of the hill counties, the ability of its politicians to manipulate conventions usually more than balanced the difference in numbers. Thus, since the one-party system made a nomination equivalent to an election, a small white minority located in the Black Belt and in the cities was in a position to control the political destinies of a whole state. Naturally the ruling caste used this power to preserve the privileges that it enjoyed.

Black sharecroppers in the Black Belt, under the oppressive weight of Bourbon landlordism, found themselves disfranchised outright, or they were cajoled, bribed and intimidated into voting for the Democratic machine. Even when they refused to vote, they were "voted" by the machine. This scandalous situation evoked two contradictory responses from the white agrarian rebels. The more radical Populist leaders realized that a free ballot had to be instituted if the black vote were to be truly independent. But ingrained custom made it all too easy for many of the dissident white farmers to accept the white supremacist notion that blacks could never intelligently exercise

the franchise, and therefore they concluded that blacks should be written off as incorrigible political enemies.

Thus, historically, two contradictory dynamics were at work among the white farmers of the late nineteenth century: one pushing them toward economic and political alliance with similarly exploited black farmers, and the second, based on white supremacy, moving them to economic and political hostility toward black farmers.

Agrarian unrest among Southern farmers was brought to a head by the depression of 1873. As early as 1875 a group of frontier farmers in Texas had organized the first farmers' alliance. By 1885 the Texas Alliance claimed a total of 50,000 members spread among some 1,200 locals. The Texas Alliance started its life as a combination social organization and purchasing cooperative, but it soon radically altered its character by drawing up a long list of demands whose implementation would require political action. Among other things the Texas farmers called for the prevention of speculative dealing in the agricultural produce market, more adequate taxation of the railways, new issues of paper money in the hope of thereby reducing credit costs, and an interstate commerce law. A committee of the Texas group was appointed to present these demands to the state legislature and to Congress.

Meanwhile, similar organizing activities were progressing independently in other states, and the Texas Alliance soon joined forces with groups such as the Farmers' Union of Louisiana and the Arkansas Agricultural Workers. Southern farmers flocked into the consolidated group by the thousands, with the result that by 1890 the new Southern Alliance was estimated to have a membership of between one and three million.

Very nearly the same train of events transpired in the North and West. The first unit of the Northern Alliance was formed in New York in 1877 demanding redress of grievances against the railroads and tax reform, among other things. The Westerners who came into the Northern Alliance sounded a note of economic radicalism. At their 1887 meeting the Western farmers suggested that government regulation of the railways might well be supplemented by actual government ownership of one or more of the transcontinental lines. These farmers also contended that the financial squeeze that gripped agrarian populations could be remedied by the free and unlimited coinage of silver. The federal government had stopped minting silver dollars in 1873, and instead paper money was issued by a number of private national banks acting in effect as subagents

of the U.S. Treasury. The farmers believed that this arrangement gave the private banks control over the monetary system and that the banks exploited this control to keep the volume of money in circulation low, thereby keeping the cost of credit at a high level. Free coinage of silver, the farmers argued, would increase the volume of money in circulation and compel the reduction of interest rates. Free silver thus became a rallying cry of the embattled white farmers.

Black farmers were not admitted as members of the Southern Alliance. In fact, in the late 1880's when there was talk of the Texas Alliance combining forces with the Northern Alliance, one of the chief objections raised by the Southerners was the fact that blacks were eligible to membership in the Northern Alliance. The issue came up again at the 1888 meeting of the Southern and Northern Alliances. This meeting proposed to work out a merger between the two groups, but the Northerners objected to the exclusion of black farmers from the Southern Alliance. The Southerners suggested a compromise. They offered to strike the word "white" from their qualifications for membership, thereby leaving to each state organization the right to prescribe the eligibility of black farmers within its jurisdiction. The Southerners specifically wanted to keep blacks out of the national legislative body, the Supreme Council, but as a last concession to the North they offered to change their position on this point. However, by this time negotiations between the Northern and Southern groups had already broken down over this and several other issues. These disagreements ended immediate prospect of union between the two alliances.

Nevertheless, in their own way, the leaders of the Southern white farmers recognized the need for black support. The whites organized a segregated but parallel group called the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union. The first black alliance was established in Texas in 1886, and by 1891 the Colored Alliance claimed a million and a quarter members scattered among a dozen state organizations.

The national leader and many of the organizers of the Colored Alliance were whites. "What we desire," one of the organizers explained in 1889, "is that the Farmers' Alliance men everywhere will take hold and organize or aid in organizing the colored farmer, and placing him in an attitude to cooperate intelligently and systematically. A Southern white man, R.M. Humphrey, who

has been a Baptist missionary among the black farmers, was the main force behind the organizing of the Colored Alliance, and he became its national head. All other officers were blacks.

Populist historian John D. Hicks repeatedly asserts that the Colored Alliance was "little more than an appendage" to the Southern Alliance. The attitude of white Alliance leaders and the virtual fusion of the two groups in 1890 would tend to support this interpretation; yet there were substantial areas of disagreement and discord between the two, and the black alliancemen tried, with little success, to chart an independent course.

At one point in 1891 the Colored Alliance proposed a strike of black cotton pickers. Circulars were mailed out demanding an increase in the wage rate to \$1.00 per hundred pounds, and setting a date for the strike. However, Col. L.L. Polk, president of the white Alliance, squelched the strike idea by advising the white farmers to leave their cotton in the fields rather than pay more than fifty cents per hundred to have it picked. Polk charged that the black were attempting "to better their condition at the expense of their white brethren. Reforms should not be in the interest of one portion of our farmers at the expense of another." The white Alliance thus sought to prevent the black organization from acting independently, especially when such action seemed to threaten the immediate self-interest of the white farmers.

Underlying this dispute was a difference in class interests between the two groups. Many of the white farmers, especially the leaders of the agrarian revolt, were farm owners and their ideology tended to be that of a landowning class. Between white and black farmers, who were overwhelmingly sharecroppers differing only in degree from landless farm workers, there was a smoldering class conflict not altogether unlike the contemporary conflict between farm owners and farm workers. This class conflict theme was never articulated. Instead, Populist leaders constantly stressed the identity of interests between farmers and laborers. Both groups had a common enemy in Eastern capital, they asserted. The Knights of Labor reciprocated this sympathy, but the American Federation of Labor dismissed the farmers as an employer class. In later years following the decline of Populism and the growth of large-scale farm enterprises, the conflict between farmers and workers became more evident to all concerned.

Politically, the Southern Alliance exhibited little positive concern for black people. Alliancemen had gained control of the 1891 Georgia legislature by electing 160 of its 219 members. While the Alliance platform proposed certain reforms, the Alliance-controlled legislature passed the largest number of anti-black bills ever enacted in a single year in Georgia history. These included a law which laid the basis for the later establishment of the white primary, and a segregation statute which superseded an equal accommodations law won by black politicians during Reconstruction. The segregation bill required railroads to furnish separate coaches for white and black passengers. It also authorized streetcar conductors to segregate the races. The Georgia Colored Alliance, which was holding its state convention in Atlanta at the time, sent a delegation to the legislature to protest that black people were not seeking social equality. "All the Negro wants is protection," he said. Despite this protest from their black brothers, the white alliancemen passed the Jim Crow bill and it was signed into law on October 21, 1891.

Black farmers thus were caught in a position of economic and racial conflict with white farmers and their political representatives. However, unlike the Negro Conventions of the Abolitionist era, the black farmers lacked a truly independent organization through which they could develop and articulate their own program. Instead they were reduced to a subservient status in the agrarian reform movement. With the organization of state and national Populist parties in the early 1890s this situation underwent certain changes in form but not in substance.

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## CAUSES OF THE MIGRATION FROM THE SOUTH (1938)

When nearly one-fourth of the white population and over two-fifths of the Negro population leave a county within ten years, as was the case in Greene County between 1920 and 1930, there must be some very evident reasons. There were fundamental causes, making migration inevitable, and immediate causes, determining the time and intensity of the migration.

### THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF THE EXODUS

A combination of boll weevil ravages and excessive deflation of land values was the immediate cause of the Green County exodus in the twenties.

Cotton and Corn - King and Vassal - During the first quarter of this century, roughly half of the improved acreage in Green County was devoted to the single cash crop of cotton. About half of the remaining improved acreage was planted in corn, all of which was consumed within the county by the people who chop and pick cotton, by the work animals that pull the cotton plows, by the pigs that the cotton producing families eat. Corn serves rather than rivals cotton: where cotton is king, corn is vassal.

Depredations of the Weevil - To a rural people who devoted three-fourths of their acreage to cotton and its support, corn, came the boll weevil. A glance at the accompanying table will indicate what havoc was wrought in Greene. From an average of 16,844 bales a year from 1910 through 1915, the production of cotton in Greene dropped to 11,964 bales in 1916 when the weevil first reached the county.

Between 1917 and 1919 the weevil was less in evidence and the number of bales reached a new high mark in 1919, about which comment will presently be made.

Though the 1920 crop was somewhat below par, 13,414 bales, prices were fairly good and most of the planters determined to make back by the next crop their relatively small loss. For the 1921 crop great sums were spent in fertilizer, and later in the year for weevil poison; provisions for tenant families were still high - nearly at war-time prices. To satisfy the outlay, there was a crop of but 1,487 bales, less than one-tenth of a normal crop; the cultivation of some plantations was abandoned, the expensive crop having consumed the cash and credit of a score of the largest planters in the county. There was a remnant, however, who hoped to retrieve from the crop of 1922 a part of their loss in 1921. But in 1922 the weevil was even more relentless than the year before, and only 333 bales, or about 2.0 per cent of an average crop, were harvested. Debts and taxes went unpaid; credit vanished; chaos reigned.

The Fates Tricked Greene - Green County doubtless would have suffered less if the boll weevil had remained when it first appeared in 1916; but with fewer weevils in 1917 than the year before, and practically none in 1918 and 1919, many of the local farmers felt that the weevil had found Greene County and environs unsuited to its way of life. Cotton farmers forced off their lands to the south and southwest looked with greedy eyes upon this proclaimed weevil-proof area. In Macon, farther south and infested since 1916, the cotton crop



was smaller in 1919 than any year between 1910 and 1934. Land prices in Green County were already inflated by the relatively good yields and high prices of cotton during and immediately after the World War. Everybody, even tenants, had money and wanted land. Prices were boosted by occasional extravagant offers made by prospective buyers from distant counties. Presently everybody wanted more land.

During the summers of 1919 and 1920 land buyers rushed from one part of the county to another. They offered from \$75 to \$200 per acre for the best tracts. When the owner did not sell, as was often the case, he usually was holding his place for yet better prices, or was determined to remain on his land and reap the returns of his good investment. When an owner did sell he joined those who rushed about looking for a farm which could be cultivated or sold for a nice profit. Landowners, bankers, lawyers, doctors, and merchants - to say nothing of tenants who bargained for land or made first payments on automobiles or wore silk shirts for the first time in their lives - all were intoxicated with their prosperity. Green County was on a spree, and everyone was speculating on why the area was "weevil-proof."

And Then the Weevils - But while the people speculated, the weevils, elusive and small, floated across the Oconee River from Morgan and Putnam counties; they came up the national highway from Hancock County, and through the woods from Oglethorpe County, and up the little creeks from Taliaferro County; they seemed to come up out of the very ground. The winged demon, as it were, had descended upon the planters over night. Their valuable farms became unproductive; their cash was consumed by costly fertilizers and furnishings for extravagant tenants; their crop did not pay the bills; their credit dwindled as their lands continued to decrease in value; their optimism of 1919 had turned into despair by the fall of 1922.

Every effort to retrieve in 1922 the losses of 1921 had been mocked by the pestiferous little weevils on the one hand and the evaporation of credit on the other; by 1925, land prices had dropped to one-fifth of what they had been in 1919. As the crops grew poorer, the tenants became more and more dependent upon the landlords, who were less and less able to carry them. The fertilizer cost alone of each bale of cotton produced rose from approximately \$16 to 1919, \$23 in 1920, \$190 in 1921, to \$665 in 1922.

Land and Labor Unproductive - Land bargained for at high prices gave no relief, for the payments which had been made prior to the slump were either dissipated in the inflation or consumed by the expensive crops of 1921 and 1922, while with the slump these purchasers preferred to relinquish their equity rather than continue payments. More and more land was for sale at distress prices; the banks throughout the county were paralyzed; the two largest ones, both at Greensboro, closed, as did most of the smaller ones.

The crops of the croppers were not sufficient to repay the advances made to them; white and Negro renters were unable to pay the promised cash or cotton; owners could neither meet their financial obligations nor secure more credit. Emergency relief crops, such as peanuts and peas, gave little relief. Labor not being needed, many wage hands and croppers had no choice but to leave the county to secure the bare necessities of physical existence; many renters had to sell their stock to make even partial payment of promised rents, and then either revert to wage hand status or leave the county.

Many of the migrants left Greene only upon the pinch of hunger. Think of people leaving a Georgia county for the bare necessities of life - a county where peaches, pears, pecans, peanuts, potatoes of two varieties, peas, beans, corn, oats, wheat, molasses, melons, tomatoes, asparagus, and a hundred other vegetables and cereals and fruits can be produced in great profusion, and where the countryside is well-watered and admirably adapted to livestock farming. The whole economic organization of the county was dependent upon cotton, and when cotton could not be produced everybody suffered.

Two Representative Cases - On one plantation eight miles northwest of Greensboro, the owner-operator had accumulated a cash surplus of nearly ten thousand dollars by 1919. A 180-bale crop in 1920 just about paid for itself, leaving the cash surplus intact. Only twenty-four bales were produced in 1921; the landlord could not get back even the advance which he had made to his croppers to say nothing of the enormous expenditures made for feed, fertilizers, and weevil poison.

This one lean year consumed the fat of the previous years: the owner could not finance another crop; the tenants could not live through the winter without an advance; an exodus occurred, all the tenant families leaving the plantation except a mere handful employed at the sawmill which the owner had set up to get what cash he could from the timber on the plantation. After

sawing and selling his timber, and after buying and sawing and selling the timber on other plantations, he moved his sawmill to Alabama. Since 1922 the old column-fronted mansion has been empty. The deeds for the land have fallen into the hands of a life insurance company, in settlement of a loan. Only two of the tenant houses are now occupied: in one of these live an aged Negro man - the ex-mule feeder about the barn - and his wife, the ex-cook in the kitchen of the "big house." Another aged Negro couple live in the second house. Each of these families cultivates a few patches of the best land, paying the insurance company, which furnishes them nothing, a small cash figure for the privilege.

A second representative case is the old William Tuggle place, a few miles northeast of Union Point. For a number of years a Negro by the name of Tuggle, formerly a slave of the family, had leased the place for ten bales of cotton a year. The lessee cultivated part of the land; on the remainder he used six Negro families who worked on halves with him. For several years, with cash or bank credit, he had financed the furnishings of his cropper families, bought fertilizer for the whole crop, and fed his stock. In the early summer of 1921, in addition to other property, he owned six fine mules, for each of which he had paid \$250 the year before, and had a balance of \$3,000 in a Union Point bank. The weevils began to drop his cotton squares in midsummer, but he would not pick up squares or use poison, for he was not going to be a party to any interference with "the doin's of the Almighty."

As the summer wore on, his six fine mules stood in the stalls eating costly bought feeds; the expenses for furnishing his croppers and fertilizing his cotton had all been met with cash. He was a cotton farmer, and a successful one, but the squares continued to fall.

At length the cotton was picked and sold, and the croppers did not have enough to repay the advances; the bank which held his remaining cash was closed; he could not pay the ten bales of rent. Late in the fall he refused \$199 for a team of his mules; in the spring, unable to feed them longer, he sold five of them for \$200. Now he is a cropper on the same place. Five of the six families who worked with him moved off to find some means of securing a livelihood.

# Ballad of the Boll Weevil

Negro folk song  
Arranged by Earl Robinson

*This was probably written by a southern Negro share-cropper shortly after the great invasion of the cotton fields by the boll weevil around 1900.*

**Firmly and Fast**

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It consists of four systems of music. The first system has a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The first system includes the lyrics: "1. Oh, the boll wee-vil is a lit - tle black bug, come from Mex - i - co, they 2. Now, the first time I seen the boll wee - vil, he was set - tin' on the". The second system continues the melody and bass line with lyrics: "say, come all the way from Tex - as, just a - look - in' for a place to square, the next time I seen the boll wee - vil, had his whole fam' - ly". The third system is the beginning of the chorus, with lyrics: "stay, there, Just a-lookin' for a home, Just a-look-in' for a home,". The fourth system continues the chorus with lyrics: "Just a-look-in' for a home, Just a-lookin' for a home, Just a-lookin' for a home, Just a-lookin' for a home." The score includes various chords (D7, G, Em, A7) and dynamic markings (p).

3. The farmer took the boll weevil,  
He put him in the hot sand,  
The weevil say, "This is mighty hot,  
But I'll stand it like a man,"  
This'll be my home, etc.
4. Then the farmer took the boll weevil  
And put him in a cake of ice,  
The weevil say to the farmer,  
"This is is mighty cool and nice,"  
This'll be my home, etc.
5. Then the boll weevil say to the doctor,  
"You can throw out all them pills,  
'Cause when I get through with the farmer,  
Cain't pay no doctor bills,"  
Won't have no home, etc.

6. Well the merchant got half the cotton,  
The boll weevil got the rest,  
Didn't leave that farmer's wife  
But one old cotton dress,  
And it's full of holes, etc.
7. Well the farmer say to the merchant,  
"We ain't made but only one bale;  
And before we give you that one  
We'll fight and go to jail,"  
We'll have a home, etc.
8. And if anybody should ask you  
Who it was that made this song,  
Just tell him it was a poor farmer,  
With a pair of blue overalls on,  
Ain't got no home, etc.

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING FOR CHAPTER 5

1. Harry Haywood, Negro Liberation, 1948.
2. Charles S. Johnson, Growing Up in the Black Belt: Negro Youth in the Rural South, 1941.
3. Charles S. Johnson, Shadow of the Plantation, 1934.
4. Charles S. Johnson, Edwin R. Embree and Will Alexander, The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy, 1935.
5. Howard Kester, Revolt Among the Sharecroppers, 1936.
6. Hylan Lewis, Blackways of Kent, 1955.
7. Hortense Powdermaker, After Freedom: A Cultural Study in the Deep South, 1939.
8. Arthur F. Raper, Preface to Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black Belt Counties, 1936.
9. Walter F. White, Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch, 1929.
10. Carter G. Woodson, The Rural Negro, 1930.



Meeting of Farmworkers' Union in 1936.

# CHAPTER 6

THE INDUSTRIAL EXPERIENCE: THE PROLETARIANIZATION OF AFRO-AMERICAN LABOR

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why did Black people migrate to the cities, particularly the northern industrial cities? How was the agricultural experience of Black people similar to and different from the industrial experience?
2. What kinds of jobs did Black people get in the city?
3. What were the major forms of discrimination and oppression experienced by Black people in the city?
4. How did Black people fight back during this period?

## KEY CONCEPTS

Bureaucracy

C I O

Consumer Boycott

Double Duty Dollar

Ghetto

Negro Jobs/Job Ceiling

New Negro

Proletarianization

Push/Pull

Urbanization/Suburbanization

Black people had the opportunity to begin moving out of the South in large numbers and they did. They moved to the cities of the North and the South, but particularly important is the move out of the South, and eventually to the cities of the West. The great migrations occurred during the two world wars when there was a great demand for unskilled labor in northern industries. This is the basis for the Black community that we know today.

Between 1910 and 1940, the proportion of the Black population resident in urban areas of the U.S. increased from 22.7% to 48.2%. In 1950, only 40% of the Black population lived on farms and the number of acres operated declined 37% to 25.7 million acres. Moreover, in 1950 the United States Census Bureau reported that for the "non-white" population--95% of which was Black--only 18.4% were employed as farm workers, with 38% as "blue collar workers" (mainly industrial) and 34% as "service workers." This transformation of the social form of the Black community--from a predominantly agricultural laboring class in the rural South to an integral sector of the industrial proletariat more concentrated in the urban North--is one of the most significant social transformations in the history of the United States.

By the 1970's Black people have become an urban people. In 1890 whites were twice as likely to be in cities, passing the 50% mark by 1920. However, the WWI and WWII migrations to the city by Black people, as well as other subsequent developments (suburbanization of whites, increased fertility/birth rates and lower mortality/death rate for Blacks, etc.) have resulted in Black people today being more urbanized than whites.

This new urban experience produced a new response by Black people, and a new term developed for this the "New Negro." The urban experience for Black people was similar to that of any other formerly rural and poor people. The city was a relatively small place where large numbers of people lived and therefore social and cultural activities were intensified. Moreover, the economic basis for all of this was significantly different from the rural experience.

Black people were transformed into wage workers with little opportunity to be self-employed and own the means of making a living (like a piece of land) in an independent way. In the city virtually everyone worked for someone else. On the other hand, the Black experience in the city was "last

hired, first fired" so that the vicious pattern of discrimination continued in a new form. Initially there continued to be jobs that were occupied by Black people only, and certainly there was a limit beyond which Black people couldn't go, at least in large numbers, in other words, a job ceiling.

In some respects the discrimination that Black people faced in the northern cities was less than that of the rural experience, but in some respects more. There was more apparent social equality, the work paid more, and there was a great deal more to do in the course of normal everyday life. However, life was cold and impersonal, prices were higher, and there was much greater relative deprivation, in that in the city a poor Black person was closer to wealth though without it. It was easier to be without something in the South because Black people there were quite distant from the general wealth of the middle and ruling classes (except for the domestic servants, similar to the house slaves), and because of the legacy of slavery.

The main process of life in the cities had to do with the increased industrialization of Black workers. This process represented:

1. an increase in the skill level of Black workers,
2. an increase in the pay of Black people, especially since both World Wars resulted in Black women getting factory jobs too, making a great deal more money than they had ever made before;
3. an increased association with white workers on a more equal basis, resulting in positive association in comparison with the more blatant racism and oppression that had been the common experience in the South.

But the northern experience also meant that social and cultural life was quite different. Urbanization brought about the functional differentiation of social life in which the church ceased to be the main and central social institution. In the city each social and cultural activity had its own institution that was more often than not divorced from the church. Either the activity was set up by the government (like public education and public assistance programs), or it was simply the activity of private enterprise, e.g. recreation (movies, bowling, dance halls, bars, etc.) and insurance (health care, death benefits, etc.).

The cultural life of Black people took a tremendous leap forward in the city, both in quantity and quality. Immediately after the WWI migrations,



while the automobile and pre-depression prosperity of the USA created the "roaring 20's," Black people in Harlem had a cultural renaissance (re-birth). In every decade since, Black art and culture have advanced in waves. All of this has two tendencies: (1) more and more Black people have assimilated the dominant culture, become proficient, and in some cases, expert; and (2) the mass culture of Black people has changed to express the urban working class experience (rather than <sup>the</sup> rural tenant experience) and has achieved a universal appeal which has continued to make a significant impact on all US culture and most peoples throughout the world.

In the city Black people faced discrimination in housing so that segregated Black neighborhoods were formed. This approximated the rural experience in the South so closely that in Chicago, for example, the South Side was called Chicago's Black Belt. Moreover, based on this geographical concentration, it was possible to develop new ways to oppress Black people through city agencies organized on geographical lines, e.g., public education, police, parks and public recreational facilities, water and sewage disposal, garbage collection, public health and public transportation. By coming to the city Black people did not escape oppression, they merely had to face it in a new form.

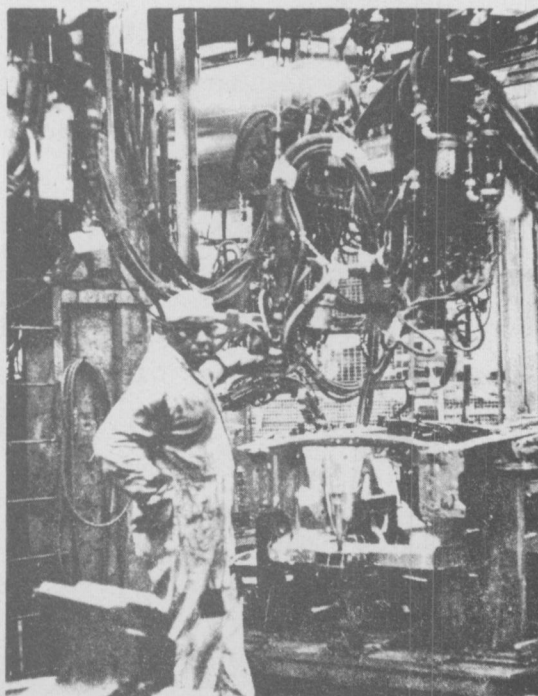
And Black people fought against these new attacks against them. While geographic concentration enabled the ruling class to orchestrate new forms of oppression more effectively, it also enabled Black people to fight back with more intensity, more force. One way to fight was based on the concentration of buying power. Black people used their money to force merchants to hire Black people by shopping only where Black people worked. Also mass protests were organized in many different ways.

In addition, and most important, since Black people were becoming workers, the fight against discrimination was aimed at racist practices by industry as well as at segregated unions. This took its most advanced form in the 1930's with the development of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and campaigns in basic industry like steel and automobile production.

In the next chapter we will take up in more detail the experience of Black people as industrial workers in urban centers.

## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 6

- |     |  |                                  |     |
|-----|--|----------------------------------|-----|
| 40. | "THE UNEASY EXODUS" (1915-poem)  | Unknown migrant                  | 214 |
| 41. | URBANIZATION OF THE NEGRO POPULATION (1957)  | E. Franklin Frazier              | 215 |
| 42. | MAP AND TABLE: NEGRO POPULATION STATISTICS, 1910 - 1940  |                                  | 220 |
| 43. | THE NEW NEGRO: WHAT IS HE? (1920)  | <u>The Messenger</u>             | 221 |
| 44. | THE TRANSITION ERA, SECOND PHASE:<br>WORLD WAR I TO WORLD WAR II (1970)                                  | Harold Baron                     | 223 |
| 45. | THE COLOR LINE IN JOBS AND HOUSING (1945)  | St. Clair Drake<br>Horace Cayton | 236 |
| 46. | THE DOCTRINE OF THE DOUBLE DUTY DOLLAR (1945)  | St. Clair Drake<br>Horace Cayton | 239 |
| 47. | TABLE: THE STRUGGLE FOR JOBS IN THE CITY OF CHICAGO  |                                  | 243 |
| 48. | "WE COME BACK FIGHTING!" THE NEW NEGRO'S RESPONSE TO RIOTS AND<br>POST-WAR CONDITIONS IN THE CITY (1919) | <u>The Crisis</u> (NAACP)        | 244 |



Auto worker

## THE UNEASY EXODUS (1915)

From Florida's story banks I go;  
 I bid the South "Good Bye."  
 No longer shall they treat me so  
 And knock me in the eye.  
 The northern states is where I'm bound,  
 My cross is more than double,  
 If the chief executive can be found,  
 I'll tell him all my trouble.

Arise, you Darkies now a slave,  
 Your chance at last has come;  
 Hold up your head with courage brave,  
 'Cause times are changing some.  
 All before this change was made  
 They took me for a tool.  
 No respect for me was paid,  
 They classed me for a fool.

Anyone doing the work I do  
 Is paid four dollars per day;  
 But I must lie, and steal some, too,  
 To get one-half that pay.  
 Then they pay me off in trashy mess,  
 And cheat me in the deal;  
 They force me hard to work for less  
 And arrest me when I steal.

Why should I remain longer south  
 To be kicked and dogged around?  
 Crackers to knock me in the mouth  
 And shoot my brother down.  
 I would rather the cold to snatch my breath  
 And die from natural cause  
 Than to stay down south and be beat to death  
 Under cracker laws.

(Two men were reported to have been arrested in Georgia and given thirty days in jail for having the poem in their possession - the authorities declared they had thus "incited riot.")

## URBANIZATION OF THE NEGRO POPULATION (1957)

When the first census was taken in 1790, Negroes were found in considerable numbers in the four large cities of the country. In New York City and Baltimore

they constituted more than 10 per cent of the population, and in Philadelphia and Boston their relative numbers were about half as great. During the period of slavery, as we have seen, the free Negroes were concentrated in urban areas. After Emancipation Negroes migrated in large numbers to the cities of the North as well as the South. Between 1860 and 1870 the Negro population increased 90.7 per cent in fourteen southern cities as compared with an increase of 16.7 per cent of the white population in these same cities. During this period the Negro population of eight Northern cities increased 51 per cent. The cityward movement of Negroes during the next two decades continued but slowed down. In 1890 four out of five Negroes still lived in rural areas. Those who had moved from rural areas had gone principally to the southern cities. As late as 1910, nearly seven-tenths (69.0 per cent) of the urban Negro population was in the South. The movement to southern cities was in response to the demand for labor created by railroad building and growing industrial and commercial enterprise in the South.

The urbanization of the Negro population during the present century has followed a similar trend in the white population and has been influenced largely by the same social and economic factors. From 1900 to 1940 the proportion of whites living in urban areas increased from 43 per cent to 57.8 per cent. During this same period the proportion of the Negro population resident in urban areas increased from 22.7 per cent to 48.2 per cent. Between 1900 and 1930, about two and a quarter million Negroes left the farms and small villages of the South for the cities. According to Ross, "During the first decade of the present century the volume was somewhat over a third of a million, during the second decade nearly three-quarters of a million, and between 1920 and 1930 nearly one and one-quarter million." During these thirty years, the rural Negro population in the South decreased 262,921 while the urban Negro population in the country increased by 3,191,905. A million rural Negroes moved from rural areas into 78 southern cities with a population of 25,000 and over and into 773 towns and cities with populations ranging from 2,500 to 25,000. The movement of Negroes to southern cities was inconspicuous, while the mass migrations to northern cities during the War period were replete with dramatic incidents and were directed to a few cities - New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Detroit. During the decade from 1910 to 1920 the total Negro population of these four cities increased by nearly three-quarters of a million.

Of the 14 southern cities having 25,000 or more Negroes in 1920, Norfolk had the largest increase in its Negro population between 1910 and 1920. Because of the great demand for labor in its shipyards, the Negro population of Norfolk increased from 25,039 in 1910 to 43,392 in 1920 or 73.7 per cent. The Negro population of Houston, Texas, and Jacksonville, Florida, increased over 40 per cent and that of Birmingham, Alabama, about a third during this decade. On the other hand, of the 10 northern cities with 25,000 or more Negroes in 1920, all except Pittsburgh and Kansas City, Missouri, showed an increase of over 50 per cent in their Negro population between 1910 and 1920. The greatest relative increase in the Negro population occurred in Detroit where the number of Negroes increased from 5,741 in 1910 to 49,838 in 1920, or 611.3 per cent. Cleveland came next with an increase from 8,448 to 34,451 Negroes, or 307.8 per cent. The Negro population of Chicago increased from 44,103 in 1910 to 109,458 in 1920, or 148.2 per cent; while the number of Negroes in Indianapolis, who were half as numerous as those in Chicago in 1910 increased 59 per cent. Philadelphia, one of the three northern cities with 100,000 and more Negroes in 1920, showed an increase of 58.9 per cent in its Negro populations that showed a much higher relative increase in the number of Negroes. For example, Gary with only 383 Negroes in 1910, had 5,299 Negroes in 1920, an increase of 1,283.6 per cent. Likewise, in Akron, Ohio, the Negro population of only 657 in 1910 increased to 5,580 in 1920 or 749.3 per cent.

The movement of southern Negroes to northern urban centers between 1910 and 1920 differed fundamentally from earlier northward migrations. During previous migrations Negroes had moved from the border states into the North. The difference between the two movements is summarized by J.A. Hill, of the United States Census Bureau, as follows:

Even as recently as 1910, 48 per cent, or nearly one-half, of the southern-born Negroes living in northern States came from two States - Virginia and Kentucky. The migration between 1910 and 1920 reduced the proportion born in these two States to 31.6 per cent. On the other hand, the proportion of northern Negroes coming from the States farther south, or from what we may term the cotton-belt States, including in this class South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas, increased from 18.2 per cent of the total number of southern-born Negroes living in the North in 1910 to 40.5 per cent of the total in 1920. The absolute number of Negroes in the North who were natives of these States increased

from 75,517 in 1910 to 298,739 in 1920, so that there were nearly four times as many in 1920 as there were in 1910.

On the basis of special tabulations for cities, Ross was able to discover five distinct types of Negro population origins:

(1) widespread drawings to many of the larger and more northerly of the northern cities, as exemplified by Chicago; (2) accretions to certain northern Atlantic coast cities almost exclusively from southern states on the Atlantic Seaboard as in Baltimore; (3) strictly local increases in most of the cities of the deep South, as demonstrated by Atlanta; (4) acquisitions from the Mississippi Basin by cities of the middle western, border and lower tier states, for example St. Louis; (5) increments to far western cities from East South Central and more strikingly West South Central states, as found in Los Angeles.

Although the northward migration of Negroes was influenced by social factors, the basic cause was undoubtedly economic. During and following the War there was a great demand for unskilled labor to fill the gap created when immigrants returned to Europe and immigration from Europe ceased. At the same time economic conditions in the South growing out of the tenancy system tended to "push" the Negro out of the South. During 1915 and 1916, crop failures, floods, and the ravages of the boll weevil resulted in the widespread disorganization of the plantation economy. In a study which was designed to measure the relative strength of the "pull" of northern industries and the "push" of southern agriculture, Lewis concluded that the "pull" of the North was primarily responsible for the migration.

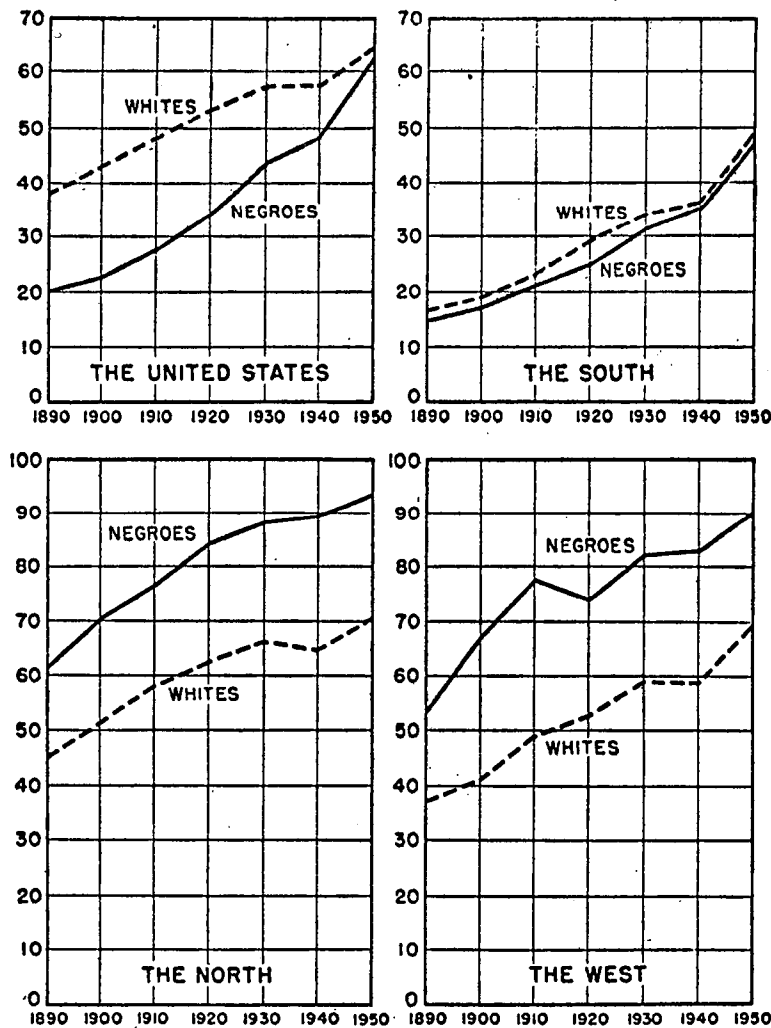
During the industrial depression of 1920, the northward migrations slowed up, but when industrial activities in the North increased in 1922 the northward migrations were resumed. According to a press release of the United States Department of Labor on October 24, 1923, nearly half a million Negro migrants left the 13 southern states during the twelve month period ending August 31, 1923. The effect of these movements was seen in the growth of the Negro population in northern cities. Between 1920 and 1930 the Negro population in New York City and in Chicago increased 114 per cent while in Detroit the increase amounted to 194 per cent. During the same period the Negro population of Cleveland increased 108.7 per cent; that of Gary 238.2 per cent; and that of Buffalo, New York, 200.7 per cent. The Negro population of Los Angeles, the only city in the West with 10,000 or more Negroes in 1920, increased 105 per cent between 1910 and 1920 and 149.7 per cent between 1920 and 1930. Even during the depression years, 1930 to 1940, the cityward movement of Negroes continued,

though at a slower rate. The Negro population of New York City increased 40 per cent; that of Detroit 24 per cent; and that of Chicago only 19 per cent. On the other hand, the Negro population of the District of Columbia increased 42 per cent; that of Miami, Florida, 47 per cent, and that of Houston, Texas, 36 per cent.

