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Frantz Fanon, Soweto
and
American Black Thought

by Luv Turner and John Alan



Soweto

Thought

John Alan



On the cover: Original art of Fanon by E. Nichols. Photos depict student demonstration in Soweto, 1977; Anti-Bakke rally, 1978; and bullet-riddled dormitory at Jackson State College, 1970.

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Frantz Fanon, Soweto
and
American Black Thought

by LOU TURNER and JOHN ALAN

*And you
my friends
my allies
cosily chaired in London
or termiting in a thousand towns
or treadmilling the arid round
of protest, picket, pamphlet—
for as long as fervour lasts:
what shall I say of us?*

from "For Chief"
by Dennis Brutus

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Introduction
 by
CHARLES DENBY
 Editor, News & Letters
 and
RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA
 Chairwoman, News and Letters Committee

On this, the 10th anniversary of the 1968 Kerner Commission's admission that "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal," it is clear that nothing has been done to change the situation that the 1967 uprisings throughout the breadth and length of the land had forced the President's Commission to acknowledge. Today's papers are filled with statistics proving that conditions of life and labor among Blacks have not only not improved . . . they have worsened. Whether you take the 204-page report of the Urban League, the three-day spread of the *New York Times*, or the single column into which the *Chicago Tribune*, *Detroit Free Press* and others have squeezed a whole decade's neglect, the following facts glare out:

- Unemployment is twice what it was 10 years ago.
- Poverty has worsened and so has the death rate.
- And while the Black middle class has grown, so has pauperization among the poor—and not just for those on welfare. Many can't even reach that level of poverty. There are families who, literally, have not been on a job for three generations!

The New York blackout illuminated the fraud in the long-known statistic that the "average" unemployment among Blacks is twice that of whites. Even the statistic that unemployment among Black youth is fully 30 percent does not tell the whole story. The naked truth is that there are Black ghettos where unemployment among Black youth is 80 percent!

What the proliferation of statistics failed to show, however, is that the dissatisfaction with the Government and the Blacks' erstwhile leaders — headed by that mouthpiece of U.S. imperialism, the Ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young — does not mean that the Black masses are just despairing. Contrary to the reports in the white press, Black America's actual rejection of white capitalistic-imperialistic exploitation, with or without Black lackeys, is, at one and the same time, a time-bomb that is sure to explode, and a time for thinking and readying for action.

Put another way, what seems to be quiescence is not apathy. Rather, it is the hewing out of new ways to meet the challenge of the times which would not again allow activity to get so separated from theory (and vice versa), as very nearly to assure aborted revolutions. To succeed, philosophy and revolution must be united. Which is why Black youth are taking a second, deeper look at the writings of a very different type of Ambassador —the Martiniquean Frantz Fanon. Fanon, who had given up his French citizenship to be an actual participant in the Algerian Revolution and

theoretician of Third World revolutions, had come as Algeria's Ambassador to Ghana in 1960.

But nearly a decade before then, in that other quiescent period—the early 1950s—Fanon had broken with European values, and, in 1952, wrote that original philosophic work, *Black Skin, White Masks*. It became the transition point to new theory, and practice, of revolution. Fanon was the precursor of a whole new generation of revolutionaries.

By the time, in 1961, when Fanon wrote his masterpiece, *The Wretched of the Earth*, it was to be not just his highest point of development, and not only a Manifesto of the Third World, but a Manifesto with global dimensions he called "a new humanism." That its todayness keeps proving itself in reality as well as in theory was shown both at the height of youth revolt in Paris, May 1968, and all over again during the summer of 1976 when Soweto teen-agers, rebelling against being made to learn Afrikaans, the language of the oppressors, were found instead to be reading *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Before his savage murder, Steve Biko, that leader of the Black Consciousness movement who made the link to Fanon most direct both on consciousness and on internationalism, said: "The Black Consciousness movement does not want to accept the dilemma of capitalism versus communism. It will opt for a socialist solution that is an authentic expression of black communalism . . . As Fanon put it, 'the consciousness of the self is not the closing of a door to communication . . . National consciousness which is not nationalism is the only thing that will give us an international dimension.'"

It is this, just this, type of affinity of ideas of freedom that led American Black youth to identify with Africa and Caribbean freedom struggles and thinking. Petty-bourgeois intellectuals may not have noticed this working out of a new relationship of theory to practice that is itself a form of theory, since they haven't done the "theorizing." But the American Black identification with Soweto and Biko, with Fanon and Caribbean thought, was precisely that, as Black and white American youth demonstrations against U.S. imperialism's heavy investments in apartheid South Africa showed. Opposition to U.S. imperialism's propping up of Rhodesia while mouthing hollow words regarding "Black majority rule," words as false as Ian Smith's, is another such manifestation. Many are the ways the passion for freedom is articulating itself.

It is this idea of liberation whose time has come, which inspired the Black authors of this pamphlet—John Alan and Lou Turner—to probe their own experiences as well as historic-philosophic developments. One — Lou Turner—came into the Movement just when the civil rights struggles of the 1960s had reached, on the one hand, a new point of development with "Hell, no, we won't go!" into the Vietnam war, and, on the other hand, got aborted at the very highest point reached in Kent, Ohio, and Jackson, Mississippi, against U.S. imperialism's invasion of Cambodia.

The other—John Alan—who had been in all class struggles as well as Black struggles from the mid-1940s, felt that the very length of his experiences demanded a total re-examination and re-evaluation of the doings he felt had lacked a comprehensive theory, ever-widening the gulf between revolution and philosophy. He also felt keenly the constant underestimation of Black American thought — as if the Third World struggles were the whole and had no roots in the Black American experience. The truth was that the two-way road from Africa to America and back, indeed the triangular—African-West Indian-Black American — development of ideas which led to

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actual liberation movements, had started way back when all capitalism saw was a triangular trade of slaves, rum, molasses.

Karl Marx had been the first to graphically and profoundly sum up the beginnings of capitalism:

"The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a Warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production."

And what his new continent of thought—Historical Materialism that he called "a new Humanism"—led Marx to point to as the path of world revolution was the "new forces and new passions" that would not only destroy the old capitalistic society but create the new, classless social order on truly human foundations. Bound by this vision, the authors of *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought* wish to trace the triangular development of ideas and actual achievement of liberation, not for history's sake, but as preparation for the American revolution-to-be.

News & Letters, both as paper and as organization, is proud to publish their study and to appeal to all revolutionaries to rise to the challenge of the times beset by myriad crises, as well as to open new roads of revolution in thought as in fact. When Frantz Fanon declared that the colonial fight for freedom was "not a treatise on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute," he was, in fact, laying the foundation for the Absolute Idea—the unity of theory and practice—not just as a summing up, a totality of past and present, but what we call new beginnings for the future. Revolutionary Black thought, whether it comes from Azania (South Africa), the Caribbean, or the United States, is not end, but prologue to action. We invite all readers to join our authors in working out the imperative task they set for themselves to prepare theoretically for the American revolution-to-be.

Detroit, Michigan, May, 1978

*Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Chapter 31, Kerr edition, p. 823 (Penguin edition, p. 915)

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Mass student rallies, like this one in 1977, were held continuously by Soweto students in opposition to apartheid South Africa educational policies.

Part I
**SOWETO, BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS
 AND STEVE BIKO**

SOweto, THE SOUTH AFRICAN ghetto where the Black student revolt erupted in June 1976, reverberated throughout the world like a thunderbolt. It not only signalled a new stage of revolt among youth, but also marked the greatest revolt South Africa had yet seen among workers, nothing short of a three-day General Strike in August 1978. The dehumanized apartheid government's answer to these two thunderbolts which gave proof to the truth that no matter how oppressive the state, it cannot kill the passion for freedom—was the slaughter of hundreds of unarmed students, capped by the savage murder in September 1977 of Steve Biko, the founder of the Black Consciousness movement. But let us begin at the beginning—Soweto, June 1976.

The Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC) began their revolt by rejecting the attempt of the apartheid government to impose the Afrikaans language as a medium of instruction in their segregated schools. The South African state, through its Bantu educational policy, was, in this instance, heaping an added and offensive burden upon a learning process already made difficult by tuition fees, high cost of books, crowded classrooms, etc.; it was now arrogantly demanding total ideological submission by mandating that Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor, be used in the schools.

To Black South Africans, white South African civilization is an insidious maze of interconnecting laws and regulations, validating total control by white supremacists over every physical and every mental aspect of their lives. The Soweto revolt, in its opposition to the Afrikaans language, literally emerges out of the "Black mind," in defense of its own mind, resisting an absolutism which wants only to see its own image reflected in the minds of the people it is oppressing.

But the students of Soweto had no illusions about the value of the education offered to them by the apartheid state. They had long discarded any lingering belief that an apartheid education would provide them with the equipment to participate in a common South Africa. "For them, reality had been stripped naked: they can see their future in the horrifying Bantustans of Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana and other [homelands]. And the spectre is so horrendous that they do not mind to be shot at."

After bloody encounters with South African police, using sophisticated modern weapons of warfare to quell students armed only with sticks and stones, a victory was won by the students. Afrikaans was withdrawn as a language to be used in instruction, but it was a costly victory in young lives. Over 600 Black students lay dead, countless others wounded and/or arrested. This was not the end of the struggle, it was only a manifestation of how wide and how deep the opposition to apartheid was among Blacks and the rest of the discriminated against people in South Africa, and at the same time, it was the beginning of a new stage of the South African revolution.

Moreover, it was not only Soweto. Listen to a 16-year-old Cape Town student, Ms. Miriam Gafoor, speaking to a Supreme Court Judge: "Apartheid has become an insult to our human dignity. Our whole being rebels!"

Dr. Manas Buthelezi, "Letter from Soweto," Africa, Dec. 1976

against the whole South African existence. The system of apartheid does not allow us to grow to full womanhood or manhood. It is reducing us to intellectual cripples." Refusing to give her evidence before a government commission anonymously, she told her story this way: "I am a student at Saltriver High School, facing charges of public violence and arson. I was suspended from my school with seven other students. I am 16 years old and I have been locked up, refused food, and interrogated . . . We, the youth of South Africa, reject the subservient heritage that has been handed down to us . . ."

Scarcely a day in August passed without police shooting down demonstrators somewhere, as township after township exploded. By September 2, 1976, the revolt had spread to the "Coloured" masses (as those of mixed race are identified in South Africa), when 3,000 Coloured youth brought the conflict for the first time directly to a white area itself—downtown Cape Town.

What started as a student protest against the forced use of the oppressor's language, assumed overnight all of the features of a movement for national liberation, and in a very short time it became also a movement for the emancipation of labor—for Black workers to have the right to withhold their labor, i.e., to strike. The successful three-day General Strike in August 1976 sent shock waves through the economy and the minds of South Africa; the ruling whites learned that their vaunted white civilization was nakedly exposed, disclosing that its very existence was dependent upon Black labor.

THE EVENTS IN SOWETO revealed a high degree of consciousness and organization, carried out in the most democratic and meticulous manner, with the students as initiators and co-ordinators. Student bodies within the school system were conduits through which forms of action to be taken were relayed to Soweto's population, so student attendance remained at the maximum during revolt. Once the schools became the students' vehicles for discussion and organization of further defiance, the police began to pass out forged leaflets, instructing the children to stay home.

