

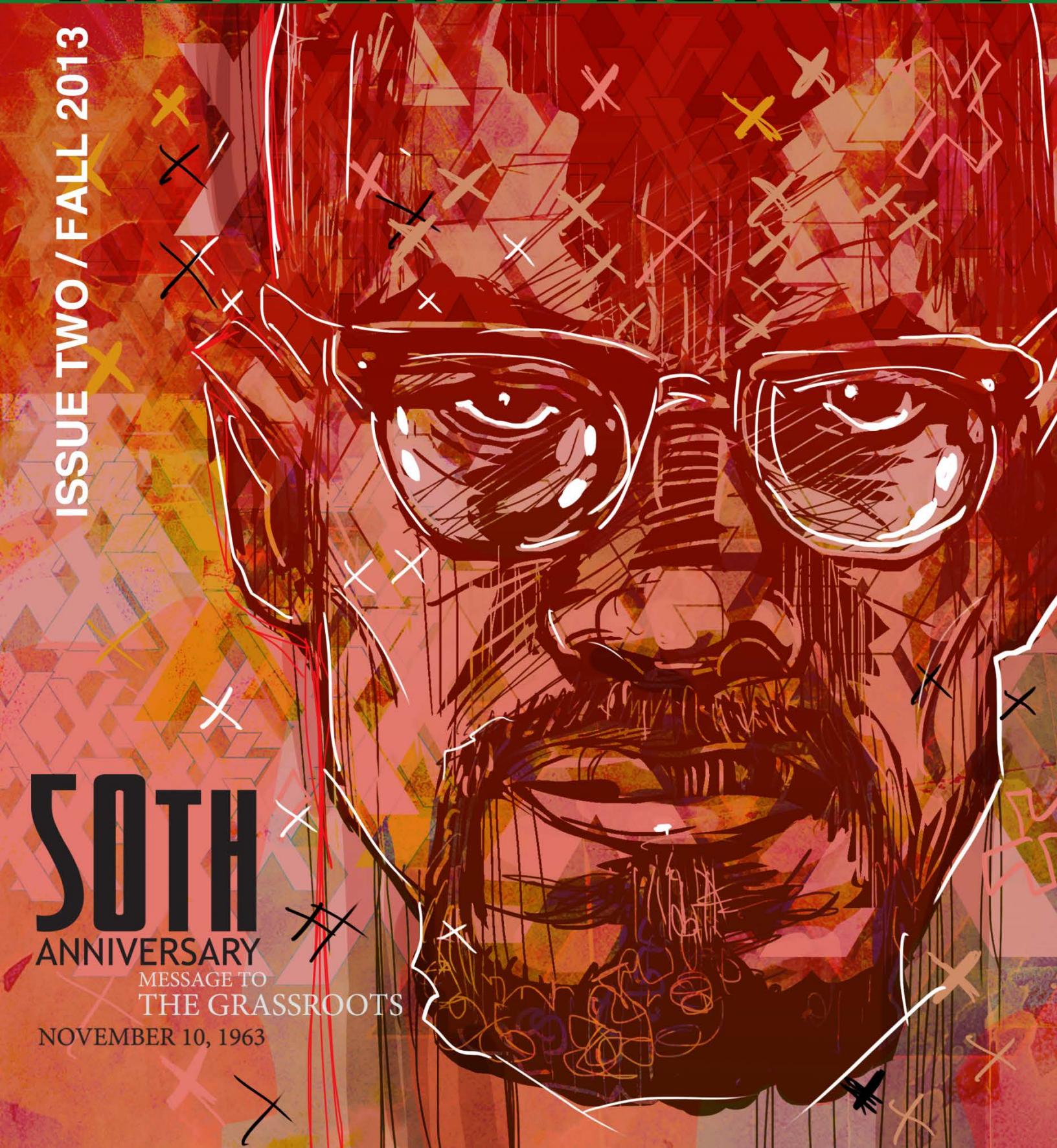
# THE BLACK ACTIVIST

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ANNIVERSARY

MESSAGE TO  
THE GRASSROOTS

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## EDITORIAL

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### Rethinking Political Struggle: Black Liberation is a Fight for Power

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) includes forces actively engaged in all aspects of fight back in 2013, a year of great significance. This is the 50th anniversary year of two important events: the March on Washington and the “I have a dream” speech by Martin Luther King (August 28, 1963), and the speech by Malcolm X, Message to the Grassroots” (November 10, 1963). While this issue is not merely about memory; it is this memory that helps us understand the significance of today’s events and why a process for forging Black left unity and a program of action is so critical at this historical juncture.

2013 is both a year of loss and gain, of defense and offense... of Sanford, Florida; Jackson, Mississippi and North Carolina. It is the year of the assassination of Trayvon Martin, the mayoral victory of Choke Lumumba and the positive mass power of Moral Mondays. It is important to put all of this in a framework that helps us chart the future path of Black Liberation. We have had dreams and nightmares, but in the 21st century we have to have our eyes open, our minds alert, and never lessen our spirit and willingness to fight for freedom by any means necessary.

Black people have been exploited and oppressed because that's how the U.S. society has been organized from day one. Racist violence and economic exploitation, to quote H. Rap Brown (Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin), “is as American as cherry pie.” Radical Black activists have used moral persuasion, and aroused public opinion to fight for democracy and progress. But even with the Black Liberation Movement having the support of oppressed nationalities and white allies in the trade unions, churches, campuses, and social justice movements, the rich and powerful in society have used their power to repress, co-opt and redirect our struggles for fundamental changes. Why? Because we Black Activists threaten their hold on power, exploitation, wealth and domination on a national and global scale.

Over the generations during and since slavery, Black people have learned the hard way, meaning the school of hard knocks, that Black liberation is a fight for power and revolutionary social transformation. So we have to start by answering the question, “What is power and how do we get it and use it to struggle, resist, alter power relations and transform society?”

**Power** is the capacity to force structural changes in the economic, social and political power relations between the oppressed and exploited, and the systems of oppression and

exploitation. Another aspect is the control of important resources – money, institutional resources, votes, people, and the ability to disrupt and stop the means of capital production, essential services and major functions of the state. We can either see the struggle for areas of governmental power and engaging in social movements as two different choices, or have a strategy that sees governance driven by the social movements as a feature of the struggle for power.

The country is run by rich corporations and inherited wealth, some of which date back to the ill-gotten profits of the slave trade and slavery. The wealth accumulation was deepened by a system of patriarchy that super-exploited women's labor in the economy, the home, and as a source of labor reproduction. This wealth and power either dominates or influences every level of government, including the media, the major religions, institutions of higher education, philanthropic foundations, and sections of the underground economy.

The government (often referred to as the state), controls the military including the local police and all of the branches of the armed services and domestic and international intelligence and counterintelligence agencies; the judicial system that includes the courts and prison industrial complex; and all of the federal agencies dealing with social programs, the environment, the treasury, transportation, trade and commerce, regulatory agencies, etc.

Social movement strategies, tactics and revolutionary programs that organize and mobilize the power of the people, are core to a revolutionary process of building transformative revolutionary consciousness, confidence, organization and the mass political will to struggle. In this context the BLUN aims to focus its energy on the historical role of the working class and the impoverished masses to defeat capitalism and create a new society.

**The struggle for transitional and transformative democratic governance of the local branches of state power should be seen as an important political objective in the fight for fundamental change.** However, individuals may play important and leading roles in the social movement. But, they are not the main agents of fundamental change. Our struggle for liberation and justice never waited for nor needed a "heroic" individual. Our struggle created heroes and sheroes in the midst of battle and not through self-selection or voting for the "most heroic."

The main role of the state is to protect the U.S. capitalist system and to expand its global dominance. There are five ways that power is controlled in terms of what people generally refer to as governmental democracy:

1. Voters: elect officials that are supposed to pass laws that increase economic, social and political democracy and prosperity for their constituencies and the whole society.

2. Officials get elected and wield power to represent their constituency in order to get reelected. The US system is usually a “winner take all” exercise, so even if you get 49% you end up with nothing. This 49% gets silenced in the legislative bodies until the next election.
3. The executive runs the central institutions of government and is the symbolic voice of the entire government and country, although not controlling all of the institutions.
4. The bureaucracy of the government is composed of both electoral appointments (usually by the chief executive) and civil service staff protected from arbitrary firing. This bureaucracy is usually intact for up to 20 years whereas executives last for terms of 4 years.
5. The political party system is rigged to support two capitalist parties and shut everyone else out. Parties organize voters, slate candidates, develop political programs, and link local politics into a national framework. Parties control the finances of electoral campaigns.

We face two kinds of struggles against the power of the state, and this has been true from the very beginning of African captivity in slavery – defense and offense. We have to fight to protect ourselves and to survive racist attacks, while at the same time plotting and scheming up on plans to unite, organize, mobilize, and fight to get free. This goes on every day in the consciousness of individuals, over the dinner table, in organizational meetings, in hair salons, in churches, at the workplace, in union halls, on the college campuses and in Black Studies classes.

Social movements are usually non-institutionalized actions of people who share a common ideology and set of goals, and unity around improvisational mass tactics to achieve goals and carry out their mission. The role of a social movement is to change people, change structures, and lead to more sustainable forms of organization. This motion is constant.

**What the BLUN hopes to bring to these many struggles is a return to the fresh out of the box revolutionary thinking that is needed to help all of us again glimpse sight of the ultimate goal of freedom.**

This means that we have to focus on the link between reform (small changes to make immediate conditions better) and revolution (the ultimate goal of taking power and fundamentally changing the system to something that works for everyone). The struggle for revolutionary transformative power must shape the Black liberation movement’s core understanding of the fight for self-determination, and serve as a basis for uniting the Black left and the Black masses in the struggle against national oppression, patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism.

### **So, we defend and strike back!**

We fight for every reform possible but always linked to the goal of freedom based on revolutionary change. We stand against reforms that mainly seek to legitimize and protect the capitalist system and that support imperialism and American exceptionalism.

So we want to discuss this dialectic of defense and offense by analyzing the Assassination of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, the Mayoral victory of Chokwe Lumumba in Jackson, Mississippi and the Forward Together Movement's Moral Monday Campaign in North Carolina.

## The Assassination of Trayvon Martin

Trayvon Martin was a 17-year-old African American male. A zealous wannabe cop who was declared not guilty by a jury with just one assimilated Black Latina on it murdered him. Some middle class Black people and stabilized Black working class, moved into predominantly white gated communities assuming to be safe for their families from the increasing violence of the economically declining inner-city Black communities. That's the kind of community where Trayvon was murdered, in such a community.

He was also an average young brother, eating candy and talking on the cell phone. But being Black with a hoodie and clearly enough self-respect to not be totally be intimidated by the armed stalker – he was a target.

Trayvon is not alone. The Malcolm X Grassroots movement demonstrated that Rap Brown was right, because every 28 hours racist cops and vigilantes shoot down a Black man, woman or child. But Trayvon's vigilante execution was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back... graphically exposing the racist role of the state from the amount of time it took the local government to arrest and charge Trayvon's killer, the string of failures of the prosecuting lawyers and the ignore-race instructions by the judge, supported by a stand your ground law justifying racial profiling that led to the not guilty verdict of Zimmerman.

The failure of the U.S. District Attorney to declare Trayvon's murder as part of a pattern represented by thousands of similar extrajudicial murders by police and vigilantes of Black people, tells Black folk that they must honor the rule of law. Hypocritically, the US government makes charges against other governments internationally for acts of violence and repression against their people to the point of carrying out military actions against those governments.

**This kind of structural hypocrisy makes it crystal clear that there is a war on Black America that requires nothing short of a revolutionary struggle to end it.**

The swift and massive responses by Black people and many from oppressed and working class communities following the Zimmerman not guilty verdict indicate an increasing loss of confidence in the U.S. as a system of democracy and justice.

We can see five social and political actions in response to this great awakening:

1. Mainstream Civil Rights organizations, with the most financial resources and with support of the state, led by such forces as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, have a national platform to

- organize containment events that corral the masses into “peaceful” demonstrations, allegedly in 100 cities.
2. In Florida, closer to ground zero of the Trayvon Martin murder, more militant actions have been organized. The African Peoples Socialist Party has long been a militant agent for change. The Southern Peoples Movement Assembly organized a statewide march on Sanford, and the Defenders of the Dream organized a sit in at the Governor’s office in Tallahassee.
  3. The prisoner hunger strikes on the West Coast are part of the growing national prison resistance and abolition movements, making the links between the racial profiling and police violence against Black and other oppressed peoples in the streets and the violence and inhumanity of the prison industrial complex as a major aspect of the state’s violence.
  4. In several cities BLUN affiliate organizations mobilized and engaged in Trayvon Martin protests, linking the struggle to local issues.
    - The People’s Organization for Progress (POP) in New Jersey, known for mobilizing Black, Latino and working-class communities for institutional changes, people’s power and international solidarity mobilized at a major intersection that blocked traffic;
    - The Black Workers For Justice in NC that has focused on organizing Black workers as central to organizing labor in the South as a rank-and-file democratic social movement mobilized and promoted around the demand for justice for Trayvon and Stop the War on Black America at the Moral Monday civil disobedience mass rallies at the NC State Capital, challenging the corporate domination of state government and attempts to eliminate basic democratic and human rights for Black, other oppressed and working-class people,
    - The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement a leading national organization in the struggle against police and vigilante murders of Black people, and for transformative power in the city of Jackson and the Mississippi Black Belt, has helped to promote the widespread and systemic nature of racial profiling and the complicity of all levels of government,
    - The Defenders for Freedom, Justice and Equality in Richmond, Va., active in the struggles for social justice and a major leader in a fight against the desecration of an African burial ground by government and corporate that want to use the site for a sports stadium.
  5. Finally, every social justice coalition is in deep discussion about how to intervene in this moment of spontaneity and rising mass consciousness.

There is no single tactic that is correct as we have to fight where we are with the resources at hand, but fight back we must. We need more of whatever forms of resistance are possible. But at this time it is critical to get on the same page with our general orientation.

The BLUN has adopted the following slogans for this current period of mobilization:

STOP THE WAR ON BLACK AMERICA!

WE CHARGE GENOCIDE!

HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL!

These slogans give us a framework. MXGM has taught us this racist capitalist society kills a Trayvon every 28 hours – no location is exempt from this slow walking style of mass murder. Given this the BLUN urges everyone to make sure they are studying and linking their immediate situation to national trends because the Black Liberation Movement has to be built on the national level. We need to begin this theoretical process now in the heat of the struggle. We call this work Revolutionary Praxis—linking theory with practice and practice with theory.

## **Internationalism and The Black Liberation Movement**

Doing solidarity work with and for our revolutionary anti-imperialist allies throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America has historically been a key component to Black Left organizations in the US. The BLUN has continued this necessity with our Solidarity & Education work around Cuba, Haiti and the Venezuelan Bolivarian Revolution as documented on our blog (<http://www.blackleftunity.blogspot.com>), website ([www.blackleftunity.org](http://www.blackleftunity.org)) and within our first issue of this journal ([jblun.org](http://jblun.org)). We will –in the near future- also be addressing the issue of Reparations as an African and African Diasporic demand central to Black Freedom and Human Rights.

We are aware of the inextricable links we have with our African and Latino Diasporic Sisters and Brothers. These links are grounded in the recognition of having capitalism as a common enemy and of having significant cultural ties and similarities which have evolved out of slavery, the slave trade, colonialism and present-day globalized capitalism.

### Grappling with Key Questions of Forms of Actions

Within every context this spontaneous motion is grappling with key questions.

Here are two critical ones – self-defense and the need for mass civil disobedience versus the power of the state.

Many people while leading protests always begin by pleading for peace, even while the people are under attack. The BLUN calls for a distinction between generalized violence against people or property and politically focused violence especially self-defense.

We demand the right of Black people to self-defense – Trayvon could have killed Zimmerman in self-defense because we clearly now know that Trayvon's life was in danger! On the other

hand, the aimless street violence in Oakland, for example, divided the community and distracted the political focus to vandalism and not an organized fight-back against racist state power.

Another important tendency is petitioning the Department of Justice to investigate the possibility that Trayvon's murder involved a civil rights violation. History teaches us that this is very much a long shot that spans years of litigation. The main thing is that we don't oppose this move, but consider it secondary to maintaining massive street demonstrations and innovative tactics to build consensus and unity of action across the organized forces in our community that can put "boots on the ground!"

Every mother feels the pain of a lost child, every sister the loss of a brother, every grandmother the loss of a grandchild, and every wife the loss of a husband. We hurt for each other. We must act now to stop this madness!

What would be a powerful expression of national resistance as part of the No More Trayvons Campaign would be women and young girls holding weekly vigils at police stations, courts, city halls, jail -wearing red scarves symbolizing the blood from the police murders of Black people-and demanding an end to police/state violence and mass incarceration of Black people!

"The No More Trayvons" struggles have identified militant forces across the country ready to struggle, but they lack a national program of action to help unite and define them collectively as a strategic campaign against the state.

The "Moral Monday" movement in North Carolina has embraced the importance of making a connection between the right wing legislative attacks on all social support programs and the complicity of a rigged jury system allowing a murderer to go free.

Activists in Depressed Detroit are fighting back against the capitalist sale (commodification) of all public assets in their struggle against a right wing governor fronting for the auto industry that claims to have recovered without labor recovering as well!

Activists in Chicago are fighting the right wing Zionist mayor carrying out the largest closing of public schools in the history of the US. Everyone is connecting his or her local struggles to the senseless murder of Trayvon Martin. **We fight to honor Trayvon because we are all Trayvon Martin!**

It is also important to internationalize this struggle, exposing the lack of U.S. accountability to the UN Declaration on Human Rights, and international treaties and conventions as part of the struggle to isolate U.S. imperialism. As the leading imperialist country extending its state violence across the world, we must use every opportunity to help to expose, isolate and charge

the U.S system with committing crimes against humanity. **This also gives further meaning and support for the demand for Reparations as part of the struggle for African American self-determination. By linking the “No More Trayvon’s Struggles to other local issues, the Black led resistance shows how the police and overall state violence against the Black working-class is part of the capitalist system’s strategy to criminalize and scapegoat Black people as the cause of society’s economic and social problems that hurt “all citizens.”**

## **Building a popular movement that mobilizes broad sectors to resist the capitalist attacks**

The Forward Together, Not One Step Back Movement in North Carolina has mobilized thousands on Moral Mondays to challenge the right-wing dominated state legislature that has enacted bills attacking the working class with emphasis on Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, immigrants and the labor unions.

This mass movement began as a people’s assembly establishing a 14-point program that dealt with education, worker rights, imperialist wars, environmental justice, voting rights and many other social justice issues, declaring itself as the Historical Thousands on Jones St (HKOJ) the location of the NC General Assembly. Every February thousands are mobilized to the NC state legislature stating that “it’s the people’s house” meaning that the people have not turned over power to legislators to act in their own narrow racist and procapitalist interests.

The HKOJ includes over 100 NAACP local branches and close to 200 community and social justice organizations. By organizing 29 Moral Mondays challenging the moral consciousness, and the democratic and constitutional legality of the right-wing super-majority in the legislature, thousands of people, including many whites from the districts of the right-wing legislators have turned out in protest, including 960 that got arrested for engaging in non-violent civil disobedience. This movement has helped to beat back much of the Tea Party influence in NC.

It has created a climate of resistance, bringing out teachers and some of the AFL-CIO unions whose actions have been largely focused on lobbying and supporting legislative candidates. The main national issue of this movement is protecting voting rights. While playing an important and leading role, the NC NAACP is still mainly a civil rights organization tied to the Democratic Party and will only go so far in terms of tactics in challenging the attacks of the Black and general working-class. It is critically important for the Black Left to have a mass base and network of forces to be an influential part of this movement and acting independently within the climate it creates. One of the good things that have come out of North Carolina’s Moral Mondays is that other cities are beginning to adopt Moral Mondays as part of their fight-backs.

## **Electoral Struggles and the Fight for Self-Determination**

Black Left forces also face the constant lure of electoral politics. We seek the capacity to protect ourselves from negative electoral political forces and have the ability to initiate a popular electoral campaign to grab the reins of power of local and regional government to advance the freedom struggle. The government sometimes acts like a spider's web, you enter to change it but it grabs you and turns you into the spider's meal. The forces that control the government often end up controlling the activists that enter. In spite of this, we have a few examples of local level electoral politics that have clearly advanced the Freedom Struggle.

A current example of an electoral victory that is advancing our Freedom Struggle is the mayoral victory in Jackson, Mississippi. A militant activist lawyer, a leader of the Malcolm X grassroots Movement and the New African Peoples Organization and a longtime leader in the Black liberation movement, Chokwe Lumumba, has been elected mayor. The slogan of his campaign was "the people must decide." Lumumba and the MXGM built a people's assembly in his ward when he was running for Jackson city councilman in 2009.

The People's Assembly was the starting point for his Jackson city council position. It had an international connection with the Chavez-led government of Venezuela, who provided the city's poor with low cost fuel, light bulbs. In addition, Venezuelan governmental representatives visited Jackson to meet with the People's Assembly.

The concept of the People's Assembly grew out of the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita survivors assembly that was held in Jackson to bring together dispersed survivors to develop a Post Katrina/Rita Reconstruction Program to launch a Reconstruction movement that would influence and control over the rebuilding of their communities while struggling for rights of internally dispersed people under the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

Many saw the demand for Reconstruction and the Reconstruction movement as a developing strategic battlefield for the struggle of the Black liberation movement and African American self-determination. The Reconstruction movement was seen as a new framing for the national Black liberation struggling for the reconstruction of communities that were gentrified, for public schools that are characterized and privatized, for police accountability to the communities, accessible public healthcare, affordable housing, political power, etc.

While the splits in the Gulf Coast Reconstruction movement led to its demise, the Lumumba election and the Jackson Plan (in this issue, page 16) is carrying forward its basic strategic aims in the form of that Plan.

**"While the revolution can't be elected, elections can be helpful to the progressive and revolutionary struggles."**

What lessons can be learned from the experience? What advances can be made? What are the challenges of administering local government with a progressive agenda? What must the Black liberation movement do to help defend this important victory toward building a mass base of democratic people's power, and a zone for advancing the Black liberation and workers movement in the South?

It is important to put this in the context of the Obama presidency. To compare our "race-pride" expectations of Obama with what he has actually done leads to many of our activist/progressive Sisters & Brothers disappointed and feeling betrayed.

However, we expect more from Mayor Chokwe Lumumba and the Jackson Plan that provides the program and strategic context for his election. Key is that this election and strategy must be embraced and supported as part of a national strategy of the Black liberation movement. The strategic document for this tactical political victory is the Jackson Plan.

## **Some lessons and questions for the national Black Liberation Movement to discuss**

This is a period of new Black electoral energy rising across the nation. The fight-back against the mega-rich-backed Tea Party Onslaught upon hard fought for Civil Rights legislation is just beginning.

We need to rethink this process in terms of what it means for the Black Liberation Movement (BLM). This is critical because the BLM fights in opposition to capitalism; hence it is fundamentally in opposition to both mainstream political parties. In fact, the BLM is opposed to the fundamentals of this entire political system, including their rooted-in-slavery constitution. We acknowledge, however, that the masses of Black people have a history of struggling in the electoral arena for civil and democratic rights as well as for us to have voice and power in pressing for social justice reforms within the system.

The last great expansion of access to have a civil right-voice was the 1965 Voter Rights Act. Of course since the Supreme Court has just taken the teeth out of that legislation, there will likely be a battle to win back enforcement. And even though Black people have started getting disillusioned with Obama, they will once again fight to have voice within the political system even as that very system continues to betray and victimize them. The BLUN considers the battle to restore Black voter enfranchisement as a crucial political opportunity to help root the Black Liberation Movement deeper within the Black masses.

The common view is that the Black movement has been divided into a civil rights movement (integrationists and assimilationist) and a Black Nationalist movement (separationist and self-determination). The position of the BLUN is this is a false dichotomy for the masses of Black

people. Both have provided tactical moves that expressed elements of Black power. This is especially clear in electoral politics.

The fight to gain voice in the system was based on a special claim of the Black vote to support Black candidates. The formation of Black caucuses represented recognition of the strategic role of the Black masses in the electoral arena as the basis for their elections and in building alliances with other oppressed nationalities to become a social and political bloc to advance broader demands and fights for concessions.

Black people in the electoral arena, voters and office holders, practice democracy in general, while also paying particular attention to the special interests of Black people. Since the 19th Century, the Black vote has also been a bargaining chip primarily for the Black middle-class and bourgeoisie to enter the Republican and later, the Democratic Party with the hopes of influencing the direction of those parties on issues dealing with race, civil rights and winning some concessions for their classes.

Since the New Deal, Black people have been the most loyal base of voters for the Democrats. They are Democrats in search of incremental reforms that can protect the Black community and provide some kind of social and economic relief from class, national and women's oppression. This is part of local struggles in every city.

Given how deep the economic crisis is, we need to embrace every move the masses of people make to better their conditions. But that is not all. Our task is to link this fight for a voice and reforms inside the system to the outside fight for revolution to fundamentally transform this very system.

## **Danger! US Financial Capital Delinking From US Labor**

There is one class in power over the state, dominated by finance capital, and it is increasingly delinked from direct appropriation of surplus from US labor power. This is dangerous because they are rewriting the social contract between labor and capital. Working labor and the permanent unemployed face declining wages, decreased standard of living and homelessness.

This position of fighting for reforms inside and revolution outside is beginning to converge. The extreme expansion of obscene wealth and grinding poverty is tearing the veil off the eyes of the people. Add to that the crimes of imperialist war and techno-fascist-global-surveillance; just about everybody is asking some very fundamental questions about what kind of system we have in this country.

**If ever there was a time to talk about moving past this exploitative capitalism system it is now.**

We can learn from a major error of the national democratic revolution in South Africa following the establishment of a Black majority government. A large number of the key organizers and leaders of the COSATU labor federation, the Communist Party and some mass organizations went into the government and tried to lead from the top. However this leadership made great compromises with global capital and turned into its opposite ending up having this police shooting down protesting miners just as had been done by the previous racist regime. The system can convert you into an enemy of the people!!

**There are critical battlefronts for the Black liberation movement no matter who heads the government.**

Detroit is 82.7% Black and has just been taken over by a right wing governor who has installed a Black lawyer assigned to sell off city assets and make sure capital remains in control over the diminishing Black labor living there. This is after 39 years of Black mayors, and 46 years since the great rebellion of 1967. We look forward to an in depth summation of the Detroit experience covering both inside and outside, both the experience of fighting for reforms and for revolution.

The South -which has always served as strategic region for U.S. capital to undermine the power of organized labor and to shape the racist politics in the electoral arena and the overall U.S. system of institutionalized racism- has now become a major region for the industries that remain vital to US and global industrial-finance capital. The emerging mass struggles against the right-wing state legislatures, as in the case of North Carolina; and for democratic people's governance in Jackson, MS, with the election of Mayor Chokwe Lumumba is taking place in a region where more than 55% of the U.S. Black population live and continue to struggle against remnants of the Jim Crow era. It is also a major region for foreign direct investments from the global economy. The political struggle with deep roots in the Black working class and the labor movement that must be built as a conscious and militant social movement provides conditions for the Black liberation movement to again play a leading role in the struggle for revolutionary change.

## **The Black Left Unity Network, Some Questions and the Work Ahead**

The Black Left Unity Network believes that a Black National Congress is needed to link the many defensive and offensive social, economic and political struggles around a program of action that produces a popular national mass movement to challenge and gain power and control over the system's social, economic and political institutions as a basis for establishing areas of dual power.

The main focus of the BLM should be the urban Black and Latino communities and the South. The South is now a region of historic concentration of African Americans and a rapid growth of Afro-Caribbean's and Latinos with pockets of Native American... all of whom represent the most oppressed sectors of the U.S. working-class.

### **What is the role of the state – reforms?**

The use of state finance. The control of land. Bully pulpit. Check police brutality/murder. Local versus state versus national. When BLM forces are a legislative force, people's consciousness will advance rapidly around program because the public debate will offer real alternatives outside of the republicans and democrats.

### **What is the role of the BLM – defense and offense?**

**The politics of self-determination – the people's assemblies.** This is the context for the convergence of the fight for reform and revolution. This is the organic form of people's power that can prepare the people for the great transformation.

**The independent organization of the working class and leadership of Black workers– the role of workplace politics.** Fighting to control the workplace, the site of production, distribution and consumption, and educating, organizing and mobilizing Black workers in the labor movement to help radicalize labor's broader rank-and-file as a class conscious force in the fight against the political and social control by capital.

**The current hundreds of spontaneous struggles reflect the righteous outrage of the Black masses and larger sections of the working-class against the many injustices caused by the capitalist system. However, all struggles against the injustices are not consciously struggles against the capitalist system and the class and powers that control it.**

**Today's spontaneous struggles cannot develop this revolutionary class-consciousness. This is the task of a rebuilt and rejuvenated organized national Black liberation movement.**

Black left unity must be a conscious effort to align revolutionary forces in rebuilding a national Black liberation movement. The Black Activist Journal of the Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) is part of the BLUN effort to make the rebuilding of the Black liberation movement a conscious effort and unity process that many can engage in.

### **Join the BLUN!**

# A Call to Organize! The Black Liberation Movement Cannot Advance Without the Revolutionary Organization of Women

## The Black Left Unity Network Calls for the Formation of a National BLUN Women's Working Group

To address the many forms of oppression faced by Black Women in particular and all working class women in general in this society, women workers must have an organization that addresses the triple oppression we face as women, as workers, and as African Americans. The struggle against patriarchy must also be a pillar of the Black Liberation Movement's efforts to rebuild and reorganize. It is a key historic task of our struggle in the fight to transform society and for the national liberation of our people.

Join the BLUN Women's Working Group! We Must Organize!

The Black Left Unity Network Women's Working Group

For more information on the Women's Working Group email: [abinta@iflm.org](mailto:abinta@iflm.org)



2003 in Atlanta, Georgia: Women from around the world convened for the International Working Women's Conference organized by the Black Workers for Justice Women's Commission in conjunction with the Transnational Information Exchange.

# OUR MOVEMENT

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## 01 The Jackson Plan: A Struggle for Self-Determination, Participatory Democracy, and Economic Justice by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement

A major progressive initiative is underway in Jackson, Mississippi. This initiative demonstrates tremendous promise and potential in making a major contribution towards improving the overall quality of life of the people of Jackson, Mississippi, particularly people of African descent. This initiative is the **Jackson Plan** and it is being spearheaded by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM) and the Jackson People's Assembly.

The Jackson Plan is an initiative to apply many of the best practices in the promotion of participatory democracy, solidarity economy, and sustainable development and combine them with progressive community organizing and electoral politics. The objectives of the Jackson Plan are to deepen democracy in Mississippi and to build a vibrant, people centered solidarity economy in Jackson and throughout the state of Mississippi that empowers Black and other oppressed peoples in the state.

The Jackson Plan has many local, national and international antecedents, but it is fundamentally the brain child of the Jackson People's Assembly. The Jackson People's Assembly is the product of the Mississippi Disaster Relief Coalition (MSDRC) that was spearheaded by MXGM in 2005 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina's devastation of Gulf Coast communities in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and Texas. Between 2006 and 2008, this coalition expanded and transformed itself into the Jackson People's Assembly. In 2009, MXGM and the People's Assembly were able to elect human rights lawyer and MXGM co-founder Chokwe Lumumba to the Jackson City Council representing Ward 2.

What follows is a brief presentation of the Jackson Plan as an initiative to build a base of autonomous power in Jackson that can serve as a catalyst for the attainment of Black self-determination and the democratic transformation of the economy.

## Program or Pillars

The Jackson Plan has three fundamental programmatic components that are designed to build a mass base with the political clarity, organizational capacity, and material self-sufficiency to advance core objectives of the plan. The three fundamental programmatic components are:

- Building People's Assemblies
- Building a Network of Progressive Political Candidates
- Building a broad based Solidarity Economy

### People's Assemblies

The People's Assemblies that MXGM are working to build in Jackson and throughout the state of Mississippi are designed to be vehicles of Black self-determination and autonomous political authority of the oppressed peoples' and communities in Jackson. The Assemblies are organized as expressions of participatory or direct democracy, wherein there is guided facilitation and agenda setting provided by the committees that compose the People's Task Force, but no preordained hierarchy. The People's Task Force is the working or executing body of the Assembly. The Task Force is composed of committees that are organized around proposals emerging from the Assembly to carry out various tasks and initiatives, such as organizing campaigns and long-term institution building and development work.

### Rooted in a History of Resistance

The People's Assemblies model advanced by MXGM has a long, rich history in Mississippi and in the Black Liberation Movement in general. The roots of our Assembly model are drawn from the spiritual or prayer circles that were organized, often clandestinely, by enslaved Africans – to express their humanity, build and sustain community, fortify their spirits and organize resistance. The vehicle gained public expression in Mississippi with the organization of “Negro Peoples Conventions” at the start of Reconstruction to develop autonomous programs of action to realize freedom as -Blacks themselves desired it and to determine their relationship to the Union

This expression of people's power remerged time and again in Black communities in Mississippi as a means to resist the systemic exploitation and terror of white supremacy and to exercise and exert some degree of self-determination. The last great expression of this vehicles power in Mississippi occurred in the early 1960's. It was stimulated by a campaign of coordinated resistance organized by militant local leaders like Medgar Evers that drew on the national capacity and courage of organizations like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). This campaign created the democratic space necessary for Black communities in Mississippi to organize themselves to resist more

effectively. Broad, participatory based People's Assemblies were the most common form of this self-organization.<sup>1</sup> One of the most memorable outgrowths of this wave of Peoples Assemblies in Mississippi was the creation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MSFDP), which tested the concrete limits of the Voting Rights Act and challenged white hegemonic control over the Democratic Party in the state of Mississippi and throughout the south.

It is this legacy of People's Assemblies that MXGM is grounding itself in, and one we encourage others, particularly those in the Occupy movement, to study to help guide our collective practice in the present to build a better future.

#### **A Comprehensive Electoral Strategy: Mounting an Effective Defense and Offense:**

MXGM firmly believes that at this stage in the struggle for Black Liberation that the movement must be firmly committed to building and exercising what we have come to regard as "dual power" – building autonomous power outside of the realm of the state (i.e. the government) in the form of People's Assemblies and engaging electoral politics on a limited scale with the express intent of building radical voting blocks and electing candidates drawn from the ranks of the Assemblies themselves. As we have learned through our own experiences and our extensive study of the experiences of others that we cannot afford to ignore the power of the state.

First and foremost our engagement with electoral politics is to try to negate the repressive powers of the state and contain the growing influence of trans-national corporations in our communities. From police violence to the divestment of jobs and public resources, there are many challenges facing our communities that require us to leverage every available means of power to save lives and improve conditions. We also engage electoral politics as a means to create political openings that provide a broader platform for a restoration of the "commons,"<sup>2</sup> create more public utilities (i.e. universal health care and comprehensive public transportation), and the democratic transformation of the economy. One strategy without the other is like mounting a defense without an offense or vice versa. Both are critical to advancing authentic, transformative change.

Fundamental to our engagement with electoral politics is the principle that we must build and employ independent political vehicles that are not bound to or controlled by either of the two

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<sup>1</sup> See "I've Got the Light of Freedom: the Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle," by Charles M. Payne; "Local People: the Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi," by Charles Dittmer; "The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change," by Aldon D. Morris; "A Little Taste of Freedom: the Black Freedom Struggle in Claiborne County, Mississippi," by Emilye Crosby; and "Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in Action in Social Movements," by Francesca Polletta.

<sup>2</sup> The "Commons" refers to the resources of the earth that everyone is dependent upon and must utilize to survive and thrive. The essential "Commons" are land, water, and air.

monopoly parties in the United States. We are particularly focused on building an independent political force that challenges the Two Party monopoly and empowers oppressed people and communities throughout the state of Mississippi. In the effort to build on the legacy of independent electoral engagement by Blacks in Mississippi, MXGM's members are all registered members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MSFDP) and are starting to work as activists within the party to extend its reach and impact.

It is this combination of building and exercising dual power – building autonomous People's Assemblies and critical engagement with the state via independent party politics – that are the two fundamental political pillars of the Jackson Plan.

To date, some of the accomplishments of this model beyond the 2009 election of Chokwe Lumumba include:

- Leading the campaign to elect the first ever Black Sheriff of Hinds County, Tyron Lewis, in August 2011;<sup>3</sup>
- Leading the campaign to Free the Scott Sisters, which won their release in January 2011;<sup>4</sup>
- Successfully campaigned to save the J – Tran city public transportation in Jackson from devastating austerity cuts planned by current Mayor Harvey Johnson;
- and united with the Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA) and other progressive forces to pass an anti-racial profiling ordinance in Jackson and to defeat Arizona styled anti-immigrant legislation in Mississippi in 2011 and 2012 respectively.<sup>5</sup>

### **Building a Local Solidarity Economy**

The critical third pillar of the Jackson Plan is the long-term commitment to build a local Solidarity Economy that links with regional and national Solidarity Economy networks to advance the struggle for economic democracy.

Solidarity Economy as a concept describes a process of promoting cooperative economics that promote social solidarity, mutual aid, reciprocity, and generosity.<sup>6</sup> It also describes the

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<sup>3</sup> See Black Agenda Morning Show August 29, 2011 interview with Kamau Franklin by Kali Akuno at <http://youtu.be/lJcginZpw> and "Lewis prepares for the Future", by Elizabeth Waibel at [http://www.jacksonfreepress.com/index.php/print\\_view/47994](http://www.jacksonfreepress.com/index.php/print_view/47994).

<sup>4</sup> See "Lumumba says Scott sisters released because of supporters" at [http://youtu.be/oXBm\\_szT\\_5E](http://youtu.be/oXBm_szT_5E) and "Scott Sisters Finally Set Free" at [http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/01/scott\\_sisters\\_finally\\_set\\_free.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/01/scott_sisters_finally_set_free.html).

<sup>5</sup> See "A New Kind of Southern Strategy", by Susan Eaton at <http://www.thenation.com/article/162694/new-kind-southern-strategy>.

<sup>6</sup> For more information on Solidarity Economy see the works of Ethan Miller, particularly "Solidarity Economy: Key Concepts and Issues" at

horizontal and autonomously driven networking of a range of cooperative institutions that support and promote the aforementioned values ranging from worker cooperatives to informal affinity based neighborhood bartering networks.

Our conception of Solidarity Economy is inspired by the Mondragon Federation of Cooperative Enterprises based in the Basque region of Spain<sup>7</sup> but also draws from the best practices and experiences of the Solidarity Economy and other alternative economic initiatives already in motion in Latin America and the United States. We are working to make these practices and experiences relevant in Jackson and to make greater links with existing cooperative institutions in the state and the region that help broaden their reach and impact on the local and regional economy. The Solidarity Economy practices and institutions that MXGM is working to build in Jackson include:

- Building a network of cooperative and mutually reinforcing enterprises and institutions, specifically worker, consumer, and housing cooperatives, and community development credit unions as the foundation of our local Solidarity Economy
- Building sustainable, Green (re)development and Green economy networks and enterprises, starting with a Green housing initiative
- Building a network of local urban farms, regional agricultural cooperatives, and farmers markets. Drawing heavily from recent experiences in Detroit, we hope to achieve food sovereignty and combat obesity and chronic health issues in the state associated with limited access to healthy foods and unhealthy food environments
- Developing local community and conservation land trusts as a primary means to begin the process of reconstructing the “Commons” in the city and region by decommodifying land and housing
- Organizing to reconstruct and extend the Public Sector, particularly public finance of community development, to be pursued as a means of rebuilding the Public Sector to ensure there is adequate infrastructure to provide quality health care, accessible mass transportation, and decent, affordable public housing, etc.

In building along these lines we aim to transform the economy of Jackson and the region as a whole to generate the resources needed to advance this admittedly ambitious plan.

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[http://www.communityeconomies.org/site/assets/media/Ethan\\_Miller/Miller\\_Solidarity\\_Economy\\_Key\\_Issues\\_2010.pdf](http://www.communityeconomies.org/site/assets/media/Ethan_Miller/Miller_Solidarity_Economy_Key_Issues_2010.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the Mondragon visit <http://www.mondragon-corporation.com/ENG.aspx>.

## Turning Theory into Action: Organizing Campaigns and Alliance Building

These fundamental program components or pillars of the Jackson Plan will only be built through grassroots organizing and alliance building. The key to the organizing component of the overall plan is the launching and successful execution of several strategic and synergistic organizing campaigns. The most critical of these organizing campaigns are:

- The Amandla<sup>8</sup> Education Project
- Take Back the Land
- Operation Black Belt
- 2013 Electoral Campaigns

### The Amandla Education Project

The Amandla Project is a youth and community education project specializing in skill building for civic engagement and participation. The Project provides training to youth and community members in the People's Assembly and the broader civil society in Jackson on community organizing, conflict resolution, critical literacy, media literacy, journalism and media advocacy, political theory, political economy, human rights advocacy, cooperative planning and management, participatory budgeting, the principles and practices of solidarity economy, sustainable economic development, and ecological sustainability. The Project also specializes in teaching the rich history of social struggle in Jackson and Mississippi in general, focusing on the legacy of struggle to deepening and expanding democracy in the state and the lessons from these struggles that can be employed today to enhance civic engagement and participation.

In its first year, the Amandla Project will recruit, train, and organize 100 youth and community organizers. These 100 individuals will serve as the core organizing cadre for the Jackson Plan. Our objective is to place 10 organizers in each of Jackson's 7 Wards and to utilize the remaining 30 to enhance the overall organizing capacity of progressive forces in the state of Mississippi. Mississippi

These organizers will be trained by a team of experienced organizers drawn from the ranks of MXGM, Mississippi Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights and other allied organizations that support the People's Assembly and the Jackson Plan.

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<sup>8</sup> "Amandla" is a Xhosa or Zulu word for "Power." It is used in a fashion similar to the slogan "Black Power" by the BLM in the United States. It is used in call and response form, and the response is "Awethu," which means "to us." Combined it means "Power to the People," as made popular in the United States by the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. This slogan was and remains common in the Azanian (i.e. South African) Freedom Movement.

Training 100 organizers is a critical start, but is in no way sufficient to meet the comprehensive needs of the Jackson Plan. To develop and train the cohorts and cadre of organizers needed to realize the objectives of this plan, MXGM, MS NAACP and the Praxis Project are working in alliance to build a training school by the start 2013 that will serve as the cornerstone of this long term educational initiative.

### **The Take Back the Land Campaign**

The Take Back the Land campaign is an initiative to create a network of urban farms and farmers markets to promote a healthy diet, affordable produce, and food sovereignty in the city. It also aims to create a land trust network, cooperative housing, and a workers cooperative network to provide a base of employment for many of the un and under employed

The Take Back the Land campaign will focus on occupying vacant land, abandoned homes and industrial facilities and convert them into usable agricultural land for urban farming, refurbished green housing to establish a cooperative housing network, and community space to establish training facilities, business centers and recreation spaces.

Aspects of this campaign have already been launched by MXGM with the healthy foods initiative and Fannie Lou Hamer gardens project. This initiative is also conceptually linked with the National Take Back the Land Movement that was launched in 2009 by the Land and Housing Action Group (LHAG) of the US Human Rights Network (USHRN), which originally consisted of MXGM, Survivors Village, Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign, and Take Back the Land Miami.<sup>9</sup>

### **Operation Black Belt**

Operation Black Belt is a campaign to expand worker organizing in Jackson and Mississippi overall, concentrating particularly on Black and immigrant workers. The aim is to organize these workers into associations and unions to provide them with collective voice and power and improve their standards of living. ,

The long-term objective of this campaign is to challenge, and eventually overturn, the “right to work” laws and policies in Mississippi. These laws and polices play a major role in sustaining the extreme rates of poverty and health disparities in the state, and must be overturned in order to improve the living standards of the vast majority of its residents. MXGM and the People’s Assembly aim to partner with the Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights to build and expand this critical long-term campaign.

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<sup>9</sup> For more background on the National Take Back the Land Movement and its history visit <http://navigatingthestorm.blogspot.com/> or <http://www.takebacktheland.org/>

## 2013 Electoral Campaigns

For the 2013 City Elections in Jackson, the Jackson People's Assembly and MXGM are prepared to run two candidates. One candidate, Attorney Chokwe Lumumba, who currently serves as the City Councilman for Ward 2, will run for Mayor. The other candidate is June Hardwick, who is also an Attorney, will run for City Council in Ward 7.

The objective of running these candidates and winning these offices is to create political space and advance policy that will provide maneuverable space for the autonomous initiatives promoted as part of the Jackson Plan to develop and grow. They are also intended to be used to build more Ward based People's Assemblies and Task Forces in Jackson, base build for the overall plan, and raise political consciousness about the need for self-determination and economic democracy to solve many of the longstanding issues effecting Black people.

In order to create the democratic space desired, we aim to introduce several critical practices and tools into the governance processes of the Jackson city government that will help foster and facilitate the growth of participatory democracy. Some of these processes and tools include:

- Participatory Budgeting to allow the residents of Jackson direct access and decision making power over the budgeting process in the city
- Gender-Sensitive Budgeting to address the adverse impact of policy execution as reflected in budget priorities that negatively impact women and children
- Human Rights Education and Promotion will require all city employee's to undergo human rights training to ensure that their policies and practices adhere to international standard of compliance with the various treaties ratified by the United States government and the results based norms established by the United Nations

We also aim to make several critical structural changes to the city of Jackson's governance structure. The most critical change we will propose and fight for is:

- Creating a Human Rights Charter to replace the existing city charter as the basis of sovereignty and governance for the city

And finally we aim to advance several economic and social changes on a structural level in Jackson via the governance process. These include:

- Expanding Public Transportation, by increasing transport lines and launching a fleet of green vehicles that utilize natural gas, ethanol, and electric energy
- Creating a network of solar and wind powered generators throughout the city to expand and create a sustainable power grid

- Creating a South-South Trading Network and Fair Trade Zone, that will seek to create trading partnerships with international trading blocs such as CARICOM (the Caribbean Community and Common Market) and ALBA (the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas)

## Alliance Building

Following the example of Malcolm X and countless Black political strategists and organizers before and after him, MXGM is a major advocate for strategic alliance building and united front politics. We are clear that none of our strategic objectives and demands can be attained simply by the forces we can muster. And few of our transitional goals and objectives can be reached without creating substantive alliances with strategic partners and allies. The Jackson Plan, as a transitional plan, is no exception to the rule.

Alliance building has been central to the operations of MXGM in Jackson. In many fundamental respects, the roots of the Jackson People's Assembly rest with the principled alliance of Black progressive organizations like Southern Echo, MS NAACP, MS Workers Center, Nation of Islam, MS ACLU, N'COBRA, MIRA, MS Freedom Democratic Party, NCBL, etc., assembled in the early 1990's to combat environmental racism, labor exploitation, and various aspects of institutional racism in Mississippi. Some of the key alliances we have formed or helped support over the last 20 plus years include the Andre Jones Justice Committee, MS Justice Coalition, Concerned Citizens Alliance, Jackson Human Rights Coalition, Concerned Workers of Frito Lay, Johnnie Griffin Justice Committee, Anti-Klan Coalition, Kwanza Coalition, Chokwe Lumumba Legal Support and Defense Committees, Workers United for Self Determination, City Wide Coalition for Selective Buying Campaign, Grassroots Convention, Committee to Free the Scott Sisters and the Full Pardon Committee for the Scott Sisters.

In order for the Jackson Plan and its objectives to be realized, we are going to have to build a broad alliance in the city that is aligned with the principle aims of the Plan and the initiatives that emerge from the People's Assemblies. This alliance will intentionally be multi-national in its outlook and orientation, but be based in and lead by Black working class communities and forces. We assess our strategic allies being the growing Latino community and various immigrant populations that are migrating to the state seeking employment in the agricultural, construction, and professional service sectors. The strategic nature of these forces rests with our common interest in eradicating white supremacy and institutional racism. This alliance will also give due focus to building principled relationships with white progressive forces throughout the city and state who are essential to the current and foreseeable balance of power in the state. Our immediate aim is to win enough of these forces over to our vision and program so as to weaken, if not altogether neutralize, aspects of white conservative power in the state.