From federal census data we are able to secure information on the volume and the direction of Negro migration during the years 1935 to 1940. In 1940, 1,141,920 nonwhite persons in the United States had migrated from the county in which they were living in 1935. The vast majority, 808,833, or about 70 per cent, of the nonwhite migrants were resident in the South in 1940. In fact, most of the nonwhite or Negro migrants in the South had moved about in the state of their residence in 1935 or had moved to other southern states. There were more men than women among the Negro migrants who had remained in southern states. On the other hand, women predominated among the 253,083 nonwhite migrants who were living in the North in 1940. About nine-tenths of these nonwhite migrants living in the North had come from southern states. As the result of interregional migration the South lost 106,610 Negroes and 165,701 whites. All of the southern states with the exception of West Virginia showed a net loss in Negro population, the greatest loss - 30,801 - being in the state of Georgia. In the South as a whole the greatest net loss of Negro population was in the rural-farm regions, though the migration of Negroes from the South had been principally from southern cities to the large urban areas of the North.

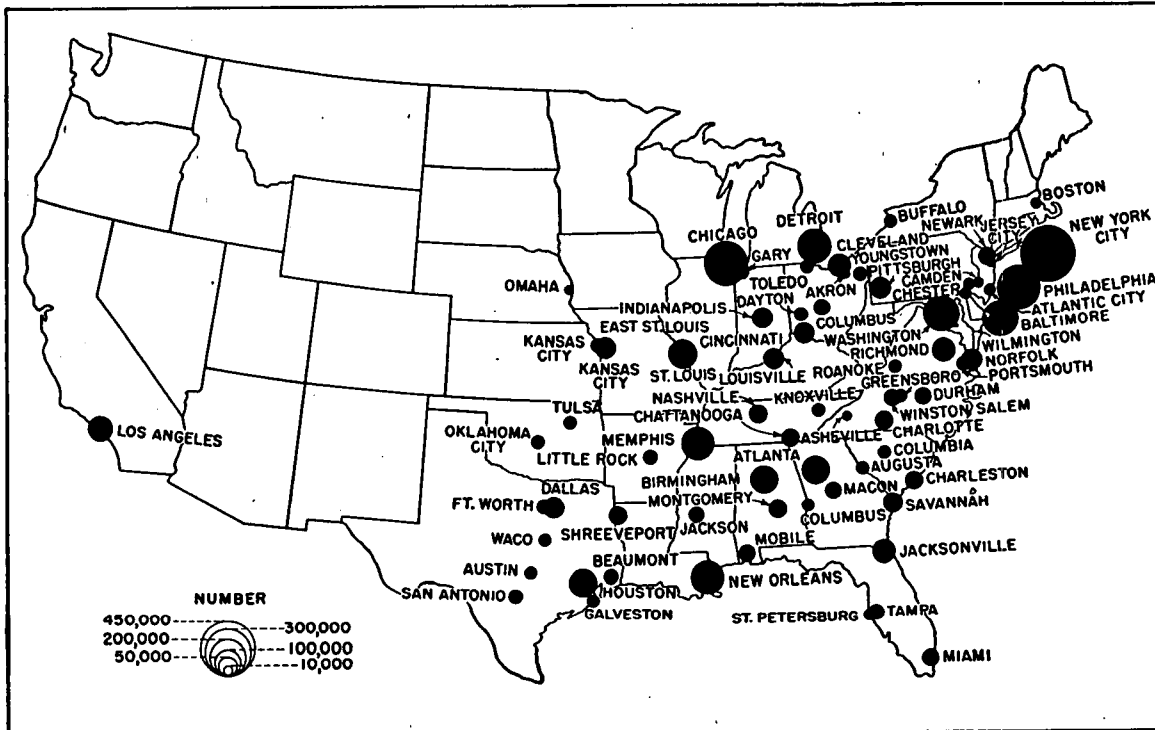
In fact, the growth and distribution of the Negro population during the first half of the twentieth century have been determined by the economic and social forces which have shaped the growth of the nation. The Negro population has been concentrated, on the whole, in those areas where there was a demand for a type of labor which the Negro could provide. Negroes were first concentrated in the South because a commercial system of agriculture without machinery required a large supply of cheap, unskilled labor. Even after Emancipation and during the turbulent days of Reconstruction and the years of violence which followed, the majority of Negroes remained in the plantation South because there they could find a means of subsistence. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, they began to migrate to the cities and towns of the South as did the whites. As industry came to the South, the

urbanization of the Negro closely paralleled that of the whites. (See Diagram). Then, when during and following World War I there was a demand for unskilled labor in the heavy industries of the North, masses of southern Negroes migrated to northern industrial centers from the cotton plantations ravaged by the boll weevil. The migration of Negroes from the rural South was again accelerated during World War II. Because of the presence of defense industries on the West Coast, a large proportion of the Negro migration from the South took a westward direction for the first time. It is estimated that 250,000 Negroes migrated to the cities on the Pacific coast where defense industries were located. As the result of the westerly migration, large communities have grown in the West as well as in the North. At the present time, in the country as a whole about the same proportion of both Negroes and white (approximately five-eighths) live in cities. In the following chapters we shall consider the economic and social organization of Negro communities in rural areas and cities, and their relation to the larger white communities of which they are a part.



Percentage of the White and Negro Population in the Urban Areas of the United States and Major Regions at Each Decennial Census: 1890-1950.





Seventy-two Urban Negro Communities with 10,000 or More Population in 1940.\*

\* Based on *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population. "Characteristics of the Population,"*

Cities With a Negro Population of 100,000 or more in 1940 with Comparative Figures for 1930, 1920, 1910, and 1900.\*

CITY	1940	1930	1920	1910	1900
NORTH					
New York	458,444	327,706	152,467	91,709	60,666
Chicago	277,731	233,903	109,458	44,103	30,150
Philadelphia	250,880	219,599	134,229	84,459	60,613
Detroit	149,119	120,066	40,838	5,741	4,111
BORDER					
Washington	187,266	132,068	109,966	94,446	86,702
Baltimore	165,843	142,106	108,322	84,749	79,258
St. Louis, Mo.	108,765	93,580	69,854	43,960	35,516
SOUTH					
New Orleans	149,034	129,632	100,930	89,262	77,714
Memphis	121,498	96,550	61,181	52,441	49,910
Birmingham	108,938	99,077	70,230	52,305	16,575
Atlanta	104,533	90,075	62,796	51,902	35,729
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,074,051</b>	<b>1,684,362</b>	<b>1,020,271</b>	<b>695,177</b>	<b>538,944</b>

\* United States Bureau of the Census, *Negroes in the United States 1920-1932* (Washington, 1935) p. 55, and *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, Vol. II, "Characteristics of the Population"* (Washington, 1943), p. 114.

## THE NEW NEGRO - WHAT IS HE? (1920)

Our title was the subject of an editorial in the New York Age which formed the basis of an extensive symposium. Most of the replies, however, have been vague and nebulous. The Messenger, therefore, undertakes to supply the New York Age and the general public with a definite and clear portrayal of the New Negro.

It is well nigh axiomatic that the most accurate test of what a man or institution or a movement is, is first, what its aims are; second, what its methods are, or how it expects to achieve its aims; and third, its general relations to current movements.

Now, what are the aims of the New Negro? The answer to this question will fall under three general heads, namely, political, economic, and social.

In politics, the New Negro, unlike the Old Negro, cannot be lulled into a false sense of security with political spoils and patronage. A job is not the price of his vote. He will not continue to accept political promisory notes from a political debtor, who has already had the power, but who has refused to satisfy his political obligations. The New Negro demands political equality. He recognizes the necessity of selective as well as elective representation. He realizes that so long as the Negro votes for the Republican or Democratic party, he will have only the right and privilege to elect but not to select his representatives. And he who selects the representative controls the representative. The New Negro stands for universal suffrage.

A word about the economic aims of the New Negro. Here, as a worker, he demands the full product of his toil. His immediate aim is more wages, shorter hours and better working conditions. As a consumer, he seeks to buy in the market, commodities at the lowest possible price.

The social aims of the New Negro are decidedly different from those of the Old Negro. Here he stands for absolute and unequivocal "social equality." He realizes that there cannot be any qualified equality. He insists that a society which is based upon justice can only be a society composed of social equals. He insists upon identity of social treatment. With respect to inter-marriage, he maintains that it is the only logical, sound and correct aim for the Negro to entertain. He realizes that the acceptance of laws against inter-marriage is tantamount to the acceptance of the stigma of inferiority. Besides,

"He the one ain't here, Cap'n."

"He's the head of this family, I was told."

"That's right, Cap'n."

"Then he's the one I wanted to see."

Hattie spoke from the doorway.

"We ain't seen hide or hair of Big Mat for a long, long spell, suh."

"That there the truth," spoke up Chinatown. "He a good-for-nothing - always run off when it come time to make up the ground for crop."

The man smiled. "It's all right. Black George, down the way, told me to see you boys."

"Black George...Black George..." pondered Chinatown.

"Said he was a friend of yours."

Chinatown turned to Melody.

"You ever hear of anybody down the way name Black Goerge?" he asked.

"Cain't say as I have."

The white man turned to Melody.

"Look here," he said, "I ain't got all day. You think you can deliver a straight story?"

"Reckon I kin, suh."

"Can you keep your mouth shut too?"

"Reckon so, suh."

The man gave a broad look around the yard.

"I'm from up North," he said.

Chinatown adn Melody stared. This was the first real jackleg they had ever seen.

"They need men up there - good men - all they can get. If Big Mat speaks for this family tell him they can use him and all the other able menfolks in this house."

"If I see him I tell him," said Melody.

"Dammit!" cried the man, "you don't have to be cagey with me. I'm your friend."

"Sure, Cap'n." Chinatown trinned.

"Look here, are you boys satisfied with the way you're getting on around here?"

"Oh, yessuh, we satisfied," cried Chinatown warily.

"Yessuh, they ain't kickin' none," came Hattie's warning voice from the

doorway.

"How much crop you make last year?" asked the man.

"Put in nigh thirty acres," Melody told him.

"That's good," said the man. "Must have made yourself a couple hundred dollars or so."

"Reckon that's right, but Mr. Johnston keeps the book. He don't let us see what's writ in it."

"Well, don't you know how much he gave you?"

"Nosuh, he say what we made, and what's writ against us leave us owin' him."

"It don't make any difference," said the man. "Just suppose you make two hundred dollars. Up North in the mills you three would make more 'n that much in a month."

Chinatown grinned his disbelief. Hattie gave a little snort and went into the house.

"You boys want to make that kind of money, don't you?"

"Sur do, Cap'n." And Chinatown grinned behind his hand.

The man reached back in his pocket and pulled out a roll of bills. It was more money than Chinatown had ever thought was in the world. The permanent grin almost left his face as the man shucked off a ten-dollar bill and gave it to him.

"Now you think I'm on the level?"

"Yessuh-yessuh, Cap'n," stuttered Chinatown.

"The freight train will stop at Masonville Junction at midnight. That's tonight. That's where you boys board her for the North."

"But there be trouble if we tries to leave," said Melody.

"Won't nobody see you if you look sry," said the man. "Then you're in a sealed boxcar that won't be opened until you're out of the state."

"Maybe Big Mat won't come," Melody told him.

"He'll come if you tell him the thing straight, like I told you."

"What about Hattie?" Melody asked. "That's his wife."

"He can send for her later. Can't transport no women."

"Yessuh."

The man climbed back onto his horse.

"Now don't forget - tonight - Masonville Junction. I'll be there to put you on board."

A white man in a flapping black hat, astride a black nag - he was gone. They stood looking after him full twenty minutes after the hills had muffled the sound of the black nag's hoofs. Then Chinatown gave a whoop and waved the ten-dollar bill high in the air.

"Lawd! And I thought only niggers was dumb."

Hattie came flying to the doorway.

"What the fuss?"

"That jackleg give us this here for foolin' him."

"Lawd-a-mercy!" cried Hattie. "Lemme git a tin can and bury that money back in the hills."

"I'm keepin' this in my pocket, woman," cried China.

"Fool! He come back for it sure," said Hattie.

"Let him come back," said China. "When I hear him comin' I'm off to the hills."

Chinatown danced around until he wore himself out. Then he dropped, puffing and blowing, to the ground.

"Must be a lot of that kind of up-North money," said Melody.

"Glad some of it stray off down this way." Chinatown grinned.

"You reckon that white man tellin' the facts?"

"Don't know."

"Maybe we ought to be at Masonville Junction tonight."

"You talkin' crazy," cried Hattie. "Big Mat ain't just going to pick up and walk off the land."

"There a snake under the door sill somewhere," said Chinatown. "Man have to kill himself workin' to make the kind of money he was talkin' about."

"But if he was speakin' facts," said Melody, "us makin' a year crop money in one month --"

"Well, supposin' so..."

"Think what we have in a season."

'Supposin' so..."

"We have all the money in a year."

"Supposin' so..."

"In two years we got enough to fill a corn crib."

"Supposin' so..."

Melody got heated up.

"What you mean by that 'Supposin' so'? Why, China, in two years you wouldn't have to do no work."

"I don't do no work now." He laughed. Then he rolled like a pony in the dust, tickled over how he had tricked Melody.

"When Big Mat come we go into town and buy up some stuff," said Hattie.

"Gonna drink red pop till I falls out," sang Chinatown.

"A big can of snuff," said Hattie.

"Red pop, fried fish, a big box of candy all tied up in red ribbon."

"Maybe I git some calico," said Hattie, looking down at her torn gray dress.

"Hold on, woman!" cried Chinatown. "This money ain't for wastin',"

"What you hanker for most, Melody?" asked Hattie.

"Reckon I wants a new E string for my box," he told her.

Away off in the hills beyond Vagermound came a deep "Hallo." The hills played catch-ball with the echo, throwing it around until it was thrown away somewhere in the bottoms.

"Sound like Big Mat!" she cried.

They all sprang to their feet.

"China, you and Melody go hide in the corn crib. That white man jest might be with him - ain't no tellin'."

"Tell him us run off for good and ain't no use in lookin' for us," called Chinatown as they ran for the crib.

Crouched inside the drib, they sat tensed, bodies and faces slatted by the sunlight hitting through the planks. Just to be hiding filled them with mad-dog terror. Hiding in the red-clay hills was something always in the backs of their heads. It was something to be thought of along with bloodhound dogs and lynching. Chinatown was ducking his head up and down trying to peep out across the yard. The sun and shadow played across his rolling eyes.

Melody had to talk or get out and run away.

"Maybe we hadn't ought to taken that white man's money."

"He give it to me hisself. He give it to me. You seen him, Melody."

"Yes, I seen him."

There was a sound of hoofs in the yard.

"I ain't asked him for nothin'. He give it to me. All by hisself he give it to me."

"I seen him."

Hattie's voice came around the house. "China, Melody, c'mon out. Ain't nobody but Mat."

Chinatown let out his breath. The gold in his mouth laughed.

"Shucks, Melody, if that was that jackleg come back he couldn't handle us."

"If he do come back we make tracks for the hills and the double back to the crib. Be sleepin' while he out lookin'."

They saw Big Mat coming into the yard, leading a big-boned mule by a rawhind. They ran toward him, Chinatown waving the big-money bill.

Hiding his cheek under one big hand, Mat listened to them tell about the crazy jackleg. Not one muscle in his body moved, though Chinatown was waving the bill under his nose. Hattie was the first to notice his strange calm.

"What on your mind, Mat?"

He took his hand away from his face. A long purpose welt blossomed on his cheek.

"Misery! Misery!" wailed Hattie.

Chinatown and Melody pressed in on him with questions. Hattie kept up her cry: "Misery! Misery!"

"Git the stuff packed," Big Mat said. "We goin' to be at Masonville Junction 'fore midnight."

He pushed them aside and started up the big hill that topped the fields.

"I knowed somethin' had to happen," said Chinatown. "When the coot come afore the duck -"

"Lord, what become of us?" wailed Hattie.

Mat stood looking at the fields. He stood a long time. Late evening. The sun was low at his back. His shadow went out from his feet to lie across the land. He felt in his bones that this was his last look at the checkered hills. Never again would the ground be something to work. It was a solemn feeling. He talked it out of himself in what was a prayer.

"Ain't nothin' make me leave the land if it good land. The hills bigger 'n any white man, I reckon. Take more 'n jest trouble to run me off the hills. I been in trouble. I been born into trouble. Shareworked these hills from the bad land clean to the mines at Madison. The old folks make crop here afore we was born. Now the land done got tired. All the land got tired, 'ceptin' the

muck in the bottoms. It do somethin' to a man when the corn come up like tired old gents.

"Somehow it seem like I know why the land git tired. And it jest seem like it come time to git off. The land has jest give up, and I guess it's good for things to come out like this. Now us got to give up too."

At dark they left, and Hattie, barefoot, was in the doorway.

\* \* \*

Saturday morning Big Mat went to the mill a changed man. A-borning in him was a new confidence. He did not sink into himself when O'Casey singled him out as scapegoat for the mistakes of the crew. He looked the little pit boss in the eye. O'Casey knew men. He knew when to let up. The other men were quick to sense the change. They passed little looks among themselves when O'Casey passed by Big Mat. They began to lag in their work. The pit boss had to do something to save face. Luckily, one of the pouring crew failed to show up. And when the call came for a replacement O'Casey recommended Big Mat.

Bo had said that they put the green men on hot jobs before they knew enough to stay alive. That was true. Black George, one of the men from the red hills, had been slow learning. They had put what was left of him in the ground. But Big Mat proved to be a natural hot-job man. After the first turn he did not have as many burns to grease as had the regulars.

The steel pourers' shelf was just a narrow platform high up against a wall. Around it was a rickety iron railing. Big Mat was told about that railing. One of the pourers said, "It was jest put up lately. 'Fore that a guy who faints rolls right into heaven."

They did faint on the shelf - especially on hot spring days like this one. But Big Mat welcomed the heat. Through the long, hot hours he would do twice as much work as anybody else. In competition with white men, he would prove himself.

The Bessemers were directly across from the shelf. Through the blinding heat Big Mat saw them in a haze - the blower on the pulpit, watching the tall air-stretched flames, the flaming air pulsing through the white metal, shimmying thirty feet above the live steel, blowing at the sun through holes in the roof. Once Big Mat had thought the holes were there so the flames could light the sky at night. Once the drone of the Bessemers had frightened him. Now his ears



did not hear the drone. The steel began to blow noiselessly after he had been a short turn on the shelf.

The blower was an old Irishman. He knew by the color of the flame when it was time to tip a Bessemer. Now he waved his gloved hand at the shelf. Someone let out a warning "Hallo-o-o-o-o!" Big Mat followed the example of the men around him and yanked down his dark glasses. The Bessemer sighed, and the place was full of sparks. The furnace was tilted. And almost before the full ladle could move on its overhead tracks to the pourers' shelf another great Bessemer went into its noiseless song.

Hollow molds were moving beneath the shelf. The pourer signaled when the first was in position. He pulled the lever on the full ladle, releasing the white fire. Through his glasses Big Mat could see the red winking eye growing in the bottom of the mold. The stream that fed that eye threw off curtains of sparks, pinpricking his hands and face. He got his signal and threw strips of manganese into the growing mold. He was continually dodging, but still the sparks fried in the sweat of his chest where the leather apron sagged. The red stream stopped suddenly. Another mold slid underneath the ladle.

Without slowing between molds, they took tests of the steel. The sweat ran into Big Mat's wide-mouthed gloves and made small explosions when it fell on the hot test steel. Big Mat did not flinch. Alone he held the spoon steady. It took two hunkies to hold up a spoon. He smiled behind his expressionless face. His muscles were glad to feel the growing weight of the steel. The work was nothing. Without labor his body would shrivel and be a weed. His body was happy. This was a good place for a big black man to be.

# 50

THE INDUSTRIAL STATUS OF THE NEGRO (1930)

That the problems of Negro workers and organized labor may be seen more clearly the industrial status of the Negro group must be considered. What are Negro workers doing? How is their labor utilized? Do the "Negro jobs" of the century's early years continue? Have Negroes broken through the economic and industrial deadlines established against them?

The terrific pressure exerted by slavery upon the white laboring classes was being released in the latter years of the 19th century. Jobs formerly

classified as "Negro jobs", and which no white man would accept, were filled by white workers. The depletion of the soil in agricultural communities and the disappearance of free land, were causing Negroes to desert the farms of the South for newer fields in the midwest in the first instance, and to seek urban communities in the second. The increased competition between the two racial groups led to the exclusion of the minority group in practically all occupational lines except domestic service.

In the North the newer immigrants were usurping the unskilled industrial positions, while the Germans, English, Irish, Swedes and Greeks were making severe inroads upon the traditional occupations as domestics, caterers, boot-blacks, butlers and coachmen. Thus appeared a racial stratification of American labor that was rapidly relegating the Negro to a most insignificant status in all occupational groupings other than agriculture and domestic service.

Between 1900 and 1910 there was an era of advancement in the skilled trades. The Negro population in 1900 found its greatest occupational importance in agriculture, and in domestic and personal service. The native whites were most extensively employed in agriculture, manufacturing and in the mechanical pursuits; the foreign born whites found their greatest importance in the manufacturing and mechanical pursuits and in personal and domestic service. Among Negroes, agricultural occupations increased 35 per cent, trade and transportation increased 103 per cent, domestic and personal services increased 17 per cent, while the jobs in which Negroes were engaged in the manufacturing and mechanical pursuits increased 156 per cent. In 1900 the number of Negro workers in factories was 131,216 but the number increased to 358,180 or 173 per cent in 1910. The textile industries employed eight thousand more Negroes in unskilled positions in 1910 than in 1900, the number increasing from 2,949 to 11,333, or 283 per cent.

During the period prior to the World War the repeated efforts of Negro spokesmen and interested white persons to entrench Negro workers in industrial positions, with such increments as might accrue to the them from these positions, were futile. For one hundred years, America had relied almost entirely upon the European immigrants who had come to their shores for its industrial labor and the adjustment of this immigrant group was considered more satisfactory than could be expected of the Negro worker. The World War, however, exerted profound changes.

This immigration was suddenly checked. New recruits for industry were necessary and the Negro was the most available supply. The activities of labor agents were bringing Negro workers into northern industries in great numbers. They went into those industries needing masses of unskilled workers - the steel and iron industries, construction, stockyards, railroads, road maintenance and construction. In many instances they entered as strike-breakers. These new industrial opportunities were in no small way responsible for the migration of 1,200,000 Negroes who moved from South to North between 1915 and 1928.

The results of this mass movement have been intricate and manifold. For the first time the economic and industrial status of the Negro has received attention as an integral element in the problems of the relationship of worker and industry. As early as 1923 the U.S. Department of Labor reported an increase of employment in skilled lines of 34 per cent. Some states showed increases as high as 186 per cent. Steel and iron workers in Pittsburgh increased from less than 100 in five plants in 1910 to 16,900 in 23 plants in 1923. In August of that year the Carnegie Steel Company alone employed 6,758 Negro workers. The Ford plant in Detroit employed 11,000 Negro workers. Chicago showed great gains in iron and steel as well as in the packing industries. Meanwhile physical conflicts resulted. White workers threatened to quit work if Negroes were employed. Many did. Southern whites were imported to northern mills as foremen. Trade unions sought Negro members. Negroes remained skeptical. The period was fraught with so many difficulties that each new day brought new analyses and new conclusions regarding the efficiency of that labor. One group of employment managers in Pittsburgh classified races on the basis of their efficiency in certain types of industrial activity. In this scale the Negro ranked nineteenth among thirty-seven races and nationalities. Interesting, however, was the conviction in one plant that Negroes are excellent workers on operations of severe heat. In this plant they were employed in the heat of the open hearth furnaces during the summer months, and were assigned to outside duties in the winter.

The present distribution of Negro workers cannot be told completely, though the 1920 census findings are indicative of trends. The 11,650,000 Negroes in the United States representing 9.9 per cent of the population do approximately 12 per cent of all the work. If, however, his opportunity for employment were equal to that of other racial groups there would be many changes

in the occupational distribution. On the basis of the amount of work to be done, the Negro is overemployed in agriculture and domestic service, and underemployed in the other occupational classes. Moreover, the amount of underemployment among Negroes increased in Trade, Public Service, Professional Service and Clerical Work between 1910 and 1920. Despite the fact that there have been losses in the number of gainfully employed persons in both agricultural and domestic occupations, one finds that on the basis of total man power used in these various groupings, the Negro has lost ground while the total trend has been toward increases in the number of employed.

A further analysis of the census material reveals interesting information regarding the occupational distribution of Negro workers. The Negro provides 75 per cent of the fertilizer laborers, 33 per cent of the tobacco workers, 14 per cent of the iron and steel laborers, 33 per cent of the laborers in lumber and furniture industries and 20 per cent of the helpers in the building and hand trades. He also provides 42 per cent of the fish packing and curing hands, 29 per cent of the glass workers, 32 per cent of the longshoremen and 28 per cent of the railroad laborers. Between 1910 and 1920 semi-skilled Negro workers in slaughtering and packing houses increased 1,832 per cent, laborers in iron and steel increased 237 per cent, while laborers in food industries increased 261 per cent. Meanwhile, the number of Negroes in the following occupations decreased from 24 to 100 per cent - captains, masters and pilots of vessels, motormen, freight agents, express agents, steam railway conductors, telephone and telegraph linesmen, firemen in fire departments, mechanical engineers, waiters, bell boys, butlers and several others.

There is a marked tendency in the American occupational scheme toward job usurpation for the American whites of native parentage and those of foreign and mixed parentage. Between 1910 and 1920 the foreign born worker as well as the Negro worker showed losses in their ratio to the total gainfully employed population at an acceleration in excess of their relation to the total population ten years of age and over.

The industrial employment of Negro women prior to 1928 was negligible. The Federal census of 1920 showed that they constituted from one-fourth to one-third of those women reported working in the manufacture of wood products, hosiery, tobacco, bags, and waste and glass. They formed from 28 to 52 per

cent of those working in three different food industries. Between 1910 and 1920 the proportion of Negro women in manufacturing and mechanical industries nearly doubled, presenting a striking contrast to the employment of all women in those lines, which was comparatively slight.

The following analysis will indicate more clearly the advance made by the Negro woman worker: In 1910 of every 100 employed Negro women, approximately 50 were in agriculture, 40 were in domestic and personal service, and 10 were following other lines of work; but in 1920, of every 100 Negro women approximately 35 were in agriculture, 50 were in domestic and personal service and 15 were in other work. The largest numbers of those 15 were in tobacco, food products, textiles, and wood industries.

In the more or less skilled trades Negroes have a much smaller percentage of the total. In the United States there are only 56,000 Negro skilled craftsmen as compared with 1,371,000 pursuing unskilled occupations or employed as day laborers. These workers form 3.8 per cent of all carpenters, 5.5 per cent of iron molders, 1.2 per cent of all cotton mill workers and 3 per cent of the workers in oil and petroleum. Little hope for a greater inclusion in the building and hand trades is seen in the fact that Negroes form only 1.7 per cent of all apprentices in the building and hand trades.

Opportunities for apprenticeship training in special trades have shown greater restrictions than the trades themselves. The ten year period 1910 - 1920 added only 98 Negro apprentices while the total number of apprentices increased from 118,964 to 144,177. Blacksmiths, carpenters, brick masons and painters, for example, had fewer Negro apprentices in 1920 than in 1910 or 1900.

The economic status of the Negro as well as his opportunity of employment varies with the sections of the country. While the North is beginning to give Negroes opportunity in major industrial fields, the development of skill in the hand crafts and various other occupations has taken place in the South. In Georgia, for example, are found more locomotive firemen than in all the northern states combined. New York provides more jobs for male workers in domestic and personal service. South Carolina, Alabama and Georgia in 1920 employed more than half of the colored painters and paper hangers in the country, while Pennsylvania accounted for one-tenth of all the Negro chauffeurs.

Wages received by Negro workers are, in the main, lower than that of the

white workers, even for the same type of work. Current explanations for this difference in earnings are many. Chief among them is the statement that the Negro workers' standard of living is lower than that of the white worker. As a result the wages of Negroes reach a subsistence level. They have been able to live on less than the white worker because they have been compelled to do so. It has become necessary for the Negro to be an opportunist in the matter of wages. "Working in an industrial plant on the same operations with white workers, as skilled or unskilled operatives, they get the same wages as others - working exclusively as a racial group in a department of a business, as, for instance, an all-Negro force of janitors, stockgirls, messengers, shipping clerks, their pay is apt to be less than that received by whites. Working as the only wage earners of a business such as building tradesmen, laundresses, garment workers, the rule is to force upon them smaller compensation than whites would get - an arrangement assuring Negroes employment they otherwise would not have and employers a savings in wages. Union membership does not always remove the lower wage, for unions sometimes permit a double standard."

The Bureau of Labor Statistics made a study of wages and hours in cotton compresses in 1927. This study covered the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. In 67 establishments covering 4,071 male and 106 female workers of whom 2,873 males were Negroes as were all of the females, the investigation reported the average earnings.

In no one of the ten states were the earnings of Negro workers as much as that of the white workers, while Alabama and South Carolina showed actual earnings of Negroes to be less than one-half that of white workers. In Texas where Mexican workers were used, earnings per week for whites were \$26.97, Negroes \$20.15, Mexicans \$17.37.

The studies of women workers in southern states made by the Women's Bureau in every instance show the wages of Negro women to be lower than that received by the white women workers.

Though the unusual demand for Negro labor has disappeared, it appears certain that this group has become a permanent factor in American industry. An analysis has been made of this situation by the Federal Department of Labor. Representatives of this office studied the payrolls of 273 employers of Negro

labor during the year prior to April 30, 1923 in California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Ohio and Wisconsin. The industries included machinery, tobacco, iron and steel, food stuffs, brass, brick, rubber, railroad equipment, and occupations in the fields of transportation, construction and railroad work. Negro workers during that period increased by 18,050. Of this number 13,893 were unskilled and 4,157 skilled. The skilled workers increased 38.5 per cent and the unskilled increased 44.0 per cent.

There has always existed a body of beliefs regarding the efficiency of Negro labor. It has been called wasteful - inefficient, lazy and indifferent. Negro workers are said to be an asset only when working in gangs under white supervision. The most complete analysis however is that formerly used as the basis for the employment of Negro workers in a large industrial center. In these industries the Negro worker was classified "good" in the following capacities - with the pick and shovel, in carrying material as lumber and steel, at repairing roads, at building and demolition, at work requiring speed, on hot and dry operations, on wet and hot operations, where there are fumes and smoke, on oily work and on shifts. He was "fair" in concrete, with the wheelbarrow, as a hod carrier, in cleaning tracks, as a trucker, in repairing tracks, at shoveling material in bulk, at coal pushing and as a fireman, on stills and furnaces, as a rigger's helper, as a boilermaker's helper, as a pipefitter's helper, as an engineer's helper, when closely confined, on dirty work and on night work. Finally, he was "poor" as a machinist's helper, as a blacksmith's helper, as a carpenter's helper, at work requiring precision, on wet and cold jobs, when exposed to weather and when working in a variable temperature.

In the main, the statement as to the greater efficiency of white workers are empirical and based largely upon the experience which they have acquired at their jobs. No scientific data have been gathered on the relative efficiency of the white and the Negro worker.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that the tragedy of human waste in industry is nowhere more outstanding than in the case of Negro employment. Blind alley occupations for workers who have latent capacity for other jobs is the rule rather than the exception among Negro workers. For the Negro there is little encouragement and less opportunity for promotion. Success stories

of rises from laborer to superintendent and manager are few. Opportunities for training are even more restricted. Apprenticeships are few and other opportunities for trade training rare. Schools do not see the wisdom of training Negro pupils in skilled crafts because there is no opportunity for placing them after they have been trained. Employers will not hire them because they have no training. The vicious circle continues when a privileged few do receive the training or the required apprenticeship only to find that white workers refuse to accept them as fellow workmen. Strikes have been waged on this account. Union workers have been known to walk off the jobs when a Negro fellow unionist was employed.

# 51

## BLACK PEOPLE IN THE WORKING CLASS (1974)

Black people were brought to this country in order to provide the labor power for developing a new society. We were brought here as slaves, and were fully employed because slave labor has the highest level of exploitation of all forms of labor. The Black worker has been at the very key point of the production process, especially where the work is the hardest, most dangerous and where the greatest value is created by transforming natural resources into useful commodities. We have been the beasts of burden for the captains of industry, as they have reaped super-profits from our labor power.

Black labor reflects our precarious position as the reserve army for the capitalists. This means that while we have been, and are, the last hired and first fired, the capitalists keep us in reserve to fight all other workers with the threat that "if you don't like the terms (in wages, conditions or benefits) then we can always hire the 'Niggers' and they will jump at the chance." The categories [of Black people in the working class] are (A) the employed workers, (B) the unemployed workers and (C) the displaced workers.

A. The Employed Black workers Black workers are concentrated in specific occupations. Over 75% of Black males have jobs classified by the U.S. Census as crafts, operatives, unskilled labor, and service. On the other hand, over 82% of Black females are in jobs classified as clerical, operative, service, and domestic. The largest category of males is operatives, for females it's service.



## OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY: 1970

<u>Occupations</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
White Collar	18.9	29.9
Professional	6.0	9.0
Managerial	3.5	1.5
Sales	1.9	2.0
Clerical	7.5	17.4
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Skilled Labor	47.4	18.4
Crafts	16.6	1.8
Operatives	30.8	16.6
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Labor, Farm Service	33.7	51.6
Laborers	14.7	1.6
Farmers	1.0	0.2
Farm Laborers	3.2	1.1
Service	14.4	28.8
Private, Domestic	0.3	19.9
<hr/>		

It should be noted however, that the composition of the Black working class is unevenly distributed throughout the country (a by-product of the anarchy of the capitalist mode of production). The following table indicates the two areas of work that vary most: manufacturing or durable (like automobiles) and non-durable (like food) goods, compared with personal (like hair work), professional (like lawyer) and related services.



A Foundry Worker

## COMPOSITION OF BLACK LABOR IN SELECTED AREAS

Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas	Manufacturing	Services	%Black
North			
Detroit	39.2	26.4	43.7
Newark	34.9	16.7	54.2
Capital			
Washington	5.3	31.5	71.1
South			
Atlanta	18.2	34.4	51.3
New Orleans	13.2	36.6	45.0

This composition is even further clarified by these national figures:

"The latest figures from the building trades show that Black workers compose: 23.8 per cent of all furnacemen, smelters and mixers; 25 per cent of metal moulders; 12.3 per cent of the masons, tile setters, and stove cutters; and 22.8 per cent of the plasterers, lathers, and cement finishers. Notwithstanding the fact that whites make up the bulk of the foremen and skilled craftsmen, there would be no building trade without the jobs that large numbers of Blacks perform."  
(Black World, October, 1973, p. 44)

Further,

"In cities like Chicago, Detroit, New York, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, Blacks make up the majority of the mass transit operators. They form a significant minority in mining (15-20%), longshoring (25%), steel (13%) and auto (20%: in some Chrysler factories in Detroit Black workers are the majority, 70%).

Specific to each of these industries of Black concentration are particular jobs that Blacks hold. The following table lists 25 occupations made up of at least 10% Black.