They refused to stay home. The students of Soweto, alone, decided when to boycott and when to attend classes. In 1977, so total was the boycott that shut down all the schools in Soweto, in other Black townships and even in several "tribal homelands," that at the end of the year the government dropped thousands of leaflets over Soweto by plane warning parents their children would fail if they did not show up for examinations. "Are you going to allow dropouts and intimidators to ruin your child's future?" the leaflets asked. A year-and-a-half after the first uprising, the answer was a school boycott more powerful than ever; the number of boycotters was more than 300,000.

Another aspect of the students' creative organizing was the development of the concept of consultation. For example, the SSRC pointed out that the success of the strike in Johannesburg was due in great measure to consultations with taxi drivers and railroad workers, urging them to stop all traffic to that city. The SSRC also realized that the failure to consult could cause a break in the front against apartheid, as in the case of the so-called Zulu backlash. Consultation with the Zulu workers, who lived in the hostels provided for them in Soweto, was all that was necessary for the "backlash" to disappear.

What emerges, in a very concrete way, is that the students, workers, women and children of Soweto, devised, during their rebellion, an organ-

ization and a method and a theory of struggle, which was a new extension of the old existing organizations, such as the African National Congress (ANC), the All African Convention (AAC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC).

Ezekiel Mphahlele, the Black South African essayist, novelist and teacher, when he returned in the summer of 1977 after many years abroad, was quick to recognize the great distance between the "old" and the "new" in Soweto. He scolded the political chiefs who claimed that they had engineered the revolts from exile, "on international time and money," when, he said, the truth is "The students did it all on their own steam, driven by their own hurts and esteem of themselves."²

This is not to say that the revolt in South Africa has not been continuous. When Bantu Education was first introduced in 1953, African students went on strike at almost every institution of higher education throughout South Africa. Although Black workers are forbidden to strike, and refusal to work is punishable by fine and imprisonment, illegal strikes jumped, after they were forbidden, from 33 in 1954 to 73 in 1955. When South Africans were involved in the great bus boycott of 1957, hundreds of thousands walked 20 miles to work and trudged another 20 miles back to their segregated townships for three solid months until they won their fight against a fare increase.

In 1969, the dockworkers won the support of not only African students, but even students at the white universities in Cape Town and the Witwatersrand. The years between 1973 and 1975 saw wave after wave of strikes. But the half million African workers and almost quarter million Coloured workers, who struck in response to the Soweto students' call in August of 1976, carried out the greatest strike in the history of South Africa.

The women, especially those in the garment and food canning industries, were numbered among the most militant. The large clothing industry, which employs 50,000 workers, 90 percent of them women, was completely shut down in the general strike. And white housewives were seen scrubbing their own floors for the first time in their lives when Black maids failed to report for work.

WOMEN HAVE BEEN FIGHTING to change the system ever since 1913, when their demonstrations against passes in the Orange Free State were so massive and militant that the passes were withdrawn. In 1955, when pass-carrying was once again to be extended to the women, 2,000 of them—mostly Africans, but including women of other races—began protests that continued until August 9, 1956, when 20,000 women converged on Pretoria. August 9 has since then become known as "Women's Day" in South Africa.

Even the rural women, who are the largest single group, the most deprived culturally and the most burdened by the migratory labor system that forces their husbands and sons to leave their homeland, marched over 10,000-strong from Natal South Coast to Port Shepstone to present their grievances in 1958.³

But Soweto 1976 was both the highest point of integrality with Black

² Ezekiel Mphahlele, "Back to Ancestral Ground," *First World*, May-June 1977.

³ For more on Black women in South Africa, see: Phyllis Nienholtz, *An African Tragedy* (Agascha Productions, P.O. Box 38063, Detroit, MI, 48238, 1976); and Hilda Bernstein, *For Their Triumphs and for Their Tears* (International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 104 Newgate Street, London EC1, England, 1975; available in the U.S. from IDAF, P.O. Box 17, Cambridge, MA, 02138).



Many of these women were arrested following their protest in 1958 against South Africa's apartheid policy of demanding that women carry identification passes.

Consciousness and the first mass opposition to apartheid to break into world view since the Bloody Sharpeville massacre of 1960, when thousands of Africans shouted "Izwe Lethu," burned their passes, and marched to the police stations demanding to be arrested for having violated the apartheid rules. The unarmed mass of men, women and children were machine-gunned, a state of emergency was declared, and any political organization daring to challenge white supremacy—such as the ANC and PAC—was outlawed at once. Soweto is the proof that arms not only cannot kill the idea of freedom, but that the struggle also embraces ever newer layers of the population:

Soweto was not just a simple separation in time from a preceding generation, but such a quantum leap into revolutionary methods and ideas that it inspired a Soweto youth to proclaim: "Go and tell the world that the process of Black Liberation, which nobody can reverse, has begun in South Africa!"⁴ Within hours that spirit caught on in every township in South Africa, from Johannesburg to Cape Town, and soon, on the walls of schools and government buildings, slogans appeared announcing: "Black IS power."

Whether the leadership was killed or exiled or jailed, more leaders emerged from below. An American Black intellectual who spent 11 months in South Africa reported that the youth learned to taunt the "hippos" (the name of the eight-sided, armed police transports used to strike fear in Soweto residents). To divert the "hippos" from actual meetings, students would gather at a different place nearby to throw rocks at "hippos" that

⁴ See "Letter from Soweto," cited above.

came to break up the meeting, then disappear and regroup elsewhere, while the actual meeting continued undisrupted.

Not a week has passed since the first outburst in June 1976 that hasn't disclosed that it is a still ongoing revolution. It is for this reason, precisely this, that the armed apartheid government has deluded itself that it was "reasonable and practical" to throw Steve Biko, naked and unconscious from serious head wounds, into the rear of a police jeep, and drive him 700 miles to murder him. It was then that the world learned in full what the government tried to suppress—Biko's philosophy of liberation, which he called Black Consciousness.

Listen to Steve Biko speak for himself:

By Black consciousness I mean the cultural and political revival of an oppressed people. This must be related to the emancipation of the entire continent of Africa since the Second World War. Africa has experienced the death of white invincibility.

I must emphasize the cultural depth of Black consciousness. The recognition of the death of white invincibility forces Blacks to ask the question: "Who am I?" "Who are we?" And the fundamental answer we give is this: "People are people!" So "Black" consciousness says: "Forget about color!" But the reality we faced 10 to 15 years ago did not allow us to articulate this . . .

Where is the evidence of support among the younger generation for BPC (Black People's Convention)? In one word: Soweto! The boldness, dedication, sense of purpose, and clarity of analysis of the situation—all of these things are definitely a result of Black consciousness ideas among the young generation in Soweto and elsewhere. Indeed, this is not quantitatively analyzable. For the power of a movement lies in the fact that it can indeed change the habits of people. This change is not the result of force but of dedication, of moral persuasion. This is what has gotten through to the young people. They realize that we are not dealing with mere bread and butter issues . . .

Ah, this is a quick change! We begin with the assumption that from the international point of view South Africa is a pawn in the politics of pragmatism, in the game of power between the U.S. and USSR . . .

In order to realize its long-term policy, America has to find a group with which it can be allied . . . It appears to us that this is the reason why [U.S. President] Carter chose Andrew Young as Ambassador to the UN, and why he sent him to Southern Africa. In this way Carter hopes to develop a new complexion, acceptable to the Third World in general and to South Africa in particular. Carter uses Andrew Young's color as a special passport to the Third World. But Young has no program except the furtherance of the American system. That's why he plays tennis in Soweto. Carter is doing more skillfully what Nixon and Ford did: to make the American system work more efficiently.

In being so critical of the economic self-interest in the Third World on the part of American capitalism, I at the same time have no illusions about Russia. It is as imperialistic as America. This is evident in its internal history as well as in the role it plays in countries like Angola. But the Russians have a less dirty name; in the eyes of the Third World, they have a clean slate. Because of this, they have had a better start in the power game. Their policy seems to be acceptable to revolutionary groups . . . Here we are probably

faced with the greatest problem in the Third World today. We are divided because some of us think that Russian imperialism can be accepted as purely an interim phase while others—like myself—doubt whether Russia is really interested in the liberation of the Black peoples.

The Black consciousness movement does not want to accept the dilemma of capitalism versus communism. It will opt for a socialist solution that is an authentic expression of Black communalism. In the present stage of our struggle it is not easy to present details of this alternative. But it is a recognition of the fact that a change in the color of the occupier does not necessarily change the system. In our search for a just system we know that the debate about economic policy cannot be pure, completely separate from existing systems. In our writings we at times speak of collective enterprises because we reject the individualistic and capitalistic type of enterprises. But we are not taking over the Russian models. . .

The call for Black consciousness is the most positive call to come from any group in the Black world for a long time. It is more than just a reactionary rejection of Whites by Blacks. The quintessence of it is the realization by the Blacks that, in order to feature well in this game of power politics, they have to use the concept of group power and to build a strong foundation for this. Being an historically, politically, socially and economically disinherit ed and dispossessed group, they have the strongest foundation from which to operate. The philosophy of Black consciousness, therefore, expresses group pride and the determination by the Blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self.

At the heart of this kind of thinking is the realization by the Blacks that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. Once the latter has been so effectively manipulated and controlled by the oppressor as to make the oppressed believe that he is a liability to the White man, then there will be nothing the oppressed can do that will really scare the powerful masters. Hence thinking along lines of Black consciousness makes the Black man see himself as a being, entire in himself, and not as an extension of a broom or additional leverage to some machine. . .

It is often claimed that the advocates of Black consciousness are hemming themselves into a closed world, choosing to weep on each other's shoulders and thereby cutting out useful dialogue with the rest of the world. Yet I feel that the Black people of the world, in choosing to reject the legacy of colonialism and White domination and to build around themselves their own values, standards and outlook to life, have at last established a solid base for meaningful cooperation amongst themselves in the larger battle of the Third World against the rich nations.

As Fanon puts it, "the consciousness of the self is not the closing of a door to communication . . . National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension" . . .

We have in us the will to live through these trying times; over the years we have attained moral superiority over the White man; we shall watch as Time destroys his paper castles and know that all these little pranks were but frantic attempts of frightened little people to convince each other that they can control the minds and bodies of indigenous peoples of Africa indefinitely.⁵

⁵ Excerpts from "Steve Biko Speaks for Himself," News & Letters, November 1977.



WHAT IS POWERFUL AND NEW about Biko's ideas is that he always centers the possibility for change *within the subject of the oppressed*, and not simply within the South African economy or in the hierarchy of the system. This distinguishes him sharply from people like Andrew Young and opinion-manufacturers in this country who deliberately delude the people that racial persecution in South Africa can be ended by applying a tourniquet to the economy, which in any case is always applied in a half-hearted manner, like the wrist-slapping six-month arms embargo by the UN (which does not include nuclear materials).

