

Review

Reviewed Work(s): INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES: A Course Outline—Guide for Study Groups by

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But then, these criticisms are mere discussions on what might have been.

The truth is that what has been accomplished in this book is of sufficient magnitude that such criticisms pale into insignificance.

The last two chapters alone are worth the price.

And as Allen so deftly demonstrates, reform movements must alter their conception of the "task at hand."

What is really needed is not reform, but revolutionary social transformation.

(Reprinted from: Washington (D.C.) Afro-American, August 31, 1974.)

**INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES: A Course Outline-Guide for Study Groups.** Peoples College Press (P.O. Box 7696, Chicago, Ill. 60680.), 1975. 64 pp. \$1.50.

Reviewed by ST. CLAIR DRAKE

*As I re-read these messages of more than half a century ago, I sense two matters which are not so much omission on my part as indications of what I then did not know or did not realize; one is the influence of Freud and his co-workers in their study of psychology; the other is the tremendous impact on the modern world of Karl Marx. . . . He was mentioned at Harvard and taken into account at Berlin. It was not omission but lack of proper emphasis or comprehension among my teachers of the revolution in thought and action which Marx meant. . . .*

(Preface to the Jubilee Edition of *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1953, by Dr. W.E.B. DuBois)

Ronald Bailey and Abdul Alkalimat (s.n. Gerald McWorter), working in Nashville, the same city where Dr. DuBois received his undergraduate education and apparently did *not* hear Marx mentioned, have led a group of students and community activists in the development and testing of materials for use in carrying out those intellectual tasks that are an integral part of the process of black liberation. The study-guide they have produced is one tangible result of their diligent and devoted labors. They *do* take Marx into account in developing analytical tools for studying The Black World.

This study guide appears during a period when contradictions are being heightened in the liberation struggle, and the search for ideological clarity has precipitated national and international discussion of the issue that first surfaced at the 1867 session of the one-year old National Labor Union, the relationship between the working-class movement and the struggle for black liberation in America. The debate in *THE BLACK SCHOLAR* during the past year suggests that the time is ripe

for a study-guide that will facilitate systematic study of this issue, as well as related ones such as the origins of racism and the factors in its persistence. This little booklet is in the tradition of DuBois on one hand and of the African savant, Cheikh Anta Diop, on the other, who has been cited so frequently in the debate. Both scholars combine a firm black perspective with a Marxian approach to economic, political, and "racial" history.

Various political parties and other types of action-groups emphasizing one or another facet of Marxism as a political movement have been competing for members and sympathizers ever since Marx and Engels published the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. Such differentiation was as inevitable among Marxists as it has been among Christians, Muslims, and proponents of "democracy." Padmore, Toure and Nkrumah, Fanon and Cabral, have achieved syntheses of Marxism and Black Nationalism that are in accord with African realities. Now, such syntheses are evolving in black America, and as they do, it is to be expected that the Congress of Afrikan Peoples will elaborate variations on Marxist thought that differ from those of the Communist Party U.S.A., and there was no surprise when the Black Panthers once developed a theory of *lumpen* vanguardism that was rejected by S.W.P. and P.L.P., as well as the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. What has been needed for the un-initiated was a manual that could provide some experience in handling the most general Marxian concepts as a tool for analyzing the Black Experience in Pan-African perspective, historical and contemporary. A group of carefully selected readings applying Marxist analysis to the concrete problem of Black Liberation was also needed—as well as a group of provocative questions for discussion that would also serve as a stimulus to action, and perhaps lead to eventual commitment to some specific group of the student's own choice. This book meets that need.

One of the most valuable aspects of this study-guide is that it introduces the student to the work of a previous generation of black social scientists who often were what might be called unlabeled "intuitive Marxists" in some aspects of their work. This list includes people such as Charles S. Johnson (of Fisk, the Rosenwald Fund and the Urban League), Ralph Bunche and Horace Mann Bond during the Depression years. How could a black scholar reflect upon the Black Experience without beginning with an analysis of "the economic base" and the primacy of the profit motive during the slavery and post-slavery years? How could they think about white Christianity without starting in to "unmask ideology?" And living behind what Dr. DuBois called "the Veil" forced them to think dialectically, holding opposites together in conceptual unity while continuously searching for the

new system gestating in the womb of the old. T. Thomas Fortune and Amiri Baraka are juxtaposed for our serious consideration—and this is as it should be.

