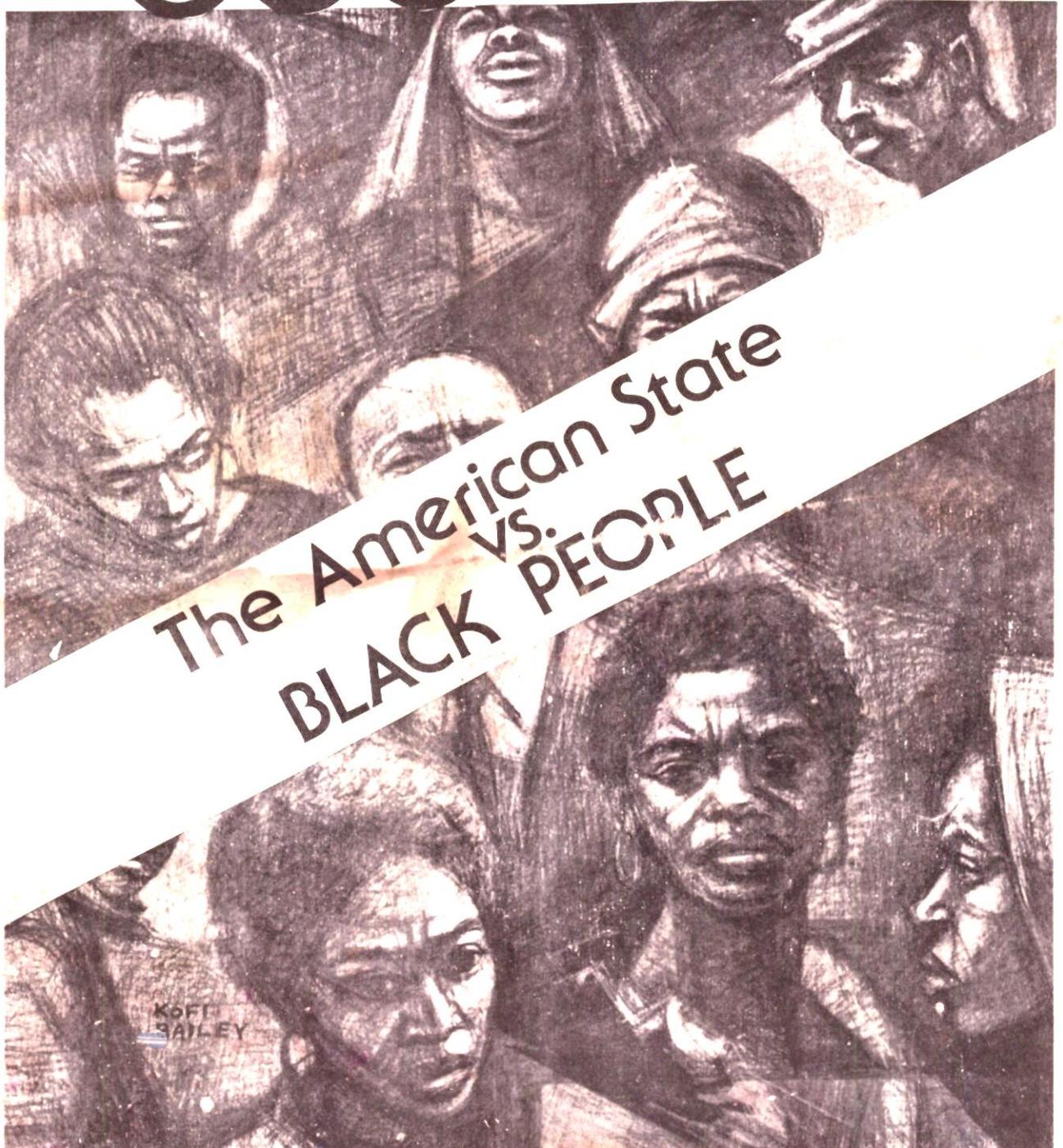


**BW** black-world-view



BLACK STRUGGLE: THE OTHER AMERICAN REVOLUTION

## IN THIS ISSUE

The American Constitution was supposedly signed into law in order to (among other things) "establish Justice" and "insure domestic Tranquility." In actual fact, however, as concerns black Americans, America has always been more committed to insuring domestic tranquility than establishing justice. All too often these two concepts have meant constitutionally sanctioned violence against Blacks (in order to "insure domestic tranquility" for whites) and violent suppression of Black's struggles for freedom and justice, rather than the defense and support of the same. As Mary Berry has noted in *Black Resistance, White Law*, "Law and the Constitution in the United States have been a reflection of the will of the white majority that white people have and shall keep superior economic, political, social and military power, while black peoples shall be the permanent mudsills of American society." It is this American "justice" and its relationship to black people and the black struggle that is the theme of this issue of *Black-World-View*.

HAYWOOD BURNS' "A 200th Birthday 'Gift' of Death" opens this issue. Calling attention to the racist character of the July 2, 1976, Supreme Court decision that ruled that the death penalty is not unconstitutional (58% of the more than 600 persons on "death row" are black), Burns establishes, also, the relationship between this stand on capital punishment and America's racist criminal justice system.

VINCENT HARDING'S "White Compromise, Black Struggle: The Search for 'Our Country,'" is another excerpt from his forthcoming book, *The Other American Revolution*. It takes us back to an earlier period in our history when another branch of the American government declared open war on black people in order to blunt their quest for freedom and justice. In this instance, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was the weapon employed by the State but, as Dr. Harding reveals, black people's responses to these attacks led them (and us) to a deeper level of understanding of the relationship between the struggles of Blacks against American injustice and the larger struggle to transform American society.

ELDSON MCGHEE'S "From Vietnam to Prison: The Education of Eldson McGhee" concludes his essay of his encounters with American injustice at home as well as abroad. It reveals some of the more subtle ways in which this society supports and/or sponsors the dehumanization of black people in the military and in prison.

MICHELE RUSSELL'S "'Message' From Flint: The Case of Madeline Fletcher," is a study of the ways in which an arm of the State's domestic military apparatus (the Flint, Michigan, police department) wages officially sanctioned violence on black life and humanity. Madeline Fletcher, a black woman, joined the police force, hoping to curb its attacks on the black community. Her fellow officers rewarded her with a bullet in her chest. The

courts charged her with assault, even though *she* had been the person assaulted. Only the response of Flint's black community prevented her from becoming another victim of American "justice."

MANNING MARABLE'S "Thermidor: The Political Economy of the South in the 70's" focuses on the ways in which state-supported capitalistic ventures in the South since the 1960's have had a debilitating effect on the economic and political condition of Southern Blacks. In his analysis of the process of Southern black dispossession, exploitation and oppression, he suggests the degree to which American economic policies have taken up where segregationist political practices had left off.

WILLIAM STRICKLAND'S "The Government vs. Black People" concludes this issue. Focusing on the officially sanctioned, organized violence (code-named COINTELPRO) that was carried out by the FBI and other government agencies against the black movement of the 1960's, Strickland reminds us of the fact that America is at war with black people and black struggle. And, whether we like it or not, we are at war with America.

### INSIDE I.B.W.

The Institute of the Black World (IBW) is an independent center of research, analysis and advocacy based in Atlanta, Georgia. A non-profit, educational institution, IBW has been actively involved in the struggle to transform the character of black education since its inception in 1969. Through its programs of historical research, analysis, and publishing, IBW seeks to develop politically conscious print and audio materials for the arena of black education. Through its education programs, the Institute seeks to impart the philosophy, values, knowledge and skills needed to understand ourselves and the world in which we live and to change both. IBW places greatest emphasis on developing such understanding and competence within the black community, but its ultimate goal is to serve as an agent of social transformation for the total American society.

### ABOUT BLACK-WORLD-VIEW

BLACK-WORLD-VIEW is a periodical publication which explores the evolution of the black freedom struggle in America: its history, contemporary manifestations, and its future prospects. Although our focus is on the black American experience, that experience is viewed in the context of domestic and international change. Forthcoming issues will examine the racial, economic, political, cultural, and class dimensions of struggle; as well as the role that education, and personal and social transformation can play in building a new society. This year's theme, as indicated on the cover, is "Black Struggle: The Other American Revolution."

# A 200th BIRTHDAY 'GIFT' OF DEATH

by Haywood Burns

*For nearly ten years there has been no execution in the United States. Appeals of death sentences have been taken to the Supreme Court, asking it to declare such sentences unconstitutional as "cruel and unusual punishment." As the moratorium has lengthened, so has the roll of those awaiting the outcome on "death row," not knowing whether they are finally to live or die, if to die, when. There are now over 600 of them, of which over 60% are black, brown or red, and nearly all of them are poor, suggesting that the ultimate sanction continues to fall more heavily on minorities and those who cannot afford extensive legal defense.*

*The Supreme Court of the United States has at last ruled that the death penalty is not unconstitutional (Gregg v. Georgia, decided July 2, 1976), and may be justified as an expression of the outrage of society at particularly heinous crimes. Legislators have hastened to enact new statutes to legitimize the reinstatement of capital punishment. It seems only a question of time until some state will execute one of its citizens, break the moratorium, and open an avalanche of legal slaughter.*

It is ironic that the United States Supreme Court decision in July upholding the death penalty for murder should have come on the eve of the 200th anniversary of the nation's birth. The irony lies not only in that these two events so nearly coincide but also in that beneath the surface of the capital-punishment issue is an unresolved question that has plagued this country throughout the two centuries of its existence: racial justice. It may be convenient to ignore the race question inherent in capital punishment, but it is far from honest.

Race, of course, is not the single most important question involved. For each of the condemned, white and nonwhite, life is uniquely precious—just as it was for each of the victims of the crimes for which they were convicted (though many face death for crimes other than murder). Poverty and class justice are certainly an issue. Though most of the condemned are nonwhite, probably all are poor. There are many

overarching questions of humanity and decency that must be answered by a society that will calculatedly take the lives of its members and still dare to call itself civilized.