The objectives of the Jackson Plan require the building of coalitions and alliances that far exceed the borders of Mississippi. We envision the coalitions and alliances we are seeking to build in Mississippi as being an essential cornerstone to the building of a strategic South by Southwest radical peoples' alliance, rooted in the rebuilding of principled alliances amongst the primary oppressed peoples' in the U.S., namely Blacks, Xicanos, and Indigenous Nations. When and if linked with the growing immigrant population, this grand alliance possesses within it the potential to transform the United States into an entirely new social project.

## **What You can do to help promote and advance the Jackson Plan**

MXGM believes that for organizing initiatives like the Jackson Plan to be successful, it will take a balance of self-reliant initiative, will and resourcing combined with genuine solidarity and joint struggle on the part of our allies. To help see this initiative to fruition, we are calling on our allies and supporters to build with us in the following concrete ways:

### **Promotion and Education**

The first critical task is to spread the word about the Jackson Plan. Promote it amongst your family, friends and comrades and wherever you live, work, play, rest or pray. Promote the democratic potential the plan represents and educate people about the importance of this initiative, the lessons that can be learned from it, how it can be applied in their context, and how they can support it.

### **Resource Generation**

No major social initiative such as the Jackson Plan can succeed without resources. The Jackson Plan needs a broad array of resources, but the two most fundamental resources it needs are money and skilled volunteers.

We need money for a great number of things, but more specifically to help support and build our organizing drives and campaigns, which includes paying organizers, covering work expenses (transportation, operations, facilities, etc.), and producing and promoting educational and agitation materials. If all our allies and supporters were to make small individual donations, we firmly believe we could raise millions to support this critical work. In this spirit, we are challenging everyone who supports the Jackson Plan and the work of MXGM to make a contribution of \$5 or more to this work to ensure that it succeeds. You can make a tax deductible contribution by donating to Community Aid and Development, Inc., which is our 501c3 fiduciary agent, by visiting <http://www.cadnational.org/>.

The types of skills we need are organizing, managerial, fundraising, entrepreneurial, and technical in the fields of social networking, farming, construction, engineering, journalism and

media, and health care. We are looking for volunteers to come to Jackson and make commitments to help at strategic times for short-term campaign initiatives, mainly for one or two weeks. And, when and where possible, to make more long term commitments for several months or years to work under the discipline of MXGM and the People's Assemblies.

### **Solidarity and Joint Campaigns**

Political support for the Jackson Plan and the many initiatives within it is just as essential as resource support. We strongly encourage folks in the South to join us in building and extending Operation Black Belt, as this campaign ultimately needs to be a Southern wide initiative in order to be successful. The Amandla Project needs book and curriculum donations, pedagogical exchanges, and volunteer trainers to help it get started. We further call on our allies and supporters everywhere to support our 2013 electoral campaigns by joining one of our volunteer brigades that will start in the summer of 2012 to carry out the will of the People's Assembly. And of course make generous financial contributions to the campaign coffers of Chokwe Lumumba and June Hardwick.

More critically however, we would like to encourage our allies and supporters outside of Mississippi to form local and regional Jackson Solidarity Circles to support the Plan and relate directly with MXGM and the People's Assembly to support some or all of the aforementioned initiatives. We want to strongly encourage organizing and organizational development anywhere to enable social transformation to happen everywhere.

We are also looking to inspire, encourage, and support Jackson like plans in other Black Belt regions of the South. In particular, Black Belt regions with mid-sized cities like Jackson with similar race and class demographics, as these represent the greatest potential for success given the current balance of forces in the US, primarily because these cities don't possess the same degree of consolidated transnational capital to contend with as do larger cities. We would hope that over time Jackson Plan Solidarity Committees throughout the Black Belt South would take up this call to action and build their own local political bases of support to engage in dual power initiatives that can link with the forces advancing the Jackson Plan to empower Black and oppressed communities in the South.

If people would like to work more closely with MXGM to build the Jackson Plan we strongly encourage people of Afrikan descent to join MXGM. People interested in joining should contact our national organizer Kamau Franklin at [kamauadeaabiodun@yahoo.com](mailto:kamauadeaabiodun@yahoo.com). We strongly encourage whites and other non-Afrikan peoples' committed to anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-sexist politics interested in working directly with us to join the Malcolm X Solidarity Committee (MXSC). People interested in joining the MXSC should contact [malcolmxsolidaritycommittee@gmail.com](mailto:malcolmxsolidaritycommittee@gmail.com).

## Forward!

The Jackson Plan is a major initiative in the effort to deepen democracy and build a solidarity economy. To the extent that this plan calls for a critical engagement with electoral politics, we take heed of the lesson and warning issued by Guyanese Professor Walter Rodney, who stated:

I say this very deliberately. Not even those of us who stand on this platform can tell you that the remedy in Guyana is **that a new set of people must take over from old set of people, and we will run the system better.** That is no solution to the problems of Guyana. **The problem is much more fundamental than that.** We are saying that **working class people will get justice only when they take the initiative. When they move themselves!** Nobody else can give (freedom) as gift. Someone who comes claiming to be a liberator is either deluding himself or he is trying to delude the people. He either doesn't understand the process of real life. Or he is trying to suggest that you do not understand it. And so long as we suffer of a warped concept of politics as being leadership, we're going to be in a lot of trouble." (Walter A. Rodney, In the Sky's Wild Noise)

We draw two lessons from this statement and the history associated with it. One, that to engage is to not be deluded about the discriminatory and hierachal nature of the system, nor deny its proven ability to contain and absorb resistance, or to reduce radicals to status quo managers. The lesson we draw from Rodney's statements are that we have to fight in every arena to create democratic space to allow oppressed and exploited people the freedom and autonomy to ultimately empower themselves. The second lesson regards leadership. MXGM believes that leadership is necessary to help stimulate, motivate, and educate struggling people, but that leaders and leadership are no substitutes for the people themselves and for autonomous mass movement with distributed or horizontal leadership. As the legendary Fannie Lou Hamer said,

we have enough strong people to do this. For peoples to win this election, it would set a precedent for other counties in the state. Peoples need a victory so bad. We've been working here since '62 and we haven't got nothing, excepting a helluva lot of heartaches.<sup>10</sup>

The Jackson Plan ultimately aims to build a strong people, prepared to improve their future and seize their own destiny. We hope you will join us in its building and advancement.

Unity and Struggle!

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<sup>10</sup> Quote taken from "This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer," by Kay Miles, page 176.

For updates and more information about the Jackson Plan please visit the following websites and social media sources:

Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, [www.mxgm.org](http://www.mxgm.org) or  
<https://www.facebook.com/MXGMnational>.

Source: <http://mxgm.org/the-jackson-plan-a-struggle-for-self-determination-participatory-democracy-and-economic-justice/>

## 02 Sankofa<sup>11</sup> Cuba: Racism and Revolution in the Afro-Cuban Experience by Abdul Alkalimat



**Sankofa Bird.** See footnote.

*This article is in response to the continuing discussion of how the Cuban revolution has dealt with the task to eliminate racism as a fundamental feature of socialist transformation. First it must be stated that this issue has never been ignored by the Afro-Cubans who have suffered from the oppression and exploitation of racism in their own country. On the other hand inside Cuba the reality of racism has not been fully dealt with, while outside Cuba the issue is most often raised to attack the revolution. This is a debate that is now raging outside and inside Cuba. It is a debate that ought to be raised everywhere inside of Africa and the African Diaspora. In fact, the issues speak to the struggle for socialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for all progressive forces in the world.*

*The reason for this essay first developed as a result of two letters exchanged between activists in the US Black Liberation Struggle regarding racism and the struggle for freedom, justice and equality in Cuba. One article took a position against what it perceived as the failure of the Cuban revolution to eliminate racism against Afro-Cubans*

*(<http://afrocubaweb.com/actingonourconscience.htm>), while the other letter rose in defense of the Cuban revolution (<http://www.blackeducator.org/cubasolidarity.htm>). I signed the letter in*

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<sup>11</sup> Sankofa is an African concept represented by a bird carrying an egg on its back. It refers to a historical consciousness that encourages one to have a historical perspective as a precondition to planning and taking action to create the future. (See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sankofa>) All of us are born into a historical context and we all face the freedoms and the limitations of the times we live in. The main question is always what we do with what we start with, how we account for ourselves, what we make of ourselves. Historical context sets the stage for all our knowledge of society and nature, but does not determine what we do as individuals. The future we want is possible but getting there will be very difficult and dangerous so we had better learn from the past.

*defense of the revolution but could not let it end there as this was too dangerous a contradiction within our movement about the experience of such an important country. The debate continued. This article has been developed to raise the level of our understanding of the dialectics of the Cuban revolution and how the unfolding of events requires us to grasp the dialectical motion of history and not simply to let perceptual knowledge of specific events dominate our consciousness. We also need to acknowledge and give respect to the response by Cuban comrades (<http://www.havanatimes.org/?p=16838>).*

*And now the debate is emerging out of the Afro-Cuban community itself. An article by Roberto Zurbano was published in the New York Times that was critical of the conditions faced by Afro-Cubans was followed by an article by Esteban Morales who responded and challenged his accuracy and revolutionary commitment. Of course this is not a new subject as Morales and others, especially in the National Library, the National Writers Union, etc. have been having discussions for the last few years. The people in Cuban know their situation very well, and certainly better than others looking at Cuba from afar.*

*I hope this essay helps to deepen our grasp of general lessons from the Cuban struggle, as we focus our main energies on our own revolutionary struggle. Movement activists need to sharpen this debate in the context of extending our solidarity to the Cuban revolution. The African American liberation struggle and the fight for socialism in the US are in complete solidarity with the Cuban revolution. This paper aims to clarify this point.*

Fundamental issues are at stake in an analysis of Cuban nationality. One usually starts with the historical ideals of the Cuban revolutionary process, that all of us in Cuba are Cubans, descendants of Africa and Spain alike. But in every instance the question is always whether the practical experience fits that ideological ideal. And as the internal struggle in Cuba has unfolded historically there is the simultaneous external battle with the forces acting against the Cuban revolution as a whole. Whether the external force is Spain, the US or other forces of Globalization, patriots of Cuba always rise to the defense of the revolution. On the other hand a key qualitative barometer of any transformative change inside Cuba is the condition of the Afro Cuban. They have faced successively slavery, racist segregation, class exploitation, and uneven development in the emerging global economy and how they fare to a great extent is a measure of the success of the Cuban revolution, externally and internally.

Every society has a master narrative, the voice of hegemony. This often contains the story of the nation/country, its origin and its stages of development and transformation, including major figures and social movements. The requirement for a patriot is to be an embodiment of the master narrative, its voice, something you have to know and to feel as well. This becomes the collective will of the society. And at the same time there are always alternative narratives that must negotiate with the master narrative because they also have a basis in fact and



**Statue of Antonio Maceo in Santiago de Cuba.**

Source: [http://pr.indymedia.org/uploads/2006/08/antonio\\_maceo.jpg](http://pr.indymedia.org/uploads/2006/08/antonio_maceo.jpg)

cultural reproduction.<sup>12</sup> A society is a complex of social networks and forms of cultural literacy, and while one dominates it does not exist without constant interaction with what everybody else is thinking and doing. The African legacy speaks in Cuba today despite whatever silences have dominated for whatever reasons. Cuban history is not a utopia but is (like everywhere else) a dialectical process of conflicting forces representing classes, nationalities, colonialism

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<sup>12</sup> One can see the universality of what DuBois says about the US African American experience as applied to the crisis of identity faced by Afro Cubans: "One ever feels his twoness - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." See "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" in the Souls of Black Folk (1903).

and neocolonialism, etc. Its genius, however, is that this history has been impacted by revolutionary forces for the last 150 years. The master narrative in Cuba has always been corrected by the agency of the silenced ones, the Afro-Cubans. This is a major issue that has to be taken up at the beginning of this paper. The master narrative of one Cuba (Black and white) has been put forward by patriots of Cuba who often spoke out of the white experience to convince other white people of the morality and logic of their arguments. This has been a critical historical force for a free and independent Cuba. On the other hand, Black Cubans (of all colors) have always spoken for themselves, and their critical patriotic embrace of the master narrative always advanced the freedom struggle. They always took into account their own voice; they have been the ones who have often been the main participants in war, in labor, in politics, and always in cultural production. No African contribution, no Cuban political culture as we have known it. One Cuba – same words from different people, but often with a different meaning.

So what I propose to do in this article is to summarize recent research on the three main stages of the Cuban revolutionary process and the experience of the Afro-Cuban people and their leadership.

1. Stage one, 1526 – 1902: Abolitionism and the fight for independence
2. Stage two, 1902 – 1959: Anti racist struggle against US Neo-colonialism
3. Stage three, 1959 – 2013: Anti globalization struggle for national sovereignty

Our focus in each stage is on critical aspects of Cuban history: the political economy of capital and labor, the main narrative of the Cuban revolutionary process, and the agency of Afro-Cuban activism. More specifically the Cuban history of revolutionary transformation consists of successive struggles with Spanish colonialism, US neo-colonialism, and the forces of globalization both socialist and capitalist. In every instance we have two alternatives and equally important approaches to historical interpretation. On the one hand we have to carefully place the event in its historical context and clarify the alternatives that presented themselves, especially the alternative actually chosen by key political actors. On the other hand we have to make a comparison to where we are now. In the first instance we can view history within the context of its own time and demonstrate how history moved forward from there. But also, we have to always indicate how these developments still had far to go relative to where we are today. Without both we remain stuck in the past or in the present without a past. We need to fight for a future we have never had but we need, a future beyond the past and the present for the full emancipation of humanity.

One more point of clarification. During every period Afro-Cuban political and cultural action covered a wide diversity of positions and social formations. We will be focusing on the dynamic

Afro-Cubans in the revolutionary movement, and not the reactionaries or the apathetic. For every slave revolt there were traitors, but it is also true that every time the Cuban revolution has made an advance it has been because of the fundamental patriotic impulse of Cubans of all colors and cultures. And, always a major force, Africa is in the soul of Cuban political culture. So we are interested in two main trends in Cuban revolutionary history – the unity of all sons and daughters of Cuba, both Black and white on the one hand, and on the other hand as oppressed people the Afro-Cubans have always organized in their own interests to achieve the overall goals of the revolution based on the relentless struggle against all forms of racist oppression and exploitation. The first trend is applauded by all in the revolutionary movements, but the second one has always been a point of contradiction faced by Afro-Cubans not willing to remain silent or not willing to accept delay, deception, or disregard.

## **Stage 1: Abolitionism and the fight for independence<sup>13</sup>**

There is a long history from the time of the Spanish invasion of the island to the independence of Cuba, over 400 years from 1492 to 1898. However the historical origin of human settlement takes place almost 300 years before with the arrival of native peoples that constitute the original inhabitants of the islands – the Siboneys, the Guanahacabibes, and the Tainos.<sup>14</sup>

José Martí describes the first approach of the native peoples in the Caribbean when the Spanish landed in Hispaniola:

As friends they had received them, the white men with their beards; they had regaled them with their honey and their corn, and even King Behechino gave a handsome Spanish his daughter Higeumota as a wife, she who was like a wild pigeon and a royal palm. They showed them their mountains of gold and their rivers of golden waters, and their adornments all of fine gold and they had put on these adornments on their armor. And these cruel men hung them with chains; they took away their women and their sons; they put them in the depths of the mines to drag the weight of stone with their forehead, and divided them and marked them with a brand.<sup>15</sup>

The subsequent arrival of the Spanish in Cuba was therefore known to be an invasion. Proof of this is because the Guanahacabibe leader, Hatuey, rallied the indigenous people to resist and fight them on their arrival. Based on stops at other islands they knew that “the God that these tyrants adore is the Gold that is hidden in the entrails of our land.” When the Spanish landed

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<sup>13</sup> See the following key works: Barnet (1968), Knight (1970), Scott (1985), Howard (1998), Ferrer (1999), Childs (2006), Reid-Vazquez (2011).

<sup>14</sup> Foner Vol 1 page 13-32; Le Riverend page 38-44.

<sup>15</sup> Foner Vol 1 page 19-20.

they had to fight from that very day. Hatuey was captured and burned alive in 1512.<sup>16</sup> Subsequent arrivals of the Africans and the Chinese were conditioned by this initial history of a war of invasion and a policy of genocide against the indigenous people. A reputation of barbarism was reproduced by each generation of Spanish colonialists. Hence, history constantly kept negating the view that the oppressed should trust their oppressors.

1492	Spanish invasion led by Christopher Columbus
1526	Captured Africans forced into slavery in Cuba
1553	First recorded slave revolt
1812	The Aponte slave revolt
1843	La Escalera slave revolt
1867	End of slave trade in Cuba
1868	Cespedes frees slaves, begins 10 year independence war
1878	Betrayal of Zanjones, Protest at Baragua
1886	Abolition of slavery in Cuba
1887	The Directorio Central de las Sociedades de la Raza de Color
1898	Spain defeated
1902	"Independent" Cuba becomes US neo-colony

#### **Chronology of invasion, slavery, abolition, and independence.**

In less than three decades the Spanish colony of Cuba was importing slaves and developing the economy to serve Spain. There developed two main legs of the Cuban economy, tobacco and sugar.

It was Columbus who exported the first tobacco and imported the first sugar cane. Tobacco left Cuba with him on his return from his first voyage; sugar cane came in with the Admiral on his second voyage...The relations of tobacco and sugar with their workers have been different. Sugar has always preferred slave labor; tobacco, free men. Sugar brought in Negroes by force; tobacco encouraged the voluntary immigration of white men.<sup>17</sup>

This is the importance of slavery in the sugar plantation system. Sugar came to dominate the economy. By 1851 Sugar grew to over 80% of all Cuban exports. By 1862, 47% of all slaves worked on sugar plantations and only 5% on tobacco farms. The great sugar plantations were in the western regions of Cuba, while small farms with free Blacks were more common in the eastern region of Oriente. A major impetus came from technology, notably the introduction of

<sup>16</sup> Since these indigenous peoples left few documents of struggle from their point of view we have to rely on the records of the Spanish. See commentary on Hatuey testimony as a key exception to this, Foner vol 1, pages 13-32.

<sup>17</sup> Ortiz 1940 page 72 and page 81.

the steam engine that transformed the sugar industry between 1820 to 1878. By the end of the century the mechanization of the sugar mill was complete, but cutting the cane was done by hand. Just as in the US where the cotton gin had created a massive increase in the demand for slave labor to pick cotton, so in Cuba the steam engine led to an increase in the demand for slaves to cut the sugar cane.<sup>18</sup>

Knight analyses the production relations of rural Cuba from data in the 1857 census:

The total of 303, 375 registered slaves in the rural areas had 26,358 owners, an island-wide average holding of 11.6 slaves per owner. But the picture was very different in the plantation areas: 483 rural owners had more than 80 slaves each, yielding a total of 95,523 slaves for a mean holding of 197 slaves each. In other words, less than 1 per cent of the slave owners of Cuba held more than 25% of all the slaves in the island...These slaver owners...were very influential men in political affairs, and owned the largest sugar estates.<sup>19</sup>

Another development of great importance is the Haitian revolution of 1791.<sup>20</sup> This first successful Black insurgency led by Toussaint L’Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe sent shivers through the networks of slave owning societies, alarming the owners and giving hope to the enslaved. After the formation of the new Haitian republic a campaign began in Cuba to avoid a similar fate. Over 30,000 expropriated owners of Haitian slave plantations moved to Cuba to maintain their way of life. They were a new source of propaganda to build and maintain Black scare tactics against the enslaved Africans. Of course the Cuban creole planters were the main source of the scare. Since Haiti, the largest sugar producer, was taken out of the global market of sugar run by the French and replaced by local small scale farming by a liberated people, the world market for Cuban sugar plantations was there for the taking.

The Spanish settlers and their descendants began to divide into two distinct and contradictory communities. The pennisulares were immigrants born in Spain and remained colonial government bureaucrats and merchants loyal to Spain. The other section was born in Cuba and began to develop an island consciousness looking less and less to Spain, and was led by the creole elite of the slave based sugar plantations that dominated the economy. These two groups agreed on maintaining slavery but differed on the issue of Cuban independence. The creole plantation elite had to unite with the Blacks, slave and free, to fight for the independence of Cuba, but they were stuck with the issue of how to maintain the allegiance of their slave owning class if there was the implication that independence also meant the abolition

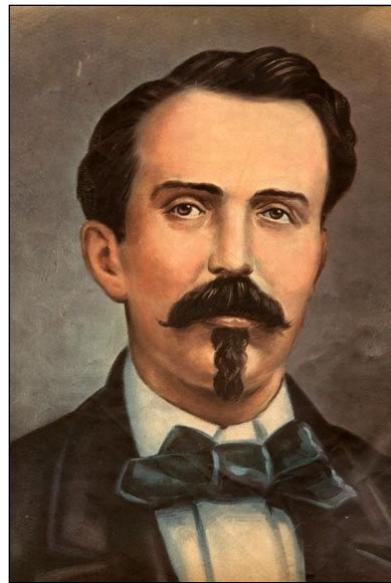
<sup>18</sup> Ortiz page 49-51, Foner vol2 page 129; Scott 1985 page 20-21.

<sup>19</sup> Knight 1975 page 124-125.

<sup>20</sup> C L R James Black Jacobins.

of slavery. More specifically, the impulse for independence based on Black-white unity was easier for the tobacco planters than the sugar plantation owners as the latter were clearly dependent on slave labor and lots of it.

The key figure that emerged as the best case for this emergent creole national bourgeoisie was Carlos Miguel de Céspedes (1819-1874). Céspedes was a lawyer/sugar planter in Oriente where less than 10% of the slave population worked on sugar plantations, and then worked along with free labor. This area was also influenced by the sizeable free Black and mulatto population, as well as the low intensity raids from the maroon communities hidden deep in the Sierra Maestra Mountains. Céspedes carried out actions that tried to advance the revolution using a slave military force but making it clear that he was also protecting the interests of the slave owning elite. His reputation is based on his historic freeing of his slaves, but his go-slow approach compromised his revolutionary impact. As president of the new republic (declared during October 1868) he announced in November that anyone who assisted plantation slaves to rise in rebellion would face the death penalty, and by December he clarified further that abolition would only be considered after independence.<sup>21</sup> He was clear: "When we...have forced the representatives of the Spanish government to leave Cuba precipitously, the revolution will take care of this vital question."<sup>22</sup>



**Carlos Miguel de Céspedes.**

This emergent national bourgeoisie operated within its own historical limitations. It must be clear that Cuba (1886) and Brazil (1888) were the last to end slavery hence this slave society was particularly backward and defensive against the global winds of abolition. One of the

<sup>21</sup> Scott 1985 page 45-62; Foner 1977 page 7-35.

<sup>22</sup> Foner vol 2 page 172 and 190.

reasons for this is that every decadent slave owning class being overthrown sought rear guard action by resettling to Cuba, including from the slave owning US south preceded by those from Haiti. Céspedes is a national hero, a patriot, but flawed and limited by his weak policy toward abolition. (He was very similar but slightly better than the first president of the US, slave owning George Washington, because 90 years after the victory of the American revolution in 1776 Céspedes could at least offer the promise of a limited kind of freedom from slavery.) However, Céspedes acts in 1868 the same year as the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution)

## Afro-Cuban Agency During Slavery

By contrast we can turn to the agency of the Afro-Cubans. Just as the Spanish polarized into the colonial and national, so the “white” Cuban (of Spanish heritage) categorization of “race”<sup>23</sup> created three categories for Afro-Cubans: *Pardos* (visible Spanish ancestry), *Morenos* (Afro-Cuban with Spanish ancestry, mulatto), and *Bozales* (no blood connection to Spanish). While Afro-Cubans were mostly treated the same, these categories also represented a hierarchy of class and status.

The Spanish colonial government organized Afro-Cubans into militia to protect Cuba from the British. This gave a great deal of autonomy, leadership development and military training especially for freedmen. Of course they used the militia to serve the state and the institution of slavery, while at the same time the militia served to help organize the people for their resistance. This was mainly in Havana.

While the militia option facilitated some degree of autonomy within the mainstream of colonial society, a more fundamental autonomy was being allowed to flourish within the Afro-Cuban community itself, both slave and free. The Spanish allowed organization within each ethnic group, both so they would provide mutual aide to each other as a cost saving measure, and to keep energy diverted from political complaints to cultural expression without fully realizing that this very cultural affinity would be the basis for a politics of resistance. *Cabildos de nacion* were formed among people from the same region, especially the Congo or Nigeria.<sup>24</sup> These were semi-public forms of organization. But there were also the Ñaños, aka the Abakua, male secret societies that maintained both a cultural and military orientation. All of these groups – the militia, cabildos, and Abakua – were actively involved in every major instance of resistance along with their related family-kinship networks.

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<sup>23</sup> Race is a fictional concept so I will always put it in quotes, while racism exists. One form of racism is the virulent and immoral anti scientific concept to rationalize the exploitation of an oppressed group. A different kind attempts to be liberal and argue that “race” is a social construct. The weakness in this argument is that many people fail to full emphasize that it’s a socially constructed lie.

<sup>24</sup> Howard 1998.

After the indigenous the next source of resistance to Spain was the enslaved African who became a foundation for the new Cuban nation and a force in shaping the dynamics of Cuban nationality. The first recorded slave revolt was in 1553 after slaves were introduced to the island in 1526. There was a low intensity war between the slaves and the slave owning society, continually breaking out in open rebellion on plantations, towns and sugar mills. Things got hot and violent on a regular basis. There are two well-known revolts that can demonstrate that these slave revolts were not only putting forward an agenda for the end of slavery but for the freedom of all Cubans from the shackles of Spanish colonialism: the Aponte Rebellion in 1812, and La Escalera in 1844.<sup>25</sup>

The Aponte Rebellion of 1812 was a major event that impacted the entire island.<sup>26</sup> José Antonio Aponte was a free Afro-Cuban carpenter/sculptor. His political leadership was rooted in the autonomy of Black organizations, being the head of the Cabildo de Changó Tedum (a Yoruba society) as well as in the elite leadership of the Ogboni (a powerful Abakua secret male society). Moreover he was a veteran captain of the Havana militia of Afro-Cubans. He was literate and politically connected. He was in contact with Black revolutionaries in the US, Brazil, Santo Domingo, and most of all Haiti. He had a letter from the Haitian leader Henri Christophe, and commitment for military support from the Haitian General Juan Francisco.

Aponte brought together a diverse network of groups. Their mission was “to abolish slavery and the slave trade, and to overthrow colonial tyranny and to substitute the corrupt and feudal regime with another, Cuban in nature, and without odious discriminations.”<sup>27</sup> The battlefields of the Aponte Rebellion spread over 500 miles, from Puerto Principe (now Camagüey) in the west to Bayamo in the east. However these were not coordinated as the main leadership was arrested and each location’s local leadership revolted on their own. A total of nine main leaders were executed. The head of Aponte was placed in an iron cage and displayed in front of the house where he lived, and his hand was displayed in another street. These Afro-Cuban freedom fighters got the same treatment as had the Arawak Indians 300 years earlier.

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<sup>25</sup> Barcia 2012 is another important book that focusses on 1825 slave resistance in Matanzas.

<sup>26</sup> Childs 2006, Torres 2003, and Howard 1998

<sup>27</sup> Childs 2006



**Carlota.**

Another important slave rebellion is La Escalera (The Ladder), named after the ladder used to hold slaves while being tortured. This is known as one rebellion, but it is more accurately known as the 1844 conclusion of a couple of years of intense rebellions scattered over many areas but principally in Matanzas. One important instance, the revolt at the Triunvirato sugar estate, was led by three militants including Carlota, an enslaved Yoruba/Lucumi woman. She was part of a new Pan Afro-Cuban movement as Blacks began to unite and project themselves as the future of a new country. They built a network linked together by talking drums, concealed as part of the *Cabildos* cultural celebrations. Her most famous battle was when a comrade was captured and she led her collective swinging machetes to free her. News of her courage and success spread from plantation to plantation and sugar mill to sugar mill as an example to emulate. In fact the US government was stirred to prepare to intervene because the militancy had become so threatening. They hated her so much, the heroism of an Afro-Cuban woman daring to fight the colonial military, that when they caught her they tied her to horses that ran in opposite directions so as to tear her apart beyond any recognition.

A key antagonist that the Spanish had identified was the British agent David Turnbull who had been spreading abolitionist ideas and organizing resistance. They got him out in 1842, but revolts spread over the next two years based on Afro-Cuban leadership.<sup>28</sup> Over 4,000 people were arrested, including over 2100 free Afro-Cubans and almost 1,000 slaves. In addition, in total figures 78 were killed, 1,292 sent to prison, and over 400 were sent into exile to Florida. At least 300 were killed by the whip on La Escalera/the ladder.

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<sup>28</sup> Foner vol 1 page 201-211

The critical agency of the Afro-Cubans was based on the unity of free and slave. Free Afro-Cubans became a source for material support, communication, education, and leadership. Of course it must be said that for every instance of resistance there were traitors, both slave and free, who would report on any new plans in hopes of being rewarded. But freedom was the dominant theme of the Afro-Cuban community. Out of this political culture came the great Afro-Cuban general Antonio Maceo Grajales.

## Maceo

Maceo became an icon of the revolution, especially in the eyes of the Afro-Cubans.<sup>29</sup> He was the preeminent warrior committed to full emancipation of the Cuban nation: abolition of slavery, independence from Spain, and a democratic society in which rich and poor shared rights.<sup>30</sup> His general reputation is that of a military leader, "The Bronze Titan." It is now clear that he was an ideological and political leader of the Cuban revolution as well. In ten years he rose from being a recruit to being a general in the liberation army. His fame was based on both his professionalism (maintaining discipline and not allowing racist practices) as a soldier and his personal courage leading the famous Mambise Calvary charge with swinging machetes in hand. Their screams of war sent fear in the hearts of the Spanish soldiers so much that frequently being outnumbered and out gunned they consistently used courage and military tactics to route the colonial troops.

The single most important event for Maceo and for the entire independence war was the dialectical opposition of the betrayal of Zanjón versus the protest at Baragua. Following a defeatist tendency after 10 years of war (1868-1878) an agreement was reached in the ranks of the creole bourgeoisie with the Spanish for a surrender. Foner sums up the costs of the 10 Years War:

No accurate figures are available, but the costs in lives for the Cubans was about 50,000 dead; the Spaniards 208,000. (It is impossible to tell how many Cubans were killed by Spanish cruelty.) The cost in money amounted to \$300,000,000. This sum was added to the Cuban debt, for Cuba was made to pay for the expenses on both sides.<sup>31</sup>

Maceo was committed to fighting on. He was outraged when he heard of the betrayal of Zanjón, and this response is another reason why Maceo became such a national hero. He refused to make an individual stand, and instead called all of the officers who had not yet agreed with the betrayal and gathered them at the spot where Maceo was to speak with the Spanish representative. They came, with their soldiers, all 1500 of them at Baragua. He was

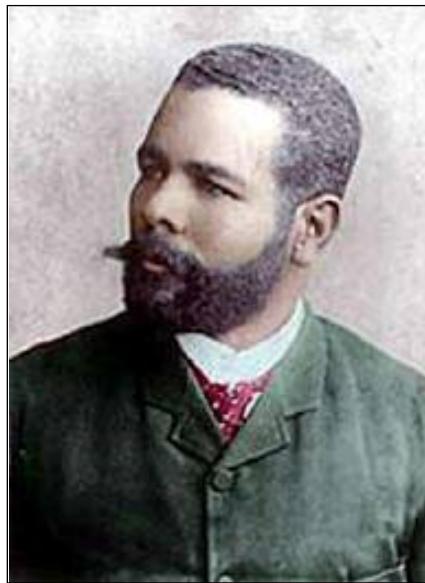
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<sup>29</sup> Foner 1977

<sup>30</sup> Foner 1977

<sup>31</sup> Foner vol 2 page 274

building a new kind of army, one in which democratic discussion dominated political decisions while maintaining strict discipline in the command structure of all military action. This was an Afro-Cuban General of the independence army who by this time was a national hero. And he was now leading the most dangerous opposition to the colonialism and slavery imposed on Cuba by Spain.



**Antonio Maceo Grajales.**

The Spanish general Arsenio Martínez Campos was confident that this would be a moment of great triumph, the surrender of Maceo. But instead he got the shock of his life. Maceo came to discuss the end of slavery and the independence of Cuba and not the surrender that had been discussed with others ready to end the war. Here is the recorded exchange:

Martínez Campos then asked Maceo directly: "That is to say, we are not in agreement?" Not being contradicted he asked further: "Then hostilities will again break out?" "Hostilities will again break out," Maceo replied emphatically. Martínez Campos then asked how much time the Cubans would need before the outbreak of hostilities. "For my part," answered Maceo, "I do not find it inconvenient that they break out right now." ...Thus ended the historic and dramatic meeting.<sup>32</sup>

Although the actual fighting ended soon afterwards, it was not a surrender but a truce, a truce that would not have been possible without the leadership of General Maceo. Maceo had been able to beat back the opportunist policy of the sugar plantation owning creole elite, they had only wanted to only grant freedom to those slaves who fought for independence and their own freedom but not enough to end the system of slavery. Now he was the main defender of

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<sup>32</sup> Foner 1977 page 81

independence in general. In fact after the Protest of Baragua the strategic unity of the abolition of slavery and the independence from Spanish colonialism was forever linked.

Ferrer sums up the meaning of Baragua with the following comment:

[Maceo] nullified the argument that Spain, the colonial power, civilized Cuba, its charge. Instead he portrayed the colonial power as the principal obstacle to the progress of civilization. The Spanish – not African – presence in Cuba was classified as the problem. In that meeting at Baragua, Maceo painted himself and his companions as the bearers of honor and civilization; Spain had lost its claim to both by tolerating and preserving racial slavery. Maceo had skillfully unmoored the categories of colonial discourse that posited Spain as civilizer and Cuba as uncivilized. That this inversion came not from a colonial subject but from a man of color made the inversion that much more of a challenge to traditional notions of honor and place in a colonial slave society.<sup>33</sup>

The end of slavery came slowly. It was dragged out and was marked by delay, deception, and disregard for the righteous demand to abolish slavery. The Spanish had been passing legislation to meet the growing demands of the abolitionist movement, but there was a big disconnect between the laws on the books and government implementation of legislation in Cuba. Scott argues that the end of slavery actually can be dated over the period from 1870 to 1886. A major beginning for this process was the Moret Law (1870) that was supposed to be the end of slavery. The main aspects were that any child of slaves born after September 1868 would be free, and any slave over 60 would also be free. The young were virtually indentured as they had to work for food until 18, and if they stayed on the plantation or the sugar mill they had to work under slave like conditions for the means to survive. And the conditions for the slaves were so miserable that most slaves never made it to the age of 60. Furthermore, this approach helped the slave owner who could then put the older slaves off the plantation and not have to care for them. If they stayed, they had to work as before.<sup>34</sup>

1880 was another land mark year for delay and deception. They ended slavery and replaced it with a new system of forced apprenticeship for up to 15 years, significantly more than the average life span of a slave forced into a life of cutting sugar cane. The system was called "*The Patronato*" and the slaves renamed as "*Patrocinados*." While it was another form of slavery, Scott points out it was not the same as things had been as now there was a mechanism to get out of forced labor. Both sides had rights and obligations so there was a chance for Afro-Cubans to get free and many tried with some limited success. This is the main thesis put forward by

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<sup>33</sup> see Ferrer, page 66

<sup>34</sup> See Scott 1985 page 63-83, Howard page 119, etc.

Scott that freedom was a process that took some 30 years to complete, and then freedom was marked by racism, discrimination, and segregation.

The Spanish colonial regime was using their “emancipation con game” to regain the loyalty of the former slaves. They held out the illusion that the Spanish would grant their freedom, either because they were no longer slaves or could look forward to eventual freedom. But the bottom line was always to keep them working as much as possible and making profits for the plantation and mill owners. However, the Afro-Cubans were not willing to accept one form of servitude for another. They had been fighting for freedom and weren’t prepared to stop.

The formal end to slavery came in 1886, but without democratic rights. This was unacceptable to the Afro-Cubans because, as patriots of Cuba, they were demanding their democratic rights and would not accept new forms of racism, discrimination, and segregation. This two tier system was not the Cuba they had fought for. Liberation forces were not getting their full citizenship, and even officers who were Afro-Cuban were being forced to accept the mandate to make Cuba for the offspring of the Spanish who stayed in Cuba and not the Africans who stayed in Cuba.

Following the tradition of Afro-Cuban agency for freedom, (including those who formed free maroon communities, the cabildos de nacion, the Abakua, the slave revolts, and the Mambises fighters) when emancipation came in 1886, after most of the main Afro-Cuban organization had disbanded to join the mainstream of Cuban society. But since the problems continued, Afro-Cubans decided to organize once again in their own interests since colonial society continued to deny them any serious democratic rights. Now the organizations were mainly Pan-Afro-Cuban integrating various former *cabildos* members into common organizations fighting not to preserve their African identity under the conditions of slavery but fighting to end a system of oppression that they all shared in common.

## Marti and Juan Gualberto Gómez

Two main organizational breakthroughs came shortly after the end of slavery in 1887. One was outside of Cuba, and one was there inside the country. Outside there were many patriots in exile, especially in Miami and New York, as well as Europe, including many Afro-Cubans such as General Maceo, Juan Gualberto Gómez, and Rafael Serra. On the other hand there was considerable action within Cuba, including the self-organization of the Afro-Cuban community. These two Afro-Cuban geographies converged with other patriotic forces to carry out the next stage of the revolutionary process.

Local Afro-Cuban organizations consolidated into one national coordinating body, The Directorio Central de la Raza de Color.

A decisive step in the struggle for equality took place in Havana in 1887 when the Directorio Central de las Sociedades de la Raza de Color was created to represent “in the strictest legality” the interests of the people of color in their dealings with authorities. The Directorio also aimed at coordinating the actions of the sociedades of color, cabildos de nacion, and other black associations so that these groups would take a united stand against racism. Its ultimate goal was “the moral and material wellbeing of the raza de color” through the promotion of formal education and better “habits.”<sup>35</sup>

The Directorio was clear in its manifesto about why the Afro-Cubans needed to self-organize:

The race of color has been...the one who has proportioned the largest contingent for the conquest of liberty yet who has had the least usufruct of the fruits of that conquest.”<sup>36</sup>

This initiative by Afro-Cubans became a key force in the Cuban revolutionary process.

Five years after the Directorio, in 1892, José Martí formed the Cuban Revolutionary Party and took up the fight started by Céspedes in 1868. This party took the struggle to a higher level of national aspiration based on a more firmly established national bourgeoisie now fighting Spain. They were also anticipating fighting the US, a predatory nation, becoming a new threat, moving with rising interest towards the annexation of Cuba.<sup>37</sup>

The Directorio took on new importance when Juan Gualberto Gómez became president and organized a major week-long meeting in Havana attended by 100 local organizations. This was also in 1892. These two men (Martí and Juan Gualberto) agreed on some matters and disagreed on others, but the main posture was one of unity as it had been between Céspedes and Maceo. Martí and Juan Gualberto agreed on the need for a united struggle for national liberation, but disagreed on the need for Afro-Cuban autonomous self-organization in the fight for complete freedom against all forms of racist oppression.

Juan Gualberto Gómez (1854-1933) was born free because his parents, although they were slaves, were able to purchase his freedom, and then later purchased their own freedom. He was sent abroad to France (1869-1879) to become a carriage maker but was able to get an academic education that sent him on to a career in journalism. His politics were partly shaped by his participation in the Paris Commune in France (1871). He returned to Cuba, founded an Afro-Cuban abolitionist newspaper (*La Fraternidad*) and joined the Little War (*La Guerra Chiquita*)<sup>38</sup>, but was arrested and sent to prison in Spain, only able to return to Cuba after 10

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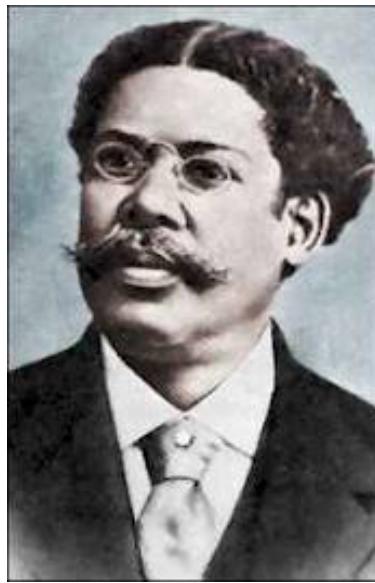
<sup>35</sup> Helg page 36

<sup>36</sup> Pappademos page 157

<sup>37</sup> Morales-Dominguez 2008. See Chapter 1: “Historical Background of US-Cuban Relations (1800-1959)”

<sup>38</sup> Ferrer (1999) See Chapter 3: Fear and its uses: The Little War, 1879-1880

years. But he had been writing and influencing the struggle in Cuba so when he returned he was embraced into the leadership of the resistance.



**Juan Gualberto Gómez.**

José Martí (1853-1895) was first generation born in Cuba (father born in Spain and mother in Spain's Canary Islands). He came of age politically during the Ten Years War (1868-1878). He was a young nationalist who opposed both Spanish colonialism and slavery, and on that basis became the ideological leader of the revolution and regarded as the father of free independent Cuba. More than that, he was a leading intellectual for all of the Caribbean and Latin America. His travels took him all over, especially the USA, Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela, and many of the other islands and countries. His literary production for a man who was an activist and who died at the age of 43 is amazing as he wrote poetry, articles, and books for adults and children including a novel.

Marti was a visionary with high ideological ideals. More than anyone else he was the icon of the one Cuba philosophy – no Black person could do it, so it was left to Marti to commit both class and “race” suicide in the interest of a free and united Cuba. He was in direct conflict with the social Darwinist movement that argued for a hierarchy of humanity and posited the theory that equality was biologically impossible, and in any case the history of change would be evolutionary and not revolutionary. He was clear on the US: “I have lived in the monster and know it from the inside.”<sup>39</sup>

Marti united with Maceo and Juan Gualberto in the final dialectics of the war with Spain. On the one hand Gómez was on the ground, a nationally respected journalist and a key force to unite

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<sup>39</sup> Foner vol 1, page 332

and mobilize Afro-Cubans in the war for independence. On the ideological level Martí disagreed with Juan Gualberto Gómez on his intention to organize and mobilize an Afro-Cuban movement, but on the practical level he united with him as a key asset required to win the war. On the other hand Martí had to get the support of Maceo as he was the great Afro-Cuban military leader from the 10 Years War who defined through courageous action the strategic vision of the war of independence in the patriotic military Protest at Baragua. This was the politics of difference and unity at the highest level, proceeding on the basis of political unity.<sup>40</sup>



**José Martí.**

This fight against colonization and slavery shaped Cuban political culture over 400 years. At every stage the main acts of resistance were created by peoples forging themselves into the new nation of Cuba. These were mainly people from Spain (Andalusia, Extremadura, Galicia, the Basque country, and Catalonia) and Africa (esp Nigeria and the Congo). The revolutionary vision, theory and policy was of this united Cuba as one people. However, this was not a description of life in Cuba. Cold blooded racism prevailed. The autonomous agency of the Afro-Cubans was the main corrective to this disjunction between the ideal and the material reality – For example, Maceo at Baragua, and Juan Gualberto Gómez with the Directorio. The voice of the oppressed has been a rudder for steering revolutionary action in Cuba.

Two big lessons emerge from this intense historical experience from 1553 to 1902. 1. Blacks were an integral part of the main force for independence and the end of slavery. 2. Blacks maintained the fight for consistent democracy through their own autonomous agency. This is a critical point for how to define the origin of Cuba, not as a Spanish colony but as an emerging nation in its own right. The African is not an add-on, but a primary source for Cuba. However,

<sup>40</sup> This includes the “little war” known as the Guerra Chiquita, August 1879-September 1880.

the Spanish colonial legacy has continued to be reproduced as racist oppression of the African heritage. So the Afro-Cuban has been forced to resist and be so doing has been more Cuban than those who affirm Spanish colonial racist practices.

## US Neo-Colonialism<sup>41</sup>

The US was no innocent bystander regarding Cuba.<sup>42</sup> The basic policy was set by the US President James Monroe. He spoke in Congress on December 2, 1823 and stated that the Americas were the domain of the US and any foreign power that made advances there would have to contend with the US. This imperial policy became known as the Monroe Doctrine. This was directly motivated by US interests. By 1895 the US had invested “50 million in Cuba, with more than 50% in sugar. This was significant in that this represented 50% of the total capital of the sugar industry. This capital investment led to domination of sugar exports. Out of 1,485,224 bags of exported sugar in 1892, 1,154,193 bags were sent to the US.<sup>43</sup> So when it looked advantageous to the US they joined the independence war by initiating what became known as the Spanish-American War of 1898.

1823	Monroe Doctrine
1899	The Platt Amendment claims Cuba as a US neo-colony
1902	Cuba gains flag independence
1908	Independent Party of People of Color established
1912	Massacre of Afro-Cuban leadership
1925	Socialist Party (basis for Cuban Communist Party)
1933	Anti-Machadatos massacre
1934	Rise of Batista
1940	Cuban constitution
1948	Jesus Menendez assassinated
1953	July 26 attack on the Moncada
1956	Fidel and revolutionaries land in Cuba
1959	Cuba's second liberation

### Chronology of the continuing struggle against US neocolonialism.

The US was keen to keep on top of the Cuba situation. On January 25, 1898 the USS Maine arrived in Cuba, a highly visible move as it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> battleship commissioned by the US Navy, and the biggest. On Feb 15 the USS Maine exploded and 260 American naval personnel were

<sup>41</sup> For studies of the Afro-Cuban experience during the Republic see the following: Moore (1997), La Fuente (2001), Bronfman (2004), and Pappendemos (2011)

<sup>42</sup> Morales Dominguez 2008

<sup>43</sup> Foner, vol 2, page 298

killed or wounded. After expanding to other battle fronts, with Spanish defeats in Cuba and the Philippines, a peace treaty was signed on Feb 6, 1899. The US President McKinley stated that the US had a mandate to rule Cuba “because God has pre-ordained American expansion and responsibilities.”<sup>44</sup>

In quick step the following events sealed Cuba’s fate. In 1901 the Platt Amendment, an imperialist ploy, was added to the first Cuban Constitution of 1902. In 1902 President Theodore Roosevelt pulled US troops out of Cuba, and then in 1903 Cuba signed the Cuban-American Treaty perpetually giving the US government rights to a military base, hence the current situation at Guantanamo. The US supported the first President of Cuba, Tomas Estrada Palma, as he had once proposed that Cuba be annexed by the US! The US so dominated Cuba that it had become a neo-colony, really only able to have its own government in 1902, almost five years after the defeat of the Spanish. This led to racism being institutionalized, now with the instigation and blessing of the new US rulers.

Of course this meant that the aspirations for Afro-Cuban freedom were beat down by US racism being institutionalized during the entire historical period of the Republic (1902 – 1959). For 60 years Cuban Blacks were as much “second class citizens” as African Americans in the deep US South. The American dilemma was as much a Cuban experience as in the US.<sup>45</sup> The issue here is values and ideals versus the reality of social life. Marti and Maceo were the two headed face of independent Cuba, the ideal, but the reality was racist oppression for Afro-Cubans. This produced a civilizational crisis, one of science, religion, and culture.

There was a great disconnect between the Afro-Cubans and their history versus the descendants of the Spanish colonizers and their history. In the extreme this produces a fundamental crisis of human understanding grounded in the very soul of a society – What is culture? What is civilization? Can Blacks and whites live together? Can you be Black and Cuban at the same time? These were and are fundamental questions in Cuba, and more generally throughout the world. The age of globalization puts questions of identity on a new footing that disrupts the past and thrusts everyone into the chaos of global culture. So as Cuba moved past colonialism into neo-colonialism the conditions demanded that they go beyond the visionary ideology of Marti.