OCCUPATION	BLACK MEN AS A % OF ALL MEN
Private Household Workers	44.7
Janitors and Porters	37.2
Longshoremen and Stevedores	34.5
Laundry and Dry Cleaning Operatives	33.3
Lumbermen, Raftsmen and Woodchoppers	30.8
Laborers, Chemicals and Allied Products	30.2
"    Transportation, Equipment Mfg.	27.9
"    Railroads, Railway Express	27.8
"    Primary Metal Mfg.	26.4
"    Construction	25.9
Furnacemen, Smelters and Pourers	22.8
Laborers, Textile Mill Products & Apparel Mfg.	22.7
Moulders, Metal	22.3
Plasterers and Cement Finishers	21.7
Cooks, except Private Household	21.5
Elevator Operators	21.4
Laborers, Stone, Clay, & Glass Products	19.7
Operatives, Saw & Planing Mills, Misc. Wood Prod.	18.8
Taxicab Drivers and Chauffeurs	18.3
Operatives, Primary Metal Mfg.	15.0
"    Food & Kindred Products Mfg.	14.7
"    Misc. Nonfg. Industries	14.7
"    Motor Vehicles and Motor Vehicles Equip. Mfg.	14.0
Shoemakers and Repairmen, Exc. Factory	12.1
Mail Carriers	10.4
Bus Drivers	10.1

(The American Negro Reference Book, 1966, p. 211)

The Black labor force (excluding professionals and intellectuals) is made up of 43% industrial workers (mining, construction, and utilities). These workers are the heartbeat and backbone of the Black community.

- B. Unemployed Black Workers: This class formation fluctuates as we are pushed out and pulled into plants and offices by the capitalists. The rate of Black unemployment has been twice that of whites since the Korean War.

DATE	% BLACK WORKERS UNEMPLOYED
1950	9.0
1955	8.7
1960	10.2
1965	8.1
1970	8.2
1973	9.4

Again, Black unemployment is not evenly distributed. Black urban youth are the hardest hit with over 35% of those aged 16 to 19 unemployed in 1970. Black women are usually 2-3% points more unemployed than men. And unemployment is an urban phenomenon.

- C. Displaced Workers: There are many Black working class people removed from the production process. These are primarily welfare recipients and a certain segment of prison inmates. The welfare rolls have increased dramatically. The monopolists have sought greater surplus by increasing productivity per hour and cutting down the size of the work force. The overall welfare rolls have increased as follows (in millions):

1950	2.9
1960	4.7
1970	10.8

And Blacks make up over 40% of these figures (4 times our percentage of the general population):

BLACKS RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE IN 1969

Total Population	25.1 Million
Receiving Public Assistance	4.3 Million
Percent on Welfare	17%

There is a generational effect here, so we now have 2nd and 3rd generations on welfare which begins to push folks into the lumpen element wholly divorced from the objective potential and subjective desire for gainful productive employment.

Prisons are cages to put whoever threatens private property; the state actively serves the ruling class by operating prisons. The average daily number of actual inmates inside of so-called correctional institutions is 500,000. The 1960 data for long term inmates by age is:

1960 BLACK PRISON POPULATION

AGE	NUMBER
Under 15	324
15-19	11,197
20-24	24,019
25-39	67,469
Total	133,249

The prison breeds a warrior's curse inside a man, a curse when guided by a correct political ideology can be a contribution to revolutionary armed struggle.

SIMPLE ON THE STRUGGLE OF BLACK WORKERS: "WHEN A MAN SEES RED" (1940)

**52**

"I may not be a red," he said as he banged on the bar, "but sometimes I see red."

"What do you mean?"

"The way some of these people a man has to work for talks to a man, I see red. The other day my boss come saying to me that I was laying down on the job - when all I was doing was thinking about Joyce. I said, 'What do you mean, laying down on the job? Can't you see me standing up?'

"The boss said, 'You aint' doing as much work as you used to do.'

"I said, 'A Dollar don't do as much buying for me as it used to do, so I don't do as much for a Dollar. Pay me some more money, and I will do more work.'"

"What did he say then?"

"He said, 'You talk like a red.'

"I said, 'What do you mean, red?'

"He said, 'You know what I mean - red, communist. After all this country has done for you Negroes, I didn't think you'd turn out to be a red.'

"I said, 'In my opinion, a man can be any color except yellow. I'd be yellow if I did not stand up for my rights.'

"The boss said, 'You have no right to draw wages and not work.'

"I said, 'I have done work, I do work, and I will work - but also a man is due to eat for his work, to have some clothes, and a roof over his head. For what little you are paying me, I can't hardly keep body and soul together. Don't you reckon I have a soul?' I said.

"Boss said, 'I have nothing to do with your soul. All I am concerned about is your work. You are talking like a communist, and I will not have no reds in my plant.'

"I said, 'It wasn't so long ago you would not have no Negroes in your plant. Now you won't have no reds. You must be color-struck!'

"That got him. That made him mad. He said, 'I have six Negroes working for me now.'

"I said, 'Yes, out of six hundred men. You wouldn't have them if you could've got anybody else during the war. And what kind of work do you give us? The dirty work! The cheapest wages! Maintenance department- which is just another way for saying clean up. You know you don't care nothing about us Negroes. You getting ready to fire me right now. Well, if you fire me, I will be a red for sure, because I see red this morning. I will see the union, if you fire me,' I said.

"'Just go and do your work,' he said, and walked off. But I was hot, pal! I'm telling you! But he did not look back. He didn't want to have no trouble out of that union."

"Now I know he will think you are a red," I said.

"Is it red to want to earn decent wages? Is it red to want to keep your job? And not to want to take no stuff off a boss?"

"Don't yell at me," I said. "I'm not your boss. I didn't say a thing."

"No, but you implied," said Simple. "Just because you are not working for white folks you implied."

"There you go bringing up the race issue again," I said. "I think you are

too race-conscious."

"I am black," said Simple, "also I will be red if things get worse. But one thing sure, I will not be yellow. I will stand up for my rights till kingdom come."

"You'd better be careful or they will have you up before the Un-American Committee."

"I wish that old Southern chairman would send for me," said Simple. "I'd tell him more than he wants to know."

"For instance?" I said.

"For instant," said Simple, "I would say, 'Your Honery, I wish to inform you that I was born in America, I live in America, and long as I have been black, I been an American. Also I was a Democrat - but I didn't know Roosevelt was going to die.' Then I would ask them, 'How come you don't have any Negroes on your Un-American Committee?'"

"And old Chairman Georgia would say, 'Because that is un-American.'

"Then I would say, 'It must also be un-American to run a train, because I do not see any colored engineers running trains. All I see Negroes doing on the railroads is sweeping out coaches and making beds. Is that American?'"

"Old Chairman Georgia would say, 'Yes! Sweeping is American.'

"Then I would say, 'Well, I want to be un-American so I can run a train.'

"Old Chairman would say, 'You must be one of them Red Russians.'

"'No, I ain't neither,' I would say. 'I was born down South, too, like you. But I do not like riding a Jim Crow car when I go home to Dixie. Also, I do not like being a Pullman porter all the time. Sometimes I want to run a train.'

"'I know you are a Red Russian!' yells that old Chairman. 'You want to tear this country down!'"

"'Your Honery,' I says, 'I admit I would like to tear half of it down - the Southern half from Virginia to Mobile - just to build it over new. And when I built it over, I would put you in the Jim Crow car instead of me.'

"'Hold that Negra in contempt of court!' yells Chairman Georgia.

"'I thought you just said I was a Red Russian. Now here you go calling me a Negro. Which is I?'"

"'You're both,' says the Chairman.

"'Why? Because I want to drive a train?'"

"'Yes,' yells the Chairman, 'because you want to drive a train! This is a white man's country. These is white men's trains! You cannot drive one. And down where I come from, neither can you ride in a WHITE coach.'

"'You don't have any coaches for Red Russians,' I said.

"'No,' yells the Chairman, 'but we will have them as soon as I can pass a law.'

"'Then where would I ride?' I asked. 'In the COLORED coach or in the RED coach?'

"'You will not ride nowhere,' yells the Chairman, 'because you will be in jail.'

"'Then I will break your jail up,' I said, 'because I am entitled to liberty whilst purusing happiness.'

"'Contempt of court!' bangs the Chairman."

Just then the bartender flashed the lights off and on three times, indicating that it was time to close the bar, so I interrupted my friend's imaginary session of the Un-American Committee.

"Listen," I said, "you're intoxicated, and when you are intoxicated, you talk right simple. Things are not that simple."

"Neither am I," said Simple.

## 53

### THE NEGRO IN "LITTLE STEEL" (1937)

The vastness of American industrial enterprise is impressively realized in her steel areas. There is the tremendous steel province centering about Gary. Another is in the South with Birmingham as its heart. The last great district sprawls about Pittsburgh, extending eastward to Bethlehem, south through Weirton and Huntington, and west along Ohio's Mahoning Valley.

With over a half million men employed in steel, it is natural that attempts would have been made to organize them. However, until recently the larger corporations have vigorously counteracted all attempts to bring the workers into the unions. In this the corporations were under the domination of men like Gary, Schwab and Carnegie. Gary openly stated that U.S. Steel would have no dealings with unions.

Beginning with the Homestead strike of 1892, some of the bloodiest and most bitter industrial conflicts have occurred in the steel areas. Therefore,



when John L. Lewis signed a contract on behalf of the CIO with Big Steel in March of 1936, he had smashed through a veritable fortress of reaction and entrenched capital. With the recognition of the CIO by the U.S. Steel Company and its subsidiaries, or what is commonly termed Big Steel, the CIO had organized 70 per cent of the steel industry. In accomplishing this, Lewis had the backing of such powerful unions as The Amalgamated Clothing Workers, his own United Mine Workers, and the newly organized United Auto Workers. All of these unions contributed to an organization fund for the Steel drive. It has been variously estimated that Lewis spent upwards of \$75,000 a month in unionizing the steel workers. His success in organizing the steel workers, as well as other mass production industries, can be attributed mainly to his policy of industrial unionism. Previously, most of the organization done in steel was among the skilled workers who were brought together in different crafts of the trade. Machinists, electricians, millwrights, all had their own unions. Little attempt was made to bring together the thousands of unskilled laborers who comprised the bulk of the steel industry. There was little rapprochement between the skilled and unskilled workmen. They could never join in positive and united action. This was one of the causes of the failure of the great steel strike of 1919 when Foster tried to bring all the workers together. However, Lewis, with this resuscitated plan of industrial unionism, has organized everyone who works in the plants into one large federation. Especially is the industrial union advisable at this time, because with the increasing technological advances in the industry the skilled workmen is being pinched harder and harder.

When Big Steel saw how well-knit their workmen were, they were forced to give in to the CIO's demand for union recognition, increased wages, an eight hour day, and time and a half for overtime. Big Steel did not want a halt in its production. The steel industry has been on the upgrade since 1936. The American market has been good, and there has been a stream of foreign orders largely for the purpose of rearmament.

Flush with their initial success in Big Steel, the CIO rushed into the organization of the big independent mills. The six largest of these include nearly all the other men employed in steel. These companies are known as Little Steel, and include, The Youngstown Sheet and Tube, Jones & Laughlin, Republic Steel, The Bethlehem Steel Co., Weir's National Steel Co., and Inland

Steel. The workers at these companies went out on strike - with the exception of those employed at the Jones & Laughlin Mill (they signed a CIO agreement) and the workers at the Weirton National. But whereas Big Steel has met the union demands, Little Steel has fought the CIO with a ruthlessness for which the CIO was hardly prepared. The strikers were intimidated and beaten by company thugs, aeroplanes were used to fly food to the men who remained in the Republic Mill, vigilantes and other flag-waving organizations were formed in the Little Steel towns, back-to-work movements were initiated, and all this was accompanied by furious anti-CIO propaganda.

The strikes were broken to the extent that the mills have started working again. This does not mean that there is no hope for the CIO in Little Steel. The mills have been crippled. When a mill is shut down and the fires are allowed to cool, the insides of the furnaces often have to be ripped out and relined. The gauges in the rolling mills have to be reset, necessitating a large waste of steel. Higher wages are paid to the strike-breakers who are less efficient than the regular men. It is alleged that huge sums have been appropriated to bribe town officials and to pay the salaries of the Babbitts who headed the anti-union citizens' Committees. The profits at Girdler's Republic Mill were less by over \$5,000,000 in the second quarter of 1937 than in the first quarter. Therefore, if the CIO can plug certain apparent weak spots in its setup, the chances are that Little Steel will be fully organized. Although most of the strikers have gradually gone back to the mills, a number are still in favor of unionism. But when the strikes began to drag out and the pay-checks were really missed, the men grew restless. They wilted under the pressure from home, the grocer, and the installment man. Couple this with the well organized propaganda against the CIO and it is understandable why they were taken in by the back-to-work movements. If the CIO has the patience to continue working in the areas, will undertake to educate the men, and develop leaders from their numbers, Little Steel will be forced to recognize the union. Little Steel has become the Verdun in the conflict between labor and capital in the steel industry, and a victory for labor will be as vital as that battle was to the Allied forces.

With an understanding of the nature of the struggles in steel, we can turn our attention to the Negro worker. Previously, the Negro steel worker had been denied entrance to the unions. He was employed in the menial jobs,

and the old Amalgamated was not interested in him or in any unskilled workman. But with the coming of the CIO and the active policy of industrial unionism, an earnest effort has been made to get the colored workers into the union. When Big Steel signed the CIO contract, most of the colored workers in U.S. Steel joined the union. However, they waited at first to see which way the cat jumped. At the Jones and Laughlin Mill the colored men were hesitant about wearing their union buttons until the agreement was actually signed. It is difficult to get accurate figures, but roughly 75,000 Negroes are employed in the steel industry. They have migrated to the steel areas from the South, have little education, and a great deal of their life centers around the church. In the larger cities they live in narrow, ancient, cobble-stoned alleyways, flanked on both sides with densely packed houses. In the smaller towns their houses cluster wearily along the railroad tracks or around the hulking mills.

In talking with many of the Negro steel men in the Pittsburgh area, the writer found a variance of opinions concerning the CIO. Most of the objections were unfounded and came out of a lack of understanding of the principles and operation of the union. However, a few of these adverse opinions might be stated. One man who was a chipper at the Allegheny Steel Co. said that when the company recognized the CIO his wages were raised from \$.83 an hour to \$1.03 an hour. A chipper is a man who works with an automatic hammer and drill and cuts out the imperfections in the steel. The man contended that the company has started "scarfing" a lot of its steel, which is a mechanical method that accomplishes the same results as "chipping." He feels that there will be less work in the future for the chippers. A number of the Negro workers denounced the fact that the more skilled men in some of the larger plants did not allow the Negro man to rest in certain shanties or use the best lavatories and showers, which they reserved for themselves. This, in spite of the fact that the companies had placed these conveniences in the mills for all the workers and did not intend any Jim-Crowism. The men feel this is hardly fair treatment from fellow union workers. The more ambitious colored workers are angered because they are given the worst jobs with little chance for advancement. They want to work as electricians, millwrights, crane operators, and machinists. In answer to the objection that they might not be qualified for these jobs, they say that promising white workers are apprenticed to the skilled men until they can learn the craft. These Negro workers feel that the union

should fight for the same opportunities for the colored men.

The writer talked with some of the white workers in the Pittsburgh district to learn their feelings towards the Negro workers and found that out of the struggles there is slowly growing a kindredship between the two groups. John Dutchman, a CIO director in the Lawrenceville section of Pittsburgh told of how at the beginning of the drive he had to meet with a few colored workers in their homes at night, with the shades down. Later he spoke at their churches and organizations. Gradually he was able to break down their antipathy toward the union. Dutchman said: "It is difficult to organize the Negro workers, but once they are in the union they become good union men."

The colored workers in the Pennsylvania Iron & Steel Company at Tarentum, Pa., can be offered as evidence that the Negro worker will seek the union when opportunities for advancement are not denied him. When fully staffed, the company employs about 350 men, of whom nearly 250 are colored. Every man in the plant belongs to and enthusiastically supports the CIO. The president of the Local is a Negro, Hunter Howell. By their own ruling the local requires their dues to be paid a month in advance of the CIO requirements. Not only must a man belong to the CIO in order to work in the mill, but his dues must be paid up.

The mill is one of the few old "puddling mills" that are still operated. Most of these mills have been replaced by those mills using the blast and open-hearth furnaces. The major principles in the operation of the plant are not difficult for the layman to understand. Pig iron billets are heated in small furnaces by crews of two or three men under the charge of one man who is called a puddler. The iron is constantly turned by the men, who work before the withering heat of the furnaces with long iron rods. The white hot iron is worked until it is roughly the shape of a large ball. When the puddler feels that the iron is sufficiently heated, it is taken out of the furnaces with a big clamp. Then it is rushed along a stationary cable, dripping hot iron and slag all the while, until it is pushed into the rollers. The rollers are a series of cylinders in constant motion. Where the iron strikes the rollers it is pressed out like biscuit dough. After its trip through the rollers, the iron is passed out into the yard in the desired shape. In this case, strips averaging eighteen feet in length, six inches in width, and half an inch in thickness were the result. When the strips are cooled they are sent to the finishing mill. Here

the iron is reheated to rid it of imperfections and sent through another set of rollers. But, at this point, the iron is finished in long, round strips to be cut into bolt forms.

The company's chief product is a bolt used in the linings of engines called the "Lewis Staybolt." In the trade it is considered one of the finest products of its kind. This is very significant when it is considered that colored workers in the mill are employed in skilled capacities. There are colored rollers, puddlers, and millwrights. Joe Langston, the head roller, is a Negro.

The writer interviewed Mr. W.A. Hicks, the president of the mill, and his superintendent, Mr. John Davis. Mr. Hicks was well satisfied with his colored workers and found them equally efficient as the white workers. Mr. Hicks said that he did not practice racial discrimination in the mill, and that the colored workers could advance according to their abilities. When white workers applied for jobs they were not considered if they did not care to work with colored men.

In the plant, as well as on the outside, there is a fine relationship between the workers. They live near each other. Their children play together in a large ballfield back of the mill. The writer took some pictures of Howell, the president of the local, in the mill yard. After snapping several pictures, one of the white workmen came over and asked the writer to take his picture with Howell. When the picture was completed, the white worker said, "I wanted you to take my picture with Howell because he's my best friend in the mill. And if I'm not his friend he hasn't a friend in this mill."

And finally, the picture of American life is changing. Along with his white brothers the Negro steel worker is being tested in the might cauldron of American life. The Negro leaders, as well as the leaders of labor, must spend time and patience in considering his problems. His own leaders from out of the ranks must be developed. The outworn patterns of his thinking must be recreated. If this is done, the Negro steel-worker will be moulded into a powerful unit in the ranks of organized labor.

Eighteen years later [after the 1919 organizing drive] - years characterized by a hesitating, timid and stupid policy on the part of union officials - there appears a new, progressive and vigorous force determined to organize steel workers: The Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) and its Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC). The CIO is made up of 12 powerful trade unions having a membership of 1,250,000, or more than one-third of all organized workers in America. In the treasuries of these unions are several millions of dollars. In the employ of these unions are hundreds of trained organizers. At the head of these unions are men who have indicated their liberal views. In certain of these unions (unfortunately not all), especially the United Mine Workers of America, The Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the International Ladies Garment Workers, are leaders who have shown sympathetic interest in Negro workers and their problems.

The Steel Workers Organizing Committee set up by the CIO began its campaign with one-half million dollars available. It has employed several hundred full time and part time organizers. It has established hundreds of mill committees of steel workers and has several thousand volunteer organizers in the field. Unlike the campaign of 1918-19, it has begun its organizational campaign in practically every steel plant in the country. Unlike that campaign also, it has by issuance of secret membership cards, prevented dismissals by the company of men who join the union. It has indicated in many ways a fair policy towards Negro workers. Of most importance is the fact that steel workers are being organized into one big industrial union, instead of 24 separate craft unions.

In this great campaign the National Negro Congress has played some part. It has supplied one full time and several part time organizers at its own expense; and has recommended several others who have been employed. In key communities it has organized corps of volunteer organizers. It has carried on educational campaigns among all elements of the Negro community in support of the drive. It has published already some 20,000 leaflets especially designed to meet the questions of Negro steel workers. And before this article is published it will have distributed many more thousands of leaflets, placed in the field additional corps of volunteer and paid organizers and carried through

a program of at least four radio broadcasts for Negro steel workers in pivotal areas. It will lend its every energy to the success of this campaign.

It may be asked why the National Negro Congress, woefully weak financially, should use its slight funds to supplement those of the financially well equipped Steel Workers Organizing Committee. No better answer can be found than in the statement of the President of the Congress, A. Philip Randolph, writing a little more than a year ago:

"Not only must Negro workers organize themselves, but what is as important they must pay the price in suffering, sacrifice and struggle. Even if the A.F. of L. could and would organize the Negro workers, without Negro workers going through the ordeal of fire of suffering, struggle and sacrifice, it would be more of a bane than a benefit, for Negroes would lack the experience, the class perception, courage and vision that are only born in a struggle for power."

Thus it must be the task of the Congress - as a federation of organizations - and of other organizations and individuals, to seek with every possible energy to recruit scores of thousands of Negro steel workers into the steel workers union. It should, of course, be understood that in rendering sincere and honest aid to this campaign, the Negro organizations supporting it are not writing the CIO a blank check; nor, indeed, must it be supposed that the CIO wishes us to. Once Negro workers are in the union, it must be our task and theirs to see to it that there is complete trade union democracy, with Negroes entitled to every office and every privilege granted other members. We must see to it that Negro steel workers have a part in the formulation of all union demands and the making of all agreements, to the end that once and for all inequalities in jobs, labor conditions and wages will be abolished. "Plan Eleven" in the steel industry must be no more. But it must be obvious that the best guarantee of fair treatment both by union officials and employers will be found in the solid organization of the nearly 85,000 Negro workers in the industry.

Not for themselves alone, but for all Black America, will Negro steel workers strike a telling blow for economic freedom by organization. For them it will mean the end of intolerable wage slavery. But 85,000 Negro steel workers with union cards will signal the beginning of the organization of all Negro workers. They will mark a start toward the liberation of hundreds of thousands of Negro sharecroppers, of hundreds of thousands of Negro women sweating away their lives as domestics. This will mean the winning of powerful

allies in our struggle for democratic rights and civil liberties.

Negro steel workers cannot sit between two stools. They must choose between joining the union with their white fellow workers and taking the side of their slave driving employers. One road leads to a bright new day, the other leads to ruin. But what Negro men and women, who are not steel workers, must clearly see is that they too must make this choice; either, by lethargy and unconcern, to forfeit the chance to win economic freedom; or by active and unselfish aid in this drive to write a Magna Charta for black labor.

# 55

I AM A DOMESTIC (1940)

They just can't be as bad as they seem to me - these women I have worked for as a domestic. After all, I knew many fine women in various capacities before I was forced, as a penniless widow of forty, to go out to service in order to earn a living for my child and myself.

No, she can't be as bad as she seems, this average woman who hires a maid - so overbearing, so much a slavedriver, so unwilling to grant us even a small measure of human dignity. But I have had three years of experience in at least a dozen households to bear eloquent witness to the contrary.

Of course I am speaking of the average woman. There must be many exceptions. But in my experience the only exception I encountered was a woman whose friends thought her a trifle crazy.

It was true that she employed me by way of astrology - that is, of all the many applicants she figured that my date of birth showed that we would get on well together. I cooked for her one week by astrology and by a color chart the next. That is, our dinner would be entirely purple one day - eggplant, purple cabbage, and beets; and next it would consist of golden corn, yellow squash, carrots, and oranges. And sometimes, poor dear, she would ask me to sit by her bed and talk to her all night to keep her awake because she feared dying in her sleep.

Take this matter of inconsiderateness, of downright selfishness. No other women workers have the slave hours we domestics have. We usually work from twelve to fourteen hours a day, seven days a week, except for our pitiful little "Thursday afternoon off." The workday itself is often nerve-racking.



Try broiling a steak to a nice turn in the kitchen while a squalling baby in the next room, in need of a dry diaper, tries to protect himself from his brother, aged two, who insists on experimenting on a baby's nose with a hammer. See how your legs can ache after being on them from 7:00 A.M. until 9:00 P.M., when you are finishing that last mountain of dishes in the pantry! Know how little you care for that swell dinner you cooked when it comes to you, cold, from the table at 8:00 P.M.

Our wages are pitifully small. I doubt if wages for domestics average higher anywhere than in New York City; and here \$45 a month is good for a "refined woman, good cook, and fond of children." I often wonder just what they mean by "refined." I remember one woman to whom I applied saying: "Say - Wadda ya mean? Usin' better English 'an I do askin' me fer a job! Git out."

Then there was the old lady in "reduced circumstances" whose sick husband tried to earn a living as a door-to-door salesman. I'm sure she could not afford a maid, even a part time one at \$6 a week. She was unhappy, had little to do, and took it out by standing over me at each little task.

One day I was glad to see she had borrowed a book from a lending library. I thought that now, engrossed in her book, she would leave me alone. Unwisely I said: "I see you are reading ————. I read it last year and enjoyed it." Mrs. S——— looked at me forbiddingly and merely grunted. Later she followed me to the kitchen and whispered: "Naomi, do you read?" I looked at her bewildered. "Read? Why, of course I read!" Then the point of the question dawned on me. I had to laugh. "You mean, Mrs. S———, do I read instead of getting on with my work when you are out? No, I don't do that."

Then there was the grandma in the household of Southern folk, a fat old lady who would call me away from anything I was doing to help her dress. "Naomi, please fasten my garters - I can't reach," or "Tie my shoes - I hate leaning over!" After I had been in that household a week I found the three-year-old calling me "Naomi Noble" instead of my own name. Grandma explained: "Down South we always call our niggers by our own last name, so here we'll call you 'Naomi Noble.'"

These women are so contradictory. They want someone "good with children"; yet when we turn out to be really good - that is, interested, kindly, and intelligent in our handling of their spoiled offspring - they are likely as not to resent the fact that we have succeeded where they failed. They hate the

feeling that a "low" domestic worker can do anything better than they.

It is not only the long hours, the small pay, and the lack of privacy - we often have to share a room with the children - that we maids find hardest to bear. It is being treated most of the time as though we are completely lacking in human dignity and self-respect. During my first year at this work I was continually hopeful. But now I know that when I enter that service elevator I should park my self-respect along with the garbage that clutters it. Self-respect is a luxury I cannot retain and still hold my job. My last one was a good example of this.

As such jobs go, it was a good one. It was "part time." That is, I worked as cook nine instead of the customary twelve to fourteen hours per day. My Sundays were free. My wage was \$40 per month, and I "slept out." After my last ride down with the garbage I could hurry home to the furnished room I shared with my schoolgirl daughter. My employer, Mrs. B——, was the wife of a fashionable doctor. And another person worked with me as a chambermaid. She was a little French girl, new in America, and just learning our language. We two got along splendidly.

Mrs. B——'s apartment was huge. But Lucille and I together kept it immaculate. However, no matter how much we scoured and dusted on hands and knees Mrs. B—— could always find imaginary dust. "Now Naomi," or "Lucille - you know you're lying when you say you cleaned under the settee!" Mrs. B—— was a hypochondriac who drank too much. One day she would be maudlin, the next vindictive. "Now you know I'm no slavedriver and you know there's little work to do around here - why can't you do it well instead of just trying to get by?" Or, "What's happened to all that butter I got yesterday?" The idea being that I had stolen some of it. And I would answer respectfully, minutely accounting for the disposal of the butter. We domestics, whatever our background, are supposed to be natural born thieves. "Lucille! You took my box of candy!"

"No, madame!" with a flash of peasant temper, banging open several bureau drawers, "here is your candy where you yourself put it, madame!"

No apology. Why apologize. We needed our jobs, didn't we?

Mrs. B—— was forever giving me orders as to just how many minutes to cook a certain dish - corned, beef, for instance! Of course the only way to get around this was to listen respectfully, say: "Yes, Mrs. B——," and then

go ahead and cook it as it should be cooked. I had learned early that Mrs. B—— would tolerate no discussion on such matters. That was "talking back" or "impudence." She was always talking about a legendary Negro cook she had once had for six, eight, or ten years (the time varied according to the low or high of the whisky bottle) who in all that time had never "answered back."

"Mrs. B—— is the one beeg liar," Lucille would whisper at such times. Lucille, by the way, in learning English, had also acquired some fine cusswords. She enjoyed muttering, when Mrs. B—— had been especially trying: "Son o' de beech! Son o' de beech!"

Healthy Lucille came down with a heavy cold, and finally, after trying to conceal her misery had to go to bed for three days. Mr. B—— berated her soundly for not having told her. The truth was Lucille knew that when I had been sick for two days my pay had been docked, and she feared the same thing happening to her. While she was ill I did her work as well as my own; but there was no extra pay in my envelope at the end of the month.

When Mrs. B—— had hired me my hours were to be from noon until after dinner. Dinner was to be at seven. But soon dinner was set ahead to seven-thirty and then to eight. Which meant that I did not get through till nine or ten. Mrs. B—— would say: "Now, Naomi, don't rush yourself to have dinner just on the dot - it doesn't matter to us whether it's at eight or eight-thirty. We like to sit around and sip our cocktails."

We dared not say: "But it matters a lot to us whether we finish at eight or ten!"

Lucille and I both met our Waterloo in the following fashion. I had cooked a huge dinner for many guests - we always had company besides the ordinary family of five - and it was 9:00 P.M. before we two sat down to our meal, both too tired to eat.

Suddenly the bell rang furiously and Lucille came back, flushed with anger. "She say to put the cake right on the ice!"

Soon the bell rang again. "Is that cake on the ice?" called out Mrs. B——.

I sang out. "We've just started our dinner, Mrs. B——."

Later I said to Lucille: "Does she think we're horses or dogs that we can eat in five minutes - either a coltie or a Kiltie?" (Kiltie was the dog.) Lucille, who loved such infantile jokes, broke into peals of laughter.

In a second Mrs. B—— was at our side, very angry. She had been eaves-

dropping in the pantry. "I heard every word you said!"

"Well, Mrs. B——, we're not horses or dogs, and we have been eating only five minutes!"

"You've been a disturbing influence in this house ever since you've been here!" Mrs. B—— thundered. "Before you came Lucille thought I was a wonderful woman to work for - and tonight you may take your wages and go. Tomorrow, Lucille, your aunt is to come, and we shall see whether you go too!"

I wanted to tell her what I thought of her, but for Lucille's sake I kept quiet. At last at the door I offered my hand to Lucille, saying: "Here is my address."

"I am not interested!" she cried dramatically, throwing the paper to the floor.

I felt suddenly slapped. But from the pleading look in Lucille's eyes, I understood. Mrs. B—— was still in the pantry, and poor Lucille was thinking of her stern French aunt and that she would get no references after ten months' work.

They have us there! For a petty whim they can withhold that precious bit of paper without which it is hard for us to obtain another ticket to slavery. I knew, in my case, I would never get a reference from Mrs. B——. So I did not ask for one, but rode on down for the last time with the garbage.

Jobless, and with only \$15 between us and starvation, I still felt a wild sense of joy. For just a few days I should be free and self-respecting!

THE AMERICAN NEGRO LABOR CONGRESS (1930)

# 56

What It Is: The American Negro Labor Congress is an organization uniting Negro workers and class-conscious white workers in a common struggle against racial, social and economic oppression.

What It Stands For: The American Negro Labor Congress stands for a militant and uncompromising struggle against all forms of white ruling-class terrorism: lynchings, etc.; against the attempts of the employers to set one group of workers against the other in order to continue more easily their exploitation of both black and white workers. The American Negro Labor Congress stands for

the right of workers to organize for self-defense.

The American Negro Labor Congress fights relentlessly the fakers in the American Federation of Labor who deliberately aid the employers by refusal to organize the unorganized, by barring Negroes from membership in existing unions and discriminating against the few who have fought their way into these unions in spite of every attempt to keep them out. The American Negro Labor Congress not only fights against the oppressors and exploiters of black and white labor, and their tools and allies in the reactionary American Federation of Labor, but against the treacherous middle-class Negro leaders who have consistently betrayed and fooled the Negro masses and whose leadership of the race, heretofore unchallenged, has been one long record of cowardly wavering and out and out treachery to the interests of the masses. The American Negro Labor Congress stands for a stern struggle against all enemies of the working class and for the linking up of the struggles of the American Negro workers with the struggles of the enslaved colonial masses and of the class-conscious white workers in all countries.

In order successfully to resist the attacks of the employers, the workers must be organized into industrial unions on a basis of complete equality and full participation by the Negro workers in the leadership of the unions.

In order successfully to resist white ruling class terrorism in the South and fight for the right to determine their own form of government in those sections where Negroes form the majority of the population, the Negro masses of the South must have the active support of the Negro workers in the North and of the white workers, North and South. Negro and white workers must make this fight together! There must be more instances of working-class solidarity as at Gastonia, N.C., where Southern white and Negro workers stood shoulder to shoulder, under the leadership of the National Textile Workers Union (affiliated with the T.U.U.L.), against the mill owners and their racial hostility propaganda.

What It Has Done: The American Negro Labor Congress during the four years of its existence has led many struggles of the Negro workers against exploitation on the job, oppressive landlordism and bad housing conditions, discrimination in public places, white ruling class terrorism: lynching, police brutality, savage sentences, extradition of Negro workers to the South to face harsh

prison conditions and possible lynching.

The American Negro Labor Congress led the Fig and Date workers strike in Chicago, Ill., the laundry workers' strike in Carteret, N.J.; the Moving Picture Operators' strike in New York City, and gave active support to many other struggles of Negro and white workers, including the recent Subway workers' strike in New York City. It has supported all efforts to organize the industries in which Negroes work.

The American Negro Labor Congress has helped the harassed Negro tenants to organize to fight the landlords, their rent raises and evictions. It has led the way in organizing several tenant leagues throughout the country.

The American Negro Labor Congress has organized and led demonstrations of black and white workers against restaurants and theatres which discriminate against Negroes.

The American Negro Labor Congress, in cooperation with other militant working-class organizations (such as the International Labor Defense, the Workers International Relief, the Trade Union Unity League and its affiliated unions, the All-America Anti-Imperialist League, etc.) has carried on an extensive agitation against the influence of the imperialist ideology of racial separation and hostility among the working class, and has been able, in many instances, to get Negro and white workers to co-operate in their common struggle.

The American Negro Labor Congress sent delegates to both the first and second congresses of the League Against Imperialism and aided materially in organizing the world-wide front of the workers and colonial masses against world imperialism.

What It Is Doing: In its task of organizing the Negro workers and farmers, North and South, to resist the growing attacks of the bosses, the American Negro Labor Congress is calling its national convention in May, 1930. In its determination to carry the fight into the South, St. Louis, Mo., has been selected for the convention.

The American Negro Labor Congress is also one of the chief sponsors for the international conference of Negro workers called for July, 1930, in London, England.

The Congress is holding mass meetings throughout the country protesting the conditions under which Negroes are forced to live in this country, protesting the American occupation of Haiti, and mobilizing the masses, black and

white, for the struggle for Negro liberation.

Conclusion: The Negro masses throughout the world are the victims of one of the most monstrous systems of exploitation the world has known. In Africa, the West Indies, the United States, etc., our lot is that of an oppressed and exploited subject race. Mob violence, lynching, peonage, segregation, debt imprisonment, convict lease labor laws, jim-crowism, denial of education, are some of the methods used by the landowners and employers, in collusion with the banks, courts and police, to enslave the Negro masses.

These terrible conditions, which face the Negro not only in the South but throughout the imperialist world, call for effective organization and militant methods of struggle on the part of the Negro workers and farmers, in alliance with the class-conscious white workers.

It is futile to expect the wavering, treacherous middle-class Negro leaders to give militant leadership to the struggles of the masses. Such leadership can only come from the workers in the factories and shops who constitute the membership of the American Negro Labor Congress. Only through trained, intelligent and courageous working-class leadership can the masses resist oppression and achieve real emancipation.

Every Negro worker and farmer should join the American Negro Labor Congress. Every class-conscious white worker should give it his support.

Join the American Negro Labor Congress!

Build Working-Class Leadership!

Help Organize the Unorganized Into Militant Industrial Unions!

Fight the A.F. of L. Fakers!

Expose the Negro Reformist Leaders!

Protest the Murder of Haitian Workers and Peasants by United States Imperialists!

Demand Immediate Withdrawal of Marines from Haiti, Nicaragua and China!

Fight Against Imperialist Wars!

Down With U.S. Imperialism!

Down With World Imperialism!

Long Live the Heroic Workers and Peasants of Haiti!