All of this having been said, however, the simple fact remains that the decision to permit the reintroduction of the death penalty was a decision to kill hundreds of persons, mostly racial-minorities members.

In the welter of controversy over whether to end the nine year moratorium on executions and put into service once more the electric chair, the gas chamber, the scaffold and the firing squad, too little attention has been paid to the fact that, in a country with a minority population of less than 20 percent, the overwhelming majority of those facing death at the time of the Supreme Court's decision were Black (58 percent), Chicano (3 percent) and American Indian (2 percent).

For the most part, when faced with the gross racial disparities in capital sentences, Supreme Court Justices have either ignored the question or dismissed the problem as being accounted for by social and economic factors unrelated to issues of constitutional law. The dangerous myopia in such a view is that it misses completely the role that the law has played in creating the degraded and disadvantaged position of the nation's poor and non-whites that figures so largely in spawning crime and criminals. These "social and economic factors" are often a direct product of a history of centuries of victimization of a people by a legal system.

For the black, brown and red American, the law has been the way in which society's generalized racism has been made particular and converted into policies and standards of social control and economic debasement. Even a cursory knowledge of United States legal history of the last two centuries yields an understanding of the role of the law in the enslavement and continuing subjugation of black people, the genocidal attacks on American Indians, and the heinous crimes in the name of law against other persons of color.

*" . . . the decision to permit . . . the death penalty was a decision to kill hundreds of persons, mostly racial-minorities members."*

The law is directly implicated in the creation and the continuation of the nation's ghettos and barrios and the conditions in them. Our courts cannot now so neatly wash their hands of the stain of this past. Refusal to regard these facts at this time only perpetuates past injustices. A further fallacy in some of the judicial responses to the racial character of capital punishment is the rather conveniently naive view that, whatever the problem may have been in the past, we no longer have a problem of discrimination in our justice system, that because we no longer have explicit statutory segregation we no longer have racism.

Whereas, in fact, racism is part and parcel of the daily functioning of the criminal-justice system. It often plays a part in the decision of whom to prosecute and for what; in who sits on the grand juries that return indictments and who sits on the petit juries that return verdicts;

in the weight accorded the testimony of non-whites; and in who gets the benefit of the exercise of any official discretion, from the decision to arrest through the decision to commute a death sentence already imposed.

Given its history, Bicentennial America may be quite prepared now to look on in silence, perhaps even satisfaction, at the electrodes placed against the black shaven heads, the red throats gasping for air in the gas-filled chambers, the brown necks snapping as the trap doors open.

The symbolic significance of these state murders will not be lost, however, on a generation of minority youth or a watching world, providing as they would even further evidence of the extent to which this country values nonwhite life.

*Previously published in New York Times, October 7, 1976*

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### The Declaration of Economic Independence

The history of the giant corporation is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations; all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these (United) States. To prove this, let the facts be submitted:

America's giant corporations have seized control over the great land and resources of our country. They have systematically destroyed thousands of small businesses and forced millions of Americans to become wage serfs for the wealthy owners. They have formed shared monopolies in virtually every major retail and wholesale industry, forcing millions of consumers to pay higher and higher prices for goods and services they cannot do without. They have forced millions of Americans into unemployment lines by systematically closing down their American plants and moving their business operations abroad so they can hire cheaper labor and reap still greater profits for their owners. They have pursued a policy of industrial negligence which kills 14,000 workers and permanently disables 900,000 more every year. They have manufactured unsafe products that kill 30,000 and permanently disable 110,000 Americans every year. They have used the energy crisis in order to double the price of fuel and make record gains in profit.

They have turned our nation into a weapons factory, wasting valuable labor and resources that could be utilized for basic human needs. They have fostered tensions and conflicts between races, sexes and ethnic groups in their arbitrary and discriminatory employment practices. They have pillaged the resources, exploited the peoples, and systematically intervened in the domestic affairs of other nations in order to profit their corporate treasuries. They have subverted the Constitution of the United States and the principle of government of, by, and for the people by illegally financing their own candidates for local, state and national office and by placing their own supporters in key government commissions and regulatory agencies.

*"Peoples' Bicentennial Commission"*

# WHITE COMPROMISE, BLACK STRUGGLE:

## *The Search For 'Our Country'*

by Vincent Harding

*The Other American Revolution is that of black struggle to obtain the freedoms ostensibly won by Americans in the American Revolution. Any careful historical study eventually reveals that this Other American Revolution is the longest unbroken, active struggle for freedom ever carried on in the post-medieval world, covering more than 300 years and costing untold hundreds of thousands of lives.*

*This article continues our series of excerpts from Dr. Harding's forthcoming book, The Other American Revolution.*

By the middle of the 19th century, the hundreds of thousands of Africans who had survived the terrors of the middle passage had now become an unrealized nation of nearly four million persons within the United States. Almost ninety per cent of that number, more than three million black folk were living in slavery in the South and Southwest. All together, both free and bond, black people represented some sixteen per cent of the entire population, nearly one out of every six persons. And, by 1850, the implications of this major black presence for the total life of the nation were becoming more painfully clear with each passing day.

In the first place, in a society committed to white supremacy, any efforts by black people to struggle for life, liberty and the pursuit of human dignity carried an intrinsic revolutionary character. Indeed, in a nation which was unabashedly described by its citizens as "a white man's country," the black presence itself was unbalancing, dangerous and potentially explosive. Moreover, when a large, enslaved population was massed at the base of a society, supposedly committed to freedom and opportunity, no white movement towards this purported freedom could escape the heavy weight and the jagged edges of the chains that black folk wore.

Nowhere was this latter paradox more obvious than in the conflict between the "democratic" white movement for "free land for free men" in the new West, and the expanding system of slavery. Ever since the days of the Constitutional Convention, the issue of the Black enslaved presence in the newly usurped Western lands was

an abrasive one. White leaders were constantly trying to work out compromises to determine how far toward the Pacific (and the Canadian border) slavery and all its economic, cultural and political baggage could be allowed to go. In 1820, the Missouri Compromise set the slave/free line at the 36°30' parallel in the territory of the Louisiana Purchase. But as America took the land of the Mexicans and the Indians by conquest and deceit, as they pushed relentlessly West and North, the question of black slavery in this new land was raised again.

### The Law, and Resistance

By the end of the 1840's, an acrimonious and sometimes deadly debate built up in Congress, in town halls, on street corners and drawing rooms, and in journals across the land. At the heart of it all was the black presence. As white men looked at the new territories and planned for their settlement, three major points of view were pressed forward. One group, usually known as Free Soilers, wanted no slavery anywhere in the new lands (but most of them wanted no free Blacks either). Another, pro-slavery, group believed that slavery should be free to go wherever white men were free to go, and receive federal protection as well. A third group, advocating "popular sovereignty," claimed that the white settlers in each area should decide upon the slavery issue by majority vote. None of the groups had in mind any question of black freedom, equality or democratic participation.

Then, in 1850, just as it appeared that the debates over the issue would tear the country apart, a new compromise plan was enacted by Congress which tried to give each of the three white camps something of what they desired. Most important for our purposes was the fact that it offered a drastically strengthened fugitive slave law to the pro-slavery forces. It was a law which placed all black people at the mercy of the slave catchers and gave them no recourse in the courts. Once more, it was obvious that white compromise had been achieved at the cost of

black freedom.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 served as a tremendous catalyst to the forces of resistance which were already at work in the Black community. At an anti-Fugitive Slave Law rally in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, Martin Delany pointedly turned toward the white mayor of the city and said,

If any man approaches [my] house in search of a slave I care not who he may be, whether constable, or sheriff, magistrate or even judge of the Supreme Court may let it be [President Millard Fillmore] surrounded by his cabinet as his bodyguard with the Declaration of Independence waving above his head as his banner, and the constitution of his country upon his breast as his shield. If he crosses the threshold of my door, and I do not lay him a lifeless corpse at my feet, I hope the grave may refuse my body a resting place, and righteous Heaven lay spirit a home. O, no! He cannot enter that house and we both live.

## CAUTION!!

### COLORED PEOPLE OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,

You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and advised, to avoid conversing with the  
**Watchmen and Police Officers  
of Boston,**

For since the recent ORDER OF THE MAYOR & ALDERMEN, they are empowered to act as

### KIDNAPPERS

AND

### Slave Catchers,

And they have already been actually employed in KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING SLAVES. Therefore, if you value your LIBERTY, and the Welfare of the Fugitives among you, Show them in every possible manner, as so many HOUNDS on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

Keep a Sharp Look Out for  
**KIDNAPPERS, and have  
TOP EYE open.**

APRIL 24, 1851.

Nor were black people simply engaging in angry rhetoric. In city, town and rural areas, they began to organize for mutual defense and civil disobedience at a level previously unknown. New, militant vigilance committees were formed. In some places, like Chicago, armed, active black patrols were commissioned to seek out slave-hunters and see to it—by any means necessary—that they did not invade the black community.

Meanwhile, other Blacks organized for another kind of action: Exodus. During the decade of the 1850's, directly as a response to the stringencies of the Fugitive Slave Law and other similar developments, some 20,000 persons fled the black communities of the North and made their way to Canada. Their flight was often highly organized: sometimes a pastor and most of his congregation would fill the cars of a North-bound train. Sometimes a local vigilance committee leader would transport a company of men, women and children across the Canadian border.

Of course most Blacks remained to stand their ground, to struggle as best they could in this strange native-exile land. Among them, the practice of civil disobedience continued and expanded. But it is likely that no example of black resistance so stirred the society in the early years of that decade as the events which transpired near a rural Pennsylvania community called Christiana.

There, in the Fall of 1851, a local black vigilance committee took a bold, defiant stand against representatives of the forces of slavery and the federal government. Led by a former captive named Samuel Parker, an armed group of men and women barricaded themselves in Parker's house and refused to give up several runaways whose former "master" had come to claim them. In spite of the presence of two U.S. Marshals (who threatened, in fine style, to burn the house down), Parker and black people of the local community defended their endangered brothers.