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<sup>44</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty\\_of\\_Paris\\_%281898%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_%281898%29)

<sup>45</sup> This concept, the “American Dilemma,” was coined by the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal to name the contradiction in the US regarding African Americans – positive abstract policy versus negative concrete reality. See Myrdal 1962

## Ortiz

The 20<sup>th</sup> century demanded a theory rooted in social science research to anchor the mestizo nature of Cuban identity in the systematic study of the empirical reality of Cuba. Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) emerged as the anthropologist to provide such a theory - transculturation.

The bulk of his contributions to Cuba's intellectual life and public culture stemmed from his seminal research on all aspects of Cuba's African-influenced, orally transmitted traditions. He validated the use of *Afro-Cuban* as an analytical construct while insisting that Afro-Cuban cultural forms were integral to a unified Cuban national identity. He also addressed the problem of racism and the workings of race as a social rather than biological category.<sup>46</sup>

Ortiz made a journey from being hostile to Black culture, to being an advocate of tolerance and multicultural understanding.

I am of the opinion that the word transculturation better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another... In the end, as the school of Malinowski's followers maintain, the result of every union of cultures is similar to that of the reproductive process between individuals: the offspring always has something of both parents but is always different from each of them.<sup>47</sup>

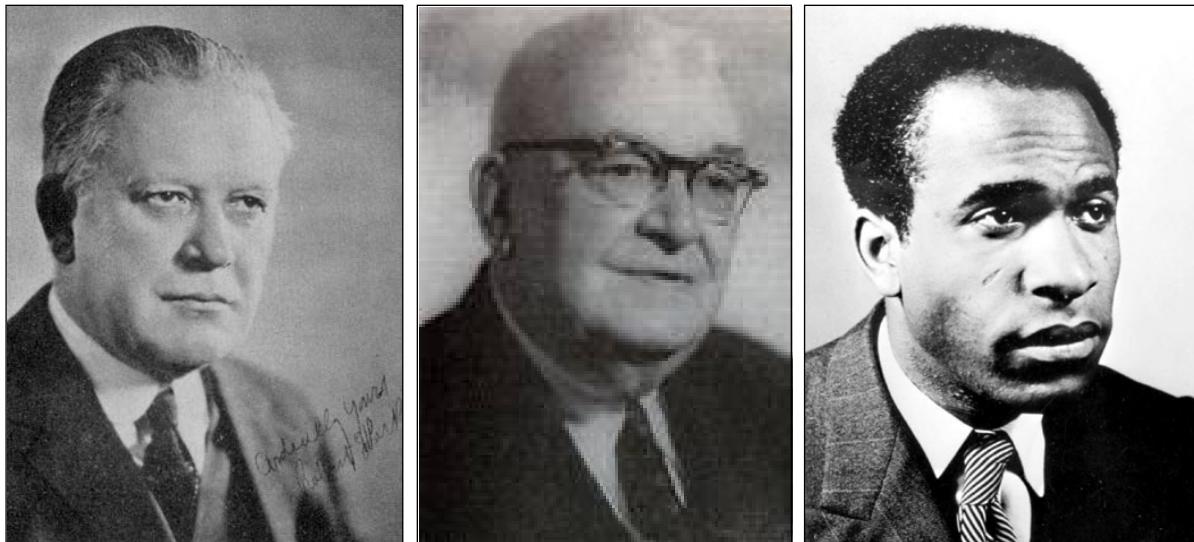
The central concept transculturation is a model of five stages, which according to Ortiz describes Cuba through stage four, but not yet five: hostility, compromise, adjustment, self-assertion, and integration. He was the scholar-activist who took the ideological orientation of José Martí and brought it into social science. The first and main ideological intervention was the argument that "racial differences" were myth and had to be replaced by differences in cultural heritage. Moore states, "Ortiz began to question the validity of racial constructs and to propose that Cubans define themselves in terms of shared cultural heritage rather than shared ancestry."<sup>48</sup> Therefore change was possible and his theoretical model attempted to map this change.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3045301836.html>

<sup>47</sup> Ortiz, Cuban Counterpoint, page 102-103

<sup>48</sup> Moore page 133



**Robert E. Park, Fernando Ortiz, and Frantz Fanon.**

It is interesting to compare the thinking of Ortiz with an earlier sociologist, Robert Park, and a later psychologist, Frantz Fanon. All three models have a teleological thrust as they have predetermined ends. Park (sociologist) worked with Booker T Washington, and then as a Sociology professor at the University of Chicago where Park developed his “race relations cycle.” As a liberal in the US (he also served on the Board of the Chicago Urban League) he theorized reform based on his version of Anglo-conformity. He wrote after the first Great Migration of African Americans to Chicago, and theorized that the desires of the Black middle class would prevail, and as such he posited yet another framework guiding the reforms of the civil rights movement. Fanon (psychologist) wrote as a theorist in the Algerian war for national liberation, hence he advanced a framework for revolutionary transformation in which the oppressed fought to overthrow the oppressive system after stages of embrace (assimilation) and rejection (nationalism). Park wrote in the context of western colonial dominance (ending in “assimilation”) while Fanon wrote in the context of the African revolution for national sovereignty (ending in “revolution”).

Robert Park (1926)	Fernando Ortiz (1942)	Frantz Fanon (1959)
Contact	Hostility	Contact
Competition	Compromise	--
Accommodation	Adjustment	--
Assimilation	--	Assimilation
--	Self-Assertion	Nationalism
--	Integration	Revolution

**Comparing the models of Park, Ortiz, and Fanon.**

Ortiz (anthropology) wrote within the US neo-colonial domination of Cuba and faced the legacy of Cuban racist slavery, with its relative degrees of freedom, covered over by the racist segregationist practices imported by the Yankee rulers and their “one drop rule.” He began his career as a racist criminologist following the school of the Italian Social-Darwinist Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) who advanced a biological theory of crime that targeted Black people as slow witted and criminally inclined. However, Ortiz was active in progressive politics and also interacted with a wide variety of Black people in his research, going deeply inside the Afro-Cuban community. Black people turned him around and he became an advocate of Afro-Cuban humanity.

The one Cuba thesis of Martí was ideological and the political goal for revolutionary transformation, just as the integration phase of the Ortiz model has never been fully realized in everyday life, though it has repeatedly been affirmed in the official documents since the founding of the Republic. Ortiz campaigned for the full embrace of the African influences in Cuban culture and the recognition of the many forms of Afro-Cuba organizations. So in the end Ortiz makes an insightful critique of how the Cuban authorities attacked Black self-organization alleging that this was against the national unity of Cuba, that in the end all they did was drive these Black organizational forms underground and polarize rather than embrace. This is how Ortiz puts it as early as 1921:

The government persists in attacking the external and antiquated forms and does not take care to note the persistence of the internal essence. Thus disappeared the Cabildo, together with all of its positive features: mutual air, the insurance against illness, the bases, in short, of a traditional and rigorous mutuality...How much better would it be if we today had mutualist cabildos and public dances with African drums and not temples of brujería, of clandestine or openly tolerated nature.<sup>49</sup>

The main contribution of Ortiz was to provide a rational theoretical framework for grasping the deep contradictions in Cuban society between the two external influences of Cuban heritage – Spain and Africa.

## Afro-Cubans agency during the Republic

The shifting politics of the new country hinged on working to balance two wings of its ruling class: its emergent national capitalists restructuring society into their form of indigenous class rule, and the Comprador capitalist class under the supervision of their Yankee rulers, focusing on the export of raw materials and all other forms of wealth extraction. The clearest example of how these forces came into conflict emerged at the very beginning of the Republic. The

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<sup>49</sup> Palmié page 232

independence army was full of Afro-Cubans. It has been estimated that Afro-Cubans were 40% of the officers, and 60% of the soldiers.<sup>50</sup> However, after the war these Afro-Cuban patriots were pushed aside and discriminated against. In 1901 out of 7,000 appointments to government jobs only 100 went to Afro-Cubans.<sup>51</sup> Yes, some few did get inside Cuban civil society and the government with positions of economic security, but the vast majority returned back to the degraded status they had under slavery.



**The leadership of the Party of Color.**

Source: <http://www.asetbooks.com/Us/Espanol/EspanolIndex.html>

Of course this was a repudiation of the goals of the revolution, full emancipation for all from colonialism, slavery and every vestige of its institutionalized racist legacy. Again the Afro-Cubans responded with courage and self-determination forming the first Black political party in the Americas in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in 1908. The Independent Party for People of Color (PIC) was formed with many of the activists who had been in the cabildos de nacion and the Directorio for the societies of color. "A Black independent political party was finally organized under the leadership of Evaristo Estenoz in Havana on August 7, 1908."<sup>52</sup>

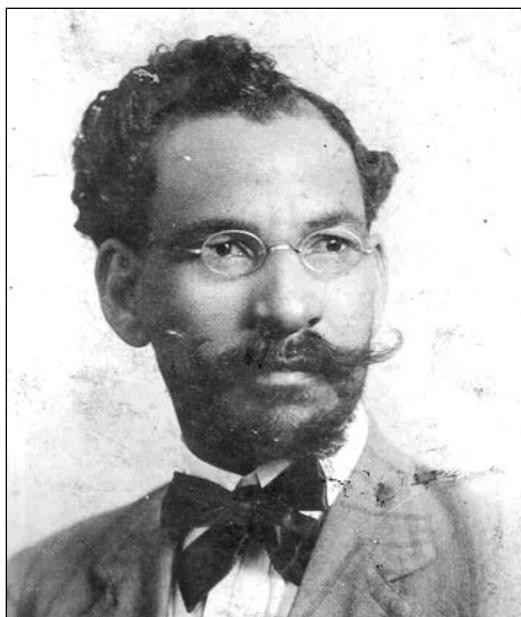
The response of the new government in 1910 was to declare any organization based on a non-white membership to be illegal, thus driving the new party underground. The curious aspect of this is that this law was an amendment initiated by the only Black member of the Senate, Martin Morua Delgado. In fact he was President of the Senate, yet racism as government

<sup>50</sup> Pappademos page 79

<sup>51</sup> La Fuente page 131

<sup>52</sup> La Fuente page 69, and see the film by Gloria Rolando

practice meant he could not bring his wife to official government receptions. During the independence war Morua Delgado joined the independence struggle towards the very end, after the formation of the Republic, and his high position within the government, his perspective changed. He now believed that Black forms of organization would only make a bad situation worst. However, as the situation got worse anyway the PIC decided to have a public militant protest to shock the society into making reforms to open the society up to become more democratic. They emerged in protest fully armed. Again the Black scare hysteria took over and the government mobilized vigilante action and killed over 3,000 thousand of Afro-Cubans, including all of the leadership of the party. This is known as the massacre of 1912.



**Evaristo Estenoz.**

After this the divergence of the nationalist-assimilationist polarity became more located in the cultural realm as politics became more tied to soliciting patronage from mainstream political forces with less independent Black agency. This worked because Black men got the vote and by 1907 constituted 37% of Cuban voters, hence they were a fixture in the “vote market.”<sup>53</sup> The assimilationist position was very much how to gain acceptance for Afro-Cubans into mainstream Cuban society. First and foremost this meant disassociating from Africa, hence reconfirming the old distinctions: *Pardos* (visible Spanish ancestry), *Morenos* (Afro-Cuban with Spanish ancestry, Mulatto), and *Bozales* (no blood connection to Spanish), while maintaining cultural distinctions to clarify any color ambiguity – you were “out” based on dark skin color as well as any cultural practices linked to Africa.

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<sup>53</sup> La Fuente page 58

The Black middle class began to emphasize education and cultural conformity as the best path to acceptance into the mainstream. This included being a good catholic rather than practicing any form of African religion, at least not in public. The Black middle class formed organizations to consolidate their class and to exert leadership over the entire community. The leading example of this is the Club Atenas formed in 1917.



**Club Atenas.**

Source: [http://media.elnuevoherald.com/smedia/2008/12/27/16/119-buildx00\\_AfroCuba\\_latin\\_YU.embedded.prod\\_affiliate.84.JPG](http://media.elnuevoherald.com/smedia/2008/12/27/16/119-buildx00_AfroCuba_latin_YU.embedded.prod_affiliate.84.JPG)

## Machado

The US became as much in command of Cuba as had been Spain. With few exceptions the US maintained a client-patron relationship with every Cuban president, each one selling more and more of Cuba to the Yankees. After the suppression of the 1912 PIC and the massacre of Black political leadership, the next most important historical experience was that of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cuban president Gerardo Machado who served from 1925 – 1933. Pappendemos explains his success this way:

Machado's political success during the 1924 presidential election was largely driven by his Platform of Regeneration to end political corruption and give life to his populist declarations. These were demonstrated in public works projects such as constructing the Central Highway; making high-level Black political appointments; and in designating the anniversary of the death of Black general Antonio Maceo [December 7] as a national holiday.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Pappendemos page 175

In fact Machado was embraced by the Afro-Cuban middle class elites, as demonstrated by a grand tribute to Machado in 1928 sponsored by Club Atenas and joined by almost 200 Black societies.

But who was Machado? He was manager of the “American and Foreign Power and Light Company,” with sworn loyalty to the US. US President Calvin Cooledge said this:

“Under Machado Cuba is a sovereign state...her people are free, independent, in peace, and enjoying the advantages of democracy

This view by the US president represents the US control of Cuban sugar production: 1906 – 15%; 1920 – 48%; and 1928 – 75%.<sup>55</sup>

There was a dialectical relationship that Machado had with Afro-Cubans of different classes:

While Afro-Cuban intellectuals, professionals, and government employees gathered in the exclusive club Atenas to honor the president for opening some opportunities for Afro-Cubans in the government bureaucracy, most Black workers were struggling to survive in a declining economy that would soon fall into depression.<sup>56</sup>

Contrary to the imperialist fantasy of Calvin Cooledge the workers of Cuba began a new movement of organizing labor with support from the Cuban Communist Party that had been established in 1925. Also that same year the workers founded the National Federation of Cuban Workers, the first national labor organization in Cuba. Fundamental to this was the organization of sugar workers, led by the Afro-Cuban communist organizer Jesus Menendez. They were so militant and advanced that after the dictator Machado was driven out by a general strike in 1933 the sugar workers were encouraged to assert their power by seizing the sugar mills and organizing soviets by the Afro-Cuban communist Blas Roca.<sup>57</sup> They did so:

Black workers (who constituted the bulk of the field laborers tended to lead the seizures of sugar properties, while lists of imprisoned sugar workers held in Havana contained several Anglo surnames, a sure sign of the presence of a strong British West Indian contingent.<sup>58</sup>

After Machado left and the workers movement was in full swing in 1933, under key leadership by Afro-Cuban communists, a racist counterattack was organized to divide Cuban society. The Kuban KKK and other such groups spread rumors of a movement for a Black takeover of Cuba, and targeted the few Black people in high official positions. Peoples were attacked, homes and

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<sup>55</sup> Moore page 27

<sup>56</sup> La Fuente page 95

<sup>57</sup> Carr 1996 page 141

<sup>58</sup> Carr page 150-151

businesses burned, and in some cases people were killed. So, Black people became the victims to prevent the revolutionary goals of ending racism and class exploitation.<sup>59</sup>



**Jesús Menéndez.**

Garvey had made some inroads, especially among the immigrant English speaking workers. The Cuban UNIA was second only to the US in membership (52 branches<sup>60</sup>), although he only got cordial greeting from the middle class social clubs like Atenas. Garvey was interested in the activities of Booker T Washington. It is interesting that the Black middle class in Cuba, though in opposition to the program advanced by Marcus Garvey, was also attracted to the thought and program of Booker T Washington as well. This ideological unity is clearly advanced in Washington's 1895 speech in Atlanta.<sup>61</sup>

The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges. The

<sup>59</sup> De la Fuente 2001 page 204-205; Pappademos 2001 page 203.

<sup>60</sup> Lewis 1988

<sup>61</sup> Juan Gualberto Gómez sent his son to study at Tuskegee, and not Paris as he had done, along with 23 other Cubans. His son was a roommate with the son of Booker T. Washington. After graduation both of them went to continue their study at an elite private boarding school, Exeter in New Hampshire, along with the sons of the US ruling elite. See Guridy 2010, see chapter 1: "Forging Diaspora in the Midst of Empire: The Tuskegee-Cuba Connection."

opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.<sup>62</sup>

It is important to be clear that finding ways to survive and achieve a stable social existence motivate and drive every social group. The Black middle class in Cuba always sought to have a working relationship with whoever was in charge – they had no choice. And given the fact that Black male Cubans had the vote since 1902 a system of patronage politics was set up, so nearly all Afro-Cuba leaders had some “deal” with the business class and the state. This extends to the workers movement as well. The critical question here is the source of revolutionary thinking, and the social basis on which these ideas can take root.

At this same time there developed a Black cultural renaissance with a twist:

Artists chose to move the basis from the “guajiro” to the marriage of Europe and Africa.<sup>63</sup>

This became a paradigm shift in mainstream consciousness from “white” to “off-white” by incorporating aspects of the Afro-cultural life into exotic commodities consumed by the Cuban mainstream and exported to a global audience. This global moment has been summed up by Robin Moore:

This was the era of the tango, the “jazz craze,” “bohemian” Paris, the Harlem Renaissance, the primitivists, the fauvists, naïve *kunst*, and a host of related movements drawing inspiration from non-European traditions. The arts of the “people without history,” or at least certain conceptions and representations of them, became fashionable even among the elite. From today’s perspective, the 1920s can be seen as a crucial first step in the gradual democratization of music making, paralleled by the emergence of genres such as calypso and samba, and presaging later developments such as rhythm and blues, salsa, and reggae.<sup>64</sup>

However, this put the Afro-Cuban middle class in a trick bag because they had been forced to mimic “white mainstream society” to play by their rules and most of all repudiate anything Africa. A musician put it this way in terms of the elite Club Atenas:

In the Club Atenas things got so absurd that orchestras were obligated by the “Comission de Orden” to play waltzes, fox-trots, danzones, or boleros, and were decisively prohibited from including any rumbas, *sones*, or mambos. Meanwhile, the

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<sup>62</sup> <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/39/>

<sup>63</sup> Moore page 44

<sup>64</sup> Moore page 3

"high-society" whites were going crazy dancing Black music, and traditionally ended their fiestas with a street conga.<sup>65</sup>



Dancing at an Afrocuban social club.

Source: [http://media.elnuevoherald.com/smedia/2008/12/27/16/134-Dancex00\\_AfroCuba\\_MHL\\_ho.standalone.prod\\_affiliate.84.JPG](http://media.elnuevoherald.com/smedia/2008/12/27/16/134-Dancex00_AfroCuba_MHL_ho.standalone.prod_affiliate.84.JPG)

Machado turned into the opposite of his promise by manipulating the electoral process in 1928 and getting a second term of even longer years than before. This second term Machado became a full-fledged dictator. He banned Garvey and the UNIA.

There were polar opposite positions, from the far right and left, that separated Afro-Cubans out of mainstream Cuban society, one was the segregationist KKK and the other was the Black belt thesis of the CP that argued for regional autonomy for Afro-Cubans in Oriente Province.. Both of these positions were repudiated. And, as sort of a civil rights type reform effort, in 1933 a "bi-racial" Committee for the Rights of the Negro was formed. All of this was patterned after the political culture of the United States, from all positions from the right to the left. In Cuba there is no nation without the full participation of those who originally came from Spain and Africa, so any form of separation was destructive of the revolutionary history of the Cuban people, all of them.

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<sup>65</sup> Moore page 210

The next president was Carlos Miguel de Céspedes, who was not a total friend of the US as he was enough of a nationalist to want to end the Platt Amendment. After all, he was the son of the first president and personified national pride. The US was annoyed, and engineered the so called “Revolt of the Sergeants” led by Batista in 1934. They installed him as their Cuban strong man from 1934 to 1944 (sometimes as president and sometimes not), and again from 1952 to 1959. From 1944 to 1952 he lived a fully subsidized luxurious life in the USA. He was even elected to the Cuban Senate while living in the US.

## Batista

Batista became the main social control force for the rulers of Cuba but not a member of their class nor their social life. He was a very light skinned mulatto, but even as president of Cuba he was still excluded from membership in the racist clubs of Cuba’s ruling elites. This is the incredible proof of the racism that crippled Cuba. In fact in 1937 a major international incident of Cuban racism is when a Black US Congressman from Chicago, Arthur Mitchell, visited Cuba and was denied accommodations for dinner in the Hotel Saratoga (Havana) because of his skin color, in spite of the fact that he was a member of the US Congress!<sup>66</sup> This became an international incident and helped to brand Cuba as a part of the African Diaspora under US influenced racist domination.

Given the dominance of racism, Batista was cunning enough to try and build bases of support by sharing government resources with outlying constituencies that he felt could be won over to support his administration. Part of this was his sharing of the profits from the national lottery. He financed the Black Clubs, even allocating \$50,000 for the Club Atenas to build a building in Havana.<sup>67</sup> He even financed workers organizations:

In 1939, Batista allowed the newly organized Confederation of Cuban Workers to hold its first meeting. And he twice gave lottery monies to the organization for the construction of the Workers’ Palace – its headquarters....And after Batista announced that sorteos (lottery funds) were available for Black societies, many of those that petitioned his administration for Black clubs were leaders of local trade organization.<sup>68</sup>

The most important development, however, is how Afro-Cubans were so central to the development of the working class organizations and the Communist Party.

Between the 1930’s and the 1940’s, in fact, the proportion of Black leftists who were union organizers and/or in the leadership of Communist Party organizations (under their

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<sup>66</sup> Frank Guridy, page 168-175

<sup>67</sup> La Fuente page 170

<sup>68</sup> Pappendemos page 216-217

various shifting titles) and who ran as Communist in several elections surged in response to the post-revolutionary (1933) prominence of the popular classes and to Communists' emphasis on the issue of racial justice.<sup>69</sup>

As elected President in 1940, Batista led the writing of a new Cuban Constitution, opening this process to progressive forces including the Cuban Communist Party. The constitution had two articles of particular importance for the Afro-Cubans.

ART. 20. All Cubans are equal before the law. The Republic does not recognize exemptions or privileges. Any discrimination by reason of sex, race, color, or class, and any other kind of discrimination destructive of human dignity is declared illegal and punishable. The law shall establish the penalties that violators of this provision shall incur.

ART. 74. The ministry of labor shall take care, as an essential part, among others, of its permanent social policy, that discriminatory practices of no kind shall prevail in the distribution of opportunities for labor in industry and commerce. In personnel changes and in the creation of new positions, as well as in new factories, industries, or businesses that may be established, **it shall be obligatory that opportunities for labor be distributed without distinctions on a basis of race or color**, provided that requirements of ability are satisfactorily met. It shall be established by law that any other practice shall be punishable and may be prosecuted officially or at the instance of the aggrieved party.<sup>70</sup>

However, these were for the most part merely words on paper as Cuba remained a society organized around racist segregation.

This was the max time for the commodification of Cuban life – gangsters, sex trade, drugs, and gambling. Cuba became the playground and cash cow of Mafia bosses Meyer Lansky and Lucky Luciano.<sup>71</sup>

One thread of struggle throughout the Republic has been that of the University students. Julio Antonio Mella, founder of FEU was also a founder of the Cuban community Party. He was assassinated in Mexico by the order of Machado after the party formed in 1925. Then came José Antonio Echeverria and at the same time Fidel Castro Rúz, who was a student at the law faculty of the University of Havana.

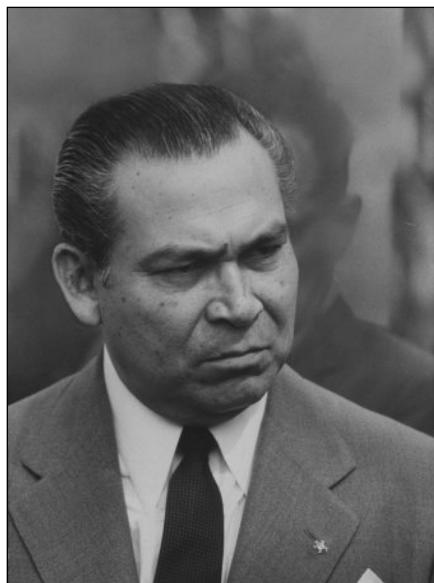
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<sup>69</sup> Pappendemos page 217

<sup>70</sup> <http://paxety.com/Site/1940Constitution.html>

<sup>71</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Havana\\_Conference](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Havana_Conference)

Events were moving fast, and several organizations advanced attacks against the Batista government, but the most important was a group headed by Fidel Castro, a young lawyer. Batista made his coup and grabbed power on March 10, 1952, followed 16 months later by Fidel leading an assault on the Moncada Garrison in Oriente Province (on July 26<sup>th</sup>, a date that gave the movement its name). The attack was not successful, so they were captured but eventually released under pressure as part of a general amnesty the Batista government was forced to enact. At his trial Fidel gave a speech that became a manifesto for the revolution, "History will absolve me."



**Fulgencio Batista.**

After gathering in Mexico, and being joined by Che Guevara, the revolutionary forces in the Granma boat land Cuba on Dec 2, 1956. A new stage of the Cuban Revolution was carried forward by the bearded revolutionaries of the July 26<sup>th</sup> Movement.

## **Struggle for national sovereignty**

On the basis of these two historical stages of the Cuban historical experience (colonial slavery and the neo-colonial republic) we can make some generalizations that can help us understand the revolutionary experience since 1959. In the first instance the external enemy was Spain, and next came in US Yankee imperialism. Both colonial powers imposed racist restrictions on the Cuban people, separating people on the basis of color and cultural practices. The main resistance always came from a patriotic mobilization of Cubans, people from all parts of the Islands, from all classes and all colors and cultural backgrounds. This was always the fundamental contradiction facing Cuban patriots. But that's not all, as Cuba has never been so simple.

The external global economy and dominant influences from the major foreign power (Spain or USA) represent the objective conditions that have to be engaged. Whether the global economy expanded and raised the price of sugar by extending the Zafra or not, racism was always decisive. The brunt of any economic crisis would fall on the Afro-Cubans. This has always been partially hidden as the official population statistics have always underestimated the African connection. This is a fundamental contradiction between what we believe is real and what is objective. Because of the devaluation of Black and all that is African everywhere in the African Diaspora people end up choosing white if they have a choice regardless of what generally recognized type their skin color might be. They do it in the US and they are doing it in Cuba. Census statistics are highly contested in light of this.

The complexity of Cuba's class, color and cultures represents advances and setbacks in every stage. When facing Spain, there was both Spanish colonialism and slavery. The comprador bourgeoisie was loyal to Spain and dominant, but had to face the nationalist impulse of a national bourgeoisie. Both wings of the Cuban Bourgeoisie wanted to maintain slavery, but differed over supporting Spanish rule. The national bourgeoisie needed the slaves to fight for and with them hence they had to promise some kind of freedom, although they vacillated and tried to renege at every key point. When facing US neo-colonialism, a similar situation emerged with a segregated labor force and racist separation of social life. However, during the Republic a fighting working class developed with its base and leadership disproportionately Afro-Cuban.

The pattern seems to be that Black-white unity in Cuba has been a necessity for transformative social change. This has been more so true in the realm of fighting to change power and control of the state, than it has in any actual changes in the consciousness and behavior of people in everyday life.

On the other hand when Afro-Cubans have organized in their own organizations they have been either accepted or rejected based on changing conditions. The Spanish supported these organizations, but in the end they proved patriotic and were decisive in the independence war. The neo-colonial regime also supported the middle class Black organizations as class forms of social control over the masses of Black working people, although when these organizational forms were forced to go underground, they still provided a vital force for social change. So, one lesson is that the self-organization of people that is historical and organic can't be suppressed, and another is that such organizations among Afro-Cubans have always been patriotic and a positive force in the struggle to advance the Cuban nation. In sum, the continued formation of the Cuban nation represents the dialectic between the patriotic class forces and the anti-racist forces against any form of discrimination against Afro-Cubans, especially their own Afro-Cuban societies. There can be no Cuban cultural unity without equality of its diversity. Why? Because

there has been no Cuban struggle to end its many forms of colonial and neo-colonial rule without the full and equal participation of the Afro-Cubans.

The task that has always united the majority of Cuban people is the independence and national sovereignty of their country. The challenge has always been to realize these aspirations based on equality for all Cubans, Black and white. The revolution of 1959 threw off the shackles of US domination and its neo-colonial Cuban lackeys, and little Cuba stepped out on the world stage for all nations. It faced the great forces of globalization, socialism and capitalism, the USSR (CMEA) and the USA (World Bank and IMF).

The revolution took power, i.e., a relatively small social movement took power, and had to quickly become a government administration. There was a mass exodus of people who felt threatened by the change, especially professionals like doctors, and in general well to do white people who had maintained close ties abroad in any case. So overnight, on January 2, 1959 the July 26<sup>th</sup> Movement led by Fidel Castro took power. However, the mostly “white” Cubans in positions of authority in the many diverse institutions of Cuban society remained where they were. The transition took time, and the new leadership had to formulate policy to unite people of the old social arrangement (who had benefited from racist privilege) while building something different, unity for the new society without racism and class exploitation.

## **Establishing the principles and practices of the revolution**

The July 26<sup>th</sup> Movement consistently stated its agreement with a strong anti-discrimination policy for the Cuban revolution. This is clear in the first Fundamental Law of the Revolution (Article 20) established one month after taking power (Feb 7, 1959):

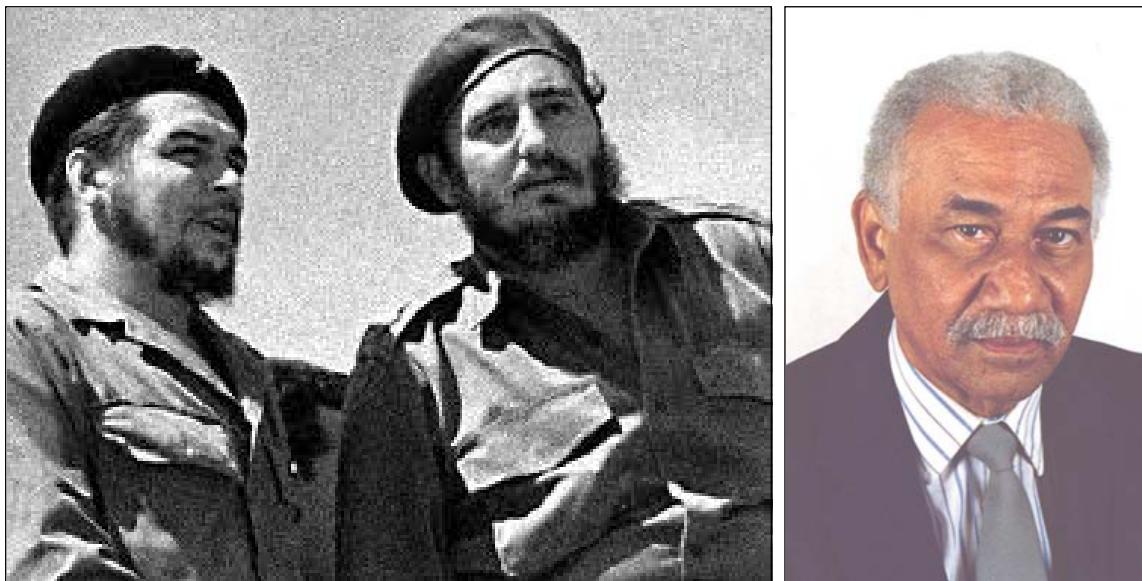
Any discrimination by reason of sex, race, color, or class and any others that injures human dignity is declared unlawful and punishable.<sup>72</sup>

The basic process of creating the new society ran into direct conflict with US interests, and their massive hostile reaction put a strangle hold on the Cuban economic and social life. In March the Cuban government nationalized the phone company, taking it from the US International Telephone and Telegraph. The Agrarian Reform Law was passed in May that limited land holdings to 1,000 acres and began the process of democratizing agricultural production. They brought in Soviet crude oil but the US owned refineries refused to process it, so Fidel nationalized them in June. In July the US canceled all orders for Cuban sugar. Fidel responded by nationalizing all US companies in August, and then the US banks in September. In 1960, Fidel came to New York, was discriminated against in a mainstream ‘downtown’ hotel, and instead went “uptown” to Harlem to stay at the invitation of Malcolm X. By the next year 1961 the US

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<sup>72</sup> <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015011008946;seq=1;view=1up>

had broken ties with Cuba, had begun training counter revolutionaries, and had sponsored the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in April. Later that year in December 1961 Fidel announced himself a Marxist and that the revolution was for socialism.



**Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Fidel Castro, and Juan Almeida.**

Cuban policy at first went beyond simply outlawing discrimination. Fidel made a very important televised speech on March 22, 1959. He made sweeping statements about making the vision of Marti finally realized, so he elaborated a vision of an integrated and totally free society with no discrimination in any way. Cuban society apparently was not ready for this kind of "revolutionary" transformation. A Haitian poet living in Cuba, Rene Depestre, reported the reaction of the Cuban public:

The entire white bourgeoisie and most white petit bourgeois, even those who would then have given their lives for the revolution, were panic stricken as if the Cuban Prime Minister had announced an atomic attack against the island on the following morning...The whole sinister mythology constructed in the days of slavery resurfaced in men's consciousness along with its imaginary procession of evil instincts, lubricity, physical filth, pillage and rape...The volcano of Negrophobia was in eruption.<sup>73</sup>

The next year in 1960, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Declaration of Havana, Fidel stated that the Cuban state guaranteed "the right of Negroes and Indians to "the full dignity of Man;" but also more proactively the following was proclaimed that "The duty of peasants, workers, intellectuals, Negroes, Indians, young and old, and women, (was) to fight for their economic, political and

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<sup>73</sup> Sam Farber page169-170

social rights”<sup>74</sup> Che called for agency<sup>75</sup> when he visited the University of Las Villas and spoke to the faculty

the days when education was "a privilege of the white middle class" had ended. "The University" he said, "must paint itself black, mulatto, worker, and peasant." If it did not, he warned, the people would break down its doors "and paint the University the colors they like."<sup>76</sup>

However, this call for agency was not something that meant Black agency could be organized as an autonomous force. In fact, one of the serious decisions made by the Cuban revolutionary leadership was to follow the pattern of closing down all the Black organizations, forcing these networks underground. Their solution was to maintain the Marti idealism as the subjective solution, while the revolutionary process created policy to change the objective situation. The fundamental approach was to focus on how changes in Afro-Cuban access to jobs and education will lead to changes in private spaces and the overall consciousness of society. The Cuban revolution impacted Afro-Cuban quality of life via class focused policy, and great gains were made. One of the greatest of these projects was the literacy campaign in 1960. However, the legacy of racism was not destroyed, and some developments since 1959 have created new social contradictions that feed the continuation of racism in Cuba.

## Socialist transformation via moral incentives

Cuba first reached out to the US, while at the same time challenging US domination of the economy. The US was furious and tried to shut Cuba down. The full US blockade of Cuba began in 1960. The US bombed the Cuban air fields on April 15, 1961, Fidel announced that Cuba was socialist on April 16, 1961, and the next day the US sponsored the Bay of Pigs failed invasion. During these first two years there was a mass exodus of the professionals and middle class strata that was supported by US neo-colonialism. This was a radical reduction of available doctors, lawyers, and university professors.

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.walterlippmann.com/fc-09-02-1960.html>

<sup>75</sup> Agency, according to Wikipedia, is defined as "In philosophy and sociology, agency is the capacity of an agent (a person or other entity, human or any living being in general, or soul-consciousness in religion) to act in a world. The capacity to act does not at first imply a specific moral dimension to the ability to make the choice to act, and moral agency is therefore a distinct concept. In sociology, an agent is an individual engaging with the social structure." ("Agency," Wikipedia, accessed October 6 2013.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agency\\_%28philosophy%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agency_%28philosophy%29)

<sup>76</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che\\_Guevara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che_Guevara)

1959	July 26th Movement takes power from Batista
1959	March 22 Fidel calls for an end to racism
1960	Fidel and Malcolm X meet in Harlem
1960	US sets up an economic blockade around Cuba
1961	Literacy Campaign
1961	US-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion attempted
1962	Cuba becomes allied with USSR
1987	Battle of Cuito Cuanavale (Angola)
1991	USSR ends special relationship with Cuba
1996	Helms Burton Act intensifies US Blockade
2006	ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas) by Hugo Chavez
2008	Fidel resigns
2011	6th Congress of Cuban CP, last for the July 26th generation
2011	Cuban CP Central Committee 30% Black

### **Chronology of the Cuban revolution and the crisis of globalization.**

As Cuba faced the tug and pull of global politics they decided to close ranks. The Bay of Pigs (April 1961) and the Soviet missile crisis (October 1962) were critical points requiring the highest level of unity and mobilization of the Cuban people.<sup>77</sup> In this conflict the Cuban CP decided to close ranks, close Black organizations and declare the issue of racist discrimination to be a settled question. The Club Atenas was closed down:

The 1961 resolution dissolving Atenas spelled it out clearly: among other reasons, the club was being closed because “discrimination due to race, sex, age, or social condition had disappeared” in Cuba’s socialist society.<sup>78</sup>

Just as Barack Obama won the loyalty of the Black middle class even while a representative of the imperialist class, so Batista won the relative support of the Afro-Cuban middle class. Both are tragic developments.

Among the forty-two civic and professional institutions that demanded Batista’s resignation in March 1958, not a single Afro-Cuban society was listed.<sup>79</sup>

There was a great shift in Cuban global relationships as they wrenched free from the US and entered into a tight relationship with the USSR. This lasted from 1962 to 1991, and was firmly

<sup>77</sup> See the speech by President Kennedy regarding the Soviet missile crisis:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOnY6b-qy\\_8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOnY6b-qy_8)

<sup>78</sup> LaFuente page 284

<sup>79</sup> LaFuente page 252

consolidated when Cuban became a full member of the CMEA in 1972. The USSR impacted what kind of Marxism was adopted, and what level of technological development (based on trade and direct aide) was possible. Moreover, it impacted the economic thinking about how to advance the Cuban revolution.



**Women soldiers in Cuba. Source:**

[http://inapcache.boston.com/universal/site\\_graphics/blogs/bigpicture/cuba\\_2011/bp1.jpg](http://inapcache.boston.com/universal/site_graphics/blogs/bigpicture/cuba_2011/bp1.jpg)

The basic story of the Cuban economy continued to be sugar. As the US tried to put a hurt on Cuba with a total trade embargo, Cuba turned to the USSR for economic trade and support. They agreed on a subsidized price for Cuban sugar. This led to the idea of expanding production to 10,000 tons by the 1970 zafra (the sugar harvest). They did not achieve this goal, so it was a policy setback. But more than just that, it was a great example of voluntary labor for the revolution, a great effort for the revolution, action driven by moral and political incentives. This was not a solid economic plan as it drove Cuba toward their colonial and neo-colonial past to be tied to the political economy of sugar and tobacco. The revolution was not being driven toward a diversification of the economy for sustainable self-sufficiency. This also pulled Cuba into the China-Soviet struggle within the socialist camp as China was providing rice to Cuba while also needing it to support the Vietnamese in their war with the US, and their own home market. Of

course in this context it must be mentioned that Cuba sent at least 10,000 pounds of sugar to Vietnam as part of their international solidarity.

There was an underlying struggle between two lines in the revolutionary ranks – one to continue spreading revolutionary struggle, while the other argued to align with the USSR and build incrementally within the socialist camp. One was associated and led by Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and the old cadre of the Cuban CP, and the other with Che Guevara and the revolutionary struggles for national liberation associated with China. Che was a revolutionary idealist wanting revolution in his lifetime, who was willing and ready to give his all including his life – which he did in Bolivia in 1967! Che called for moral incentives to guide the masses in their revolutionary transformation. Rodriguez was a party official who had served in Batista's cabinet as part of the Soviet sponsored Popular Front strategy. Fidel held these different wings of the revolutionary leadership together giving support to each set of policies as his pragmatic sense of proportion has led him to keep Cuba's revolution going longer than any other current case.

A great advance was made toward the democratization of knowledge. The new revolutionary regime faced an education crisis that would threaten any serious democracy:

The last national census taken before 1959 was in 1953, and it reported an illiteracy rate for Cuba as a whole at 23.6 percent. The rural rate was much higher. That same census found that 64 percent of children within the age range of compulsory education were not attending school. It also discovered that only three percent of those attending were completing the compulsory requirement. Many rural zones lacked certified teachers. Universities were accessible only to privileged elite who chose overwhelmingly to study the lucrative fields of business and law while rejecting scientific courses needed to bring Cuba out of underdevelopment.<sup>80</sup>

1961 was proclaimed “Education Year” and 100,000 young people left home for all parts of rural Cuba, joined by other volunteers who taught in the urban areas. This was controversial from the point of view of the accountant’s balance sheet of lost work and school time. However, while only some fought in the Sierra Maestra mountains, now the entire society was experiencing the needed revolutionary transformation. The greatest victory was the youth of Cuba were being united with the masses of Cuba people. 700,000 Cubans were taught to read, and as a result school attendance went up: 1959 – 64%, 1970 – 88%, and 1986 – 100%! Of course this means an aggressive program of building schools, training teachers, and building public agreement. Also, Cuba is noted for having wide spread availability of television, an important tool for popular education for people of all ages.

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<sup>80</sup> Abendroth page 51

A counter-revolutionary force continued fighting for another several years.<sup>81</sup> A major event that rallied the nation was the brutal murder of an Afro-Cuban literacy campaign volunteer named Conrado Benítez. Once again the freedom of Cuba was linked to the heroic martyrdom of an Afro-Cuban.



**Conrado Benítez.**

However, while this has been a great equalizer for all Cubans, the legacy of the past has continued with a marginalization of the impact of Africa on Cuba, and the Afro-Cuban at the heart of defining Cuban identity, treating Afro-Cubans an addition to something that already existed. This is not ice cream and cake, two different things. If Cuba is the cake, then Africa is part of the basic recipe of a cake that is not yet fully cooked. Cuba is not a white country although it has been dominated by the Spanish and the US state (and by the way Spain and the US are not entirely white countries either!) A critical issue is how all Cubans are taught about the Black co-founders of this nation. The crisis is that the ideal of Martí of all Cubans has been historically replaced by the dominance of the Spanish heritage over the African heritage.

Esteban Morales sums this up:

We can easily realize that there is very little, or almost nothing, taught about the racial question in our schools....It is clear that in the schools skin color is not mentioned; in our educational system the study of slavery extends barely to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, without much reflection on its consequences. In our teaching we cover very little of the cultures of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East; the study of race barely forms part of our academic university curriculum and, in our scientific work, there is little in the way of research on those themes. Thus, how could it be possible to get to the bottom of our

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<sup>81</sup> See Dreke 2002

cultural roots, and even more so, eventually overcome the problems of racism and discrimination.<sup>82</sup>

However in sports and music the role of Afro-Cubans reflects the soul of home grown Cuban culture. But there remains a contradiction between the heritage of Spain (ballet) as art and the cultural heritage of Africa as folklore. The evolutionary process requires a negation of these (pasts) toward a higher synthesis (future).

While a close ally of the Soviet Union, Cuba carried out one of the most progressive foreign policies of any country especially in relation to African and the African Diaspora. Especially in this way did Cuba maintain its independent path in world revolution. Angola is a good example. Immediately upon getting their independence Angola was threatened by South Africa. Fidel created Operation Carlota (named after the great warrior Afro-Cuban woman who fought against slavery in 1844) and sent 35,000 troops to Angola. More than that, eleven years later the Cuban were a decisive aspect of defending the freedom of Angola in the Battler of Cuito Cunavale having sent 55,000 troops including air support and heavy artillery. This battle was the largest battle fought in African since World War II. Black people, Angolans and Cubans, fought South Africa and its US ally and won. Fidel sent an elite unit charged with protecting Havana, and by so doing he put the very survival of Cuba at the service of African liberation.

A final indicator of how the Cuban revolution linked with the African armed struggles was the campaign carried out by Che, Dreke, and the company of Cuban who fought in the Congo.<sup>83</sup> Of course the lessons from this intervention were mainly negative: you can't export revolution, revolutionary forces must emerge organically from the people and their struggles, and there must be a revolutionary theory and ideology to unite revolutionary forces. Raul summed up Che's Congo campaign this way:

It wasn't possible to unite the Lumumbist forces and make them a cohesive unit. A time came when the internationalist column was fighting alone on unknown terrain. Faced with such adverse circumstances the column had to leave that country. It wasn't defeated by the enemy, but the purpose of its mission couldn't be achieved, because of the absence of an organized patriotic movement.<sup>84</sup>

Che left the Congo and ended up learning the same lessons in Bolivia at the cost of his life.

The most pervasive program of Cuba's foreign policy of internationalism has been its provision of medical professionals to serve in countries all over the world. In all parts of the African

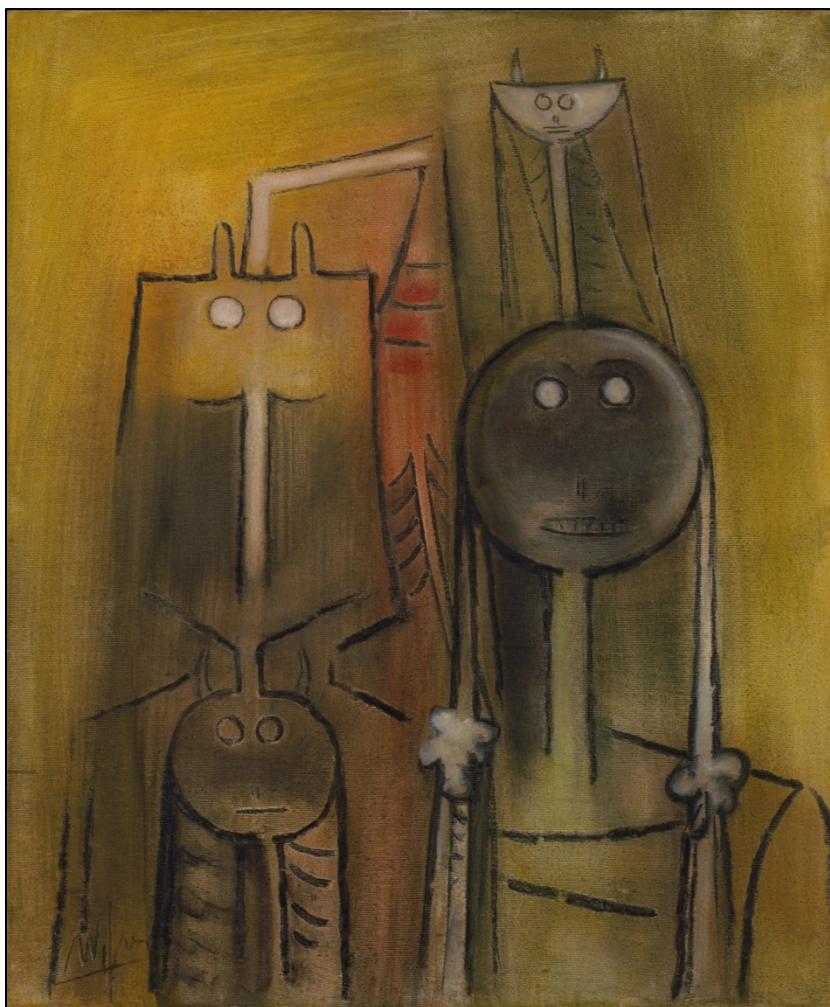
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<sup>82</sup> Morales Dominguez page 84-85

<sup>83</sup> Dreke and Waters 2002, and Galvez 1999

<sup>84</sup> Galvez 1999, page 294

continent Cuban doctors have made the greatest continuation back to Africa from the African Diaspora, from the little liberated territory called Cuba. One of the great strategic goals has been to make sure that each generation has a transformative revolutionary experience. After 1959, the great Literacy campaign gave a revolutionary identity to a new generation of youth. Angola touched almost every family in Cuba. Cuban medical staff is on the cutting edge of every third world crisis serving the people and remaining sensitive to the revolutionary process in the world. They set up special schools in Cuba for people from these areas fighting all forms of colonials and imperialism, to promote self-determination.