## THE STRUGGLE OF UNEMPLOYED WORKERS: (1933)

"Gentlemen of the Jury: I would like to explain in detail the nature of my case and the reason why I was locked up. I recall back about the middle of June 1932, when the Relief Agencies of the City of Atlanta, the County Commission and the city government as a whole, were cutting both Negro and white workers off relief. We all know that there were citizens who suffered from unemployment. There were hundreds and thousands of Negroes and whites who were each day looking for work, but in those days there was no work to be found.

"The Unemployment Council, which has connection with the Unemployed Committees of the United States, after 23,000 families had been dropped from the relief rolls, started to organize the Negro and white workers of Atlanta on the same basis, because we know that their interests are the same. The Unemployment Council understood that in order to get relief, both races would have to organize together and forget about the question whether those born with a white skin are 'superior' and those born with a black skin are 'inferior.' They both were starving and the capitalist class would continue to use this weapon to keep them further divided. The policy of the Unemployment Council is to organize Negroes and whites together on the basis of fighting for unemployment relief and unemployment insurance at the expense of the state. The Unemployment Council of Atlanta issued those leaflets after the relief had been cut off, which meant starvation for thousands of people here in Atlanta. The leaflets called upon the Negro and white workers to attend a meeting at the court house building on a Thursday morning. I forget the exact date. This action was initiated as the result of statements handed out to the local press by County Commissioners who said that there was nobody in the City of Atlanta starving, and if there were, those in need should come to the offices of the Commissioners and the matter would be looked into. That statement was made by Commissioner Hendrix.

"The Unemployment Council pointed out in its circulars that there were thousands of unemployed workers in the City of Atlanta who faced hunger and starvation. Therefore, they were called upon to demonstrate in this court house building, about the middle part of June. When the Committee came down to the court house, it so happened that Commissioner Hendrix was not present that morning. There were unemployed white women with their babies almost naked and without shoes to go on their feet, and there were also Negro women



with their little babies actually starving for the need of proper nourishment, which had been denied them by the county of Fulton and State of Georgia and City of Atlanta as well.

"Well, the Negro and white workers came down to the Commissioners' office to show that there was starvation in the City of Atlanta and that they were in actual need of food and proper nourishment for their kids, which they never did receive. I think Commissioner Stewart was in the office at that time. The white workers were taken into his room and the Negroes had the door shut in their faces. This was done with the hope of creating racial animosity in order that they would be able to block the fight that the Negro and white workers were carrying on - a determined fight to get relief. The white workers were told: 'Well, the county hasn't any money, and of course, you realize the depression and all that but we haven't got the money.' We knew that the country did have money, but were using it for their own interest, and not for the interest of the Negro workers or white workers, either way. They talked to the white workers some considerable time, but when the white workers came out, they had just about as much results as the Negroes did - only a lot of hot air blown over them by the Commissioners, which didn't put any shoes on their little babies' feet and no milk in their stomachs to give them proper nourishment. No one disputed the fact they did keep the Negroes on the outside, but the white workers were in the same condition that their Negro brothers were in. In spite of the fact that the County Commissioners had published statements to the effect that there was no money in the country treasury to provide unemployment relief for the Negro and white workers, still the next day after the demonstration the County Commissioners voted \$6,000 for relief, mainly because it was shown that for the first time in the history of Atlanta and the State of Georgia, Negro and white workers did join together and did go to the Commissioners and demand unemployment insurance. Have not they worked in the City of Atlanta, in different industries, different shops and other industrial concerns located in Atlanta for all their years, doing this work, building up the city where it is at the present time? And now, when they were in actual need of food to hold their bodies together, and when they came before the state and county officials to demand something to hold their bodies together, they were denied it. The policy of the Unemployment Council is to organize these workers and demand those things that are denied them.

They have worked as slaves, and are entitled to a decent living standard. And, of course, the workers will get it if you ever organize them.

"After the successful demonstration, the solicitor's office had two detectives stationed at the post office to arrest anyone who came to take mail out of box 339. On Monday, July 11, 1932, I went to the post office to get mail from this box and was arrested by detectives, Mr. Watson and Mr. Chester. I had organized unemployed workers, Negro and white, of Atlanta, and forced the County Commissioners to kick in \$6,000 for unemployment relief. For this I was locked up in the station house and held eleven days without even any kind of charges booked against me. I was told at the station house that I was being held on 'suspicion.' Of course, they knew what the charges were going to be, but in order to hold me in jail and give me the dirtiest kind of inhuman treatment that one could describe, they held me there eleven days without any charge whatsoever until my attorney filed a writ of habeas corpus demanding that they place charges against me or turn me loose. It was about the 22nd of July, and I still hadn't been indicted; there had been three sessions of the grand jury, and my case had been up before them each time, but still there was no indictment. This was a deliberate plot to hold me in jail. At the habeas corpus hearing, the judge ordered that if I wasn't indicated the next day by 2:30, I should be released. Solicitor Hudson assured the judge that here would be an indictment, which, of course, there was. Ever since then I have been cooped up in Fulton County Tower, where I have spent close to six months - I think the exact time was five months and three weeks. But I want to describe some of the horrible experiences that I had in Fulton Tower. I was placed in a little cell there with a dead body and forced to live there with the dead body because I couldn't get out of the place. The man's name was William Wilson, who fought in the Spanish-American war for the American principles, as we usually call it. He was there on a charge of alimony. His death came as a result of the rotten food given to all prisoners, and for the want of medical attention. The county physician simply refused to give this man any kind of attention whatsoever. After three days of illness, he died, and I was forced to live there with him until the undertaker came and got him. These are just some of the things that I experience in jail. I was also sick myself. I could not eat the food they gave me as well as hundreds of other prisoners. For instance, they give you peas and beans for one

dinner, and at times you probably get the same thing three times a week. You will find rocks in it, and when you crack down on it with your teeth, you don't know what it is, and you spit it out and there it is. They have turnip greens, and just as they are pulled up out of the ground and put in the pot, with sand rocks and everything else. But that's what you have to eat, otherwise you don't live. For breakfast they feed grits that look as if they were baked instead of boiled, a little streak of grease running through them, about two strips of greasy fatback. That is the main prison fare, and you eat it or else die from starvation. I was forced to go through all of this for five months without a trial. My lawyers demanded a trial time after time, but somehow the state would always find a reason to postpone it.

"They knew that the workers of Atlanta were starving, and by arresting Angelo Herndon on a charge of attempting to incite insurrection the unity of Negro and white workers that was displayed in the demonstration that forced the County Commissioners to kick in with \$6,000 would be crushed forever. They locked Angelo Herndon up on such charges. But I can say this quite clearly, if the State of Georgia and the City of Atlanta think that by locking up Angelo Herndon, the question of unemployment will be solved, I say you are deadly wrong. If you really want to do anything about the case, you must go out and indict the social system. I am sure that if you would do this, Angelo Herndon would not be on trial here today, but those who are really guilty of insurrection would be here in my stead. But this you will not do, for your role is to defend the system under which the toiling masses are robbed and oppressed. There are thousands of Negro and white workers who, because of unemployment and hunger, are organizing. If the state wants to break up this organization, it cannot do it by arresting people and placing them on trial for insurrection, insurrection laws will not fill empty stomachs. Give the people bread. The officials knew then that the workers were in need of relief, and they know now that the workers are going to organize and get relief.

"After being confined in jail for the long period of time that I have already mentioned, I was sick for several weeks. I asked for aid from the county physician and was refused that; the physician came and looked through the bars at me and said: 'What's the matter with you?' I told him 'I'm sick, can't swallow water, my chest up here is tight and my stomach absolutely out of order, seems as if I am suffering with ulcers or something.' He would

answer: 'Oh, there's nothing the matter with you, you're all right.' I explained: 'I know my condition. I know how I'm feeling.' He said: 'You will be all right.' Through friends I was able to get some medicine; otherwise I would have died.

"On Christmas Eve I was released. My bail was once \$3,000 but they raised it to \$5,000 and from that up to \$25,000, just in order to hold me in jail, but you can hold this Angelo Herndon and hundreds of others, but it will never stop these demonstrations on the part of Negro and white workers, who demand a decent place to live in and proper food for their kids to eat.

"I want to say also that the policy of the Unemployment Council is to carry on a constant fight for the rights of the Negro people. We realize that unless Negro and white workers are united together, they cannot get relief. The capitalist class teaches race hatred to Negro and white workers and keep it going all the time, tit for tat, the white worker running after the Negro worker and the Negro worker running after the white worker, and the capitalist becomes the exploiter and the robber of them both. We of the Unemployment Council are out to expose such things. If there were not any Negroes in the United States, somebody would have to be used as the scapegoat. There would still be a racial question, probably the Jews, or the Greeks, or somebody. It is in the interest of the capitalist to play one race against the other, so greater profits can be realized from the working people of all races. It so happens that the Negro's skin is black, therefore making it much easier for him to be singled out and used as the scapegoat.

"I don't have to go so far into my case, no doubt some of you jurymen sitting over there in that box right now are unemployed and realize what it means to be without a job, when you tramp the streets day in and day out looking for work and can't find it. You know it is a very serious problem and the future looks so dim that you sometimes don't know what to do, you go nuts and want to commit suicide or something. But the Unemployment Council points out to the Negro and white workers that the solution is not in committing suicide, that the solution can only be found in the unity and organization of black and white workers. In organization the workers have strength. Now, why do I say this? I say it because it is to the interest of the capitalist class that the workers be kept down all of the time so they can make as much profit as they possibly can. So, on the other hand, it is to the interest of Negro and white

workers to get as much for their work as they can - that is, if they happen to have any work. Unfortunately, at the present time there are millions of workers in the United States without work, and the capitalist class, the state government, city government and all other governments, have taken no steps to provide relief for those unemployed. And it seems that this question is left up to the Negro and white workers to solve, and they will solve it by organizing and demanding the right to live, a right that they are entitled to. They have built up this country, and are therefore entitled to some of the things they have produced. Not only are they entitled to such things, but it is their right to demand them. When the State of Georgia and the City of Atlanta raised the question of inciting to insurrection and attempting to incite to insurrection, or attempting to overthrow the government, all I can say is, that no matter what you do with Angelo Herndon, no matter what you do with the Angelo Herndons in the future, this question of unemployment, the question of unity between Negro and white workers cannot be solved with hands that are stained with the blood of an innocent individual. You may send me to my death, as far as I know. I expect you to do that anyway, so that's beside the point. But no one can deny these facts. The present system under which we are living today is on the verge of collapse; it has developed to its highest point and now it is beginning to shake. For instance, you can take a balloon and blow so much air in it, and when you blow too much it bursts; so with the system we are living under - of course, I don't know if that is insurrection or not!"

## 58

## "THE MARCHING SONG OF FIGHTING BROTHERHOOD" (1920s)

Many blacks knew the words of "The Marching Song of the Fighting Brotherhood," set to the tune of "My Old Kentucky Home":

We will sing one song of the meek and humble slave  
 The horn-handed son of toil  
 He's toiling hard from the cradle to the grave  
 But his masters reap the profit of his toil.  
 Then we'll sing one song of our one Big Brotherhood  
 The hope of the Porters and Maids  
 It's coming fast it is sweeping sea and wood  
 To the terror of the grafters and the slaves.

(Chorus)

Organize! Oh Porters come organize your might,  
 Then we'll sing one song of our one Big Brotherhood,  
 Full of beauty, full of love and light.

## 59

## "OUR THING IS DRUM" (1960s)

Of all the developments since 1968 that have symbolized the emergence of black power in the unions, the most widely publicized is the "black worker insurgency in Detroit." To many young black militants (as to many white radicals), black power in the unions is summed up by the following poem in praise of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM):

Deep in the gloom of the fire-filled pit  
 Where the Dodge rolls down the line,  
 We challenge the doom while dying in shit  
 While strangled by a swine...  
 For hours and years with sweated tears  
 Trying to break our chain...  
 But we broke our backs and died in packs  
 To find our manhood slain...  
 But now we stand for DRUM's at hand  
 To lead our freedom fight,  
 And now till then we'll unite like men  
 For now we know our might...  
 And damn the plantations and the whole Dodge nation...  
 For DRUM has dried our tears...  
 And now as we die we have a different cry  
 For now we hold our spears!  
 UAW is scum...  
 OUR THING IS DRUM!!!

DRUM: "DARE TO FIGHT! DARE TO WIN!" (1968)

I. Preamble

We the super-exploited black workers of Chrysler's Hamtramch Assembly Plant recognize the historic role that we must play and the grave responsibility that is ours in the struggle for the liberation of black people in racist U.S.A. and people of color around the world from the yoke of oppression that holds all of us in the chains of slavery to this country's racist exploitative system. Because we recognize the magnitude of the problem and the dire predicament of our people, we do here proclaim our solemn duty to take this the first step on the road to final victory over the great common enemy of humanity; i.e. the monstrous U.S.A. and the aforementioned system of exploitation and degradation.

We fully understand after 5 centuries under this fiendish system and the heinous savages that it serves, namely the white racist owners and operators of the means of production. We further understand that there have been previous attempts by our people in this country to throw off this degrading yoke of brutal oppression, which have ended in failure. Throughout our history, black workers, first slaves and later as pseudo-freedmen, have been in the vanguard of potentially successful revolutionary struggles both in all black movements as well as in integrated efforts. As examples of these we would cite: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the beautiful Haitian Revolution; the slave revolts led by Nat Turner; Denmark Vesey and Gabriel Prosser; the Populist Movement, and the labor movement of the 30's in this country. Common to all of these movements were two things, their failure and the reason why they failed. These movements failed because they were betrayed from within or in the case of the integrated movements by the white leadership exploiting the racist nature of the white workers they led. We, of course, must avoid this pitfall and purge our ranks of any traitors and lackeys that may succeed in penetrating this organization. At this point we loudly proclaim that we have learned our lesson from history and we shall not fail. So it is that we who are the hope of black people and oppressed people everywhere dedicate ourselves to the cause of liberation to build the world anew, realizing that only a struggle led by black workers can triumph our powerful reactionary enemy.

## II. Purpose and objective

Our purpose is to come together as black workers to relieve the long suffering of our people under this demon system of racist exploitation. Our sole objective is to break the bonds of white racist control over the lives and destiny of black workers with the full understanding that when we successfully carry out this mammoth task, relief will be brought to people all over the world oppressed by our common enemy. With stakes so high the enemy will undoubtedly resist with great ferocity, this tide of change that will sweep over him and his system like a mighty storm.

We must gear ourselves in the days ahead toward getting rid of the racist, tyrannical, and unrepresentative UAW as representation for black workers, so that with this enemy out of the way we can deal directly with our main adversary, the white racist management of Chrysler Corporation. In this way we will be able to overcome the obstacle that the enemy has erected between himself and black workers that denies us the necessary confrontation in order to bring down this racist exploitative system.

## III. Procedure

To reach our objectives, DRUM shall be a democratic organization demanding the full participation of all members. Our concept of democracy being, of course, different from the pseudo-democracy of the UAW and other so-called democratic institutions in this dictatorial land. Each member is required to prepare himself for full participation in the activities and discussions of DRUM through study and understanding the problems we face in carrying out our program. In our discussion, all relevant ideas should be raised and deliberated upon. And in our activities, great care must be exercised in planning and carrying them out to ensure their success. Meetings shall be chaired by an appointed chairman and an agenda will be circulated prior to meetings. Members will be required to exercise discipline over themselves to ensure an orderly meeting.

## IV. Rules governing membership

Membership in DRUM will be contingent upon a member's ability to commit himself to the DRUM program and discharge his responsibilities to this organization. These responsibilities are: (1) Acceptance of the DRUM program which means full and resolute participation in activities and organizational affairs.



(2) A member should be subject to evaluation and criticism of the members of the committee that he serves on. (3) The individual committees should set the criterion whereby membership is democratically granted, denied or withdrawn. (4) Membership is denied to all honkies due to the fact that said honkey has been the historic enemy, betrayer, and exploiter of black people. Any relationship that we enter into with honkies will be only on the basis of coalition over issues. (5) Members should pay their dues on a weekly or monthly basis. Each individual unit will have responsibility of collecting dues as well as deciding when a member is sufficiently delinquent to warrant disciplinary measures.

#### V. Duties of officers

The duties of officers has been outlined in the discussion of structure. It should be further added that all officers are accountable to the membership and should be constantly scrutinized, evaluated, and subjected to constructive criticism in open discussion by his committee. Officers can be removed by a democratic vote within his compartment with recourse to the membership at large if so desired.

We recognize our struggle is not an isolated one and that we have common cause with other black workers in this racist nation and throughout the world. For this reason it is incumbent upon us to foster, join with, initiate and lead other black workers in our common struggle. By being in the forefront of this revolutionary struggle we must act swiftly to help organize DRUM-type organizations wherever there are black workers, be it in Lynn Townsend's kitchen, the White House, White Castle, Ford Rouge, the Mississippi Delta, the plains of Wyoming, the tin mines of Bolivia, the rubber plantation of Indonesia, the oil fields of Biafra, or the Chrysler Plants in South Africa.

Needless to say, our line is the hard line. We are in a life and death struggle that has been raging savagely for 5 centuries. A struggle between master and slave, rich and poor, black and white, beast and prey, management and worker. A struggle which has shown no quarter to the black man and which we now wage and give no quarter. The ruthless and vicious nature of our enemy has brought us to a point where we are now prepared to be as ruthless and vicious, if not more so. All that the honkey has acquired, has been acquired through his exploitation of our people with his brutal tactics of murder, enslavement,

mayhem, and rape. Our line is one of consistent struggle in which we support everything the enemy opposes and oppose everything the honkey supports.

DARE TO FIGHT! DARE TO WIN!

Fight, Fail, Fight again, Fail again - Fight on to Victory!

Long Live Black People in This Racist Land! Death to Their Enemies!

Long Live the Heroic Black Workers Struggle!

Long Live DRUM!

# 61

## THE POWER OF ORGANIZED BLACK LABOR (1967)

Within the ranks of organized labor there are nearly two million Negroes. Not only are they found in large numbers as workers, but they are concentrated in key industries. In the truck transportation, steel, auto and food industries which are the backbone of the nation's economic life, Negroes make up nearly 20 percent of the organized work force, although they are only 10 percent of the general population. This potential strength is magnified further by the fact of their unity with millions of white workers in these occupations. As co-workers there is a basic community of interest that transcends many of the ugly divisive elements of traditional prejudice. There are undeniably points of friction, for example, in certain housing and education questions. But the severity of the abrasions is minimized by the more commanding need for cohesion in union organizations.

If manifestations of race prejudice were to erupt within an organized plant, it would set into motion many corrective forces. It would not flourish as it does in a neighborhood with nothing to inhibit it but morbid observers looking for thrills. In the shop the union officials from highest to lowest levels would be immediately involved, for internal discord is no academic matter; it weakens the union in its contests with the employers. Therefore an important self-interest motivates harmonious race relations. Here Negroes have a substantial weight to bring to bear on all measures of social concern.

The labor movement, especially in its earlier days, was one of the few great institutions where a degree of hospitality and mobility was available to Negroes. When the rest of the nation accepted rank discrimination and

prejudice as ordinary and usual - like the rain, to be deplored but accepted as part of nature - trade unions, particularly the CIO, leveled all barriers to equal membership. In a number of instances Negroes rose to influential national office.

Today the union record in relation to Negro workers is exceedingly uneven, but the potentiality for influencing union decisions still exists. In many of the larger unions the white leadership contains some men of ideals and many more who are pragmatists. Both groups find they are benefited by a constructive relationship to their Negro membership. For those compelling reasons, Negroes, who are almost wholly a working people, cannot be casual toward the union movement. This is true even though some unions remain incontestably hostile.

In days to come, organized labor will increase its importance in the destinies of Negroes. Automation is imperceptibly but inexorably producing dislocations, skimming off unskilled labor from the industrial force. The displaced are flowing into proliferating service occupations. These enterprises are traditionally unorganized and provide low wage scales with longer hours. The Negroes pressed into these services need union protection, and the union movement needs their membership to maintain its relative strength in the whole society. On this new frontier Negroes may well become the pioneers that they were in the early organizing days of the thirties.

The trade union movement in the last two decades, despite its potential strength, has been an inarticulate giant with an unsteady gait, subjected to abuse and confused in its responses. Some circles of labor, after simmering discontent, are now allowing their challenge to vent itself.

The Teamsters Union, ousted some years ago from the AFL-CIO, instead of tottering or perishing, launched an expansion program that has increased its membership to nearly two million. It is not well known that the Teamsters have well over a quarter of a million Negroes in their ranks, with some of the highest rates of pay enjoyed by Negro workers anywhere in industry. In other mass unions new leaders have emerged with a deep commitment to broad social issues.

Recently, Walter Reuther and other leaders of one and a half million auto workers have announced a new policy directed toward a restoration of the crusading spirit that characterized the unions of the past. They have fashioned

a program for organizing the poor, Negro and white, in the South and the North. This will be no simple crusade, because the poor have many problems to overcome even to get into motion. Yet they are so many millions in number that the promise is stirring and its implications are vast.

The emergence of social initiatives by a revitalized labor movement would be taking place as Negroes are placing economic issues on the highest agenda. The coalition of an energized section of labor, Negroes, unemployed and welfare recipients may be the source of power that reshapes economic relationships and ushers in a breakthrough to a new level of social reform. The total elimination of poverty, now a practical possibility, the reality of equality in race relations and other profound structural changes in society may well begin here.

To play our role fully as Negroes we will have to strike for enhanced representation and influence in the labor movement. Our young people need to think of union careers as earnestly as they do of business careers and professions. They could do worse than emulate A. Philip Randolph, who rose to the executive council of the AFL-CIO, and became a symbol of the courage, compassion and integrity of an enlightened labor leader. Indeed, the question may be asked why we have produced only one Randolph in nearly half a century. Discrimination is not the whole answer. We allowed ourselves to accept middle-class prejudices toward the labor movement. Yet this is one of those fields in which higher education is not a requirement for high office. In shunning it, we have lost an opportunity. Let us try to regain it now, at a time when the joint forces of Negro and labor may be facing an historic task of social reform.

THE FIGHT AGAINST THE OPPRESSION OF BLACK PEOPLE IS A FIGHT OF THE WHOLE  
WORKING CLASS (1975)

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The Black people's movement was not just an inspiration to other oppressed nationalities, and to students and youth, women and other sections of the people who were also engaged in sharp struggles against the ruling class during this period. Especially as it developed from simply a civil rights movement into a Black liberation movement aimed more squarely at the imperialist system, it became the main force pushing ahead all other struggles against the capitalist

rulers at that time, including the struggle of the working class itself. At a time when the working class movement was weakened and without a revolutionary vanguard Party, the Black liberation struggle rekindled revolutionary spirit among people of all nationalities, and raised again the question of the overthrow of imperialism.

But this struggle could not accomplish the overthrow of imperialism and the real liberation of Black people. The struggle of Black people can and does deal powerful blows to the monopoly capitalists and to the various forms of discrimination and racist trash they foster to make profit and maintain their power. But by itself it cannot end Black people's oppression because the source of this oppression is capitalist rule. The Black people's struggle alone cannot resolve the basic contradiction of capitalism -- between the working class and the capitalist class -- the contradiction from which all of its evils arise.

Thus, the advance of the Black people's struggle, in bringing up the question of revolution has also brought up the fact that the working class as a whole must lead in making revolution, and that the Black people's struggle must and will be developed as part of the overall working class struggle to overthrow capitalism.

As the links between the Black people's struggle and the general working class struggle grew stronger, as the need for a revolution to smash capitalist rule began to stand out, some forces among Black people, especially the professionals and businessmen, began to waver in their support of the Black liberation movement. Some of these even joined the ranks of the ruling class lackeys, as the imperialists put out more money to build up some Black businesses and bureaucrats in poverty programs, and allowed more openings to Black professionals and intellectuals, in an effort to misdirect the Black people's struggle away from the imperialists themselves and aim it instead at white workers, and workers of other nationalities.

But through their own experience, the masses of Black people are increasingly coming to see that the basic conflict in this country is not between Black and white, but between the handful of rich and the masses of working people of all nationalities. And millions of white workers are also seeing that the Black people's struggle is a powerful part of the same struggle they are engaged in against exploitation and

oppression, and has been a decisive force advancing the workers' movement as a whole to a new stage.

Capitalism by necessity leads to the subjugation of whole nations and nationalities for the purpose of making superprofits. With the development of capitalism into imperialism this national oppression becomes all the more necessary for the capitalists and all the more vicious for its victims.

The history of the development of capitalism in the U.S. is a history of the most savage oppression of the Black, Native American (Indian), Mexican-American, Asian and other minority peoples, as well as the most brutal exploitation of the working class as a whole. The rulers of the U.S. have from the beginning made use of color and race to carry out this oppression, while presenting it as an inevitable result of "racial differences" among the people. Their purpose in this has always been to confuse and divide the masses of all nationalities, and to cover up the fact that this oppression results from the ruling class's plunder of peoples and countries throughout the world, as well as in this country, in the unceasing drive for more profit.

From the beginning the oppressed peoples in the U.S. have fought back against the various forms of their enslavement. And this struggle continues today, more powerfully than ever before, against wage-slavery as part of the U.S. working class, and against subjugation as nationalities.

From being small farmers and sharecroppers in oppressed regions of the U.S. - the deep South and the Southwest in particular - as well as Puerto Rico, Mexico and many other Third World nations, huge populations have been driven by economic necessity and the destruction of warfare to the cities and factories of the northern and southern United States. But occurring as it did under imperialist rule, mainly around and after WW II, this "assimilation" into working class life could not be complete and equal.

Discrimination, the denial of democratic rights, violent police repression, suppression and mutilation of their cultures, exploitation and oppression as members of the working class, with the lowest positions, constantly high unemployment, the lowest paid jobs, the worst housing, the worst of bad health care and other social services - this is daily life for the masses of these nationalities in the U.S. today. And this is what gives rise to the militant struggle of millions against the system that is responsible for it.

From the beginning the struggle of the oppressed nationalities has always

been closely linked with the overall struggle of the working class in the U.S. But today this link can be forged all the more firmly, because the oppressed nationalities are, in their great majority, members of the single U.S. working class and their struggles are immediately and directly bound up with the struggle of the entire class.

Recognizing this and seeing in it the greatest threat to their rule, the imperialists make use of the social antagonisms their national oppression has created, in a desperate attempt to drive a wedge between the struggles of the oppressed nationalities and the working class struggle. But they are bound to fail because the working class is one working class, with one class interest - to end exploitation and all oppression. End national oppression by ending its source, capitalist rule - this is the stand of the working class, and with this stand the workers' movement will unite with it the struggles of the oppressed nationalities to form the solid core of the united front.

To achieve this the working class and its Party applies the policy of building the fight against national oppression as part of the overall class struggle and of "working at it from two sides." This means: mobilize the masses of the oppressed nationalities in the struggle against this oppression, on the one side, and mobilize the working class as a whole to take up this fight, on the other; bring forward the ideology of the proletariat and its common interest in fighting exploitation and all oppression; and in this way merge the national movements with the workers' movement as a revolutionary alliance.

As an inseparable part of this, the Party wages the most consistent and thorough struggle, among the masses and in its own ranks, against the bourgeoisie's ideological props of white chauvinism (in particular the poisonous idea that white Americans are superior to other nationalities who are the "cause of the problems" and that white workers should unite with the imperialists to suppress them), and narrow nationalism (in particular the line that the oppressed nationalities should be concerned only with the advancement of their own nationality and should fight people of other nationalities, especially white workers, for a bigger "piece of the pie").

Capitalist rule forces the masses of people to compete with each other for survival, while keeping the majority of the oppressed nationalities a step behind in the competition. The unity of the workers of all nationalities

can and will be built not in competition over the division of the pie but in the common struggle to take the whole pie and the means to continually enlarge it. For the working class, the fight for equality between nationalities is not a fight to "suffer equally under capitalism" but it is a crucial part of the struggle to eliminate capitalism and the misery it means for the masses.

With this goal, the working class and its Party raises and fights for the following as main demands in the fight against national oppression:

End all discrimination in hiring, promotion and firing.

Equality in education and all social services.

Smash segregation in housing and the extortion of higher rents, taxes, prices and credit and insurance rates in the minority communities.

Equality of culture and language, no privileges for one nationality over another.

End police terror against the oppressed nationalities, stop police murder, brutality and harassment.

These basic demands are aimed against the common oppression of all minority nationalities. But different oppressed nationalities have their own history and particular forms of oppression. In order to build the most solid unity of these different nationalities, together with the working class as a whole, in revolutionary struggle, it is essential to take up these questions.

The sanitation workers of Memphis struck early in 1968 to force the city to bargain with their union. It was while visiting Memphis in support of their protest demonstrations that Martin Luther King was murdered.





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# CHAPTER 8

## THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS, BLACK BUSINESS AND THE PROFESSIONS

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the three major sub-groups of the Black middle class? Discuss the development of the Black middle class during the slave, agricultural, and industrial experiences of Black people.
2. What is the difference between Black capitalism and monopoly capitalism in the United States today?
3. How is the Black middle class different from and similar to the masses of Black working class people?
4. What role can Black middle class forces play in the Black liberation struggle?

### KEY CONCEPTS

Class/Power

Black Capitalism vs Monopoly Capitalism

Middle Class (Petty Bourgeoisie)

Social Status/Prestige

Status vs Class



*The late sixties and early seventies saw more and more black men and women move into management and professional positions.*

All Black people face racist oppression in the USA, but some Black people have achieved a higher standard of living, greater economic independence, and therefore constitute a small privileged group. A middle class sector of the Black community has developed and plays a critical role in the life of the Black community, and in the relationship between the ruling class in the USA and the masses of Black people. However, the Black middle class is vulnerable to changes in the economy to such an extent that the vast majority of them are often forced back into working class conditions whenever there is a downturn or crisis in the economy.

An important distinction must be made between two different concepts: (1) status, meaning one's subjective social position in the community based on the opinions of other people; and (2) class, meaning one's objective social position based on what role is played in the ownership and control of the economy and governmental structures in the society. Status is not based on power. Only those who own the economy and control the government have real power. Our discussion will focus primarily (but not exclusively) on class and power, and not on status.

We can observe the development of this middle class over the historical periods of the development of Black people. During the slave period, there were free Blacks located mainly in a few southern cities and in the North. In fact, some of these people were even owners of slaves themselves (sometimes their family and sometimes Black people whom they worked for profit). Also, the slaves who worked as personal servants for wealthy white people often took on the cultural lifestyle (to the extent that it was possible in speech patterns, wearing hand-me-down clothes, etc.), and maintained a social position based on a higher social status than the other slaves.

In the rural period, a traditional middle class took shape. This was mainly based on artisans, larger farmers (renting tenants and part-owners), a few businessmen and professionals. The above developed primarily in the South. The professionals were mainly ministers and a few teachers. In the North, while there were some shopkeepers and businesspeople (particularly in the area of service such as catering), status was accorded anyone who had a steady, good paying job, especially if it was a clean job like work in the post office.

With the coming of the urban period, changes have occurred which have resulted in the complete transformation of the Black middle class. The farmers have been virtually eliminated, with those few still in existence operating very

marginally. The business sector has been changed from small shop keepers to a few budding industrialists, but mostly tied into large monopoly capitalist firms through franchising and various economic support programs for minority businesses. And the professionals have become the main group with a considerable increase in professional educational opportunities, the opening up of many new professions, and increasing opportunities for Black women.

The US government has played a significant role in the development of the Black middle class. This is critical today as 51% of Black men and 72.1% of Black women who graduate from college are employed by some government agency. A large number of Black professionals are included in this group. In addition, various levels of government are the sources of capital for Black businesses, either directly with public funds or indirectly by giving breaks to private firms who invest in minority business enterprises. The earliest precedent for this (in the transition from the slave period to the rural period) is the Freedman's Bank, a federal agency set up to promote savings among ex-slaves. This venture failed because it did not have the full support of the government and business and because of illegal dealings by those who operated these banks. And it appears that the Black capitalist programs initiated by the infamous President Richard Nixon are heading for the same fate.

It is important to keep in mind that all Black people, regardless of what class they are in, are victimized by racist national oppression, although the more wealth and status one has, the more it is possible to protect oneself from certain attacks. This unity in national oppression is the main basis for the unity of the vast majority of Black people. Of course, some relatively few Black people are so tied to the interests of the ruling class that they are nearly completely the enemies of the masses of Black people. But this is a very small group.

On the other, the privilege that middle class people have is concrete and real. They are able to have better housing, transportation, work less and make more money, their children get better education, better health care, can consume more luxuries, travel more widely, etc. But the other side of this privilege is its vulnerability to crisis. In times like the present, when the US economy is undergoing an all around crisis, the situation of the Black middle class is very much threatened. In fact, one of the obvious aspects of this is that businesses have a very high rate of failure, and the Black community is

filled with empty buildings giving evidence of middle class failure.

In this period of crisis, the Black middle class splits into two groups. The largest group (like gas stations and other businesses that were forced to close during this economic crisis) fails, and is pushed down into the working class. This does not mean that they immediately give up their capitalist aspirations, but it does mean that they lose their immediate source of economic privilege. The smaller group is granted funds and support by the government and private capitalist firms, getting a new lease on life. Often the price for this is more dedicated and loyal service to the interest of the ruling class, even when this means actively working against the interests of the masses of Black people (as in the case of high political appointees in the government).

In general, then, the majority of Black middle class forces share both national (racial) oppression and economic exploitation with the Black masses though in a different form and to a different degree. This means that a concrete basis does exist for unity in struggle. In fact, as will be demonstrated in the second half of this text, the Black middle class has played a significant role in the struggles of Black people. This is one of the major theoretical and practical problems facing Black students and Black people -- the relationship between different class forces and the Black liberation struggle.



Three Harlem beauties during the exciting days of the "Black Renaissance" of the 1920s.

## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 8

- |     |   |                      |     |
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| 63. | THE NEW NEGRO MIDDLE CLASS (1955)                                     | E. Franklin Frazier  | 314 |
| 64. | BOSTON'S BLACK MIDDLE CLASS:<br>ROXBURY'S SUGAR HILL (1965)           | Malcolm X            | 323 |
| 65. | BLACK MILLIONAIRES: JOHN H. JOHNSON AND<br>A.G. GASTON (1972)         | Louie Robinson       | 324 |
| 66. | THE BASES OF NEGRO PRESTIGE (1963)                                    | Norval D. Glenn      | 339 |
| 67. | THREE POEMS (1935)  | Frank Marshall Davis | 346 |
| 68. | BLACK PEOPLE IN THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE (1977)                          | Peoples College      | 347 |
| 69. | BUSINESS OWNERSHIP AMONG BLACK PEOPLE (1974)                          | US Dept. of Commerce | 352 |
| 70. | <u>BLACK ENTERPRISE</u> TOP 25 BLACK BUSINESSES (1977)                |                      | 354 |
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## THE NEW NEGRO MIDDLE CLASS (1955)

Thirty years ago I wrote for inclusion in The New Negro a short chapter entitled "Durham: Capital of the Black Middle Class." In that chapter I undertook to show how a small group of Negroes, practicing the philosophy of thrift, had built up businesses which indicated the emergence of the spirit of modern business enterprise. Moreover, I undertook to describe the patterns of behavior and general outlook on life of this new class among Negroes, which I regarded as representative of a new element that was appearing in the evolution of Negro life in the United States. The many changes which have occurred in the economic and social structure of American society since that chapter was written have brought about a transformation of Negro life. One of the most important aspects of this transformation has been the emergence of a sizeable middle class which has acquired a dominant position in the Negro community. It is my purpose in this paper to discuss the development of the new Negro middle class and its present status. But before entering upon the main emphasis of this paper I must say something of the character of the Negro middle class which I described thirty years ago.

The middle class of which I wrote was composed principally of teachers, doctors, dentists, preachers, trusted persons in personal service, government employees, and a few business men. At that time all persons in professional occupations comprised about two and a half per cent of all employed Negroes, while the percentage of all those gaining a living from business enterprises, including clerical workers as well as proprietors, was even smaller. When I speak of this group as a middle class group I am not referring simply to the source of its incomes. This group was distinguished from the remainder of the Negro population not so much by economic factors as by social factors. Family affiliation and education to a less degree were as important as income. Moreover, while it exhibited many middle class features such as its emphasis on respectability and morality, it also possessed characteristics of an upper class or an aristocracy. To this extent the middle class group of this I wrote thirty years ago may be regarded as a caste in the Negro community. This leads me to say something of the sources of the traditions of this class.