In the course of the struggle, one in which black women played an active part, the white slave owner was killed, his son was seriously wounded, and the Federal Marshals beat a hasty retreat. When they returned, a company of U.S. Marines was with them, but by then Parker and other leaders of the resistance were on their way to Canada.



When word of the incident spread to the black community across the country, there was an overwhelming outpouring of sympathy and financial support for the men and women they called "the victorious heroes of the battle of Christiana." Obviously, the spirit of resistance was alive, and many African-Americans knew that in the struggle for freedom and humanity there were no other arms they could ultimately trust but their own.

#### On the Question of Destiny

While events like Christiana stimulated an almost unanimous black opinion on the right and necessity of self-defense, there were deepening divisions within the black community concerning the positive, offensive steps they should take in their struggle for freedom. Two of the major opposing positions were represented by Frederick Douglass on the one hand, and by his friend, Martin Delany on the other. Raising his arguments from a black abolitionist position of protest and agitation, Douglass assumed that Blacks had no other essential destiny than that which was bounded by America. So he placed great emphasis on the necessity of whites,

especially white leaders, to act justly in relationship to black needs. Black protest and agitation served to pressure such white action.

For instance at mid-century Douglass was saying,

We deem it a settled point that the destiny of the colored man is bound up with that of the white people of this country . . . we are *here*; and . . . this is *our* country; . . . the question for the (white) philosophers and statesmen of the land ought to be, what principles should dictate the policy of the action towards us? We shall neither die out, nor be driven out; but shall go with this people, either as a testimony against them, or as an evidence in their favor throughout their generations. We are clearly on their hands and must remain there forever.

With those words in his newspaper, *North Star*, Douglass identified one of the most vexing questions in the movement for black freedom in America: what does it mean to Blacks for America to be "*our* country?" In statements like this one Douglass, himself, assigned to Blacks a passive sense of belonging. He proposed that the major actions needed to come from whites, defining the position of his fellow Africans as that of an unwanted, but inescapable burden on the hands of the white majority.

By the 1850s, Delany, one of the most black-conscious men of his time, had taken another, far more revolutionary position. He put it forward initially in 1852 in his landmark publication, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered*. The key word in that title was not "Emigration," as so many persons have thought, but "Elevation"—and "Destiny." For Delany, the crucial issue was not where black people were located, or what whites would do. Instead, his primary concern was for the "elevation" of the peoples of Africa to their rightful destiny in the struggle for a new humanity.

The redemption of Africans and Africa was his great vision. All his conclusions flowed from that point. Thus he called out

The time has now fully arrived when the colored race is called upon by all the ties of common humanity, and all the claims of consummate justice, to go forward and take their position, and do battle in the struggle now being made for the redemption of the world. . . . But we must go from among our oppressors; it never can be done by staying among them.

Looking at the massive evil of the Fugitive Slave Law, Delany was forced to a very different conclusion than Douglass' regarding the white leaders who shaped and maintained it. He said, "A people capable of originating such a law as this, are not the people to whom we are willing to entrust our liberty at discretion."

For Delany, black people had a key role to play in the development of mankind and of their own people and they could not play that role while cramped into the oppressive structures of a white racist society. Therefore, in faithfulness to their history and destiny, they must struggle to leave America to establish a new, self-determining existence. Whatever that struggle for a new beginning might cost, Blacks must be ready to pay it. Those were the major themes being raised by Delany, and as the anguished decade developed he received an increasingly receptive hearing among key segments of the black community.

### "Our Country"

For an enslaved, embattled people to be called to fulfill a universal destiny was a revolutionary vocation. Then, when Delany and his allies (like the brilliant young native of Virginia, H. Ford Douglass) were asked to state the conditions under which black people could remain in America, they were not less revolutionary in their assessment of what was necessary. At an emigration convention which they organized in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1854, Delany and his colleagues defined in words very different from Douglass' what they considered to be the only honorable terms for a continuing, free black presence in America:

as men and equals, we demand every political right, privilege and position to which the whites are eligible in the United States, and we will either attain to these, or accept nothing . . . as a people we will never be satisfied nor contented until we occupy a position where we are acknowledged a necessary constituent in the ruling element of the country in which we live.

No goals could have been more revolutionary at the time. If they were to remain in America, the children of the slavships demanded equal rights with the children of the masters. But even

more importantly, they were defining what America would have to be if it was ever to be truly their country. For them, the children and grandchildren of the masters could no longer be the privileged ones. The country could no longer "belong" to whites. Black people would have to move to master their own lives and to share in deciding the direction of the life of the nation at large. They would do this not simply as supplicants, or even as voters or minor office holders. Blacks would have to become participants in the positions and centers of power, responsibility and control in the land. Only then could it truly be "our country," responding to black needs and to black visions of the best human good.

How would these things come to be? At that stage of history neither Delany nor his associates had any delusions about the harsh and costly nature of the struggle to transform their position in America—if they remained. It was, indeed, a struggle for the transformation of the entire society, its directions and its goals. Thus they wisely said,

it is futile hope on our part to expect such results through the agency of moral goodness on the part of our white American oppressors. . . . if we desire liberty, it can only be obtained at the price which others have paid for it.

Moreover, whatever else happened in the struggle, they pledged never to lose a sense of their peoplehood, never to forget the shores from which they came, the blood in which they were baptised. So they said,

no people, as such, can ever attain to greatness who lose their identity . . . we shall ever cherish our identity of origin and race, as preferable, in our estimation to any other people.

Such a vision and commitment, in all of its fullness, was radical and revolutionary in the America of the mid-1850s. It is still. For many black persons, its goals continue to be just and proper ones for the other American revolution.

*Vincent Harding, IBW Director, is the author of numerous essays and articles. Currently at the Moton Center in Philadelphia, he is completing a history of the black freedom struggle in America.*

*This article is an excerpt from Dr. Harding's forthcoming book, The Other American Revolution.*

# FROM VIETNAM TO PRISON: THE EDUCATION OF ELDSON MCGHEE

by Eldson McGhee

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*The following is the conclusion to a two-part essay first published in our last issue.*

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## Addiction

Heroin in Vietnam was plentiful and cheap. The potency of the drugs was such that many guys had gotten sores on their bodies by allowing the drug to remain on their skin for any length of time. For instance, if the drug was kept in fatigue pockets for a few days without being wrapped in some strong plastic-like bagging, that part of the body beneath the pocket would develop sores. Snorting and smoking the drug were the most common means of consumption, but there were a few guys mainlining and dying from overdoses like roaches from Raid. The brothers I hung out with (the supposedly hipper set) never actually shot drugs. We viewed those who shot heroin as death challengers who no longer cared about going back home. I stayed with the snorters and drugged myself into thinking I was into something different which could be abandoned with little or no effort. Admittedly, I was very naive but, I say to all who care to listen, anyone who resorts to the use of drugs as a means of contending with reality has reached a state of being well beyond mere naivete; they have, instead, ceased to cope with life and thus will sink further into oblivion.

It is my desire to see and feel in America the unity that the brothers manifested in Vietnam. In this atmosphere of uncertainties, there was one thing everybody knew for sure: The black soldiers were gonna stick together. Brothers were always trying to help brothers, even when they did not know how, and were, in many cases, worse off than those they attempted to help. A few days into November, 1968, and before coming back home, I discovered that I had to take a physical, including a blood test. It was common knowledge that heroin could be readily detected in the blood stream, regardless of what method was employed to get it into the body. The rule was that any one caught using drugs without a prescription went to L.B.J. (jail). This was almost the end. While making all the necessary connec-

tions to be sure my physical was accepted, I missed my scheduled flight to An-Khe. The ofay in charge of giving physicals had a booming business. As a matter of fact, his business was so good that a few of us brothers had to go down and fix the price limit for this rip-off artist. After taking care of this business I caught a make-up flight on a C-124. Within a few minutes of being in the air one of the engines went dead; fifteen minutes later the other engine was dead and the pilot was requesting an emergency landing in hostile territory. This pilot had to be the best in Vietnam: during the misfit rains of the monsoon, the landing on a small airstrip somewhere around Mai-Ke was letter-perfect.

Arriving at Cam Rahn Bay in late November, 1968 with approximately twelve months of Vietnam behind me, I watched all of the young and unmindful new recruits coming in. From within a drug-induced stupor I could see myself twelve months earlier in many of their faces. Because of my experience, for each of them I had respect and for each of them I had regret. There is no way I can really begin to explain my feeling during my final hours in Vietnam. Although drugs were more plentiful now than ever before, I could not seem to get high enough to suppress this remote feeling. On board the "freedom bird" the stewardess, after congratulating us, began to give flight instructions and as the plane started out for the runway I could, for the first time since my childhood, feel tears running down my face.

## Home

When the stewardess awakened me on the morning of December 2, 1968, requesting that I lock my seat in its upright position and fasten my seat belt in preparation for landing at the Atlanta Airport, I almost went into hysterics. I knew something was terribly wrong; but just how wrong my frustrated, confused, drug-bent mind was unable to muster the necessary strength to grasp. I was not ready for the plane to land in

Atlanta. I needed time to get my head together. I could not let my mother know that I had deserted the faith she had in me. I could not let my sisters know that their brother, to whom they always looked for strength, had fallen victim to human weakness. I knew within my drug-subdued mind that all of those who cheered me off to war deserved to be proud of my returning home. They deserved something I was unable to give. The hero they awaited was a junkie now; a junkie, yes, but also very much human, and possessed with a deep inner concern for the feelings of other people. Having no real knowledge of the gravity of my problem and how it would eventually affect everyone who cared for me, I kept it a secret as long as I could. Since I had never actually tried to kick the habit or stop using drugs it was easy for me to delude myself into thinking I could stop before my family and friends knew I was fooling around. This was not only my most ignorant thought but it later proved to be a most harmful one, a mistake which I am still struggling to overcome.