Art by Wilfredo Lam. Source: <http://latinartjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/Lam.jpg>

Within Cuba change was taking place but not on par with Cuba's role in the world. The critical point is that formal de jure forms of discrimination were against the law and abolished, but informal de facto norms maintained old patterns. Black Cubans were making advances in education and the military, but in many institutions of government and media Blacks were underrepresented. Fidel's theory was that ending discrimination in the workplace and in

education would wipe out all forms of prejudice and discrimination in public and private life. Many changes took place but widespread forms of prejudice and de facto discrimination continue to be socially reproduced.

The most important aspect of the quality of life for all Cubans is the state of the economy. All contradictions are impacted by an economic crisis, and doubly so for Afro-Cubans.

## Special period experimentation via material incentives

The Socialist bloc took a major hit when capitalist roaders took over with Gorbachev and Yeltsin.<sup>85</sup> The privileged client relationship the Cuba had was ended and hard times came down hard. They called this a “special period.” It began in 1991 and in many ways continues today. Over a three year (1989-1992) period Cuba lost 75% of its international trade and its GDP declined over 50%.<sup>86</sup> Without major external support and with increased decline in living standards in the special period the state turned to market forces and material incentives to energize the economy and stimulate growth and a rise in standard of living. Family remittances from US and Europe came from those who registered themselves as over 85% white.<sup>87</sup> Those who stayed in Cuba, the most patriotic, Black people, were hit hardest because they received overwhelmingly less remittances. So during the special period the twin enemies of Cuba began to rise again, class differences and racist attitudes and actions. This is the kind of struggle that has emerged in every one of the former socialist countries.

There is a class-crime dialectic and we need to check the positive and negative in each. In addition to tobacco and sugar, tourism has been a mainstay of the Cuban economy, and it continues to be an engine for jobs since 1959. On the one hand while tourism is open to the entire island, the Cuban government has restricted joint ventures that include working with global corporations to its form of enclave tourism on key beaches. The beaches are open to the entire public, but the hotels are private. And there are jobs involving tips often in hard global currencies. There is a negative side of this for Afro-Cubans for they are underrepresented in the tourism sector in terms of jobs and positions of authority, and when employed are usually not in public contact positions so they get less tips. Intentional or not this fits the racist pattern of the US.

These contradictions have even led to disproportionate levels of arrest and imprisonment of Afro-Cubans. It is estimated that 57% of prison inmates are Black. But it is also important to realize that as a socialist country Cuba has approached the problem of youth anti-social

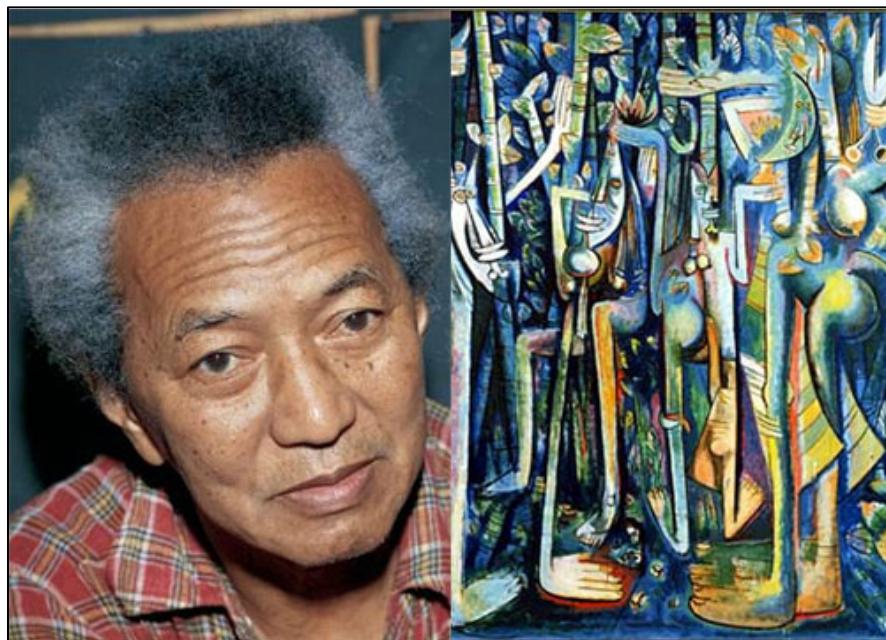
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<sup>85</sup> The roots of this go much deeper. See these two works: <http://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1/red-papers-7/index.htm>; <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/RCSU75.html>

<sup>86</sup> Morales and Prevost 2008, page 8

<sup>87</sup> Farber 2011, page 176-178; Sawyer 2006, page 110-112.

behavior (involving a high per cent of Afro-Cuban youth) with an educational "social work" program aimed at forming the basis for self-determination unleashing the youth to develop programs to deal with the issues they feel are important for their quality of life and for sustaining the revolution.



**Left, Wilfredo Lam. Right, one of his paintings.**

Source: [http://24.media.tumblr.com/tumblr\\_m90ons6bLe1qgc6fao1\\_500.jpg](http://24.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_m90ons6bLe1qgc6fao1_500.jpg)

More profoundly as a fundamental policy move to stimulate economic growth and to sustain the population food production and distribution has been open to a private market. The government market is used to provide a safety net for food and to control price, whereas private markets have been allowed to develop under specific conditions. This has been expanded to cover 178 types of jobs that can become a private business venture.<sup>88</sup> On the one hand in this way there is the unleashing of a middle class, while trying to avoid the kind of capital accumulation that can lead to a new economically based capitalist class. On the other hand, the joint ventures for a large part are connected to the Cuban government through the military, a connection that continues right up to and including the Political Bureau of the Cuban CP. This too follows the pattern in the former USSR's transition to Russia, and in Deng Xiaoping's China in which the capitalists are invited to join the Central Committee of the CP of China. As Malcolm taught, history is the best teacher. It's time for clarity and vigilance.

This last Cuban Communist Party congress was supposed to be the transition of a new generation of leadership. Part of this was set back by virtue of having to sack one set of

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<sup>88</sup> <http://blogs.shu.edu/diplomacy/2011/02/cubas-limited-privatization/>

prospective successors after another from top government posts. The founding revolutionary generation is passing on and the majority of the people were not alive to experience before 1959. No revolution has made it through the next couple of generations yet, so in global terms Cuba is a rare case study for what advances can be made after 50 years of socialist policies, and what can be sustained after the founding generation makes their transition. The most dangerous crisis is that of opportunism and corruption within the government and the party. An important example of how this connects with the crisis of racism is the case of Esteban Morales Domínguez.



**Esteban Morales Domínguez.**

He is a scholar from the University of Havana who has specialized on the relations between the US and Cuba. He is also an Afro-Cuban and has become a major voice calling for dialectical and historical materialism in the study of the Afro-Cuban experience so a revolutionary policy for equality and social justice can be scientifically developed. The ideal of Martí can be the guiding spirit but the social science of Ortiz is needed for a materialist approach to eradicate racism and to give proper respect to the African origin of Cuba in folklore and art at its highest levels. He wrote a critique of opportunism in the party and government and was shortly thereafter purged from the party. He challenged the decision and internal party democracy led to a reversal of the decision and he was reinstated. Shortly after that Raul Castro gave an important speech where he pointed out the danger of opportunism and corruption within the revolution and therefore people had to be ever vigilant and practice criticism self-criticism whenever necessary.

Esteban Morales then continues dealing with the condition of the Afro-Cubans within the context of supporting and defending the Cuban revolution. He has a book out in Cuba and one

(in English), *Race in Cuba*, published by Monthly Review in 2013. He is a firm and righteous two-fisted revolutionary, to fight

Variables of Historical-Colonial Legacy
Colonization - Slavery
Capitalism - Slavery
Slave Trade - Illegal Commerce
Racism - Racial Prejudice - Discrimination
Fear of Blacks
Whitening policies
Ethnicity-race-color of skin
Slavery - Abolition
Slavery - Annexation
Slavery - Independence Movement
Variables of Republican Frustration
North American Intervention - Frustration of Independence
Racism - Discrimination during the Republic
Racism - Cuban capitalism
Variables of Socialist Revolutionary Society
Points of departure for racial groups
Inequality - social policy
Cuban racialism - Revolutionary idealism
Economic crisis - welfare model
Racial prejudices - discrimination - racism
Race - National Project.

### **Research program for anti-racist studies.<sup>89</sup>**

both capitalism and racism. So when he answers Roberto Zurbano by saying the Cuban revolution began in 1959 I think of the line in the Movie *Reds* when John Reed says to Emma Goldman who is threatening to boycott a meeting, “Dammit Emma, this may not be the revolution you wanted, it’s the revolution you got, so get up and lets go to the meeting.” The only line forward for Black liberation is through the fight for socialism. To the extent that socialism is pushed back in Cuba so to that extent will the virulent racism of the past be resurrected. All of freedom loving humanity wants the Cuban revolution to maintain the journey, and yet we must be ready for whatever happens.

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<sup>89</sup> Morales 2013 page 45-46.

Esteban Morales proposes Black Studies as a research program grounded in the empirical variables listed in Table 5:

Variables are the stable social phenomena that characterize the system of contradictions at an essential level for each stage in question.<sup>90</sup>

Clearly this is the case with the recent unexpected events in Venezuela. The importance of Venezuela is threefold for Cuba: the revolutionary bonding of Cuba and Venezuela led by Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro, the exemplary sharing of resources (oil from Venezuela and medical technology and personnel from Cuba), and the fact that each country has an African heritage at the heart of their national identity.

Hugo Chávez is the first president in Venezuela's history to claim and honor his Indigenous and African ancestry. In an interview with Amy Goodman in 2005, President Chávez said, "Hate against me has a lot to do with racism. Because of my big mouth, because of my curly hair. And I'm so proud to have this mouth and this hair, because it's African."<sup>91</sup>

## African Americans and the Cuban Revolution

The African American people have a long history of interacting with Cuba as it has always been seen as part of the African Diaspora and the Cuban people as common sufferers under the evil racist government regimes set up to serve US imperialism and not the Cuban people.<sup>92</sup> This has been true in each period of Cuban history. Good examples during the slave period are Frederick Douglass, Martin Delaney, and Henry Highland Garnet.

During the slave period African Americans consistently showed their solidarity with the fight for Abolition of slavery and independence from Spain. But within the US they knew to watch their own ruling class. Frederick Douglass, in a 1851 essay titled "Cuba and the United States," starts with this clarity: "Our voracious eagle is whetting his talons for the capture of Cuba."<sup>93</sup> Further, in the wake of the Civil War, he encouraged African American youth to go to Cuba and join the anti-slavery patriots fighting the Ten Year War for their independence (1868-1878).<sup>94</sup>

Martin Delaney was so taken by the anti-slavery struggle in Cuba that he named one of his sons after the great Afro-Cuban poet Placido who was murdered in the 1844 massacre known as La Escalera. Placido also heavily figured in Delaney's book Blake, or the Huts of America: A Tale of

<sup>90</sup> Morales 2013 page 46.

<sup>91</sup> <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/6159>

<sup>92</sup> Jones 1966, Brock and Cunningham 1998, Reitan 1999, Guidry 2010

<sup>93</sup> Foner, f volumes, col 2, page 159

<sup>94</sup> Brock page 176

the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States and Cuba. Serialized in 1859, it is often hailed as African America's first novel. Blake, the central character, travels throughout North America and Cuba organizing a general slave insurrection; in Havana he receives instruction and inspiration from Placido.<sup>95</sup>



**Raul Castro (left) and Esteban Lazo, currently president of the Cuban Parliament.** Source:  
<http://www.infolatam.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Raul-Castro-y-Esteban-Lazo-cuba-655x497.jpg>

Henry Highland Garnet, a great abolitionist minister, was not only focused on the US but also Cuba. He led the formation of an organization dedicated to providing political, moral, and material support for the Cuban patriots fighting for the end of slavery and their independence, The Cuban Anti-Slavery Committee. Ofari puts it this way:

Another issue that drew his attention was the plight of Blacks in Cuba. During the 1870's, a small movement for Cuban independence had begun to grow among African Americans. The key to emancipation on the island was the overthrow of Spanish rule. The movement had the support of Douglass, Downing, P.B.S. Pinchback, the Black lieutenant governor of Louisiana, and other Black spokesmen. Garnet organized a Cuban

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<sup>95</sup> Brock page 9

Anti-Slavery Committee in early 1873 and served as the group's secretary. The committee collected five thousand signatures on petitions, which it presented to Congress and to President Grant at the White House.<sup>96</sup>

Douglass had predicted the US intervention in Cuba nearly 50 years before it finally took shape. The US became the key architect of the Republic with the stranglehold of the Platt Amendment on Cuba's sovereignty. One unintended consequence of this was a tightening of the ties between Afro-Cubans and African Americans, especially in music and sports.

During this time the struggle of the Afro-Cuban working people became a permanent aspect of the overall working class movement. This was clear when Paul Robeson took an invitation from the International Longshoreman's Union to do a series of concerts to raise money for the sugar workers in Hawaii and Cuba. His efforts led to funds going to Jesus Menendez, and then after his murder to his widow as well. During the Republic African Americans were treated to the kind of racism that defined Afro-Cubans as second class citizens just as in the USA. Notable cases were Arthur Mitchell and Josephine Baker. They were proud of Batista as a man of color, but opposed to his failure to end racist practices and policies even though the 1940 constitution was clearly anti-racist.

As the revolution was launched three tendencies vied for the Cuba connection. Two weeks after the July 26th Movement took power Adam Clayton Powell made an early visit. Appearing with Fidel Castro in a Havana rally, he expressed support for ending racist discrimination and the desire for the US to support this new government. This failed gesture was followed by a delegation led by Joe Louis, famous boxer who was also tied to the tourism industry serving the African American middle class. Also on the delegation were over 70 editors of Black newspapers interested in learning about the new country full of Black people. This failed as the US Black middle class was not autonomous nor strong enough to resist political pressure to conform to US foreign policy. The left alternative emerged in the form of the "Fair Play for Cuba Committee." Richard Gibson, Black journalist working for CBS, and others on the left formed this committee to counter the media attack on the Cuban revolution. They did educational work and organized tours to Cuba.

So within the first year it was clear that this new Cuba was a profoundly radical project that would incur the wrath of US imperialism. Mainstream options were closed, so they had to turn to the movement. Their main connection to the Black Liberation Movement begins with Robert Williams and Malcolm X. Robert Williams was the fearless leader of Black militants in Monroe, North Carolina who armed and confronted the KKK. He developed this militancy within an NAACP chapter based on recruiting Black veterans of the US military. The July 26th Movement

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<sup>96</sup> Ofari page 121

was just months away from being armed guerrillas themselves and so believed that Williams was a viable option in US politics. Richard Gibson of the Fair Play for Cuban Committee took Williams on a trip to Cuba June 1960. This trip was a success and in July, the very next month, Williams was leading a new Black delegation that included among others Amiri Baraka, Harold Cruse, John Henrik Clarke, Sarah Wright and Julian Mayfield. The revolutionary spirit was at high tide and the delegation was transformed by this Black country taking such a giant stride only 90 miles from the world HQ of imperialism.



**Malcolm X and Fidel Castro.**

Source: <http://thimk.files.wordpress.com/2008/07/malcolm-and-fidel.jpg>

In two months, a Cuban delegation to the UN being led by Fidel Castro was denied hotel accommodations causing an international incident (September 24, 1960). Malcolm X invited the Cuban delegation to reside at the Theresa Hotel in Harlem, and they accepted. Masses of Black people gathered to welcome Fidel and the delegation, and stood guard as they witnessed third world heads of state come to Harlem to visit Fidel. Malcolm X met with Fidel and had an important discussion helping Malcolm X continue his intellectual and political synthesis of global revolutionary experience. Fidel was meeting his African American revolutionary peers in Robert Williams and Malcolm X.

As with the economy so with relationship between Cuba and the Black liberation movement. The forces remaining true to the Cuban revolutionary experience supported revolutionary nationalists who were taking up armed resistance, while others were focused more on the civil rights movement. There have been four major examples of the alliance between Cuba and the armed militant wing of the Black Liberation Movement:

1. Robert Williams:<sup>97</sup> After visiting twice in 1960, the very next year Robert Williams was able to escape a trumped up kidnapping charge in the US to live in exile in Cuba from 1961 to 1965. At first he was able to both use the radio to broadcast his program "Radio Free Dixie," and printing presses to publish his newsletter "The Crusader." But he was a revolutionary nationalist and that was not in favor by the surrogates for the Soviet party, the CPUSA. Williams gradually was limited, and increasingly was outspoken about what he perceived as continuing patterns of racism. Even with such great changes as the literacy campaign and land reform, the persistence of racism was glaring to Williams. The government declared racist discrimination a thing of the past, but this was true about the de jure aspect but not the de facto aspect.

2. Stokely Carmichael/Kwame Toure:<sup>98</sup> The first major trip was during a 1967 OSPAAAL conference. He led a SNCC delegation during a summer of urban rebellions, especially Detroit. Carmichael over stated the case when he likened the uprising to the revolutionary struggles of the third world. But to the revolutionary forces in the third world, this was a new development inside the imperialist monster and this courageous young warrior was given top honors and respect by these third world revolutionaries. Again, Carmichael's move toward PanAfricanism and not communism strained relations from both sides.

3. Eldridge Cleaver/Huey Newton:<sup>99</sup> The Black Panther Party was a national organization that embraced the armed militancy of Malcolm X and Robert Williams. In their armed confrontations with the police they were subject to legal persecution and assassination attempts. This led several Panthers to escape the US, with many managing to get to Cuba, including Eldridge Cleaver (1968-69) and Huey P. Newton (1974-1977). As with Robert Williams the key question here is how and under what circumstances would Cuba be able to assist in the planning and training of revolutionary armed units that would carry forth a plan for Black Liberation. The main organization they were connected to was the Communist Party USA, an affiliate of the CP USSR, who was adamantly against what it considered foolhardy and dangerous. This was a great influence on Cuban policy. On the other hand the policies connected to Che opened up such dangerous possibilities. The Panthers were so infiltrated by the political police that no such plan was possible.

4. Assata Shakur: As a militant in the Black Liberation Army Black Liberation Army She was involved in an armed confrontation with the New Jersey State Police and a BLA member was killed as was a state trooper, along with other being wounded including Assata. After being tried and imprisoned she escaped and was eventually granted asylum in Cuba in 1984. She continues to live there under the protection of the Cuban government.

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<sup>97</sup> Tyson 1999

<sup>98</sup> Seidman 2012. Also see Carmichael and Thelwell 2003

<sup>99</sup> Gates and Cleaver 1975, and Bloom and Martin 2013

The result of this intense interaction with Black radical activists is that while the Cubans hosted activists who lived there as individuals, in the end there was no qualitative leap in organizational capacity as a result of Cuban support or their own organizational capacity. The main error seemed to have generally been the lack of a plan within the limitations of the hospitality provided by the host country Cuba. The greatest gain seemed to have been made by Robert Williams and his propaganda work (radio program and newsletter), although his symbolic presidency of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) and the Republic of New Africa (RNA) did not produce sustainable organizational development as he was out of the country.

Another significant sector interacting with and writing about the Cuban revolution were Black intellectuals/activists. There are many people who have networked via trips to Cuba, especially people who were active during and as a result of the 1960's. These include scholar-activists like John Henry Clarke, Robert Chrisman,<sup>100</sup> Danny Glover, Johnetta Cole,<sup>101</sup> James Early,<sup>102</sup> and Lisa Brock.<sup>103</sup> Cuba has been a special focus for journals: The Black Scholar has had special issues on Cuba in 1973, 1977, 1984, and 2005. The U Mass journal, Contributions in Black Studies published a special issue in 1994, "Ethnicity, Gender, Culture and Cuba."<sup>104</sup> Souls, then a journal from Columbia University under the editorship of Manning Marable, published a special issue in 1999 – "Race and Revolution in Cuba: African American Perspectives."<sup>105</sup>

Another venue has been conferences in which important ideas are discussed and people network. Some proceedings have been published in the Black Scholar and summed up in many other radical journals as these conferences have been held in almost every profession and academic area. One particularly important conference for this paper is the 1990 conference held in Cuba<sup>106</sup> followed by the important New York Conference on Malcolm X.<sup>107</sup> An important feature of the documentation of the 1990 Malcolm X conference is a video of a statement from Fidel Castro to the Black Liberation Movement. A video of this important statement is on the website of the proceedings.

On the cultural front warm and friendly relations continue to strengthen between Afro-Cuban and African Americans in the US. This ranges from poets like Nancy Morejón, film maker Gloria

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<sup>100</sup> As editor of the Black Scholar he supported Cuba even when it caused a split in their editorial leadership. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Black\\_Scholar#Original\\_Editorial\\_Board.2F\\_Nathan\\_Hare\\_Split](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Black_Scholar#Original_Editorial_Board.2F_Nathan_Hare_Split)

<sup>101</sup> Cole 1977, 1980

<sup>102</sup> Early 1999

<sup>103</sup> See Brock 1976, 1994, 1999

<sup>104</sup> <http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cibs/vol12/iss1/>

<sup>105</sup> <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ccbh/souls/vol1no2.html>. Now the journal has relocated to the University of Illinois – Chicago under the editorship of Professor Barbara Ransby.

<sup>106</sup> [http://brothermalcolm.net/2002/mx\\_1990/](http://brothermalcolm.net/2002/mx_1990/)

<sup>107</sup> <http://brothermalcolm.net/sections/malcolm/index.html>

Relando, the jazz musician Chucho Valdés, and the librarian Marta Terry González. The new creative energy is driving a bonding via hip hop.

But all is not well within Cuba as the tourist market is turning Santeria into a commodity and subverting the authentic organic historical meaning of this religious practice. Marx and Engels warns us about the market in the Communist Manifesto. It has

left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment”. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.<sup>108</sup>

A commodified Afro-Cuban heritage will cease to be the people’s heritage. This has attacked and destroyed much of African American cultural production so we can see the future coming.

Three fights are required for the liberation and future of Cuba:

1. The fight to continue down the anti-capitalist path
2. The fight to end racism and give proper respect and historical importance of the African influence in creating the Cuban nation.
3. The fight to resist and overcome the influence of the imperialist policies of the US

If we isolate one of these with no regard for the others then we place the Cuban revolution in danger. One major tendency is to target the continuation of racism as a way to discredit the Cuban revolution. This is the approach of Carlos Moore. Moore volunteers to be an agent of US imperialism by playing the race card against the revolution. Henry Louis Gates, on a PBS TV series in the US, has targeted the end of racism as requiring a revolution.<sup>109</sup>

This leads us to the open letter charging racism in Cuba<sup>110</sup> and the letter supporting the Cuban revolution.<sup>111</sup> The great majority of people who signed both letters share a commitment to social justice and it is unfortunate that this divide over racism in Cuba became such a public polemic. In the first case there is the issue of what is known about any particular policy or practice, including the imprisonment of an alleged political criminal. Secondly there is the issue

<sup>108</sup> Marx, *Communist Manifesto*

<sup>109</sup> <http://video.pbs.org/video/1898347038/>

<sup>110</sup> <http://www.afrocubaweb.com/actingonourconscience.htm>

<sup>111</sup> <http://www.petitiononline.com/withcuba/petition.html>

of how you raise criticisms of a revolution from within the context of the great imperialist power. The Cubans have always been available for a conversation. Third, as the crisis in the world deepens we have to give support to people within the Cuban context as they are the ones who will carry the revolution forward. We have recently seen the exchange from leading Afro-Cuban intellectuals, Zurbano and Esteban Morales.<sup>112</sup>



**Clockwise from top left: Nancy Morejón, Gloria Rolando, Marta Terry González, and Chucho Valdés.**

## Summation

So, does racism exist in Cuba? Yes. Is Cuba a racist society? No.

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<sup>112</sup> <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CubaNews/message/139228>

Racism and its legacy nurtured by the traditions and cultural imperatives of western domination exist everywhere. There is no place free from racism, deep in the very structure of how all of it is all put together from social existence, to cultural expression, to paradigms of consciousness. On the other hand, there has always been struggle against all of this. And certainly this has been true in Cuba.

Context is everything. Cuba is the best case in the African Diaspora for fighting to end racism and class exploitation, and all other forms of oppression. However the class struggle is going to intensify in Cuba. One important manifestation of this class struggle is whether the Afro-Cubans can be mobilized into a fight that brings the anti-racist and socialist programs together. Capital is going to play the “color” card hard, and the survival of Cuba returns to the crisis of the Zanjón sell out versus the protest at Baragua, only now the form is whether the market will rule over continuing the revolutionary transformation of Cuba because it’s the best way they have found to divide the working class and suppress wages.

So there are two related tasks for progressive forces in the US:

1. Our primary international responsibility is to vigorously oppose our own ruling class, to end the blockade, to fight to repel the Helms-Burton Act, to support the Cuban 5 held political prisoners in the US – in sum, to change US policy in fundamental ways. Of course the ultimate solution is to end the rule of capital in the US, because any other form of détente will simply be another form of warfare.
2. Our moral and political responsibility is also to support revolutionary forces within Cuba to maintain the socialist path. The USSR, China, and Vietnam are in a process of opening their society to global capitalist penetration. In fact these economies are being reengineered based on capitalist models leading to polarized class inequalities and multiple of forms of degeneracy and gangsterism. This danger is lurking in Cuba as well though not yet fully unleashed. This is a vital struggle that will be waged by the Cuban people.

We can sum up by stating three major points:

1. The Cuban revolutionary process has always been advanced by all sectors of Cuban society, especially Afro-Cubans. They fight against external enemies and the internal enemies who cling to the racism that continues the Spanish colonial and US neocolonial legacy, promoting class exploitation.
2. The main enemy in this historical period is US gangster imperialism promoting permanent war. Obama is the current governmental leader of this state that functions as a tool of Wall Street finance capital. We can’t be fooled when US capital paints its face black.

3. The Black liberation movement has the historical task of opposing US imperialism at home and abroad, and this includes steadfast support and solidarity with the Cuban revolution.

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## 03 The Malcolm We Knew by Darryl “Waistline” Mitchell

Never have so few done so much harm to so many as the current Bush Jr. administration. As the military budget tops \$400 billion dollars a year, what would Malcolm's message to the grass roots say today? The Malcolm we knew would probably point out that one fourth of the military budget - \$100 Billion, a year could end hundred and poverty on earth and fix a heck of a lot of potholes. Another \$100 Billion a year could turn the hell on earth the Bush Jr. administration is creating into a paradise, with enough change left over to solve the crisis in our schools, most of the health care problems and end "bad hair days" for most people on earth.

The Malcolm we knew would without question speak of the social position of the African American people and the reason we remain at the bottom of the social ladder and working class in America. Where do we come from and where are we going?



Dan Watts, Editor of the Liberator Magazine, Rev. Albert B. Cleage, Jr. Pastor Wilfred X., and Malcolm X. of New York City

**Dan Watts, Rev. Albert B. Cleage, Jr., Pastor Wilfred X., and Malcolm X.**

Source: [http://yeyleade.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/jaa\\_grassrootsconference.jpg](http://yeyleade.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/jaa_grassrootsconference.jpg)

First as slaves and then as second-class citizens within the working class, segregation and discrimination has been the most striking feature of the history of the African American people. The heavy violent hand of segregation and color discrimination made life unbearable behind the "Cotton Curtain" and the police controlled industrial areas of the North. The focus of the "Freedom Movement" has always been for freedom: against murder, violence and terror, and to live as equal members in American society.

Freedom really means freedom. Having a government of the people that protects the economic and social well being of all its citizens, is important for each generation. Without freedom to live without violence and terror, or to have no money and adequate social services compels one to live in crime-infested neighborhoods that become dumping grounds for criminals in high and low places.

What was it that made Malcolm X the man he was in November 1963? What economic, social and political environment was Malcolm confronting that captured the desires and imagination of the masses? Why was Malcolm a beacon of light for millions? What voices from the "grass roots" - the streets, did Malcolm hear that made him deliver his "Message To The Grass Roots" - right here in Detroit, 40 years ago?

Nineteen sixty-three was a turning point in the battle for freedom in America. The slogan was "Free by 63," when Malcolm made his speech at King Solomon Church. "Free by 63," was the

one-hundredth anniversary of the drafting of the Emancipation Proclamation. There had been an unbroken wave of systematic murder, violence and terror against the African American since the Civil War shattered the chains of slavery. During the past ten years of our lives - 1990-2000, much of this history has been made public in movies like Rosewood, Four Little Girls and the information highway called the Internet. What was the flavor going into the 1960s?

When the "Second Imperial World War" ended in 1944 thousands of black soldiers reentered American society unwilling to accept exclusion from those things in society that make life worth living and unable to accept the violence and terror without militant struggle and fight back, including armed resistance to thugs and mob rule. No government on earth can teach men to kill and then expect them not to kill to defend themselves and loved ones. Black people - working class, sharecroppers, small farmers, teachers, storeowners, the bourgeois-like middle class, doctors, and even wealthy real bourgeois blacks were extremely angry and had been angry for a long time.

There are many ways of looking at why the so-called Civil Rights Movement erupted in the years following the Second Imperial World War. Every point of view is important but certain events happened - that must be admitted and understood. When black and whites began migrating from the agricultural areas of the Deep South, to the cities of the South and to the industrial areas of the North, things began changing. It is one thing to terrorize a mass of people scattered in the countryside living wide distances from one another and another thing terrorizing people concentrated in their thousands into modern cities. "Government on Horseback" cannot stand in a large industrial city because someone will hit you with their car or shoot at you from an alley. Plus, millions of people concentrated in an industrial area need political representation to get streetlights, the roads paved, the water system in and basic human needs have to be met. This leads to a common framework of thinking.

The mechanization of agriculture - bringing modern industrial production to the countryside, eliminated the need for a mass of labor in agriculture was the hidden hand behind the mass migration to the Southern cities and North. This dramatically affected southern black and white folks because there were 11 million sharecroppers being driven off the land by modern industry, of which 5 million were black. In the Deep South - the old plantation areas - behind the Cotton Curtain, and the small cities were Klan controlled. In the industrial jungles of the North the Klan was organized as the police department, backed up by a court system that practiced the ancient law of the land - "a black had no rights that a white man was bound to respect."

America is a big country and the Freedom Movement - called the Civil Rights Movement by the newspapers and media, had gripped the country. The center of action shifted to Birmingham Alabama in 1963 - the state that Mayor Coleman Young Jr. came from; Eddie Kendrick and also

Paul Williams of the original Temptations. Like old Pharaoh, who would not "let my people go," Birmingham was destined to enter the history books. Birmingham Alabama became the turning point in the struggle and one of the major reasons was that Birmingham was home of the Southern steel industry. The industrial concentration of thousands of black laborers could not but give them a new feeling of their collective strength. When thousands of people are put together they feel their strength and start asking the same questions. The heavy hand of terror and violence, could not suppress the hundred-year tear - battle, being waged behind the "Cotton Curtain."

The battle for Birmingham was ultra intense. With few exceptions, never in history has ten to twelve percent of a population waged an unrelenting struggle against violence and terror from one generation to the next. It is this generations "Freedom Struggle" - common identity, which helped mode the African American people into a people. Millions of people across the country called it "Booming-ham," because eighteen public bombings had taken place over the past six years.

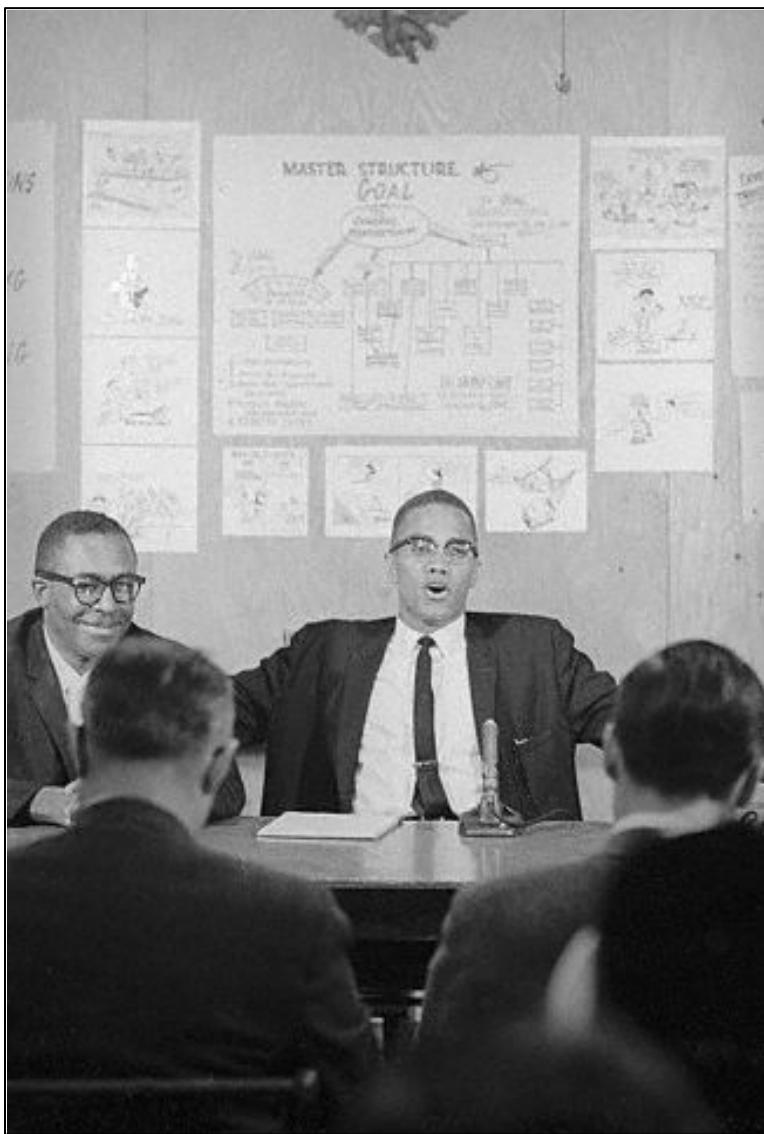
## Birmingham

The bombing of black churches and the murder of our four little girls became a turning point in American history and bring tears to ones eyes 40 years after the fact. Birmingham would be the catalyst - not the cause, for violent uprisings - riots, around the country. "Booming-ham" was the continuation of the struggle, which broke out December 4, 1955 in Montgomery Alabama - the bus boycott associated with the name Rosa Parks. The militant bravery, ingenuity and steadfastness of the African American people in Montgomery shall live forever.

In January of 1963, Martin Luther King announced that SCLC was going to Birmingham to integrate public facilities and department stores. King was based in Montgomery Alabama. The Birmingham "establishment" was not about to welcome him nor his supporters with open arms. George Wallace had just recently been elected as governor of the state and was not about to give an inch to these protesters. Beneath all the race hate and theories of white superiority is one basic proposition: the idea and desire for someone to work for a master and make them rich, while the person on the bottom of the ladder remains in poverty.

All the organizers understood that Birmingham would be a "hard nut to crack." The Klan in Birmingham was believe to be one of the most violent in the entire country - excluding Mississippi, but they acted as if they were from Mississippi. Once we get a sense of the economics of oppression and slavery it becomes pretty obvious why Mississippi was generous in melting out the blade, boot and the bullet to the black - cash money in the form of King Cotton.

In discussing history, one has to use some common sense. No man or women is taken from the womb of their mother hating another man or women. Basically, "haters" are created. Nine out of ten times hate involves money, privilege and compelling someone to labor for the "other man." In Birmingham the Klan and others were the guardians of dozens of bombings throughout the area and had the support of the Birmingham police department, led by Eugene "Bull" Connor. Before the bombing of those four innocent little girls the other bombings of public institutions got very little national attention.



**Local activist and lawyer Milton Henry with Malcolm X in Detroit. Source:**

[http://farm1.staticflickr.com/96/243571823\\_be46e231ba.jpg](http://farm1.staticflickr.com/96/243571823_be46e231ba.jpg)

Resistance to change - any change, is always with people who have become accustomed to doing things the "old way" and those whose economic interest want things to stay the same way so they can keep making money. The wall of segregation hides the economics of slavery,

oppression, violence and abuse. In 1963 "nigger this and nigger that," was horribly real and Malcolm X was a man that lived "the real."

Martin L. King Jr. had picked up some organizing lessons during the December, 1961 march in Albany, Georgia. King went to Albany to give a speech and had no plans to march or protest. The demand to march and protest came from the grass roots because they catch all the hell as the saying goes. The day after his speech, he ended up in jail with 250 other protesters. Then the plan was to fill the jails to the brim until they desegregated the entire city. In total more than 700 were arrested. Information from the Internet helps to fill in the picture.

Sheriff Laurie Pritchett had already negotiated with area police departments to give them assistance. When the arrests began, most of the protesters were taken to jails outside the city. Thus, there was still plenty of room for more prisoners. Albany had been a disaster. Local officials negotiated with King and other leaders and indicated that they would begin to desegregate the city. As soon as King and the reporters left, city official resorted to their same policies of segregation. In Birmingham, King and Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth had specific objectives--desegregate public facilities and department stores.

During the Albany march, the police did their best to hide police brutality. In Birmingham, the violence perpetrated by law enforcers was hard-core, and they were "dogging" kids eight and nine years old. Prior to the start of the march, King and Shuttlesworth were arrested for violating an order not to march. While in prison, he wrote his famous response to eight White area clergymen who had called the march untimely and unwise. The liberal establishment also criticized King for "breaking the law." King responded to the clergymen indicating that Black Americans have waited 340 years for basic rights given to all by God.

On April 20, King and Shuttlesworth were released from prison, and the marchers were ready to begin. James Bevel was the primary organizer for SCLC. He orchestrated a plan to use high school children to initiate the march. The plan was to use 13 to 18 year old kids to fill up the city's prisons. With the media there, this would surely embarrass and disgrace city officials. On May 2, the march began. Less than a block away, Bull Connor was waiting for them. As soon as they turned the corner, he ordered the arrest of all of the students. Over nine hundred children were jailed ranging from the age of 6 to 18. Connor was furious and many of his officers were embarrassed, disgraced and shown to be morally bankrupt and degenerate human beings to millions of people.

## **"Who let the dogs out?" Bull Conner**

The following day, Connor called out the water cannons and the dogs. As marchers came parading down the streets, the police attacked. First came the water cannons, then the Billy

clubs, and lastly the dogs. America watched in horror as school age children were being savagely beaten. The whole nation was outraged. The following day, things were different. As the marchers came down the street, Conner again ordered his men to attack. Instead, some firemen refused to turn on the hoses and many of the police would not participate in the arrests. Several hundred protesters were still arrested that day.

On the fourth day, a truce was called. City official were embarrassed by the negative publicity. Area merchants met with Black leaders and indicated that they would not negotiate unless they called off the march. King then spoke with Shuttlesworth, who was in the hospital after being injured by the water cannons. King wanted to call the march off. However, Shuttlesworth said no. Shuttlesworth told King that he could call it off if he wanted to, but his name would be called "Mud", instead of Dr. King. Martin was growing weary of the violence that was being inflicted on the marchers. Surely they were getting good press, but this was absurd. After Albany, however, they could not afford to fail again. In the end, they decided that they would continue the march. While near financial ruin, local merchants decided to negotiate in good faith. They agreed that rest rooms, lunch counters, fitting rooms, and drinking fountains would be desegregated within ninety days. The "grassroots" wanted more than sitting next to whites on the toilet. They wanted an end to the murder, violence and terror and the things called "freedom."

When word came of a negotiated settlement, the Klan and White Citizens Council went berserk. They rioted in the city and fire bombed several Black churches, businesses, and homes. King's brother's home and the SCLC headquarters were among the buildings destroyed. This reactionary wave of violence was being reproduced in various parts of the country depending on the concentrations of blacks, whether it was an agricultural or industrial area and what kind of organizations existed in a particular area. The heavy unionized areas had their share of violence but it was noticeably less than in the non-union areas, even though the unions excluded blacks from democratic elections, using "a bag of dirty tricks."

Despite the violence, SCLC declared victory and was preparing to move on. Well, you know what happened. Governor Wallace's state troopers poured into the area. Many of the protesters were staying at the black owned Gaston Motel. The motel was firebombed. As the occupants fled the building, state troopers, led by Colonel Al Lingo, ordered his men to attack. Several of the protesters were seriously injured. Caught in a no win situation, strategically reduced to no options, having ones back to the wall, a desperate fight-back - not unlike the Palestinians, began.

What does a human being do when they are standing in the sand on a beach with their back to the ocean and some fool it trying to force you into the deep waters? And you can't swim? If we must die let it not be like hogs waiting to be slaughtered by fascist - Hitler like butchers. Bricks

and bottles were thrown at the troopers and area Blacks tossed their remaining poker chips into the pot and played their last hand - the riots began.

When it was all over, forty people had been injured and seven stores were destroyed by fire. Birmingham 1963 established what would become a new level of struggle that would later be taken "over the top" in the 1965-Watts Rebellion. The reason Watts "went over the top" is because the local black leader advocating laying in front of cars and non-violent protest in the face of bullets was shot by someone in the large audience of blacks. Watts was "off the hook," but it took place in 1965 and we do not want to get ahead of ourselves because 1963 was a monster and this knowledge was in Malcolm's head when he delivered his "Message to the Grass Roots." Nevertheless, Birmingham established what would go down in history as "the long hot summer." Before Birmingham the revolt and resistance of blacks - and there were countless riots and uprisings - was called the "Red Summer." If you fought against being killed and for what is "right" in America you are branded a communist or "Red." Hell, the "red" was all of the blood that had been spilled on the land trying to live first as slaves, then freemen and finally as industrial workers.

Small victories were being won throughout the South that could be measured in blood. The violence against the marchers and organizers continued. Reminiscent of the end of Reconstruction - the 1890s, the Klan, the White Citizens' Council, and other White supremacist groups step forward as the hangmen of democracy and the American version of Adolph Hitler's Nazi's. A broad section of America was outraged.

Volunteers from throughout the North were streaming South to assist in the effort. Many of them were "beat down" - severely beaten. Three students, Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner were murdered in Mississippi. Mississippi NAACP leader Medgar Evers was also murdered in front of his house. It took nearly thirty years to convict his killer. Blacks were outraged, - some arming themselves and others wondering if the struggle was worth the effort. Like most Presidents before John F. Kennedy, some Blacks felt that change must come slowly. Nina Simon would later sing in her record "Mississippi Goddamn" - "you keep saying go slow, but that's just the trouble."

How slow does a bullet travel? How long does it take that hangmen noose to snap the neck? How long does it take for the water from the fire hose to hit you, for the dog to get you, for the brick to miss you? Malcolm knew these things were taking place and that the Nation of Islam had a policy that prevented it from engaging in social struggle although their members were being jailed and murdered by the police. The Malcolm in 1963 Detroit was deeply troubled and very clear about the so-called Negro Leaders performing their 1960's "song and dance" act.

Many people - black and white, Mexican and Indian, did not like the tactics of the Civil Rights workers, in the face of increasing violence. (Some of the Civil Rights Workers did not like their tactics.) When the Civil Rights workers and National press corps left town, the average person on the street had to endure the hostility from organized reaction and the stares of the collaborators of American fascism. Another group of people just did not like the peaceful tactics of the Civil Rights workers and had no intentions of going to jail for defending themselves from terrorist and thugs. Many of the blacks North and South - especially those with military experience, and those who had live in the South during the 1940s and come to the North, had order their caskets and secretly swore to themselves to fight to the death.

Malcolm understood this when he gave his "Message to the Grass Roots" speech. Malcolm also understood that this feeling did not just happen in 1963 but had reached its peak in the nineteen hundred and sixty three year of "their lord."

## **Negroes with Guns**

Malcolm knew the story of Robert Williams and this was also in the back of his mind in the year 1963. The story of Robert Williams is instructive.

Robert F. Williams was a leading and respected member of the Monroe, North Carolina, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and had obtained a charter for the group from the National Rifle Association. Mr. Williams - an ex-soldier, urged members to "arm themselves or harm themselves" as the saying would later go. In 1957 the Monroe NAACP and its supporters drove off a Ku Klux Klan motorcade at gunpoint thus preventing an attack on chapter President Albert Perry. In 1961 after an effort was launched to integrate the community swimming pool (the city council said it couldn't afford to let blacks use it as it would have to drain and refill it each time before letting whites use it again!) Klansmen from surrounding counties descended on Monroe and targeted Williams. In the course of this situation Williams had drawn his weapon on police officers and a mob - saving his life, and later he saved the lives of a known Klansman and his wife. After he fled Monroe before the mob could get him, Williams was accused of kidnapping the couple and inciting violence. He was put on the FBI's "Most Wanted" list.

Somewhere Malcolm said that Robert Williams "was ahead of his time," and "Brother Rob," as he was called in Detroit, was like thousands upon thousands of black soldiers - scattered across the face of America, who had no intentions of submitting to tyranny. Armed self defense groups had sprung up throughout America in isolated black communities because there was no choice.

In the cities of the industrial North, police and mob violence - centered around white ex-soldiers who tended to be from the South, terrorized entire communities of blacks. What

became known as the Ronald Stokes Murder in 1962 shook the nation in a manner similar to the Rodney King Incident - thirty years later. Again it was the Los Angeles Police Department.. .

On April 27, 1962 Ronald Stokes, who was the twenty-eight year old secretary of Mosque Number 27, in Los Angeles was murdered by the LAPD for "less than nothing." Ronald was returning from the cleaners with his wife and stopped by the police and told he could not sell clothes without a license. Ronald explained that he was not selling clothes but on his way from the cleaners. Fearing violence, Stokes told his wife to return to the Mosque, which she did. An argument ensued and Stokes was shot in the head.

When the brothers in the Mosque heard the gunshot they rushed outside. Once outside an armed special unit of the police department that "just so happened to be in the area" fired on the brothers. At least six unarmed Muslims were shot and a dozen injured. While lying on the ground the police systematically kicked the brothers. One of the brothers was kicked so hard in the mouth that his lower dental bridge was broken in half. The Muslims were unarmed but one police was shot in the arm by another and six more wounded.

Afterwards the cops went into the Mosque with guns drawn and demand everyone line up and start tearing people clothes off and beating them. People were arrested in mass - for no reason, and denied medical treatment for two days. This rampant violence repeated itself across the country towards the Nation of Islam, which to this very day has a national reputation for not engaging in political activity or "bothering anyone." Stokes murder was called "justifiable homicide."

The violence - directed by the government at the worse and protected by the government at the least, was carried out by police agencies and militant thugs and had been escalated in the past month, in retaliation for black pastors registering blacks to vote. Five of their churches had been bombed in Alabama and Louisiana and the home of Dr. Cuthbert Simpkins, a prominent black dentist and member of Kings SCLC in Shreveport, Louisiana was bombed in an assassination attempt. The wave of violence and reaction to blacks desiring no more than to be able to vote and live with dignity reached a feverish pitch. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, who generally minded his own business, wrote one of his harshest statements on May 12, 1962, writing in the column for the New Crusader. He wrote:

"There is no justice for us black people. There is no future for us nor our children in 'civilized' America. This country's police force, using the tactics of brute savages, have behind them the government to kill us - judging from the governments silence. I have hundreds of followers now in jails, state and federal penitentiaries, for no other reason than they are Muslims. Therefore it is useless to appeal for justice to the state prosecutors of the U.S.A., since no justice will be given us from them!"