From the standpoint of their cultural history, the Negroes in the United States have developed only two really vital traditions. The most important has

been the folk tradition which gave the world the Spirituals and the secular folk songs. The second, of less importance but of considerable interest from the standpoint of the stratification of the Negro population, is the tradition of the gentleman. The folk tradition developed out of the experiences of the Negro masses on Southern plantations. The tradition of the gentleman was developed as the result of the close association of Negroes and whites, often in the same household, and led to the amalgamation of the two races. The assimilation of the patterns of behavior and values of upper class whites, mainly Southern aristocrats, established the tradition of the gentleman among a small class of Negroes. Of course, the traditions of the folk have often become mingled with the traditions of the gentleman. This is the reason for my statement in the chapter written thirty years ago that "the Negro has been a strange mixture of the peasant and the gentleman." This fact, as we shall see, has become especially significant in the growing importance of the new middle class today.

But let us return to the middle class of three decades ago. With few exceptions the representatives of the middle class were educated in the missionary schools which had been established by Northern missionaries after the Civil War. These missionaries had inculcated along with their pious teachings the idea of thrift. The influence of the missionaries extended to Tuskegee Institute and other schools under Negro administrations where the idea of thrift and the practice of piety were so conspicuous in the education of Negroes. In the schools of higher education founded by missionaries the teaching of piety and thrift was designed to build character and create a group of leaders with a sense of responsibility for the welfare and elevation of the masses. Moreover, these schools aimed to instill a certain love and appreciation of cultural things - music, literature, and art. The tradition of Yankee piety and thrift was often grafted onto the tradition of the aristocrat and gentleman.

The changes which occurred in the economic and social organization of the United States as the result of two world wars brought into existence a new middle class group among Negroes. The primary cause of this new development was the urbanization of the Negro population on a large scale. Prior to World War I about nine-tenths of the Negro population was in the South, and less than 25 per cent of Southern Negroes lived in cities. As the result of migrations to Southern as well as Northern cities about five-eighths of the Negroes live in



cities today. The migration to Northern cities was especially crucial since it created large Negro communities in an area that was relatively free from the legal and customary discriminations under which Negroes live in the South. One of the first effects of the migrations to Northern cities was that it gave Negro children access to a standard American education. Secondly, the entrance of the Negro into industrial employment and into occupations that had been closed to him in the South accelerated the occupational differentiation of the Negro population. The occupational differentiation of the Negro population was accelerated also by the new needs of the Negro communities which were served by Negroes. Finally, the migrations gave the Negro access to political power which helped him to improve his economic as well as his social position.

These changes provided, first, the economic basis of the new middle class. Whereas the middle class of thirty years ago, as we have seen, was composed of a few professionals, mainly teachers and a few persons in other occupations including a few business men, middle class Negroes are found today in a large variety of professional and technical occupations. And what is more important is the significant increase in the proportion of Negroes in clerical and other white collar occupations. This latter development has occurred in the North because whereas in the South Negroes in white collar occupations are restricted to employment in segregated Negro schools and Negro business, in the North Negroes have increasingly been employed in white collar occupations in both public services and private enterprises. Then, too, Negro business in the North has become more important than in the South. This has refuted the old belief that Negro business could thrive better in a section where the Negro was segregated and suffered discrimination. However, in discussing the development of Negro business one should remember that some of the most conspicuous successes of Negroes in business have been in the policy racket and other illegal enterprises.

The expansion of the Negro middle class and the change in its character are indicated by the change in its capital, so to speak. Thirty years ago Durham, with its flourishing business enterprises, was rightly regarded as the capital of the black middle class. But today one turns to the North in order to discover what might be regarded as the capital of the black middle class. Although both Chicago and Detroit lay claim to this distinction, the unbiased observer is inclined to regard Detroit as the new capital of the

Negro middle class because it is in that city that he finds the most intense expressions of the character and values of the new Negro middle class. The outlook on life and patterns of behavior of the new middle class are not confined to any city, however; they have tended to permeate the new middle class wherever the economic and social conditions have favored the emergence of this new element among Negroes. In the remainder of this paper, I shall undertake to analyze the orientation of this new class and to assess its influence upon the adjustment of the Negro to American civilization.

Let us consider first the economic basis of this class in the light of economic realities. At the present time, about a fourth of the Negroes in the North and West and one-eighth of those in the South may be classed as of middle class status. This estimate is based upon the fact that around three per cent of the employed Negro men in the North and West gain a living in professional and technical occupations and the same percentage as managers, officials, and proprietors, exclusive of farm owners. Slightly more than eight per cent are employed in clerical occupations and as salesmen. To these groups are added the skilled craftsmen and foreman who comprise between ten and eleven per cent of the employed Negroes in the North and West. In the South there are half as many, proportionately, in these occupations.

From the standpoint of incomes, Negroes of middle class status have incomes ranging from between \$2,000 and \$2,500 upwards. In the South the majority of the Negro middle class do not have incomes amounting to \$3,000. In the North and West the Negro middle class is better off since a half of the Negroes of this status have incomes between \$3,000 and \$4,000. But in any case the less than one per cent of Negroes in the country with incomes between \$4,000 and \$5,000, who are at the top of the Negro middle class, have incomes about equal to the medium incomes of white collar workers among whites. As we have seen, the group of managers, officials, and proprietors, excluding farm owners, comprise slightly more than two per cent of employed Negroes. It is in this group that belong the Negro business men who are the symbols of the Negro middle class and its aspirations and values. Therefore, it is necessary to say something concerning Negro business.

In our discussion we are interested in Negro business first from the standpoint of its economic significance and secondly from the standpoint of its social significance for the Negro middle class. From the first standpoint

it has little significance in the economic life of the United States and little significance in the economic life of the Negro. It is obvious to anyone that the infinitesimal accumulations of capital represented by all Negro business enterprises have no significance in the American economic system. One small bank in a small town in the state of New York, for example, has more assets than all the Negro banks combined. Then, from the standpoint of providing employment for Negroes, Negro businesses provide employment for less than one-half of one per cent of all the employed Negroes. On the other hand, Negro business has a social significance that can not be ignored or underestimated.

Negro business is not only an economic fact, however insignificant; it is a social myth. The social myth has a long history. It originated in the 1880's when Negro leaders in the South, seeing the Negro supplanted by white workers, began preaching the doctrine that Negroes would achieve economic salvation by building their own businesses. These business enterprises were supposed to give employment to Negro workers. The myth was institutionalized when the National Negro Business League was organized in 1900. Since then the doctrine of salvation through business has been preached in every Negro church and school. Despite the fact that Negro business is no more significant today in the American economy and in the economic life of Negroes than it was fifty years ago, the myth is still perpetuated among Negroes. It is dear to the heart of the Negro middle class and no argument based upon facts can change their faith in Negro business as the means to racial salvation. This is not strange because the Negro middle class lives largely in a world of delusions.

The world of delusions which the Negro middle class has created for itself is due partly to the fact that it has no integral body of traditions. Here, then, it is necessary to consider the social origins of this class and its education. Earlier it was pointed out that two distinct traditions had developed among Negroes: the tradition of the folk and the genttel tradition or the traditions of the gentleman. The small Negro middle class of thirty years ago had its roots on the whole in the latter tradition. Most of the leaders among the Negro middle class were of mixed ancestry and had inherited the traditions of the upper class whites. The missionary education which they received tended to reenforce this tradition. As the result of the rapid social mobility which has brought into existence the new middle class, this

tradition has been dissipated. Then, those with the traditions of the Negro folk who have risen to middle class status have shed their social heritage.

This may be seen if one views the changes which have occurred in Negro schools which provide education for the Negro middle class. Formerly, these schools were dedicated to the building of character or the making of men. As a part of this process the students of these schools were expected to become literate in the broadest meaning of the term and to develop some philosophy of life which included a sense of social responsibility. But today these institutions have become a sort of finishing schools for the children of the middle class. The term 'finishing school' is not exactly appropriate, since a finishing school is supposed to give a superficial culture, whereas the graduates of these schools lack even a superficial culture and are generally illiterate. This is not serious from the standpoint of the Negro middle class since these schools are no longer dedicated to the making of men but to the making of money-makers. The students are no longer taught habits of thrift and piety. They take as their models the successful members of the middle class who did not gain their money through such old fashioned virtues as thrift and saving, but through clever manipulations, rackets, and gambling. Moreover, during their college life the students strive to emulate the conspicuous consumption in which their parents and other persons who provide models engage. They have little or no respect for knowledge and learning and often even exhibit a certain contempt for anything involving intellectual achievement. In this respect they tend to perpetuate the anti-intellectualism which sets the new middle class apart from the old middle class that had some respect for education and learning.

The general anti-intellectualism of the new middle classes was shown by the failure of the Negro Renaissance in the twenties, many of the fruits of which are contained in The New Negro, edited by the late Professor Alain Locke. The Negro Renaissance of the twenties represented a reevaluation of the Negro's past and of the Negro himself by Negro intellectuals and artists. It failed because at that time the new middle class which was growing in size and importance in the Negro community rejected it. The short stories, novels, and poems which expressed this new evaluation of the Negro and his history in America by his artists and intellectuals were unread and ignored by the new middle class that was eager to gain a few dollars. Instead of being interested in gaining a new conception of themselves, the new middle class was hoping to escape from them-

selves. Money appeared to them to provide this main avenue of escape. But the escape was to be into a world of make-believe and delusions.

The Negro press has been one of the chief agencies by which the Negro middle class has escaped from the realities of its position in American life. The Negro press has created a world of make-believe into which the middle class attempts to escape from the realities of its position in American life. Some of these realities have been described. But there is still an important fact concerning the middle class which has not been mentioned, namely, the inferiority complex from which the middle class suffers. During its rise to its present position, the middle class has broken with its traditional background and identification with the Negro masses. Rejecting everything that would identify it with the Negro masses and at the same time not being accepted by white American society, the middle class has acquired an inferiority complex that is reflected in every aspect of its life. In creating a world of make-believe for the middle class, the press has provided compensations for their inferiority complex.

Although the vast majority of Negroes of middle class status are in reality white collar workers who derive their incomes from salaries, the Negro press represents them as a wealthy group. The press constantly plays up fantastic stories of rich Negroes. From time to time the Negro millionaires are featured in the Negro press. It carries pictures of their richly furnished homes, their expensive automobiles, their gay and extravagant parties and debutante balls. Since there has been a movement toward integration and white people are increasingly reading about the Negro world behind the walls of segregation, white teachers are asking how Negro teachers can afford debutante balls. But they are only beginning to learn of the gaudy carnival in which the middle class Negroes find an escape from their inferior status in American life.

In fact, much of the news carried in the Negro press is concerned with status. Every bit of news concerning the Negro that indicates that he is given some recognition by whites is recorded as a great consequence. If a Negro has nearly completed his residence work for the doctorate in a Northern university, it is played up as a great intellectual achievement. If a Negro is elected or appointed as a mere police magistrate, he is heralded as a great jurist and is forever afterwards referred to as "Judge." Even if a Negro was supposed to have been intimately associated with some notorious

white criminal, he becomes a figure of note. Sometimes a Negro woman gains fame because she was caught in an illicit love affair with a white man. Of course, some of the news showing that the Negro has achieved recognition is mere fiction. Negroes who travel abroad are usually received by royalty, or some count falls madly in love with a Negro woman. Sometimes one reads in the Negro press of some Negro who scarcely knows a word of a foreign language astonishing foreign scholars with his facility in the language as well as his erudition. Thus does any recognition, real or fancied, soothe the inferiority feelings of the Negro middle class.

Much of the world of make-believe created by the Negro press consists of the activities of "Negro society." Nearly everyone who is featured by the Negro press is a socialite. This seems to be the highest compliment conferred upon a person of middle class status, male or female. A very retiring, scholarly friend of mine about whom a notice of his participation in a scientific meeting was carried in the Negro press was surprised to read that he was a leading socialite. Inclusion in "society" implies that a person is wealthy and can engage in all kinds of conspicuous consumption and waste. For example, one hardly ever reads of a socialite getting into her automobile but of her getting into a "chauffeured Cadillac." Minute details are generally provided concerning the cost of a mink coat, the cost of a house, or the cost of a party. But extravagant expenditure is not the only feature of being a socialite. It involves exclusiveness, and exclusiveness is always a means of overcoming one's feeling of inferiority.

The attempt of the middle class Negro to escape from the realities of his position in American life is really an attempt to escape from himself. This is shown partly in the case of the religious life of the middle class. At one time the Negro middle class was identified with the Congregational, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and, in a few cases, the Catholic churches. When one acquired middle class status it often meant a change from membership in the Baptist or Methodist denomination to affiliation with one of the above churches. But today, the new middle class has lost much of its religion and is constantly seeking some new religious or quasi-religious affiliation. But since the middle class has no philosophy of life and can only draw upon scraps of a religious tradition which it has rejected, it seeks solutions of life's problems in spiritualism and other forms of superstition. In fact, the world has become a

a world of chance for the middle class. After all, don't most of the most successful prominent members of the middle class owe their achievement to chance? This accounts for its almost religious devotion to poker, horse racing, and other forms of gambling.

The middle class owes its growth and form of existence to the fact that the Negro has been isolated mentally, socially, and morally in American society. Therefore, in some respects, the Negro community may be regarded as a pathological phenomenon. It is not surprising, then, that the Negro middle class shows the mark of oppression, to use the title of a recent study of the Negro, in its mental and psychic make-up. The middle class Negro shows the mark of oppression more than the lower class Negro who finds a shelter from the contempt of the white world in his traditional religion, in his songs, and in his freedom from a gnawing desire to be recognized and accepted. Although the middle class Negro has tried to reject his traditional background and racial identification, he cannot escape from being identified as Negroes. This self-hatred is really the hatred of the Negro turned against themselves. The inefficiency of the middle class Negro in the running of businesses and the management of educational institutions is notorious, but he excuses his deficiencies by exaggerating the defects of the Negro masses. Yet the middle class Negro pretends that he is proud of being a Negro while rejecting everything that identifies him with Negroes. He pretends that he is a leader of Negroes when he has no sense of responsibility to the Negro masses and exploits them whenever an opportunity offers itself. As a result, the middle class Negro is often plagued by feelings of guilt. Much of the neurotic behavior of the middle class Negro is doubtless due to his self-hatred and guilt feelings.

The middle class Negroes are haunted by feelings of insecurity. None of the compensations of the world of make-believe can completely efface their deep feelings of insecurity. The reality of the world about them breaks through the pretenses about wealth and recognition and social status. These feelings of insecurity become more urgent as the walls of segregation cease to protect them from the competition and requirements of American society. While middle class Negroes are often vociferous in their fight against segregation, many of them are afraid of the competition and the demands of the larger community. Some hope to come to terms with the white world by shedding as far as possible the last vestige of their racial identification. But this

will provide no solution of their problems which arise from their rejection of their racial identification and their refusal to accept their real role in the economic organization of American life. As they become integrated into American society, they can achieve personal dignity and peace within themselves only through acceptance of their racial identification and their real position in American economic life.

# 64

BOSTON'S BLACK MIDDLE CLASS: ROXBURY'S SUGAR HILL (1965)

So I went gawking around the neighborhood - the Waumbuck and Humboldt Avenue Hill section of Roxbury, which is something like Harlem's Sugar Hill, where I'd later live. I saw those Roxbury Negroes acting and living differently from any black people I'd ever dreamed of in my life. This was the snooty-black neighborhood; they called themselves the "Four Hundred," and looked down their noses at the Negroes of the black ghetto, or so-called "town" section where May, my other half-sister, lived.

What I thought I was seeing there in Roxbury were high-class, educated, important Negroes, living well, working in big jobs and positions. Their quiet homes sat back in their mowed yards. These Negroes walked along the sidewalks looking haughty and dignified, on their way to work, to shop, to visit, to church. I know now, of course, that what I was really seeing was only a big-city version of those "successful" Negro bootblacks and janitors back in Lansing. The only difference was that the ones in Boston had been brainwashed even more thoroughly. They prided themselves on being incomparably more "cultured," "cultivated," "dignified," and better off than their black brethren down in the ghetto, which was no further away than you could throw a rock. Under the pitiful misapprehension that it would make them "better," these Hill Negroes were breaking their backs trying to imitate white people.

Any black family that had been around Boston long enough to own the home they lived in was considered among the Hill elite. It didn't make any difference that they had to rent out rooms to make ends meet. Then the native-born New Englanders among them looked down upon recently migrated Southerner homeowners who lived next door, like Ella. And a big percentage of the Hill



dwellers were in Ella's category - Southern strivers and scramblers, and West Indian Negroes, whom both the New Englanders and the Southerners called "Black Jews." Usually it was the Southerners and the West Indians who not only managed to own the places where they lived, but also at least one other house which they rented as income property. The snooty New Englanders usually owned less than they.

In those days on the Hill, any who could claim "professional" status - teachers, preachers, practical nurses - also considered themselves superior. Foreign diplomats could have modeled their conduct on the way the Negro postmen, Pullman porters, and dining car waiters of Roxbury acted, striding around as if they were wearing top hats and cutaways.

I'd guess that eight out of ten of the Hill Negroes of Roxbury, despite the impressive-sounding job titles they affected, actually worked as menials and servants. "He's in banking," or "He's in securities." It sounded as though they were discussing a Rockefeller or a Mellon - and not some gray-headed, dignity-posturing bank janitor, or bond-house messenger. "I'm with an old family" was the euphemism used to dignify the professions of white folks' cooks and maids who talked so affectedly among their own kind in Roxbury that you couldn't even understand them. I don't know how many forty- and fifty-year-old errand boys went down the Hill dressed like ambassadors in black suits and white collars, to downtown jobs "in government," "in finance," or "in law." It has never ceased to amaze me how so many Negroes, then and now, could stand the indignity of that kind of self-delusion.

## 65

BLACK MILLIONAIRES: JOHN H. JOHNSON (1972)

There can be little argument that John Harold Johnson at fifty-four is the most daring, innovative, and powerful black businessman of his era. Penniless and with no experience, he entered the field of Negro journalism and, using methods never tried before, harnessing his own vast energies and the energies of those around him, built a publishing empire that has continued to flourish in a generation in which the mortality rate among mass publications has been frightening.

John H. Johnson has succeeded because of, and sometimes in spite of, what

he has demanded of himself and others. Sometimes with great good humor, sometimes with desk-pounding and rising-voice crescendo; sometimes cautious, sometimes gambling; sometimes with compassion and sometimes relentless, he has moved, almost always according to his own lights and almost always forward.

So strongly has he dominated the magazine scene that no other black periodical has had one tenth the success of the Johnson Publications, and the once-powerful Negro newspapers have gone down in their wake.

When he came to black journalism, it was made up almost entirely of newspapers. Despite the examples of Luce and Cowles and Curtis and Wallace, the innovators of magazine journalism, black publishers continued to bring forth to their readers a weekly diet of crime news, stories of discrimination, what civic uplift the public would stand, and a heavy frosting of sports, entertainment, and local society. Most, confined either by inclination or financial prospects, concentrated on their home base. A few, most notably the Pittsburgh Courier and Baltimore Afro-American, became powerful chains. But none, despite the possession of equipment, staffs, experience, and ready-made readership and distribution outlets, made a serious incursion into the growing world of magazines. By the early forties, the times were begging for just such a venture.

The war put black people on the move. Military service and new opportunities in industry caused many to leave their homes for places they might never have dreamed of going. The black educational level was rising, and with it the demand for information. Black newspaper would reach their peak circulations and white publications began to print more stories about the Negro in wartime.

Still, an information gap existed. Most of the white daily press still treated the Negro as nonexistent, except for an occasional black crime, a sports feat (mostly boxing and track), or an entertainer of the stature of Louis Armstrong or Nat Cole. Negro teachers, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, their accomplishments and life styles, were largely ignored. Filling that gap was a job that Negro press seemed incapable of doing, and one the white press felt obliged not to do. It was an ideal time for the coming of age of John H. Johnson.

A university student who had taken a job at Chicago's Supreme Life Insurance Company, John had been born in Arkansas City, Arkansas in 1918. His

father died when he was six, and in 1933 his mother, Mrs. Gertrude Johnson, brought him to Chicago to see the World's Fair.

They decided to stay in Chicago, and young John Harold, despite the necessity of working after school and the shame of sometimes living on relief, became class president at DuSable High School, edited the school paper and class yearbook, and was president of the student council.

Delivering a graduation address at DuSable, Johnson caught the attention of Harry H. Pace, Supreme Life's president, who offered him a job as an office boy to help finance his enrollment at the University of Chicago.

Supreme Life in the late thirties was a meeting place for some of the best black minds in the city, and in that atmosphere young Johnson's own ideas and ambitions grew. A brief interest in politics waned, but another idea stuck.

Johnson's talents had brought him some advancement at Supreme, first in 1936 as assistant editor of the company's house organ, then later as managing editor. It was his job to condense some of the news of the day and include it, along with company news, in the Supreme publication. Johnson soon noticed that there was a considerable amount of material being printed about the Negro in leading white publications that, if culled and put together in one publication much the same as Reader's Digest, would make an interesting magazine for black people.

He took the idea to Pace, who thought it sound but advised Johnson to try it on his own. Others whom Johnson approached with the idea declined to put cash into it. Black publications often lasted only an issue or two, and seemingly no one could grasp the potential that Johnson saw.

No one but his mother, who allowed him to obtain a five-hundred-dollar loan on her furniture, which he then invested in the mailing of twenty thousand letters to clients of Supreme Life Insurance Company, offering them a charter subscription to Negro Digest. Black people were not exactly accustomed to spending money on publications they had not received, indeed publications that might not even be in business long before the subscription time was up, but Johnson's appeal was so convincing that he received three thousand replies, each with the two dollars subscription price.

With this cash base Johnson felt sufficiently justified to move on to the printing company where, since he had been supplying the copy for Supreme's

house organ, no one questioned the new material he was having printed. Johnson did not bother to make a distinction, since no one asked, and as a result the first print order of thirty thousand was run off on credit.

In November 1942 the first issue of Negro Digest was ready for the newsstands, although the newsstands were hardly ready for it. Dealers saw little future for the black digest and chose not to handle it. When Johnson succeeded in encouraging a considerable number of friends to go to the newsstands and ask for it, the dealers changed their minds and the issue sold out.

In the years that followed, Negro Digest was to see its initial circulation more than quadruple. As the issues grew in size, Johnson sought to bring original manuscripts to its pages, one of the most notable among them being a piece written by Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt for the "If I were a Negro Today" series that Digest was featuring.

As Digest prospered and Johnson began to build a staff, his chief ally became Ben Burns, a white newspaper man who, like Johnson, had a prodigious capacity for work. Burns became executive editor, being responsible for the actual production of the magazine while Johnson approved editorial ideas and worked with business problems.

By 1945 Johnson had savored the success of Digest long enough to think in terms of another publication, and looked at the other successful ones around, notably the picture magazines. Thus, again in November, he brought out the first issue of Ebony, a black imitation of Life in art format, but actually geared to feature stories like Look, rather than being a news-picture magazine.

Not only would Ebony become the giant in its field, but it would break many precedents for a black publication. Still relying a great deal on its own distribution system of field men the company was building up, Ebony pushed its circulation to the point where it could go after national advertising. When the doors to such advertising remained closed, Johnson appealed directly to the heads of companies on the grounds that if he were the visiting president of a small nation, he would be met by the president of the United States as a matter of protocol; therefore as head of a small company, he should be granted an audience with presidents of larger companies out of courtesy.

The ploy worked, and slowly the advertisers began to come in.

Still the imitator, Johnson turned to two new magazine fields, Tan

Confessions was introduced in 1950 taking its lead from the large readerships of such magazines as True Confessions and Modern Romances, and in 1951 Johnson began publishing Jet, a pocket-size newsweekly that had as its model the short-lived Cowles publication Quick.

With the advent of Jet, Johnson decided to discontinue publication of Negro Digest, the goose that had laid the golden egg. Times were changing again. With the war over and less emphasis on a united America to meet the enemy, several of the few white publications that had devoted a fair amount of articles to the Negro no longer made a point of doing so. Digest had been forced to rely more and more on original material. At the same time, Ebony had outstripped its older sister in circulation, climbing steadily over the three hundred thousand mark and becoming the largest-selling black periodical in history. It was also bringing in advertising, while Digest did not.

Furthermore, Tan was doing well and Jet proved an instant success. The latter's staff utilized news clips from daily papers all over the country, made telephone calls to any part of the world necessary to get a follow-up or new lead, and boiled down all of the information into a tight, concise format that could slip easily into a man's suit pocket or a woman's purse. Although not as detailed as rival black newspapers, the breezy, sexy Jet seemed to be just what people wanted.

Johnson readjusted his sights, dropped Digest, and, following what was now becoming a traditional birth month for Johnson publications, started two new magazines in November 1953: Hue, a second pocket-size magazine to catch the spillover of stories too short for Ebony and too long for Jet, and Copper a second romance magazine.

Now, however, Johnson was in competition with himself, both for readership and advertising dollars, and in terms of the time of his own editorial staff, since almost no new people were added to put out the new magazines.

The staff had grown, of course, and the company had established bureaus in New York and Los Angeles. It had stringer correspondents and photographers - those who worked for the company on the part-time, per-story basis - all over the United States and abroad. At home in Chicago, JPC, as the workers referred to Johnson Publishing Company, occupied newly renovated quarters in a former mortuary on South Michigan Avenue, about a mile from the city's downtown section. This had come about through an interesting maneuver on Johnson's part. When

the owner of the funeral home had declined to sell the property to a Negro, Johnson had instructed an attorney to arrange the deal, then pretend to send over a Negro maintenance man to check for needed repairs. Dressed in overalls, Johnson got his first look at the new quarters for his publishing company.

The luck that had accomplished his earliest publishing ventures was to run out, however. Copper and Hue had little future, and Johnson soon dismissed them. An economic recession of the mid-fifties did not help matters any, and some staffers had to be let go as the company cut back its payroll.

Meanwhile, it was able to open up a new editorial bureau in Washington, for a brief time ran one in Atlanta, and, when Ebony's major black competitor folded - a rather good magazine called Our World, which was published in New York - Johnson bought the title and its files. He gave some thought to publishing Our World, but as he put it: "After all these years of telling advertisers that the one magazine they needed to reach Negroes was Ebony, I could hardly go back to them suddenly and say, 'Well, you really need Our World, too.'" Thus with no prospect of advertising, Our World was denied rebirth.

During the mid-fifties both the times and the magazines were undergoing change. From both inside and outside the magazines came complaints about the tendency toward editorial sensationalism. Chorus girls and physical oddities occupied much of Ebony's space, along with provocative but hardly meaningful titles.

Johnson himself felt a need for change, but his view was not shared by his executive editor, a man whose staff viewed him with something less than adoration. In the end Burns was fired, and Ebony embarked on a course of more substantial content.

Jet, however, continued its rather sensational ways, offering readers a centerspread pin-up every week, and long sections of crime, entertainment, and the antics of male and female under a section titled "Mr. and Mrs." Through the efforts of Washington editor Simeon Booker, however, it gave some of the best national coverage of any black publication as well as stories on the growing civil rights struggle that were not found anywhere else. A picture of the water-bloated, drowned body of Emmett Till, a young teen-ager murdered in Mississippi, and subsequent stories on the case sent Jet's circulation zooming from about 350,000 to more than six hundred thousand, and the magazine maintained unusually high sales for quite some time.

As the decade turned, Ebony grew fat with advertising despite periodic rate increases, and circulation blossomed. For a long time sales had stood at four hundred thousand, then five hundred thousand, and after that they seemed to take off.

Johnson's business success naturally brought him considerable attention. In 1951 he was selected, at the age of 33, as one of the ten outstanding young men in the nation by the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce. In 1957 he was invited to accompany then Vice President Richard Nixon on a good will tour of nine African countries, and again in 1959, on trips to Russia and Poland. He was named special ambassador to represent the United States at Ivory Coast independence ceremonies in 1961 and at Kenya independence ceremonies in 1963. In 1966 he won three national awards, Russwurm, Spingarn and Horatio Alger.

By the end of the sixties, Johnson Publishing Company's advertising revenues reached the seven-million-dollar mark as a result of its having smashed economic barriers that had existed against the black press from its birth. Automobile manufacturers, soft drink firms, liquor distillers, soap makers, and brand name foods rushed into Ebony's pages. Long before it became fashionable, Ebony pushed for black models in its ads and, in another unprecedented move for the black press, launched an expensive advertising program of its own, buying full-page space in the New York Times in a one-hundred-thousand-dollar-a-year campaign to get more of the nation's companies to search for black consumers through the pages of Ebony.

Another Johnson Publishing Company innovation was the Ebony Fashion Fair, a touring fashion show that features some of the slickest fashions anywhere and some of the prettiest Negro girls in the country - and occasionally out of it. With clothes selected from the fashion centers of the world by Johnson's wife, Eunice (who in addition to being Fashion Fair director shares ownership of JPC with the publisher and his mother), and with carefully selected black beauties, the Ebony Fashion Fair goes from coast to coast in the fall, earning money for local charity organizations and subscriptions for the magazines.

The success of John H. Johnson as a magazine publisher has prompted him to try his hand at other business ventures. The first is a beauty products firm called Supreme which, after a rather slow start, became caught in the tide of new black desire for items made especially for Negroid characteristics.

The second additional Johnson business interest is probably an extremely satisfying one. He is now chairman of the board and chief stockholder of the company where he got his start, Supreme Life, which grosses ten million dollars annually and has assets of thirty-five million dollars. (Supreme Life ranks third among black-owned insurance firms in the nation, behind Atlanta Life with more than sixty-one million dollars in assets, and the largest of all, North Carolina Mutual, which has more than eighty-two million dollars in assets.)

Johnson's acquisition of control of Supreme Life, although engineered with the help of longtime friend and company president Earl B. Dickerson, was not met with the warmest reception by some of the insurance firm's old guard. One high company official described Johnson's business methods as "arrogant" and "ruthless," a charge that others would sometimes agree with. But even so there were soon indications that the company was responding to new and vigorous leadership.

Meanwhile, back at the publishing empire, Johnson has made new strides, Negro Digest has been revived and renamed Black World with a more modern editorial format, and Tan, the confession magazine, is now an entertainment book, Black Stars. Along with the other publications, they are now housed in a sparkling new multi-million dollar, eleven-story building in downtown Chicago, where Johnson's own penthouse comforts rival those of across-town publisher Hugh Hefner of Playboy fame.

Some of today's younger readers of Ebony magazine do not see it as fitting into their more militant mode, or they question its relevancy. Middle-class black America's story, however much it needed to be told in the forties and fifties, is not all that popular today.

An objective assessment of the magazine would have to show, however, that while it has not plunged headlong into the forefront of leadership for civil rights, it has nevertheless supported that movement and, in fact, considering some of its special issues, may have been its most effective spokesman in print.

But there have always been times when Johnson has shown caution. "I am a businessman, not a social worker," he once told an associate who wanted a speedup in militancy.

Some feel that Johnson's upbringing in the South and his early days in



Chicago made him somewhat shy of whites. "He's not comfortable around them," an old acquaintance once observed. "He doesn't want to do anything to embarrass himself, and he doesn't want them to do anything to embarrass him."

Another observer remarked when Johnson and his family moved out of the predominantly black Chicago Southside into the predominantly white Northside a couple of years ago: "It's a trauma for him. He's crossing that shadow line along the Chicago River, leaving the Southside behind him."

But where Johnson may have once been shy, he is now certainly more confident, as the Southside-to-Northside move itself indicates. Worldwide travel and association with presidents and royalty have added a polish. Success has given him more assurance in many ways.

And whatever he may have once felt about whites, he quite probably now cares less about what they think. When the company began a direct mail campaign for subscription a few years ago, utilizing mailing lists that caused its pitch for reading Ebony to wind up in a lot of white mailboxes, some whites complained about receiving promotional material which they felt must have been intended for blacks. Said Johnson laughing: "White folks send us mail all the time. Why can't we send them mail?"

Those who know him, however (although among his business associates it is admitted that hardly anyone really know him), do not see Johnson ever adopting the role of the militant separatist. "He is an integrationist," says one. "He follows more the Urban League and NAACP line, with a little bit of Jesse Jackson thrown in."

Johnson is also seen as still not being overly trustful of most whites, but considerably more at ease with them.

There are few times, however, when Johnson may appear to be at ease at all. "He always seems to be restless," says a friend, "as if he can't stay in one place too long, as if something is driving him." In individual and group conferences with business associates, he often pours out his own thoughts without taking too much time to listen to others, then moves swiftly on. When it was suggested that a onetime close associate had probably spent more time talking with the publisher than anyone else in the company, the former employee corrected: "You mean listening to him."

Even his vacations seem to be taken with a kind of impatience, a few days here or there in Jamaica or Puerto Rico or Hawaii or Europe. Perhaps it is

because he finds relaxation a bore. He has never particularly cared for sports, perhaps evidencing his greatest interest as a fan in boxing, and he learned to swim only a few years ago. He neither drinks nor smokes.

He has always read prodigiously, most evenings carrying from his office to his sleek black Cadillac a briefcase bulging with papers and magazines. Recently he took a speedreading course. "He absorbs a helluva lot of material," says one of his executives.

An outwardly friendly and jovial man, Johnson somehow remains remote from those even close around him. His true circle of friends is limited. Among those who do seem to influence his judgment are his wife, the former Eunice Walker of Arkansas, whom he married before building his magazine empire, and his mother, Mrs. Gertrude Williams. They are secretary and treasurer of the company, respectively, and its only other officers. Johnson often tests ideas and reactions on his wife, who mostly stayed in the background of company affairs until she became Ebony's fashion director a few years ago. Mrs. Williams, a warm, surprisingly spry and curious woman despite her advancing years, has been known to say of her son: "When John Harold gets on his high horse, I have to call him down."

Although Johnson Publishing Company is now more than a quarter of a century old, there remains no clearcut chain of command, or any real idea of what might happen to it should its founder, president, editor, and publisher suddenly no longer be around. And although employees have been made to feel somewhat secure with pension and life insurance and hospital plans, there is no guarantee against sudden unemployment, no matter what the rank or seniority. One former staffer, severed after seventeen years, describes himself as having the distinction of being "the oldest living employee, in terms of length of service, ever to be fired by Johnson Publishing Company."

Yet, though he is as quick to fire as he is to hire, Johnson has been known to keep some employees on the payroll through long illnesses or other problems.

A stout man whose own broad features could best be described as "ebony" in hue, the onetime boy wonder of Negro journalism faces his golden years in surroundings of elegance, comfort, and security. He and his wife lived for many years with their two adopted children, John Harold, Jr., and Linda, in Drexel Circle, an expensive area for Chicago's black elite. They have now

moved to Chicago's second most sumptuous apartment building, the Carlyle, where in the splendor of decor collected from around the world, Johnson can overlook the city that he came to nearly forty years ago as a small, penniless Arkansas boy.

#### A.G. GASTON

Arthur George Gaston has been called many things in his seventy-eight years. One of his latest designations, according to the man himself, is "Super-Uncle Tom," a classification placed upon him by some black militants who see Gaston's own particular brand of black-white cooperation as being something less than desirable in the age of racial revolution. Fifty years ago, probably the harshest description applied to Gaston was "cheap." He would walk miles rather than spend a nickel to ride a bus.

Neither term ever seemed to bother Gaston very much.

Whatever name one chooses to give him, none is more accurate than "rich."

In Birmingham, Alabama, a bastion of Southern prejudice often described in the past as one of the worst cities in the South for Negroes, A.G. Gaston has made a fortune. A penniless, uneducated black boy, he cast his eye early upon the American dollar, and his gaze has never wandered. Asked if he sees economic security as the chief means of elevating black people from the quagmire of second-class citizenship, his answer is a resounding yes: "I find it difficult to go first-class broke," says Gaston.

But it is with no little conviction that Gaston says, "Not separately, but together," when he talks of a better America for black and white. As an example of what he means, he points to the Citizens Savings and Loan Association which he heads and which counts some three million dollars from white depositors among its more than seven million dollars of assets. The firm also hires white employees.

It is also with no little pride that Gaston speaks of his accomplishments despite lack of much formal education - that being limited to finishing the eighth grade at Tuggles Institute in Birmingham. "The only time I went to college was when I went to make a speech," says the man who has received honorary doctorate from five colleges and universities.