The ominous character of Henry Kissinger's role in South Africa, perpetuated now by Andrew Young at the very moment of the coalescence of revolutionary forces in South Africa, shows the imperialist face of the U.S. This is seen not only in the U.S.'s heavy investments in South Africa, but in its global political counter-revolutionary role throughout the whole of Africa ever since the birth of the Third World.

When the African Revolutions first unfolded in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they electrified the world not only because in a single decade they reshaped the map of Africa, but also because the banner of liberation raised was charged with a dynamism of ideas, contrasting sharply

with the most famous monopoly of all—the U.S.'s underdeveloped intellectuals who were then expounding "the end of ideology."⁶

The tragic death of Steve Biko brought forth the re-discovery of self-consciousness as an objective force within the process of liberation. Black Consciousness means that Black people in Azania must be for themselves "and not as an extension of a broom or an additional leverage to some machine."

Every white person's health and prosperity in South Africa is derived wholly from the dirt-cheap Black labor held in control by restrictive laws and police terror. South Africa's prosperity during the 1950s and 1970s rested largely upon the world price of gold. Even with the inflated price of gold, its economy would not have bloomed if it were not for the low wages that were paid to Black workers in the labor-intensive mining operations.

The UN reports that real wages in South Africa have not increased since 1910. Black unions are recognized neither by the industries nor by law, and Black workers earn as little as \$40 a month in many industries. That is why 50 of the largest 100 U.S. companies operate in South Africa, investing more than \$1.5 billion and realizing a rate of profit that is among the highest in the world.⁷

Because the "success" of capitalism in South Africa is inseparable from the subsistence wages paid to Black labor, there can be no meaningful improvement for Black workers under such a system. The fear that haunts capitalism in South Africa is the continuous revolt of the masses.

As far back as 1951, one of the leaders and theoreticians in South Africa, I. B. Tabata, said in his opening address to the first conference of the Society of Young Africa (SOYA):

SOYA can, for instance, assist in bringing to the consciousness of wider sections of the people the two-fold nature of oppression: national oppression and class exploitation . . . You will have noted that I lay great stress on the importance of ideas . . . The ideas are the weapons with which you cut your path in the barbaric jungle of South African society today. We have to fight ideas with ideas. We have nothing to lose. We have a world to conquer . . . We go into the struggle, not simply to save the youth, not only to save the non-Europeans. It is a question of the preservation of all society. Our struggle, here in South Africa, is part and parcel of the struggle of humanity as a whole.⁸

The '60s began with massive protests launched by the newly created Pan African Congress against the pass system. The apartheid government's response was the Sharpeville massacre. PAC leader Robert Sobukwe, charged with incitement, said, "We regard it as our historic role to contribute towards a United States of Africa from Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Madagascar." At the end of his four years at hard labor, so determined

⁶ See Raya Dunayevskaya, "The New Humanism: African Socialism," Appendix to Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions (The Left Group, Cambridge University Labour Club, 1967), reprinted as Appendix to "Henry Kissinger's African Safari: Pressuring Rhodesia While Bolstering Apartheid South Africa" in *The Political-Philosophic Letters of Raya Dunayevskaya* (News and Letters, Detroit, 1977).

⁷ For a discussion of the expanding American investments in South Africa in the context of the current world economic crisis, see Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis* (News and Letters, Detroit, 1978), pp. 12-13.

⁸ Tabata's "Opening Address" to the first conference of the Society of Young Africa, Dec. 20, 1951, is reprinted as Document 98 in Vol. II of the four-volume study *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, edited by Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M. Carter (Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, Ca., 1972).

was the government not to allow him to go free that it rushed through a special law that became known as the "Sobukwe Bill," and sent him to infamous Robben Island as a "special prisoner."⁹

WHEN SOWETO ERUPTED it was again their fear of genuine revolution that impelled the South African government first to step up attempts to fragment the Black people along "tribal" lines with their so called "homeland" schemes; then to offer minimal reforms to the "Coloured" and Asian population; and above all, to wage a full scale attack on the identifiable leadership of the organized forms of resistance. Steve Biko was one of hundreds of Black activists, students and trade union leaders who was banned or jailed. Indeed, he had already been banned to the isolation of King Williamstown since 1973, but on August 18, 1977, he was picked up under the infamous Section 6 of the Terrorism Act, which allows permanent detention without charge or trial. On September 12 he was murdered in Pretoria's central prison by the security police, the 23rd activist to die in police custody in 18 months.

South Africa is a society where revolt walks always in the shadow of a massacre. Change and revolution have become, finally, inseparable. The policy of apartheid has made it impossible to think in terms of "degrees" of freedom, because it can only be understood as a little less bondage than the bondage that exists.

What was new about Soweto, in addition to the massive nature of the revolt of the youth as well as the workers, was the internationalization of the struggle, especially its impact on the U.S.



Defiant family of murdered Steve Biko: Ntsikie Biko and their children, Sakora, 2, and Nkosinathi, 6.

⁹ Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe died in South Africa on Feb. 26, 1978. See "In Memoriam" by Phyllis Jordan, *News & Letters*, April 1978.

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Undaunted by driving downpour, Martin Luther King, Jr. and
marchers sing out on historic march from Selma to Montgomery,
Alabama, in 1965.

Part II

BLACK STRUGGLES IN THE UNITED STATES

THE PRESIDENT OF THIS UNIVERSITY, Dr. Brage Golding, sits on the Board of Directors of the Armco Steel Corporation, and Mr. George Janik, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Kent State University, is an employee of IBM, Inc.¹ wrote the undergraduate student representatives at Kent State University, demanding that Golding and Janik resign their positions in these U.S. corporations which support apartheid South Africa with extensive investments. "The economic future of South Africa can be said to be the willingness of U.S. corporations to invest heavily in a country that offers cheap labor; exploiting the African population at the expense of their dignity, living conditions and rights to a decent living."

The anti-apartheid messages were brought home on campus after campus, and not separated from struggles at home. Thus, students at Stanford and the University of California, who initiated mass anti-apartheid actions in 1977, deepened that movement by drawing in demands that the universities restore gutted minority studies and that the courts overturn the Bakke decision. In 1978 demonstrators from many campuses converged on Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, protesting South Africa's participation in the Davis Cup tennis matches. The next month both Wesleyan and Princeton students seized buildings on their campuses until they won the promise from their university administrators to disinvest in banks and corporations dealing with South Africa. The protests, bringing anti-apartheid action home, soon erupted on campuses all over the land. In a three-week span, demonstrations took place at Amherst, Brandeis, Columbia, Dartmouth, Harvard, MIT, Tufts, Williams, Yale and the University of Michigan.

It is clear that American youth have no more use for a system that degrades humanity than do the youth of Soweto. This rejection of a racist, exploitative, capitalist society permeates university and ghetto youth alike.

So simple a matter as an accidental power blackout in New York City, July 13, 1977, dramatically exposed the Achilles heel of American capitalism, its racism. All over the city the lights, burglar alarms and electronic locks went out, and within seconds, thousands of Black and Latin youth were racing through all the major ghettos, including Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick in Brooklyn, the South Bronx, Jamaica and Harlem—as well as more “downtown” areas such as Times Square and the Upper West Side.

The youths, followed by the entire community, made the streets and the racist rip-off businesses their own. They dubbed it “Christmas in July” as they smashed into the stores and took what they needed.

All kinds of stores were hit in spontaneous, yet in many cases, highly organized fashion. Sometimes tow trucks were used to pull down burglar gates, and there were often lines, just like at a sale.

The “commandeering” of the private property cannot be compared with the politicalization that was very much in evidence during the urban

revolts of the 1960s, but the reasons for the looting and burning in New York City's ghettos were the same reasons that compelled the ghetto youth of 1964-67 to go out into the streets in rage.

In the case of unemployment, conditions are worse than they were ten years ago. Unemployment among Black youth in 1965 was 20 percent. Today it is between 40 and 50 percent. In New York City in 1977 it was 80 percent. The second highest unemployment category is Black women. And these same two groups also have the highest suicide rates. Whether it is infant mortality in this supposedly highly advanced land, or the alarming suicide rate, or the incredibly high homicide rate for young Black men, it is abundantly clear that life — especially Black life — is "expendable" to American capitalism.¹⁰

When Black youth broke into stores and carted off the wares to their ghetto homes, it was as though entire pages of statistics had come alive to challenge the failure of the system to meet the human needs for a whole segment of American society.

HOW TO OVERCOME this failure has baffled all capitalist policy makers and politicians, because they dare not look at the fact that capitalist society really has no "normal" need for the labor of Black youth. Black youth are to be wasted in the ever-maddening cycle of unemployment, welfare, prison, and back again. Solutions offered are minimal, with a lot of pieties about the "work ethic" and "a good minimum education."

The realistically-minded Black job seekers know it to be a "con and a shuffle." They know that the few jobs which will be presented are "make work," to which they will not be allowed to bring any creativity or responsibility. As one youth put it, complaining that he had been promised an interesting job and was instead asked to sweep the streets, "When we're grown up, we'll have to take this kind of menial job to have work, but while we're young we want to do something more exciting."

Some so-called radicals and moral defenders of capitalism have characterized the New York "looting" either as a "failure of cultural values" or as "an innate lack of moral standards." Such views express total ignorance of what it is to live in a ghetto; what it means to be young and Black, growing up in the big cities of this country. Although there has been "great advancement" of the Black middle class in the last two decades, and the disappearance of the most visible and obnoxious forms of racism in public accommodations, economic and cultural racism is still part of the day-to-day life in this country.

The New York black, i exposed not only the racism of American capitalism, which has meant a full decade of Depression economic conditions for Blacks, and the attempt to push back every gain made by the Civil Rights movement of the '60s — from jobs, to housing, to numbers imprisoned. It also exposed the widening division between leadership and masses in the Black movement. Contrast the difference between the way in which Martin Luther King, Jr., trying to respond to the need to unite Black and labor, marched with the sanitation workers on the eve of

¹⁰ The New York Times, April 4, 1978, documents from Health Department records that the death rate in Harlem is almost 50 percent higher than the New York citywide rate of 10.2 per 1,000 population; the infant mortality rate in Central Harlem is 42.8 per 1,000 live births, against the citywide average of 19.0 infant deaths for each 1,000 live births. "The gap between Harlem's rates and rates of other parts of New York have been widening over the last decade," the article continues, "despite the introduction in 1966 of Medicaid and Medicare . . ."



Student demonstrations, like this one at the University of Michigan, swept U.S. campuses in 1978, demanding that university administrations withdraw their investments in apartheid South Africa.

his assassination in 1968, and the disgusting way in which Maynard Jackson, Black Mayor of Atlanta, broke the sanitation workers' strike in his city in April, 1977—on the very anniversary of Dr. King's murder.

Indeed, it was only after the New York outburst that Vernon Jordan of the Urban League signaled the end of his and other Black leaders' honeymoon with the Carter Administration by ever-so-mildly taking issue with Carter's lack of specific proposals dealing with Black poverty, most specifically in the area of jobs. The blackout events had exposed the fakery of Carter's rhetoric and the impotency of Black leadership in this period when most of the gains, so hard-won in the past decade, were being rolled back.