The late fifties and early sixties in our country involved overturning generations of tradition. Unlike today where there is a clear class separation within the black population, and the bourgeois middle class black and the real bourgeois blacks are able to economically escape the harshness of poverty, in 1962 the wave of violence was directed at the African American as a people. The class separation began accelerating after the 1967 Rebellion and Detroit and is pretty obvious today. Today, the police violence remains directed at the lowest section of working class, with the blacks being jailed as felons and denied the right to vote. The purpose of these jailing and violence is the same, to keep you out of the political arena to insured privileges and wealth to the upper crust of society.

For the majority of the black population in Detroit, the city was like a large prison camp where one was only allowed to go to work and school. Driving through the city of Dearborn to get to work was an act of courage and desperation. This was somewhat better than the agricultural South where lynching and outright murder was the law of the land.

The roots of the Detroit Riots lie in its history and "the pecking" order imposed on the black population. The city of Detroit was part of the Underground Railroad, the last stop before Canada. This led to a large amount of escaped slave settling in the city. The "pecking order" - what group of people get first pick of the crumbs, regulates the black to the end of the line, no matter how long one has stood in line. As a country of immigrants, America is funny about color and nationality. The white Polish is "less" than say the white English and the German is "higher," than the Russian and the Western European Anglos are better than the Eastern European Anglos and when everything is said, the Italian is on the bottom and below him is the Irish.

When new groups of people enter a city - any city, in thousands they are forced to take the worst of everything as everyone move up the next step on the social ladder. This pecking order is called discrimination and segregation with respects to blacks because no amount of money could allow them to escape "the bottom" of the social ladder. Generally, money allows one to escape the segregation - poverty, of a nationality group but not so with the blacks during this period of history.

The various Africans brought to America that evolved into the African American people were brought here for slavery - money made from the labor of others, and this must be understood. The class of slaves, by definition is the bottom of the barrel of the working class people. This was called "looking up to see bottom" and since the black is on the bottom of the social ladder, the only areas they could settle in during the migration to the industrial North and Detroit were into a white community. Some of the tension is just outright racism and ignorance; some of it is jealousy by those who felt they were not "raising up" the ladder fast enough. A large part of it was the housing shortage and the structure of segregation that says whatever area a color

group or nationality settles in, slowly becomes their area. The segregated areas become the basis of political authority in government and here is the reason many politicians supported the Klan and terrorist against the blacks. They wanted to hold on to their political authority through violence. Segregation is by design not chance.

## The Twenty-Year Build-Up in Detroit: 1943-1963

The Detroit populations grew when the city became the industrial center for World War I. Job migrations had decreased after the Great Depression, but rose again during World War II. Racism was a huge problem in Detroit because of the "pecking order" and this order was brutally enforced - to no small degree, by whites that migrated from the South and lived by the Jim Crow Laws. The Jim Crow Laws was a law code that isolated and segregated through using violence and murder. The Ku Klux Klan influenced Detroit's white population. The Black Legion also became widespread. The Black Legion was an organization of whites that worked to obtain jobs for the white Southern settlers that moved into Detroit. However they ended up becoming a violent hate group that targeted African Americans, Jews, Catholics, and others. After the court convicted the Black Legion leader Virgil F. Effiger, they released a list of its members. This list included a state legislator, the state sales tax manager, a treasurer, a few sheriffs, and other government employed officials.

Housing shortages were a big problem in Detroit. The African Americans lacked houses and when new housing complexes were built, they were offered to whites first. The blacks lived in the two slums of Detroit: the East Side and part of the West Side. Even though they had money, the black population was unable to find houses they could buy or rent. At the time, there were very few areas in the United States that were as crowded. The city of Detroit had been deficient at keeping up with the number of Southern drifters. Between 1930 and 1942, 12,000 families moved into the city; however only about 5,200 housing facilities were built. The social position of the blacks is by design and a housing shortage in and of itself does not produce violence and terror against blacks. Blacks are singled out and compelled to accept less or be murdered.

As WW II ended, Blacks - like immigrants from throughout the world, who (through the great migration) escaping the poverty and violence of the Deep South, found another kind of violence and racism in the North. There had been 11 million Southern sharecroppers - 5 million black and 6 million white, and many southern whites brought their own prejudices with them as both groups journeyed northward.

Recruiters toured the South convincing whites and blacks to head north with promises of high wages in the new war factories. They arrived in such numbers that it was impossible to house them all. The influx of newcomers strained not only housing, but transportation, education and recreational facilities as well. Wartime residents of Detroit endured long lines everywhere, at

bus stops, grocery stores, and even at newsstands where they hoped for the chance to be first answering classified ads offering rooms for rent. Even though the city enjoyed full employment, it suffered the many discomforts of wartime rationing.

Then you were expected to yield to whites in all areas of social life. This was not going to happen. "First come, first served" is a good policy. One can only take "cuts" - get in front, and push the man standing in line further back for so long. The design of segregation meant that many plants only hired or preferred hiring black and whites from the same state in the South. Up until the 1970 the old Cadillac Plant on Michigan Avenue - Local 22, had a preference for blacks and whites from Georgia. The purpose of the "design" is to work the hell out of everyone and keep all the "workers in their place." No system of discrimination and segregation can be maintained without extreme police violence, murder and terror. It gets tricky because once it is understood that "they" are trying to murder "you" - anyway, each generation starts fighting the death fight "out of the box." In African American vernacular this is called "fuck it." During the war there was an abundance of this attitude. From a totally different point of view, this attitude gave rise to the "cool jazz" movement, what was called the "be-bop" jazz movement, then the industrial sound of "Motown" and what would later become "hip hop." That is another story for later.

On June 4, 1941, the Detroit Housing Commission approved two sites for defense housing projects--one for whites, one for blacks. The site originally selected by the commission for black workers was in a predominantly black area. The federal government chose a site at Nevada and Fenelon streets, a white neighborhood.

Times were tough for all, but for the black community, times were even tougher. Sixty years ago, blacks were excluded from all public housing except the Brewster projects. Many lived in homes without indoor plumbing, yet they paid rent two to three times higher than families in white districts. The degenerate politicians in Congress and the state government, along with the "economist" called this "the free market factor" and blacks called it a bunch of crap. To hold this system in place, the police confronted blacks along with government in the shape of a segregated military, discrimination in public accommodations, and unfair treatment.

On Sept. 29, 1942 a housing project planned for the black immigrants from the South and those who had been in Detroit a long time new began. The project was named Sojourner Truth in memory of our women black leaders during the Civil War days. Despite being completed on Dec. 15, no tenants moved into the homes because of so-called opposition from "the white neighborhood." On Jan. 20, 1942, it was announced that the Sojourner Truth project would be for whites and another site would be selected for black workers. But when a suitable site for blacks could not be found, the Federal housing authorities agreed to allow blacks into the finished homes.

On Feb. 27, with a cross burning in a field near the homes, 150 angry whites picketed the project vowing to keep out any black homeowners. By dawn the following day, the crowd had grown to 1,200, many of whom were armed. The first black tenants, rent paid and leases signed, arrived at 9 a.m. but left the area fearing trouble.

Fighting began when two blacks in a car attempted to run through the picket line. Clashes between white and black groups continued into the afternoon when 16 mounted police attempted to break up the fighting. Tear gas and shotgun shells were flying through the air. Officials announced an indefinite postponement of the move. The families, having given up whatever shelter they had in anticipation of their new homes, were left with no place to go and were temporarily housed with other families in the Brewster Homes and other sites around Detroit. Here is the backdrop of the 1942 "race riot."

By 1943 the number of blacks in Detroit had doubled since 1933 to 200,000 and racial tensions in the city grew accordingly. Containing 200,000 people in a compact mass is more than a notion. According to newspaper reports, to protest unfair conditions, some blacks began a "bumping campaign" -- walking into whites on the streets and bumping them off the sidewalks, or nudging them in elevators. To this author this sounds like a mass movement against people accustomed to "taking cuts" and getting in front of you because they believe they are entitled to rights the black do not have.

On June 20, 1942 blacks and whites clashed in minor skirmishes on Belle Isle. According to press reports, two young blacks, angered that they had been kicked out of Eastwood Park some five days previously - for "walking and breathing while black" had gone to Belle Isle to try to even the score. Police began to search cars of blacks crossing to Belle Isle but they did not search cars driven by whites. Why were they searching anyone car in the first place and secondly why just the cars with blacks? Fighting on the island began around 10 p.m. and police declared it under control by midnight. More than 200 blacks and whites had participated in the free-for-all.

What the newspaper reports fail to mention is that soldiers were stationed on Belle Isle at the time and the white soldiers were ready to kill anybody and have a tradition of practicing on blacks. Below is how the bourgeois newspaper writers describe the after events of the riot.

Mayor Edward Jeffries Jr. and Governor Harry Kelly asked President Roosevelt for help in restoring order. Federal troops in armored cars and jeeps with automatic weapons moved down Woodward. The sight of the troops with their overwhelming firepower cooled the fervor of the rioters and the mobs began to melt away.

The toll was appalling. The 36 hours of rioting claimed 34 lives, 25 of them black. More than 1,800 were arrested for looting and other incidents, the vast majority black. Thirteen murders remained unsolved.

Five black men received 80-day jail terms for disturbing the peace. Two were acquitted. Twenty-eight were charged and convicted on various charges including concealed weapons, destruction of property, assault, larceny. There was little arson, due to gasoline rationing, but more than a few cars were overturned and torched.

The city's white police force was criticized for its "restraint" in dealing with the black rioters, despite the fact that only blacks -- 17 of them -- were killed by police.

Police Commissioner John H. Witherspoon defended his force and his refusal to issue shoot-to-kill orders, saying hundreds could have been killed. "All of those killed would not have been hoodlums or murderers--many would have been victims of mob psychology or innocent bystanders. If a shoot-to-kill policy was right, my judgment was wrong.

Mayor Jeffries praised the police and said he was "rapidly losing my patience with those black leaders who insist that their people do not and will not trust policemen." The mayor asked the Rev. White to search for 200 qualified Negroes to join the police force.

Thurgood Marshall, then with the NAACP, assailed the city's handling of the riot. He charged that police unfairly targeted blacks while turning their backs on white atrocities. He said 85 percent of those arrested were black while whites overturned and burned cars in front of the Roxy Theater with impunity while police watched.

Unions did their best to keep production figures up, the assembly lines running and gave "lip service" to keeping the lid on confrontations, even though the Ku Klux Klan and the "Black Legion" were organized and visible in the plants. The problem is that the unions were trying to keep the workers organized and protect their economic interest while keeping their imperial foot on the neck of the black worker. The idea that you can escape the bullet of the company because you are white is not well thought out.

Early in June 1943, 25,000 Packard plant workers, who produced engines for bombers and PT boats, stopped work in protest of the promotion of three blacks. A handful of agitators whipped up animosity against the promotions. During the strike a voice outside the plant reportedly shouted, "I'd rather see Hitler and Hirohito win than work beside a nigger on the assembly line." Hirohito was the emperor of Japan - the big man, and Adolph Hitler was Adolph Hitler. This kind of thinking was a bitter pill to swallow.

During the 1950's the working class in Detroit - black and white, was "starving like Marvin." Auto production was down, the police violence was up and soldiers trained in killing walked the streets. It was not uncommon to face a pistol and be "stuck up" for a pack of cigarettes. What pulled the economy out of the slump were the Korean War and the secret war in Vietnam. In

the late 1950's and early 60's Detroit had a "stop and frisk" law. That meant the police could stop you for nothing and search you on the spot - for nothing. Black school children had their book bags searched, just for intimidation purposes.

This was an era - time frame, when the police road around as a group called the "big four." The "big four" was a police car with four white officers who terrorized the neighborhoods. The "big four" would ride down the street and tell young people standing around singing and "hanging out" to "give me that corner" - which meant get the heck off of the street. It was not like it was playgrounds and parks to go to or the bus fair and cars to take you there. If you managed to get to the park you had to expect to fight someone who felt you should not have a right to go to the park of fish off the Detroit River. It was rough all over and most of the fellows made it a habit to hang out in the alley. Lots of people are shot from running from the police - mostly in the back, because "why get shot in the face?"

The year 1963 was the year of the "Poor Peoples Campaign and March."

Dr. King gave a number of famous speeches during his time, in Montgomery, Birmingham, Selma, Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. On June 23, 1963, Dr. King spoke to a crowd of more than 125,000 at the Walk to Freedom in Detroit and told the marchers, "I can assure you that what has been done here today will serve as a source of inspiration for all of the freedom-loving people of this nation." The Freedom Walk in Detroit foreshadowed the upcoming March on Washington and Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech two months later on August 28, at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. In his Detroit speech, Dr. King spoke of having a "dream deeply rooted in the American dream," where black and white children "will be able to join hands as brothers and sisters," and where "my four little children will . . . be judged on the basis of the content of their character, not the color of their skin."

It was a critical look at the Washington March of August 28 that occupies a large part of Malcolm's "Message to the Grass Roots."

Malcolm X came up during this enter era and understood "the real." With all due respect to the Nation of Islam and The Honorable Elijah Muhammad to whom all praises are due and the noble Dr. King, it is this "real" Malcolm X, who delivered his famous "Message to the Grass Roots" here in Detroit. It is this political Malcolm X that the workers in Detroit flocked to and loved.

## **End Game: The More Things Change ... The More Change Affect Things**

Malcolm X was deeply affected by the "change wave" of 1963 and in turn affected the 1963 "change wave." One can read a chronology of Malcolm's life in 1963 at [www.brothermalcolm.net.](http://www.brothermalcolm.net.), and get a feel for the deep personal trauma and anguish he felt

over his membership in the Nation of Islam and his personal relationship with The Honorable Elijah Muhammad. The real story has to do with the movement of millions of people and how this movement affected Malcolm.

The struggle of the African American people for equality, decency, peace and prosperity - like the struggle of most people in America, takes place within the framework of how one makes a living and supports themselves and loved ones. There have been stages and phases - places and spaces, in this struggle. First as slaves, then as sharecroppers and farm laborers, then as industrial workers and service workers and today as increasingly minimum wage workers, unemployed and unemployable members of society. A whole generation has been criminalized and virtually no one has a family where someone is not under the authority of the penal system.

We are the last ones on earth that need to be lectured about crime and more police is not the answer. Caught in the vice grip of police violence, discrimination and crime we are presented a view of the world that always blame us for our social position. Without question there are things that the individual can do to help himself and community, but when 30 million people face the same social evils this is not the fault of the individual but a criminal conspiracy.

The growing poverty and disease in our community is real, yet the government spends more money on prisons than programs to combat the poverty and crime. Our problems did not start with the Bush Jr. administration but have gotten worse with his administration that will spend billions of dollars on war and trying to catch one man rather than deal with real American working people problems.

As slaves we faced a certain kind of problem - slavery pure and simple. This problem of slavery grew out of the nature of using millions of slaves as the basis of a system of wealth creation. As sharecropper we had another kind of problem. Besides the extreme violence, terror and segregation there was the problem of getting paid. It might not sound like it, but sharecropping is a business. The sharecropper grew crops and was paid a part of the crops by the landowner, who often owned the stores, banks and controlled the credit system so that you always stayed in debt and had to work another year for him. The story is that without having political muscle, a class of owners can cheat you out of your labor - money.

As industrial and service workers we moved up to being wage slaves on the more than less bottom of the pecking order. Not all blacks have the worse low paying jobs and all one has to do is look at the Mexican workers throughout America. Not all whites have the best paying jobs and a certain economic integration has taken place. However, the majority of blacks, senior citizens and an increasing amount of everybody is catching hell.



# **League of Revolutionary Black Workers, Detroit.**

Source: <http://www.marxists.org/history/erol/1960-1970/lrbw.jpg>

What would be Malcolm's actions and thinking under new conditions when computers, advance robotics and the technology revolution is putting people out of work and lowering wages by replacing human beings but make it possible to feed and cloth everyone? How come illiteracy is rising in America when we have the ability to teach the world? How can medical care be out of the reach of the poorest person when we have a wonderful medical technology and access to the earth's natural healing substances?

Changes in our system of government are needed and the individual is important and can do something about this today. Everything is important and one action cannot solve a problem that has been brewing and stewing for years. Questions have to be asked. One can understand a person owning the local pizza joint but not owning the water supply. No one has the right to own the water and privatizing water is a criminal act of greed.

What is needed is a vision and discussion about where "do we go" in the new age of electronics and advanced technology.

Source: <http://www.brothermalcolm.net/aug04/legacy.html>

# OUR TRADITION

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## 04 Message to the Grassroots by Malcolm X (1963)

And during the few moments that we have left, we want to have just an off-the-cuff chat between you and me -- us. We want to talk right down to earth in a language that everybody here can easily understand. We all agree tonight, all of the speakers have agreed, that America has a very serious problem. Not only does America have a very serious problem, but our people have a very serious problem. America's problem is us. We're her problem. The only reason she has a problem is she doesn't want us here. And every time you look at yourself, be you black, brown, red, or yellow -- a so-called Negro -- you represent a person who poses such a serious problem for America because you're not wanted. Once you face this as a fact, then you can start plotting a course that will make you appear intelligent, instead of unintelligent.

What you and I need to do is learn to forget our differences. When we come together, we don't come together as Baptists or Methodists. You don't catch hell 'cause you're a Baptist, and you don't catch hell 'cause you're a Methodist. You don't catch hell 'cause you're a Methodist or a Baptist. You don't catch hell because you're a Democrat or a Republican. You don't catch hell because you're a Mason or an Elk. And you sure don't catch hell 'cause you're an American; 'cause if you was an American, you wouldn't catch no hell. You catch hell 'cause you're a black man. You catch hell, all of us catch hell, for the same reason.

So we are all black people, so-called Negroes, second-class citizens, ex-slaves. You are nothing but a ex-slave. You don't like to be told that. But what else are you? You are ex-slaves. You didn't come here on the "Mayflower." You came here on a slave ship -- in chains, like a horse, or a cow, or a chicken. And you were brought here by the people who came here on the "Mayflower." You were brought here by the so-called Pilgrims, or Founding Fathers. They were the ones who brought you here.

We have a common enemy. We have this in common: We have a common oppressor, a common exploiter, and a common discriminator. But once we all realize that we have this common enemy, then we unite on the basis of what we have in common. And what we have foremost in common is that enemy -- the white man. He's an enemy to all of us. I know some of you all think that some of them aren't enemies. Time will tell.

In Bandung back in, I think, 1954, was the first unity meeting in centuries of black people. And once you study what happened at the Bandung conference, and the results of the Bandung conference, it actually serves as a model for the same procedure you and I can use to get our

problems solved. At Bandung all the nations came together. There were dark nations from Africa and Asia. Some of them were Buddhists. Some of them were Muslim. Some of them were Christians. Some of them were Confucianists; some were atheists. Despite their religious differences, they came together. Some were communists; some were socialists; some were capitalists. Despite their economic and political differences, they came together. All of them were black, brown, red, or yellow.

The number-one thing that was not allowed to attend the Bandung conference was the white man. He couldn't come. Once they excluded the white man, they found that they could get together. Once they kept him out, everybody else fell right in and fell in line. This is the thing that you and I have to understand. And these people who came together didn't have nuclear weapons; they didn't have jet planes; they didn't have all of the heavy armaments that the white man has. But they had unity.

They were able to submerge their little petty differences and agree on one thing: That though one African came from Kenya and was being colonized by the Englishman, and another African came from the Congo and was being colonized by the Belgian, and another African came from Guinea and was being colonized by the French, and another came from Angola and was being colonized by the Portuguese. When they came to the Bandung conference, they looked at the Portuguese, and at the Frenchman, and at the Englishman, and at the other -- Dutchman -- and learned or realized that the one thing that all of them had in common: they were all from Europe, they were all Europeans, blond, blue-eyed and white-skinned. They began to recognize who their enemy was. The same man that was colonizing our people in Kenya was colonizing our people in the Congo. The same one in the Congo was colonizing our people in South Africa, and in Southern Rhodesia, and in Burma, and in India, and in Afghanistan, and in Pakistan. They realized all over the world where the dark man was being oppressed, he was being oppressed by the white man; where the dark man was being exploited, he was being exploited by the white man. So they got together under this basis -- that they had a common enemy.

And when you and I here in Detroit and in Michigan and in America who have been awakened today look around us, we too realize here in America we all have a common enemy, whether he's in Georgia or Michigan, whether he's in California or New York. He's the same man: blue eyes and blond hair and pale skin -- same man. So what we have to do is what they did. They agreed to stop quarreling among themselves. Any little spat that they had, they'd settle it among themselves, go into a huddle -- don't let the enemy know that you got a disagreement.

Instead of us airing our differences in public, we have to realize we're all the same family. And when you have a family squabble, you don't get out on the sidewalk. If you do, everybody calls you uncouth, unrefined, uncivilized, savage. If you don't make it at home, you settle it at home; you get in the closet -- argue it out behind closed doors. And then when you come out on the

street, you pose a common front, a united front. And this is what we need to do in the community, and in the city, and in the state. We need to stop airing our differences in front of the white man. Put the white man out of our meetings, number one, and then sit down and talk shop with each other. That's all you gotta do.

I would like to make a few comments concerning the difference between the black revolution and the Negro revolution. There's a difference. Are they both the same? And if they're not, what is the difference? What is the difference between a black revolution and a Negro revolution? First, what is a revolution? Sometimes I'm inclined to believe that many of our people are using this word "revolution" loosely, without taking careful consideration of what this word actually means, and what its historic characteristics are. When you study the historic nature of revolutions, the motive of a revolution, the objective of a revolution, and the result of a revolution, and the methods used in a revolution, you may change words. You may devise another program. You may change your goal and you may change your mind.

Look at the American Revolution in 1776. That revolution was for what? For land. Why did they want land? Independence. How was it carried out? Bloodshed. Number one, it was based on land, the basis of independence. And the only way they could get it was bloodshed. The French Revolution -- what was it based on? The land-less against the landlord. What was it for? Land. How did they get it? Bloodshed. Was no love lost; was no compromise; was no negotiation. I'm telling you, you don't know what a revolution is. 'Cause when you find out what it is, you'll get back in the alley; you'll get out of the way. The Russian Revolution -- what was it based on? Land. The land-less against the landlord. How did they bring it about? Bloodshed. You haven't got a revolution that doesn't involve bloodshed. And you're afraid to bleed. I said, you're afraid to bleed.

[As] long as the white man sent you to Korea, you bled. He sent you to Germany, you bled. He sent you to the South Pacific to fight the Japanese, you bled. You bleed for white people. But when it comes time to seeing your own churches being bombed and little black girls be murdered, you haven't got no blood. You bleed when the white man says bleed; you bite when the white man says bite; and you bark when the white man says bark. I hate to say this about us, but it's true. How are you going to be nonviolent in Mississippi, as violent as you were in Korea? How can you justify being nonviolent in Mississippi and Alabama, when your churches are being bombed, and your little girls are being murdered, and at the same time you're going to violent with Hitler, and Tojo, and somebody else that you don't even know?

If violence is wrong in America, violence is wrong abroad. If it's wrong to be violent defending black women and black children and black babies and black men, then it's wrong for America to draft us and make us violent abroad in defense of her. And if it is right for America to draft us,

and teach us how to be violent in defense of her, then it is right for you and me to do whatever is necessary to defend our own people right here in this country.

The Chinese Revolution -- they wanted land. They threw the British out, along with the Uncle Tom Chinese. Yeah, they did. They set a good example. When I was in prison, I read an article -- don't be shocked when I say I was in prison. You're still in prison. That's what America means: prison. When I was in prison, I read an article in Life magazine showing a little Chinese girl, nine years old; her father was on his hands and knees and she was pulling the trigger 'cause he was an Uncle Tom Chinaman, When they had the revolution over there, they took a whole generation of Uncle Toms -- just wiped them out. And within ten years that little girl become a full-grown woman. No more Toms in China. And today it's one of the toughest, roughest, most feared countries on this earth -- by the white man. 'Cause there are no Uncle Toms over there.

Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research. And when you see that you've got problems, all you have to do is examine the historic method used all over the world by others who have problems similar to yours. And once you see how they got theirs straight, then you know how you can get yours straight. There's been a revolution, a black revolution, going on in Africa. In Kenya, the Mau Mau were revolutionaries; they were the ones who made the word "Uhuru" [Kenyan word for "freedom"]. They were the ones who brought it to the fore. The Mau Mau, they were revolutionaries. They believed in scorched earth. They knocked everything aside that got in their way, and their revolution also was based on land, a desire for land. In Algeria, the northern part of Africa, a revolution took place. The Algerians were revolutionists; they wanted land. France offered to let them be integrated into France. They told France: to hell with France. They wanted some land, not some France. And they engaged in a bloody battle.

So I cite these various revolutions, brothers and sisters, to show you -- you don't have a peaceful revolution. You don't have a turn-the-other-cheek revolution. There's no such thing as a nonviolent revolution. Only kind of revolution that's nonviolent is the Negro revolution. The only revolution based on loving your enemy is the Negro revolution. The only revolution in which the goal is a desegregated lunch counter, a desegregated theater, a desegregated park, and a desegregated public toilet; you can sit down next to white folks on the toilet. That's no revolution. Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality.

The white man knows what a revolution is. He knows that the black revolution is world-wide in scope and in nature. The black revolution is sweeping Asia, sweeping Africa, is rearing its head in Latin America. The Cuban Revolution -- that's a revolution. They overturned the system. Revolution is in Asia. Revolution is in Africa. And the white man is screaming because he sees

revolution in Latin America. How do you think he'll react to you when you learn what a real revolution is? You don't know what a revolution is. If you did, you wouldn't use that word.

A revolution is bloody. Revolution is hostile. Revolution knows no compromise. Revolution overturns and destroys everything that gets in its way. And you, sitting around here like a knot on the wall, saying, "I'm going to love these folks no matter how much they hate me." No, you need a revolution. Whoever heard of a revolution where they lock arms, as Reverend Cleage was pointing out beautifully, singing "We Shall Overcome"? Just tell me. You don't do that in a revolution. You don't do any singing; you're too busy swinging. It's based on land. A revolutionary wants land so he can set up his own nation, an independent nation. These Negroes aren't asking for no nation. They're trying to crawl back on the plantation.

When you want a nation, that's called nationalism. When the white man became involved in a revolution in this country against England, what was it for? He wanted this land so he could set up another white nation. That's white nationalism. The American Revolution was white nationalism. The French Revolution was white nationalism. The Russian Revolution too -- yes, it was -- white nationalism. You don't think so? Why you think Khrushchev and Mao can't get their heads together? White nationalism. All the revolutions that's going on in Asia and Africa today are based on what? Black nationalism. A revolutionary is a black nationalist. He wants a nation. I was reading some beautiful words by Reverend Cleage, pointing out why he couldn't get together with someone else here in the city because all of them were afraid of being identified with black nationalism. If you're afraid of black nationalism, you're afraid of revolution. And if you love revolution, you love black nationalism.

To understand this, you have to go back to what the young brother here referred to as the house Negro and the field Negro -- back during slavery. There was two kinds of slaves. There was the house Negro and the field Negro. The house Negroes - they lived in the house with master, they dressed pretty good, they ate good 'cause they ate his food -- what he left. They lived in the attic or the basement, but still they lived near the master; and they loved their master more than the master loved himself. They would give their life to save the master's house quicker than the master would. The house Negro, if the master said, "We got a good house here," the house Negro would say, "Yeah, we got a good house here." Whenever the master said "we," he said "we." That's how you can tell a house Negro.

If the master's house caught on fire, the house Negro would fight harder to put the blaze out than the master would. If the master got sick, the house Negro would say, "What's the matter, boss, we sick?" We sick! He identified himself with his master more than his master identified with himself. And if you came to the house Negro and said, "Let's run away, let's escape, let's separate," the house Negro would look at you and say, "Man, you crazy. What you mean, separate? Where is there a better house than this? Where can I wear better clothes than this?

Where can I eat better food than this?" That was that house Negro. In those days he was called a "house nigger." And that's what we call him today, because we've still got some house niggers running around here.

This modern house Negro loves his master. He wants to live near him. He'll pay three times as much as the house is worth just to live near his master, and then brag about "I'm the only Negro out here." "I'm the only one on my job." "I'm the only one in this school." You're nothing but a house Negro. And if someone comes to you right now and says, "Let's separate," you say the same thing that the house Negro said on the plantation. "What you mean, separate? From America? This good white man? Where you going to get a better job than you get here?" I mean, this is what you say. "I ain't left nothing in Africa," that's what you say. Why, you left your mind in Africa.

On that same plantation, there was the field Negro. The field Negro -- those were the masses. There were always more Negroes in the field than there was Negroes in the house. The Negro in the field caught hell. He ate leftovers. In the house they ate high up on the hog. The Negro in the field didn't get nothing but what was left of the insides of the hog. They call 'em "chitt'lings" nowadays. In those days they called them what they were: guts. That's what you were -- a gut-eater. And some of you all still gut-eaters.

The field Negro was beaten from morning to night. He lived in a shack, in a hut; He wore old, castoff clothes. He hated his master. I say he hated his master. He was intelligent. That house Negro loved his master. But that field Negro -- remember, they were in the majority, and they hated the master. When the house caught on fire, he didn't try and put it out; that field Negro prayed for a wind, for a breeze. When the master got sick, the field Negro prayed that he'd die. If someone come [sic] to the field Negro and said, "Let's separate, let's run," he didn't say "Where we going?" He'd say, "Any place is better than here." You've got field Negroes in America today. I'm a field Negro. The masses are the field Negroes. When they see this man's house on fire, you don't hear these little Negroes talking about "our government is in trouble." They say, "The government is in trouble." Imagine a Negro: "Our government"! I even heard one say "our astronauts." They won't even let him near the plant -- and "our astronauts"! "Our Navy" -- that's a Negro that's out of his mind. That's a Negro that's out of his mind.

Just as the slavemaster of that day used Tom, the house Negro, to keep the field Negroes in check, the same old slavemaster today has Negroes who are nothing but modern Uncle Toms, 20th century Uncle Toms, to keep you and me in check, keep us under control, keep us passive and peaceful and nonviolent. That's Tom making you nonviolent. It's like when you go to the dentist, and the man's going to take your tooth. You're going to fight him when he starts pulling. So he squirts some stuff in your jaw called novocaine, to make you think they're not doing anything to you. So you sit there and 'cause you've got all of that novocaine in your jaw,

you suffer peacefully. Blood running all down your jaw, and you don't know what's happening. 'Cause someone has taught you to suffer -- peacefully.

The white man do the same thing to you in the street, when he want to put knots on your head and take advantage of you and don't have to be afraid of your fighting back. To keep you from fighting back, he gets these old religious Uncle Toms to teach you and me, just like novocaine, suffer peacefully. Don't stop suffering -- just suffer peacefully. As Reverend Cleage pointed out, "Let your blood flow In the streets." This is a shame. And you know he's a Christian preacher. If it's a shame to him, you know what it is to me.

There's nothing in our book, the Quran -- you call it "Ko-ran" -- that teaches us to suffer peacefully. Our religion teaches us to be intelligent. Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone puts his hand on you, send him to the cemetery. That's a good religion. In fact, that's that old-time religion. That's the one that Ma and Pa used to talk about: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and a head for a head, and a life for a life: That's a good religion. And doesn't nobody resent that kind of religion being taught but a wolf, who intends to make you his meal.

This is the way it is with the white man in America. He's a wolf and you're sheep. Any time a shepherd, a pastor, teach you and me not to run from the white man and, at the same time, teach [sic] us not to fight the white man, he's a traitor to you and me. Don't lay down our life all by itself. No, preserve your life. it's the best thing you got. And if you got to give it up, let it be even-steven.

The slavemaster took Tom and dressed him well, and fed him well, and even gave him a little education -- a little education; gave him a long coat and a top hat and made all the other slaves look up to him. Then he used Tom to control them. The same strategy that was used in those days is used today, by the same white man. He takes a Negro, a so-called Negro, and make him prominent, build [sic] him up, publicize him, make him a celebrity. And then he becomes a spokesman for Negroes -- and a Negro leader.

I would like to just mention just one other thing else quickly, and that is the method that the white man uses, how the white man uses these "big guns," or Negro leaders, against the black revolution. They are not a part of the Negro revolution. They are used against the Negro revolution.

When Martin Luther King failed to desegregate Albany, Georgia, the civil-rights struggle in America reached its low point. King became bankrupt almost, as a leader. Plus, even financially, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was in financial trouble; plus it was in trouble, period, with the people when they failed to desegregate Albany, Georgia. Other Negro civil-rights leaders of so-called national stature became fallen idols. As they became fallen idols,

began to lose their prestige and influence, local Negro leaders began to stir up the masses. In Cambridge, Maryland, Gloria Richardson; in Danville, Virginia, and other parts of the country, local leaders began to stir up our people at the grassroots level. This was never done by these Negroes, whom you recognize, of national stature. They controlled you, but they never incited you or excited you. They controlled you; they contained you; they kept you on the plantation.

As soon as King failed in Birmingham, Negroes took to the streets. King got out and went out to California to a big rally and raised about -- I don't know how many thousands of dollars. He come [sic] to Detroit and had a march and raised some more thousands of dollars. And recall, right after that [Roy] Wilkins attacked King, accused King and the CORE [Congress Of Racial Equality] of starting trouble everywhere and then making the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] get them out of jail and spend a lot of money; and then they accused King and CORE of raising all the money and not paying it back. This happened; I've got it in documented evidence in the newspaper. Roy started attacking King, and King started attacking Roy, and Farmer started attacking both of them. And as these Negroes of national stature began to attack each other, they began to lose their control of the Negro masses.

And Negroes was [sic] out there in the streets. They was talking about how we was going to march on Washington. By the way, right at that time Birmingham had exploded, and the Negroes in Birmingham -- remember, they also exploded. They began to stab the crackers in the back and bust them up 'side their head -- yes, they did. That's when Kennedy sent in the troops, down in Birmingham. So, and right after that, Kennedy got on the television and said "this is a moral issue." That's when he said he was going to put out a civil-rights bill. And when he mentioned civil-rights bill and the Southern crackers started talking -- about what? We're going to march on Washington, march on the Senate, march on the White House, march on the Congress, and tie it up, bring it to a halt; don't let the government proceed. They even said they was [sic] going out to the airport and lay down on the runway and don't let no airplanes land. I'm telling you what they said. That was revolution. That was the black revolution.

It was the grass roots out there in the street. Scared the white man to death, scared the white power structure in Washington, D. C. to death; I was there. When they found out that this black steamroller was going to come down on the capital, they called in Wilkins; they called in Randolph; they called in these national Negro leaders that you respect and told them, "Call it off." Kennedy said, "Look, you all letting this thing go too far." And Old Tom said, "Boss, I can't stop it, because I didn't start it." I'm telling you what they said. They said, "I'm not even in it, much less at the head of it." They said, "These Negroes are doing things on their own. They're running ahead of us." And that old shrewd fox, he said, "Well If you all aren't in it, I'll put you in it. I'll put you at the head of it. I'll endorse it. I'll welcome it. I'll help it. I'll join it."

A matter of hours went by. They had a meeting at the Carlyle Hotel in New York City. The Carlyle Hotel is owned by the Kennedy family; that's the hotel Kennedy spent the night at, two nights ago; [it] belongs to his family. A philanthropic society headed by a white man named Stephen Currier called all the top civil-rights leaders together at the Carlyle Hotel. And he told them that, "By you all fighting each other, you are destroying the civil-rights movement. And since you're fighting over money from white liberals, let us set up what is known as the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership. Let's form this council, and all the civil-rights organizations will belong to it, and we'll use it for fund-raising purposes." Let me show you how tricky the white man is. And as soon as they got it formed, they elected Whitney Young as the chairman, and who [do] you think became the co-chairman? Stephen Currier, the white man, a millionaire. Powell was talking about it down at the Cobo Hall today. This is what he was talking about. Powell knows it happened. Randolph knows it happened. Wilkins knows it happened. King knows it happened. Everyone of that so-called Big Six -- they know what happened.

Once they formed it, with the white man over it, he promised them and gave them \$800,000 to split up between the Big Six; and told them that after the march was over they'd give them \$700,000 more. A million and a half dollars -- split up between leaders that you've been following, going to jail for, crying crocodile tears for. And they're nothing but Frank James and Jesse James and the what-do-you-call-'em brothers.

As soon as they got the setup organized, the white man made available to them top public relations experts; opened the news media across the country at their disposal; and then they begin to project these Big Six as the leaders of the march. Originally, they weren't even in the march. You was talking this march talk on Hastings Street -- Is Hastings Street still here? -- on Hasting Street. You was talking the march talk on Lenox Avenue, and out on -- What you call it? -- Fillmore Street, and Central Avenue, and 32nd Street and 63rd Street. That's where the march talk was being talked. But the white man put the Big Six at the head of it; made them the march. They became the march. They took it over. And the first move they made after they took it over, they invited Walter Reuther, a white man; they invited a priest, a rabbi, and an old white preacher. Yes, an old white preacher. The same white element that put Kennedy in power -- labor, the Catholics, the Jews, and liberal Protestants; same clique that put Kennedy in power, joined the march on Washington.

It's just like when you've got some coffee that's too black, which means it's too strong. What you do? You integrate it with cream; you make it weak. If you pour too much cream in, you won't even know you ever had coffee. It used to be hot, it becomes cool. It used to be strong, it becomes weak. It used to wake you up, now it'll put you to sleep. This is what they did with the march on Washington. They joined it. They didn't integrate it; they infiltrated it. They joined it, became a part of it, took it over. And as they took it over, it lost its militancy. They ceased to be

angry. They ceased to be hot. They ceased to be uncompromising. Why, it even ceased to be a march. It became a picnic, a circus. Nothing but a circus, with clowns and all. You had one right here in Detroit -- I saw it on television -- with clowns leading it, white clowns and black clowns. I know you don't like what I'm saying, but I'm going to tell you anyway. 'Cause I can prove what I'm saying. If you think I'm telling you wrong, you bring me Martin Luther King and A. Philip Randolph and James Farmer and those other three, and see if they'll deny it over a microphone.

No, it was a sellout. It was a takeover. When James Baldwin came in from Paris, they wouldn't let him talk, 'cause they couldn't make him go by the script. Burt Lancaster read the speech that Baldwin was supposed to make; they wouldn't let Baldwin get up there, 'cause they know Baldwin's liable to say anything. They controlled it so tight -- they told those Negroes what time to hit town, how to come, where to stop, what signs to carry, what song to sing\*, what speech they could make, and what speech they couldn't make; and then told them to get out town by sundown. And every one of those Toms was out of town by sundown. Now I know you don't like my saying this. But I can back it up. It was a circus, a performance that beat anything Hollywood could ever do, the performance of the year. Reuther and those other three devils should get a Academy Award for the best actors 'cause they acted like they really loved Negroes and fooled a whole lot of Negroes. And the six Negro leaders should get an award too, for the best supporting cast.

Source: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~public/civilrights/a0147.html>

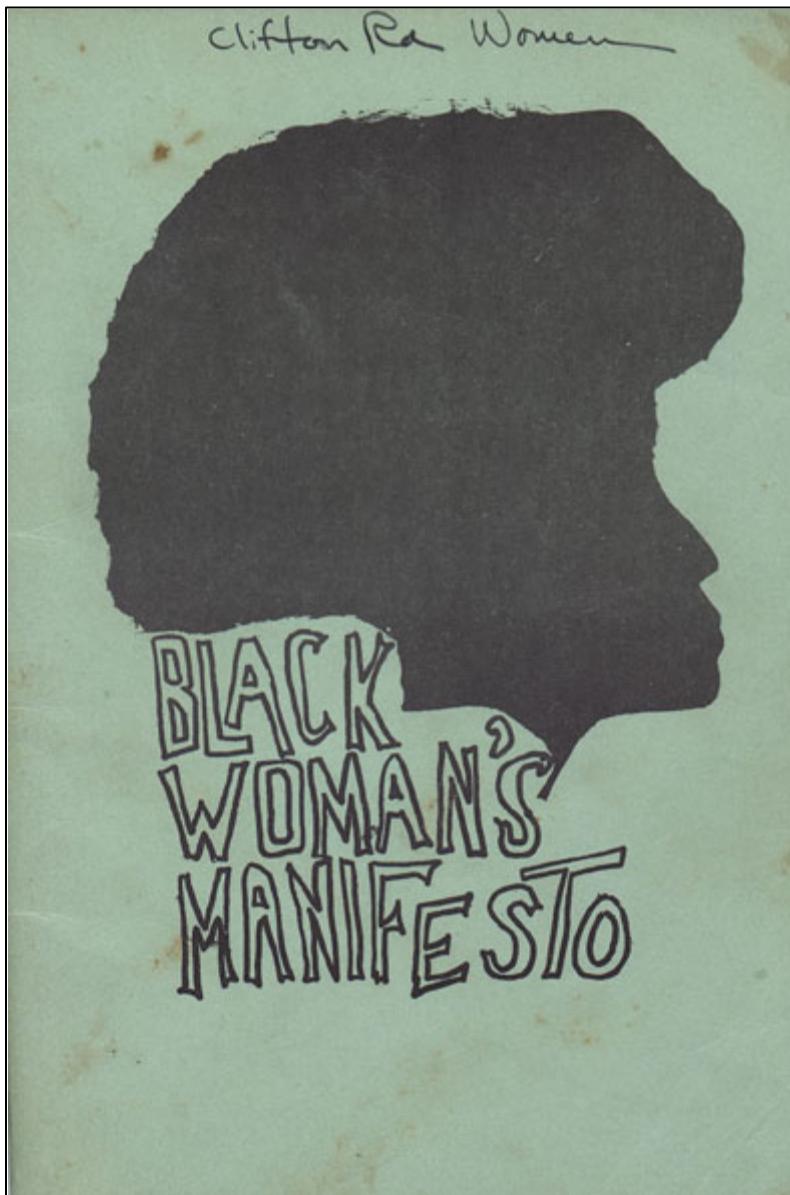
## **05 Black Woman's Manifesto by the Third World Women's Alliance (1970)**

### **Introduction by Gayle Lynch**

Racism and capitalism have trampled the potential of black people in this country and thwarted their self-determination. Initially the physical characteristics of those of African descent were used to fit blacks into the lowest niche in the capitalist hierarchy - that of maintenance. Therefore, black women and men of today do not encourage division by extending physical characteristics to serve as a criterion for a social hierarchy. If the potential of the black woman is seen mainly as a supportive role for the black man, then the black woman becomes an object to be utilized by another human being. Her potential stagnates and she cannot begin to think in terms of self-determination for herself and all black people. It is not right that her existence should be validated only by the existence of the black man.

The black woman is demanding a new set of female definitions and a recognition of herself of a citizen, companion and confidant, not a matriarchal villain or a step stool

baby-maker. Role integration advocates the complementary recognition of man and woman, not the competitive recognition of same.<sup>113</sup>



**Cover of the first edition of the Black Woman's Manifesto, published by Third World Women's Alliance. All photos in accompanying this article appeared in this edition, unless otherwise attributed. Source:**

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/wlm/blkmanif/blkmanif-cover-72.jpeg>

Role integration encourages a broader mental and emotional growth in black women and men as they share the responsibility of working towards liberation. Neither of them should be relegated to a narrow experience in life. Neither of them should have their potentiality for self-

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<sup>113</sup> Linda La Rue, The Black Movement and Women's Liberation, *The Black Scholar*, Vol. I, May, 1970, p.42.

determination controlled and predetermined by the opposite sex. That is a type of slavery that will not deliver us as a people. That is a form of bondage which is an integral part of the racist and capitalist system which black women and black men must work to oppose and overthrow.

## For Sadie and Maude by Eleanor Holmes Norton

Some subjects are so complex, so unyielding of facile insight, that it will not do to think about them in the ordinary way. Black women, their lot and their future-is for me such a subject. Thus, the new crop of literature concerning women - attuned to the peculiar relationship between white women and white men in America - has inspired me much, but less than the poetry of the great black poet, Gwendolyn Brooks, who writes for me and about me. Take, for example Miss Brooks' poem, "Sadie and Maude," a sad ballad that in a few stanzas touches in some intimate respect all of us who are black women:

Maude went to college.

Sadie stayed at home.

Sadie scraped life

With a fine-tooth comb.

She didn't leave a tangle in.

Her comb found every strand.

Sadie was one of the livingest chits

In all the land.

Sadie bore two babies

Under her maiden name.

Maude and Ma and Papa

Nearly died of shame.

When Sadie said last so-long

Her girls struck out from home.

(Sadie had left as heritage

Her fine-tooth comb.)

Maude, who went to college,

Is a thin brown mouse.

She is living all alone  
In this old house.<sup>114</sup>

Sadie and Maude are blood sisters, each in her own way living the unrequited life of the black woman. Sadie has two children out wedlock, but the Sadies of this world also include black women who have been married but have lost their husbands in America's wars against the black family. Maude "went to college" - or wherever black women have gone over the years to escape the perils of living the nearly predestined half-life of the black woman in this country. Maude, the "thin brown mouse" lives alone rather than incur Sadie's risks or risk Sadie's pleasures.

The difference in the lives of those two women cannot conceal the over-riding problem they share - loneliness, life lacking in the chance to develop a relationship with a man or satisfactory family relationships. The complexities of the problems facing black women begin to unfold. Not only must we work out an unoppressive relationship with our men; we must - we can at last - establish a relationship with them *de novo*.

In this respect, we conceive our mission in terms that are often different from the expressed goals of many white women revolutionaries. To be sure, our goals and theirs in their general outlines are same, but black women confront a task that is as delicate as it is revolutionary. For black women are part of a pre-imminent struggle whose time has come - the fight for black liberation. If women were suddenly to achieve equality with men tomorrow, black women would continue to carry the entire array of utterly oppressive handicaps associated with race. Racial oppression of black people in America has done what neither class oppression nor sexual oppression, with all their perniciousness, have ever done: destroyed an entire people and their culture. The difference is between exploitation and slavery. Slavery partakes of all the worst excesses of exploitation - and more - but exploitation does not always sink to the miserable depths of slavery.

Yet black women cannot - must not - avoid the truth about their special subservience. They are women with all that that implies. If some have been forced into roles as providers or, out of the insecurity associated with being a black woman alone, have dared not develop independence, the result is not that black women are today liberated women. For they have been "liberated" only from love, from family life, from meaningful work, and just as often from the basic comforts and necessities of an ordinary existence. There is neither power nor satisfaction in such a "matriarchy." There is only the bitter knowledge that one is a victim.

Still the stereotypic image of matriarchy has basic appeal to some black men who, in their frustration may not see immediately the counter-revolutionary nature of such a battle cry. To

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<sup>114</sup> Gwendolyn Brooks, *Selected Poems*, Harper & Row, N.Y. 1963.

allow the white oppressor to share the burden of his responsibility with the black woman is madness. It is comparable to black people blaming Puerto Ricans for competing with them for jobs, thus relieving the government of the pressures it must have to fulfill its duty to provide full employment. Surely, after hundreds of years black men realize that imprecision in detecting the Enemy is an inexcusable fault in a revolutionary.

But our problems only begin with the reconstruction of the black family. As black men begin to find dignified work after so many generations, what roles will their women seek? Are black people to reject so many of white society's values only to accept its view of woman and of the family? At the moment when the white family is caught in a maze of neurotic contradictions, and white women are supremely frustrated with their roles, are black women to take up such troubled models? Shall black women exchange their ancient insecurity for the white woman's familial cocoon? Can it serve us any better than it has served them? And how will it serve black men?

There is no reason to repeat bad history. There is no reason to envy the white woman who is sinking in a sea of close-quartered affluence, where one's world is one's house, one's peers one's children, and one's employer one's husband. Black women shall not have gained if Sadie and Maude exchange the "fine-tooth comb" and the "old house" for the empty treasures white women are today trying to turn in.

We who are black have a chance for something better. Europeans who came to this country struggled to be accepted by it and succeeded. Occasionally they changed America - for the better and for the worse - but mostly they took it as it was, hoping it would change them. Black people imitated this process pitifully, generation after generation, but were just so much oil on all that melting pot water. Today we are close to being true outsiders, no longer desiring to get in on any terms and at any cost. Racial exclusion has borne ironic fruit. We are perhaps the only group that has come to these shores who has ever acquired the chance to consciously avoid total Americanization with its inherent, its rank faults. On the road to equality there is no better place for blacks to detour around American values than in foregoing its example in the treatment of its women and the organization of its family life.