Gaston has much reason to be proud. He did it all himself. Friends do point out, however, that Gaston has surrounded himself with competent people in his various business ventures. "He gives you the job, and if you can't cut it, he gets rid of you," says one.

But in the beginning - the very beginning - there was just Arthur George and the swing in his grandmother's yard in Demopolis, Alabama, and other kids loved that swing. "Right then and there I started my first business," reveals Gaston, "and the principle on which this business was founded has remained with me to this day: I saw a need and filled it." The small boy began charging a fee, an interesting looking pin, or a button, for a ride on the swing. Before long the youngster had a cigar box full of buttons and pins, and neighborhood women who were suddenly missing their costume jewelry soon knew where to look for it.

Born in Demopolis on Independence Day in 1892, Gaston lived with his grandmother after his father died and his mother went off to Birmingham to work in white kitchens. Later the small boy was taken to Birmingham where he attended school, and went on to do a stint in the Army.

After that he settled down in a mining community called Westerfield on the edge of Birmingham, and went to work for the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Steel Company, painting boxcars and digging holes for thirty-one cents an hour. Gaston has recalled of that period: "I had no prospects and I had no backing, but I had a plan. I had decided what I wanted to do with my life; I was going to be a businessman."

It was a bold plan for a young man who worked all day to earn less than three dollars. But Gaston had incredible self-discipline in matters of money. He put himself on a strict budget, allowing but ten dollars for living expenses for a two-week pay period. He extravagantly decided that five dollars should cover "social activities, for spending on the girls and so forth," for the same period. All else he would put in the bank.

Young Gaston soon learned that he had overestimated his two-week expenses, however. "Being a single man in a lively community, where some people spent their whole salary on payday, I soon got a reputation for being cheap," Gaston explains. "The girls avoided me, so I had another five dollars to save."

To supplement his income as a laborer. Gaston began selling peanuts on the side to fellow workers, and sometimes picked up as much as twenty dollars

extra from his peanut business on paydays. Soon he started making small loans to the less thrifty among his co-workers, some of whom blew their entire two-week wages in twenty-four hours. Loaning money at twenty-five per cent interest, Gaston soon found that he had a thriving operation. All of a sudden those who had called him cheap started referring to him as rich. "When that happened, all of my problems were solved," reports Gaston. "It costs a great deal less to operate when people think you have money."

Although Gaston was earning only seventy-five to eighty dollars a month at the time, he was able to put fifty to seventy-five dollars of it in the bank as the habit of thrift took hold. "The thing got good to me," Gaston admits. "It got to be a habit. I discovered that the more you save, the more you want to save. The bank, at that time, was in Fairfield, and a bus ran from Westfield to Fairfield. I used to walk all the way to the bank to save a nickel - and I put the nickel in the bank, too."

But Gaston realized that what he had was still a nickel and dime operation, and he was becoming a student of people and the way they lived, trying to determine their wants and - most of all - their needs, asking himself the question: "What services can a businessman offer them that will make their lives more livable?"

It was during this period of thoughtful observation that Gaston noted the custom of local churches taking up money to pay for funerals of the poor. So acceptable had this become that some people took advantage, starting church collections for people who were very much alive. Gaston decided that the whole practice of burying the poor could be put on a more businesslike basis, and thus he started a burial society, collecting a small amount of money from each member each week, and guaranteeing them a decent burial. Calling his operation the Booker T. Washington Burial Society and lacking any insurance experience, Gaston simply went from door to door, collecting twenty-five cents for adults and fifteen cents for children, and promising each a seventy-five dollar burial, whenever the inevitable happened.

The idea was sound, but the inevitable happened too soon. Gaston's first customer promptly died, with the assets of the Booker T. Washington Burial Society being the recently departed's lone twenty-five cents.

But Gaston persuaded an undertaker to bury the man on credit, and the minister of the church was so impressed with the honest and forthright service

of Gaston's "company" that he announced from the pulpit that henceforth there would be no more burial collections taken up in his church. Said the cleric: "A man who won't pay twenty-five cents to protect himself and his family doesn't deserve a decent burial." The minister then appointed two female members of the congregation to work with Gaston in lining up burial society members.

Stationing themselves at the church door, Gaston and his two helpers collected thirty-five dollars that first day and, by making door to door calls the following day, soon had enough to pay the undertaker. The Booker T. Washington Burial Society was in business.

The business grew and Gaston, now married, was aided in his enterprise by his father-in-law, A.L. (Dad) Smith, and, lacking any mortuary facilities of their own and with the burial society growing rapidly, Gaston contracted with an undertaker who was running a funeral home for a white firm. Later they bought out the white firm and Smith and Gaston were in the funeral business for themselves.

White industrial insurance firms by this time had begun to realize that there was money to be made in that black community across the tracks, and they started to compete for it. But Gaston's enterprise was growing so rapidly that when one of the white firms found itself facing bankruptcy, he bought them out.

It was not long however, before the wary eye of white suspicion began to look upon this upstart Negro businessman in the small town, and Gaston and his father-in-law decided it was best they move their business to Birmingham.

The Booker T. Washington Insurance Company was incorporated in 1923 with the posting of a five-thousand dollar bond. Although Gaston had several thousand dollars in personal savings, he chose to borrow the necessary cash from a bank.

Business in Birmingham was good, but not so good that there weren't a few sharpies around to suggest to Gaston ways to make it better. One thought it would be highly profitable to change the death certificates on unidentified dead persons and then collect insurance and burial money. Gaston later described himself as "too scared, too dumb" to go in for it, but he also noted that the fellow who had the idea ended up getting caught. "I took the slow, the steady way and built my business on simple honesty. In the long run, that's

the only way," declares Gaston.

With a thriving insurance company and mortuary on his hands, Gaston found he had a growing need for clerical help and, with his second wife, Minnie Lee Gardner, whom he married in 1937 after the death of the first Mrs. Gaston, he started the Booker T. Washington Business College. Gaston says he did not figure to make any money out of it at the time, but then World War II came along, and more opportunities opened up for blacks with clerical skills. Pretty soon Booker T. Washington Business College, like almost everything else that Gaston touched, became a money-maker.

And yet, although Gaston's entire life has been spent making money, he will today deny that such was his basic intent. "None of the Smith and Gaston businesses were founded to make money," he has said. "As a matter of fact, the only time I ever lost any money was when I went into business to make a killing. Back in 1938 or 1939 we got a Joe Louis Punch franchise and started the Brown Belle Bottling Company. I bought machinery and sat down and waited for the money to roll in. I lost more than six thousand dollars in that venture."

Then he added: "Successful businesses are founded on needs. Once a businessman sees a need - a need to the public, not to him, not his need to make money - he is on his way."

The need that Gaston foresaw when he started his burial society and mortuary businesses indeed put him on his way. It has been estimated that Gaston at one time or another has buried up to eighty per cent of the deceased Negroes in the state of Alabama.

But Gaston has also searched out the needs of the living. When housing for black people became acute in Birmingham, Gaston formed the Citizens Federal Savings and Loan Association, for he saw that a great part of the problem was simply that white mortgage institutions refused to make loans to Negroes. When the black firm was formed, many Negroes withdrew their savings from white companies and deposited them in Citizens Federal. This quickly brought about a change in the attitude of some of the white lending firms about making loans to blacks.

The A.G. Gaston Alabama empire is now worth an estimated ten million dollars. It includes motels, a realty and investment corporation, apartment buildings, a home for senior citizens, a cemetery, and a Walgreen-franchised

drugstore, in addition to Gaston's other interests.

"We've tried to operate our holdings according to the accepted standards of the marketplace, always being honest with our fellow men," Gaston has said in explaining his business concepts. "We meet our competition by rendering better service at no added cost. We appeal to our people from the point of view of race pride, but at no additional cost for such loyalty." The latter sentence is a nice way of saying that Negroes do not have to sacrifice quality or pay more when dealing with Gaston, a situation which all too frequently has not been the case when black people have tried to patronize their own.

In trying to get his message across, Gaston has not simply relied on satisfied customers. Billboards, radio, newspaper, and public service programs have been utilized by the businessman. "Over the years, we have fashioned a certain image," explains Gaston, "and people respond to that image."

One image that people have of Gaston personally is that of an extroverted businessman but a social introvert. While his wife loves to entertain in their great, white, colonial mansion in the Birmingham suburbs, Gaston, a short, grey-haired, square-jawed man with small hands and feet, tends to keep to himself. "I guess he thinks a lot about his businesses," says one visitor to the home.

The Gastons live comfortably, but not ostentatiously, and he admits that he is now in a tax bracket where the Government collects eighty cents of every dollar he makes. It is a far cry from the old days when he was able to save about eighty cents of every dollar he made.

But, says A.G. Gaston: "Accumulating money is so easy that "I'm surprised that more people aren't rich."

THE BASES OF NEGRO PRESTIGE (1963)

# 66

Although there is no dearth of Negro prestige-stratification studies, their conceptualization is, without exception, hazy and their methods are, at best, only moderately rigorous. Many of the reports of these studies merely enumerate the characteristics of people at the different prestige levels, failing to distinguish between what Powdermaker has called primary and secondary



class characteristics, that is, between the bases of prestige and its correlates and consequences. Such a distinction can be made empirically only with difficulty, but it is of theoretical importance. For instance, if most high-prestige Negroes are found to be light-skinned, it is important to know whether their prestige is based to a large extent upon their skin color or whether it is based largely upon other attributes, which, for historical reasons, mulattoes are more like to possess than other Negroes. The relationship between prestige and the associated attributes is further complicated by the probable tendency for correlates and consequences of prestige to evolve into prestige criteria. In other words, if all or most high-prestige people exhibit a certain type of behavior, for whatever reason, such behavior may become requisite to, or at least an aid to, the acquisition of high prestige.

Despite the difficulty of distinguishing bases from correlates of prestige, we have been able to find sixteen Negro prestige stratification studies where the researchers clearly believed they have identified the more important bases of prestige. These studies and the major prestige criteria identified by each are given in Table I. Several well-known negro stratification studies, including the study of Chicago Negroes by Warner, Junker, and Adams, are so vague concerning the determinants of prestige that they could not be included.

Those criteria emphasized in more than one study and the number of studies in which each is emphasized are given in Table 2. Education is emphasized most frequently (in all but one of the sixteen studies), and occupation and wealth or income rank second and third. The exact frequencies should not be taken too seriously since the decision as to whether a criterion was or was not emphasized was necessarily made on a subjective basis. However, the ranking of education, occupation, and wealth or income above the other criteria is very likely to reflect the empirical rank order. Also, education very likely does rank first in importance (or has until recently), since the studies most frequently identify it as the Number 1 criterion. For instance, King writes of his study of Negroes in a southern city:

TABLE I

## MAJOR CRITERIA OF PRESTIGE DISCOVERED IN

## SIXTEEN EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Study and Date of Publication or Completion	Major Criteria *	Study and Date of Publication or Completion	Major Criteria *
DuBois: Negroes in Philadelphia's Seventh Ward, 1899	Respectability, income occupation, style of life, education, general social efficiency	Davis, Gardner, and Gardner: A small town in the Deep South, 1941	Education, occupation, manners and refinement, skin color, morality, status of employer
Daniels: Boston Negroes, 1914	Occupation, wealth, education, refinement	Johnson: Rural Negroes in eight southern counties, 1941	Family social heritage, education, occupation, income, property ownership, stability of residence, cultural standards
LaGrone: Negroes in Marshall, Texas, 1932	<u>Education</u> , cultural similarity to whites (especially with respect to morals)	Drake and Cayton: The Chicago Black Belt, 1945	<u>Education</u> , wealth, occupation, standards of behavior, organizational affiliations, skin color
Burke: Tulsa Negroes, 1936	<u>Education</u> , wealth, occupation	Hill: A small all-Negro community in Oklahoma, 1946	Cultural pattern, wealth, education, family status, leadership
Dollard: A small town in the Deep South, 1937	Property ownership, occupation, white ancestry, education, morality	Jones: Negroes in a small Virginia town, 1946	Education, wealth, occupation, family tradition
Powdermaker: A small town in the Deep South (same community studied by Dollard), 1939	<u>Sex morality and stable family life</u> , education, occupation, forms of religious worship	King: Negroes in a southern city, 1953	Education, occupation, source of income

TABLE I (Continued)

Study and Date of Publication or Completion	Major Criteria *	Study and Date of Publication or Completion	Major Criteria *
Frazier: Louisville Negroes, 1940	Wealth, family background, skin color, occupation	Lewis: Negroes in a southern Piedmont community, 1955	<u>Respectability</u> , education, occupation
Warner: New Haven, Connecticut, Negroes, 1940	Morality, refinement, education, income, occupation	Rohrer and Edmonson: New Orleans Negroes, 1960	Occupation, education, income

\* Criteria that are clearly more important than the others are underlined.

TABLE 2

FREQUENCY OF EMPHASIS OF NEGRO PRESTIGE CRITERIA IN SIXTEEN EMPIRICAL STUDIES, BY REGION\*

Criterion	No. of Studies in Which Emphasized			
	Four Northern Studies	Three Border Studies	Nine Southern Studies	Total
Education	4	2	9	15
Occupation	4	2	8	14
Wealth of income	4	3	3	10
Respectability or morality	3		5	8
Refinement or "culture"	2	1	2	5
Skin color or white ancestry	1	1	2	4
Family background		2	2	4
Property ownership			2	2

\* Only those criteria emphasized in two or more studies are listed.

The informants generally stressed or implied that education is the chief item, followed by occupation and source of income, that makes for social differentiation. The rating of occupations tends to be determined by the amount of education based to the occupation.

Drank and Cayton point out that in Chicago in the early 1940's a heavier weighing of education than of occupation was a peculiarity of the Negro social-status (prestige) scale. They write:

Securing an education is the most effective shortcut to the top of the Negro social pyramid. Money and occupation are important, but an educated man without a high-status occupation or a very large income, might be admitted to circles that a wealthy policy king or prize-fighter would find it hard to enter.

Those authors who do not list education as the most important criterion generally list it very near the top. For instance, Powdermaker writes that education "is second only to the code of sexual behavior as an index of status, and is the chief means of advancing one's social position." No one places either occupation or income above education in order of importance.

That Negroes value education more than high occupational status tends to be corroborated by a study in which Rosen found that Negro mothers had high educational but low occupational aspirations for their sons relative to the aspirations of mothers in several ethnic groups. Relative aspiration and relative evaluation are not necessarily the same, of course. The Negro mothers may have had higher educational than occupational aspirations for their sons mainly because they perceived greater opportunities for educational attainment.

The prestige criteria found by the different studies listed in Table 1 vary considerably. However, it is difficult to discern whether the variations reflect regional differences, differences among communities of varying sizes, temporal changes, or simply differences in the perceptions of the investigators. That the latter accounts for some of the variation is evidenced by the fact that both Dollard and Powdermaker studied the same community.

The studies show no clear-cut pattern of temporal [time] change in criteria. Education and occupation are emphasized in the two earliest as well as in the several latest studies. The six studies that do not emphasize income or wealth range from one of the earliest (1932) to one of the latest (1955). Respectability or morality is emphasized in the earliest (1899) and in the next to the latest study (1955). On the other hand, "culture" and refinement appear to have declined in importance, being emphasized in only one study after 1941 and

in none after 1946. White ancestry and skin color are emphasized neither in the earliest nor in the latest studies. The absence of stress on these attributes in recent studies supports the rather general agreement in the literature that Caucasoid features are declining in importance as Negro prestige criteria.

Not enough very recent studies are included in Table I to form a basis for conclusions about current trends in Negro prestige criteria. Nor can much speculation about these trends be found in the recent literature. Frazier claims that income and its concomitant style of life have emerged as the most important Negro prestige criteria, having surpassed education and occupation. This conclusion is impressionistic, however, and may or may not be correct. For a reason that is discussed below, income probably has increased in importance as a Negro prestige criterion, but it may not yet be more important than education and occupation.

When the studies are divided into those of southern, northern, and border communities (see Table 2), some ostensible regional differences appear. Wealth or income is emphasized in all of the studies of northern and border communities but in only three of the nine southern studies. Family background is emphasized only in the border and southern studies. This may reflect a general North-South difference in the relative degrees of achievement as opposed to ascription of prestige.

Of the prestige criteria listed in Table 2, only one, skin color or white ancestry, is peculiarly Negro. While each of the others is, to some extent, important in white prestige evaluations, their rank order of importance among whites appears to be different. In reports of white prestige-stratification studies, strong emphasis upon education is conspicuously absent. Primary emphasis is placed upon wealth, income, family background, and a variety of other variables that can be subsumed under "style of life." For example, Davis, Gardner, and Gardner point out that among the whites of "Old City" the social strata were delineated primarily by economic variables at the lower and middle levels and by family background at the highest level. Education was of secondary importance and could be used to aid upward mobility only if the person had or could obtain the requisite economic status for the level to which he aspired.

Warner, in his study of prestige stratification in Morris, Illinois, found several variables more highly correlated than education with the Evaluated Participation (E.P.) ratings (which are essentially measures of prestige). The correlation of the E.P. with education was  $+0.78$ , whereas it was  $+0.91$  with occupation,  $+0.85$  with source of income,  $+0.85$  with house type, and  $+0.82$  with dwelling area (each variable having been rated on a seven-point scale). Although correlation must not be equated with causation, it is likely that the variables most highly correlated with the E.P. were the most important bases of prestige.

A means of estimating the relative importance of education and income as prestige criteria that is available for whites is not available for Negroes. The relative importance of these two variables as bases of occupational prestige is probably similar (although not necessarily identical) to their relative importance as bases of personal prestige. In the NORC (North-Hatt) occupational prestige study published in 1947, a number of occupations were rated as to prestige by a national sample. Forty-five of these occupations are comparable or roughly comparable with occupations used in the 1950 Census reports. Among these, the prestige ratings and the median incomes of male experienced workers in 1949 correlate with a value of  $+0.83$ . The correlation of the prestige scores with the median years of school completed in 1950 is exactly the same -  $+0.83$ . The identity of the two correlations indicates that income and education were of about equal importance among whites as bases of occupational prestige, and probably also of about equal importance as bases of personal prestige.

It seems, therefore, that education was relatively more important as a basis of prestige in the white population as a whole than in the small communities studied by Warner and by Davis, Gardner, and Gardner. However, education was not markedly more important than income for whites, as it apparently was for Negroes.

## THREE POEMS (1935)

## ROBERT WHITMORE

Having attained success in business  
possessing three cars  
one wife and two mistresses  
a home and furniture  
talked of by the town  
and thrice ruler of the local Elks  
Robert Whitmore  
died of apoplexy  
when a stranger from Georgia  
mistook him  
for a former Macon waiter.

## ARTHUR RIDGEWOOD, M.D.

He debated whether  
as a poet  
to have dreams and beans  
or as a physician  
have a long car and caviar.  
Dividing his time between both  
he died from a nervous breakdown  
caused by worry  
from rejection slips  
and final notices from the finance company.

## GILES JOHNSON, PH.D.

Giles Johnson  
had four college degrees  
knew the whyfore of this  
the wherefore of that  
could orate in Latin  
or cuss in Greek  
and, having learned such things  
he died of starvation  
because he wouldn't teach  
and he couldn't porter.

## BLACK PEOPLE IN THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE (1977)

The historical development of the Black petty bourgeoisie is an important but frequently obscured class reality. We are confronted with the best and worst in a work by E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie (1957). He presented a wealth of empirical evidence, but was blinded by the pseudo-scientific theories of bourgeois social science. His theoretical blunder is best revealed in this definition: "...the black bourgeoisie is comprised essentially of white-collar workers." It is important to go deeply into these errors and separate what is correct from the incorrect but that would be a deviation from our task here.

The petty bourgeois class among Blacks has had four main sectors:

(a) Artisans: An artisan is a free worker who by virtue of owning means of production, being self-employed, and employing few if any workers, consumes his own labor power by virtue of appropriating all surplus value for the well being of himself and his family. This was the experience of the handicraft worker who existed in the USA up til the 20th century, and continued til WWII and after.

Blacks in this category are described in a study of early Philadelphia and this generally represents the pattern in pre-Civil War times. The existence of some free Black artisans in southern cities is described by Blassigame, Wade, Starobin, and Frazier. In the end, however, Black artisans were never allowed to develop and therefore are not of great significance during the 20th century.

(b) Farmers: A farmer (small petty bougeois type as distinct from the large capitalist farmer on the one hand and the tenant farmer on the other) owns (wholly or in part) land and tools by which products are produced by family labor for direct consumption or exchange wholly appropriated for sustaining the well being of the family.

This class sector of the petty bourgeoisie also has its roots before the Civil War. Frazier reported:

In 1830 the free Negroes owned about 32,000 acres of land valued at \$184,184, and by 1860 both the acreage and the value of the farms owned by free Negroes had doubled. Since nearly half (43%) of the farms owned by the 1,200 free Negro farm owners contained 25 acres or less, it may be assumed that these farms were used for subsistence rather than for commercial enterprises.



More recent statistics give a good picture of the 20th century changes in the size of Black farmers (owners and part owners).

BLACK FARMERS IN THE SOUTHERN USA

<u>Date</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% of Total in South</u>
1900	186,676	.93
1910	218,467	.86
1920	217,589	.93
1930	182,019	.89
1940	173,263	.86
1945	189,232	.91
1950	193,346	.92
1954	180,590	.93
1959	127,283	

The high point of Black farmers was 1910.

By 1900, the first census year for which general data are available on color and farm tenure combined, 179,418 Negroes were operating their own farms in the southern states. The number was somewhat larger in 1910 and then held fairly steady from 1910 to 1920, when 217,589 Negro farm owners had 4% of the southern farm acreage. In 1920, owner-operators were 60.4% of Negro farmers. Thereafter the number of owner-farmers (whether white or colored) declined, but the rate of decline was much sharper in the colored group. After 1930 there was a slight upward spurt, the number of Negro farm owners rising from 182,000 in 1932 to 186,000 in 1935, but their total acreage continued to decline.

Since World War II there has been an overall decline in the number of people engaged in agricultural production, especially among Blacks. "From 1945 to 1959, a 70% loss of Negro tenants took place. Owners declined by 33% —a heavy loss in itself, but much less than that of tenants." However, "Negro owners (full and part) numbered (in the south) 127,000 and operated 8.7 million acres of land in 1959."

The current picture shows a continued decline:

Today, there are fewer than 1000,000 Black farmers in the south, a tenth of the region's total. Twenty-five years ago, Blacks operated 20 percent of the south's farms.

The Emergency Land Fund, an agency established to aid Black farmers, states:

According to the fund's calculations, in the decades immediately after the Civil War, the south's newly freed Blacks amassed some 15 million acres of farm land. Today, the fund estimates Blacks own fewer than 5 million farm acres, perhaps half of them lying fallow.

(c) Shopkeepers: The petty bourgeois shopkeeper is self-employed in commercial trade by providing the essential service of enabling buyers to gain more efficient access to commodities. This has been the main objective basis for what has euphemistically been mis-labeled "Black Capitalism."

E. Franklin Frazier stated:

In 1939 there were nearly 30,000 retail stores owned and operated by Negroes, with total sales amounting to about 71.5 million dollars. According to the 1944 study of Negro business, 80% of all Negro businesses were operated by their owners...about 70% of these stores were located in the southern states.

The current picture is as follows:

#### BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Sales (\$)</u>
1969	163,073	4,474,000,000
1972	194,986	7,168,000,000

(d) Professionals: The professional sector of the petty bourgeois class is highly skilled, enjoys work conditions that allow for relative individual independence, and receives material rewards reflected in relative comfort and consumption of luxuries. Black petty bourgeois professions developed in two waves, paralleling the general development of this class, though very few existed before the Civil War. First to develop were the traditional professions: teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc. Then, greater differentiation occurred in government (e.g., social workers) and technical fields. On the elite level, from 1920 to 1962 Blacks received only 143 doctorates in the physical sciences (0.27% of total) and 250 doctorates in natural sciences (0.29% of total).

In general, the Handbook of Labor Statistics 1974 enables us to present a very general approximation of the relative size of the three significant sectors of Blacks in the petty bourgeois class (excluding artisans)

## EMPLOYED MALES

	Total (000s)	Farmers (%)	Shopkeepers (%)	Professionals (%)	Total (%)
1958	3,821	5.8	1.0	3.2	10.0
1963	4,229	3.4	.9	4.9	9.2
1968	4,702	2.0	.8	6.6	9.4
1973	5,133	1.1	.8	8.2	10.1

The importance of this table is how the relatively constant size of the petty bourgeoisie conceals the change in its character from the traditional (farmers) to the new (professionals) while shopkeepers decline only slightly.

An important aspect of this picture of the petty bourgeois class in the US is the role of the government (the state apparatus). In general, the state has been the major single agent in the objective development of petty bourgeois Blacks and its ideological orientation. Not only does this reflect the general trend of US state monopoly capitalism, but it is central to understanding the particular history of Blacks since the Civil War (e.g., Freedmen's Bureau, New Deal Programs, FEPC, Poverty Program and Affirmative Action are some of the high points in this respect).

1. The government as a source of jobs: This is key for the petty bourgeois professional as well as the entire Black employed, in that over 20% of Black workers are classified by the 1970 census as government workers. In addition, the passage of the Fair Employment Practice Commission bill opened new opportunities during and after World War II. Hence government action has been both a direct (as employer) and indirect (through legislation regarding employment in general) source of jobs.

More recent statistics reveal the importance of government employment in a study for the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education by a Harvard University economist:

Over all, about 51% of all male Black college graduates are employed by governments--either federal, state, or local--compared to about 25% of college-educated white males. Although the largest number are teachers, there are high proportions of Blacks employed by governments in other fields as well--about 28% of Black lawyers, compared by 15% of lawyers overall, and 24% of all Black men who are managers, which is about double the overall proportion.

During the 1960's Freeman reported, the share of Black managerial workers employed by governments nearly tripled.

2. The government as a source of capital: Again the history of Black business activity can be seen in relation to government action, beginning with the great fiasco of the Freedmans Bank during the reconstruction period, but best since the Nixon administration with special legislation and executive guidelines to channel both public and private funds into the hands of Black entrepreneurs. And while the majority of businesses started by Blacks may be independent of direct government intervention, it appears that a majority of those that are successful are helped with funds (grants, loans, etc.) and/or technical assistance.

A further aspect of this class is its ideological reproduction. This is key because of the dynamically changing and insecure economic basis of and political prop for petty bourgeois Blacks. By ideological reproduction we mean the process by which the material interests of a class are reinforced through education, cultural activities, religion, mass media, and political organization.

Frazier is at his best on this subject. The second half of Black Bourgeoisie is entitled "The World of Make-Believe." He states:

This world of make-believe, to be sure, is a reflection of the values of American society, but it lacks the economic basis that would give it roots in the world of reality. In escaping into a world of make-believe, middle-class Negroes have rejected both identification with the Negro and his traditional culture. Through delusions of wealth and power they have sought identification with the white America which continues to reject them. But these delusions leave them frustrated because they are unable to escape from the emptiness and futility of their existence.

There is no doubt that the Black petty bourgeoisie tries to mimic the ruling class in this society. This is the meaning of various Black colleges claiming to be the "Black Harvard," or the way social and fraternal organizations consume luxuries in order to achieve status where they don't have the material equality rooted in class terms. This pattern of delusion seems to be increasing rather than decreasing due to the changing demand for Black labor. When Black colleges were founded there was the need for skilled labor and managers of the affairs of the ruling class over the Black community. Now that the supply of such has started to exceed demand, particularly in this period of a downturn and increased economic and political crisis, the decrease in material payoff is mystified by the increased ideological thrust to commit this highly ambitious class force to a world of make believe. A concrete example is that during the 1960's Black fraternities and sororities were on the decline. But with the economic crisis of the 1970's they are on the rise again.

## BUSINESS OWNERSHIP AMONG BLACK PEOPLE (1974)

Advances were made in black entrepreneurship during the 3-year period 1969-72. By 1972 there were 195,000 black-owned business enterprises with total receipts of \$7.2 million, representing nearly a 20-percent increase in number of firms and approximately a 60-percent increase in gross receipts since 1969. The considerable increase in gross receipts reflects both the general inflation in prices and some real increase in volume of sales and service.

As in 1969, nearly all black-owned firms operated as sole proprietorships in 1972. Corporations were used least by black entrepreneurs as a legal form of organization.

Information shown in Table I on total and black-owned firms (excluding corporations) indicates the extent of black gains relative to the total business market since 1969. Black firms in 1972 remained a marginal sector of the business community in every industry, accounting for about 2.7 percent of all businesses (excluding corporations) in the country, essentially the same proportion as in 1969. A very small increase was noted for gross receipts realized by black firms - 1.7 percent of all gross receipts, slightly above the 1.3 percent in 1969.

In 1972, black-owned firms remained highly concentrated in two industry divisions - retail trade and selected services. These firms accounted for 65 percent of all black-owned firms, about the same proportion which existed in 1969. The category "selected services" includes hotels and other lodging places, personal services, business services, automotive repair services, garages, etc.

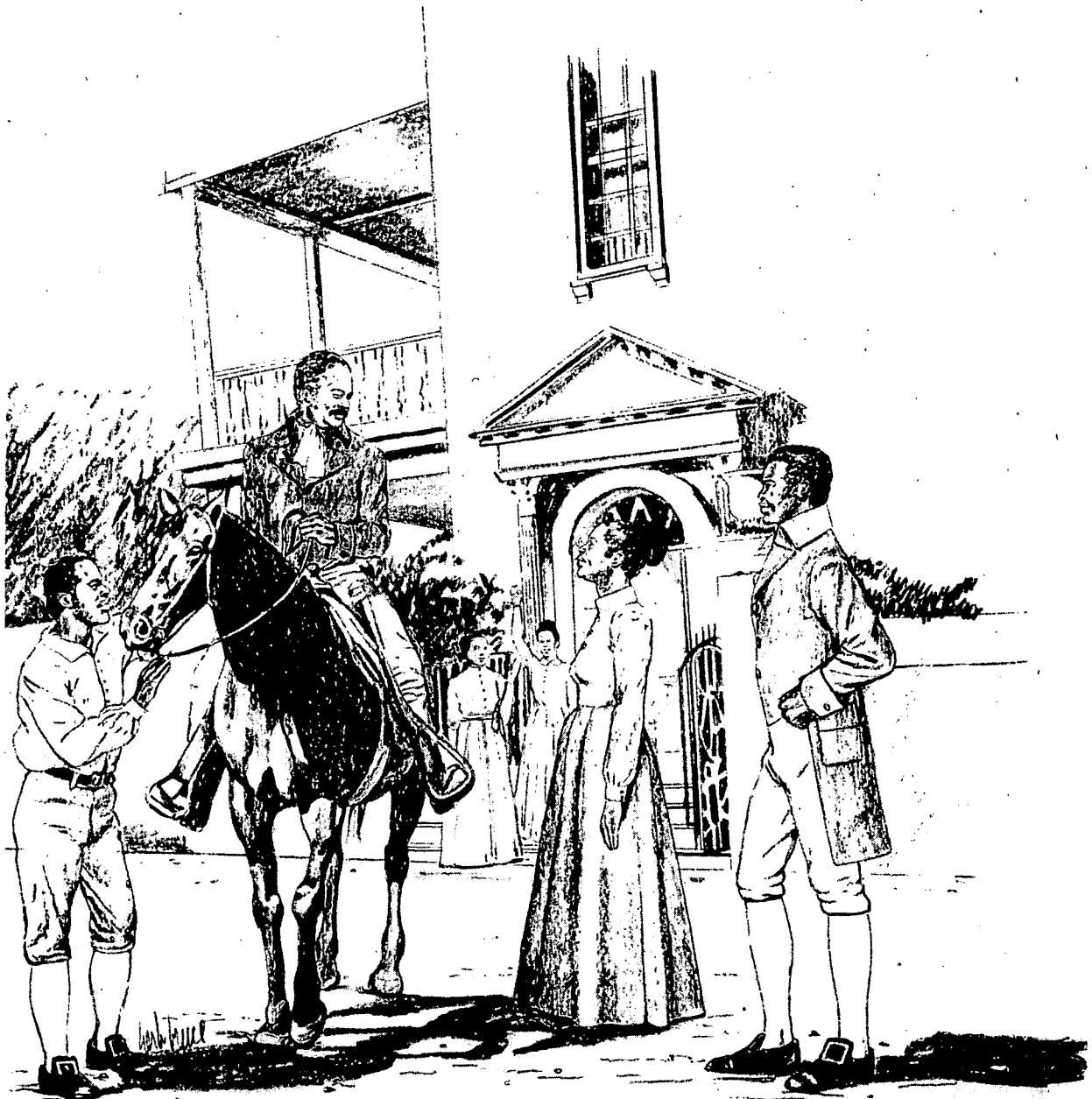
In terms of dollar volume of receipts among black-owned firms, automotive dealers (including service stations) and food stores ranked first and second.

The preponderance of black-owned firms operated in the South where there were 96,000 such businesses in 1972. However, the greatest percentage increases (1969 to 1972) were noted in the West and Northeast.

There were 16 States with 5,000 or more black-owned firms in 1972; about half were located outside the South. Three-fourths of the selected 16 States showed an increase of 50 percent or more in gross receipts since 1969. Very high increases (80 percent or more) were noted for Maryland, New York, District of Columbia, Florida, and California. In 1972, California recorded both the largest amount of gross receipts and number of firms of any State. Illinois

though second in rank for gross receipts, was fourth in number of firms; Texas was second in number of firms.

The seven standard metropolitan statistical areas having the largest number of black-owned firms in 1972 (5,000 or more) accounted for 31 percent of the total number of black-owned firms in the United States and 32 percent of gross receipts of all black-owned firms in the Nation. Gross receipts for the Chicago SMSA were substantially above those for any of the other 6 SMSA's.



Anthony Johnson, a Black slaveowner, and his slaves in front of his plantation home in Virginia in the 1650s.