It would take a mother with her only son coming back from war alive and seeing him in one piece to fully relate to the expression on my mother's face when she first saw me getting out of the taxi. She picked me up completely off the ground. When she finally put me down, everybody in the neighborhood knew I was home.

Almost immediately, all of my sisters and some friends came over to welcome me home. My mother was so overwhelmed with joy until she insisted that I sit on her lap. Of course, I did not mind sitting on her lap but she had a habit of calling me baby when expressing her proud feelings. Deep within I knew if she found out I was on drugs it would render her life a tragedy. I was not about to let it be known that "her baby" was a junkie.

So much had happened in those twelve months; there had been so many disappointments for me and, as a result, I became a disappointment to so many. For the first time I began to see America and miss Vietnam. I was at home but found myself in a strange place. I was with my family but a stranger in their midst. All that I once knew had become foreign to me. Chicken Little and I were in the same world: my sky was

falling, too. I felt it necessary to isolate myself from my family and life-long friends. My habits were different now; I took on new acquaintances and disassociated myself from the fast turning wheel of reality. Thoughts of building up my neighborhood, buying my mother the kind of house she always dreamed of having, all my dreams of becoming a prominent figure in the American way of life were leaving me faster than blood from a body shot full of holes with an Ak-47.

My problem was a big one and the few months from January 2, 1969 until May 9, 1969 that I had left in the Army offered no possible remedies. Seeking help for my nerves I reported early to Ft. McPherson, Georgia, instead of my assigned next duty station with the 82nd Airborne at Ft. Bragg, N.C. I am still trying to understand how the Army with all its disciplined medical and technical know-how allowed me to be honorably discharged without a thoroughly programmed check-up. There were too many people around me going to jail for being on drugs or turned into informers and being used to put other—sometimes innocent—people in jail. Yes, even under the vicious control of heroin addiction, I was able to retain some pride, even though many times I suffered severely because of my sickness.

I returned to civilian life on May 10, 1969, not realizing that my freedom days were growing shorter. It became impossible for me to get to work on time and even harder for me to stay there the full eight hours. All of my hangouts were places the police always raided or constantly stopped and frisked anyone in the area at random. I stayed in the streets at night and nodded all day. In an attempt to escape the reality of how I came home from Vietnam I found myself in a situation more vicious and treacherous than I ever imagined possible. More extreme than the dope fiends in Vietnam, the junkies in America are never sure about the drugs they use or if, in fact, they are getting *drugs* for their money. It is common for a junkie to sell one of his peers a pack of BC powder or a similar substance for heroin. The life of a drug addict is one long continuous nightmare where he cries out for awakening but in too many cases has lost the courage to

open his eyes.

Drug addicts are human beings whose problems, brought on by society in their quest for expression, lead them into a physical drug dependency. And drug addicts, just like any other human being with a problem, cannot truly be helped unless there is a genuine concern for their problem. My first jail term (from November 1970 until July 1971) was blatant proof that not only was there no concern for my problem but it seemed that things were conveniently arranged to perpetuate it. You can get drugs in this country's jails and prisons easier than it can be gotten on any street corner in Saigon. I was able to maintain the same drug habit throughout my jail term, and I also learned how to use a hypodermic needle without any assistance, in addition to becoming experienced in the sophisticated process of cutting drugs, all during an eight month jail term.

A few months after the completion of my jail term the word was out that I was a drug addict. Various members of my family questioned me about these rumors of my drug usage. Because of the gap that had developed in my relationship to the home front, I was able to discount the rumors as lies told by the same people who were responsible for my going to jail in the first place. About this same time the Veterans Administration had just opened their first drug abuse program in Atlanta on Pryor Street. I thought it would be safe for me to go there for help and be able to get

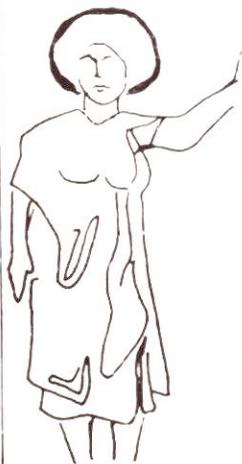
straightened out before my family found out for sure about my drug dependency. This gesture was not long-lived: the bureaucracy and the daily feeling of being followed upon leaving the drug center were too intense for me to really benefit from the program before I was arrested again, on September 12, 1972, this time charged with conspiracy and aiding and abetting a bank robbery-kidnapping. Notwithstanding the facts that I was never legally charged with the actual crime, nor

was there any evidence of my aiding and abetting except the testimony of the confessed crime perpetrator (turned government witness) and that of my drug dependency, I was convicted and sentenced to serve the rest of my natural life, plus five years, in prison . . . .

*While serving in the Army in Vietnam, Eldson McGhee was wounded and, subsequently, became addicted to the morphine used to ease his pain. It was due to his addiction that he was arrested for a crime of which he says he is innocent and for which he has been sentenced to prison for life.*

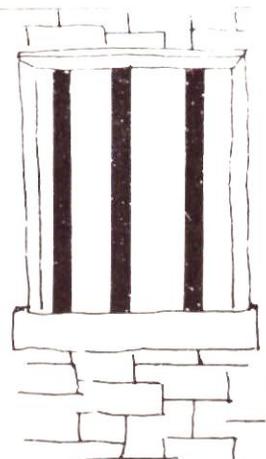
*Added to what appears to have been a bogus conviction has been evidence of manipulation by the Courts in order to sustain that conviction and there are certain inconsistencies in the Courts' handling of McGhee's case. A defense fund has been established for McGhee and the Hon. Yvonne B. Burke, Chairperson of the U. S. Congressional Black Caucus, has agreed to push for an investigation into the legality of his conviction. Inquiries and contributions should be addressed to: The Eldson McGhee Defense Fund, c/o P. O. Box 7751, Station C, Atlanta, Ga. 30357.*

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# 'MESSAGE' FROM FLINT: THE CASE OF MADELINE FLETCHER

by Michele Russell

In the ten years since American cities felt the shock wave of black rebellion, we have been told that a domestic detente has prevailed, that law and order has been restored. Troop occupation gave way to affirmative action. Vietnam vets came home. The only body counts the mass media tallied were the growing numbers of black elected officials. Corporate hands donned velvet gloves and union leaders signed no-strike pledges.

Recently, however, it has become undeniable that the official firefighters of that period only temporarily smothered the flames; they did not extinguish them. Brush fires and border skirmishes multiply. In every city in the U.S. hostilities smolder, kindled by high unemployment, higher prices, deteriorating schools, and parochial political leadership. The smoke is visible from the army helicopters that routinely hover over strategic hamlets such as Boston, Louisville, Manhattan, Wilmington, East LA, North Philly, South Chicago, Washington, D.C., Raleigh, NC, and Oak Parks everywhere. The only withdrawals occurring are of people from one another — in fear. And, when some stand firm, taking to heart the language of inalienable rights and human dignity, they immediately come under fire. It doesn't even need to be summer anymore for the fighting to begin. The story of Madeline Fletcher is a case in point: it began with affirmative action and developed into armed struggle.

## The Shoot-out

It was winter, 1975. In the industrial mid-west, family incomes and city budgets plummeted with the temperatures. Black unemployment approached 30%. The economy had done more than bottom-out.

In broad daylight, grown men dug in garbage cans and kept neighbors waiting in grocery lines, trying to convince clerks to take food stamps for cigarettes, wine, and dog food. They settled for giving up the wine.

Black women either swelled to 250 lbs. on starch or dwindled to 98 in a more socially

fashionable version of hunger. Anemia and hypertension were common to all.

City beautification meant HUD evictions, bulldozed blocks and victory gardens in vacant lots. Kids couldn't even get money for returning empty pop bottles anymore.

On one particularly bleak pre-dawn morning, a black woman and four white men faced each other in an alley in Flint, Michigan. They were all in uniform. There were shouts, then shots. Two months later the incident's main outlines were first reported in the *New York Times*:

"Last December 27th, a number of Flint police officers were on sick leave. So, officers Madeline C. Fletcher and Walter Kalberer found themselves assigned temporarily to patrol duty together. Miss Fletcher, a woman, black, was one of 14 children of an auto worker and his wife. The 20 year old rookie officer had been hired under the city's affirmative action program for increasing minority representation on the police force. She had been on the force for a little more than a year. Mr. Kalberer was a 34 year old white man, a nine-year police veteran who had been a Marine Corps machine gunner for six years. Like some other men on the force he was opposed to the assignment of women to street patrol. He had asked in writing never to have to work with one.

The two officers quarreled over who was to drive the squad car. Testimony at a preliminary court hearing showed that Miss Fletcher was already in the driver's seat and that Mr. Kalberer said that Miss Fletcher said she did not have to follow his orders. Mr. Kalberer said he had grabbed her by the coat collar and that Miss Fletcher flopped on her back and began kicking at him. Then, according to the testimony, Miss Fletcher attacked Mr. Kalberer with her night stick and he fought back with his. "If you're going to fight like a man, I'm going to have to treat you like a man," Mr. Kalberer said he told her. He knocked Miss Fletcher's night stick out of her hand.

According to the testimony of the other officers, Miss Fletcher backed away, ran a few steps, whirled, drew her pistol, and shot at Mr. Kalberer, apparently hitting him in the left thigh. Mr. Kalberer, witnesses said, returned the fire. Miss Fletcher threatened to kill the other white officers nearby, and three of them fired on her. In all, 14 shots were fired during the melee. Miss Fletcher fired once. She was hit in the chest and dove into some nearby bushes for

cover. Miss Fletcher has been charged with assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder and is suspended from duty without pay. If convicted, the sentence could be ten years. Mr. Kalberer is charged with nothing and was put on sick leave to recover from his thigh wound."

There were additional details that the *Times* did not see fit to print. For instance, Walter Kalberer was immediately rushed to Hurley Hospital in a squad car; but, Madeline Fletcher was walked into the station, questioned and, later, put in an ambulance. Tapes of cruiser radio traffic just after the incident revealed white male officers saying, "Why don't you drive her around awhile. Maybe the crazy bitch will bleed to death." Mr. Kalberer's flesh wound was stitched up and he was home in two days. Madeline Fletcher underwent two operations and was in the hospital for two months with surgical complications. During that two-month period, hardly a night went by without the Fletcher family being plagued by rocks through windows of their home, threatening phone calls, and the blare of sirens at all hours from cruiser patrols allegedly "protecting" the block.