In fact, the Black movement has been in a situation of "dual alienation"—from its own leadership as well as from the American system—ever since the mid-1960s when the mass of Black people began to question the goals and methods of the Civil Rights movement leadership.

WHAT MARKED THE GREAT and historic decade of the '60s was the mass nature of the Black revolt — its self-activity, self-organization and self-development. The courage of the Black youth in the Deep South initiated a new era in the U.S.A. that swept along young and old, gave a new definition to the labor movement's "sit-down" with sit-ins, teach-ins and wade-ins, and inspired a whole new generation of revolutionaries, Black and white.

It was this very mass character and strength out of which the disillusion began, and not only in the South, but in the North as well. The Rent Strike movement which swept the New York slums in the winter of 1963-64 involved over 100,000 people under the slogan "no rent for rats." Yet the leadership led the mass demonstrations into the arena of the landlord-tenant courts, where things bogged down interminably. Six months later, CORE demonstrations were taken over by Harlem youth and the 1964 Newark rebellion was on; the next summer Black fury exploded in the first of many outbursts in the now internationally-known Watts community in California.

Job discrimination was rampant in industry, and low-paid menial work was the exclusive province of Black and other minority workers. Housing was rigidly segregated, but the Black worker and the urban poor could not

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afford to live outside of the vast deteriorating slums that were the "Black communities."

The feeling of frustration was not only directed against the system of capitalism and its symbols, i.e. the white landlords and white merchants, but also against the middle-class leadership of the Civil Rights movement. This leadership was proving to be incapable of moving against the all-pervasive racism that plagued the lives of Black workers and the Black poor city dwellers.

Alongside this criticism of capitalism and of the Black leadership, there was a growing new "Black consciousness." The slogan "Black Power," raised by Stokely Carmichael on the 1965 march from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi with James Meredith and Dr. M. L. King, was the articulation of this growing new Black consciousness.

The slogan "Black Power" did not precede, but followed Watts; the Black masses had already broken with the leadership's conception of the movement a full year before Carmichael tried to capsulize it as a slogan. As Raya Dunayevskaya put it: "... he signalled more than the end of Dr. King's predominance in the leadership of the Movement. It was also the beginning of the division between tanks and all leaders, himself included."¹¹ The division was especially sharp between the Black women and Carmichael when he dared to say that the only position for women in the movement was "prone." He never repeated it.

Black power, before it was corrupted with the ideas of "Black Capitalism," reflected the disillusionment with, and alienation from, white capitalism on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a feeling of race pride and race respect, wedded to the conscious knowledge that power existed within the Black masses to transform society. It was a quest for a total solution in ideas as well as in action.

Behind the twin slogans of "Black Power" and "Black is Beautiful," the course of Black liberation was altered and the method of struggle redefined. From 1966 onward into the 1970s, no facet of Black American life was left untouched by the Black Power Movement.

Into this ferment of so much activity which seemed to spring out of nowhere, came the Black urban revolts culminating in the 1967 summer Detroit Revolt. This revolt stunned a nation which had already experienced the "hot summers" of Watts and Newark, but Detroit was to be different. It was not simply an upheaval to "get whitey," but a revolt against the class system wearing a white face. The Black people of Detroit, mainly workers and urban poor, in the fury of their attack upon the symbols of capitalism, did not spare the property of the Black businessman or the Black landlord. The looting of stores, and the sniping at the police and the military, was interracial.

Detroit's outbreak was to be the final step in the new stage of Black revolt—a stage characterized by the movement away from White/Black liberalism to class/race consciousness. It was also at this point of the Black rebellion that the Federal Government decided to intervene with massive sums of money to oil the waters of dissension in the Black ghettos. This spending of federal funds has mainly resulted, over the last decade, in bringing forth an "influential" strata of the Black middle class, most of whom are "expert" on handling the "Black Question" within the framework of democratic liberalism espoused by the Democratic Party.

¹¹ Raya Dunayevskaya, "New Passions and New Forces," Chapter 9 of *Philosophy and Revolution* (Dell Publishing Co., New York, 1973), p. 269.

The infusion of federal funds, whether actually under the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) budget or not, was called the "poverty program" by ghetto residents. A name went with it for those Civil Rights leaders who took the jobs that were offered — "poverty pimps." Where the cry of the ghetto revolts was "Abolish the slums!" the intent of the OEO was to create a new generation of "tame" Black leaders.

THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT not only touched every facet of life, it also produced a new consciousness and spirit of revolt that cannot be erased from history.

By the '70s Black workers had organized Black caucuses within their unions to combat the racism found both in the unions and in the factories.

As one of the most experienced Black workers wrote:

An entirely new stage was born with the appearance of groups like DRUM (Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement) within the auto shops. DRUM was organized after Chrysler fired seven of the black workers who had struck the Dodge Main plant to protest a speed-up on the line, while the UAW Convention was being held in Atlantic City. In July, 1968, when DRUM called for a strike to support a list of demands against racism, both by Chrysler and the UAW, the call brought thousands of workers out of the plant and shut down production for two days.

Several months before the Dodge strike in Detroit, 500 workers at the Mahwah, New Jersey Ford plant had shut down production for three days after a racist foreman called a production worker a "black bastard." Out of that spontaneous wildcat, the United Black Brothers of Mahwah Ford was organized.

The greatest difference between the new caucuses emerging today and those that appeared before is that most of us who were in Black opposition groups up to now thought that the most important thing to do was to throw out the leadership, or change the union structure, or something of that nature. The young people today aren't thinking that way. They are thinking in terms of a complete change — of revolution.

Young Blacks today aren't joking about the complete change they are out to get. When the group at Dodge named themselves the Revolutionary Union Movement, it was very significant. Years ago if workers called themselves "revolutionaries," other workers would have shied away from them. Today the very word can attract workers.¹²

In the '70s, Black students are letting it be known they have no intention of giving up the Black Studies courses for which they had fought so hard following the assassination of Rev. King. To win these programs Black students had occupied buildings and shut down universities, and two had been shot to death at UCLA over the direction of a new center. In Atlanta, Georgia, high school students boycotted classes and called for daily Black Studies programs in the public school curriculum, beginning with elementary school. One student commented, "If they teach us every day about the White man, they can teach us every day about the Black man."

¹² Charles Denby, "Black Caucuses in the Unions," *New Politics*, Summer 1968; reprinted as Appendix to third edition of *American Civilization or Trial* (News and Letters, Detroit, 1970).

Suddenly, not only did the number of programs decline sharply from the estimated high of about 500 in 1972, but those remaining were rapidly becoming establishment-controlled. "College administrators don't want meaningful Black studies programs because they would reveal the racist nature of American higher education," charged Leonard Jeffries, director of the Black Studies department at City College of New York.¹³ Nothing better proves his point than the racism revealed by the top intellectual citadel, Harvard, where the Chairman of the Afro-American Studies Department, Prof. Ewart Guinier, fought so long and so hard to prevent the proposed W.E.B. Du Bois Institute from being wrenched from Black control to become an instrument in the hands of the Administration.¹⁴ He lost the battle. "The treatment Blacks receive at Harvard today parallels their treatment in American life . . . is no more elevated than that of the conservative majority of the U.S. Supreme Court . . . or the local police force," said Dr. Guinier, accusing Harvard of nothing less than the "academic lynching of Black students."

This attempt to either eradicate or discipline Black Studies has been met with new student strikes and occupations from the University of Michigan to Brown University in Rhode Island, and from CUNY to Kent State, Ohio. It is not only the existence of serious Black Studies programs that is in jeopardy, but the very presence of substantial numbers of minorities on university campuses. In the South, all-Black colleges have suffered drastic cuts in financial aid. In New York, the open admissions and free tuition policies which gave the opportunity for Black, Latino and poor white youth to go to college have been eliminated.

HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE—which is overwhelmingly Hispanic, offers the only bilingual education program in the East, and was founded in 1970 only after massive pressure from the Latino community of the South Bronx—was threatened with closing in 1976. It was saved only by the immediate occupation of the college for two weeks by students who conducted classes and seminars themselves.

When the threat was repeated in 1978, students took over an almost finished but empty building across the street from the college at 500 Grand Concourse Ave., which students had demanded become part of their school for four years. It soon could not accommodate all the professors who wanted to teach their classes there to show support for the action.

Declaring that "Hostos is affirmative action," the students sent a large contingent to the mass April 1978 march in Washington, D.C. called to protest the Bakke decision which aimed at ending the few meaningful affirmative action programs that ever were implemented, not alone on the campus, but in employment as well.

The protests against Bakke have brought together, in a new way, Black and white students, women, and other minorities on a scale not seen for many years. At the same time, Black students at Cornell University were joined for the first time by white students to protest more cuts in Black Studies there—and even Barnard College had a demonstration against the elimination of some of their Black Studies.

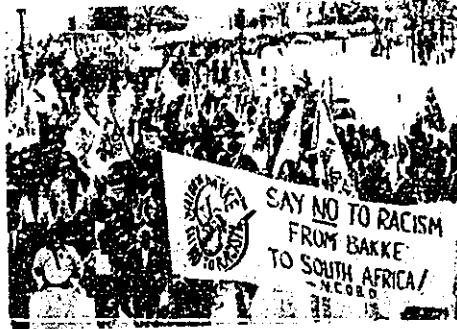
In the same way, Kent State students—in their 1977 battle against

¹³ Quoted in "Black Studies Monk Gains but Seek Wider Role" by Edward Fiske, New York Times, June 19, 1977.

¹⁴ See "The DuBois Legacy Under Attack" by David Graham DuBois, The Black Scholar, Jan.-Feb. 1978.

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Over 30,000 demonstrators massed in Washington, D.C. on April 15, 1978, demanding that the Supreme Court overturn the Bakke decision.



construction of a gym on Blanket Hill, where National Guards murdered four students on May 4, 1970—tried not to let their movement be separated this time from the Black dimension, as it was in 1970. Whereas the massacre at Kent State had shut down no less than 426 campuses in 1970, while ten days later none protested the killings at Black Jackson State in Mississippi, the protesters of 1977 were wearing bright red T-shirts with white letters: "Long Live the Spirit of Kent and Jackson State."

BLACK MASSES HAVE ALWAYS been the revolutionary vanguard, releasing an avalanche of creative energy. It was Black workers forming caucuses who took the lead in fighting for decent working conditions for all workers. It was Black youth from preteens through college who inspired white youth to join in protest. All stereotypes of "age" have been broken down in the very process of revolt. One who had been a civil rights activist in the South put it this way: "I was constantly astonished at how youth in 6th, 7th and 8th grade would not only demonstrate and get arrested, but organize others—adults as well as kids. You saw kids as thinkers in the Freedom Schools. This is what we are witnessing again in Soweto, today."

The "new passions and new forces" which Marx first mentioned in his monumental work, Capital, are being concretized by our own age because they are central to the transformation of reality—the reality of racism, sexism and capitalist exploitation today.