TABLE I

BLACK ENTERPRISE TOP 25 BLACK BUSINESSES

1977	1976	Company and Location	Year Started	Employees	Type of Business	1976 Sales (\$000)
1	1	MOTOWN INDUSTRIES Hollywood, CA	1959	300	Entertainment conglomerate	50,000
2	2	JOHNSON PUBLISHING CO. Chicago, IL	1942	320	Publishing	47,600
3	3	JOHNSON PRODUCTS CO. Chicago, IL	1954	413	Hair care products & cosmetics mfg.	43,500
4	4	FEDCO FOODS CORP. Bronx, NY	1969	450	Supermarkets	37,000
5	5	PHILADELPHIA INTERNATIONAL RECORDS Philadelphia, PA	1967	150	Records & music publishing	25,000
6	15	H.J. RUSSELL CONSTRUCTION CO. Atlanta, GA	1958	300	Construction & development	21,000
7	6	GARLAND FOODS, INC. Dallas TX	1969	187	Ham processing	15,997
8	14	WALLACE & WALLACE CHEMICAL & OIL CORP. St. Albans, NY	1972	42	Fuel oil import & distribution	15,478
9	7	H.G. PARKS, INC. Baltimore MD	1951	260	Meat specialties mfg	14,706
10	12	DRUMMOND DISTRIBUTING CO., INC. Compton, CA	1969	56	Liquor distribution	13,500
11	9	DICK GIDRON CADILLAC, INC. Bronx NY	1972	60	Auto sales & service	12,130
12	13	WALLACE & WALLACE FUEL OIL CO., INC. St. Albans, NY	1968	36	Retail fuel oil sales	11,410
13	16	AL JOHNSON CADILLAC, INC. Chicago IL	1971	90	Auto sales & service	11,000
14	10	CAPITAL CITY LIQUOR CO. INC. Washington, D.C.	1970	57	Wholesale wines & spirits	10,500
15		SEIDEL CHEVROLET, INC. Landover, MD	1974	46	Auto sales & service	10,358
16		SUPERIOR FORD INC. Plymouth, MN	1975	70	Auto sales & service	10,169
17		S.T.R. CORP. Cleveland, OH	1965	167	Retail food markets	10,000
18		COOK-FARR FORD INC. Oak Park, MN	1975	80	Auto sales & service	9,800
19		AL JONES OIL CORP, Jamaica, NY	1970	42	Fuel sales	9,130
20		TERRY BRANTLEY GREENBRIAR LINCOLN-MERCURY SALES, INC. Atlanta, GA	1975	74	Auto sales & service	9,000
20	17	CENTURY CHEVROLET, INC. Upper Darby, PA	1971	50	Auto sales & service	9,000
20		HARRIS & STROH, Hayward, Ca.	1975	70	Sporting goods distribution	9,000
23		HOPKINS CHEVROLET, INC. Atlanta GA	1975	87	Auto sales & service	8,597
24	18	CONYERS FORD, INC. Detroit, MI	1970	64	Auto sales & service	8,054
25	37	COCOLINE CHOCOLATE CO. INC. Brooklyn, NY	1974	90	Chocolate mfg.	8,000

(Published In June 1977)

TOTAL

3,561

429,929

FORTUNE'S TOP 25 INDUSTRIAL CORPORATIONS

		Sales (\$000)	Assets (\$000)	Profits (\$000)
1	EXXON (New York)	48,630,817	36,331,346	2,640,964
2	GENERAL MOTORS (Detroit)	47,181,000	24,442,400	2,902,800
3	FORD MOTOR (Dearborn, Mich.)	28,839,600	15,768,100	983,100
4	TEXACO (New York)	26,451,851	18,193,818	869,731
5	MOBIL (New York)	26,062,570	18,767,450	942,523
6	STANDARD OIL OF CALIFORNIA (San Francisco)	19,434,133	13,765,397	880,127
7	GULF OIL (Pittsburgh)	16,451,000	13,449,000	816,000
8	INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES (Armonk, N.Y.)	16,304,333	17,723,326	2,398,093
9	GENERAL ELECTRIC (Fairfield, Conn.)	15,697,300	12,049,700	930,600
10	CHRYSLER (Highland Park, Mich.)	15,537,788	7,074,365	422,631
11	INTERNATIONAL TEL. & TEL. (New York)	11,764,106	11,070,078	494,467
12	STANDARD OIL (Indiana) (Chicago)	11,532,048	11,213,198	892,968
13	SHELL OIL (Houston)	9,229,950	7,836,516	705,838
14	U.S. STEEL (Pittsburgh)	8,604,200	9,167,900	410,300
15	ATLANTIC RICHFIELD (Los Angeles)	8,462,524	8,853,334	575,178
16	E.I. DU PONT DE NEMOURS (Wilmington, Del.)	8,361,000	7,027,100	459,300
17	CONTINENTAL OIL (Stanford, Conn.)	7,957,620	6,041,516	459,994
18	WESTERN ELECTRIC (New York)	6,930,942	5,178,470	217,383
19	PROCTER & GAMBLE (Cincinnati)	6,512,728	4,102,996	401,098
20	TENNECO (Houston)	6,389,236	7,177,100	383,500
21	UNION CARBIDE (New York)	6,345,700	6,621,600	441,200
22	WESTINGHOUSE ELECTRIC (Pittsburgh)	6,145,152	5,318,342	223,217
23	GOODYEAR TIRE & RUBBER (Akron, Ohio)	5,791,494	4,336,125	121,967
24	PHILLIPS PETROLEUM (Bartlesville, Okla.)	5,697,516	5,068,463	411,656
25	DOW CHEMICAL (Midland, Mich.)	5,652,070	6,848,664	612,767
		376,100,000	613,400,000	20,200,000

(Published in May 1977)



## A COMPARISON: BLACK CAPITALISM AND MONOPOLY CAPITALISM (1977)

## INDUSTRIAL CORPORATIONS

		<u>Black Enterprise</u>	<u>Fortune</u>
Top 25	Sales	429,929,000	376,100,000,000
	Employees	3,561	4,213,083
Top 50	Sales	472,167,000	493,100,000,000
	Employees	5,744	5,916,975
Top 100	Sales	767,589,000	635,692,000,000
	Employees	8,356	8,583,921

It is important to note that both of these lists talk about capitalist corporations - Black and White. But Black Enterprise does not include the total assets for the Top 100 Black corporations, making it difficult to get a more detailed knowledge of the real importance of these corporations. In 1976, Fortune's Top 500 industrial corporations owned \$736.8 billion in assets. In 1975, the Fortune 500 controlled 66% of all the sales and 72% of all the profits of industrial corporations in the U.S., which demonstrates the concentration of corporate ownership which characterizes U.S. monopoly capitalism and imperialism. In addition, if all of the corporations on the Black Enterprise Top 100 could be combined into one corporation, the total sales of this combined corporation would place it just below the 272nd largest corporation on the Fortune 500 list. With \$775 million in total sales, the Black Enterprise Top 100 would be smaller than Penn-Walt with \$777.3 million in sales.

## TOP 25 BANKS

	<u>Black Enterprise</u>	<u>Fortune</u>
Total Assets	673,700,000	488,500,000,000
Total Deposits	594,300,000	385,900,000,000
Employees		221,166

## TOP 25 LIFE INSURANCE COMPANIES

	<u>Black Enterprise</u>	<u>Fortune</u>
Total Assets	570,600,000	226,600,000,000
Insurance In Force	9,585,000	1,393,900,000
Employees		

In addition to industrial corporations, banks, and insurance companies, Fortune also lists the following:

## TOP 50 DIVERSIFIED FINANCIAL COMPANIES

(Aetna, American Express, Transamerica, etc.)

Assets	172,100,000,000
Profits	50,400,000,000
Employees	431,000

## TOP 50 RETAILING CORPORATIONS

(Sears, Safeway, Macy's etc.)

Sales	132,600,000,000
Assets	45,800,000,000
Profits	2,900,000,000
Employees	

## TOP 50 TRANSPORTATION CORPORATIONS

Assets	52,300,000,000
Income	1,800,000,000
Employees	961,500

## TOP 50 UTILITIES

(ATT, Con Ed. (NY), General Telephone, Duke Power, Peoples Gas, etc. etc.)

Assets	252,700,000,000
Income	10,100,000,000
Employees	1,570,000
Operating Revenues	94,900,000

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING FOR CHAPTER 8

1. W.E.B. Dubois, "The Talented Tenth," in W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington, eds., The Negro Problem, 1903 and The Negro in Business, 1899.
2. Ebony, special issue on "The Black Middle Class," August, 1973.
3. G. Franklin Edwards, The Negro Professional Class, 1959.
4. E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie, The Rise of a New Middle Class in the United States, 1967.
5. E. Franklin Frazier, The Free Negro Family, 1932.
6. Charles S. Johnson, The Negro College Graduate, 1938.
7. August Meier and David Lewis, "History of the Negro Upper Class in Atlanta, Georgia, 1890 - 1958," Journal of Negro Education, Spring, 1959.
8. Alain Locke, ed., The New Negro, 1925.
9. Joseph A. Pierce, Negro Business and Business Education, 1948.
10. Louie Robinson, Jr., The Black Millionaires, 1972.
11. Wallace Thurman, The Blacker the Berry, 1929.
12. Carter G. Woodson, Free Negro Owners of Slaves, 1924.
13. Carter G. Woodson, The Negro Professional Man and the Community, 1934.



"The old dude would have retired years ago but he knows I'm next in line for his job."

# CHAPTER 9

## RACISM AND BLACK LIBERATION

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the social basis for racism? In historical terms, why does it exist?
2. Has the United States been getting more or less racist?
3. Can Black people be racist?
4. How can racism be defeated?

### KEY CONCEPTS

Democracy

De jure / De facto Segregation

Discrimination

Liberation

Prejudice

Racism

Reform

Revolution

Stereotype

Racism is an ideological justification for the economic exploitation and oppression of a group of people whose physical traits and cultural patterns differ from those of the dominant group in a given society. Generally, the beginnings of racism in the modern world can be traced to the expansion of capitalism from Europe into other parts of the world in the fifteenth century. During the process, European peoples dominated other peoples for economic and political reasons. White racism holds that Black people are inferior to white people because of genetic traits or cultural behavior. An opposing view states that racism as a systematic ideology justifies the oppression of Black people, facilitates continued economic exploitation, and diverts attention away from capitalist exploitation which is the root cause of all major problems in modern society for Blacks as well as for whites.

Failure to grasp the basic connection between racism and the particular socio-economic context in which it exists will leave one with a biological theory of history (race as the major factor) that is unable to explain any of the complex characteristics of the ideology of racism, national oppression, and economic exploitation in the United States and throughout the world. If you don't understand racism, it is impossible to understand the history of Black people in the USA. For this reason, it is important to take up the question of racism--its origins, and its history as an obstacle to Black liberation and a just society, and how it can be struggled against and defeated.

The word "race" was used by biologists and others in the nineteenth century. It referred to a sub-group of humanity whose members had inherited physical characteristics which distinguished that sub-group from other sub-groups. These so called scientists said three basic "racial" groups existed: Negroid (Africans, Afro-Americans), Mongoloid (Asians) and Caucasoid (Europeans). These distinct groups are based mainly on common physical characteristics, e.g. skin color, and shape of head, nose and lips. The last century, however, has rendered this biological use of the category "race" scientifically inaccurate. No "pure races" exist.

Based on this nineteenth century view, races were ranked as a hierarchy. Europeans of the white race were considered superior to others. This use of "race" is the basis for racism as an ideology and in this sense reflects important economic, social and cultural patterns of exploitation and oppression.

It was not until capitalism became the dominant economic system and Black slave labor became one of its main supports, that the use of color differences became elaborated into a full and systematic racist rationalization for the exploitation and oppression of Blacks. Thus, as Ralph Bunche states, "Race prejudice has deep economic roots." Essentially, racism has been used to prevent the exploited masses of Black and white people from uniting in struggle against a common exploiter. Thus by having Black people described as "inferior people," poor whites are tricked into using Black people as scape goats, people to hate and blame for their own conditions of economic exploitation. Thus, it has provided the white ruling class with a powerful tool to use in exploiting both whites and Blacks whenever the exploited class turns to united struggle to improve their conditions.

It is essential that we have a dynamic, historical view of how racism has affected Black people over the years and how it has been used to divide the exploited and oppressed people in the US for the benefit of a small exploiting class. Otherwise, we fall victim to a non-historical analysis that does not see the cause for nor the changing character of racism, one that blames racism on genetics and not on social conditions that have changed through struggle, and can continue to be changed through struggle.

For example, during slavery the most blatant examples of racism were virtually legalized -- torture, imprisonment, rape and even murder. This was necessary to maintain the slave labor force in total domination. We see this in the slave codes (see Readings in Chapter 4) and in the fact that the US Supreme Court declared in the Dred Scott decision (1857) that Black people have no rights that white people must respect.

In the rural period, new forms of racist oppression had to be developed. During this period we find "extra-legal" (outside the law) forms like the Ku Klux Klan emerging. The most brutal forms of racist oppression took place in the South because Black people were historically formed in a concentration, particularly in the Black Belt. The national trend was thus established as the Ku Klux Klan spread throughout the country. Moreover, racism was so normal and legitimate that all agencies used by the ruling class for their ideological work (schools, churches, mass media, art centers, etc.) were dominated by racist ideas.

In the urban experience, "race relations" took on the character of mass struggle. Social segregation was instituted, but allowed to remain only in per-

sonal areas of life, especially neighborhood agencies like local churches, recreation and schools. The key aspect is housing segregation. Here the distinction must be made between de jure racism (established by law) and de facto racism (established by custom). By 1954, legal segregation was outlawed, but racism remains at the heart of more subtle attacks on Black people.

Today (1977) we are experiencing a rebirth of violent racist attacks on Black people. These recent racist attacks did not just fall from the sky. They are rooted in the obvious fact that the US is undergoing a significant economic and political crisis -- increasing unemployment and inflation, corruption and scandals like Watergate, cutbacks in social programs like welfare and daycare, deterioration of the cities, and many other blatant examples.

All of these problems result from a capitalist system that continues to put profits over people, that will allow the masses to starve and suffer while a few rich capitalists enjoy more and more wealth and luxury. During such a period as this, as during the Great Depression in the 1930s, it becomes clear to the masses of people exactly who the enemy is. Thus, it is essential that some way be found to divide the people, to focus attention away from the real causes so that the system can be maintained. It is therefore no accident that most of the issues and decisions around which racist attacks develop are orchestrated and implemented by the ruling class: bussing plans which do not speak to equal quality education for all children, "red lining" in housing, police brutality, etc.

What is the path to ending these racist attacks that stand in the way of Black liberation and a more just society? There are two basic views. One is a reformist view that says that racism is fundamentally a problem of attitudes and can be solved if we can educate all white people about Black people and appeal to the ruling class for more just treatment toward Blacks. Mistakenly, this analysis does not see the profound historical and social basis of racism -- it is not simply a set of ideas that are in a few heads but it is part and parcel of the existing social order and is very profitable to the capitalist class.

Another side of this reformist view states that the problem of racism is caused by white people -- all of them. Some even argue that racism is transmitted by the genes of white people in much the same way that white racists argue that the genes of Black people transmit Black inferiority. Therefore, the only solution is for Blacks to completely separate from white people and develop independent institutions, and/or return to Africa. This is a reformist view because it leaves the problem untouched, and seeks a solution by running from the

problem.

The other view is the revolutionary view. In the words of murdered Black revolutionary George Jackson, "We must combat racism while we are in the process of destroying the system." This view is based on an accurate historical assessment of the economic roots of racism -- the fact that it is caused by an exploitative and oppressive capitalist system, serving only the interests of a small capitalist class. While it recognizes that many, if not most, white people have been influenced by living in a society dominated by white supremacist views, they are also exploited by this same small group of capitalists who are themselves white. This common exploitation by a "common enemy" is the basis on which Black and white people, especially the masses of Black and white workers, have in the past and will continue to unite to fight against racism and all forms of oppression and exploitation.

There is considerable unity in the Black community that racism is an obstacle to Black liberation and that it must be fought. The rising trend is for Black people of different views to initiate and join coalitions of people of all nationalities to struggle against this common problem. Where there are common problems, there must be common solutions.



*Selma, Ala.*



*Chicago, Ill.*



*Jersey City, N. J.*



*Seattle, Wash.*



*Los Angeles, Cal.*



*Brooklyn, N.Y.*



## REQUIRED READINGS FOR CHAPTER 9

- |     |  |                     |     |
|-----|--|---------------------|-----|
| 73. | THE ORIGINS OF RACISM (1936)                                   | Ralphe Bunche       | 365 |
| 74. | RACIAL PROBLEMS IN THE US AND WORLD SOCIETY (1955)             | E. Franklin Frazier | 370 |
| 75. | MARTIN LUTHER KING ON RACISM (1966)                            | Martin Luther King  | 375 |
| 76. | MALCOLM X'S CHANGING VIEW OF RACISM (1965)                     | Malcolm X           | 386 |
| 77. | COMBAT RACISM BY DESTROYING THE SYSTEM (1971)                  | George Jackson      | 392 |
| 78. | THE GOALS OF OUR ANTI-RACIST, ANTI-IMPERIALIST STRUGGLE (1973) | Abdul Alkalimat     | 394 |

Two members of the Black Panther Party on the steps of the state capitol in California.



## THE ORIGINS OF RACISM (1936)

The historic origin of racial prejudices and conflict is to be found in the migration of human groups and the invasions by conquering peoples of territory inhabited by other peoples. These conflicts did not result from any innate aversion of one racial group toward another, however. The fact that race mixture has taken place among all peoples and at all times establishes that. The true historical explanation is that the conquering peoples constituted themselves the ruling class and relegated the conquered group to an inferior status. Thus race became a badge of social superiority, and in time the dominant race assumed for itself qualities of moral, intellectual and political superiority, as well as economic privilege. So long as the dominated races passively accept their lower status in the society, there prevails a sort of benevolent racial prejudice in the form of paternalism, and racial conflict will not become acute. In every such society there are a number of forces at work encouraging the group under the heel to submit without active protest. For example, historically, organised religion has often encouraged the subject peoples to accept humiliating and underprivileged status by preaching the necessity of obedience and the acceptance of things as they are, while holding forth the promise of better things in the life to come. Unquestionably, the Negro Church is responsible, to a considerable degree, for the much advertised docility of the American Negro. In many instances the subject race, in resignation, accepts the superiority of the dominant group and attempts to imitate its culture patterns, ultimately hoping to be completely absorbed in it and thus achieve "superior" status. It is when the inferior group does not willingly accept its lower status that more active race conflict develops.

The chief areas of racial conflict in the contemporary world are the United States, with its conflict between Negro and white populations; the Pacific regions, where white and yellow peoples struggle for supremacy; Africa, particularly South and East Africa, where Europeans have colonised; India; the West Indies; and now Germany, with its brutal persecution of a handful of Jews.

Racial prejudice is one of the most invariable by-products of the myth of race. Whatever its exact historical origin, it is a prominent social fact

that communities and nations in many parts of the world, where peoples with apparent differences in physical traits inhabit the same society, hold to such mythical beliefs and maintain attitudes of discrimination which create social barriers and inferior social status for racial minorities. The determination of the dominant racial groups to maintain their "superior" status, expressed in race prejudice, keeps the minority racial groups from attaining political, social and economic equality. The process works in a vicious circle. The prejudice of the dominant group is rationalised on the basis of the "inferiority" or backwardness of the minority or weaker peoples. The resulting racial or "color line" which usually assumes the form of segregation, severely restricts the social opportunities of the "inferior" peoples, makes it impossible for them to attain the fuller life, or to rise above their "inferior" status, and thereby emphasizes and perpetuates the consciousness of difference between the groups. Such attitudes are usually group attitudes. Individuals of different races may be on the most cordial of terms, though bitter racial feeling characterizes the relations of the two groups as a whole. Unfortunately, group attitudes exert an influence on individuals within the group which is so compelling that it is rarely that an individual is able to regard members of another group as individuals, rather than in terms of their association with a particular race or caste.

Group antagonisms thus are fed by mythical beliefs with their attitudes of scorn, derision, hate and discrimination. The mental images or verbal characterizations generally accepted as descriptive of the members of the particular racial group - the "pictures in our heads," to employ Walter Lippmann's phrase - give rise to racial stereotypes which are of the greatest significance in race relations. However, these stereotypes, which conform to the popular idea of the particular race, are never accurate, either in detail or broad outline. The racial stereotypes are not as serious as their social implications and results. Thus, if the racial stereotype pictures the Negro as primitive and animal-like, the Negro will be feared by many people as an ominous rapist. Both the Jew and the Negro in the United States have suffered severely as a result of such false stereotypes.

Racial attitudes are primarily social inheritances. In general they are based on limited and inaccurate knowledge, and are tailored to suit the needs of the dominant group. They are certainly not inborn. Small children of

different racial stock show no consciousness of race attitudes until they have learned the attitudes of the society in which they live. A Frenchman, newly arrived in the country and who has had no opportunity to absorb our social prejudices, will evidence no racial feeling toward Negroes. Yet another Frenchman who has lived for years in the South will reflect the typical southern attitude toward the Negro.

#### Economic Roots of Race Conflict

Race prejudice has deep economic roots. The white population of the South, in its determination to protect its racial supremacy against the threat of the Negro, has presented since the Civil War a solid white front which has ignored class and party lines. A similar situation is found in South Africa when the white population is confronted with its native problem there. However, historical conditions throw significant light on these situations. For example, in our own country, the doctrine of "white superiority" has been employed historically to justify the system of slavery, and, still more significantly, to console the poor whites of the South in their impoverished economic condition. They could at least have pride in the thought that they were members of a "superior" race. But it must be considered that the Southern economy before the Civil War pre-empted the better lands for the plantation owners. This, together with the use of slave labor on the plantation, drove the poor whites to the marginal lands. Moreover, the Negro slave skilled worker was placed in direct competition with the white worker, thus lowering the standard of living and generally degrading the white worker. So economic forces were basically at work in the formation of American race prejudice.

The poor white masses of the South themselves have just grievances against the southern planters and industrialists. Moreover, the poor white and Negro masses in the South live in close contact. Consequently, the powerful land and capital owning interests of the South have lived in constant fear that white and Negro masses would unite against them. In fact, during the Civil War and the Reconstruction period, and even later, groups of poor whites in the South gave evidence of a willingness to join hands with the Negro in a fight against the Southern property-owning class. The development of the southern agrarian movement under late nineteenth century Populism made necessary vigorous efforts to prevent this "unholy alliance" which would have doomed the southern plantation

owner. It was necessary to impress the poor whites that the interests of all white people in the South had to fight off the purely fictitious threat of Negro domination." By force, fraud and lynch law at the hands of the Klu Klux Klan, the Negro was to be "put in his place." Segregation and Jim-Crow were enforced; Negroes were completely separated from whites and pushed down to the bottom rung of the social, political and economic ladder. Yet today, in many places in the South, the poor whites are awakening to a realisation of their true situation, and are joining with Negroes to form sharecropper and tenant-farmer organisations. They are beginning to realise now that race prejudice is a device which has been employed effectively in the exploitation of the masses of both races. The owning class in the South finds that it can stop this movement only by extreme measures of terrorism.

Again, in South Africa, the natives are maintained in the position of an inferior class, and all economic measures are closely related to racial conflict. Therefore class and racial conflict tend also to coincide there.

Racial conflict and prejudices are of greatest concern to the members of the submerged groups insofar as they occasion economic disadvantage for those groups. In the struggle for industrial employment and for representation in the professions, the members of the minority racial group are strongly discriminated against invariably. Vigorous efforts are exerted to exclude them from the skilled and higher paid occupations. They are made ineligible for the better paid positions and for those involving social prestige. For the most part they must be content with menial and arduous labor. By force of circumstance habituated to lower standards of living than the workers of the dominant group, they offer the attraction of low-cost labor to employers. Consequently their services are often solicited by employers who see in them workers who can be more easily and safely exploited than the better trained and organized workers of their own group. But the workers of the minority group are then regarded as a menace by the organized workers of the stronger race; they are kept out of the labor unions and race prejudice between the two races is intensified. In sheer desperation, therefore, the workers of the minority race are willing to be employed as "scab labor" to break strikes, and thus to weaken the bargaining power of the workers of the majority race. This tends to further aggravate racial conflict, and sometimes leads to violent outbreaks, race riots

and terrorization.

Intelligent labor leaders in the ranks of the dominant working-class group understand the artificiality of this device of race prejudice and its threat to the welfare of all workers. They frequently advocate the admission of members of the disadvantaged group to membership in labor organisations, if only as a protective measure. The basis for such change of attitude is the inevitable realisation that workers of the two groups arrayed against each other in racial conflict have more in common than workers of the dominant group have in common with employers of the dominant group. When such policies are pursued racial conflict tends to be lessened, but class conflict - the struggle between workers and employers - is intensified.

It seems certain that race prejudice and conflict must endure in any society in which two groups of peoples in daily contact with each other, and whose cultural or physical differences are easily identified, are forced into economic competition. When society makes it no longer necessary to compete for jobs and economic status in order to earn daily bread; and when society guarantees economic security to all peoples, regardless of race, color or cultural affinity, then alone will the chief source of group conflict be removed. It will not be so easy then to employ the device of race to stir up emotions in support of false economic and political policies, for the basic "drive" of prejudice will no longer be present.

The die is cast and racial crises threaten not only the future of the United States but the peace of the world. There are those like Lothrop Stoddard and Oswald Spengler, who express fear of the rising black and yellow tide, and who visualize the possible crumbling of Western civilization and the eventual domination of the white peoples by the black peoples. There are those, like the Pan-African nationalists, who feel that the darker peoples of the world must band together and gird their black and yellow loins for the oncoming world conflict between the races; the stakes in this little fracas are supposed to be world supremacy. Such beliefs are as fantastic as they are misleading. They assume that both the white and black peoples of the earth have a common fundamental interest in the color of their skin. They ignore completely the class, tribal, religious, cultural, linguistic, nationalistic and other differences among both black and white peoples. They carefully avoid the fact

that for either a white or a black man it is scarcely more pleasant to be exploited and oppressed by privileged members of one's own race than by members of some other race.

The world race war will never be fought, however. Unquestionably, wars involving white and dark peoples will be fought so long as dark peoples exist, just as there will be wars between groups of white peoples and wars between groups of dark peoples. There will be sporadic outbreaks when subject peoples become restless under too harsh measures of imperialistic oppression. But the signs throughout the world are unmistakable. Despite the frantic efforts of many of those who control national and world policy to conjure up international race issues, the lines are forming in a totally different manner. Race issues appear but tend to merge into class issues. Throughout the world the issue between working and owning classes is sharpening. The titanic conflicts of the future will be the product of the uncompromising struggles between those who have and those who have not. These conflicts now wage within all groups, racial and national. Insofar as the great masses of the black and yellow races are concerned, the status of economic and political inferiority which they have been compelled to accept results in their automatic identification with the working and "have not" classes of the society. They are now beginning to understand the true nature of the issues confronting them. Moreover, they will eventually appreciate the great possibilities in their numerical strength as a weapon in their struggle for justice. Their organized and directed support of the working class of the dominant populations of the world will bring an unchallengeable power to this class.

And so class will some day supplant race in world affairs. Race war then will be merely a side-show to the gigantic class war which will be waged in the big tent we call the world.

RACIAL PROBLEMS IN THE U.S. AND WORLD SOCIETY (1955)

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The racial ideology which has divided the peoples of the world into white and colored races grew out of the economic, political, and social relations which were established between white and colored peoples.

The expansion of Europe which began in the fifteenth century brought the

European peoples into contact first with the Negroid peoples of Africa, then with the Indians of the New World, and soon thereafter with the peoples of Asia. Their contacts with the Negroid peoples south of the Sahara led to the slave trade which lasted three centuries. The enslavement of Negroes was justified at first on the grounds that they were heathen, but when Christian baptism threatened the profit derived from trade in black human beings, the idea of racial inferiority was invoked as a justification. When the Europeans first encountered the people of Asia, they were inclined to acknowledge the superiority of the Asian in cultural attainments. It was only after Europeans had achieved political mastery over the countries of Asia that the doctrine of racialism was invoked to justify their domination. European aggression against the peoples of Asia and their trade was declared first to be a war against the infidel Moors. But it was not long before it was justified on the basis that "common rights" to navigate the seas were restricted to European peoples. Thus as Europeans extended their political domination over Asia and Africa, there developed a racial ideology which embodied the superiority of the white race.

The economic relations between the white and colored peoples of the world began with barter, but the subsequent development of economic relations has varied in the three racial frontiers. In the United States the racial frontiers involving Negroes and whites were created by the importation of Africans to supply the demands of a capitalistic agricultural organization for cheap and servile labor. As the result of the westward advance of the Cotton Kingdom in search of more productive lands, in the areas no longer fitted for plantation agriculture, a considerable number of Negroes and mixed-bloods managed to become free and to find a place as skilled mechanics in the economic organization of the South. It was not until after emancipation that the competition of white and black labor or the economic aspects of the racial problem became acute. After emancipation only a fourth of the Negroes in the rural South ever succeeded in securing the ownership of even small parcels of the least desirable lands while the remainder continued an existence very similar to that of the slaves. The descendants of the landless whites pre-empted the jobs requiring skill, especially the new jobs created by the industrialization of the South. The confinement of the Negro to unskilled occupations and domestic service is an aspect of the political struggle in the South,



not between the whites and Negroes but between the white propertied classes and white working classes. The changes which have occurred in the economic aspects of race relations have been caused by two world wars that sent Negroes to northern and western industrial areas. This movement resulted in political changes that have tended to lower the racial barriers against the employment of Negroes in skilled and white collar occupations.

At one time a small, skilled European labor force was superimposed in South Africa upon a mass of non-European labor force with a low standard of living. But as Europeans have gradually entered unskilled occupations, competition has developed between white and colored labor. Then, too, as colored workers have become better educated and more efficient, they have demanded skilled positions. More important still is the fact that as the result of the industrial expansion in South Africa, the employers have been inclined to utilize colored labor in skilled positions since the color bar in employment tends to destroy the mobility of the labor force that is necessary in a community as it becomes industrialized and urbanized. The political forces that are in control in South Africa today are attempting to create and maintain a system of nineteenth-century colonialism in conjunction with a modern industrial community.

Turning to the tropical areas of the world, one finds that the characteristic system of exploitation of colored peoples by Europeans has been some form of forced labor. Africans became the source of forced labor for the new world and thus helped to create the capital that was necessary for the development of capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When the first investment of capital began in Africa, it was characterized by what Frankel calls the "terror economy" of the Belgians and the "Raubwirtschaft" of French Equatorial Africa which destroyed both the natural and human resources of these areas. The subsequent development of a more humane system of exploitation was not the result so much of the growth of humanitarian sentiment as of the need for native labor. In Java the Dutch introduced a disguised system of forced labor known as the "culture system." The "culture system" was succeeded by a system of "credit bondage" which was similar to peonage in the South. It was not until 1930 that the Forced Labor Convention was submitted by the League of Nations to its members.

The racial problems arising from the fact that the lands of the colored peoples of the world offer a field for capital investment by the white nations have become the most important problems in the modern world. Under the colonial regime the economic basis of white domination was often concealed by an administrative system which tended to emphasize the political aspects of colonialism. However, when the colored peoples began to achieve political power and to gain independence, the economic interests involved in colonialism became the source of conflict. As a result there ensued a struggle on the part of the colored peoples to secure a larger share of the wealth of their territories in order to achieve a higher standard of living. This struggle has threatened the very roots of the economic system of the white European nations. This phase of the racial problems has become increasingly acute because of the growth of Communism, especially in the case of China, which has presented a challenge to the entire system of capitalistic exploitation of the colored peoples of the world. The great issue which has been raised in regard to the new nations of Africa is whether they will follow the example of China. This has been especially true in regard to Ghana and Guinea, but it also exists where other new nations of Africa have not decided upon what terms white capital will be used in the building of modern states in Africa.

As is indicated in the above statement, the economic aspects of race relations are closely involved with the political aspects. We might begin our consideration of the political aspects of race relations with the United States. In the United States this phase of race relations did not emerge until after the Civil War, when the question of the legal status of the Negro became an issue. Since the industrial North had triumphed in the struggle, it was in its interest to establish a political democracy which would prevent the return to power of the landholding class and at the same time would assure its own ascendancy in the nation. It was necessary, therefore, to enfranchise the Negro and support his political participation by armed force. As soon as industrial capitalism had assured its legal and political ascendancy in the nation, the Negro was abandoned and became the victim of Southern politics. When "white restoration," which became a shibboleth of Southern politicians, was first accomplished, the Negro was sometimes used by the planters to thwart the aspirations of the "poor whites." For a brief moment Negroes were recruited by the leaders of the agrarian unrest to aid the "poor whites." But as the result of

the class struggle within the white community, the Negro became the scapegoat of the machinations of the demagogues. These demagogues, who offered no threat to the economic interests and political dominance of the white propertied classes, diverted public funds from Negro schools to white schools, disfranchised the Negro, and established a system of legal segregation. It was not until changes had occurred in the economic and political organization of American life that the political aspects of Negro-white relations once more became important.

What has occurred in the United States is indicative of the importance of the political factor in race relations. The racial accommodation which was established between 1890 and 1915 was achieved through violence and terror, but it has not provided a permanent solution of the problem. Although the relative number of Negroes in the population of the South has declined from one in three to about one in five, Negroes continue to be excluded from sharing in the governments of the southern states. Likewise, in Africa, except in those areas where white settlement has not been possible and colored peoples have gained independence, whites have refused to share real political power with the colored peoples. Both in Kenya and in the Central African Federation every attempt has been made to work out a formula by which the African majority would be satisfied with the semblance of sharing in the government while real political power was retained by the whites. In South Africa today the dominant white numerical minority is using violence to prevent any political activity on the part of the non-Europeans. However, in view of the growing unrest among the non-Europeans, no one can predict how long the present power structure can be maintained without resort to violence on an unprecedented scale.

The problems arising from the contacts of white and colored peoples in the modern world are revealed most clearly in multi-racial communities. For in such situations the problems of social organization or the difficulties of creating a single moral order are revealed most clearly. In the United States these problems were solved for a period by the existence of two separate social organizations. A Negro society, in the sociological meaning of the term, with its own institutions which duplicated the institutions of the white society, came into existence. Park saw in the evolution of this type of biracial organization an advance in race relations since it indicated that whites no longer looked down upon Negroes but looked across at them. In fact,

the idea of a biracial organization almost became the official policy of the United States since it was argued that Negroes, because of their peculiar racial traits, could not be integrated into American society. The "separate but equal" doctrine which was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1896 in regard to separate public schools for Negroes was an expression of the quasi-official policy. Despite the attempts to make such a policy conform to what Myrdal has called the "democratic creed," by arguing that separation did not imply an inferior status, the most illiterate Negro had enough sense to know that segregation implied that the Negro was unfit for normal human association. There have been changes in the official policy of the United States with reference to the Negro as the result of internal economic, political, and social changes and because of the new position of the United States in international relations. As the result of the emergence of independent Asian and African nations whose support the United States is seeking in the struggle with the Soviet Union, the American people have been forced to modify their policy in regard to colored people. Nevertheless, the problem of the integration of the Negro into American society, especially in the South, has not been solved.

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## MARTIN LUTHER KING ON RACISM (1966)

Racism is a philosophy based on a contempt for life. It is the arrogant assertion that one race is the center of value and object of devotion, before which other races must kneel in submission. It is the absurd dogma that one race is responsible for all the progress of history and alone can assure the progress of the future. Racism is total estrangement. It separates not only bodies, but minds and spirits. Inevitably it descends to inflicting spiritual or physical homicide upon the out-group.

Of the two dominant and contradictory strains in the American psyche, the positive one, our democratic heritage, was the later development on the American continent. Democracy, born in the eighteenth century, took from John Locke of England the theory of natural rights and the justification of revolution and imbued it with the ideal of a society governed by the people. When Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, the first government of the world to be based on these principles was established on American soil. A contemporary description of Benjamin Franklin might have described the new nation: "He has torn lightning from the sky; soon he will tear their sceptres from the kings." And Thomas Paine in his enthusiasm declared, "We have the

power to begin the world over again."

Yet even amid these electrifying expressions of the rights of man, racism - the myth of inferior peoples - was flourishing here to contradict and qualify the democratic ideal. Slavery was not only ignored in defining democracy, but its enlargement was tolerated in the interests of strengthening the nation.

For more than two hundred years before the Declaration of Independence, Africa had been raped and plundered by Britain and Europe, her native kingdoms disorganized, and her people and rulers demoralized. For a hundred years afterward, the infamous trade continued in America virtually without abatement, even after it had ceased to be legal on this continent.

In fact, this ghostly blood traffic was so immense and its profits were so stupendous that the economics of several European nations owed their growth and prosperity to it and New England rested heavily on it for its development. Beard declared it was fair to say of whole towns in New England and Great Britain: "The stones of your houses are cemented with the blood of African slaves." Conservatively estimated, several million Africans died in the calloused transfer of human merchandise to the New World alone.

It is important to understand that the basis for the birth, growth and development of slavery in America was primarily economic. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the British Empire had established colonies all along the Atlantic seaboard from Massachusetts to the West Indies to serve as producers of raw materials for British manufacturing, a market for goods manufactured in Britain, and a source of staple cargoes for British shipping engaged in world trade. So the colonies had to provide an abundance of rice, sugar, cotton and tobacco. In the first few years of the various settlements along the East Coast, so-called indentured servants, mostly white, were employed on plantations. But within a generation the plantation operators were demanding outright and lifetime slavery for the Africans they imported. As a function of this new economic policy, Africans were reduced to the status of property by law, and this status was enforced by the most rigid and brutal police power of the existing governments. By 1650 slavery had been legally established as a national institution.

Since the institution of slavery was so important to the economic development of America, it had a profound impact in shaping the social-political-

legal structure of the nation. Land and slaves were the chief forms of private property, property was wealth and the voice of wealth made the law and determined politics. In the service of this system, human beings were reduced to property-less property. Black men, the creators of the wealth of the New World, were stripped of all human and civil rights. And this degradation was sanctioned and protected by institutions of government, all for one purpose: to produce commodities for sale at a profit, which in turn would be privately appropriated.

It seems to be a fact of life that human beings cannot continue to do wrong without eventually reaching out for some rationalization to clothe their acts in the garments of righteousness. And so, with the growth of slavery, men had to convince themselves that a system which was so economically profitable was morally justifiable. The attempt to give moral sanction to a profitable system gave birth to the doctrine of white supremacy.