### Flint

Flint is a city which brought the South North — minus manners. A city of poor farmers, driven from planting to plants, its people came from Michigan, Ohio, Southern Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas, and Tennessee to Fisher Body in search of work. The Fletcher family, outlasting many whites, finally gave up on Pine Bluff in the Depression of 1953.

Today, one still gets to Flint on the Dixie Highway. From Detroit, it is a journey of fifty-five minutes which sets you fifty-five years back in time. You know you have crossed the half-way mark, not by mileage signs or a break in the pastureland, but by an image of a beatific Christ. A head ten feet high, crowned by a white arch reminiscent of MacDonald's golden ones: it is the Dixie Baptist Church. And beneath the sign, at least twenty school buses cluster. One is not sure whether evolution is taught in this school, but one suspects not.

Flint is a company town, country-small (220,000 people), 40% of whom are black. But it is a nerve center in a corporate empire richer

than Switzerland, Pakistan, and South Africa combined. Decisions made here reverberate around the world: from Chile to Rhodesia. It is an industrial complex that wastes nothing but people.

It is a city concerned with cosmetics. Pimps run beauty shops. Its officials are well-kept. It is the home of the General Motors Institute. There, managers are taught that human relations means smiling to the rhythm of a speeded-up line. A rape a day is commonplace. Public service posters picture young white girls beaten black by junkie fathers. The First Federal Savings Bank motto for depositors reads: "Gratitude is a great attitude."

Flint's white working women don the armor of lacquered hair, face, and nails, fixed in the fifties, to meet the day. Cosmetically harnessed, they rein themselves in and run for cover. Their manner keeps the world at bay. They become the cardboard of the costumes they compose. They would feel flattered to be compared to mannequins. Always poised, they never strike. Another part of a skittish mass, they encourage jokes about addle-pated women who choose to drive when they can be chauffeured. Rattled, they will remain mute, look cute, and caution black women like Madeline to do the same. They forget that, for us, there is no place and nothing to hide. Their sense of their own place, however, is not baseless. In downtown Flint, the Cultural Center, all the streets are one-way. The signs in the parking structures warn: "Remember your level." The churches say: "Be quick to pray, and just as quick to obey."

Flint's history resides in the vaults of banks, markers laid on strikers' graves, and holes where communities used to be. It is a collection of Model Neighborhoods. Deprived in the worst way: uprooted, interred, and locked away. Cramped. Even in Flint's struggle boom, workers were always breaking camp. It was hard to stay. The company-erected shacks, the dirt roads and outdoor privy barracks, the concentration of five families in room enough for one, supplanted dreams of home. For refugees, the town's foundation lay in insulation. It stays walled-off. Today, Madeline Fletcher says, "It still feels

like a stopover to somewhere else." It produces the rigs and culture of the long-distance trucker. Its police are Teamsters in disguise, newly organized, the better to rove.

It is one of those cities where blacks own little, control less, and are blamed for all. The poor whites, having been treated like trash by the local bourgeoisie, pass the favor along. Forty years of combat in trade unions by Flint's white assemblers has only honed reflexes of angry reaction. The Ku Klux Klan, aka The Black Legion, needs no drive to find recruits. CBers roam the streets, at the service of the cops. In 1976, Flint remains a one-way car age town, mobilized for war. The Fletcher case opened a chink in its armor.

#### Trial

Madeline Fletcher's trial began on May 12, 1976 and lasted five weeks. During the entire process, the Genesee County Courthouse was jammed. Her case became a rallying point on one side for the defenders of white male military prerogatives and, on the other, for the black community, which consistently felt the brutal brunt of those prerogatives.

Support for Madeline Fletcher was immediate and sustained. Beneath official levels, community folk shared the only wealth they had. Mr. John Fletcher, at 60, came to court straight from overtime and the midnight shift. Twenty-three years on assembly had made him a standard model man. Jaws like rocks. Without fail, helping his wife with her coat. They gave the proceedings their dignity, the old meaning of courtliness, taught in his father's rural school.

Grandmothers, regarding all as their children, came to bear witness, first and last. They told the future by the past: gave way before nothing, standing fast. Friends came forward with corroborative accounts. Women got up at 5 am in 90 degree heat to cook for those who spent their days in court. Homes were opened, children taken in. Corridor, barber shop, and shopfloor conversation tipped the popular balance in Madeline Fletcher's favor.

Sandra Rawls, long-time friend of the Fletcher family, was one of the witnesses in the

trial giving the most important testimony on how racism and sexism in the police department affect black women on a daily basis. As the woman patrol officer with most seniority on the force—two years—her assessment of the significance of Madeline's situation was as follows:

Madeline's case was most important for the way it brought the black generations together in the community. For the first time that I can remember. I've lived here twenty years. And this is the first time there's been such unity. The older folks had lulled themselves to sleep. They knew all that was going on, but they didn't want to hear about it. The younger ones got tired of trying to make them hear. This case opened a lot of eyes and ears."

The one force that was central in expanding the political ramifications of the Fletcher situation was the Ken Cockrel team's defense. American law and the prerogatives of Judge Donald Freeman worked to restrict the case to the 60-odd seconds in which the shootings occurred. However, the Cockrel team's school of advocacy puts society's crimes on trial, not society's victims. In a series of cases spanning the last ten years in which working people like James Johnson, alienated youth like Heyward Brown, and dissident political parties like the Black Panthers have been trapped in precipitous responses to the irrationality of the American system, victory has been won on the basis of the whole truth. This case was no different. Even the prosecuting attorney was prompted to say at one point, "Responding to Mr. Cockrel is like responding to World War II." Nothing could be more appropriate. The dimensions of the war in whose crossfire Madeline was caught were made as clear as blood on a snowbank.

Those in court saw a story unfold which had nothing to do with who shot first. Rather, we heard about police officers so out of shape that they had heart attacks when in foot pursuit of fleeing suspects. We heard white officers admit continual rule-book infractions: poor record-keeping, destruction of files. Saw the career-path of police chief to city manager institutionalize military personnel in government. We experienced the fusion in individuals and institutions of the values which keep the KKK alive in Flint under the name of The Black Legion—but in the uniform of keepers of the peace. A white male

military enclave, supported by corporate and judicial powers, was being exposed, attacked and penetrated, and we saw it react.

### Action and Reaction

Many people wondered why Madeline joined the force. Indeed, the most vocal critics argued that participation of any kind in this system's domestic army was reactionary, dumb, a step backward. Her decision certainly couldn't be attributed to television's glorification of police work. Coming up in Flint wiped out any Christie Love illusions of glamour.

Rather, Madeline had grown in the Panther period. She remembered Rap Brown, Fred Hampton and Huey P. Newton. She believed the doctrine of community control. The operation of the Police Department began hitting close to home, affecting people she knew more than any other institution. They were disappearing, getting snatched. She criticized from the outside for awhile, then joined. In GM city, a job is the only position from which people are taken seriously, no matter what they say. Putting in time is the only political capital that counts.

She entered, as a community member, with fifteen other black women, to uphold the law. To fight corruption. To monitor the force. To eat. It seemed more to the point than those other jobs she had held: a presser in a cleaners; a packer of pickles (gloves so your hands won't bleed, 2,000 bottles an hour); coaching reading in college (where the battle for literacy is being lost). If she was going to be involved in a mopping-up exercise (with or without the uniform of a maid), her own community seemed a better place to start than someone else's house. She was not surprised that as a cleaning woman she would be treated like dirt.

No prior inoculation had prepared the white hosts for this particular germ of justice. The rash that broke out in their ranks when Madeline and the other black women appeared as affirmative action recruits was predictable. They were different from the policewomen (white, only) who worked with juveniles, wore skirts, and did office tasks beneath a wallposter of a kitten captioned: "It's nice to be a pussy and get petted."

Madeline and the others were there to work the street. But they were blocked. Requests for transfers, sick leaves and refusals to work with the black women on patrol mounted. A regular fever. Soon, reactions reached epidemic proportions. It was as though a disease ran rampant through vital military organs. Foreign bodies had entered the system and the carriers had to be quarantined. Flint's version of swine flu.

The counter-offensive began. The Department's work-study program was cut. Trainees were put on round-the-clock shifts. Squad-car heaters were wired not to work. Windows were smashed in the night. A walk-out of white officers was threatened.

Madeline, a black woman, soft-spoken, personified the plague. She was 5'5", 100 lbs. and 19 years of age. The weaker she looked the more dangerous she was to the veterans, the ex-Marines, who were over-weight and out-of-shape. Even her name spelled M.F. to them.

They had always depended on color and bulk. Literal-minded, they liked to swing their meat. To compensate for weak hearts, they packed big guns. They were men's men, for whom bigger meant better. The courts could change their rules, but they knew their job: keep the natives in line.

With Madeline, they failed. She dared to assert her right to the driver's seat in the squad car. It was a small, conservative step which triggered the reaction we are coming to expect: maximum retaliatory force.

None of this was lost on the jury of three white men, two white women, two black men, and two black women. They took six hours to deliberate. On June 19, 1976, at 2:30 pm, they vindicated Madeline Fletcher of all charges against her. It was a just verdict, and so clearly a victory of common sense over bigotry and corruption that even the press in attendance cheered. Its most impressive political aspect was that the jurors were citizens of Flint, part of the culture which they had unanimously indicted.

Although Madeline Fletcher's case was particularly dramatic, it is not unusual. There are now growing numbers of black women in police training academies, in traffic control schools, on

police forces, in rape squads, in all branches of the armed services of this nation. We are joining up. Enlisting. Taking up arms. It's what we become these days instead of social workers. Some have made that choice out of commitment. Some out of economic desperation. Some, casually, as they might take any other job. For many, it was the only job they could get.