With black family life so clearly undermined in the American environment, blacks must remake the family unit, not imitate it. Indeed, this task is central to black liberation. The black male will not be returned to his historic strength - the foremost task of the black struggle today - if we do not recreate the strong family unit that was a part of our African heritage before it was dismembered by the slave-owning class in America. But it will be impossible to reconstruct the black family if its central characters are to be crepe paper copies acting out the old white family melodrama. In that failing production, the characters seem set upon a course precisely opposite to ours. White men in search of endless financial security have sold their spirits to that

goal and begun a steady emasculation in which the fiscal needs of wife and family determine life's values and goals. Their now ungrateful wives have begun to see the fraud of this way of life, even while eagerly devouring its fruits. Their even more ungrateful children are in bitter rejection of all that this sort of life signifies and produces. White family life in America today is less than a poor model for blacks. White family life is disintegrating at the moment when we must reforge the black family unit. The whole business of the white family - its softened men, its frustrated women, its angry children - is in a state of great mess.



But it would be naive to think that the temptations aspects of this sort of life are incapable of luring black people into a disastrous mockery. The ingredients are all there. We are a people in search of what for us has been the interminably elusive goal of economic security. Wretchedly poor for 350 years in a country where most groups have fattened, we could come to see the pain of much of white family life as bearable when measured against the tortures we have borne. Our men, deliberately emasculated as the only way to enforce their servile status, might easily be tempted by a family structure which, by making them the financial head of the household, seemed to make them its actual head. In our desperation to escape so many suffering decades, we might trip down the worn path taken by so many in America before us.

If we are to avoid this disaster, the best, perhaps the only, place to begin is in our conception of the black woman. After all, the immediate tasks of the black man are laid out for him. It is the future role of the black woman that is problematical. And what she is allowed to become - or relegated to - will shape not simply her future but that of the black family and the fate of its members.

If she is forced into the current white model, she is doomed to the fate of the "Empty Woman" about whom Miss Brooks has also written:

The empty woman had hats  
To show. With feathers. Wore combs  
In polished waves. Wooed cats.

If so she will be unfit for the onerous responsibilities she must meet if the struggle for black freedom is to bring us out of our ancient bondage into a truly new and liberated condition.

In any case it is too late for any group to consciously revert to old familial patterns of male dominance and female servility. Those roles have their roots in conditions of life that are rapidly disappearing, and especially so in this country. If the woman's place has historically been at home, it was at least in part because there was much work to be done there, and as the natural custodian of the children, it seemed logical for her to do it. But today there is neither so much work to be done there, nor so many children. Doitall appliances and technology are making housework a parttime job, freeing millions of women to do something else. An increasing array of birth preventatives has released women from the unwanted multiples of children it was difficult to avoid in the past. The effect on the family of these work and child liberating phenomena will reverberate in ways we still cannot foresee.

Yet it is certain that the institution of the family will undergo radical alteration largely through the new roles women will have to seek. With birth preventatives and with world overpopulation, many couples will rethink whether it is wise to have children at all. And even though most may choose to have children, it is doubtful that it will any longer be prestigious or wise to have very many. With children no longer the universally accepted reason for marriage, marriages are going to have to exist on their own merits. Marriages are going to have to exist because they possess inherent qualities which make them worthy of existing, a plane to which the institution has never before been elevated. For marriage to develop such inherent qualities, the woman partner heretofore oriented toward fulfilling now outmoded functions will have to seek new functions. Whether black or white, if American women are to find themselves, they must begin looking outside the home. This will undoubtedly lead them into doing and thinking about matters now pretty much reserved for men. Inevitably, women are going to acquire new goals and a new status.

We who are black are taking up the longdelayed work of familybuilding at an historic moment in history. We embark upon this goal at a time when the family institution in America is in a state of great flux. This is fortunate happenstance, for had we been about this task in the years immediately following World War II, we might have fallen into the mold which today traps white families, and especially white women.

As it is, we have a chance to pioneer in forging new relationships between men and women. We have a chance to make family life a liberating experience instead of the confining experience it more often has been.

We have a chance to free woman and with her the rest of us.

## **Black Women and the Struggle for Liberation by Maxine Williams**

In the early part of the sixties, social scientists became more and more interested in the family structure of blacks. Unemployment and so called crime among Blacks was increasing and some of these "scientists" decided that the problems of the Black community were caused by the family pattern among Black people. Since Blacks were deviating from the "norm" more female heads of households, higher unemployment, more school "dropouts" these pseudoscientists claimed that the way to solve these problems was to build up a more stable Black family in accord with the American patriarchal pattern.

In 1965, the U.S. government published a booklet entitled "The Negro Family The Case for National Action." The author (U.S. Dept. of Labor) stated, "In essence, the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is so out of line with the rest of American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole." According to this theory, the institution of slavery led to a breakdown in the Black family and the development of a socalled matriarchy, in which the Black woman was "dominant." This "matriarchal" structure was held responsible, in turn, for contributing to the "emasculated" of the Black man. In other words, as these people would have it, the oppression of black people was partly caused by the chief victims of this oppression, Black Women!

This myth of the Black Matriarchy has had wide spread influence, and is even widely believed in the Black community today. It is something we have to fight against and expose. To show just how wrong this theory is, let's look at the real condition and history of the socalled dominant Black woman.

Under slavery, once arriving on American soil, the African social order of Black people was broken down. Tribes were separated and shipped to different plantations. Slaves underwent a process of de-socialization and had to adopt a new culture and language. Black men greatly outnumbered Black women. Sociologist E.F. Frazier indicates in his book *The Negro Family In the U.S.*, that this probably led to "numerous cases of sex relations between Negro slaves and indentured white women." The "marriage" rate between Black men and white women became so high that interracial marriages were banned.

Prior to this time, Black men were encouraged to marry white women in order to enrich the slavemaster's plantation with more human labor. The Black man in some instances was able to select a mate of his choice. However in contrast, the Black woman had little choice in the selection of her mate. Living in a patriarchal society, she became a mere breeding instrument. Just as Black men were chained and branded under slavery, so were Black women. Lying nude on the slave ship, some women gave birth to children in the scorching hot sun.

There were economic interests involved in the Black women having as many offspring as she could bear. After her child was born, she was allowed to nurse and fondle the infant only at the slavemaster's discretion. There are cases of Black women who greatly resisted being separated from their children and having them placed on the auction block even though they were subject to flogging. And in some cases, the Black woman took the life of her own children rather than submit them to the oppression of slavery.

### **The Master's Household**

There are those who say that because the Black woman was in charge of care for the slavemaster's children, she became an important figure in the household. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Black woman became the most exploited "member" of the master's household. She scrubbed the floors, washed dishes, cared for the children and was often subjected to the lustful advances of Miss Ann's husband. She became an unpaid domestic. However, she worked outside as well. Still today, many Black women continue to work in households as underpaid domestics. And as W.E.B. DuBois stated in his essay *The Servant in the House*, "The personal degradation of their work is so great that any white man of decency would rather cut his daughter's throat than let her grow up to such a destiny."

In this way arose the "mammy" image of Black women an image so embedded in the system that its impact is still felt today. Until recently, the mass media has aided in reinforcing this image of portraying Black women as weighing 200 pounds, holding a child to her breast, and/or scrubbing floors with a rag around her head. For such a one, who was constantly portrayed with her head to the floor and her behind facing the ceiling, it is ludicrous to conceive of any dominant role. Contrary to popular opinion, all Black women do not willingly submit to the sexual advances of white men. Probably every Black woman has been told the old myth that the only ones who have had sexual freedom in this country are the white man and the Black woman. But, in many instances even physical force has been used to compel Black women to submit. Frazier gives a case in his book where a Black woman who refused the sexual advances of a white man was subdued and held to the ground by Black men while the "Master" stood there whipping her.

In some instances, Black women stood in awe of the white skin of their masters and felt that copulation with a white man would enhance her slave status. There was also the possibility that her mulatto offspring would achieve emancipation. Her admiration of white skin was not very different from the slave mentality of some Blacks which caused them to identify with their master. In some cases, the Black woman who submitted herself sexually played a vital role in saving the life of the Black man. If she gave the master a "good lovin'," she could sometimes prevent her husband from being horsewhipped or punished.

### "Emancipation"

The myth that is being perpetrated in the Black community states that somehow the Black woman has managed to escape much of the oppression of slavery and that all avenues of opportunity were opened to her. Well, this is highly interesting, since in 1870 when the Fifteenth Amendment guaranteed citizens the right to vote, this right did not apply to the Black woman. During reconstruction, those Blacks who served as justices of the peace and superintendents of education, and in municipal and state governments, were men. Although the reconstruction period was far from being an era of "Black Rule," it is estimated that thousands of Black men used their votes to help keep the Republicans in power. The Black women remained on the outside.

To be sure, the Black man had a difficult time exercising his right to vote. Mobs of whites waited for him at the voting booth. Many were threatened with the loss of jobs and subjected to the terror of Klan elements. The political activity for the Black man was relatively ephemeral, but while it lasted, many offices for the first time were occupied by them. The loose ties established between Black men and women during slavery were in many cases dissolved after emancipation. In order to test their freedom, some Black men who remained with their wives began flogging them. Previously, this was a practice reserved only for the white master. In the later part of the 1860s and early 70s, female heads of households began to crop up. Black men who held jobs as skilled craftsmen, carpenters, etc., were being driven out of these occupations. Since the Republicans no longer needed the Black vote after 1876, the "welfare" of Blacks was placed in southern hands. Black men found it very difficult to obtain jobs and in some instances found employment only as strikebreakers. Black men, who were made to feel "less of a man" in a racist oppressive system, turned toward Black women, and began to blame them for the position they occupied.

The Black woman, in some cases, left to herself with children to feed, also went looking for employment. Many went to work in the white man's kitchen. DuBois in the same essay mentioned earlier, *The Servant In the HOLLY*, gives a vivid portrayal of the exploitation of domestic workers. He speaks of the personal degradation of their work, the fact that they are still in some instances made to enter and exit by the side door, that they are referred to by their first name, paid extremely low wages, and subjected to the sexual exploitation of the "master." All this proves that because the Black woman worked, it did not make her more "independent" than the white woman. Rather, she became more subject to the brutal exploitation of capitalism as Black, as worker, as woman.



Source: [http://www.search.freedomarchives.org/images/thumbnails/image\\_black\\_power1.gif](http://www.search.freedomarchives.org/images/thumbnails/image_black_power1.gif)

### The "Free" Labor Market

I mentioned earlier that after emancipation Black men had a difficult time obtaining employment, that after emancipation he was barred from many of the crafts he had been trained in under slavery. The labor market for Black women also proved to be a disaster. Black women entered the needle trades in New York in the 1900s, as a cheap source of labor for the employers, and in Chicago in 1917, Black women who were willing to work for lower wages, were used to break a strike. There was general distrust between Black and white workers, and in some cities, white workers refused to work beside Black women and walked off their jobs.

The Black woman has never held high status in this society. Under slavery she was mated like cattle and mere breeding instrument. Today, the majority women are still confined to the most menial and lowest paid occupations domestic and laundry workers, file clerks, counter workers, and other service occupations. These jobs in most cases are not yet unionized.

Today, at least 20 percent of Black women are employed as private household workers, and their median income is \$1200. These women have the double exploitation of first doing drudgery in someone else's home, and then having to take care of their own households as well. Some are forced to leave their own children without adequate supervision in order to earn money by taking care of someone else's children. Sixtyone percent of Black married women were in the labor force in 1966. Almost onefourth of Black families are headed by females, double the percentage for whites. Due to the shortage of Black men, most Black women are forced to accept a relationship on male terms. In Black communities there sometimes exists a type of serial polygamy a situation where many women share the same man, one at a time.

### **Black is Beautiful**

As if Black women did not have enough to contend with, being exploited economically as a worker, being used as a source of cheap labor because she is a female, and being treated even worse because she is Black, she also finds herself fighting the beauty "standards" of a white western society. Years ago it was a common sight to see Black women wearing blond wigs and rouge, the object being to get as close to the white beauty standard as one possibly could. But, in spite of the fact that bleaching creams and hair straighteners were used, the trick just didn't work. Her skin was still black instead of fair, and her hair kinky instead of straight. She was constantly being compared to the white woman, and she was the antithesis of what was considered beautiful. Usually when she saw a Black man with a white woman, the image she had of herself became even more painful.

But now, "Black is beautiful," and the Black woman is playing a more prominent role in the movement. But there is a catch! She is still being told to step back and let the Black man come forward and lead. It is ironic that at a time when all talents and abilities should be utilized to aid in the struggle of national liberation, Stokely Carmichael comes along and declares that the position of women in the movement is "prone." And some years later, Eldridge Cleaver in referring to the status of women said they had "pussy power." Since then, the Black Panther Party has somewhat altered its view, saying "women are our other half." When writing their political statement, the Republic of New Africa stated they wanted the right of all Black men to have as many wives as they can afford. This was based on their conception that this is the way things were in Africa. (In their publication The New Africa written in December 1969, one of the points in their Declaration of Independence seeks "to assure equality of rights for the sexes."

Whether this means that the Black woman would be allowed to have as many husbands as she can afford, I have no way of knowing.)

### **Abortion and Birth Control**

So today, the Black woman still finds herself up the creek. She feels that she must take the nod from "her man," because if she "acts up" then she just might lose him to a white woman. She must still subordinate herself, her own feelings and desires, especially when it comes to the right of having control of her own body. When the birth control pill first came into use, it was experimentally tested on Puerto Rican women. It is therefore not surprising that Third World people look at this example and declare that both birth control and abortion is a form of genocide a device to eliminate Third World people. However, what is at issue is the right of women to control their own bodies. Enforced motherhood is a form of male supremacy; it is reactionary and brutal. During slavery, the plantation masters forced motherhood on Black women in order to enrich their plantations with more human labor.

It is women who must decide whether they wish to have children or not. Women must have the right to control their own bodies. And this means that we must also speak out against forced sterilization and against compelling welfare mothers to accept contraceptive methods against their will. There is now a women's liberation movement growing in the United States. By and large, Black women have not played a prominent role in this movement. This is due to the fact that many Black women have not yet developed a feminist consciousness. Black women see their problem mainly as one of national oppression. The middle class mentality of some white women's liberation seem to be irrelevant to Black women's needs. For instance, at the November 1969 Congress to Unite Women in New York, some of the participants did not want to take a stand against the school tracking system fearing that "good" students thrown in with "bad" ones would cause the "brilliant" students to leave school, thus lowering the standards. One white woman had the gall to mention to me that she felt women living in Scarsdale were more oppressed than Third World women trapped in the ghetto! There was also little attempt to deal with the problems of poor women, for example the fact that women in Scarsdale exploit Black women as domestics.

The movement must take a clearer stand against the horrendous conditions in which poor women are forced to work. Some women in the movement are in favor of eliminating the state protective laws for women. However, poor women who are forced to work in sweatshops, factories and laundries need those laws on the books. Not only must the State protective laws for women remain on the books, but we must see that they are enforced and made even stronger.

Women in the women's liberation movement assert that they are tired of being slaves to their husbands. confined to the household performing menial tasks. While the Black woman can sympathize with this view, she does not feel that breaking her ass every day from nine to five is any form of liberation. She has always had to work. Before the Emancipation Proclamation she worked in the fields of the plantation, as Malcolm X would say, "from can't see in the morning until can't see at night."

And what is liberation under this system? Never owning what you produce, you are forced to become a mere commodity on the labor market. Workers are never secure, and their length of employment is subject to the ups and downs in the economy. Women's liberation must relate to these problems. What is hampering it now is not the fact that it is still composed of mainly white middle class women, Rather it is the failure to engage in enough of the type of actions that would draw in and link up with the masses of women not yet in the movement., including working and Third World women. Issues such as daycare, support for the striking telephone workers, support for the laws which improve working conditions for women, and the campaign to free Joan Bird are a step in the right direction. I don't feel, however, that white women sitting around a room, browbeating one another for their "racism," saying, "I'm a racist, I'm a racist," as some women have done, is doing a damn thing for the Black woman. What is needed is action.

Women's Liberation must not isolate itself from the masses of women or the Third World community.



At the same time, white women cannot speak for Black women. Black women must speak for themselves. The Black Women's Alliance has been formed in New York to begin to do this. We felt there was a need for a revolutionary Black women's movement that spoke to the oppression of Black women as Blacks, as workers, as women. We are involved in reading, discussion, consciousness raising and taking action. We feel that Black women will have a difficult time relating to the more bitter antimale sentiment in the women's liberation movement, fearing that it will be a device to keep Black men and women fighting among themselves and diverting their energies from the real enemy.

Many Black women realize it will take both men and women to wage an effective struggle. However, this does not negate the necessity of women building our own movement because we must build our struggle now and continue it after the revolution if we are to achieve real emancipation.

When the Third World woman begins to recognize the depth of her oppression, she will move to form alliances with all revolutionary forces available and settle for nothing less than complete destruction of this racist, capitalist, male-dominated system.

## **Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female by Frances Beale**

In attempting to analyze the situation of the black woman in America, one crashes abruptly into a solid wall of grave misconceptions, outright distortions of fact and defensive attitudes on the part of many. The system of capitalism (and its after birth...racism) under which we all live, has attempted by many devious ways and means to destroy the humanity of all people, and particularly the humanity of black people. This has meant an outrageous assault on every black man, woman and child who reside in the United States.

In keeping with its goal of destroying the black race's will to resist its subjugation, capitalism found it necessary to create a situation where the black man found it impossible to find meaningful or productive employment. More often than not, he couldn't find work of any kind. And the black woman likewise was manipulated by the system, economically exploited and physically assaulted. She could often find work in the white man's kitchen, however, and sometimes became the sole breadwinner of the family. This predicament has led to many psychological problems on the part of both man and woman and has contributed to the turmoil that we find in the black family structure.

Unfortunately, neither the black man nor the black woman understood the true nature of the forces-working upon them. Many black women tended to accept the-capitalist evaluation of manhood and womanhood and believed, in fact, that black men were shiftless and lazy, otherwise they would get a job and support their families as they ought to. Personal

relationships between black men and women were thus torn asunder and one result has been the separation of man from wife, mother from child, etc.

America has defined the roles to which each individual should subscribe. It has defined "manhood" in terms of its own interests and "femininity" likewise. Therefore, an individual who has a good job, makes a lot of money and drives a Cadillac is a real "man," and conversely, an individual who is lacking in these "qualities" is less of a man. The advertising media in this country continuously informs the american male of his need for indispensable signs of his virility the brand of cigarettes that cowboys prefer, the whiskey that has a masculine tang or the label of the jock strap that athletes wear.

The ideal model that is projected for a woman is to be surrounded by hypocritical homage and estranged from all real work, spending idle hours primping and preening, obsessed with conspicuous consumption, and limiting life's functions to simply a sex role. We unqualitatively reject these respective models. A woman who stays at home, caring for children and the house often leads an extremely sterile existence. She must lead her entire life as a satellite to her mate. He goes out into society and brings back a little piece of the world for her. His interests and his understanding of the world become her own and she can not develop herself as an individual, having been reduced to only a biological function. This kind of woman leads a parasitic existence that can aptly be described as "legalized prostitution".

Furthermore, it is idle dreaming to think of black women simply caring for their homes and children like the middle class white model. Most black women have to work to help house, feed and clothe their families. Black women make up a substantial percentage of the black working force and this is true for the poorest black family as well as the so-called "middle class" family.

Black women were never afforded any such phony luxuries. Though we have been browbeaten with this white image, the reality of the degrading and dehumanizing jobs that were relegated to us quickly dissipated this mirage of "womanhood". The following excerpts from a speech that Sojourner Truth made at a Women's Rights Convention in the 19th century show us how misleading and incomplete a life this model represents for us:

...Well, chilern, whar dar is so much racket dar must be something out o'kilter. I tink dat 'twixt de niggers of de Souf and de women at de norf all a talkin' 'bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all dis here talkin' 'bout? Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages and lifted ober ditches, and to have de best place every whar. Nobody ever help me into carriages, or ober mud puddles, or gives me any best places...and ar'nt I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm...I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me--and ar'nt I a woman? I could work as much as a man (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well--

and ar'nt I a woman? I have borne five chilern and I seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard--and ar'nt I a woman?

Unfortunately, there seems to be some confusion in the Movement today as to who has been oppressing whom. Since the advent of black power, the black male has exerted a more prominent leadership role in our struggle for justice in this country. He sees the system for what it really is for the most part. But where he rejects its values and mores on many issues, when it comes to women, he seems to take his guidelines from the pages of the Ladies Home Journal.

Certain black men are maintaining that they have been castrated by society but that black women somehow escaped this persecution and even contributed to this emasculation. Let me state here and now that the black woman in america can justly be described as a "slave of a slave." By reducing the black man in america to such abject oppression, the black woman had no protector and was used, and is still being used in some cases, as the scapegoat for the evils that this horrendous system has perpetrated on black men. Her physical image has been maliciously maligned; she has been sexually molested and abused by the white colonizer; she has suffered the worst kind of economic exploitation, having been forced to serve as the white woman's maid and wet nurse for white offspring while her own children were more often than not, starving and neglected. It is the depth of degradation to be socially manipulated, physically raped, used to undermine your own household, and to be powerless to reverse this syndrome.

It is true that our husbands, fathers, brothers and sons have been emasculated, lynched and brutalized. They have suffered from the cruellest assault on mankind that the world has ever known. However, it is a gross distortion of fact to state that black women have oppressed black men. The capitalist system found it expedient to enslave and oppress them and proceeded to do so without signing any agreements with black women.

It must also be pointed out at this time, that black women are not resentful of the rise to power of black men. We welcome it. We see in it the eventual liberation of all black people from this corrupt system under which we suffer. Nevertheless, this does not mean that you have to negate one for the other. This kind of thinking is a product of miseducation; that it's either X or it's Y. It is fallacious reasoning that in order the black man to be strong, the black woman has to be weak.

Those who are exerting their "manhood" by telling black women to step back into a domestic, submissive role are assuming a counter-revolutionary position. Black women likewise have been abused by the system and we must begin talking about the elimination of all kinds of oppression. If we are talking about building a strong nation, capable of throwing off the yoke of

capitalist oppression, then we are talking about the total involvement of every man, woman, and child, each with a highly developed political consciousness. We need our whole army out there dealing with the enemy and not half an army.

There are also some black women who feel that there is no more productive role in life than having and raising children. This attitude often reflects the conditioning of the society in which we live and is adopted (totally, completely and without change) from a bourgeois white model. Some young sisters who have never had to maintain a household and accept the confining role which this entails, tend to romanticize (along with the help of a few brothers) this role of housewife and mother. Black women who have had to endure this kind of function as the sole occupation of their life, are less apt to have these utopian visions.

Those who project in an intellectual manner how great and rewarding this role will be and who feel that the most important thing that they can contribute to the black nation is children, are doing themselves a great injustice. This line of reasoning completely negates the contributions that black women have historically made to our struggle for liberation. These black women include Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary McLeod Bethune and Fannie Lou Hamer to name but a few.

We live in a highly industrialized society and every member of the black nation must be as academically and technologically developed as possible. To wage a revolution, we need competent teachers, doctors, nurses, electronic experts, chemists, biologists, physicists, political scientists, and so on and so forth. Black women sitting at home reading bedtime stories to their children are just not going to make it.

### **Economic Exploitation of Black Women**

The economic system of capitalism finds it expedient to reduce women to a state of enslavement. They oftentimes serve as a scapegoat for the evils of this system. Much in the same way that the poor white cracker of the South who is equally victimized, looks down upon blacks and contributes to the oppression of blacks, --So by giving to men a false feeling of superiority (at least in their own home or in their relationships with women,) the oppression of women acts as an escape valve for capitalism. Men may be cruelly exploited and subjected to all sorts of dehumanizing tactics on the part of the ruling class, but they brave someone who is below them - at least they're not women.

Women also represent a surplus labor supply, the control of which is absolutely necessary to the profitable functioning of capitalism. Women are systematically exploited by the system. They are paid less for the same work that men do and jobs that are specifically relegated to women are low-paying and without the possibility of advancement. Statistics from the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor show that the wage scale for white women

was even below that of black men; and the wage scale for non-white women was the lowest of all:

White Males	\$6,704
Non-white Males	4,277
White Females	3,991
Non-white Females	2,861

Those industries which employ mainly black women are the most exploitative in the country. Domestic and hospital workers are good examples of this oppression; the garment workers in New York City provide us with another view of this economic slavery. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) - whose overwhelming membership consists of black and Puerto Rican women has a leadership that is nearly lily-white and male. This leadership has been working in collusion with the ruling class and has completely sold its soul to the corporate structure.

To add insult to injury, the ILGWU has invested heavily in business enterprises in racist, apartheid South Africa. --with union funds. Not only does this bought-off leadership contribute to our continued exploitation in this country by not truly representing the best interests of its membership, but it audaciously uses funds that black and Puerto Rican women have provided to support the economy of a vicious government that is engaged in the economic rape and murder of our black brothers and sisters in our Motherland - Africa.

The entire labor movement in the United States has suffered as a result of the super exploitation of black workers and women. The unions have historically been racist and chauvinistic. They have upheld racism in this country (and condoned imperialist exploitation around the world) -and have failed to fight the white skin privileges of white workers. They have failed to fight or even make an issue against the inequities in the hiring and pay of women workers. There has been virtually no struggle against either the racism of the white worker or the economic exploitation of the working woman, two factors which have consistently impeded the advancement of the real struggle against the ruling capitalist class.

This racist, chauvinistic and manipulative use of black workers and women, especially black women, has been a severe cancer on the american labor scene. It therefore becomes essential for those who understand the workings of capitalism and imperialism to realize that the exploitation of black people and women works to everyone's disadvantage and that the liberation of these two groups is a stepping stone to the liberation of all oppressed people in this country and around the world.

## Bedroom Politics

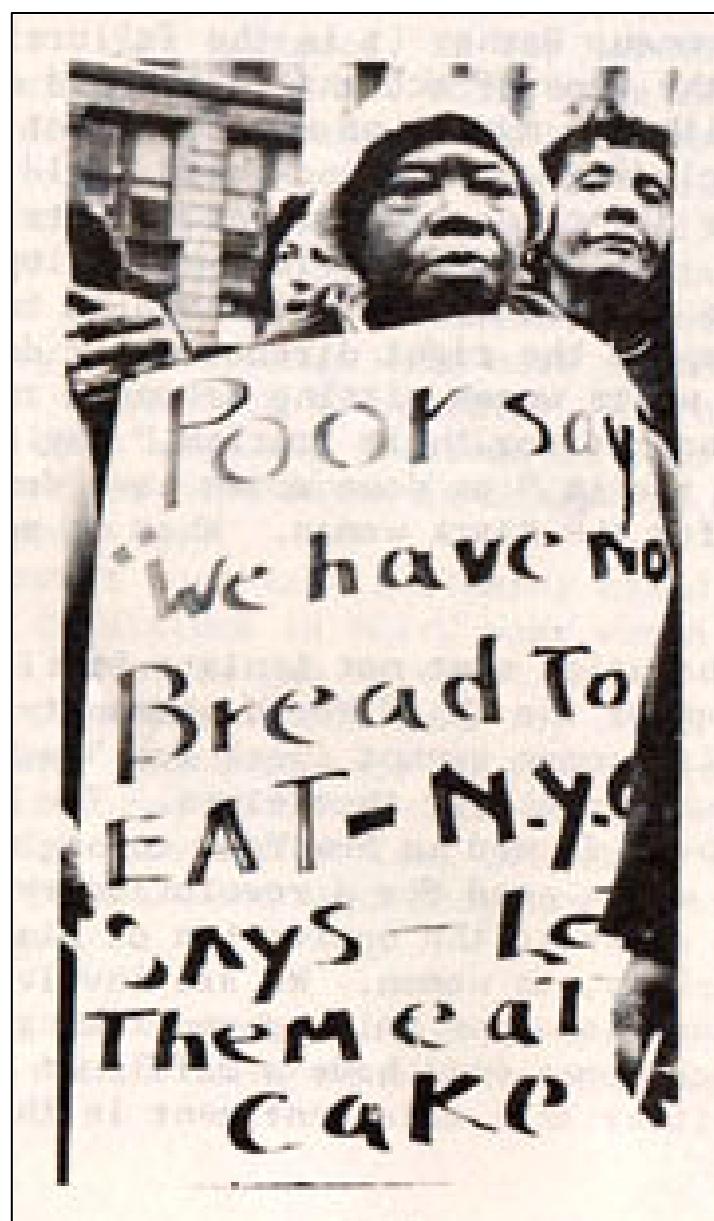
I have briefly discussed the economic and psychological manipulation of black women, but perhaps the most outlandish act of oppression in modern times is the current campaign to promote sterilization of nonwhite women in an attempt to maintain the population and power imbalance between the white haves and the non-white have nots.

These tactics are but another example of the many devious schemes that the ruling elite attempt to perpetrate on the black population in order to keep itself in control. It has recently come to our attention that a massive campaign for so-called "birth control" is presently being promoted not only in the underdeveloped non-white areas of the world, but also in black communities here in the United States. However, what

the authorities in charge of these programs refer to as "birth control" is in fact nothing but a method of outright surgical genocide.

The United States has been sponsoring sterilization clinics in non-white countries, especially in India where already some 3 million young men and boys in and around New Delhi have been sterilized in make-shift operating rooms set up by the American Peace Corps workers. Under these circumstances, it is understandable why certain countries view the Peace Corps not as a benevolent project, not as evidence of America's concern for underdeveloped areas, but rather as a threat to their very existence. This program could more aptly be named the "Death Corps."

The Vasectomy which is performed on males and takes only six or seven minutes is a relatively simple operation. The sterilization of a



woman, on the other hand, is admittedly major surgery. This surgical operation (Salpingectomy<sup>115</sup>) must be performed in a hospital under general anesthesia. This method of "birth control" is a common procedure in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico has long been used by the colonialist exploiter, the United States, as a huge experimental laboratory for medical research before allowing certain practices to be imported and used here. When the birth control pill was first being perfected, it was tried out on Puerto Rican women and selected black women (poor), using them like Guinea pigs, to evaluate its effect and its efficiency.

The Salpingectomy has now become the commonest operation in Puerto Rico, commoner than an appendectomy or a tonsillectomy. It is so widespread that it is referred to simply as "la operation." *On the Island, 20% of the women between the ages of 15 and 45 have already been sterilized.*

And now, as previously occurred with the pill, this method has been imported into the United States. These sterilization clinics are cropping up around the country in the black and Puerto Rican communities. These so-called "Maternity Clinics" specifically outfitted to purge black women or men of their reproductive possibilities, are appearing more and more in hospitals and clinics across the country.

A number of organizations have been formed to popularize the idea of sterilization such as the Association for Voluntary Sterilization and The Human Betterment (!!?) which has its headquarters in New York City. Front Royal, Virginia has one such "Maternity Clinic" in Warren Memorial Hospital. The tactics used in the clinic in Fauquier County, Virginia, where poor and helpless black mothers and young girls are pressured into undergoing sterilization are certainly not confined to that clinic alone.

Threatened with the cut-off of relief funds, some black welfare women have been forced to accept this sterilization procedure in exchange for a continuation of welfare benefits. Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City performs these operations on many of its ward patients whenever it can convince the women to undergo this surgery. Mississippi and some of the other Southern states are notorious for this act. Black women are often afraid to permit any kind of necessary surgery because they know from bitter experience that they are more likely than not to come out of the hospital without their insides. (Both Salpingectomies & Hysterectomies are performed.)

We condemn this use of the black woman as a medical testing ground for the white middle class. Reports of the ill effects including deaths from the use of the birth control pill only started to come to light when the white privileged class began to be affected. These outrageous Nazi-

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<sup>115</sup> Through an abdominal incision, the surgeon cuts both Fallopian tubes and ties off the separated ends after which there is no way for the egg to pass from the ovary to the womb.

like procedures on the part of medical researchers are but another manifestation of the totally amoral and dehumanizing brutality that the capitalist system perpetrates on black women. The sterilization experiments carried on in concentration camps some twenty-five years ago have been denounced the world over, but no one seems to get upset by the repetition of these same racist tactics today in the United States of America - land of the free and home of the brave. This campaign is as nefarious a program as Germany's gas chambers and in a long term sense, as effective and with the same objective.

The rigid laws concerning abortions in this country are another vicious means of subjugation, and, indirectly of outright murder. Rich white women somehow manage to obtain these operations with little or no difficulty. It is the poor black and Puerto Rican woman who is at the mercy of the local butcher. Statistics show us that the non-white death rate at the hands of the unqualified abortionist is substantially higher than for white women. Nearly half of the child-bearing deaths in New York City were attributed to abortion alone and out of these, 79% re among non-whites and Puerto Rican women.

We are not saying that black women should not practice birth control or family planning. Black women have the right and the responsibility to determine when it is in the interest of the struggle to have children or not to have them. *It is also her right and responsibility to determine when it is in her own best interests to have children, how many she will have, and how far apart and this right must not be relinquished to anyone.*

The lack of the availability of safe birth control methods, the forced sterilization practices and the inability to obtain legal abortions are all symptoms of a decadent society that jeopardizes the health of black women (and thereby the entire black race) in its attempts to control the very life processes of human beings. This repressive control of black women is symptomatic of a society that believes it has the right to bring political factors into the privacy of the bedchamber. The elimination of these horrendous conditions will free black women for full participation in the revolution, and thereafter, in the building of the new society.

### **Relationship to White Movement**

Much has been written recently about the white women's liberation movement in the United States and the question arises whether there are any parallels between this struggle and the movement on the part of black women for total emancipation. While there are certain comparisons that one can make, simply because we both live under the same exploitative system, there are certain differences, some of which are quite basic.

The white women's movement is far from being monolithic. Any white group that does not have an anti-imperialist and anti-racist ideology has absolutely nothing in common with the black women's struggle. Are white women asking to be equal to white men in their pernicious

treatment of third world peoples? What assurances have black women that white women will be any less racist and exploitative if they had the power and were in a position to do so? These are serious questions that the white women's liberation movement has failed to address itself to.

Black people are engaged in a life and death struggle with the oppressive forces of this country and the main emphasis of black women must be to combat the capitalist, racist exploitation of black people. While it is true that male chauvinism has become institutionalized in american society, one must always look for the main enemy...the fundamental cause of the female condition. In fact, some groups come to the incorrect conclusion that their oppression is due simply to male chauvinism. They therefore, have an extremely antimale tone to their dissertations.

Another major differentiation is that the white women's liberation movement is basically middle class. Very few of these women suffer the extreme economic exploitation that most black women are subjected to day by day. If they find housework degrading and dehumanizing, they are financially able to buy their freedom - usually by hiring a black maid. The economic and social realities of the black woman's life are the most crucial for us. It is not an intellectual persecution alone; the movement is not a psychological outburst for us; it is tangible; we can taste it in all our endeavors. We as black women have got to deal with the problems that the black masses deal with, for our problems in reality are one and the same.

If the white groups do not realize that they are in fact, fighting capitalism and racism, we do not have common bonds. If they do not realize that the reasons for their condition lie in a debilitating economic and social system, and not simply that men get a vicarious pleasure out of "consuming their bodies for exploitative reasons," (This kind of reasoning seems to be quite prevalent in certain white women's groups) then we cannot unite with them around common grievances or even discuss these groups in a serious manner, because they're completely irrelevant to black women in particular or to the black struggle in general.

### **The New World**

The black community and black women especially, must begin raising questions about the kind of society we wish to see established. We must note the ways in which capitalism oppresses us and then move to create institutions that will eliminate these destructive influences.

The new world that we are struggling to create must destroy oppression of any type. The value of this new system will be determined by the status of those persons who are presently most oppressed - the low man on the totem pole. Unless women in any enslaved nation are completely liberated, the change cannot really be called a revolution. If the black woman has to

retreat to the position she occupied before the armed struggle, the whole movement and the whole struggle will have retreated in terms of truly freeing the colonized population.

A people's revolution that engages the participation of every member of the community, including men, and women, brings about a certain transformation in the participants as a result of this participation. Once you have caught a glimpse of freedom or tasted a bit of self-determination, you can't go back to old routines that were established under a racist, capitalist regime. We must begin to understand that a revolution entails not only the willingness to lay our lives on the firing line and get killed. In some ways, this is an easy commitment to make. To die for the revolution is a oneshot deal; to live for the revolution means taking on the more difficult commitment of changing our day-to-day life patterns.

This will mean changing the traditional routines that we have established as a result of living in a totally corrupting society. It means changing how you relate to your wife, your husband, your parents and your coworkers. If we are going to liberate ourselves as a people, it must be recognized that black women have very specific problems that have to be spoken to. We must be liberated along with the rest of the population. We cannot wait to start working on those problems until that great day in the future when the revolution somehow miraculously, is accomplished.

To assign women the role of housekeeper and mother while men go forth into battle is a highly questionable doctrine for a revolutionary to profess. Each individual must develop a high political consciousness in order to understand how this system enslaves us all and what actions we must take to bring about its total destruction. Those who consider themselves to be revolutionary must begin to deal with other revolutionaries as equals. And so far as I know, revolutionaries are not determined by sex.

Old people, young people, men and women must take part in the struggle. To relegate women to purely supportive roles or to simply cultural considerations is dangerous doctrine to project. Unless black men who are preparing themselves for armed struggle understand that the society which we are trying to create is one in which the oppression of ALL MEMBERS of that society is eliminated, then the revolution will have failed in its avowed Purpose.

Given the mutual commitment of black men and black women alike to the liberation of our people and other oppressed peoples around the world, the total involvement of each individual is necessary. A revolutionary has the responsibility of not only toppling those that are now in a position of power, but more importantly, the responsibility of creating new institutions that will eliminate all forms of oppression for all people. We must begin to re-write our understanding of traditional personal relationships between man and woman.

All the resources that the black community can muster up must be channeled into the struggle. Black women must take an active part in bringing about the kind of world where our children, our loved ones, and each citizen can grow up and live as decent human beings, free from the pressures of racism and capitalist exploitation.



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### The Black Movement and Women's Liberation by Linda La Rue

Let us first discuss what common literature addresses as the "common oppression" of blacks and women. This is a tasty abstraction designed purposely or inadvertently to draw validity and seriousness to the women's movement through a universality of plight. Every movement worth its "revolutionary salt" makes these headliner generalities about "common oppression" with

others - but let us state unequivocally that, with few exceptions, the American white woman has had a better opportunity to live a free and fulfilling life, both mentally and physically, than any other group in the United States, with the exception of her white husband. Thus, any attempt to analogize black oppression with the plight of the American white woman has the validity of comparing the neck of a hanging man with the hands of an amateur mountain climber with rope burns.

"Common oppression" is fine for rhetoric, but it does not reflect the actual distance between the oppression of the black man and woman who are unemployed, and the "oppression" of the American white woman who is "sick and tired" of Playboy fold-outs, or Christian Dior lowering hemlines or adding ruffles, or of Miss Clairol telling her that blondes have more fun. Is there any logical comparison between the oppression of the black woman on welfare who has difficulty feeding her children and the discontent of the suburban mother who has the luxury to protest the washing of the dishes on which her family's full meal was consumed?

The surge of "common oppression" rhetoric and propaganda may lure the unsuspecting into an intellectual alliance with the goals of women's liberation, but it is not a wise alliance. It is not that women ought not to be liberated from the shackles of their present unfulfillment, but the depth, the extent, the intensity, the importance - indeed, the suffering and depravity of the real oppression blacks have experiences - can only be minimized in an alliance with women who heretofore suffered little more than boredom, genteel repression, and dishpan hands.

For all the similarities and analogies drawn between the liberation of blacks, the point remains that when white women received their voting rights, most blacks, male and female, were systematically disenfranchised and had been that way since Reconstruction. And even in 1970, when women's right of franchise is rarely questioned, it is still a less than common occurrence for blacks to vote in some areas of the South. Tasteless analogies like abortion for oppressed middle class and poor women idealistically assert that all women have the right to decide if and when they want children, and thus fail to catch the flavor of the actual circumstances. Actual circumstances boil down to middle class women deciding when it is convenient to have children, while poor women decide the prudence of bringing into a world of already scarce resources, another mouth to feed. Neither their motives nor their objectives are the same. But current literature leads one to lumping the decisions of these two women under one generalization, when in fact the difference between the plights of these two women is as clear as the difference between being hungry and out of work, and skipping lunch and taking a day off.

If we are realistically candid with ourselves, and accept the fact that despite our beloved rhetoric of Pan-Africanism, our vision of third world liberation, and perhaps our dreams of a world state of multi-racial humanism, most blacks and a good many who generally exempt

themselves from categories, still want the proverbial "piece of cake." American values are difficult to discard for, unlike what more militant "brothers" would have us believe, Americanism does not end with the adoption of Afro hairstyles on pregnant women covered in long African robes. Indeed the fact that the independent black capitalism demonstrated by the black Muslims, and illustrated in Nixon's speeches, appeared for many blacks as the way out of the ghetto into the light, lends a truthful vengeance to the maxim that perhaps blacks are nothing more than black anglosaxons. Upon the rebirth of the liberation struggle in the sixties, a whole genre of "women's place" advocates immediately relegated black women to home and babies, which is almost as ugly an expression of black anglo-saxonism as is Nixon's concept of "black capitalism."

The study of many developing areas and countries reflects at least an attempt to allow freedom of education and opportunity to women. Yet, black Americans have not adopted developing area's "new role" paradigm, but rather the Puritan-American status of "home and babies," which is advocated by the capitalist Muslims. This reflects either ingrained Americanism or the lack of the simplest imagination.

Several weeks ago, women's lib advocates demanded that a local women's magazine be "manned" by a woman editor. Other segments of the women's movement have carried on a smaller campaign in industry and business. If white women have heretofore remained silent while white men maintained the better position and monopolized the opportunities by excluding blacks, can we really expect that white women, when put in direct competition for employment, will be any more open-minded than their male counterparts when it comes to the hiring of black males and females in the same positions for which they are competing? From the standpoint of previous American social interaction, it does not seem logical that white females will not be tempted to take advantage of the fact that they are white, in an economy that favors whites. It is entirely possible that women's liberation has developed a sudden attachment to the black liberation movement as a ploy to share the attention that it has taken blacks 400 years to generate. In short, it can be argued that women's liberation not only attached itself to the black movement, but did so with only marginal concern for black women and black liberation, and functional concern for the rights of white women.

The industrial demands of two world wars temporarily offset the racial limitations to mobility and allowed the possibility of blacks entering industry, as an important labor force, to be actualized. Similarly, women have benefited from an expanded science and industrialization. Their biological limitation, successfully curbed by the pill and by automation, which makes stressing physical labor more the exception than the rule, has created an impressively large and available labor force of women

The black labor force, never fully employed and always representing a substantial percentage of the unemployed in the American economy, will now be driven into greater unemployment as white women converge at every level on an already dwindling job market. Ideally, we chanced to think of women's liberation as a promising beginning of the "oppressed rising everywhere" in the typically Marxian fashion that many blacks seem drawn to. Instead, the spectre of racism and inadequate education, job discrimination, and even greater unequal opportunity will be , more than ever before, a function of neither maleness nor femaleness, but blackness.

This discussion has been primarily to ward off any unintelligent alliance of black people with white women in this new liberation movement. Rhetoric and anathema hurled at the right industrial complex, idealism which speaks of a final humanism, and denunciations of the system which makes competition a fact of life, do not mean that women's liberation has as its goal

anyone else's liberation except its own. It is time that definitions be made clear. Blacks are oppressed, and that means unreasonably burdened, unjustly, severely, rigorously, cruelly and harshly fettered by white authority. White women, on the other hand, are only suppressed, and that means checked, restrained, excluded from conscious and overt activity. And there is a difference.



For some, the dangers of an unintelligent alliance with women's liberation will suggest female suppression as the only way to protect against a new economic threat. For others, a greater answer

is needed, and required, before women's liberation can be seen in perspective.

To say that black women must be freed before the black movement can attain full revolutionary consciousness, is meaningless because of its malleability. To say that black women must be freed from the unsatisfactory male-female role relationship which we adopted from whites as the paradigm of the good family, has more meaning because it indicates the incompatibility of white role models with the goal of black liberation. If there is anything to be learned from the current women's lib agitation, it is that roles are not ascribed and inherent, but adopted and inter-changeable in every respect except pregnancy, breastfeeding and the system generally employed to bring the two former into existence.

Role integration, which I will elaborate upon as the goal and the strength of the black family, is substantially different from the role "usurpation" of men by women. The fact that the roles of man and woman are deemed in American society as natural and divine, leads to false ego attachments to these roles. During slavery and following Reconstruction, black men felt inferior for a great number of reason, among them that they were unable to work in positions comparable to the ones to which black women were assigned. With these positions often went fringe benefits of extra food, clothes, and perhaps elementary reading and writing skills. Black women were in turn jealous of white women, and felt inadequate and inferior because paraded in front of them constantly, was the white woman of luxury who had no need for work, who could, as Sojourner Truth pointed out, "be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and ...have the best place everywhere."

The resulting "respect" for women and the acceptance of the dominating role for men, encouraged the myth of the immutability of these roles. The term "matriarchy" Frazier employed and Moynihan exploited, was used to indicate a dastardly, unnatural role alteration which could be blamed for inequality of opportunity, discrimination in hiring and sundry other ills. It was as if "matriarchy" was transgression of divine law or natural law, and thus would be punished until the proper hierarchy of man over woman was restored.

Black people have an obligation, as do white women, to recognize that the designation of "mother-head" and "father-head" does not imply inferiority of one and the superiority of the other. They are merely arbitrary role distinctions which vary from culture to culture and circumstance to circumstance. Thus to quip, as it has been popularly done, that the only place in the black movement for black women, is prone, is actually supporting a white role ideal, and it is neither a compliment to men or women to advocate such sexual capitalism or sexual colonialism.

It seems incongruous that the black movement has sanctioned the revolutionary involvement of women in the Algerian revolution, even though its revolutionary circumstances modified and

often alternated the common role models, but have been duped into hating even their own slave grandmothers who, in not so admirable yet equally frightening and demanding circumstances, also modified and altered the common role models of the black family. Fanon wrote in glorious terms about this role change:

The unveiled Algerian Women, who assumed an increasingly important place in revolutionary action, developed her personality, discovered the exalting realm of responsibility. This woman who, in the avenues of Algiers or of Constantine, would carry the grenades or the submachine gun charges, the woman who tomorrow would be outraged, violated, tortured, could not put herself back into her former state of mind, and relive her behavior of the past....<sup>116</sup>

Can it not be said that in slavery black women assumed an increasingly important place in the survival action and thus developed their personalities and sense of responsibility? And after being outraged, violated and tortured, could she be expected to put herself back into her former state of mind and relive her behavior of the past?

The crux of this argument is essentially that blacks, since slavery and through their entire existence in America, have also been living in revolutionary circumstances and under revolutionary pressures. Simply because the black liberation struggle has taken 400 years to come to fruition does not mean that it is not every bit as dangerous or psychologically exhausting as the Algerian struggle. Any revolution calls upon the best in both its men and women. This is why Moynihan's statements that "matriarchy" is a root cause of black problems is as unfounded as it is inane. He does not recognize the liberation struggle and the demands that it has made on the black family.

How unfortunate that blacks and whites have allowed the most trying and bitter experience in the history of black people to be interpreted as the beginning of an "unashamed plot" to usurp the very manhood of black men. But the myth was perpetuated, and thus what brought the alternation of roles in Algeria was distorted and systematically employed to separate black men and women in America.

Black women take kindness for weakness. Leave them the least little opening and they will put you on the cross. ... It would be like trying to pamper a cobra....<sup>117</sup>

Unless we realize how thoroughly the American value of male superiority and female inferiority has permeated our relationships with each other, we can never appreciate the role it plays in perpetuating racism and keeping black people divided.