This study-guide is needed during the current crisis in American capitalism, the brunt of which is falling on black Americans. Many black organizations, including the Nation of Islam, are critically re-assessing their conceptions of, attitudes toward, and relationships with, other racial and ethnic groups. Coalitions may be necessary in the next phase of the struggle. This is a recurrent theme in Afro-American history and it is relevant, as this work does, to call our attention to the Abolition Movement, the Reconstruction Period, the Populist Movement, and the period of the Great Depression for detailed analysis.

The world-wide Pan-African experience, today, proceeds within a world situation where big corporations and conglomerates and financial combines dominate the economy of the United States within which millions of black people live, subjected to ghettoized super-exploitation and forming a labor reserve force with an unemployment rate three times higher than that for whites. Yet they and white workers *both* are suffering from inflation and economic breakdown. Black people in Africa and the West Indies, often ruled by a comprador bourgeoisie allied with the army, have their life-chances determined by huge multinational corporations in which the same agencies that dominate the internal life of the United States are heavy investors. After World War II, as colonial imperialism gave way to neo-colonialism under pressure from Third World liberation movements backed up by friendly socialist states, problems of Pan-African relationships became very complex. This book will help in analyzing them.

During the 1960s, thousands of volumes poured from the presses to meet an escalating demand for works in Black Studies. Many of these were collections of articles organized loosely around a theme by an editor. A few were study guides that reflected either an ideological orientation or personal predilections, but virtually none of these provided a coherent point of view from which to analyze the Black Experience in Africa and the Diaspora within a single frame of reference, and which could also serve as a guide to day-by-day liberation tasks. This study-guide, tested in actual teaching-learning situations is a timely contribution which fills that gap.



## BOOKS RECEIVED

(*This is an informational listing only and does not preclude subsequent publication of reviews of these works.*)

ABAJIAN, JAMES DE T. *BLACKS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE AMERICAN WEST; A Bibliography and Union List of Library Holdings Through 1970*, G. K. Hall & Company, 1974. 487 pp. \$29.50 (hardcover).

BIRKOS, ALEXANDER S. & TAMBS. & TAMBS, LEWISA. *AFRICAN AND BLACK AMERICAN STUDIES*. Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1975. 205 pp. \$11.50 (hardcover). This is the Academic Writer's Guide to Periodicals, Vol. III, and focuses on those serials published in Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Canada, Latin America and the United States concerned with black American and African interests.

*BLACK NAMES IN AMERICA: ORIGINS AND USAGE*. Collected by Newbell Niles Puckett, Edited by Murray Heller. G. K. Hall & Company, 1975. 561 pp., index, biblio. \$29.50 (hardcover). *Black Names in America* is based on Dr. Puckett's research in the genesis, use and metamorphosis of the names of black Americans.

BLANTON, KATHRYN FANKLIN. *A DICTIONARY OF POETRY: VOLUME I*. Vantage Press, Inc., 1974. 70 pp. \$3.95 (hardcover). The author has been active in teaching youngsters since 1945. This book of poetry, her first, is an outgrowth of her experience that stories and rhymes facilitate a child's learning.

CHINWEIZU, *THE WEST AND THE REST OF US*. Random House, 1975. 520 pp., index, maps. \$15.00 (hardcover). Chinweizu investigates the styles and purposes of Western imperialism in Africa, revealing the role of African complicity—first by the early black slavers, and now by the present day African elite—in the subjugation of Africa by the West.

COURLANDER, HAROLD. *A TREASURY OF AFRICAN FOLKLORE*. Crown Publishers, Inc. 1975. 617 pp., index, appendix, biblio. \$14.95 (hardcover). An extensive collection of lore, recollections, epics, traditions, beliefs, and tales from widespread regions of the African continent.

COX, GEORGE O. *EDUCATION FOR THE BLACK RACE*. African Heritage Studies Publishers, 1974. 170 pp. \$4.95 (paperback). This book is an analysis of the Western educational system and the implications of that system for blacks. Cox has outlined guidelines for a new system of education for black people in a revolutionary age.