Once inside, however, the testimony is mounting (from Washington, DC, Detroit, Chicago, LA) that the conditions of labor are ripped. Most commonly, harassment takes the form of sexual assault at gunpoint by "superior" officers, verbal abuse, being issued malfunctioning equipment, being sent on false calls, and

physical retaliation when the victims speak out. The simple assertion of our democratic right to be peace-keepers who bear arms is creating a schism which may, in time, catalyze the most thorough-going exposure of the domestic military apparatus we have ever seen. Minimally, cases like this should alert us to the fact that all the battles that were being fought in the streets in the 60's continue unabated within the very institutions charged with putting out the flames, and that black women are in the front lines of the war.

*Michele Russell, a freelance teacher and writer, is on the editorial staff of Feminist Press and is a member of the Association for the Improvement of Minority Employment in Detroit.*

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# Linkages in the History of Black Struggle

## BLACK Declaration of Independence

IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY, July 4, 1970 A DECLARATION by concerned Black Citizens of the United States of America in Black Churches, Schools, Homes, Community organizations and Institutions assembled:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are not *only* created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights among which are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, but that when this equality and these rights are deliberately and consistently refused, withheld or abnegated, men are bound by self-respect and honor to rise up in righteous indignation to secure them. Whenever any Form of Government, or any variety of established traditions and systems of the Majority becomes destructive of Freedom and of legitimate Human Rights, it is the Right of the Minorities to use every necessary and accessible means to protest and to disrupt the machinery of Oppression, and so to bring such general distress and discomfort upon the oppressor as to the offended Minorities shall seem most appropriate and most likely to effect a proper adjustment of the society.

The United States has evaded Compliance to laws the most wholesome and necessary for our Children's education.

The United States has caused us to be isolated in the most dilapidated and unhealthful sections of all cities.

The United States has allowed election districts to be so gerrymandered that Black People find the right to Representation in the Legislatures almost impossible of attainment.

The United States has allowed the dissolution of school districts controlled by Blacks when Blacks opposed with manly Firmness the white man's invasions on the Rights of our People.

The United States has erected a Multitude of Public Agencies and Offices, and sent into our ghettos by arms of Social Workers, Officers and Investigators to harass our People, and eat out their Substance to feed the Bureaucracies.

The United States has kept in our ghettos, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies of Police, State Troopers and National Guardsmen, without the consent of our People.

The United States has imposed Taxes upon us without protecting our Constitutional Rights.

The United States has constrained our Black sons taken Captive in its Armies, to bear arms against their black, brown and yellow Brothers, to be the Executioners of these Friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

The Exploitation and Injustice of the United States have incited domestic Insurrections among us, and the United States has endeavored to bring on the Inhabitants of our ghettos, the merciless Military Establishment, whose known Rule of control is an undistinguished shooting of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions of Black People:

For being lynched, burned, tortured, harried, harassed and imprisoned without Just Cause.

We, therefore, the Black People of the United States of America, in all parts of this Nation, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions, do, in the Name of our good People and our own Black Heroes—Richard Allen, James Varick, Absalom Jones, Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and all Black People past and present, great and small—Solemnly Publish and Declare, that we shall be, and of Right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT FROM THE INJUSTICE, EXPLOITATIVE CONTROL, INSTITUTIONALIZED VIOLENCE AND RACISM OF WHITE AMERICA, that unless we receive full Redress and Relief from these Inhumanities we will move to renounce all Allegiance to this Nation, and will refuse, in every way, to cooperate with the Evil which is Perpetrated upon ourselves and our communities. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

Signed, by Order and in behalf of Black People  
[ National Committee of Black Churchmen ]

# THERMIDOR:

## THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE SOUTH IN THE 70's

by Manning Marable

History moves forward dialectically. There are periods of concerted struggle, such as the Civil Rights Movement, when Southern civil and political society generally, and Blacks especially, were involved in a "war of maneuver," a period of fundamental political advancement and social unrest. After 1968 and during the Nixon administration a period of restoration occurred slowly in the cultural, economic and political institutions of the South.

Historically, this reaction has been called a Thermidor: a period of political compromise and bourgeois economic development, coinciding with the underdevelopment of the oppressed. Thus, despite the successful voter education programs of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee and the development of independent black political parties in the region less than a decade ago, black Southerners are economically and politically more backward today than at the high-point of the Movement. Although four million black Southerners are registered to vote (compared with about two million in 1964), only three Representatives in the House's Black Caucus are Southerners. Blacks comprise 20.5 per cent of the South's total population; however, only 2.3 per cent of the elected officials are black, and Blacks effectively control only ten counties.

The fundamental reason for the relative success of this Thermidorian reaction is economic. Since the late 1960s, conservative economists and corporate leaders alike have commented upon the "booster" character of the South's modern economy. During the economic recessions of the Nixon-Ford administrations, Southern business lead the stock market revival through their high profit margins, automobile sales and purchases of equities. Conservative economist Elliot Janeway notes that "stock brokerage firms with national networks of branch offices report that the retail stampede to buy stocks began in the South. Its impact on Wall Street was to spread the word overnight: 'When in New York, do as the Southerners do.'" Consumer confidence in

the South, immediately after the recession, remained at 70 per cent, the highest level in the country. In order to take advantage of low corporate tax levels, large numbers of foreign industries have relocated in the South in recent years: Volvo plans to open an assembly line in Chesapeake, Virginia next March; Michelin of France has already invested 300 million dollars in three South Carolina factories.

Since 1960, gross per capita income in the South has risen from 133.6 billion dollars to 263.9 billion. Personal per capita income has increased from \$1707 to \$5198, while the industrial output of Southern factories has leaped from 25.8 billion to 54.0 billion dollars. The New South of the 1970s, like the New South of the 1880s, depends upon the finance capital and rapid commercial expansion of heavy industry. During the post-Reconstruction era the capital influx into the South came from New England and the Mid-Atlantic states; today this capital comes from the North, the West Coast and all parts of the world. In the 1880s, new cities like Birmingham, Winston-Salem and Atlanta were being created by commerce and industry; today the newer giants are the cities of Houston, Miami, Tampa Bay and Dallas-Fort Worth, and the suburban metropolitan areas of older towns such as Atlanta.

Coincident with the rapid expansion of commerce and industry into the New South has been the process of proletarianization and lumpenproletarianization—a decline in agricultural employment, the destruction of a vital petit bourgeois agrarian class, the loss of black land tenure and a significant increase in non-farm employment. From 1964 to 1974 twenty-nine per cent of all Southern farms ceased operations—totaling 454,000 fewer farms. The general economic tendency since 1960 has been the increased isolation of the Southern agrarian petit bourgeois class in favor of agribusiness corporations. Without exception, in every region of the

South the family farmer is being replaced by impersonal, profit-oriented bourgeoisie. In Florida, Tropicana, Coca-Cola and twelve other agricusineses account for sixty per cent of all citrus products grown in the state and employ a vast majority of farm laborers. In less than a single decade, Holly Farms, Inc. of North Carolina, has absorbed the market of the majority of the nation's independent poultry farmers. The federal government's farm policies under Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon and Ford encouraged the destruction of the independent middle class farmer's market in the South, the result of which was a real decline in agricultural output in the region, from 8.3 billion dollars worth in 1960 to only 7.4 billion dollars last year. Profits for Southern agribusiness remained high even during the recession years: for example, in 1973 Holly Farms netted 11.5 million dollars before taxes.

#### Southern Political Economy.

The South's success story in economics has pressed both capitalist parties into creating viable Southern political strategies. Nixon's "Sunbelt" strategy, combined with his firm grip upon the white middle and upper-middle, suburban classes, provided him with an impressive electoral margin over liberal George McGovern in 1972. Likewise, Carter's campaign clearly identified new Southern political moderates as being pivotal to his election—men such as South Carolina's John West; Arkansas' Dale Bumpers and David Pryor; Mississippi's William Walker, and Louisiana's Edwin Edwards. The Ronald Reagan candidacy for last year's Republican nomination was the recipient of much former segregationist sentiment, and without the California Governor's impressive primary victory in North Carolina and his tireless support among Southern conservatives and racists like Jesse Helms he could not have mounted a serious challenge to Gerald Ford last spring.

The South receives far more federal allocations from the government than the older industrial and agricultural regions of the North, which also accounts for the region's newfound political strength. Comparing federal taxes paid in 1975 to federal outlays, for instance, the Southeast



Photo by Pat Goudvis

received 9.5 billion dollars more than it paid the government, while the East lost 10 billion dollars and the Midwest lost 20 billion dollars.

The South's political economy has become top heavy with the importation of heavy industry and its use of cheap labor; the political and cultural hegemony of a predominantly white bourgeoisie and managerial elite; the destruction of the black and poor white agricultural classes; and the expansion of an impoverished urban prole-

tariat which is devoid of a cultural sense of collectivity and lacking in a militant labor union consciousness. The rapid expansion of textile mills into the South's piedmont sections during the past four decades illustrates the workings of the Southern political economy. By the 1970s the South employed almost seventy-five per cent of all textile workers in the nation, although less than ten per cent of the 589,000 workers are presently members of unions. Textile workers in the South are also ranked at the bottom of all industrial workers nationwide, earning an average of \$3.46 per hour, compared to \$6.43 per hour in the automobile industry. The regional police in both the cities and the rural counties function as the coercive arm for the new bourgeoisie, escorting scabs through picket lines and protecting white-owned property.

This aggressive process of mature, bourgeois economic development is accompanied by a tendency toward agrarian underdevelopment. The small towns and villages of the picturesque, rural South lose their former share of the economic market to the massive metropolitan powers of Atlanta, Memphis, Birmingham, Charlotte and Nashville. The rural petit bourgeoisie, then, become increasingly dependent upon the economic, political and cultural initiatives of the metropolis bourgeoisie. This dependency creates a lumpendevlopment of the former sharecropper and rural working class, forging a stratum of permanently unemployable men and women with scant formal and technical education.