Thus, not a single struggle in the '60s or '70s took place without Black women in the forefront. It was Rosa Parks, a Black seamstress, who sparked the whole Black revolt in the South in 1955 by refusing to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. It was Fannie Lou Hamer who initiated Mississippi Freedom Summer. It was Black women, calling themselves "Woman Power Unlimited," who organized help for jailed Freedom Riders in 1961-62. It was Black nurses' aides who led thousands into the streets in Charleston, South Carolina, and Black welfare mothers who organized the Welfare Rights Organization. Black women led the 1966 Maryland Freedom Union movement, organized the strikes of food-processing workers and created the unions for domestic workers.

It is a dimension that crosses generations back to U.S. abolitionists Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, and crosses oceans to women like South African Winnie Mandela, who has been under banning orders in her Soweto home for all but nine months of the past 16 years—ever since her



Rev. King and Rosa Parks



Gloria Richardson



Fannie Lou Hamer



Winnie Mandela

husband, ANC leader Nelson Mandela, was sentenced to Robben Island for life after the infamous Rivonia Trial. She once showed her defiance by coming into court dressed in the green, gold and black colors of the banned ANC. Now she has been banned to Brandfort, a remote Orange Free State village, under severe restrictions that do not allow her in the presence of more than one other person at a time, and then only by special permission. At the close of her latest trial, the Black audience joined her in giving the clenched-fist Black power salute.¹⁵

Indeed, it was because women are so vital and integral a dimension of the movement to freedom that one young, Black working woman—who fully appreciated the phenomenal impact that Alex Haley's *Roots* had upon white and Black America alike—was led to write, nevertheless:

Never before has the history of Black America had so much notice.
For the first time, somebody has traced our history through six generations . . . Nobody reading this book could miss seeing that Kunta Kinte's African culture was so much richer, more human, more

¹⁵ See *A Window on Soweto* by Joyce Sikakane (International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1977) pp. 52-53, for Sikakane's personal account of her own 1969-70 detention and trial along with 21 other women and men, including Winnie Mandela.

civilized, than the white slave society into which he was sold. Through his eyes, you can see the real continuity between Africa and America, in the actions and thoughts of people the white man considered savages.

But as I finished the book, there were still some questions that I wondered about. Why does Haley present Africa as a paradise, without taking up any conflicts between Africans themselves? I would like to know who helped the white man capture so many Africans as slaves. We must have had divisions in our people even then.

I also could not help noticing how it is always the man, and only the man, who really fights for our freedom in the book. Women are always in the background, or compromising with the slave owners. They are shown as though they were not allowed to make any decisions, or to discuss any important issue, even in the section that takes place in Africa. This is not the true history of our people as I know it.

Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman are not even mentioned, and neither are any of the other Black women who fought slavery. If people like Alex Haley write about our history, but let that old stuff about their attitude to Black women get in the way, we will not only never really know our past, but our future. Sometimes he is telling his own ideas of how things should be, instead of the true history of how we were.

A lot of people are saying that Roots shows that there is a new stage of Black consciousness. But that stage can't stop with just tracing our ancestry, or the surface consciousness of culture, if that culture means that we put down women, or pretend that there are no divisions among us.¹⁶

This consciousness of race and class and sex, of national and international, of activities for freedom and the idea of freedom, has time and again over the past two decades characterized the most revolutionary aspects of the Black mass movement. It has time and again pushed the Black revolt forward. When one or another Black leader caught this passion and creativity from below, they have been able to make the tremendous leap that the movement itself made. When they have not, the division between masses and leaders who fall to the side or impede the movement has been sharp. Today there is such a deep schism within the African-American world that it will have profound influence on the future development of any movement for real Black liberation in this country. It is a schism that has been with us since the urban revolts, when the Black masses of workers and the poor of the ghettos took into their own hands and minds the action of self-liberation, and thus moved beyond the safe limits set by the middle-class Blacks aspiring to leadership.

We are poised on the brink of new departures in the Black liberation movement. American capitalist-imperialism has been unable to point to any positive direction in these past ten years. To the Black masses this is clear, even if to many of the Black middle class leadership it is not. The new departure involves as much Black revolutionary thought as it does Black revolutionary activity. Indeed the two are inseparable.

The Martiniquean, Frantz Fanon, was the world revolutionary who developed this unity of theory and activity most profoundly, and it is to him we turn in the context of African, Caribbean, and American Black thought.

¹⁶ Tommie Hope, "Roots: Africa and America in making the history of freedom," News & Letters, Jan.-Feb., 1977.

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Part III FRANTZ FANON, WORLD REVOLUTIONARY

Frantz
Fanon



IT IS NOT ACCIDENTAL that Fanon's thoughts are relevant to the liberation struggles in South Africa, as manifested in the Black Consciousness movement. It was Fanon who had, in his *Black Skin, White Masks*, both deepened the Hegelian concept of self-consciousness and, in his sharp critique of "reciprocity," denied that there is any reciprocity when the relationship of Master and Slave has the additive of color. Quite the contrary. He made that the foundation of revolutionary action. In the dialectical relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor, the oppressed gains the idea of his or her own being—one's own self-consciousness—and the desire of being for self, and not for "other."

Fanon's philosophy of revolution has assumed the quality of actuality in the brutal life-and-death struggle between the Black masses of South Africa and the arrogant white ruling class that would, if they could, reduce Black humanity to a thing—an object among other objects.

It is not alone that banned copies of *The Wretched of the Earth* circulate among the South African youth of Soweto, nor that American intellectuals have chosen for their own reasons to present a truncated version of his thought, that makes us return to Frantz Fanon. Rather, it has been a resurgence of the African revolutionary spirit since the defeat of both Portuguese and U.S. imperialism in Angola—a spirit evident in the new wave of guerrilla wars of liberation in Zimbabwe and in Namibia—as well as the mass revolt in South Africa itself, that demands a new look, with the eyes of the late 1970s, at that world revolutionary figure, Frantz Fanon. A "new" understanding of Fanon becomes an imperative at this time, not as past history, but as living activity.

The Black Consciousness movement in South Africa which Steve Biko headed was powerful because it had re-established self-consciousness as a force of revolution. The idea that the Black masses have the power to shake South Africa to its foundations has become the reality of South Africa.

In his early work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon had grasped that colonial domination of Third World peoples meant not only economic domination, but also the destruction of the spirit and the personality of the oppressed people. In the chapter on "The Negro and Hegel" in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon is at his exciting best. What appears at first glance as a summation of the "Lordship and Bondage" section of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, is a brilliant exposition of the dialectical inter-relationship of the independence and dependence of self-consciousness to the Black situation in a racist society.

Here Fanon stresses the phenomenon that the self-consciousness of Blacks has been sublated by oppression and that the other, white oppressors, do not regard Black self-consciousness as real, but see in Black only their own self-consciousness. As long as Black self-consciousness is not recognized by the other, "the other will remain the theme of his [Black] actions." If there is no reciprocity between the real self-consciousness of Blacks and the other, the circuit is closed and ultimately Blacks are deprived of being for themselves.

The recognition that Blacks are saddled with a false consciousness of self—or rather two consciousnesses of self—is not new. In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois wrote in *The Souls of Black Folk* that the American world "yields him [Blacks] no true self-consciousness, but lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world."

Black people, in negating their living for the other, do not simply substitute white self-consciousness with their own—that is, simply take the place of the master—but move from one way of life to another, instead of one life to another. This was crucial for Fanon, because the role of the Black and colonial revolutions is not a perpetuation of the old in "Blackface," but says, "No to the exploitation of man. No to the butchery of what is most human in man: freedom."¹⁷

The perils of domination are two-fold, striking with equal ferocity at both the body and the mind of the persecuted and the oppressed. The fact that Fanon understood this, both subjectively as a Black colonial from Martinique, and philosophically through his mastery of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*—especially the section on "Lordship and Bondage"—was to lay the foundation for a theory of revolution.

Because Fanon did not state, in so many words, "I reject bourgeois society;" and because the language is existentialist, *Black Skin, White Masks* was treated as if Fanon were a "pupil" of Sartre. This was so, not only at the time of its publication, 1952, but even as late as his last work only at the time of its publication, 1961. In truth, a sharp critique of genius, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961. In truth, a sharp critique of Sartre was included right in *Black Skin, White Masks*, in the section on "Orphée Noir;" the very preface Sartre had written to introduce the writings of the Négritude school, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*.

In quoting Sartre's analysis of class as the "universal and abstract" and race as the "concrete and particular," which led Sartre to the conclusion that "magnitude appears as the minor term of a dialectical progression," Fanon writes: "Orphée Noir is a date in the intellectualization of the experience of being black. And Sartre's mistake was not only to seek the source of the source but in a certain sense to block that source . . . he was reminding me that my blackness was only a minor term. In all truth, in all truth I tell you, my shoulders slipped out of the framework of the world, my feet could no longer feel the touch of the ground" (pp. 134, 138).

Nor did Fanon, in that work which was a turning point in his revolutionary self-development, disregard the class struggle and the works of Marx. He chose as the frontispiece to "By Way of Conclusion," the very last chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, a quote from Karl Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire*:

"The social revolution . . . cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has

¹⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove Press, Evergreen Book Edition, New York, 1968), p. 222.

stripped itself of all its superstitions concerning the past. Earlier revolutions relied on memories out of world history in order to drug themselves against their own content. In order to find their own content, the revolutions of the nineteenth century have to let the dead bury the dead. Before, the expression exceeded the content; now, the content exceeds the expression."

THIE REVOLUTIONARY HUMANIST spirit that pervades the whole of the book is seen in Marx's sentence that had the greatest impact on Fanon: "In order to find their own content, the revolutions of the nineteenth century have to let the dead bury the dead." The expression "let the dead bury the dead" was Hegel's articulation of the passing of one epoch and the coming into existence of another. For Fanon and for us today, that new world was the wretched of the earth—the Third World. The transition to Fanon's work by the same name (which, after all, is the very first sentence of "The International") took another nine years and signalled Fanon's giving up his French citizenship and his professional post at the Blida Hospital for Algerian citizenship and revolutionary action.¹⁸

The Wretched of the Earth was to re-create the dialectics of liberation for the colonial world as it emerged out of the actual struggle of the African masses for freedom. Fanon saw the double rhythm of the colonial revolutions reflected in both the destruction of the old and the building of a totally new society. This was a break with all previous ideas about the African Revolutions—especially the idea that the African Revolutions had to first undergo a national bourgeois revolution before they could go on to a socialist, humanist society.

It is with this crucial situation facing the revolutionary masses of southern Africa and Zimbabwe that Fanon's philosophy and understanding of the colonial revolutions assumes a greater concreteness for today than it may have had 17 years ago.

Fanon's commitment to the African masses, as the only real force and reason that could bring about a true revolutionary change in Africa, was total—and his analysis of African society, carried out in the very practice of revolution, was a concrete revelation that the African masses were the decisive element in African nationalism that could both achieve the goals of nationalism and move beyond them to international freedom. This concept was grounded in the specific historical existence of the African masses, who, out of necessity, demanded the creation of a dialectic of liberation.

Some have tried to reduce Fanon's creation of a dialectic of liberation to his writings on violence. But Fanon's conception of violence, within the context of decolonization, centered around what in the subject's objectivity was more than an expression of alienation, and was, as well, a pathway to freedom.