Religion and the Bible were cited and distorted to support the status quo. It was argued that the Negro was inferior by nature because of Noah's curse upon the children of Ham. The Apostle Paul's dictum became a watchword: "Servant, be obedient to your master." In this strange way theology became a ready ally of commerce. The great Puritan divine Cotton Mather culled the Bible for passages to give comfort to the plantation owners and merchants. He went so far as to set up some "Rules for the Society of Negroes," in which, among other things, Negroes disobedient to their masters were to be rebuked and denied attendance at church meetings, and runaway slaves were to be brought back and severely punished. All of this, he reasoned, was in line with the Apostle Paul's injunction that servants should be obedient to their masters.

Logic was manipulated to give intellectual credence to the system of slavery. Someone formulated the argument for the inferiority of the Negro in the shape of a syllogism:

All men are made in the image of God;  
 God, as everybody knows, is not a Negro;  
 Therefore the Negro is not a man.

Academicians eventually climbed on the bandwagon and gave their prestige to the myth of the superior race. Their contribution came through the so-called Teutonic Origins theory, a doctrine of white supremacy surrounded by the halo of academic respectability. The theorists of this concept argued that all Anglo-Saxon institutions of any worth had their historical roots in the Teutonic tribal institutions of ancient Germany, and furthermore that "only the Teutonic

race had been imbued with the ability to build stable governments." Historians from the lofty academic towers of Oxford, like Bishop William Stubbs and Edward A. Freeman, expounded the Teutonic Origins theory in British intellectual circles. It leaped the Atlantic and found lodging in the mind of Herbert Baxter Adams, one of the organizers of the graduate school at Johns Hopkins University and founder of the American Historical Association. He expanded Freeman's views by asserting that the Teutonic Origins theory really had "three homes - England, Germany and the United States." Pretty soon this distorted theory dominated the thinking of American historians at leading universities like Harvard, Cornell, Wisconsin and Columbia.

Even natural science, that discipline committed to the inductive method, creative appraisal and detached objectivity, was invoked and distorted to give credence to a political position. A whole school of racial ethnologists developed using such terms as "species," "genus" and "race." It became fashionable to think of the slave as a "species of property." It was during this period that the word "race" came into fashion.

Dr. Samuel G. Morton, a Philadelphia physician, emerged with the head-size theory which affirmed that the larger the skull, the superior the individual. This theory was used by other ethnologists to prove that the large head size of Caucasians signified more intellectual capacity and more native worth. A Dr. Josiah C. Nott, in his Collections on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races, used pseudo-scientific evidence to prove that the black man was little above the level of an ape. A Frenchman, Count Arthur de Gobineau, in his book The Inequality of the Human Races, vigorously defended the theory of the inferiority of the black man and used the experience of the United States as his prime source of evidence. It was this kind of "science" that pervaded the atmosphere in the nineteenth century, and these pseudo-scientists became the authoritative references for any and all seeking rationalization for the system of slavery.

Generally we think of white supremacist views as having their origins with the unlettered, underprivileged, poorer-class whites. But the social obstetricians who presided at the birth of racist views in our country were from the aristocracy: rich merchants, influential clergymen, men of medical science, historians and political scientists from some of the leading universities of the nation. With such a distinguished company of the elite working so

assiduously to disseminate racist views, what was there to inspire poor, illiterate, unskilled white farmers to think otherwise?

Soon the doctrine of white supremacy was imbedded in every textbook and preached in practically every pulpit. It became a structural part of the culture. And men then embraced this philosophy, not as the rationalization of a lie, but as the expression of a final truth. In 1857 the system of slavery was given its ultimate legal support by the Supreme Court of the United States in the Dred Scott decision, which affirmed that the Negro had no rights that the white man was bound to respect.

In dealing with the ambivalence of white America, we must not overlook another form of racism that was relentlessly pursued on American shores: the physical extermination of the American Indian. The South American example of absorbing the indigenous Indian population was ignored in the United States, and systematic destruction of a whole people was undertaken. The common phrase, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," was virtually elevated to national policy. Thus the poisoning of the American mind was accomplished not only by acts of discrimination and exploitation but by the exaltation of murder as an expression of the courage and initiative of the pioneer. Just as Southern culture was made to appear noble by ignoring the cruelty of slavery, the conquest of the Indian was depicted as an example of bravery and progress.

Just as the doctrine of white supremacy came into being to justify the profitable system of slavery, through shrewd and subtle ways some realtors perpetrate the same racist doctrine to justify the profitable real estate business. Real estate brokers build up financial empires by keeping the housing market closed. Going into white neighborhoods where a few Negroes have moved in, they urge the whites to leave because their property values will depreciate. Thereupon, the real estate broker makes a huge profit from the whites that must be relocated and a doubly huge profit from the Negroes, who, in desperate search for better housing, often pay twice as much for a house as it is worth.

Many whites who oppose open housing would deny that they are racists. They turn to sociological arguments - the crime rate in the Negro Community, the lagging cultural standards, the fear that their schools will become academically inferior, the fear that property values will depreciate - in order to find excuses for their opposition. They never stop to realize that criminal



responses are environmental, not racial. To hem a people up in the prison walls of overcrowded ghettos and to confine them in rat-infested slums is to breed crime, whatever the racial group may be. It is a strange and twisted logic to use the tragic results of segregation as an argument for its continuation. As to the argument that Negroes depreciate property values, study after study has revealed that it is usually the other way around. When Negroes move into a neighborhood and whites refuse to flee, property values are more likely to increase. It is only when blockbusting takes place and whites begin to move out that property values decrease.

However much it is denied, however many excuses are made, the hard cold fact is that many white Americans oppose open housing because they unconsciously, and often consciously, feel that the Negro is innately inferior, impure, depraved and degenerate. It is a contemporary expression of America's long dalliance with racism and white supremacy.

No Negro escapes this cycle of modern slavery. Even the new Negro middle class often finds itself in ghettoized housing and in jobs at the mercy of the white world. Some of the most tragic figures in our society now are the Negro company vice presidents who sit with no authority or influence because they were merely employed for window dressing in an effort to win the Negro market or to comply with federal regulations in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

And so being a Negro in America is not a comfortable existence. It means being a part of the company of the bruised, the battered, the scarred and the defeated. Being a Negro in America means trying to smile when you want to cry. It means trying to hold on to physical life amid psychological death. It means the pain of watching your children grow up with clouds of inferiority in their mental skies. It means having your legs cut off, and then being condemned for being a cripple. It means seeing your mother and father spiritually murdered by the slings and arrows of daily exploitation, and then being hated for being an orphan. Being a Negro in America means listening to suburban politicians talk eloquently against open housing while arguing in the same breath that they are not racists. It means being harried by day and haunted by night by a nagging sense of nobodyness and constantly fighting to be saved from the poison of bitterness. It means the ache and anguish of living in so many situations where hopes unborn have died.

After 348 years racial injustice is still the Negro's burden and America's shame. Yet for his own inner health and outer functioning, the Negro is called upon to be as resourceful, as productive and as responsible as those who have not known such oppression and exploitation. This is the Negro's dilemma. He who starts behind in a race must forever remain behind or run faster than the man in front. What a dilemma! It is a call to do the impossible. It is enough to cause the Negro to give up in despair.

And yet there are times when life demands the perpetual doing of the impossible. The life of our slave forebears is eternal testimony to the ability of men to achieve the impossible. So, too, we must embark upon this difficult, trying and sometimes bewildering course. With a dynamic will, we must transform our minus into a plus, and move on aggressively through the storms of injustice and the jostling winds of daily handicaps, toward the beaconing lights of fulfillment. Our dilemma is serious and our handicaps are real. But equally real is the power of a creative will and its ability to give us the courage to go on "in spite of."

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Along with the scientific and technological revolution, we have also witnessed a world-wide freedom revolution over the last few decades. The present upsurge of the Negro people of the United States grows out of a deep and passionate determination to make freedom and equality a reality "here" and "now." In one sense the civil rights movement in the United States is a special American phenomenon which must be understood in the light of American history and dealt with in terms of the American situation. But on another and more important level, what is happening in the United States today is a significant part of a world development.

We live in a day, said the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, "when civilization is shifting its basic outlook; a major turning point in history where the pre-suppositions on which society is structured are being analyzed, sharply challenged, and profoundly changed." What we are seeing now is a freedom explosion, the realization of "an idea whose time has come," to use Victor Hugo's phrase. The deep rumbling of discontent that we hear today is the thunder of disinherited masses, rising from dungeons of oppression to the bright hills of freedom. In one majestic chorus the rising masses are singing, in

the words of our freedom song, "Ain't gonna let nobody turn us around." All over the world like a fever, freedom is spreading in the widest liberation movement in history. The great masses of people are determined to end the exploitation of their races and lands. They are awake and moving toward their goal like a tidal wave. You can hear them rumbling in every village street, on the docks, in the houses, among the students, in the churches and at political meetings. For several centuries the direction of history flowed from the nations and societies of Western Europe out into the rest of the world in "conquests" of various sorts. That period, the era of colonialism, is at an end. East is moving West. The earth is being redistributed. Yes, we are "shifting our basic outlooks."

These developments should not surprise any student of history. Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself. The Bible tells the thrilling story of how Moses stood in Pharaoh's court centuries ago and cried, "Let my people go." This was an opening chapter in a continuing story. The present struggle in the United States is a later chapter in the same story. Something within has reminded the Negro 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 spirit of the times, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers in 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.

Nothing could be more tragic than for men to live in these revolutionary times and fail to achieve the new attitudes and the new mental outlooks that the new situation demands. In Washington Irving's familiar story of Rip Van Winkle, the one thing that we usually remember is that Rip slept twenty years. There is another important point, however, that is almost always overlooked. It was the sign on the inn in the little town on the Hudson from which Rip departed and scaled the mountain for his long sleep. When he went up, the sign had a picture of King George III of England. When he came down, twenty years later, the sign had a picture of George Washington. As he looked at the picture of the first President of the United States, Rip was confused, flustered and lost. He knew not who Washington was. The most striking thing about this story is not that Rip slept twenty years, but that

he slept through a revolution that would alter the course of human history.

One of the great liabilities of history is that all too many people fail to remain awake through great periods of social change. Every society has its protectors of the status quo and its fraternities of the indifferent who are notorious for sleeping through revolutions. But today our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change. The large house in which we live demands that we transform this world-wide neighborhood into a world-wide brotherhood. Together we must learn to live as brothers or together we will be forced to perish as fools.

We must work passionately and indefatigably to bridge the gulf between our scientific progress and our moral progress. One of the great problems of mankind is that we suffer from a poverty of the spirit which stands in glaring contrast to our scientific and technological abundance. The richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become morally and spiritually.

Every man lives in two realms, the internal and the external. The internal is that realm of spiritual ends expressed in art, literature, morals and religion. The external is that complex of devices, techniques, mechanisms and instrumentalities by means of which we live. Our problem today is that we have allowed the internal to become lost in the external. We have allowed the means by which we live to outdistance the ends for which we live. So much of modern life can be summarized in that suggestive phrase of Thoreau: "Improved means to an unimproved end." This is the serious predicament, the deep and haunting problem, confronting modern man. Enlarged material powers spell enlarged peril if there is not proportionate growth of the soul. When the external of man's nature subjugates the internal, dark storm clouds begin to form.

Western civilization is particularly vulnerable at this moment, for our material abundance has brought us neither peace of mind nor serenity of spirit. An Asian writer has portrayed our dilemma in candid terms:

You call your thousand material devices "labor-saving machinery," yet you are forever "busy." With the multiplying of your machinery you grow increasingly fatigued, anxious, nervous, dissatisfied. Whatever you have, you want more; and wherever you are you want to go somewhere else...your devices are neither time-saving nor soul-saving machinery. They are so many sharp spurs which urge you on to invent more machinery and to do more business.

This tells us something about our civilization that cannot be cast aside as a prejudiced charge by an Eastern thinker who is jealous of Western prosperity. We cannot escape the indictment.

This does not mean that we must turn back the clock of scientific progress. No one can overlook the wonders that science has wrought for our lives. The automobile will not abdicate in favor of the horse and buggy, or the train in favor of the stagecoach, or the tractor in favor of the hand plow, or the scientific method in favor of ignorance and superstition. But our moral and spiritual "lag" must be redeemed. When scientific power outruns moral power, we end up with guided missiles and misguided men. When we foolishly minimize the internal of our lives and maximize the external, we sign the warrant for our own day of doom.

Our hope for creative living in this world house that we have inherited lies in our ability to re-establish the moral ends of our lives in personal character and social justice. Without this spiritual and moral reawakening we shall destroy ourselves in the misuse of our own instruments.

Among the moral imperatives of our time, we are challenged to work all over the world with unshakable determination to wipe out the last vestiges of racism. As early as 1906 W.E.B. DuBois prophesied that "the problem of the twentieth century will be the problem of the color line." Now as we stand two-thirds into this exciting period of history we know full well that racism is still that hound of hell which dogs the tracks of our civilization.

Racism is no mere American phenomenon. Its vicious grasp knows no geographical boundaries. In fact, racism and its perennial ally - economic exploitation - provide the key to understanding most of the international complications of this generation.

The classic example of organized and institutionalized racism is the Union of South Africa. Its national policy and practice are the incarnation of the doctrine of white supremacy in the midst of a population which is overwhelmingly black. But the tragedy of South Africa is not simply in its own policy; it is the fact that the racist government of South Africa is virtually made possible by the economic policies of the United States and Great Britain, two countries which profess to be the moral bastions of our Western world.

In country after country we see white men building empires on the sweat

and suffering of colored people. Portugal continues its practices of slave labor and subjugation in Angola; the Ian Smith government in Rhodesia continues to enjoy the support of British-based industry and private capital, despite the stated opposition of British Government policy. Even in the case of the little country of South West Africa we find the powerful nations of the world incapable of taking a moral position against South Africa, though the smaller country is under the trusteeship of the United Nations. Its policies are controlled by South Africa and its manpower is lured into the mines under slave-labor conditions.

During the Kennedy administration there was some awareness of the problems that breed in the racist and exploitative conditions throughout the colored world, and temporary concern emerged to free the United States from its complicity, though the effort was only on a diplomatic level. Through our Ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, there emerged the beginnings of an intelligent approach to the colored peoples of the world. However, there remained little or no attempt to deal with the economic aspects of racist exploitation. We have been notoriously silent about the more than \$700 million of American capital which props up the system of apartheid, not to mention the billions of dollars in trade and the military alliances which are maintained under the pretext of fighting Communism in Africa.

This is a treacherous foundation for a world house. Racism can well be that corrosive evil that will bring down the curtain on Western civilization. Arnold Toynbee has said that some twenty-six civilizations have risen upon the face of the earth. Almost all of them have descended into the junk heaps of destruction. The decline and fall of these civilizations, according to Toynbee, was not caused by external invasions but by internal decay. They failed to respond creatively to the challenges impinging upon them. If Western civilization does not now respond constructively to the challenge to banish racism, some future historian will have to say that a great civilization died because it lacked the soul and commitment to make justice a reality for all men.

MALCOLM X'S CHANGING VIEW OF RACISM (1965)

My thinking had been opened up wide in Mecca. In the long letters I wrote to friends, I tried to convey to them my new insights into the American black man's struggle and his problems, as well as the depths of my search for truth and justice.

"I've had enough of someone else's propoganda," I had written to these friends. "I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being first and foremost, and as such I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole."

Largely, the American white man's press refused to convey that I was now attempting to teach Negroes a new direction. With the 1964 "long, hot summer" steadily producing new incidents, I was constantly accused of "stirring up Negroes." Every time I had another radio or television microphone at my mouth, when I was asked about "stirring up Negroes" or "inciting violence," I'd get hot.

"It takes no one to stir up the sociological dynamite that stems from the unemployment, bad housing, and inferior education already in the ghettos. This explosively criminal condition has existed for so long, it needs no fuse; it fuses itself; it spontaneously combusts from within itself..."

They called me "the angriest Negro in America." I wouldn't deny that charge. I spoke exactly as I felt. "I believe in anger. The Bible says there is a time for anger." They called me "a teacher, a fomenter of violence." I would say point blank, "That is a lie. I'm not for wanton violence, I'm for justice. I feel that if white people were attacked by Negroes - if the forces of law prove unable, or inadequate, or reluctant to protect those whites from those Negroes - then those white people should protect and defend themselves from those Negroes, using arms if necessary. And I feel that when the law fails to protect Negroes from whites' attack, then those Negroes should use arms, if necessary, to defend themselves."

"Malcolm X Advocates Armed Negroes!"

What was wrong with that? I'll tell you what was wrong. I was a black man talking about physical defense against the white man. The white man can lynch and burn and bomb and beat Negroes - that's all right: "Have patience"... "The customs are entrenched"... "Things are getting better."

Well, I believe it's a crime for anyone who is being brutalized to continue to accept that brutality without doing something to defend himself. If that's how "Christian" philosophy is interpreted, if that's what Gandhian philosophy teaches, well, then, I will call them criminal philosophies.

I tried in every speech I made to clarify my new position regarding white people - "I don't speak against the sincere, well-meaning, good white people. I have learned that there are some. I have learned that not all white people are racists. I am speaking against and my fight is against the white racists. I firmly believe that Negroes have the right to fight against these racists, by any means that are necessary."

But the white reporters kept wanting me linked with that word "violence." I doubt if I had one interview without having to deal with that accusation.

"I am for violence if non-violence means we continued postponing a solution to the American black man's problem - just to avoid violence. I don't go for non-violence if it also means a delayed solution. To me a delayed solution is a non-solution. Or I'll say it another way. If it must take violence to get the black man his human rights in this country, I'm for violence exactly as you know the Irish, the Poles, or Jews would be if they were flagrantly discriminated against. I am just as they would be in that case, and they would be for violence - no matter what the consequences, no matter who was hurt by the violence."

White society hates to hear anybody, especially a black man, talk about the crime the white man has perpetrated on the black man. I have always understood that's why I have been so frequently called "a revolutionist." It sounds as if I have done some crime! Well, it may be the American black man does need to become involved in a real revolution. The word for "revolution" in German is *Umwälzung*. What it means is complete overturn - a complete change. The overthrow of King Farouk in Egypt and the succession of President Nasser is an example of a true revolution. It means the destroying of an old system, and its replacement with a new system. Another example is the Algerian revolution, led by Ben Bella; they threw out the French who had been there over 100 years. So how does anybody sound talking about the Negro in America waging some "revolution"? Yes, he is condemning a system - but he's not trying to overturn the system, or to destroy it. The Negro's so-called "revolt" is merely an asking to be accepted into the existing system! A true Negro revolt



might entail, for instance, fighting for separate black states within this country - which several groups and individuals have advocated, long before Elijah Muhammad came along.

After a while in America, I returned abroad - and this time, I spent eighteen weeks in the Middle East and Africa.

The world leaders with whom I had private audiences this time included President Gamal Abdel Nasser, of Egypt; President Julius K. Nyerere, of Tanzania; President Nnamdi Azikiwe, of Nigeria; Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, of Ghana; President Sekou Touré, of Guinea; President Jomo Kenyatta, of Kenya; and Prime Minister Dr. Milton Obote, of Uganda.

I also met with religious leaders - African, Arab, Asian, Muslim, and non-Muslim. And in all of these countries, I talked with Afro-Americans and whites of many professions and backgrounds.

An American white ambassador in one African country was Africa's most respected American ambassador: I'm glad to say that this was told to me by one ranking African leader. We talked for an entire afternoon. Based on what I had heard of him, I had to believe him when he told me that as long as he was on the African continent, he never thought in terms of race, that he dealt with human beings, never noticing their color. He said he was more aware of language differences than of color differences. He said that only when he returned to America would he become aware of color differences.

I told him, "What you are telling me is that it isn't the American white man who is a racist, but it's the American political, economic, and social atmosphere that automatically nourishes a racist psychology in the white man." He agreed.

We both agreed that American society makes it next to impossible for humans to meet in America and not be conscious of their color differences. And we both agreed that if racism could be removed, America could offer a society where rich and poor could truly live like human beings.

The discussion with the ambassador gave me a new insight - one which I like: that the white man is not inherently evil, but America's racist society influences him to act evilly. The society has produced and nourishes a psychology which brings out the lowest, most base part of human beings.

I kept having all kinds of troubles trying to develop the kind of Black

Nationalist organization I wanted to build for the American Negro. Why Black Nationalism? Well, in the competitive American society, how can there ever be any white-black solidarity before there is first some black solidarity? If you will remember, in my childhood I had been exposed to the Black Nationalist teachings of Marcus Garvey - which, in fact, I had been told had led to my father's murder. Even when I was a follower of Elijah Muhammad, I had been strongly aware of how the Black Nationalist political, economic and social philosophies had the ability to instill within black men the racial dignity, the incentive, and the confidence that the black race needs today to get up off its knees, and to get on its feet, and get rid of its scars, and to take a stand for itself.

One of the major troubles that I was having in building the organization that I wanted - an all-black organization whose ultimate objective was to help create a society in which there could exist honest white-black brotherhood - was that my earlier public image, my old so-called "Black Muslim" image, kept blocking me. I was trying to gradually reshape that image. I was trying to turn a corner, into a new regard by the public, especially Negroes; I was no less angry than I had been, but at the same time the true brotherhood I had seen in the Holy Word had influenced me to recognize that anger can blind human vision.

Every free moment I could find, I did a lot of talking to key people whom I knew around Harlem, and I made a lot of speeches, saying: "True Islam taught me that it takes all of the religious, political, economic, psychological, and racial ingredients, or characteristics, to make the Human Family and the Human Society complete.

"Since I learned the truth in Mecca, my dearest friends have come to include all kinds - some Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, agnostics, and even atheists! I have friends who are called capitalists, Socialists, and Communists! Some of my friends are moderates, conservatives, extremists - some are even Uncle Toms! My friends today are black, brown, red, yellow, and white!"

I said to Harlem street audiences that only when mankind would submit to the One God who created all - only then would mankind even approach the "peace" of which so much talk could be heard...but toward which so little action was seen.

I said that on the American racial level, we had to approach the black man's struggle against the white man's racism as a human problem, that we had to forget hypocritical politics and propaganda. I said that both races, as human beings, had the obligation, the responsibility, of helping to correct America's human problem. The well-meaning white people, I said, had to combat, actively and directly, the racism in other white people. And the black people had to build within themselves much greater awareness that along with equal rights there had to be the bearing of equal responsibilities.

I knew, better than most Negroes, how many white people truly wanted to see American racial problems solved. I knew that many whites were as frustrated as Negroes. I'll bet I got fifty letters some days from white people. The white people in meeting audiences would throng around me, asking me, after I had addressed them somewhere, "What can a sincere white person do?"

When I say that here now, it makes me think about that little co-ed I told you about, the one who flew from her New England college down to New York and came up to me in the Nation of Islam's restaurant in Harlem, and I told her that there was "nothing" she could do. I regret that I told her that. I wish that now I knew her name, or where I could telephone her, or write to her, and tell her what I tell white people now when they present themselves as being sincere, and ask me, one way or another, the same thing that she asked.

The first thing I tell them is that at least where my own particular Black Nationalist organization, the Organization of Afro-American Unity, is concerned, they can't join us. I have these very deep feelings that white people who want to join black organizations are really just taking the escapist way to salve their consciences. By visibly hovering near us, they are "proving" that they are "with us." But the hard truth is this isn't helping to solve America's racist problem. The Negroes aren't the racists. Where the really sincere white people have got to do their "proving" of themselves is not among the black victims, but out on the battle lines of where America's racism really is - and that's in their own home communities; America's racism is among their own fellow whites. That's where the sincere whites who really mean to accomplish something have got to work.

Aside from that, I mean nothing against any sincere whites when I say that as members of black organizations, generally whites' very presence subtly renders the black organization automatically less effective. Even the best

white members will slow down the Negroes' discovery of what they need to do, and particularly of what they can do - for themselves, working by themselves, among their own kind, in their own communities.

I sure don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, but in fact I'll even go so far as to say that I never really trust the kind of white people who are always so anxious to hang around Negroes, or to hang around in Negro communities. I don't trust the kind of whites who love having Negroes always hanging around them. I don't know - this feeling may be a throwback to the years when I was hustling in Harlem and all of those red-faced, drunk whites in the after-hours clubs were always grabbing hold of some Negroes and talking about "I just want you to know you're just as good as I am -" And then they got back in their taxicabs and black limousines and went back downtown to the places where they lived and worked, where no blacks except servants had better get caught. But, anyway, I know that every time that whites join a black organization, you watch, pretty soon the blacks will be leaning on the whites to support it, and before you know it a black may be up front with a title, but the whites, because of their money, are the real controllers.

I tell sincere white people, "Work in conjunction with us - each of us working among our own kind." Let sincere white individuals find all other white people they can who feel as they do - and let them form their own all-white groups, to work trying to convert other white people who are thinking and acting so racist. Let sincere whites go and teach nonviolence to white people!

We will completely respect our white co-workers. They will deserve every credit. We will give them every credit. We will meanwhile be working among our own kind, in our own black communities - showing and teaching black men in ways that only other black men can - that the black man has got to help himself. Working separately, the sincere white people and sincere black people actually will be working together.

In our mutual sincerity we might be able to show a road to the salvation of America's very soul. It can only be salvaged if human rights and dignity, in full, are extended to black men. Only such real, meaningful actions as those which are sincerely motivated from a deep sense of humanism and moral responsibility can get at the basic causes that produce the racial explosions in America today. Otherwise, the racial explosions are only going to grow

worse. Certainly nothing is ever going to be solved by throwing upon me and other so-called black "extremists" and "demagogues" the blame for the racism that is in America.

Sometimes, I have dared to dream to myself that one day, history may even say that my voice - which disturbed the white man's smugness, and his arrogance, and his complacency - that my voice helped to save America from a grave, possibly even a fatal catastrophe.

The goal has always been the same, with the approaches to it as different as mine and Dr. Martin Luther King's nonviolent marching, that dramatizes the brutality and the evil of the white man against defenseless blacks. And in the racial climate of this country today, it is anybody's guess which of the "extremes" in approach to the black man's problems might personally meet a fatal catastrophe first - "non-violent" Dr. King, or so-called "violent" me.

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COMBAT RACISM BY DESTROYING THE SYSTEM (1971)

We must look for the root causes in the psycho-social effort of competitiveness and racism. The huge mass of blue-collar workers seem to be working totally against themselves in their support of a system owned and controlled by a tiny minority. Actually, their contradictory behavior is explained by feelings of loyalty to race, by their identification with the white hierarchy and by their economic advantage over the oppressed races. They may be oppressed themselves, but in return they are allowed to oppress millions of others.

The economic nature of racism is not simply an aside. Built-in physical features exclude blacks from participation, exclude them forever. These features cannot be changed. It is the relationship that must change. Racism is a fundamental characteristic of monopoly capital. When the white self-congratulatory racist complains that the blacks are uncouth, unlettered, ;that our areas are run-down, not maintained; that we dress with loud tastelessness ( a thing the now also say about their own children), he forgets that he governs. He forgets that he built the schools that are inadequate, that he has abused his responsibility to use taxes paid by blacks to improve their living conditions, that he manufactured the loud pants and pointed shoes that destroy and deform

the feet. If we are not enough like him to suit his tastes, it's because he planned it that way. We were never intended to be part of his world. It's a silly contradiction for him or us to dwell on the subject of comparisons between the enemy culture and its creation, the subculture. The only way the exploiter can maintain his position is to create differences and maintain deformities.

It is the sense of the finality of their exclusion from solid social-economic participation that forces our youth away from the crippled family unit into the streets. It causes the excessive importance of meaningless relationships and the prevalence of anticomunal behavior which is a psycho-social response to the loss of - and longing for - community.

With the example of unity in the prison movement, we can begin to break the old behavioral patterns that have repeatedly allowed bourgeois capitalism, its imperialism and fascism, to triumph over the last several decades. We tap a massive potential reservoir of partisans for cadre work. We make it possible to begin to address one of the most complex psycho-social by-products that economic man with his private enterprise has manufactured - Racism.

I've saved this most critical barrier to our needs of unity for last. Racism is a matter of ingrained traditional attitudes conditioned through institutions. For some, it is as natural a reflex as breathing. The psycho-social effects of segregated environments compounded by bitter class repression have served in the past to render the progressive movement almost totally impotent.

The major obstacle to a united left in this country is white racism. There are three categories of white racists: the overt, self-satisfied racist who doesn't attempt to hide his antipathy; the self-interdicting racist who harbors and nurtures racism in spite of his best efforts; and the unconscious racist, who has no awareness of his racist preconceptions.

I deny the existence of black racism outright, by fiat I deny it. Too much black blood has flowed between the chasm that separates the races. It's fundamentally unfair to expect the black man to differentiate at a glance between the various kinds of white racists. What the apologists term black racism is either a healthy defense reflex on the part of the sincere black partisan who is attempting to deal with the realistic problems of survival and elevation, or the racism of the government stooge organs.

As black partisans, we must recognize and allow for the existence of all

three types of racists. We must understand their presence as an effect of the system. It is the system that must be crushed, for it continues to manufacture new and deeper contradictions of both class and race. Once it is destroyed, we may be able to address the problems of racism at an even more basic level. But we must also combat racism while we are in the process of destroying the system.

THE GOALS OF OUR ANTI-RACIST, ANTI-IMPERIALIST STRUGGLE (1973)

# 78

The anti-racist struggle is a struggle for democratic rights. The struggle for democratic rights in the context of USA history has three major high points: The colonial American revolutionary war, the civil war--reconstruction, and the high tide of the civil rights mass movement in the 1960's. These periods represent struggle for the sort of equalitarian rights expressed in the constitutions of all of the bourgeois capitalist countries (especially England, France, and the USA). Such things as universal suffrage, the right to a fair trial and being judged by a jury of one's peers, an uninhibited access to all public institutions are the sort of thing that Black people have sought for hundreds of years, and which have never been fully available for Black people in the USA. Almost all of the great movements of struggle in the Black community have been inspired by the ideological clarity of great democrats. This included Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, and Martin Luther King. This is the tradition that has actually led our people in struggle, pitched battle to be free. The struggle for Democratic Rights is an essential part of the mass consciousness of Black people, and must be kept as the rallying cry of our movement if we are to be the center of Black peoples struggle. Typical struggles today are the movements for a citizens review board to democratize the police (e.g. Atlanta, Chicago, Nashville, and Newark); to stop capital punishment (North Carolina); to fight the Nixon cutbacks in social programs (welfare, veterans benefits, educational funds, etc.); and the right to work and organize. These are the struggles we must lead if we are to lead the Black liberation movement.

The anti-imperialist struggle is a struggle for development. This is a struggle for economic justice, a struggle to alter the fundamental production relationships in this society so that the fruit of a man's labor will be

shared between him and the general welfare of the society. This is a struggle that Blacks have engaged in since the days of slavery, and reached a high point in militant labor struggles in the 20th century. In this current period, there is a struggle between the race theory and the theory of class struggle. The race theory contends that we must develop the Black community as a whole, like a colonial country. This program conceals the fact that it serves the interests of the Black bourgeoisie, because it attempts to set up a market for a few large Black businesses to monopolize (note the history of Black insurance companies, morticians, and realtors). The class analysis of the Black community developed above clearly demonstrates that a program of development for the Black community that is worthy of our struggle must be focused on working class formations. It is Black workers that produce the necessary goods and services for this society, and it is the Black worker who is most exploited and oppressed. So development for Black people requires changing their relationship to the means of production, changing the corporations that we work for. It requires that we take history into our own hands and drive the wrong doers into the sea.

In sum, only a program of consistent democracy based upon militant struggle will prevent the decadent wounded paper-tiger of USA imperialism from developing into its fascist form. Consistent democracy means that we must fight negative thinking (Black people ain't shit, or if we march the pigs will shoot us down), involve large numbers of people, and fight courageously to advance the correct ideology. In this way, the focus of our struggle will be like a laser beam to cut through the armour of oppression. Our democratic program must further our peoples analysis and heighten the contradictions.

## BLACK UNITY



Martin Luther King and Malcolm X greet each other in Washington where they announced plans for "direct action" if Southern senators filibustered against the civil rights bill.



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Malcolm X addressing a rally in Harlem in June, 1963.

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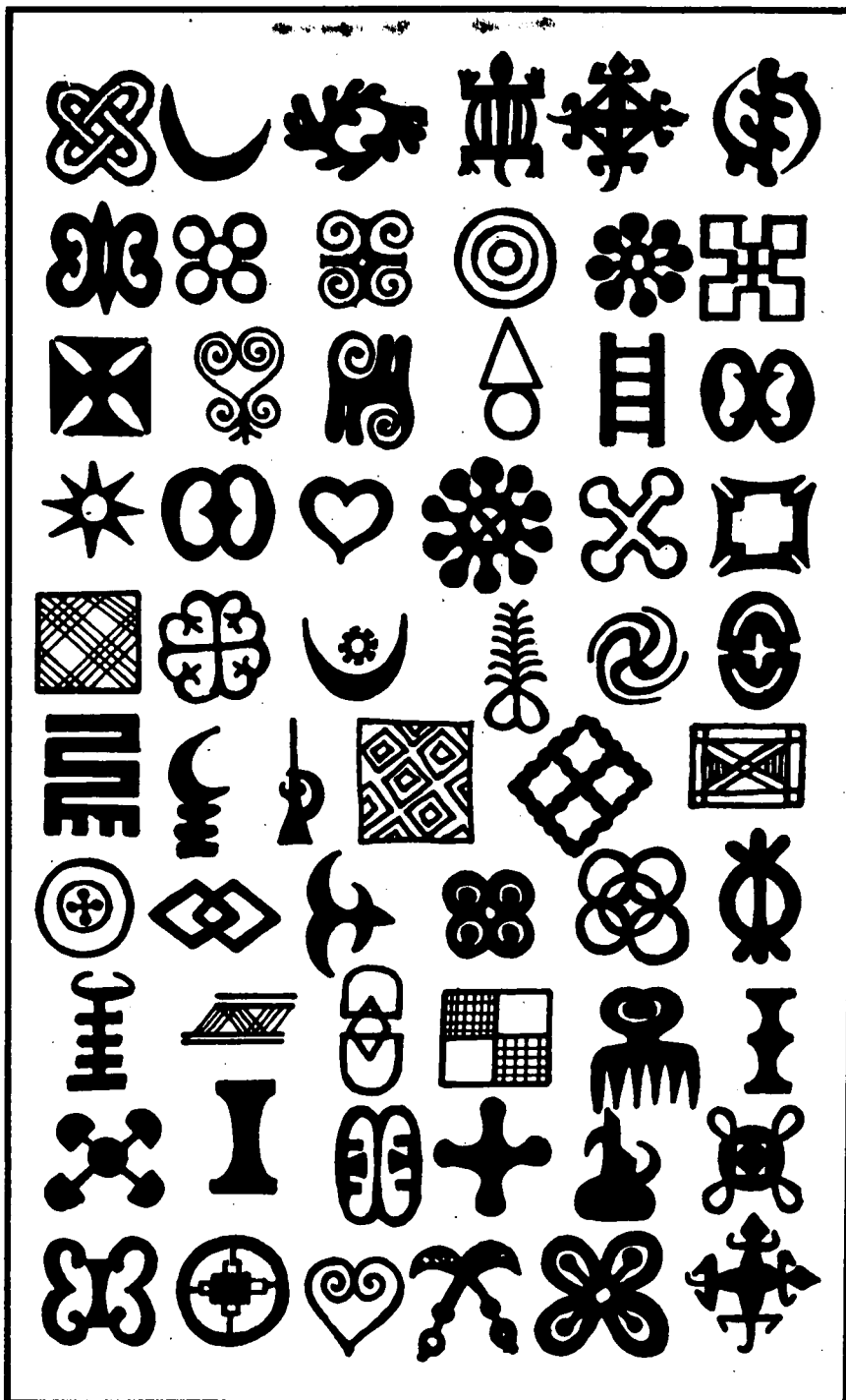
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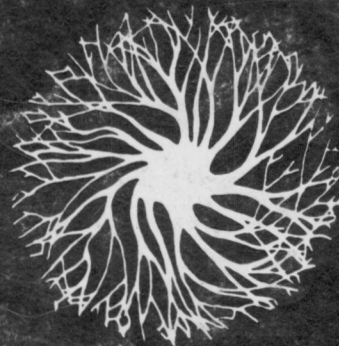
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