This lumpen economic pattern of neo-colonialism is characterized by the increasing influx of outside capital into the countryside and the concentration of the best lands and other resources, such as credit, labor and capital, in the hands of the few. The lumpendevlopment of the black South isolates black religious and ethical figures and other traditional leaders from their communities, creating black bourgeois "leaders" with little popular following and even less moral scruples. In any agrarian society rapidly transformed into a capitalist society, the entire civil structure of the culture of the oppressed becomes contradictory and irrational, filled with the tensions and philosophies from the old ways of life with the

brutal material realities of the new individualistic age.

Black elected officials have largely ignored the processes of proletarianization and lumpenproletarianization which are occurring within the South's new political economy. The attention placed upon the narrow political struggle for integration and equal opportunity to participate within the bourgeois state has obscured the more fundamental social problem for Blacks: the destruction of the independent black farming class throughout the region. In 1950 there were 560,000 farms under black management in the South. In 1971 there were only 98,000 farms and, since the recession, there appears to have been a severe drop in the latter figure. In 1950 there were 3,158,000 black farmers, but two decades later only 938,000 remained. Black farmers have virtually disappeared.

Federal government and private foundation support for black farmers has been, at best, insufficient. Black tenant farmers and sharecroppers have experienced a violent economic purge during the same period, ironically, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. Northern and foreign capitalists, experiencing a period of low inflation and high market prices between 1964 and 1969, pushed many thousands of black tenant farmers off their lands. In 1969 there were eighty per cent fewer black tenants than there were only five years before, many of these farmers and their families being pressed into the new factories and industries arriving in the South.

The high rate of industrialization and the underdeveloped consciousness of labor in the South directly contributed to the conservative character of Southern black politicians. Working class activism throughout the South is thwarted by universal right-to-work laws which permit all workers to refuse to become union members. Only fourteen per cent of all non-farm workers have joined unions, compared with over thirty per cent of non-farm workers nationally. The void of widespread, militant labor union praxis, a culture of protest, and the lack of a viable black Left has its intellectual origins in the middle of the nineteenth century and within slavery's political economy. Logically, improv-

erished whites and blacks should have been allies, economically, but the racism of whites has traditionally pushed poor whites into the political arms of reactionary conservatives like Lester Maddox of Georgia.

Because white laborers foster a backward culture of racism, the white bourgeoisie finds it easier to pay all Southern workers significantly less than the amount which laborers receive nationally. In 1974, total employment fell 2.1 per cent in the South, compared with less than one per cent for the entire nation. The super-exploitation of Southern labor, the feeble condition of unions and the loss of black properties has combined in the historical creation of a first and second generation black proletariat whose black, elected political officials often represent the economic, cultural and social attitudes of their exploiters.

#### The Rise of Bureaucracy

Paralleling the emergence of a token number of Blacks into Southern electoral politics has been a major expansion of state institutional forms. One unlikely advocate of big state government has been George Wallace, Governor of Alabama. During his administrations he supervised the construction of fourteen new junior colleges, fifteen trade schools and introduced the largest highway construction program in the state's history. The state bureaucracy tripled in size under his administration; the proportion of Alabama residents employed in public welfare programs (about thirty-four per cent) is the second highest in the nation. Wallace and other local segregationists, like Louisiana's Risley Triche and Georgia's Herman Talmadge, have openly renounced their racist rhetoric and legislation of only ten years ago and now demand that their state governments keep up with the rising expectations of black constituents. While participating with moderate white politicians like Carter, Bumpers and Pryor, the old-line racist politicians have aided the establishment of massive and poorly managed state bureaucratic structures.

The growth of state bureaucracies within the New South manifests key elements and contradictions within the region's political economy. The rapid underdevelopment of the rural proletariat and petit bourgeoisie required new state

sponsored welfare agencies. The rapid industrialization of the urban centers and the influx of a new first-generation working class called for state government intervention similar to the New Deal programs of the Thirties. The intervention of the state in the cultural or super-structural aspects of Southern society is more subtle, however. The need exists within Southern civil society to provide legitimacy for the state, given the new directions the Southern bourgeoisie have taken over the past decade: the acceptance of Civil Rights legislation, the integration of many public schools, the influx of heavy industry and the demise of agrarian political influence in state legislatures. The New South's creed is explained to the people through expanded educational institutions and through the promulgation of that creed through the electronic media, cultural journals, new newspapers and the arts. This New South aesthetic negates, or attempts to replace, the Afro-American dimensions of its cultural heritage and the *weltanschauung* of the new urban working class. Using the rhetoric of reform the state expands its influence into every aspect of cultural life to frustrate the protest impulse evident within many phases of Afro-American Southern culture.

The expansion of the state and the pre-eminence of the bourgeois and managerial classes within Southern civil society have sparked a demise in the real cultural and intellectual creativity and social status of the region. The South's aggressive economic structure, from slave labor to entrepreneurial capitalism, has contributed to what journalist W. J. Cash termed the "savage ideal." The culture of the white bourgeoisie, the love of possessions, lack of humanism and gross disrespect for different cultures and the ecology has encouraged widespread social violence and a backward intellectual climate. For example, each year more people are murdered per thousand in Savannah and Montgomery than in New York City or Watts. Increasingly, the mind of the South represents the backwaters of American academic and cultural achievement. According to a national scholastic survey, in 1970 the South had only five per cent of the nation's leading graduate schools. In spite of Wallace's expansion of state-supported educa-

tional institutions, Alabama ranks at the bottom of almost every national scale for education. The traditional black Southern college, the backbone of national Afro-American academic achievement, suffers from declining enrollments and severe financial difficulties, largely from the desegregation of the region's major white public institutions. Many black and white intellectuals and artists born in the South have fled to Northern metropolitan areas and the West Coast for higher salaries, superior working conditions and a greater degree of academic freedom. The loss of many black intellectuals during the expansion of Black Studies Programs in the Northern states, for instance, has had profound ramifications for the total civil society of the South.

The possibilities for social change within the South's political economy depend primarily upon the success of black activists and intellectuals in reeducating the dispossessed, black working people and the poor toward the political necessity of struggle. Recently Ron Daniels and the National Black Political Assembly have moved toward creating a progressive "Southern strategy," picking up where S.N.C.C. had left off ten years ago. Presently, however, black politics in the South is still markedly to the right of national black politics. The March, 1976, Cincinnati convention of the Assembly was notable in its lack of Southern black delegates. Excluding the delegates from Virginia and Louisiana, out of almost one thousand who attended that convention, no more than one dozen delegates were Southern. There was little interest in the black South for the third party liberal candidacy of former Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy.

What is missing within Southern politics, and within black politics generally, is a rational and constructive left opposition—a black alternative to the bourgeois centrist coalition politics of the Carter-dominated Democratic Party and the black capitalist-coalition politics with Republican conservatives. Black voters endorsed the Carter-Mondale ticket last November by 93 per cent majorities nationwide and, in some sections of the South, by margins of 95 per cent and higher. In most cases, however, black voters were registering a virtually unanimous protest vote against the politics of Ford and Nixon, rather than an

affirmation vote for Carter. Nevertheless, virtually every black elected official, save Julian Bond on the left and the black Republicans on the right, worked enthusiastically for Carter's politics, a position markedly to right of their own proposals for social reform a decade ago. Southern blacks within electoral politics generally have supported centrist Democrats and even old-line racists like Senator Stennis of Mississippi, Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, Lawton Chiles of Florida and George C. Wallace of Alabama.

A study of history illustrates that the Thermidor is a temporary phase of the struggle for a humane society, a reversal rather than a total defeat for progressive change. Antonio Gramsci noted that the lack of a serious political struggle created social conditions similar to the Thermidorian South: "Instead of political history, bloodless erudition; instead of religion, superstition; instead of serious politics, ephemeral quarrels and personal clashes." The election of Carter (the first President representing the Deep South since Zachary Taylor) implies that such conditions cannot remain the same forever. Black participation in the Thermidor represents a political compromise atop turbulent cultural and class contradictions—contradictions which cannot be resolved inside of the system.

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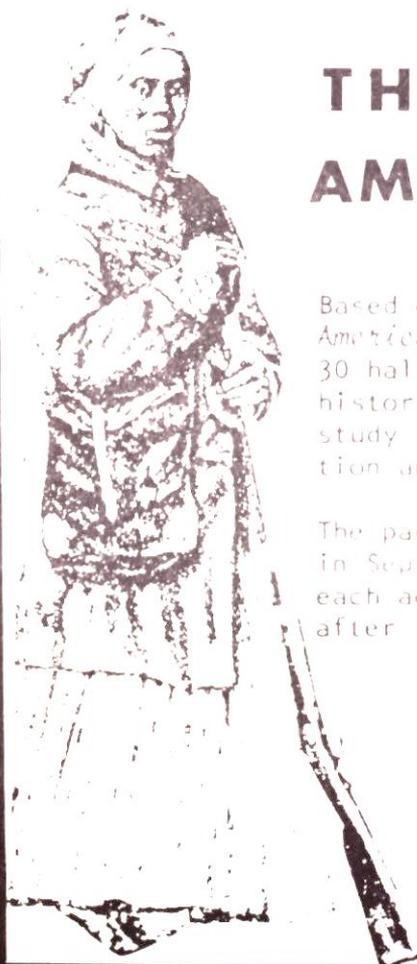
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# THE GOVERNMENT vs. THE BLACK MOVEMENT

by William L. Strickland

Some twenty years ago, black people mounted a movement in this country which marched and sang and boycotted and stood up and sat down and kneeled in and died—for freedom. It was a movement of many complexions from all walks of life: a movement of old people and young people, northerners and southerners, city folk and country folk, revolutionaries and pacifists, integrationists and separatists, men and women, girls and boys; all fighting for the common cause.