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<sup>116</sup> Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, New York: Grove Press, 1965, p. 107.

<sup>117</sup> Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul On Ice*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1968, p. 158.

Most, but not all, American relationships are based on some type of "exclusive competition of the superior, and the exclusive competition of the inferior." This means essentially that the poor, the uneducated, the deprived and the minorities of the aforementioned groups, compete among themselves for the same scarce resources and inferior opportunities, while the privileged, middle class, educated, and select white minorities, compete with each other for rather plentiful resources and superior opportunities for prestige and power. Competition among groups is rare, due to the fact that elements who qualify are almost invariably absorbed to some extent (note the black middle class) by the group to which they seek entry. We may well understand that there is only one equal relationship between man and woman, black and white, in America, and this equality is based on whether or not you can force your way into qualifying for the same resources.

But instead of attempting to modify this competitive definition within the black movement, many black males have affirmed it as a way of maintaining the closure of male monopolization of scarce benefits and making the "dominion of males" impenetrable to black females." This is, of course, very much the American way of exploitation.

The order of logic which makes it possible to pronounce, as did Dr. Robert Staples, that "black women cannot be free qua women until all blacks attain their liberation,"<sup>118</sup> maintains, whether purposely or not, that black women will be able to separate their femaleness from their blackness and thus they would be able to be free as blacks, if not free as women; or, that male freedom ought to come first; or, finally, that the freedom of black women and men, and the freedom of black people as a whole, are not one and the same.

Only with the concept of role integration can we hope to rise above the petty demarcations of human freedom that America is noted for, and that are unfortunately inherent in Dr. Staples' remark. Role integration is the realization that:

- ego attachments to particular activities or traits must be abolished as a method of determining malehood and femalehood; that instead, ego attachments must be distributed to a wider variety of tasks and traits in order to weaken the power of one activity in determining self-worth, and
- the flexibility of a people in effecting role alternation and role integration has been an historically proven asset to the survival of any people - witness Israel, China and Algeria.

Thus, the unwitting adoption and the knowing perpetuation of this American value reflects three interrelated situations:

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<sup>118</sup> Robert Staples, The Myth of the Black Matriarchy, *The Black Scholar*, Jan.-Feb. 1970, p.16

- black people's growing sense of security and wellbeing, and their failure to recognize the expanse of black problems;
- black people's over-identification with the dominant group, even though the survival of blacks in America is not assured, and
- black people's belief in the myth of "matriarchy" and their subsequent rejection of role integration as unnatural and unnecessary.

While the rhetoric of black power and the advocates of cultural nationalism laud black people for their ability to struggle under oppressive odds, they simultaneously seek to strip away or incapacitate the phenomenon of role integration - the very means by which blacks were able to survive! They seek to replace it with a weak, intractable role separation which would completely sap the strength of the black movement because it would inhibit the mobilization of both women and men. It was this ability to mobilize black men and black women that guaranteed survival during slavery.

The strength of role integration is sorely overlooked as blacks throw away the hot comb, the bleach cream, the lye, and yet insist on maintaining the worst of American values by placing the strength of black women in the traction of the white female status.

I would think black men would want a better status for their sister black women; indeed, black women would want a better status for themselves, rather than a warmed-over throne of women's inferiority, which white women are beginning to abandon.

Though most white women's lib advocates fail to realize the possibility, their subsequent liberation may spell a strengthening of the status quo values from which they sought liberation. Since more and more women will be participating in the decision making process, those few women participating in the "struggle" will be out-numbered by the more traditional middle class women. This means that the traditional women will be in a position to take advantage of new opportunities which radical women's liberation has struggled to win. Voting studies now reflect that the traditional women, middle class and above, tend to vote the same way as their husbands. Because blacks have dealt with these husbands in the effort to secure jobs, housing and education, it does not seem likely that blacks will gain significantly from the open mobility of less tolerant women whose viewpoints differ little from those of their husbands.

If white radical thought has called upon the strength of all women to take a position of responsibility and power, can blacks afford to relegate black women to "home and babies" while white women reinforce the status quo? The cry of black women's liberation is a cry against chaining a very much needed labor force and agitating force to a role that once belonged to impotent, apolitical white women. Blacks speak lovingly of the vanguard and the importance of women in the struggle, and yet fail to recognize that women have been assigned

a new place, based on white ascribed characteristics of women rather than on their actual potential. The black movement needs its women in a position of struggle, not prone. The struggle blacks face is not taking place between knives and forks, at the washboard, or in the diaper pail. It is taking place on the labor market, at the polls, in government, in the protection of black communities, in local neighborhood power struggles, in housing and in education.

Can blacks afford to be so unobservant of current events as to send their women to fight a non-existent battle in a dishpan? Even now, the black adoption of the white values of women has begun to show its effects on black women in distinctive ways. The black liberation movement has created a politicized, unliberated copy of white womanhood. Black women who participated in the struggle have failed to recognize, for the most part, the unique contradiction between renunciation of capitalistic competition and the acceptance of sexual colonialism. The failure of the black movement to resolve and deal with this dilemma has perpetuated the following attitudes in American politicized black women:

- The belief in the myth of matriarchy. The black woman has been made to feel ashamed of her strength, and so to redeem herself she has adopted from whites the belief that superiority and dominance of the male is the most "natural" and "normal" relationship. She consequently believes that black women ought to be suppressed in order to attain that "natural balance."
- Because the white woman's role has been held up as an example to all black women, many black women feel inadequate and so ardently compete in "femininity" with white females for black males' attention. She further competes with black females in an attempt to be the "blackest and the most feminine," thereby, the more superior to her fellow black sisters in appealing to black politicized men. She competes also with the apolitical black female in an attempt to keep black males from "regressing" back to females whom she feels have had more "practice" in the traditional role of white woman than has she.
- Finally, she emphasizes the traditional roles of women, such as housekeeping, children, supportive roles, and self-maintenance, but she politicizes these roles by calling them the role of black women. She then adopts the attitude that her job and her life is to have more children which can be used in the vanguard of the black struggle.

Black women, as the song "Black Pearl" relates, have been put up where they belong, but by American standards. Is it so inconceivable that the American value of respect that child or feed it? Does the vanguard, of which Dr. Staples so reverently speaks, recognize the existence of the term "bastard?"

Someone once suggested that the word "bastard" be deleted from the values of black people. Would it not be more revolutionary for blacks to advocate a five-year moratorium on black



Third World Women's Alliance at demonstration. Source:

<http://ikaythegod.tumblr.com/post/48826603742/women-s-liberation-demonstration>

births until every black baby in an American orphanage was adopted by one or more black parents? Then blacks could really have a valid reason for continuing to give birth. Children would mean more than simply a role for black women to play, or fuel for the legendary vanguard. Indeed, blacks would be able to tap the potential of the existing children and could sensibly add more potential to the black struggle for liberation. To do this would be to do something no other civilization, modern of course, has ever done, and blacks would be allowing

every black child to have a home and not just a plot in some under-staffed children's penal farm.

What makes a healthy black baby in an orphanage different from "our own flesh and blood?" Except for the American value of inferiority-superiority, and the concept of "bastard" that accompanies it, there is nothing "wrong" with the orphaned child save what white society has taught us to perceive.

We can conclude that black women's liberation and black men's liberation is what we mean when we speak of the liberation of black people. I maintain that the true liberation of black people depends on their rejection of the inferiority of women, the rejection of competition as the only viable relationship between men, and their re-affirmation of respect for general human potential in whatever form, man, child or woman, it is conceived.

Source: <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/wlm/blkmanif/>

## **06 Black Panther Party Ten Point Program (1966)**

### **1. We Want Freedom. We Want Power To Determine The Destiny Of Our Black Community.**

We believe that Black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

### **2. We Want Full Employment For Our People.**

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the White American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

### **3. We Want An End To The Robbery By The Capitalists Of Our Black Community.**

We believe that this racist government has robbed us, and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews.

The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million Black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

#### **4. We Want Decent Housing Fit For The Shelter Of Human Beings.**

We believe that if the White Landlords will not give decent housing to our Black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

#### **5. We Want Education For Our People That Exposes The True Nature Of This Decadent American Society. We Want Education That Teaches Us Our True History And Our Role In The Present-Day Society.**

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

#### **6. We Want All Black Men To Be Exempt From Military Service.**

We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Black people, are being victimized by the White racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

#### **7. We Want An Immediate End To Police Brutality And Murder Of Black People.**

We believe we can end police brutality in our Black community by organizing Black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all Black people should arm themselves for self- defense.

#### **8. We Want Freedom For All Black Men Held In Federal, State, County And City Prisons And Jails.**

We believe that all Black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.



**Original six members of the Black Panther Party (November, 1966)** Top left to right: Elbert "Big Man" Howard; Huey P. Newton (Defense Minister), Sherman Forte, Bobby Seale (Chairman). Bottom: Reggie Forte and Little Bobby Hutton (Treasurer). Source: <http://www.digitaljournal.com/image/158205>, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Black-Panther-Party-founders-newton-seale-forte-howard-hutton.jpg>

## **9. We Want All Black People When Brought To Trial To Be Tried In Court By A Jury Of Their Peer Group Or People From Their Black Communities, As Defined By The Constitution Of The United States.**

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that Black people will receive fair trials. The Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the Black community from which the Black defendant came. We have been, and are being, tried by all-White juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the Black community.



Bobby Seale (left) and Huey Newton. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Black-Panther-Party-armed-guards-in-street-shotguns.jpg>

## 10. We Want Land, Bread, Housing, Education, Clothing, Justice And Peace.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect of the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

Source: <http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/1966/10/15.htm>

## FRONT LINE REPORTS

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The Black Activist is a journal that aims to link theory to practice, general universal ideas to the diverse terrains of struggle and niches of political culture that makes up our national reality. Towards this end we are starting this section that enables the voices of the grass roots militant activists to join in the theoretical debate by focusing on local struggles. What appears here are the actual voices of our struggle, a biopsy of what is going on and what we think about it. We look forward to serious growth and development in these reports as our struggle advances. For this we need active participation, criticism, and involvement of our local organizations.

The process of rebuilding the Black liberation movement involves the dialectic of line (a national process of developing correct and useful ideas) with practice (active struggle rooted in local areas). The main task is to involve local leadership in this process, a leadership in constant interaction with a local constituency. As we get on the same page (theory) across diverse battle fronts (practice) higher levels of organizational coordination, affiliation, and unity will become evident and imperative.

Already we have agitation slogans uniting the movement as is shown in the reports in this issue. This gives coherence to the many demonstrations and campaigns, especially those focusing on national issues like the “Justice for Trayvon Campaign.” The Black Activist tries to promote this on our Face book page as an agitational tool for mass action. In the journal we target theoretical arguments. We embrace the long agreed upon distinction between agitation (few ideas to many people in mass action) and propaganda (many ideas toward developing leaders with advanced consciousness). Both are needed to rebuild our movement.

In this issue our front line reports connect with our theoretical work. We have five reports on the “No More Trayvon Campaign.” This directly links to the report by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement that sums up the patterns of police murder and advances a theory of state repression. MXGM is an affiliated organization in the Black Left Unity Network. Further we have three reports from the African Diaspora. These reports connect with the major article in this issue on the experiences of Afro-Cubans in the historical practice of the Cuban revolution. We welcome commentary on all of this.

Our main reports come from eight areas in all four regions of the country. This is a greatest challenge, to get local summations of our fight back, our actually existing movement.

The crisis of U.S. and global capitalism is intensifying state repression and attacks on democracy. Permanent war is an aspect of the global attacks led by U.S. imperialism. The threat by elements in the U.S. congress to shut down the U.S. government around questions of

national healthcare and democratic rights for the working-class and poor shows the fascist direction of the state.

The struggles around basic needs and for democratic rights for the oppressed and working-class, especially for those that are long term and permanently unemployed, constitute a real challenge for the capitalist crisis and its austerity strategy. Fighting as fragmented local struggles, with no national program of demands and coordination that unites and mobilizes the collective power of the Black masses, is a dangerous position for the forces of the Black liberation movement; a movement that the capitalist support for the election of Obama wants to discourage.

Rebuilding the national Black liberation movement is not only critical to the struggle for African American self-determination, it is critical to shaping the revolutionary mood and direction of all of the U.S. struggles for democracy and revolutionary change.

## No More Trayvons Campaign

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Protesting the George Zimmerman acquittal for killing Trayvon Martin. Source:

<http://www.mkdnews.com/2013/07/protesti-vo-sad-za-osloboditelnata-presuda-za-zimerman-videofoto/>

## 07 Stand Your Ground by Alicia Garza (Oakland)

The acquittal of George Zimmerman exposed the blatant racism of the United States justice system, but we shouldn't stop there. In a so-called post racial society where everything and nothing is about race, we witnessed yet again that if you are a Black man in America, your life does not matter and you will likely be put on trial for your own murder. However, what similar cases, like that of CeCe McDonald (2012), Marissa Alexander (2012), and the New Jersey Four (2007), have shown us is that if you are Black and a woman or gay or transgendered in America, you are also disposable. What remains to be seen is how we who seek freedom and justice make the connections that will allow us to be the strong force that we so desperately need to be in order to achieve our goals.

"Stand Your Ground" laws allegedly give all individuals the right to use deadly force to defend themselves without any requirement to retreat or avoid a dangerous situation. In a post-racial society where everything and nothing is about race, these laws were cast into the national spotlight when State Attorney Angela Corey had to be pressured to arrest and charge Zimmerman, and didn't do so until more than a month after he murdered Trayvon Martin in cold blood, on the basis that Zimmerman was protected under Florida's "Stand Your Ground" laws.

Yet another Florida resident, Marissa Alexander, was not afforded the same treatment as Zimmerman. Having given birth just nine days prior, Alexander fired a warning shot in the air during a fight with her husband—who'd allegedly beaten her during her pregnancy and had a history of domestic violence—and was sentenced to twenty years in prison.

Similarly, CeCe McDonald, a 23-year old transgender woman, was attacked when walking past a bar in Minnesota with four friends, all of whom were Black. A group of people hanging outside the bar began calling McDonald and her friends "faggot" and "nigger." Dean Schmitz, one of the people in the group harassing McDonald and her friends said, "Look at that boy dressed as a girl tucking her dick in." As they tried to walk away, Schmitz's ex-girlfriend hit McDonald in the face with a glass of alcohol and sliced open her cheek. A fight ensued and when McDonald again tried to walk away from the scene, Schmitz followed her. When McDonald turned around to face her attacker with a pair of scissors in her hand, the man was stabbed and ultimately died. Though McDonald was defending herself against multiple physical attacks, she was also denied the right to stand her ground.<sup>119</sup> She was sentenced to nearly three and a half years in a men's prison.

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<sup>119</sup> Minnesota, where the case occurred, does not have Stand Your Ground laws.

Yet again in the 2007 case of the “New Jersey Four”—a case in which seven young Black women, all of whom are lesbians from New Jersey were walking in the West Village in New York when they were physically attacked by a man who held them down and choked them, ripped hair from their scalps, spat on them, and threatened to sexually assault them and “f—k them straight,” the laws were unevenly applied. They dared to stand their ground, and four of the seven women were charged, and received sentences that ranged from three and a half to eleven years in prison. None of them had previous criminal records and two of them are mothers of young children.

In all three cases, Black women were denied their right to stand their ground and were prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, denied not only “equal protection under the law” but their ability to access their human dignity by fighting back against racist, sexist and homophobic attacks. In the case of George Zimmerman, a Latino whose mother describes her background as “Afro-Peruvian” and whose father is white, anti-Black racism was a credible defense for murdering someone’s child in cold blood. We can also say that anti-Black racism, buoyed by sexism and homophobia fueled the decision to prosecute these two women after they merely tried to save their own lives, and is the dividing line between who is afforded justice in this country and who is not.

Trayvon Martin’s unnecessary and untimely death has re-ignited national initiatives designed around Black men and boys; has had the Dream Defenders and POWER U Youth from Miami, Florida occupying the State Capitol for nearly a month now demanding significant changes to that state’s Stand Your Ground laws by introducing “Trayvon’s Law,” and hundreds walking across the state to draw attention to the daily slaughter of Black men. These are incredible efforts that have captured the hearts and minds of a nation, and given oxygen to the latent and not so latent rage that Black people feel in this country. We need those and more like those to bring about the kind of change necessary in this country for everyone to live with dignity and respect. We need initiatives that are paying attention and fighting back against the hyper-criminalization and subjugation of Black people in the United States, of which still the majority are Black men.

And if movement building and building power to achieve Black liberation is about connecting the dots and building relationships between sectors who are impacted by state repression, violence and genocide, we have an opportunity to elevate the ways in which all Black people are impacted. We can shape this national motion to not be siloed but instead be about the right of survival for all Black people. We have an opportunity to lift up CeCe McDonald and Marissa Alexander and the New Jersey Four every single time someone mentions Trayvon’s name, because all Black lives matter—not just some. Black women are the fastest growing segment of the US prison population, and Black transgender folks and gay, lesbian, and bisexual folks are

part of that as well. This is our opportunity to elevate the ways in which Black male and Black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered bodies are policed, criminalized and targeted for captivity and subjugation and ultimately, for murder. This is our opportunity to expose the racist, sexist, and homophobic tendencies of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and others like them who give cover to and build power for the corporations who exploit, terrorize, and kill our people. This is our opportunity to call for a complete overhaul of this so-called justice system which provides little more than misery for millions of families with a loved one inside.

Because we have these opportunities, we know that any effective effort to organize Black people in our own defense and towards our liberation must not stop at Black men and boys. Our efforts, must in fact, illuminate and eliminate the multifaceted ways in which all Black people are targeted by the state for exploitation, criminalization, and ultimately, death. Our unified cry must be that all Black lives matter, and we will not rest until it comes.

## **08 South to Freedom: The Walk for Dignity by Emery Wright (Atlanta, Project South)**

The last quarter mile of the Walk for Dignity marched past the Sanford Police Department, a building larger than most of the houses on the block combined. The Station sits on the boundary of Goldsboro, one of the oldest Black cities in Florida. As we walked into Goldsboro, the Florida afternoon rain started coming down. Each day of the walk from Jacksonville to Sanford, the rain came, we pulled out the ponchos, and we kept walking. Today, the last day of the walk, it was just us, 75 strong walking to the monument that the community built for Trayvon. We didn't stop, we didn't pause. Our chants got louder, more guttural and we danced for dignity in a torrential downpour. We were moved by a spirit, and we sang for some kind of justice that could liberate us from justified killings, the growing hate we could feel in the air, and the fear that people told us kept them inside their homes.

The Walk for Dignity was organized in five days after a series of morning calls with over 10 organizations in the Southern Movement Assembly. The New Jim Crow Movement called for the walk, and as an organization on the frontlines of the crisis in Florida, they anchored the process. As organizations on the frontlines of crisis across the South, we recognized that the verdict represents a broader system that kills Black people with impunity and allows poverty to worsen without an end in sight.

Rooted in the local consciousness, we set our demands to fire Angela Corey, the prosecutor who has locked up more young people of color for longer sentences than any district in the

country, and to free Marissa Alexander who was sentenced to 20 years for protecting herself without injuring anyone. These demands expressed the rage many felt towards a system of systemic racism represented by Angela Cory & the mistreatment represented towards Marissa Alexander.

We walked through the sites of colonialism and into Fort Mose where free Africans escaped and converged with indigenous resisters. We walked over the territory of the slaveholding Confederacy and into St. Augustine where Martin Luther King Jr. worked with civil rights forces when they were not allowed into Jacksonville. We walked into today's hostility - a regenerated racism manifested in 9 year olds swearing at our group from car windows and a tension in Sanford that has led to more violence since Trayvon's death.

We walked into the George Washington Carver Community Center in Bunnell and held a spontaneous youth speak-out. We were welcomed at churches like movement sanctuaries. Pastor Charlene Cothran said, "When I heard the verdict I was so angry, I wanted to do something. And when I got the call from Pastor Glasgow, I knew that something had come to me." She opened up her storefront church, and we held an Assembly about the root causes of this verdict and the long-term solutions that we must fight for. Jacksonville residents traveled down to meet us where we stayed. People saw us walking Mary McCloud Bethune Ave in Daytona Beach and joined us to walk the next day. Labor Councils, African-American Cultural Centers, and residents found us to contribute money, water, bread, and support. They told us they were so glad to know that they could do something, anything in this moment.

We walked to slow down the pace of our movement response. We walked to confront a power that denies us the ability to simply walk through our own neighborhoods. We walked to confront a racist court verdict that publicly excused and encouraged the cold blooded killing of a innocent Black child.

The organizations and community members who walked recognize that we cannot seek solutions to this crisis from within the same system that created it. We look to each other as communities and leaders who will determine the best course of action to create safety and resilience for ourselves, our children, and our families. As Southern Freedom Movement organizers, we are regenerating forms of community governance to build our own power through the Peoples Movement Assembly process. The Walk represents a significant example of the power and potential of the process to respond to crisis and attacks on our communities. We are committed to continue fighting for our demands and to converge Southern movement forces with our allies on the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington to launch a renewed strategic platform for change.

## 09 Take a Stand for Freedom by Carl Redwood (Pittsburgh)

A strong new voice exists among black liberation activists in Pittsburgh, PA. They have drawn upon the revolutionary legacy of the Combahee River Collective, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde and Assata Shakur to lead the struggle against white supremacy, women's oppression and hetero-patriarchy.

On the Saturday night acquittal of George Zimmerman, a group of queer black women in Pittsburgh called for a community gathering to recognize the injustice of the verdict.

(<http://queerandbrown.com/post/55604640037/on-the-saturday-night-acquittal-of-george>)

The next day on July 14 the people (100+) were gathered in the afternoon at a rally at Mellon Park which sits on the borders of several Pittsburgh neighborhoods including Point Breeze, Homewood, East Liberty and Shadyside. The rally was a speak-out where anyone could express their views and feelings about the verdict. Another rally was planned for 6 o'clock in the Hill District at Freedom Corner. During and after the rally, the sisters who had called for the rally held a strategy meeting to develop a statement that spoke about why it was important for our community to stop and look at this injustice. To stop and not proceed with our lives as usual because this was a horrendous display of how Black lives do not matter in America. They were outraged and wanted to call attention that this should not happen ever again!

At 6 o'clock people (200+) assembled at Freedom Corner. This was also a speak-out with an open mic. Joy KMT and Bekezela Mguni decided to sit in the street. At first it was two sisters. Then more people joined, including La'Tasha Mayes, Bria Thomas, Brya Adams, Shaquel Adams, Quinn Elliot, Aimee Mangham and Raymond Peterson, soon the whole rally moved to the street. Many men and women from the rally who had been activists for many years admonished the young women to get up, told them that the rally was over, that "*next time*" they should plan better and do things differently. However there were several allies and friends of the young women who helped them with childcare, food, water and emotional and physical support. The young women said that there should be no next times and that it was indicative how accustomed we've grown to this type of injustice that we expected one. Negotiations with police led to the police commander rerouting traffic. The sisters who took a stand and the supporters stayed until 11:00 pm and used the time to plan next steps.

The plan that was developed was to call a press conference and rally for July 17 at noon at the County Courthouse. The call stated,

We gather to condemn the not guilty verdict of George Zimmerman and to express solidarity with every black victim of injustice.

We recognize that Trayvon Martin's murder is not an isolated incident. Pittsburgh is home to the same systemic injustice, racism, white supremacy and brutalization of black people. In response, we are formally delivering a set of demands to the mayor and city council following the rally.

We will continue to stand our ground with other groups fighting for justice around Pittsburgh and the nation. We expect city officials to address our demands immediately.

150 protesters deliver demands to Pittsburgh leaders after acquittal in Trayvon Martin  
(<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/local/neighborhoods-city/150-protesters-deliver-demands-to-pittsburgh-leaders-after-acquittal-in-trayvon-martin-case-695760/#ixzz2bQltrOnK>)

Our Demands: We Stand to Address the City of Pittsburgh: Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, Democratic Nominee Bill Peduto, Pittsburgh City Council, The Urban Redevelopment Authority, The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, and all agencies, institutions, organizations, complicit with systemic injustice and white supremacy in Pittsburgh. We encourage the City of Pittsburgh, all community organizations, non-profits, churches and businesses to stand with us, express solidarity and denounce the culture of institutionalized white supremacy that inflicts incomprehensible violence on Black lives and bodies.

The demands addressed legal violence, economic violence, institutional violence, physical violence and emotional violence against black people.

(<http://trayvonpgh.wordpress.com/statement-from-freedom-corner/>)

The Mayor did not come out to receive demands. Demonstrators stayed in City Hall outside Mayor's office overnight. Because he did not show up they delivered demands to his home in the morning.

On July 20<sup>th</sup> there was rally and speak-out at the Federal building with more than 300 people.

On August 8<sup>th</sup> Pittsburgh for Trayvon delivered demands to the Urban Redevelopment Authority to stop their economic violence and gentrification in the black community.

(<http://trayvonpgh.wordpress.com/2013/08/09/love-letter-delivered-to-ura-and-talking-to-the-press/>)

Within these mobilizations, this new voice is not new at all. These sisters have been organizing for many years building a base of progressive women who fight for social justice. Many are members of New Voices Pittsburgh. New Voices Pittsburgh will soon be 10 years old.

New Voices Pittsburgh is a grassroots Human Rights organization for, led by and about women of color. Human Rights and Reproductive Justice is our innovative framework to engage Black women in community organizing for lasting social change. The mission of New Voices Pittsburgh is to build a social change movement dedicated to the health and well-being of Black women and girls through leadership development, Human Right and Reproductive Justice.

Reproductive Justice is the belief that all people should control all choices about our bodies, sexuality, gender, work and reproduction.

The Black Left Unity Network sees struggling against women's oppression and hetero-patriarchy as essential in forging the unity of Black liberation organizations.

However, some people and forces who consider themselves part of the Black liberation movement do not support LGBTQ Rights or queer black women as leaders.

The Black Left Unity Network must unite others around our principles:

- We are Black people fighting for power and liberation.
- We fight to end the system of capitalist exploitation, patriarchy, homophobia and all other forms of oppression.
- We organize by connecting local battlefronts rooted in a working class perspective to build national unity of action and international solidarity with other struggling oppressed people.

When we undermine the leadership of Black queer women, we undermine the leadership of many of our community's greatest leaders. We undermine their humanity and their contributions to our liberation and vision for freedom as a people. We harm them emotionally, psychically, and physically. We isolate them and often force them into spaces where they have to choose which parts of themselves must be most visible in order to be "accepted."

We must encourage our communities to unpack the relationships between homophobia, white supremacy, hetero-normativity and sexism. An important essay that everyone must read is Audre Lorde's work "Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities" in *I Am Your Sister*. She addresses this very issue and says:

Homophobia and heterosexism mean you allow yourselves to be robbed of the sisterhood and strength of Black Lesbian women because you are afraid of being called a Lesbian yourself. Yet we share so many concerns as Black women, so much work to be done. The urgency of the destruction of our Black children and the theft of young Black minds are joint urgencies. Black children shot down or doped up on the streets of our cities are priorities for all of us. The fact of Black women's blood flowing with grim

regularity in the streets and living rooms of Black communities is not a Black Lesbian rumor. It is sad statistical truth.

The fact that there is widening and dangerous lack of communication around our differences between Black women and men is not a Black Lesbian plot. It is a reality that is starkly clarified as we see our young people becoming more and more uncaring of each other. Young Black boys believing that they can define their manhood between a sixth-grade girl's legs, growing up believing that Black women and girls are the fitting target for their justifiable furies rather than the racist structures grinding us all into dust, these are not Black Lesbian myths. These are sad realities of Black communities today and of immediate concern to us all. We cannot afford to waste each other's energies in our common battles.

Article submitted from Pittsburgh Black Activists

## **10 Over 1,000 Marchers by Larry Hamm (Newark, People's Organized for Progress)**



**Above and below: Immediately after the murder of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman in February of 2012, POP took to the streets.**



We want President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder to launch a federal investigation and bring civil rights charges against George Zimmerman," Larry Hamm, NJ state chairman of the People's Organization for Progress.

When the usual "hard-core" 18-25 People's Organization for Progress members and supporters who begin every rally or march became a spirited picket line of more than 50 nearly an hour before an event is scheduled to begin, you know that the event answers a felt need in the community.

When the picket demanding Justice for Trayvon Martin at the intersection Broad & Market in downtown Newark on Sunday quickly filled up the entire sidewalk on one side of the intersection, Newark police practically begged POP to take it to the streets! Before 3:00 PM, nearly 500 marchers were lined up on Broad Street to march down to the Federal Building. By the conclusion of the march and rally, the Newark Star Ledger estimated 700 participants, so I would suggest that 1,000 marchers is a conservative estimation.

Reflecting on the NAACP's call for federal Civil Rights charges, People's Organization for Progress has a bit of experience with the strengths and weaknesses of this tactic. In 1999, when the State of NJ refused to even consider prosecuting the Orange, NJ police officers responsible for the murder of aspiring rapper Earl Faison (in what the Federal Prosecutor would later refer to as a "stairwell of torture" in the Orange PD building), the only option available was charging the officers with violating Mr. Faison's civil rights.

Remember, that judicially, murder, manslaughter and homicide are state crimes. There is no federal equivalent, so the closest to justice that the Faison family could hope for was that a literal conspiracy of wilting by the cops would result in a few short jail terms.

Similarly for the family of Trayvon Martin, a federal civil rights conviction against George Zimmerman simply means he is not blameless, as the acquittal in Sanford court indicates the jurors believe. A greater victory, more justice for Mr. Martin's family would probably be the repeal of racist "Stand Your Ground" laws in Florida and throughout the US.

Interestingly, Newark mayor "Hollywood" Booker has gone out of his way to distance himself from those angered by Zimmerman's acquittal (see

[http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2013/07/cory\\_booker\\_other\\_nj\\_figures\\_react\\_to\\_zimmerman\\_verdict.html](http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2013/07/cory_booker_other_nj_figures_react_to_zimmerman_verdict.html)). Apparently, part of his US Senate campaign involves making himself so "non-offensive" to those he sees as his constituents that, by comparison, NYC's racist Mayor Mike is an absolute radical! Hopefully this will make Ras Baraka's election certain.

POP demands and its work, places emphasis on mass mobilization to affect reforms in a revolutionary way. POP has therefore continued to bring people to the street after the initial response.

## **11 BWFJ Mobilizes by Black Workers for Justice (North Carolina)**

On July 14th, the day following the Zimmerman not guilty verdict for his murder of young Trayvon Martin, Black Workers For Justice (BWFJ) sponsored a rally at Morgan Square in the city of Raleigh, NC that brought out 150 majority Black people.

BWFJ representatives and other speakers and cultural workers pointed out that the murder of Trayvon and the Zimmerman not guilty verdict is really a guilty verdict against the U.S. racist capitalist system that violates Black and other oppressed people's human rights.

Many at the rally held signs saying Stop the War on Black America, a slogan adopted by the Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) that BWFJ is part of. The BLUN believes that the racist capitalist system and its police, security guards and white supremacists that have existed since Black enslavement, and its economic, social and political conditions that deny healthcare, quality education, and that create high unemployment has led some to crime and internal violence, and is responsible for the mass incarceration of more than a million Black and brown people, starting with the school to prison pipeline.

BWFJ passed out a statement and called for participants in the July 14th rally and our network of allies across the state, to mobilize around Justice for Trayvon at the Moral Monday, the weekly protest at the NC General Assembly against the anti-Black and working class legislative bills being enacted by legislators financed by the corporate billionaires.

At the July 15th Moral Monday that was attended by more than 3000, a BWFJ banner with Trayvon's picture saying Justice for Trayvon was carried and more than 300 Stop the War on Black America and Justice for Trayvon signs were passed out and quickly accepted by many, including whites. Rev. Barber, NC State NAACP President and leader of the Moral Monday protests gave a powerful speech about the Trayvon, the verdict, and how this injustice is fueled by an immoral system that devalues Black life and human rights for the poor.

As another 100 or more people stepped forth at the Moral Monday to engage in civil disobedience passed the Trayvon banner as they were entering the General Assembly, many stopped and planted kisses on the banner as a heartfelt expression of their outrage, sadness and resolve to fight against this injustice. The BWFJ mobilization and those by others across North Carolina and nationally, had a major influence on heighten the sentiment and awareness at Moral Monday about what the impacts of the legislative attacks really mean for Black and other oppressed peoples.

On July 21st a close to 2000 overwhelming majority Black rally and march was held again at the Morgan Square in Raleigh as part of the national mobilizations that were held throughout the country. The K97.5 radio station, widely listened to by the Black Community, put out the main call for the rally.

Along with the NAACP and others, BWFJ mobilized and put forward demands, slogans and passed out a statement calling for people to unite around demands that go beyond those only calling on the Department of Justice to bring about a hate crime ruling against Zimmerman.

The BWFJ is planning to hold meetings in several cities in NC to bring people together to unite as part of a national No More Trayvon's campaign. 7/22/13

## African Diaspora Struggles

### 12 Thousands of Colombian Farm Workers Stage Protest Marches by Ajamu Baraka (Colombia)



Colombian protesters march through the city of Sincelejo on August 19, 2013.

Tue Aug 20, 2013. Thousands of Colombian farm workers have staged protest marches in rural areas, demanding national dialogue on land access and government subsidies. Eberto Diaz, one of the organizers reported that more than 150,000 workers joined rallies nationwide on Monday.

According to police, some 20 rallies and four major demonstrations were held and 11 roadblocks had been set up by the protesters. Authorities deployed 56 tow trucks to dismantle the roadblocks and there were also 13 aircraft which monitored the protests. In addition, police Chief Rodolfo Palomino reported 22 arrests and other sources said eight people were injured in clashes.

Organizers demand President Juan Manuel Santos to set up a national dialogue to discuss land and other farm related issues, including subsidies to coffee farmers. Santos promised higher subsidies in March, however, farmers said that it is not enough, as coffee growers have seen a 40 percent drop in international prices over the past year.

The protest was supported by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), who called the rallies a valid response to “neoliberal economic policies.”

Meanwhile, Santos had urged the workers for the past few weeks to call off the strike. On August 15, Santos voiced his frustration over the workers’ refusal to cancel, calling them for “useful idiots” who were being manipulated by powerful political interests against him.

Another day of protest is scheduled for August 20 with other sectors joining the rallies. “Truckers and miners are also going to join. Certainly tomorrow more people will be joining,” said Diaz. Miners are demanding that the government cancels new rules requiring all mines to be licensed, saying the regulation clears the way for foreign mining companies. Colombia is struggling with a financial slowdown after three years of strong growth. Analysts blame the slowdown on lower international price on many commodities, which the country produces.

## **13 The Struggle Continues in Cuba by Rose Brewer (Minneapolis)**

As we struggle with capitalist crisis, rising white supremacy and state repression in the 21st century U.S., I was anxious to take a good look at 21<sup>st</sup> century Cuba. I spent two weeks this summer in Havana, June 15 to 30, searching as deeply as I could for understanding Cuban socialism today, its confrontations with racism/sexism/homophobia, and its vision of a new society. I left impressed with the seriously of the struggle, knowing it is crucial that the Cuban revolution be supported. No doubt, the issues the country confronts are difficult and complex, as are the global issues facing humanity and the planet.

### **Where to Begin?**

I’m walking in Old Havana, a high trafficked area, catering to the tourist trade. A young Black Cuban woman slips up to me, giving recognition of our Black African commonality. But that wasn’t the end of the exchange. She slips a peso into my hand. I’m puzzled for a second. This is a monetary exchange. She wants a CUC for the peso. The CUC is the high valued Cuban currency that floats the tourist and newly emerging entrepreneurial sector. In the CUC, you get a high power currency. One CUC has 25 times the buying power of 1 peso. It is one for one with the dollar including a 10% surcharge on the dollar. This differential is real since the tourist economy is alive and growing. Whether Black Cubans are benefitting much from it is an open debate. My Cuban sister’s gesture speaks to the fact that the differential has created inequality and economic division within Cuban society. President Raul Castro recognizes the divisions caused by the dual currency system and expresses need for change. Yet, there is a philosophical debate underpinning this that goes beyond material inequality. The issue is whether material

incentives are central to advancing the revolution. This can be contrasted to the emphasis on moral commitment to 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism. These debates are aspects of a complicated set of questions surrounding Cuba's economic sustainability under US hostility and late capitalist crisis. The challenges are many.

Nonetheless, it is very clear to me that the commitment to socialist revolution is real and deep in Cuba. It is understood that revolution is a process, non-linear, and vexed by the current political moment. The very difficult reality of finding an economically sustainable model asserts the Black Cuban scholar, Esteban Morales, is front and center to the challenge of dismantling institutional racism in Cuba today. He states "poverty on the Island was also very white, but wealth was never Black." This continues to be the case even as the revolution has profoundly advanced the health and educational prospects of Black Cubans. And skin color does matter in Cuba. Esteban goes on to point out "racism had not been eliminated with the 1962 assertion that racism and discrimination had been overcome by the revolution." On more than one occasion I was told that this was an error by the revolution and needs to be/is being dealt with.

Indeed, the status of the Black Cuban population was the subject of several of my conversations with local scholars and community people. Mistakes have been made on the issue of racial inequality, I was told. It is clear that a so-called "color-blind strategy" doesn't eliminate the racial inequities rooted in Cuban society given its history. One Cuban acquaintance, I'll call Sasha, slowly and initially reluctantly began to speak of inequities and disadvantages for Black Cubans. This is articulated in the stereotype that the troubles are not rooted systemically but reflect "not working hard enough." Erased in this stereotype, of course, is the hundreds of years of economic underdevelopment of African peoples throughout the diaspora by enslavement, colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy and capitalism. Yet, sadly, cultural imperialism is expressed in consciousness as stereotype.

I was also very interested in the position of women, especially Black Cuban women. It struck me that a promising move by some Cuban scholars is their beginning to articulate the relationality of classism, racism, and sexism. This complexity is what Black feminist thinkers, for a few decades now, call intersectionality. A reductionist class strategy will not resolve the complicated interrelationalities of gender, race, class, and sexuality. This is an important move by Cuban scholars, although connecting the frame to its practice and intellectual genealogy in radical Black feminist praxis is something that is missing from the Cuban analysis (at least that which I heard).

I wondered about Assata. There are images of the Cuban Five everywhere. I met Rene, one of the Cuban Five now out of prison. He served his sentence and is back in Cuba working to free the four left incarcerated in the U.S. It is agreed by our Cuban comrades that Assata is not a

terrorist, but little else was shared. The focus is on continuing the international pressure on the U.S. government to release the remaining four Cubans and return them home.

### **Conclusions**

While challenged from within and without, the commitment to universal education, health care for all, and a vision of a human centered society looms large in Cuba. This is the profound and imperative vision of revolutionary struggles all over the world—creating a deeply humanistic, shared world for the people and the planet. Deep political will is central to realizing this vision. In the worst days of the Cuban “Special Period” in the late 1980’s and 90s, as one Black Cuban intellectual opined, it was political will that kept all the children in school, fed and nurtured them and kept the revolution alive. This is a powerful lesson for all of us committed to self-determination and transformational social change: political will. The Cuban people have engaged in nearly 60 years of revolutionary struggle and have much to teach all of us about the long haul –a luta continua!

## **14 The Degree of Injustice by Black Action Defense Committee (Toronto)**

We are here today (10 am August 13, 2013, Two Carlton Street, Toronto) to express our concerns for the continuing deaths of civilians caused by police use of excessive force. These incidences of serious police misconduct and abuse have a lasting negative impact on our community. The recent action of the police clearly indicates that the escalation of brute force continues at serious and unacceptable levels in this province and indeed the country.

We feel that the continuation of the police use of deadly force in the community will further deteriorate police/community relations. We are deeply concerned that at governments all levels have not realized and have not taken actions beneficial to the Canadian society of the issue, despite the hundreds of lives that have been lost.

Police officers are authorized to carry a baton, handcuffs, a badge of authority, request back-up, carry a gun, the power to arrest, and also the decision to cause death of a citizen in the performance of his or her duty. They also have the support of the police union.

The citizen: even when their rights are violated have no independent body to which they can complain about police abuse of power. For several years the Black Action Defense Committee Inc. (BADC, or in French (Comité d'action pour la défense des Noirs) has been the leading organization in Canada advocating for police oversight at all levels of policing, and have encouraged and supported the formation of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU).

However since its formation the SIU has become a disappointment, and is viewed by members of the community as a rubberstamp arm of the police establishment; thereby making continuous decision in favour of the police.

Any discussion of policing must include the recognition of the extra ordinary power of the police. They are empowered by law to interfere with an individual's liberty in the most severe way. As a result of this state sanctioned power, interaction between police and any individual person is by definition characterized by an imbalance of power

At the present time, the citizens of Ontario and Canada are being disempowered, because police officers can kill and get away with it. Civilians are being denied an ease of access to lodge complaints. In general it's easier for a cop to offend a citizen than for a citizen to file a complaint. Often the victims are not financially sound to take their case through court; and in most instances legal aid does not fund professional services against police.

At this point we have two units without community input or directions (Special Investigations unit (SIU) and the (IPRO) Independent Police Review Oversight of police). Accountability of police misconduct is urgently required to start the process of rebuilding confidence in our police services; so that the community and police can begin to work together to address the continuing high degree of violence in the city and the province of Ontario.

Not being accountable to any disciplinary body but themselves, hundreds of complaints against the police, have gone unaddressed three examples. Here's one:

1. The death of Kenneth Allen, November 30, 1991: Toronto police removed him from a streetcar at University and Queen Street. Although millions of Ontarians saw the video of a police officer dragging Kenneth Allen with his Billy club under Kenneth's neck and he died, the officer was charged and found not guilty of Kenneth's death. However, a Coroner's court found later that the death of Kenneth Allan was a homicide. It is believed that Kenneth Allen was choked to death by Toronto police Constable Paul Vanseters. To the knowledge of the community; no disciplinary action was taken against the officer.
2. Isaiah Trickey In May 1994, attended a party on Parliament St. where someone pulled a knife on him. Three officers, including constables Shawn Meaney and Thomas Ragell, showed up. Suddenly Meaney began questioning Trickey, convinced he was a drug dealer because he was wearing a pager. The constable grabbed Trickey, flung him against a wall, handcuffed him and hustled him into the elevator. That's when Meaney and Ragell beat up Trickey, at one point ramming him with a nightstick so hard that it broke one of his ribs. Trickey was charged with assaulting the officers and taken to the

police station, spending a night in jail. Constables Meaney and Ragell were never investigated or disciplined by their employer.

3. On December 8, 1988, 17 year-old, Michael Wade Lawson was shot in the back of the head by Peel Constable Anthony Lelaragni, 24, who was charged with manslaughter; and Constable Darren Longpre, 27, who was charged with aggravated assault (Star, 1989, Jan 54:A20/469). Lawson was shot in the back of the head by an illegal bullet: a .38-calibre slug known as a “hot bullet,” which expands on contact, banned in Ontario by the Ontario Police. One officer removed the legally issued bullet from his gun and replaced it with the called “hot bullet” and shot Michael Lawson in the back of his head. Again although these officers were found not guilty, to our community’s knowledge, no action was taken against the police for using an illegal bullet in the death of Michael Wade Lawson. Dudley Laws questioned the intentions of police firing that type of ammunition at civilians: “Why would you go after people with a bullet like that?” He concluded that this evidence alone warranted a murder charge.

In light of this we are not here to cast a broad indication that all police officers act in unlawful manner in the performance of their duties. We therefore acknowledge and appreciate those officers who are trying to make police a respectable name. All we are saying is if any of them act in such a manner of unnecessary excessive use of force, they must be answerable to a body outside of themselves. The BADC is not under any unrealistic assumption that being a professional means that a police officer must be able to excel at everything. There are several circumstances when an officer's assessment and negotiation skills come into play. Solving a problem or situation takes both analytical and creative skills. Depending on the problem, which particular skills are needed will vary.

BADC advocates for policies and practices that are geared at the elimination of racism, and in carrying out its work, operates from a strong commitment to being a unifying force in the community, and to be an advocate for positive changes.

In BADC's presentation and recommendations in our community meetings, BADC's position has been very clear in advocating for a better police-community relationship. The badc is greatly encouraged by the findings and remarks that were made by the ombudsman. He touched on many of the concerns the BADC and other organizations have voiced over the years including transparency and accountability.

The demand for the services of our organization from members of the community has made it necessary to broaden the scope of our mandate from police brutality victimization to family bereavement support and outreach. As a contribution to the prevention of crime, BADC have conducted conflict mediation programs and training to several members of the community from various priority neighborhoods for the purpose of resolving conflicts in our community.

### Recommendation

1. Identify barriers to change and the impeding factors that contribute to the lack of police accountability
2. The Attorney General should give the resources or logistics for administrating a complaint and the reprimand of the police to the Complaint Director to employ a team of investigators for the purposes of investigating complaints against police officers. No police officers, or former police officers should be employed in this process.
3. At no stage of the complaint there should be any interference, influence, or investigation by police. Police must not be seen or considered to be investigating themselves; to allow this, the government of Ontario would be abusing the fundamental principles of fairness, human rights, and justice.
4. The only involvement that any police officer or police official should have in the process of a complaint against a police officer is to answer to the allegation.

## Stop the War on Black America Campaign

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### 15 Women's Oppression in the Home and the Workplace: The Campaign to Reinstate Shirley Venable: Domestic Violence at Home and Harassment on the Job by Ashaki Binta (Charlotte)



Left, Shirley Venable; Right, some of her supporters

Shirley Venable was unjustly fired from her job in June 2011. A 10-year veteran worker in a non-traditional job as a female sanitation truck driver for the City of Raleigh, North Carolina -- Shirley had an excellent work record. An observer might call her feisty, mouthy, outgoing, funny, and hard working. But she was also known as compassionate, thoughtful, and well-liked by the residents on her routes. She compiled years of outstanding evaluations and above average merit pay increases.

Shirley was estranged from her husband and had a restraining order against him. Near the end of June 2011, the ex-husband broke into her home and hid under her bed with a knife. He had also stolen one of her cars and left it in an outlying area. Shirley noticed the break-in when she got home from work one evening and called the Sheriff to check her home before she entered. They cleared the house but unfortunately did not look under the beds and missed the hiding ex-husband. Once the Sheriff left, the estranged husband appeared, stabbing and torturing Shirley all through the night, while he let her know he was going to kill her. The next morning, the police returned to Shirley's home to update her that they had found her stolen vehicle. She cried out for help and the police broke in and saved her life. The ex-husband was arrested and Shirley was taken to the hospital where she was treated for multiple stab wounds and shock but was ok.

Upon returning to work days later, co-workers and her supervisor noticed that Shirley had a bandaged hand and other injuries. The majority male workforce began to tease and ridicule her, including her supervisor who made outrageous and insensitive statements, after asking what happened to her, such as "Oh, you know your old man "f...d" you up!" The supervisor continued his insensitive assault in the days that followed by accusing Shirley of not carrying her load on the job – something she took pride in. One morning an argument between Shirley, some of her co-workers, and the supervisor ensued. After the back and forth, Shirley went on to her truck and started on her route as usual. She also called Human Resources to report the harassment she was getting from her co-workers and the supervisor. Later that morning, Shirley was called in from her truck, accused of violating the Raleigh Workplace Violence Policy by threatening her supervisor and subsequently fired. The supervisor and the co-workers who ridiculed Shirley were not fired.

Domestic violence advocacy groups vary on the severity of the problem of domestic violence, but most agree that from 29 to over 50% of African American women (and 12% of African American men) report at least one incident of intimate partner violence in their lifetimes ... usually much more. Reportedly, Black females as well as African Americans in general experience intimate partner violence in greater numbers than any other race, though the occurrence may be declining similar to other reported violent crime statistics in general. (Crime reporting statistics may serve many purposes either to justify the direction law enforcement

might be taking or to create a more favorable image of society for various reasons. How is it that crime statistics have been dramatically declining over the past several decades yet the US maintains the highest rate of incarceration than any country in the world!)