When the Algerians dared to hit out against the barbarism of colonial rule, the concept of the superiority of French culture showed itself to be a dimension of racism by attributing the violence to the "innate criminality" of the North African mind. Fanon showed the concepts of Black

¹⁸ See Fanon's moving letter of resignation from the Blida Hospital, "Letter to the Resident Minister," reprinted in the posthumous collection of his political essays, letters, and notes on colonialism, published by the editor under the title *Toward the African Revolution* (Grove Press, New York, 1967): "There comes a time when silence becomes dishonesty . . . The decision I have reached is that I cannot continue to bear a responsibility at no matter what cost, on the false pretext that there is nothing else to be done . . ."



South African revolutionary leader Nelson Mandela faces life imprisonment on Robben Island. Above left, he is shown as he appeared before his arrest; at right, he sews clothes at Robben Island prison.

alienation, of violence, and of emancipation, to be historically determined phenomena.

Not only that. Violence was not just having arms. Fanón took issue with what he thought Engels was saying on the theory of violence in *Anti-Dühring*, when Engels stressed that everything "depends on production." To Fanón, this sounded like "the leaders of reform . . . saying . . . 'With what are you going to fight the settlers? With your knives?'"

Fanón's contention was that at no time can violence be separated from ideology and that, in fact, revolutionary ideology is the greatest power. He then put the relationship of ideology to violence in its true historic context:

"It so happens that the liberation of colonial countries throws new light on the subject. For example, we have seen that during the Spanish campaign, which was a very genuine colonial war, Napoleon, in spite of an army which reached in the offensives of the Spring of 1810 the huge figure of 400,000 men, was forced to retreat. Yet the French army made the whole of Europe tremble by its weapons of war . . . Face to face with the enormous potentials of the Napoleonic troops, the Spaniards, inspired by an unshakeable national ardour, rediscovered the famous methods of guerrilla warfare, which, 25 years before, the American militia had tried out on the English forces."¹⁹

Clearly, the violence that has a "cathartic effect"—which the American New Left took to mean violence, in and for itself—meant, to Fanón, the liberation struggle that is permeated with a philosophy of liberation.

The South African resistance movement, too, had to deal with the

¹⁹ Frantz Fanón, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, Evergreen Black Cat Edition, New York, 1968), p. 64.

charge of violence, especially the leaders of a new organization, Umkonto We Sizwe (The Spear of the Nation), a new manifestation of Black nationalism which appeared in 1961. Here is how one leader, Nelson Mandela, responded at the Rivonia Trial, April 20, 1964:

"I admit, immediately, that I was one of the persons who helped to form Umkonto We Sizwe, and that I played a prominent role in its affairs until I was arrested in August 1962 . . . But the violence which we chose to adopt was not terrorism . . . I was the Secretary of the Conference and undertook to be responsible for organizing the national stay-at-home which was subsequently called to coincide with the declaration of the Republic . . . The African nationalism for which the ANC stands is the concept of freedom and fulfillment for the African people in their own land."²⁰

IN EVERY CASE, it was a question of the relationship of masses in revolt against armed oppressors, and not the simplistic question of "violence" vs. "non-violence."

History, to Fanon, was not just past events but history-in-the-making by live men and women, peasant masses most of all. This activist-thinker was, however, not just an Algerian revolutionary, but involved in all of Black Africa. Here, too, he was not uncritical. At one and the same time, he enthusiastically greeted each African revolution as it won independence from imperialism, and criticized the separation of leaders from masses after independence was won. Thus, he was to write, "History teaches us clearly that the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism . . . It so happens that the unpreparedness of the educated classes, the lack of practical links between them and the mass of the people, their laziness, and let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle, will give rise to tragic mishaps" (p. 148).

Nothing, however, was to stem his over-riding concern—a global concern—for fighting imperialism. This is what permeated his work as an editor of the newspaper *El Moudjahid*, and his whole life in the years 1956 to 1961, when leukemia struck him down at the age of 36. Because he did have a global vision, he placed the African revolutions in the context of his view of world revolution and the urgent need to create a totally new kind of society. And yet what was to become a view of world revolution as well as the manifesto of the Third World was so concrete as to manifest worries of new fragmentations. Who today doesn't recognize the pertinence of Fanon's warning that "what must be avoided is the Ghana-Senegal tension, the Somalia-Ethiopia, the Morocco-Mauritania, the Congo-Congo tensions . . ." Here is how Fanon continued:

"In reality the colonized states that have reached independence by the political path seem to have no other concern than to find themselves a real battle field with wounds and destruction. It is clear, however, that this psychological explanation, which appeals to a hypothetical need for release of pent-up aggressiveness, does not satisfy us. We must once again come back to the Marxist formula. The triumphant middle classes are the most impetuous, the most enterprising, the most annexationist in the world (not for nothing did the French bourgeoisie of 1789 put Europe to fire and sword)."²¹

²⁰ From *The Sun Will Rise*, edited by Mary Benson (International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1976).

²¹ From notes of Fanon's, 1960, included in *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 187.

Fanon's final decision—and only in part was it due to his terminal illness—was not to write the book he had planned on the Algerian Revolution, nor even to extend it only to African Revolutions, but to develop a world view of masses in motion, uprooting the old order as they created totally new human relations. He called it *The Wretched of The Earth*.

THE MAIN FOCUS of *The Wretched of the Earth* is in three chapters dealing with "Spontaneity," "National Consciousness," and "National Culture." In these chapters Fanon is not speaking as a psychiatrist, nor as an angry prophet demanding retribution in blood for wrongs done, but as an activist-thinker acutely aware that in the historical process of revolution there exists simultaneously both revolution and counter-revolution.

The chapter on "Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness" analyzes the conflict that exists between the self-activity of the colonial masses, who would destroy colonialism root and branch, and the symbiotic relationship between the national bourgeoisie and the colonial power. This is a great contribution to revolutionary theory, and it also represents what is profoundly new in Fanon's ideas that separates him from all the other theorists of the African revolutions. The recognition of this conflict between the leadership and the peasant masses of Africa is not presented as an abstraction, but is directly related to Black leadership, to revolutionary national leadership, to Black culture.

Fanon points out that there exists a time lag, a difference of rhythm, between the national party and the masses of people. The rank and file demand a total improvement of their lot, while the leadership seeks to limit and to restrain. This is why the rank and file feel so cheated after a prolonged struggle which has been declared victorious by the leaders.

There is a built-in conservatism both within the elitist native intellectual class and the organizational forms that this class builds within the colony to mobilize and bring pressures on the colonial administration. The elitist intellectual leadership class, in spite of their conflicts with the white colonial administration, is a privileged section within colonialism.

The organizations that the elite build to combat colonialism—the national party, the trade union, etc.—are copies of European institutions which are unrelated to the struggle for freedom in the African colonies. Yet, "the elite will attach a fundamental importance to organization, so much so that the fetish of organization will often take precedence over a reasoned study of colonial society. The notion of the party is a notion imported from the mother country" (p. 108).

The importation and the mechanical application of the European vanguard type of political party to a colonial political situation, for Fanon, was a serious challenge to the success of the colonial revolution. To him, it meant that the elite national leadership was completely unaware of the indigenous organizational forms that the colonial masses had developed in the course of the long struggle against their colonial masters. Not only were the leaders not aware of these indigenous organizations, they were even too lazy and indifferent to find out about them. They simply brought in the European political party and proceeded to focus their organizing work solely around the skilled workers and civil servants in the cities—a tiny portion of the colonial population.

This type of organizational attitude on the part of the national leadership was politically retrogressive and Fanon opposed it vigorously for obvious and concrete reasons.

The reality of the colonial world is that the overwhelming element in the population is poor peasants who are brutally exploited, miserably treated and starved by colonialism, which at the same time robs them of their homeland. And, of all the classes in the colonial world, it is the poor peasants who stand in direct confrontation to the government and the white ruling class. Each day, every member of the poor peasantry has to struggle to survive and fight in order to retain a scrap of humanity. Too, on numerous occasions the peasants have rebelled against their colonial masters and suffered grievously for failure at the hands of the colonial police and the military.

To Fanon, a disregard for the Black peasant masses, the only class in the colonies which kept the national consciousness alive by direct opposition to colonial exploitation, was tantamount to turning one's back on the revolution.

If the national party did pay attention to the colonial masses, they saw them as "blind inert tactical force: brute force, as it were" (p. 123), around which the National Parties tried to erect an *a priori* program. This attitude of the national party, the elite leadership, to the peasant masses, Fanon reasoned, is due to the dual nature of both the party form and the leadership, where "the will to break colonialism is linked to another quite different will; that of coming to a friendly agreement with it" (p. 124).

The new national bourgeoisie does not end its connection with colonialism once independence is gained. The national middle class does not repudiate its own nature, insofar as it is bourgeois, that is, insofar as it is a tool of capitalism, nor does it make itself the willing tool of that revolutionary capital which is the people. The bourgeoisie of the ex-colony is weak and dependent upon world capitalism and because it has no link with the masses, it cannot throw off its colonial past, and, to hide its weakness, it commits all sorts of chauvinistic acts and futile militant gestures. When it nationalizes, or "Africanizes", institutions, Fanon says, it does so in the interest of its own privileges and not in the interest of the masses. Fanon criticizes this type of nationalization because it ends in rigid state control of consumer goods by the civil servants. There is praise for the leaders everywhere, but there is also widespread discontent among the masses: "The party, instead of welcoming . . . the free flow of ideas from the people up to the government, forms a screen, and forbids such ideas" (p. 183).

Never could what Fanon was talking about be better understood than now. Here is how one West African describes the situation in Nigeria today:

One thing that has been lacking in all the literature on Africa is the sense of a class consciousness. One talks of "Africans". Nobody talks of Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung in the same breath, but somehow that sort of distinction is always missing in an analysis of Africa. Nigeria deserves emphasis on account of its sheer size: one out of every four Africans is a Nigerian and so, in that respect, what goes on in Nigeria is of tremendous importance to what happens in other parts of Africa.

The Nigerian press just says there has been a demonstration in South Africa and so many people were killed. There is never any mention of what they are protesting about. The Nigerian government does not want, any aspect of a movement of a people against a ruling class brought up because it couldn't stand much scrutiny.

Someone wrote a letter to a Nigerian newspaper and said, "What is all this about South Africa? I live in a slum and I work in the reserve area. I work, and then I go back to the slum. So I

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don't want to hear any more about South Africa." At first sight that might look like a very reactionary view, but it does reflect why the government is reluctant to have people report in depth on what is going on in South Africa. They would prefer people to think it is Blacks wanting to get rid of whites. And in Nigeria, we don't have that problem, do we? Because we have a Black ruling class; so—problem solved.

At the very height of the Black struggles in Southern Africa, Nigeria hosted a Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC). It was supposedly a get-together of Africans to assert their identity. Millions were spent to let Westerners know we have a culture. A front page editorial in the government-owned *Daily Times* exclaimed, "What a brilliant spectacle it turned out to be!" But a woman writer, Bisi Adebiyi, presented a much different view on the inside pages. In her column, "Woman's Angle," she wrote:

Just how liberated is the African woman? This was the crucial question before the celebrated FESTAC colloquium last week. But nobody dared to answer it. Perhaps because it has haunted the African man like the ghost of Ian Smith or John Vorster haunts all of us . . .