Now it has been revealed, courtesy of a report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, that the movement had something else in common besides its blackness and its beliefs. It had the intelligence agencies of the United States government—the CIA, the FBI, the IRS, the National Security Agency and Army Intelligence—bugging, burgling, wire-tapping, black-mailing, lying, slandering and conniving against it all the time and everywhere. The most massive and scurrilous of these counter-intelligence programs (COINTELPRO) seems to have been the FBI's which, according to the Committee, waged "a secret and nation-wide war to destroy Martin Luther King and the Black Panther Party."

This is a truly significant revelation that we would do well to ponder. It means that, while Martin was legally and peacefully counseling love and forgiveness and non-violence with a dedication that earned him catcalls from some quarters, an arm of the government was conducting a "no-holds barred" war against him. In fact, the FBI's dedication to the character assassination of Martin Luther King has endured beyond the grave, since it has maliciously lobbied against all efforts in Congress to make his birthday a national holiday.

But Martin and the Panthers were not the only black "targets" of the FBI. It also arranged adverse publicity for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and interfered with its fundraising, and ordered investigations in 1970 of "every black student union and similar group regardless of their past or present involvement in disorders." To the FBI, operating on the

principle of "guilty until proven innocent," black organization was *itself* a potential crime. (In fact, being innocent did not protect black groups from surveillance. The FBI "monitored" the NAACP for at least twenty-five years, from 1941 to 1966, despite the fact that its own agents reported that the NAACP was free from communist influence.) The irrationality of paranoid racism apparently knows no bounds.

But there was more yet.

The FBI was, at the very least, a co-conspirator in the December, 1969 raid on the Chicago apartment of Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark where both were slain. It had one of its agents call Stokely's mother to warn her that the Panthers were planning to kill her son (Stokely left for Africa the next day). And, it fomented conflict between the Panthers and Chicago's Blackstone Rangers, between the Panthers and Ron Karenga (of US), and between Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton. The upshot of all this was, as the Senate Committee rather cautiously put it, that COINTELPRO "involved risk of serious bodily injury or death to . . . (its) . . . targets."

The significance of COINTELPRO to black people appears to be at least three-fold:

1. Its stated purpose was to undermine the black movement by "eliminating any possible black Messiah" who might emerge "to lead and unite the black masses." (So the greatest danger to the American status quo perceived by this subsidiary of the Justice Department was "black unity," or a "black Messiah" who might forge such unity.)
2. The government was more respectful and fearful of our potential as a united people *than we have ever been ourselves*. Where they saw possible black unity, we saw—and see—only the impossible dream.
3. COINTELPRO had the same attitude respectable, Constitution or confronta- and SCLC that it had toward militant groups like the Panthers. Radical or respectable, Constitution-or confronta-

tion-minded, all black groups were seen as posing the same potential threat to America. Ultimately, there was no difference in the eyes of COINTELPRO between Fred Hampton and Martin Luther King. There is a lesson there somewhere.

### The Underside Of American Politics

These disclosures require, at a minimum, a new interpretation of the black movement and of the strategies needed to pursue black freedom in America. Because it now seems that the black struggle, which came so close to turning the country around, faltered and declined not only because of its own internal shortcomings (which were considerable) but also and, perhaps principally, because of the organized and conspiratorial power of government arrayed against it. If that is so, then we must come to grips with the problems of a government whose public politics are legal and democratic but whose private politics are illegal and criminal.

We must confront this underside of American politics, primarily, because it will continue to confront us. That was made abundantly clear by the Senate report which was unable to determine the extent to which COINTELPRO may be continuing. In fact, it found "three instances of similar operations even though the program was supposed to have been abandoned in April, 1971."

There is certainly no good reason to assume that the "widespread lawbreaking" of the past has come to an end; the mentality that *produced* it has not come to an end. As the FBI's director of intelligence for ten years, William Sullivan, illustrated in his testimony, no considerations of right or wrong ever deterred or even occurred to these "minions of the law!":

The one thing we were concerned about was this: Will this course of action work, will it get us what we want, will we reach the objective that we desire to reach? As far as legality is concerned or morals or ethics... (it) ... was never raised by myself or anyone else.

But we need not base our conclusions on that threat alone. There is much more suggestive evidence:

- † The intelligence agencies have lied in the past: *"withholding information from both the executive branch and Congress and ignoring their directives."*
- † They have covered up in the past: *"Triooper acts were often intentionally concealed from the government officials responsible for supervising the intelligence agencies..."* (In the Hampton-Clark murder, over 1400 documents were concealed until an agent made a slip while testifying and revealed their existence. U.S. attorneys admit that more than 700 documents are still being withheld.)
- † They have acted on their own initiative in the past as a runaway outlaw force: *"To protect its own safety, often... independent of official... state authorities."*
- They budgeted over a million dollars in 1970 for their "domestic security network," which is twice as much as they have allotted for their comparable program on organized crime. Their "domestic security" mission is actually twice as important as their "crime fighting" one.

The irony of our situation, therefore, is that at worst we are a people ambivalent about a political system that is not ambivalent about us. Whether we want to be or not, we are at war. And the sooner we come to that realization, the more likely are we to be in a position to identify and confront the enemy and do serious battle with it.

### Where Do We Go From Here?

Fighting the system on the political terms by which it is supposedly, but not actually, fighting us has not proven very productive. Witness our contemporary political situation.

Currently, we have more than 3500 black elected officials in the land, more than at any previous time in our history. Yet this increased black political voice has neither been able to stop our contemporary slide to the edges of American society, nor do away with the political police who have been stalking and ravaging our struggle. Even traditional black political leaders have been bemoaning the neglect of black people and black concerns in this presidential year.

To remedy that situation, the Caucus of Black Democrats met in Charlotte, North Carolina, in late April to prepare a black agenda to present to the Democratic party. The need to do this in 1976 when Blacks were twenty five per cent of

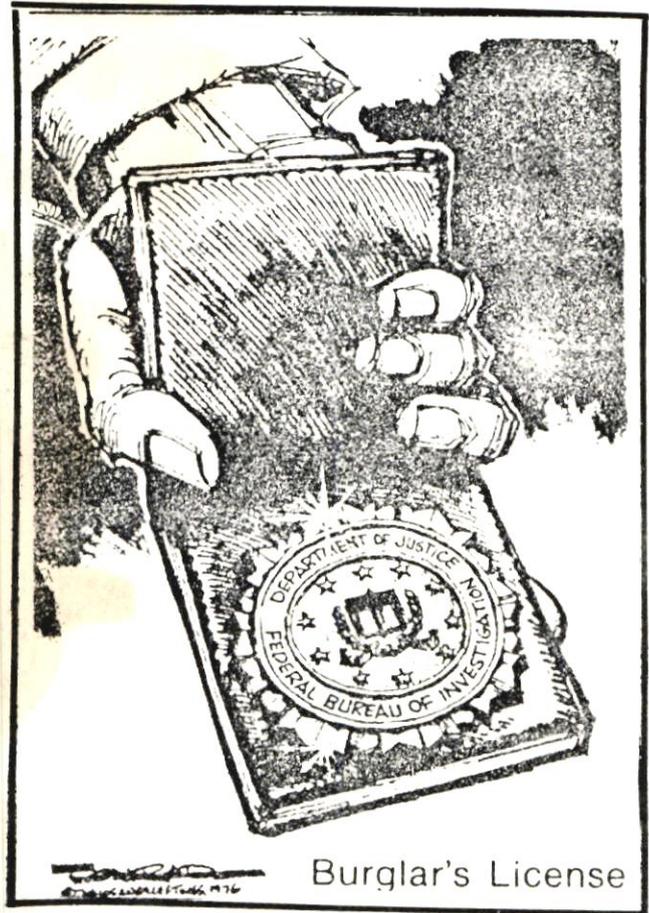
the Democratic presidential vote in 1972 means, basically, that black democrats are still outsiders in their own party. That is quite a bicentennial commentary.

Similarly, a week before Charlotte, black Republicans met in Pittsburgh to try and promote the vice-presidential spot on the Republican ticket for Senator Ed Brooke. Even though quickly rebuffed by the Party, the idea was revealing, for it was another in the long line of sought-after symbolic posts which still characterize the true substance of black politics in America. One hundred years after slavery, we still know better than to challenge for real power in this system. We still know our place.

But cosmetic appointments are not going to free us. Only a changed political order can do that.

At some point black people are going to have to bite the bullet. *Are we fighting to improve our conditions under slavery or to eradicate slavery itself?* That is the question. We need more jobs, improved education and better health care. Sure we do. But we cannot pursue those things while ignoring the structural political obstacles to black liberation. The black movement, even in its inchoate, disorganized and episodic groping is always a fundamental threat to the state, which is why the government established a national political intelligence system, the father of Watergate, to deal with us, even when we were non-violently petitioning for our rights. The *system* understood that these acts challenged the *American social structure* and acted accordingly.

As previously stated ("Watergate and the Restoration of Black Struggle," *Black World*, 1973): "... we must make new beginnings, we must develop a new and conscious politics armed with the knowledge that white America will not reform itself and that all of its systems dim, flicker and threaten to go out. But the decline and fall of white America will not solve our problems, for we too share this national living space. We who have been the underside of this nation but who have shaped the nation in manifold ways beyond our consciousness, must now return to the source of our power and identity: our struggle. The whole world watches and waits for us as white politics stands by disgraced and in default. Blacks must build a new politics, with a new social vision — a politics of true revolution, which is always and finally, a politics of self-reliance. Our future task is



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self-evident; it is self-development, building anew even as we fight. Developing in the midst of depression, developing under siege. Developing without dependence on capital, save human capital; development without resources, except human resources, with our eye on changing social structure. For nothing less than that will do.

We must be about educating, organizing, mobilizing and coordinating our efforts to develop ourselves without — and despite — white America. We need a program of change and unity arrived at objectively through nation-wide discussions within black America. We need to define our national interests as a people, not as individuals or classes, then pursue those interests purposely and relentlessly to the end. There is no precedent for what must be done. It is all new ground, new adventure."

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# EDUCATION AND BLACK STRUGGLE

## Notes from the Colonized World

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