The Black Liberation Movement must include the struggle against domestic and intimate partner violence as an aspect of the struggle against women's oppression, both within our communities and against capitalism and the US imperialist state which creates the conditions that breeds and ultimately upholds such abuse under patriarchy.

## **The Struggle in the Workplace**

UE Local 150, Raleigh City Workers members brought Shirley's case to the union. A grievance was filed on her behalf and the grievance was taken all the way through the official grievance process, including the final stage of the grievance procedure at the Raleigh Civil Service Commission. It took more than a year for the Commission to convene the hearing for Shirley Venable, even then only as a result of a struggle from the union to have the case heard.

Although the Civil Service Commission consists of a 7 member panel, only 5 of the 7 members were present to hear Shirley's Case. At the end of the process, the Commission voted 3 to 2 that the City of Raleigh had not acted properly in the termination of Shirley Venable. However, the city then invoked an unfair Commission policy that 4 out of 7 votes were needed to overturn a City decision. Clearly this was a violation of due process as only 5 of the 7 Commissioners were present to hear the Case. The panel was comprised of 4 whites and 1 African American, 3 women and 2 men. Thus, the vote broke down along gender lines as the 3 women voted to overturn the City's decision and the 2 males voted to uphold the termination!

Yet, Shirley Venable has never been returned to her job. Appeals have been made to both the Mayor and the City Council by community supporters, Black Workers for Justice, and the United Electrical Workers (UE).

## **Human Rights**

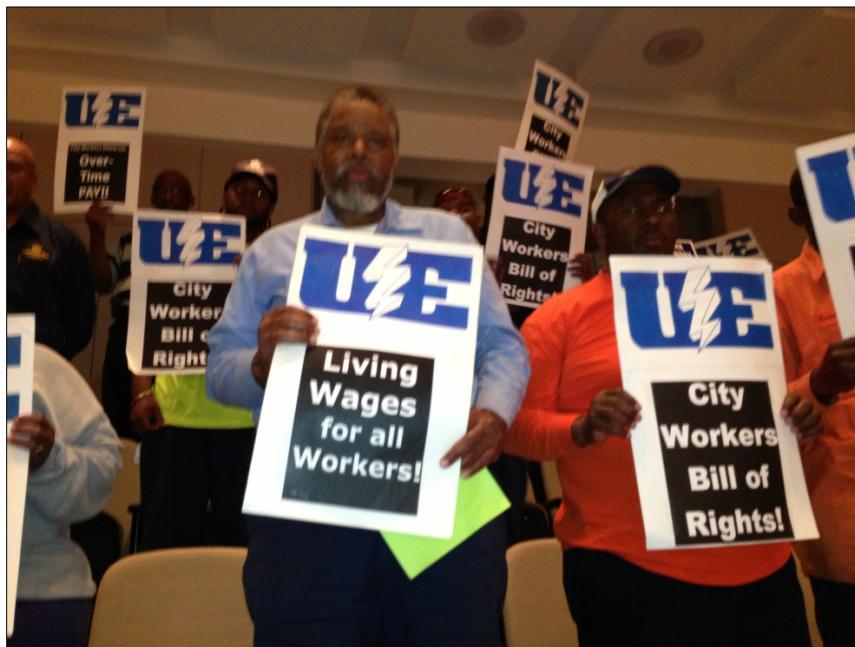
Human rights are also at issue in this case as Shirley Venable's rights to work free of harassment and a hostile work environment; to a fair and effective process under the grievance procedure; and to a stronger union base because North Carolina has a law on the books that prohibits collective bargaining for public sector workers – were all violated in this egregious case.

Black women also suffer disproportionately in the workplace when it comes to issues and incidents of sexual harassment, hostile work environments, and discrimination and their complaints are often dismissed or taken less seriously.

The struggle of the Black Liberation Movement to build new, social movement trade unionism in the US South must also include the question of human rights in the workplace and the specific conditions faced by African American women on the job.

The struggle for Shirley Venable to be reinstated to her job continues and is being spearheaded by UE Local 150 and the Black Workers for Justice. It remains a very difficult fight to win ... but justice demands that the struggle be waged with the goal of winning!

## **16 Social Movement Unionism Fights to Establish Union Rights in the South: Charlotte City Workers Win Payroll Dues Deduction After 50 Year Struggle by Ashaki Binta (Charlotte)**



### **Social Movement Unionism**

The effort to re-unify and rebuild the Black Liberation Movement in this period must anchor itself clearly in the struggles, needs, and interests of the black working class. A key historic task of strategic importance for the BLM is the building of new trade unions in the South that are rank and file based and led and that emanate from a developing consciousness and organizational process within the working class and the revolutionary forces in the form of social movement unionism.

Social Movement Unionism is “a highly mobilized form of unionism which emerges in opposition to authoritarian regimes and repressive workplaces....[and] is embedded in a network of community and political alliances, and demonstrates a commitment both to internal democratic practices as well as to the broader democratic and socialist transformation of authoritarian societies.....[It is clearly and ultimately rooted in] the forging of popular alliances with the highly politicized community organizations and the national liberation movement, as its definitive feature.”<sup>120</sup>

The emergence of the leadership of the Black working class in both the black liberation and the trade union movements can only be developed in the context of their day to day struggles. The revolutionary forces must recognize and support their important campaigns for justice and understand their struggles in the context of social movement unionism as it has emerged in the 21st century in the US South.

An organized and conscious Black working class within the trade union and Black Liberation Movement is a cornerstone of the national liberation struggle of the African American people.

## **The Charlotte City Workers Union, UE Local 150**

On January 14, 2013, the Charlotte City Council voted by a margin of 6 to 5 to enact payroll dues deduction for the five public sector unions operating at various levels within the city. City unions had been fighting for payroll dues deduction since the 1950s. Payroll dues deduction is the process of taking union dues payments from a worker’s regular pay and sending it directly to the union he/she belongs too. The city had always refused to grant this request and maintained this anti-union policy for the ensuing decades. In so doing, the City was consciously attempting to limit the consolidation, development, and strength of the unions by weakening their ability to amass their financial resources. A key issue to be aware of is that the right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has been promoting the elimination of these basic kinds of union rights nation-wide in Republican controlled states in this period. In fact, Charlotte is the key base for North Carolina’s just elected right-wing governor, Pat McCrory, who served 14 years as Charlotte’s mayor.<sup>121</sup>

UE Local 150 in Charlotte played a key and central roll, along with key allies in the community, with other key Charlotte based public sector trade unions, and the revolutionary left in seizing

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<sup>120</sup> For an informative and excellent study of social movement unionism in its international and historic context, see Karl von Holdt, “Social Movement Unionism: the Case of South Africa.” *Work Employment & Society* Volume 16, Number 2, pages 283-304, June 2002. Abstract and instructions for access to full article available at <http://wes.sagepub.com/content/16/2/283>.

<sup>121</sup> Abowd, Paul, “ALEC anti-union push includes key players from Michigan, Arizona think tanks,” *iWatch News*, May 17, 2012. Available at <http://www.publicintegrity.org/2012/05/17/8890/alec-anti-union-push-includes-key-players-michigan-arizona-think-tanks>

the opportunity to break the back of this anti-union policy when the National Democratic Party chose Charlotte as the sight for the Democratic National Convention (DNC), which convened in September 2012.<sup>122</sup>

The Charlotte Chapter launched a visible and extended campaign to pressure the Obama Administration and the City of Charlotte to end the policy and enact payroll dues deduction, recognizing it's enactment as a form of recognition of the union itself. The issue of focusing on payroll dues deduction was debated within the chapter's membership and adopted as a strategy. Meetings were then held with various City Council members to educate them on the issue. Meetings were also held with the other key allies, requesting support and visible solidarity with the push to put pressure on the DNC and the Charlotte City Council. In August 2012, one month before the DNC would convene, the Charlotte City Workers Union launched a weekly picket in front of Charlotte City Hall and invited area unions, community groups, as well as activists from across the country who had converged in Charlotte to protest the DNC to join the weekly pickets and protests. A media strategy involved weekly press conferences and press interviews. Thousands and emails and phone calls were directed toward the Mayor, City Council, and the DNC.<sup>123</sup>



**Southern Workers Assembly Gathering on September 3, 2012 at Wedgewood Baptist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina**

<sup>122</sup> Binta, Ashaki. "Charlotte Update: Charlotte Ends 50 Year Anti-Union Policy." UE Local 150. January/February 2013.

<sup>123</sup> See article in footnote 122. Additional article and video at: Binta, Ashaki. "Charlotte City Workers Win Right To Payroll Dues Deduction," 14 February 2013. Available at <http://www.ueunion.org/es/ue-news/2013/charlotte-city-workers-win-right-to-payroll-dues-deduction->

## The Southern Workers Assembly

UE Local 150 and the Black Workers for Justice linked the struggle in Charlotte with the broader context of building the labor and trade union movement in the South. On Labor Day, September 3, 2012, the Southern Workers Assembly was convened in Charlotte, bringing unions and activists from across the South and across the country together to look at the conditions for labor in the South.<sup>124</sup> The Assembly outlined the challenges and the potential ways forward for building the labor movement in the South, within the context of the attacks on labor nationally.<sup>125</sup>

## 17 Fighting on Several Fronts by Tony Menelik Van Der Meer (Boston)

The Boston Marathon bombing has casted a huge shadow on this New England city. The spring bombing left Boston with a new moniker, "Boston Strong" as a way of boosting Boston unity, pride, and of course business. Many in the African American and other communities of color questioned if the new public relations name is inclusive to our conditions. Boston is now a city that has a population that is majority people of color. African Americans are the largest group of color, yet this is not reflective in the work field. The public schools, the public safety, and amount of elected officials do not reflect a strong presents of African Americans and other people of color. Poverty rates in certain sections of Boston's Black communities are over 80%. Housing subsidies are decreasing while rents are high. The average rent for a two bedroom apartment in the Roxbury neighborhood is \$2,362. The medium household income in Roxbury is \$34,433. What these numbers illustrate is a telling story of gentrification in this Neighborhood. Working class Black families are living between the grips of increasing poverty and despair.

There are several major issues that African American activist are engaged in. There has been a long standing struggle around policies of the Boston Public schools. Black activist are involved with the Coalition for Equal Quality Education. They have fought over the city's student reassignment plan to neighborhood schools viewing it as a re-segregation of Boston Public Schools. Black Activist is also involved with The Center for Church and Prison who is challenging public officials to change policies that criminalizes African American students in public schools,

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<sup>124</sup> Smith, Celeste and Steve Harrison. "Labor Makes its Case at the DNC: Unions and Activists Join to Push for Workers' Rights in Charlotte and Nationwide," Charlotteobserver.com, September 4, 2012. Available at <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2012/09/04/3501289/labor-makes-its-case-at-the-dnc.html>

<sup>125</sup> Muhammad, Saladin. "The Southern Workers Assembly: A Call to Action for Workers to Organize Labor in the South." September 3, 2012. Available at <http://southernworker.org/downloads/SWA-Statement-Sept-3-2012.pdf>

serving as a feeder system to the prisons. Activist in various Boston neighborhoods have also been fighting for safer streets. Since the Marathon Bombing there have been over 100 shootings in Boston's communities of color. There are no significant programs in Boston that are addressing the root causes of violence and poverty in African American and other communities of color.



Non-profit organization are limited in their abilities to organize politically to address some of the root causes of social problems around education, housing, jobs, public safety, poverty, and the criminalization of African Americans and other people of color. Very often the non-profits compete for the same resources. They therefore shy away from criticizing public officials and financial institutions for fear of not getting funded.

There are a number of African Americans and other candidates of color running for Mayor. There is a possibility that one of these candidates can get into the final election. As a result of this possibility there is energy and excitement in neighborhoods. There is also a growing interest in developing a people's assembly to independently push a community based agenda.

During the community march and rally for Trayvon Martin, African American candidates for mayor also attended the Roxbury rally. A diverse and fired up crowd of approximately 500 people participated.

## **18 Campaign for Jobs, Peace, Equality and Justice by People's Organized for Progress (Newark)**



**P.O.P. taking action for jobs, peace, equality and justice.**

The People's Organization for Progress (P.O.P.) is an independent, grassroots, community based, politically progressive organization, rooted in the Black Freedom Struggle; working for racial, social and economic justice and greater unity in the community. July 11, 2012. Beginning June 27, 2011, POP initiated a campaign of daily protest for "JOBS, PEACE, EQUALITY & JUSTICE," for 381 consecutive days demanding: (1) a National "WPA-like" "Jobs Program at a Living wage; 2) ending all U.S. wars of aggression and occupations including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya; (3) preservation and improvement of workers' rights and collective bargaining; (4) a moratorium on foreclosures;(5) opposing privatization of public education; (6) a national single-payer healthcare program (Medicare for All); and, (7) affordable college education. As the 381 day Montgomery Bus Boycott "jumpstarted" the modern Civil Rights Movement ,POP worked for the **Peoples' Campaign for "JOBS,PEACE, EQUALITY & JUSTICE"** to jumpstart popular resistance to ruling class efforts to burden the masses with the adverse effects of the crisis of Imperialism.

On a daily basis, protesters numbering from four to dozens assembled at a prominent downtown Newark intersection, in front of the Essex County Court House and the statue of Abraham Lincoln raising the campaign demands on a public address system, chants, banners and picket signs. passing drivers were encouraged to honk horns in solidarity with the message. Early on, drivers seemed reluctant; but, as the campaign endured through all weather

conditions and seasonal variations the popular response became a cacophony of popular protest led by a coalition of community, political, faith based, and labor organizations. By 11 July 2012, the 381<sup>st</sup> day, 179 organizations around the NY/NJ/Ct. metro area and some from far-ranging states had endorsed and participated in varying degrees of publicizing, membership mobilization and “taking to the mike”. The campaign provided context for the year’s political activity; so that, on special occasions: MLK commemoration, IWWD, May Day, Black History Month , responses to police brutality incidents hundreds, at times mobilized for marches and rallies. Also, press conferences were held by the objectively developing united front against imperialism and national oppression.

POP forces matured politically and consolidated organizationally: leadership emerged; struggle skills sharpened (public speaking, inter-organizational relating; talking to press and public, etc.); and, POP’s visibility, prestige, influence and community respect were enhanced. As well, relations with area progressive forces advanced; unity in the movement of resistance strengthened, through joint work.

As part of continuations efforts, the coalition, with POP’s continued leadership plans a conference of participating endorsers, THE PEOPLES’ CONFERENCE ON THE FIGHT FOR JOBS, PEACE, EQUALITY, AND JUSTICE,” intended to politically develop a Peoples’ Fightback Agenda and organizationally a Plan for Implementation ; including a division of labor among and between coalition forces and hopefully new forces attracted to advance the Fightback of the Working Class and the Afro-American People and other Oppressed Peoples against Imperialists war against us at home and abroad. THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES! (on a higher level) Saturday, October 19, 2013 (appropriately) at the Paul Robeson Student Center, Rutgers University, Newark. Contact us at 973-801-0001; ingridhill@gmail.com.

## **19 NYC Area Education Struggle by Sam Anderson (New York City)**

The fight for quality antiracist public education in NYC has pushed forward during the summer months. The Coalition for Public Education (CPE, <http://www.forpubliced.org>) has been in the forefront in the fight to return public education to the public. CPE includes Brooklyn and Bronx Chapters, Black New Yorkers for Educational Excellence (BNYEE), Movement of Rank & File Educators (MORE) of the UFT, National Black Education Agenda (NBEA), Parent Union Initiative, Freedom Party, SEEDS, DC37 reps and unaffiliated parents and educators.

1. There is ongoing work on creating a Peoples Board of Education and writing the necessary legislation to bring it into existence. This work has been in collaboration with

the municipal workers union- DC37 and NY State Assemblywoman Inez Barron. We are currently vetting the nearly 200-page draft legislation before we share it with the general public. From this Fall thru 2014, The Peoples Board of Education Bill will be an essential part of our organizing work

2. There is ongoing parent organizing as well as work on creating a student component of the Coalition. Over the summer, these have taken the form of local school meetings with parent leaders and holding meeting with several of the more active Black & Latino student activists.
3. For the second year, we have collaborated with OccupyWallStreet forces to run the Paul Robeson Freedom School for Middle and High School students located in Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood. Media Literacy and Media Activism were the focal points for this year's summer program. The challenge is to raise enough money to continue the Freedom School thru the school year as an after school project.
4. This year Coalition has also initiated Garvey's Gardens for elementary school children. This Project is based in the Bronx and Queens and brings urban school children closer to nature and at the same time, learn a bit of Black History and Culture. They start by planting a seed in a paper cup and begin to learn the relationship between water, dirt and seed. They learn a little botany, nurturing and patience while picking up on basic Black History thru learning about Marcus Garvey, Black Pride and the struggle for self-determination.
5. We have ongoing work around exposing and reversing the disappearing Black and Latino educator in NYC's schools. This has taken the form of public meetings, interviews in local papers and pushing the UFT (United Federation of Teachers) leadership to address the issue. This work has been done primarily by our teacher members. The latest on this is that some of our members have gotten this issue -which is also a national issue- discussed at the National Social Justice Unionism Conference held this past week in Chicago.
6. CPE is currently gearing up for our annual October convention as well as preparing to organize parents, students, educators and elected officials to resist and repeal the test maddening policies of the Common Core State Standards and Race to the Top. The first in a series of Informational Forums on the Common Core was held in Harlem on 4 August. This is being spearheaded by the CPE affiliate NBEA.
7. CPE maintains an active blog: <http://www.forpubliced.blogspot.com> which gets nearly 1300 hits/month during this past summer.

## 20 Reflection on "Stop and Frisk" by Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (New York City)

On February 4, 1999, 22-year old Amadou Diallo got home from a long day of work and stepped back out for a trip to the store. As he made his way back into his building, he was trailed by four plain-clothed NYPD officers who profiled him and killed him in the vestibule of his building with a flock of 41 bullets. Amadou Diallo was unarmed and Black, as were many of the other black men, women and young people who have suffered similar fates or have been stopped and frisked by the NYPD. As part of a long-standing war against Black people and the 42-year war on drugs in the United States, these deaths and stops have happened under the increased militarization of police. This has fostered a hunting mentality amongst the NYPD as they carry out their wholesale detainment of Black and Brown people in our streets, in our homes and in our schools.



It was in the late 90s after the shooting of Amadou Diallo, that the late Richie Perez, leader of the National Congress of Puerto Rican Rights and the Coalition Against Police Brutality (CAPB), brought the idea of a lawsuit against NYPD's unjust stops in communities of color to the Center for Constitutional Rights. Djibril Toure of the MXGM was a plaintiff in that 1999 class action lawsuit that was named Daniels v. the City of New York. The Coalition Against Police Brutality, which included the Audre Lorde Project (ALP), CAAAV – Organizing Asian Communities, Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), the Justice Committee (JC) and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM), organized around the case until it was settled in 2003. They were successfully able to disband the NYPD Street Crimes Unit and get numbers released that

showed the NYPD routinely violated the rights of the Black community by subjecting tens of thousands to stops fed by racial profiling. The settlement also had other requirements that included the NYPD maintaining a written anti-racial profiling policy that would bind all NYPD officers, in addition to hosting community forums. Though MXGM participated in post-settlement negotiations and hosted community forums, the NYPD was not fully compliant with the consent decree and newly released information by the city of New York that showed an extraordinary increase in stops and frisks, the Center for Constitutional Rights filed a new lawsuit, *Floyd v. City of New York*. Floyd would challenge the NYPD's practice of racial profiling and unconstitutional stop and frisks of Black and Latino New Yorkers and would also become a continued fight by MXGM and the other grassroots organizations that organized during the Daniels lawsuit. Many of these organizations became members of the CAPB initiated formation, the Peoples Justice Coalition for Community Control and Police Accountability (PJ). Alongside these organizations were the families of those who lost their loved ones to police murder and continued to fight for justice.

On Monday, August 15th, NY federal Judge Shira Scheindlin made a historic ruling in landmark case *Floyd v. City of New York*, that declared the NYPD has been violating the constitutional rights of Black and Latinos New Yorkers through their stop and frisk policy. David Floyd and Lalit Clarkson, lead plaintiffs in the case, are members of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM), which played a key role in this legal battle. Since the 90s, MXGM's People's Self Defense Campaign (PSDC) has been working against the police violence and killings that were becoming commonplace in Central Brooklyn and other low-income black and people of color neighborhoods in NYC. In order to defend human rights and promote self-determination in our communities, PSDC was created as a community-led response to police violence and killings. To survive as a people it is necessary to understand our rights and to defend them. Some of the ways we have done this is through hosting Know Your Rights Workshops to teach community members about their rights, Cop Watch trainings for those interested in watching the police to prevent brutality, legal clinics to assist people with filing notice of claims against the NYPD and other legal issues they may have along with organizing around various justice campaigns. After being trained by the Black Panther Collective in the 90s, we started doing Cop Watch Patrols throughout Central Brooklyn and supporting the formation of Cop Watch teams throughout NYC. This victory in the Floyd trial is directly related to the work that's been done over the years but there are still more strides to make in striving toward community self-determination. Judge Scheindlin's ruling echoed what we all already knew and have been saying for many years.

In 2010, community members, lawyers, researchers, activists and organizers came together and began talks that would become an unprecedented campaign to end discriminatory policing practices in New York. MXGM was involved in original talks around the formation of the Communities United for Police Reform (CPR) Campaign, which has been instrumental in the

historic Floyd trial and in creating the Community Safety Act (CSA) that was recently passed by the New York City Council and vetoed by Mayor Mike Bloomberg. Both bills that make up the CSA will go back to the NY City Council to override Mayor Bloomberg's veto on August 22nd. Though the victory of Judge Scheindlin's ruling provides the legal basis that declares stop and frisk racially discriminatory and unconstitutional, in addition to other measures like providing a new federal appointed monitor that will specifically work to reform NYPD's use of stop and frisk, the CSA is still needed in this fight. As a complement to the Floyd ruling, it is an extra step in creating safer communities all over New York City.

In 2013 MXGM released a report that found that in 2012 every 28 hours a black woman, man or child dies from an extrajudicial killing by the police and vigilantes like George Zimmerman. In New York, many of these killings start off as stop and frisk and help to perpetuate genocide and war against Black people in the United States. And this list is only growing: Kyam Livingston, Kimani "Kiki" Gray, Mohamed Bah, Shereese Francis, Shantel Davis, Ramarley Graham and too many others. In organizing for self defense, we can re-imagine and create what self-determined communities may look like.

## **21 Cops Fire 137 Shots, Kill Couple, Community Outraged by Abdul Qahhar (Cleveland)**



Demonstrations protest police shooting in Cleveland, Ohio. Photo: Raj Roberson

Our struggle continues in Cleveland Ohio for justice for the police murders of Melissa Williams 30, and Timothy Russell, an unarmed Black couple whose car was shot into 137 times by 13 cops (12 white and one Hispanic) on November 29, 2012, after a high speed chase. One of the cops jumped on hood of the car and shot continuously through the roof reloading.

The cops claimed initially they were shot at by the car carrying the couple. But investigators from the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's office stated that no guns or bullet casings were found in the car. A security film showing the beginning of the chase reveals no flash or sound of gunfire. In later interviews, an officer said he observed the car and believed illegal drug activity was involved. And when he approached the car to investigate that the car took off.

The community has responded with marches, rallies, press conferences, open forums and graveside support. The Task Force for Community Mobilization, Self-Determination, Transformation and Community Empowerment, a coalition of more than 35 community groups, sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder asking for a swift investigation of the November shootings by the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Groups that make up the Task Force include the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Friends Service Committee, the Carl Stokes Brigade, the Immigrant Support Network, Peace in the Hood, the New Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, the Shurah Council of Greater Cleveland (10 mosques), Black on Black Crime, the Oppressed Peoples Nation, Survivor and Victims of Tragedy, the Hip Hop Workshop and the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

The Black on Black Crime organization initiated a chant - after every ten count loudly shouting Reload, going to 100, that has been embraced by the people. In addition to rallies and meetings, it was used at a city council meeting.

After a two month investigation, Attorney General DeWine's office concluded in a comprehensive report Feb. 5 that the shooting deaths of Mr. Russell and Ms. Williams in part were due to "a systematic failure in the Cleveland Police Department," and was "a tragedy for all involved."

In an attempt to rationalize the police murders, the report further states, that "this chase could have ended without tragic results if Timothy Russell had simply stopped the car in response to the police pursuit. Perhaps the alcohol and the cocaine in his system impaired his judgment." However, the report does not highlight the fact that nine of the cops were involved in previous violence, including shootings; one just two months after the murder of Russell and Williams.

The DOJ held a Town Hall meeting in June on police misconduct and behavior where people spoke out about the police violence against Black people. However, the DOJ stated that the

case had to go to the grand jury before they had any jurisdiction. Those officers are still on duty. Their weapons have not been taken away from them.

Here is the record of the police investigations conducted by the Cleveland Police Department. All 4,427 use-of-force investigations by police supervisors for the period January 2003 to September 2006 cleared the officers involved of wrongdoing. (Cleveland Plain Dealer, Jan. 14, 2007)

Several members of the Task Force have been investigated by the FBI, asking if they are aware of threats to retaliate against the police. However, this has not shaken these forces.

These murders are part of the War on Black America that is taking place throughout the country. It is a violation of Black people's human rights. We must unite and use every power that we have to fight back. We want to connect with others across the country to help build a powerful movement for social justice, human rights and self-determination.

## **22 Community Under Siege by Mel Reeves (Minneapolis)**

Black and colored Minneapolis is under siege from its police department. This force appears to be a throw back to 1950's Birmingham, a real racist vigilante force. They have been caught in two separate instances jumping on black men while off duty. After one of the incidents one of the Minneapolis cops told Green Bay police that their town was too "nigger friendly." It seems that maybe he sees his job to make Minneapolis nigger unfriendly. And they have been doing just that they have employed their own version of New York's "stop and frisk," which is nothing more than legal harassment. They have cops on the force with several cases of excessive force and the city has paid out millions to settle lawsuits because of police misconduct. Things are bit desperate here!

<http://www.startribune.com/local/minneapolis/219508431.html>

<http://www.spokesman-recorder.com/2013/08/07/mayor-rybak-is-al-prove-cowardly-ineffective-is-the-political-leadership-s-goal-to-make-mpls-unfriendly-toward-blacks/>

<http://www.spokesman-recorder.com/2013/07/10/help-theyre-trying-to-get-away-with-a-crime-possibly-murder/>

<http://www.spokesman-recorder.com/2013/07/10/much-at-stake-in-police-investigation-of-franklin-death/>

The tip of the iceberg was the killing of 22 year old Terrance Franklin recently. Franklin was shot down by police May 10 in the basement of a house in the Uptown area of Minneapolis in what appeared to be an execution. Police shot him 5 times in the back of the head and twice in the back according to a source whose job it was to examine the body. Authorities have refused to release the autopsy and medical examiners report. But the police, nor the prosecutor has disputed the veracity of our claim.

Police in a story leaked to the Minneapolis Star Tribune claim that Franklin somehow grabbed the police's sub machine gun and fired two shots striking two officers, before one officer jumped in front of Franklin and shot and killed him. The cops version does not explain how he wound up with 5 bullets in the back of his head or in his back.

Since his killing a campaign has been waged under the banner of the Justice for Terrance Franklin Committee (there is a website justiceforterrancefranklin@wordpress.com and a Facebook page ) to get the police who killed Franklin prosecuted. The committee is made up primarily of young people, several of them were friends of Franklin, who despite efforts to smear him in the press was a well liked young man. There have been four rallies and marches with at least 300 people in each one. The first rally and march at the end of May proceeded through the downtown restaurant district.

<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2013/05/31/news/protest-police-terrance-franklin>

The case has so resonated with Twin Citians that it has become the local Trayvon Martin struggle. In fact on July 15th the weekend after the George Zimmerman verdict over 4,000 people came out in support of Justice for Trayvon Martin and Terrance Franklin. The two are similar in the eyes of Twin Citians because they both Franklin and Martin, were shot down by vigilantes, in Franklin's case the vigilantes were uniformed.

<http://www.startribune.com/local/minneapolis/215526461.html>

There is a solidarity rally planned for Saturday August 17 in which several unions including a AFSCME local, a CWA local and a SEIU local have endorsed along with the Minnesota State Baptist Convention and one of the AME district councils. The anticipated turnout is about a thousand or more.

The system is feeling the heat because one of the worst smear pieces was run in the local paper yesterday claiming that the young Terrance fingerprint was on the police's trigger. They even tried to say he had an extensive criminal record without providing proof. He got in trouble as a juvenile, but no one knows how the paper accessed those records. The yellow journalist neglected to publish the results of the paraffin test which would prove whether he indeed fired a gun as the cops claim. <http://www.startribune.com/local/minneapolis/219863941.html>

Hennepin County has never prosecuted a cop for killing or injuring a black person. However city leaders and Hennepin County prosecutor Mike Freeman has been trying to assure the community that somehow the process will be fair. Ironically Freeman has shown that he is biased toward the police in interviews with the local newspaper.

Activists hope that the continued protest and pressure will force the power structure like in the case of Amadou Diallo, or Oscar Grant to give up one of its uniformed lackeys.

Black folks in the Twin Cities are desperately seeking support from our brothers and sisters around the country. We may be suffering from geographical prejudice because nobody thinks there are any black folks here but there a few hundred thousand of us here and we make up over a quarter of the population of the Twin Cities.

We have vowed to keep this campaign going until somebody is charged with a crime in the case of Terrance Franklin and we are also moving to resist the everyday harassment as well.

Those who want to help please email me at [mellaneous19@yahoo.com](mailto:mellaneous19@yahoo.com). Justice, then peace.

## **23 The Occupation of a City by Ife and Tdka Kilimanjaro (Detroit)**

Detroit is in crisis. In every area of life, Black folks, who comprise 84.8% of the population, are under assault: the education system has been dismantled, unions broken, houses foreclosed on, pensions defunded, emergency services selectively applied, street lights permanently shut off in certain areas, black farmers thrown out of Eastern Market, environmental injustices abound, social safety net services defunded, will of the people (through democratic processes) denied and so on.

Just as the mainly Black Detroit public school system of over 230,000 students in the 1980s was carved up (with barely 41,000 students in 2013) and parceled out to outsider White profit-driven Charter school companies and a claimed “statewide” failed schools initiative (with only Detroit-area schools funding it)---Detroit as a municipality is today on the same chopping board. The majority of Blacks took part in a democratic voting process in 2012 to oppose the appointment of an Emergency Financial Manager (EFM), we voted elected officials into office that we hoped would represent our voices at the local and state levels, we spoke out against the large scale land sale to private developer John Hantz, we’ve opposed and pushed back on other policies that would further disenfranchise us, however the Whites at the state level made sure that our officials had no authority to govern.

The state-level officials appointed their czars to oversee and have veto power over all decisions made in the city, i.e., 2009 and 2013 appointments of EFM over Detroit Public schools and the city of Detroit, respectively. In July, the Governor appointed EFM filed bankruptcy. Defenders of the systematic denial of democratic processes justify this move by drawing upon racist, ahistorical and inaccurate stereotypes of Black people, simply go online yourselves, note the tone of news articles about Detroit and read the comments at the bottom. Many of these comments reflect the views of Detroit EFM, Kevyn Orr who recently was quoted in the Wall Street Journal as saying that "For a long time the city was dumb, lazy, happy and rich... [and] if you had an eighth grade education, you'll get 30 years of a good job and a pension and great health care, but you don't have to worry about what's going to come."

The representatives of the ruling elite, including state and local elected officials, use a variety of other coded language to justify this denial of democracy and other forms of abuse-by-proxy. For example, city and state supported targeted investments are made in certain parts of town (i.e., Boston Edison, Mid Town, etc.), while nearly half the street lights don't work in other parts of the city. Such misleading words as privatization, strategic investments, targeted spending, and focused resources on improving services are used to promote a long-term strategy for boosting Detroit-based jobs and stimulating economic growth, which are key to attracting new residents and improving living conditions in the city. These are code words for a rapid and brutal gentrification process that inspired such corporate moguls as Dan Gilbert and others to throw elders and poor folks out of their subsidized homes, disrupting families and networks of relationships with sometimes as little as a month to prepare. These code words mask the rapid process of privatization that is behind the dismantling of city services (see recent request for proposals for waste management), laying off of city workers, defunding of pensions, closing schools, and more.

Many argue that race has nothing to do with the reality that cleaning up an economic mess is a priority. However in spite of the fact that many Michigan cities have been struggling in the midst of the economic crisis since the 1990 EFM law went into effect, only the ones with large Black populations have been placed under EFM rule. With Detroit now in the mix, the nearly half of Michigan's Black population is denied access to the democratic process. (The cities are Allen Park, Benton Harbor, Detroit, Ecorse, Flint and Pontiac). We are not anymore talking about the \$220 million the state owes Detroit in revenue sharing; it is no longer being discussed as the Governor said the state won't pay. The majority White Michigan population voted for the White right-wing politicians who supported this theft of democracy. These same elected officials voted in March to make Michigan the country's 24th right to work state, thereby stripping whatever remaining bargaining power unions had. These messages get lost in all the coded language used to justify the flagrant theft of taxpayer money and denial of voting rights, while blaming Black folks for messing everything up.

How are we fighting back? There are many bravely and consistently organizing and staging protests (city workers, fire fighters, residents, mothers, youth, and more) to oppose the decisions and actions of the EFM and various corporate interests buying up large swaths of Detroit. There are committed activists, long term Detroit residents and more who are organizing people by district to support certain candidates for the upcoming City Council and Mayoral elections; candidates who better represent the interests of the people than current office holders. There are courageous activists of all ages who consistently attend City Council meetings, who charter buses to Lansing to raise concerns, who fight to put people back into homes, who work to keep water from being privatized, who oppose construction efforts that would harm the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. There are many ways that Detroiters are pushing back, fighting back and raising hell.

Is this enough? Enough for small reforms but not fundamental change. Protest politics play an important role in raising awareness of issues facing people. They also provide wins for reforms, where there is room or broader support for such reforms. In the long run, more fundamental change is needed; the early stages of which require the work of professional organizations that independently fund themselves through their members. Professional organizations that systematically address each area of life, now and where we need to be in terms of food, clothing, shelter, ecology, transportation, morality and ethics, language and culture, and more. Professional organizations that evolve as the conditions change, expand and contract according to what is needed in a given moment, operate openly or clandestinely based upon the realities. This is what we know.

Source: From The Occupation of Detroit (publication September 2013).

## **24 Support for the New African Town Innovation Center by Gabriel Prawl (Seattle)**



In Seattle, the African American Longshore Coalition (AALC) has joined a growing Black led community coalition in support of the new Africatown Innovation Center.

The Africatown Innovation Center is located in The Horace Mann Building, named after one of the founders of public education in the US, which is owned by the Seattle Public Schools, but has not been utilized by the school district since 2009.

In response to threats of possible privatization of the building over the last 4 years, Seattle's Black community has united and mobilized to fill every classroom with volunteer based afro-centric educational programming. This is what REAL public education looks like! The AALC issued the following statement supporting and affiliating to this historic coalition that was presented at public meeting on August 8, 2013.

To: Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Jose Banda,

Dear Superintendent Banda,

The African American Longshore Coalition (AALC) is an organization of Black longshoremen that stands for justice and equality in every port on the West Coast, and in every metropolitan city adjacent to those ports.

Let it be hereby known that the African American Longshore Coalition hereby fully endorses the Africatown Innovation Center at Horace Mann, hereby joins the More 4 Mann Coalition as an affiliate organization, and hereby proposes to sponsor a series of labor/community education workshops in the Africatown Center at Horace Mann.

The AALC has reviewed the video of the relevant commitments you have made to the Africatown Central District Community, and applauds you for these positive, logical and constructive commitments. Let it hereby be known that we are a part of the community that fully expects and looks forward to these commitments being kept entirely.

As a part of the labor community, we also stand in solidarity with all labor and community interests that have a stake in the equity and transparency of the distribution of all renovation and addition contracts for public buildings. We notice that the only electronically available copy of the July 3, 2013 School Board Motion to award such a contract in regard to the Horace Mann building contains only blank spaces for the amount of public money to be spent, the name of the contractor, the number of contract bids received, and the name of the entity deemed to be the low bid contractor. Please furnish us with that information, or if those details have yet to be decided upon, furnish us with the dates, times and places at which those decisions will be made.

## 25 Black Worker Freedom Marker by Saladin Muhammad (Rocky Mount, North Carolina)

The Phoenix Historical Society, a grassroots organizations that includes members of the Black Workers For Justice and the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union-UE Local 150, launched a Black Worker and Freedom Marker project in Eastern, NC. The Phoenix Society's stated mission is – "To recover, record, and promote the unique history of Edgecombe County experienced by members of its African American community".

Since January 2011, the work of the Phoenix Society has establish the following historical markers in the cities of Tarboro and Rocky Mount – 1/29/11 George Henry White, the last African American Congressman elected in the late 1800s; 9/3/11 The CIO Operation Dixie, dedicated to the unionizing of 10,000 Black tobacco leaf house workers across Eastern, NC in



1946 in over a period of 2 months; 5/4/13 Thelonious Monk, great Jazz musician born in Rocky Mount.

On 8/31/13, a Knights of Labor (KOL) marker will be unveiled in Tarboro dedicated to the 5th NC State Assembly of the KOL in 1890, and pointing out the significance of the African American local worker assemblies in Edgecombe and northeastern NC since 1887.

The Marker unveilings are a real worker and community. They include presentations by historians, worker and community leaders, and

relatives of people associated with the historical experience and site being recognized, along with food and fellowship. The Operation Dixie marker unveiling had a 94 year old women tobacco worker, Mrs. Cora Baines Tann who worked at the former tobacco leaf house across the street from the Marker.

Since the Phoenix Society project, historical markers have been unveiled by other committees for Ella Baker in Halifax County on June 2012 and for the Food and Tobacco Workers Union Local 22 of Black tobacco workers in Winston Salem in April 2013.

In NC a state with the lowest rate of unionization of all 50 states in the U.S. at 2.9 percent, and with a racist right-wing dominated state legislature, this Marker Project faces major challenges and must be seen as part of the political and cultural flank of the Black Freedom and labor movement in NC.

Black Workers For Justice and the NC Public Service Workers Union-UE Local 150, views the Black Freedom and Workers Project as a component part of the historical and political geography of the rank-and-file democratic social movement unionism that they have focused on building over the past 30 years.

Operating mainly with funds from membership dues and in kind community support, the Phoenix Historical Society marches on demonstrating that working-class leaders, some still working in a diesel engine plant for nearly 30 years can produce historians that document the history of the Black working-class.

# The Last Word

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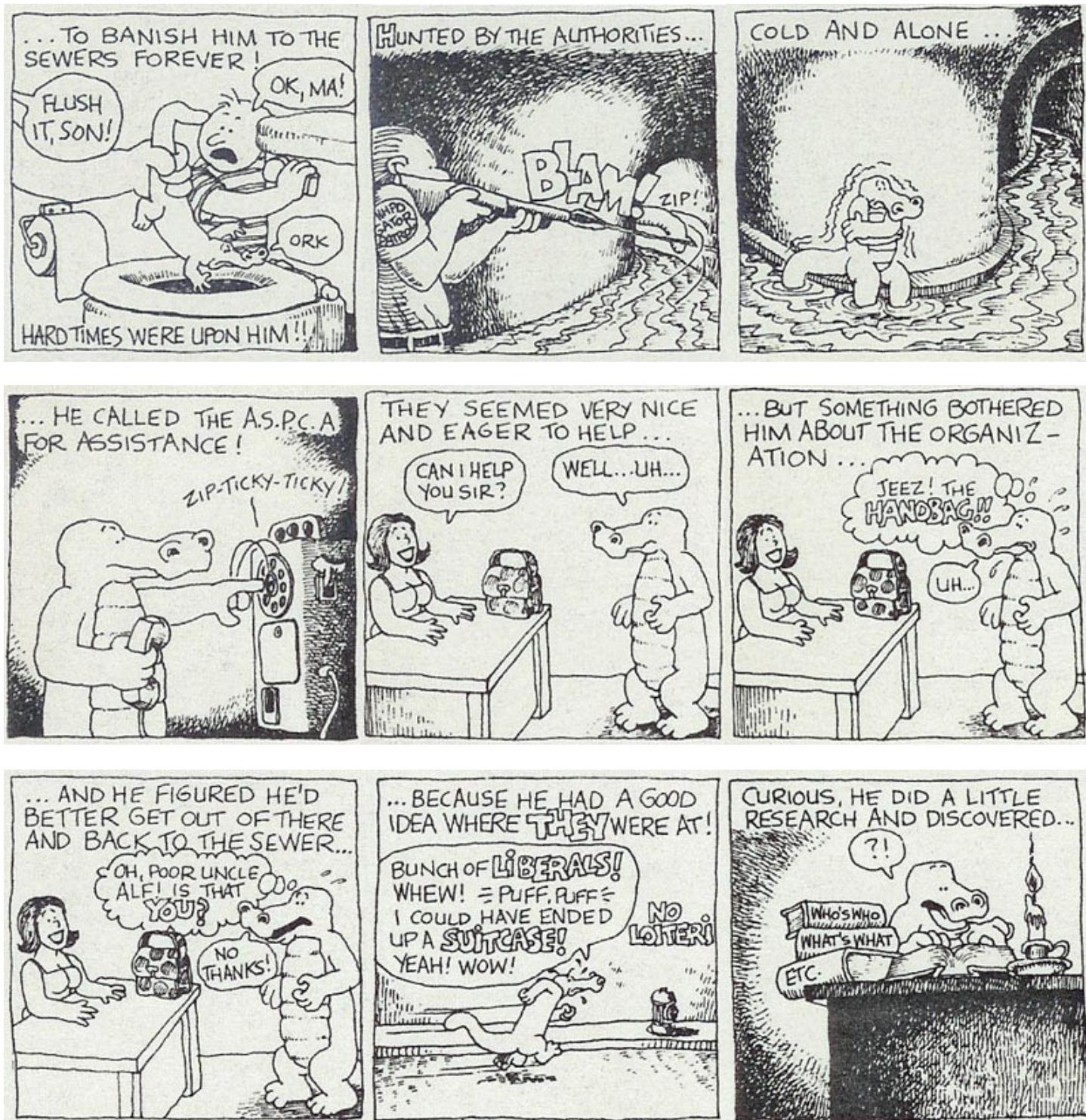
## Great Malcolm: Stars of "Might've Been" by Askia M. Touré

What happens when the dream of Nationhood falters?  
I ponder these sad truths as my mind wanders among  
the stars of "might've been." What might've happened  
if Malcolm had somehow survived--in exile--in Cuba,  
China, or Libya? Malcolm, tall, lean and brilliant,  
bearing the charisma of legendary prophets.  
A living epic embodied in his blazing promise:  
a living prophet to raise and guide a mighty Nation.  
No use blaming the robots who martyred him;  
the Empire was pulling the strings! Great Malcolm,  
our Nkrumah, our Lumumba gone in an instant, slain  
by mad men--and the self-hatred that's haunted us  
since slavery. Yes, every time we raise Anglos as  
the romantic ideal, Oprah, we slay and betray him again.  
Every time we slander events like the Million Woman  
March, Essence/Emerge, we slay and betray him again.  
Every time "assimilados" deny Ebonics, our Ancestor  
tongue, we slay and betray him again. And the Great,  
Black Spirit within shrinks and dims, the Ancestor  
Voice within us dies--as we embrace the "demons"  
of our Oppressor, and become blind, deaf and dumb,  
People; a Nation arisen from Chains and Auction  
Blocks, expires in his continuous Martyrdom!

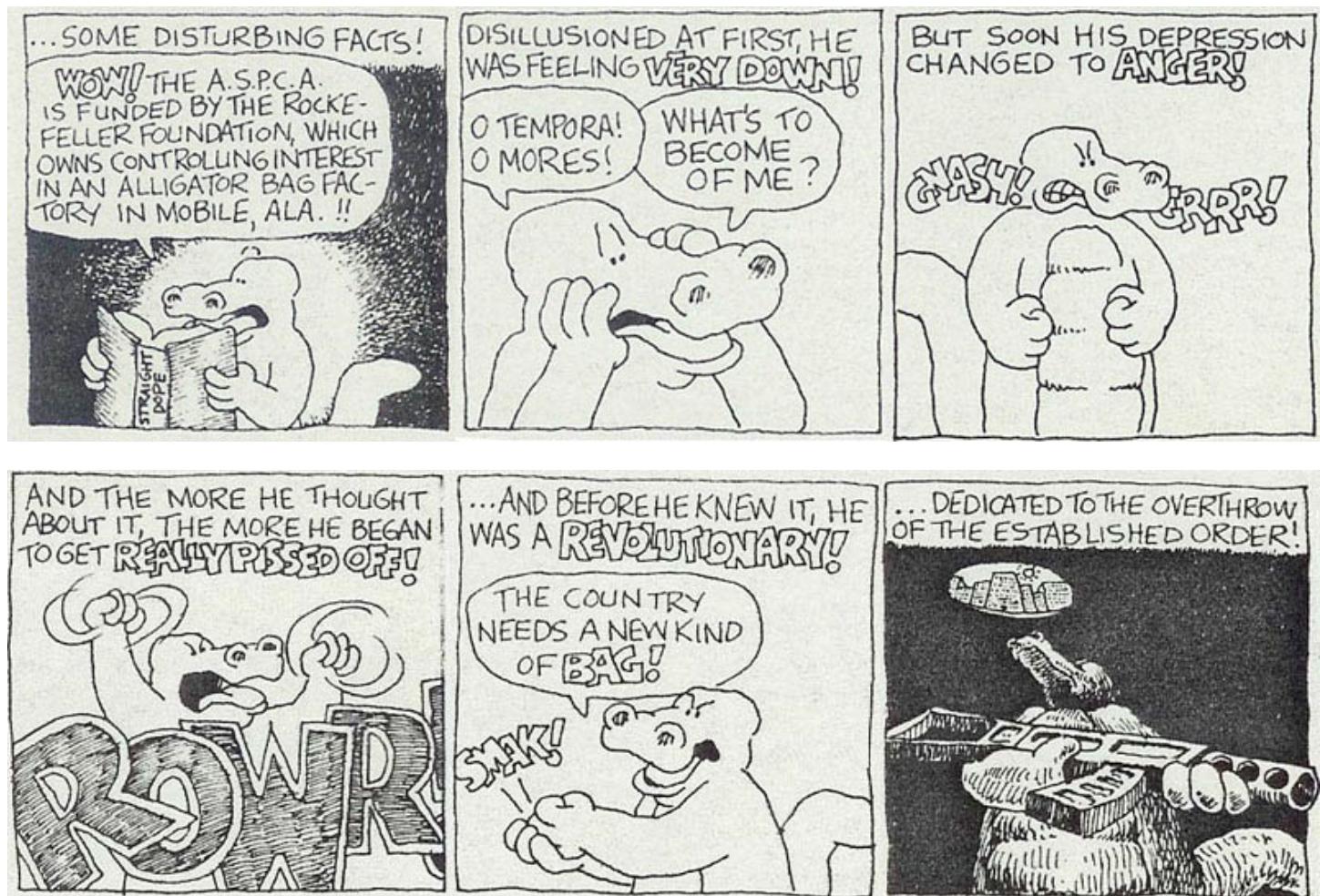
Askia M. Touré, poet, activist, environmentalist, is the author of "From the Pyramids to the Projects," "Dawn-Song!," "Mother Earth Responds, Green Poems & Alternative Visions." He resides in Boston.



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From: Bill Crawford, *High Flyin' Funnies, Comix and Stories*. Berkeley: The Print Mint, 1970. Source:  
<http://terrasol.home.igc.org/rufus.htm>