The point raised before the conference of eminent scholars was a recommendation that read: "Emphasis must be given to women's education by according them equal opportunity in schools and colleges as a process of liberating them and enabling them to play equal roles as their male counterparts." One after the other, the gentlemen of the colloquium raised hell over their bug-bear. "The word 'liberating' must be deleted from the recommendation," they roared. "The question of liberating the African woman simply does not arise because there's nothing to liberate her from."

There were very few women delegates . . . If we can find large contingents of women on the stage of the National Arts Theatre wriggling their feminine buttocks to feed the lustful eyes of men, what more do we want, to claim full participation in FESTAC?

Barely two months before FESTAC, some of us were shouting ourselves hoarse for women in the northern states of Nigeria to have something as basic as the right to vote. They've now got it. Millions of women remain tucked away in the repressive culture of purdah . . . And in the southern states, which claim to be better advanced, women in the rural areas continue to languish in a culture which survives on the economic contributions of the women — their agricultural roles — but makes the more sophisticated agricultural tools available only to the men.

For the rural woman, the prospects are still the slow death from disease and unabated pregnancies. Watch her as she trudges home from the farm — a heavy sack on her head, a baby on her back and a "bundle of joy" in her stomach, and you'll see how much the African woman can be liberated from.

There are classes in Africa. And events in Africa will continue to confuse, to befuddle, unless we face the fact that there are people in whose interest it is that things remain just as they are . . . At the moment there is a new Constitution being debated in Nigeria. And right there in the Constitution it says Nigeria is made up of so many tribes! There is a class in Africa in whose interest it is that there should be tribes. What the masses of Nigerians are talking about has absolutely nothing whatever to do with tribes. They are talking about bread and butter issues. They are talking about in-



Angolan women played a key role in the battle for national liberation.



Education in the field in Mozambique went hand in hand with the struggle for national liberation.

fation, which in Nigeria is running at about 40 percent. And there is an enormous gap in wages. So you really can't fool the people who are being oppressed about whether you have a new society. It is the intellectuals who get fooled . . .

What we have happening in Africa now is that there are changes coming from below. It's been a long time since imperialism was overthrown. Very soon it will be 20 years since Nigeria got independence, so the argument that we are being held back by the foreigners will soon start to make no impression on the people. I think we are entering the period where what will happen in Africa next will be mass- and class-oriented. Maybe the revolution people have been talking about will actually begin to happen.

FANON'S DEVELOPMENT as a revolutionary thinker was part of a triangular relationship of Africa, the Caribbean and France, which presented him with such deep contradictions at every level of human relations that he confronted the limitations of a merely psychiatric interpretation of subjectivity. He thus began his search for a philosophy of human liberation that could match the total transformation of society occurring in the Third World.

In the chapter on the "Pitfalls of National Consciousness" in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon states: "The party leaders behave like common sergeant-majors, frequently reminding the people of the need for 'silence in the ranks.' This party that used to call itself the servant of . . . the people's will, as soon as the colonial power puts the country into its control, hastens to send the people back to their caves" (p. 183). Fanon hastens to say that this "treason" is social, rather than individual.

Although Fanon paints a picture of the decrepit national bourgeois party in ex-colonial countries, he was not pessimistic about the future of the African Revolutions. There must be a theory of revolution wedded to the mass struggles for freedom and above all, the Black masses must not be considered as muscle only, but as human beings with ideas.

Fanon's analysis of the "Nationalist Consciousness" was a concrete breakthrough on the retrogressive role of so-called vanguard leadership in our age, a scathing critique not only of African, but also of European elitism.

He first reminded the Europeans that "not long ago Nazism transformed the whole of Europe into a veritable colony" (p. 101). He then showed that the two greatest events in 1956-57 were "Budapest and Suez"; in the case of the first, it was a Humanist liberation struggle against totalitarian Communism, and in the second, the Third World opposition to Western imperialism.

Fanon made clear the necessity not to mimic Europe: "Today we are present at the stasis of Europe. Comrades, let us flee from this motionless movement where gradually dialectic is changing into the logic of equilibrium. Let us reconsider the question of mankind" (p. 314).

By relating his analysis to the first wave of revolutions in Africa, Fanon has shown that any leadership that does not spring out of, and retain dependence upon, the self-activity and the self-development of mass activities for freedom, will ultimately find dependency upon neo-colonialism.

When Fanon asked his African comrades to turn their backs on Europe, he did not have alone the subject of racism in his mind. He wanted them to flee from the "motionless movement of Europe where gradually dialectics is changing into the logic of equilibrium" — where the static forms of party, unions, laws and culture, conceal the true condition of men and women and attempt to stultify the self-development of humanity. "This new humanity cannot do otherwise than define a new humanism both for itself and for others . . . National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension . . . For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades . . . we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man" (pp. 246-7, 316).

Fanon's internationalism is not just rhetoric or an attempt to avoid the question of racism. We must realize that Western imperialism has taken all from Africa, and given back nothing. African nations are still producers of raw material for the world market.

The third crucial chapter in *The Wretched of the Earth* is on "National Culture." Why was Fanon so concerned with "National Culture"? After all, culture is a natural thing; people live within a culture and they build a culture out of various means and under different conditions. We recognize this universal aspect of culture, but it was not so universally recognized that under colonialism the cultures of the colonial peoples are suppressed cultures, like the colonized people themselves. And, that a foreign culture has been imposed in the place of their former indigenous culture. It is in the relationship between these two cultures that Fanon was seeking "revolutionary development."

African intellectuals, particularly those of Senegal, developed the theory of "Négritude" as an answer to the European contention that the Black world had no culture. They did a great deal of intellectual work in re-discovering Africa's rich cultural heritage. They also organized societies and set out with great creative energy to educate European intellectuals about African art, African music, African dance, and above all the African's humanity.

HOWEVER, IN THE HARSH reality of the colonial world, not only is this not enough, but the leaders of what was once revolutionary Négritude, like Senghor, are actually carrying out the Francophile imperialist policy. So thoroughly disgusted was Fanon with the



Ezekiel
Mphahlele

leaders in power who had been creators of the Negritude theory, that he turned in utter indignation against the very closest comrade, the greatest poet, the one from whom he learned both revolutionary Negritude and nationalist struggle, Aimé Césaire, when he became mayor and welcomed the Gaullist, Malraux, to Martinique in 1958.

To Fanon, culture without revolution lacks substance. He maintained that culture must not be mere "folklore" of an "abstract populism", but something that had to validate itself through the struggle for freedom.

Bringing to life the culture of an oppressed people is not just a question of harking back to history, but lies in grasping the reality of where that culture is today. If people are oppressed and impoverished, their culture suffers inhibition and lack of creativity. Only through the struggle for freedom will that cultural resurgence take on meaningful substance.

Ezekiel Mphahlele is quite eloquent on this point, and, in praise of the American Blacks, he reminds us that it is not our "Negritude" that will be brought to account during our struggles, but our "mastery of the techniques for bringing down the white power structure that will count. And, I insist, that this very struggle defines a culture . . . Culture and political struggles define each other, and feed on each other, all the way."²²

The question of culture, when it is the culture of revolution, is multi-dimensional; and sometimes what appears the least important becomes the most important. This became especially true during the Soweto revolt, when, seemingly out of nowhere, it became known that not only were copies of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* circulating among the youth, but so were works by Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X.

As Sikose Mji, a 21-year-old South African woman, who was a member of the Black Consciousness movement and participated in the Soweto demonstrations, put it: "We no longer feel isolated. As students we read a lot, even books which are banned. I don't know how students get these books, but we certainly have a lot, which we pass on to each other. As a result, we are more and more aware that other people are struggling too, and that other people are with us, and we with them."²³

²² From the Introduction to the 1971 American edition of *Dawn Second Avenue* (Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1971).

²³ From an interview published in *Southern Africa*, Dec. 1976.

In a word, it is not that there would have been no Soweto if they had not read Fanon, King and Malcolm X. It is that their not feeling isolated meant that the very ideas and revolts that they were engaged in were evidently revolts and ideas that others were part of. We have seen that to be true in every country of the world, whether it be U.S.A., Russia, China²⁴ or elsewhere.

It is a two-way road. The internationalism of the struggle in the U.S. certainly deepened with the struggles in South Africa and the Caribbean, and with the thought of Frantz Fanon.

²⁴ See *Sexism, Politics and Revolution in Mao's China* by Raya Dunayevskaya (Women's Liberation, News and Letters, Detroit, 1977), especially the interview with the Chinese refugee in Hong Kong, who speaks of the frustration and anger of the Chinese students at Peking University when university officials blocked their attempts to socialize with the African students and learn from them about the African revolutions.



Huge crowd in Algeria welcomes released political prisoners on the eve of winning independence from French colonialism in 1962.

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Latino students and community residents march through the streets of the South Bronx in New York in 1978, showing support for the takeover of Hostos Community College and demanding the City halt education cutbacks.

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Part IV AMERICAN BLACK THOUGHT

FRANTZ FANON'S unflinching hostility to imperialism, especially the global tentacles of the U.S., didn't stop him from recognizing the other America. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he credited the Black American with being the most militant, and in *The Wretched of the Earth*, as we saw, he credited the American yeoman farmers with having been the first guerrillas in their struggles against British colonialism. Whether or not Frantz Fanon also knew that the concepts of both nationalism and Negritude had their predecessors in the 19th century's two-way road between American and African Black thought, the point is that the great affinity of ideas does not come from who was "first," but from the masses in motion.

It is masses in motion which produced a triangular relationship of ideas among Caribbean, African and U. S. Blacks, and which created the first Anti-Imperialist League in direct opposition to America's plunge into imperialism with the Spanish-American War. The News & Letters publication, *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*, sums this up precisely:

"The 'psychology of Jim Crowism' is itself the result, not the cause, of monopoly capital extending its tentacles into the Caribbean and the Pacific as it became transformed into imperialism, with the Spanish-American War . . . It was long building up. Latin America had known, ever since 1820, that while the Monroe Doctrine could protect it from European invasion, there was no such protection from American aggression for which the Doctrine was designed."²⁵

The early Nyasaland revolt and Black America's relationship to it are detailed in *Independent African*: ". . . in 1899 the Afro-American Council . . . demanded an end to lynching and the enforcement of the 14th and 15th Amendments. This was the year of the Spanish-American War which gave the United States the Philippines; and DuBois and other Negro intellectuals, together with large section of the Negro press, actively supported the recently formed Anti-Imperialist League . . ."²⁶

W. E. B. DuBois, alone, was prescient enough to draw from this horrid imperialist reality the generalization that the 20th century would be the century of color. It is true that this remark of genius was unfortunately burdened by his other theory that each nation had a "talented tenth" and it was this Negro talented tenth that would bring liberation. It is this other thesis that blinded him entirely to the greatness of Marcus Garvey in inspiring no less than six million American Blacks to join the Garvey movement. Indeed, DuBois was so ashamed of Garvey's superficial trappings that he did not see the movement's revolutionary nationalist substance; he joined with those Black intellectuals who asked for Garvey's deportation.

This did not stop other Black Americans (and West Indians and South Africans) from not only seeing the revolutionary nature of Garvey's movement, but aligning with the greatest revolution in world history—the Russian Revolution—and its thought. At a Black-Red Conference in Detroit in 1969, a young Black worker, in discussing the gulf between masses and intellectuals in our day, said:

²⁵ *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard* (News & Letters, Detroit, 1970), p. 16.

²⁶ This quotation from an article by George P. Marks is cited in *Independent African* by George Shepperson and Thomas Price (University Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1958), p. 101.



W. E. B. DuBois



Marcus Garvey



Amy Garvey



Claude McKay

"Back in 1920, when nationalism among Black people first took its roots, the U.S. government tried to suppress the propagation of radical ideas that the Russian Revolution, which had just taken place three years before, in 1917, had instilled in Black people in this country. But small groups of Black radicals retaliated to the government's attack by publishing

the fact that socialism stood for Black emancipation and that the reformers in America couldn't do anything to better the conditions of Black people. In the words of Claude McKay, a great Black poet of that time, 'I think that Afro-Americans have found that Marx had been interested and fought valiantly for Black emancipation'... That didn't stop him from criticizing the underlying prejudices of white Communists in America and telling about it to the Communist International. The Black struggle in America was important to Lenin. The word 'nation' didn't mean just a national group or a country that was being oppressed. It also included minority groups within a given nation. He said it wasn't enough to be for a revolution, you have to support national struggles that developed along the lines of independent mass activity... The question is, can a genuine Marxism as practiced by both Marx and Lenin in their time, be applied to our day?'²⁷

BLACK THOUGHT, in post-World War I, U.S.A., disclosed many tendencies—from A. Philip Randolph, who both edited the *Messenger* and organized the Pullman workers; through the Harlem Renaissance, which, though it maintained a division between intellectuals and workers, did, nevertheless, develop Black consciousness; to, at one and the same time, the massive Garvey movement and the emergence of Black Marxists.

As in every revolutionary period, new forces arose. In 1925, long before the Women's Liberation Movement of our day raised the challenge to male leadership, Amy Garvey hurled this at the Black leadership:

"A race must be saved, a country must be redeemed. And unless you strengthen the leadership of vacillating Negro men we will remain marking time. We are tired of hearing Negro men say that a better day is coming while they do nothing to usher in the day. We are becoming so impatient that we are getting in the front ranks and serve notice on the world that we will brush aside the halting, cowardly Negro men, and with prayer on our lips and arms prepared for any fray, we will press on and on until victory is ours. Mr. Black Man, watch your step... Strengthen your shaking knees and move forward or we will displace you."²⁸

It is true that at the next great divide also—the Depression and the creation of the CIO—W. E. B. DuBois kept himself far away from labor. But he continued his profound scholarship. To this day, his *Black Reconstruction* is the only true history of the Reconstruction period and the great contributions of the freed Negroes following the Civil War.²⁹

It is only in our age, especially in 1955 with the emergence of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, that a leader arose that at least recognized that it was not he who created the movement, but the movement that created him. Martin Luther King, Jr. became the most prominent leader to articulate and to sense the power that resided in Black mass action in breaking down

²⁷ Raymond McKay, in *A Report on the Black-Red Conference*, Detroit, Mich.—Jan. 12, 1969 (News & Letters, Detroit, 1969). See also Claude McKay's speech at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922, quoted in *American Civilization on Trial*, p. 21.

²⁸ From the Editorial in *Negro World*, Oct. 24, 1925, reprinted in *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History*, edited by Gorda Lerner (Random House, New York, 1972).

²⁹ The irony is that, by 1944, the Black intellectuals' analysis of what was the truth of both the Black condition and Black thought was subordinated to the analysis espoused by Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish sociologist, in his *American Dilemma*. All one has to do to see the depths of Black thought and the shallowness of white intellectual thought is to examine the original writings by DuBois, Runche, and Redding, deposited with the Schomburg Collection, and compare them with the "Methodological Note on Valuations and Beliefs" Ibsen Myrdal constructed. See also Raya Dunayevskaya's critique, "Negro Intellectuals in Dilemma," written in 1944 and reprinted in *News & Letters*, Feb. 1961.



Black youth demanding equality in Birmingham, Alabama, withstand full force of fire hoses turned on them during demonstrations in 1963.

the walls of segregation and discrimination. The fundamental separation between King and the older Civil Rights organizations was just this recognition of masses in action as power. It was this and not the discovery of a "new and powerful weapon, non-violent resistance" that made him a leader.

The older Civil Rights organizations, like the NAACP and the Urban League, had become highly specialized organizations with highly skilled staffs concentrating their efforts in the courts and lobbying in Congress to attain better treatment for Black people. The restrictive nature of the operation of these organizations didn't allow for any mass participation or creativity in the struggles for liberation. In contrast to the "club character" of the NAACP, King could write in 1956 of how 42,000 Black people in the Old South organized a strike, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, against segregated buses and ushered in the Black Revolution of the 1960s.

King dealt with the efficacy of non-violent resistance as his main theme. But listen to what one Civil Rights activist, who had put his life on the line in the 1960s, said:

"The thousands that were in the streets in Birmingham created a confrontation that meant battle to the death between two absolutely opposing ways of living and thinking. Yes, they wanted to kill us. And non-violence is a myth. How the hell do they think we survived in the string of Freedom Houses scattered across the entire South, often with one field worker 40 or 50 miles from another? We were armed. Or the people in whose homes we stayed were. And when the KKK came around and shot into the house at night, we shot back at their cars. Even when it wasn't a question of shooting back, either because you had no gun or because

of 'orders,' you knew that the opening of the freedom campaign in a town meant a declaration of war with its racist rulers."

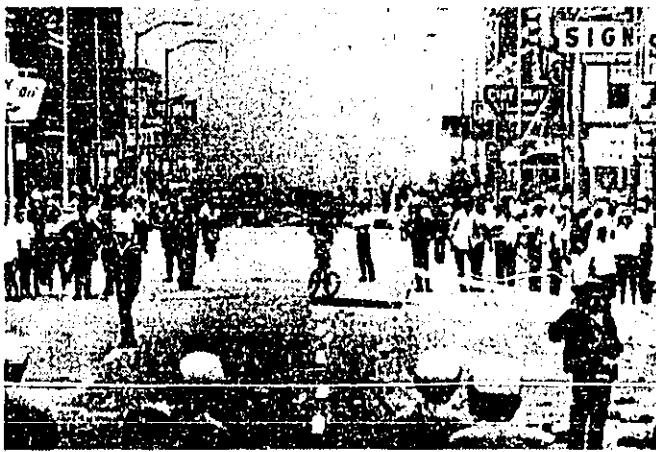
But King did know how to listen to the voices from below and therefore was able to represent them in a boycott that lasted 382 long days, during which the movement was in mass assembly three times a week, daily organized its own transportation, and moved from a struggle against segregated buses to a demand for hiring Black bus drivers — and won on both counts.

Over the next decade, King was actively involved throughout the South. He also tried to give philosophical expression to the struggle against segregation. In his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" to the white clergymen who objected to "illegal acts," King wrote: "We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal'." "Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an 'I-it' relationship for the 'I-thou' relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things."

King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" certainly represented his high point in the first phase of the Civil Rights Movement. He had caught the mass self-activity, the masses' determination to be free, as the key to overcoming segregation. It was not the legalisms of segregation and desegregation, but masses as Reason, that would establish something entirely new.

WHEN THE STRUGGLE moved to the North, the civil disobedience tactics for a lunch counter was not the issue. The right to shop and eat was not the question, but the right to a job. It was then that the Black population moved to expand their struggle beyond civil disobedience with Watts 1965, followed by Newark, Buffalo, Atlanta, Chicago and many others over the hot summers, and finally Detroit, 1967. King did not know how to respond to those voices.

Flames engulf Black ghetto during 1967 Detroit rebellion, where a new historic stage was reached.



The challenge was not alone to "whitey," but to Black leadership. Black thought, to reorganize itself and face what the Black masses were acting out — that this system had to be destroyed, root and branch. It was during this period that King's separation from the mass movement was most pronounced. Where the Black masses had accepted non violence as a tactic on their way to total liberation, they — because the issue was total liberation, not non-violence vs. violence — were willing to risk all in taking their struggle in a new direction.

Two developments wedged King back to the movement — the Vietnam War and the emergence of labor, Black labor. The Vietnam War was a testing ground for many. For white youth, it meant the mass activity against U.S. imperialism for a full generation. But it was mass activity whose radical seeds were planted in the Civil Rights Movement of the early 1960s. When Vietnam became "the question," many white radicals dropped completely out of the Civil Rights Movement to be where they felt "the action" was. As a result, some of the Black-white unity so necessary for a radical transformation of this society was lost by the casual way so many white radicals dropped out of the Black struggle. The lack of white student response to the killings at all-Black Jackson State right after the mass outpouring against Nixon's bombing of Cambodia and the killings of protesting students at Kent State University was a most concrete manifestation of this separation.

The Black youth on the other hand did not make a separation between Black liberation and anti-war. Their answer was articulated by Carmichael's "Hell no! We won't go!" And at the same time they continued the question of Black power in all phases of their lives — from the campus, to jobs, to those urban revolts.

For King, too, Vietnam became a test, one in which he spoke out against the war and thus articulated what the Black masses were doing — our liberation fight is at home, not with American imperialism abroad.

Black labor was also on the move. The particular here for King was the sanitation workers on strike in Memphis. King chose to align with their struggle. At the same time, he was planning a march of all the poor, employed and unemployed, Black, Brown, Native American and white — the Poor Peoples' March — which would as well coincide with the anti-Vietnam War protests. It was at this point that on April 4, 1968, he was gunned down.

1968 was a turning point in more than the Civil Rights movement, or the anti-Vietnam War movement. The murder of Rev. King was tragedy enough, and yet we seemed still to be at the height of the movement both nationally and internationally. The global highpoint, after all, was Paris, May 1968. It was first; then that a great youth movement gained the support of no less than ten million workers, and made everyone think that we would finally both stop the Vietnam War and end the whole capitalistic, racist, sexist, imperialist system.

It is true that 1968 so shook the system to its foundations that the capitalists have never forgotten it, to this day. But the truth is that the lesson for the movement was that activism, activism, activism, while leaving theory to be caught "en route," simply will not do. It is this recognition that there must somehow be a new relationship of theory to practice that characterizes the 1970s, but gives the rulers and their ideologues the illusion of quiescence. It is within this context that we need to take a second look at the new young Black leaders who arose in the 1960s and ask why, though not bound by any theory of non-violence, they did not achieve any more, and were further removed from the masses than King was.



Malcolm X

For one thing, they had no respect for the masses. Stokely Carmichael, when he raised the slogan "Black Power," was responding to a new stage in mass consciousness. But both Carmichael and SNCC were to remain elitist in their relationship to the Black masses. SNCC never became more than an organization of organizers.

Secondly, though the new young leaders considered themselves more internationalist than King, the truth is that it was the Montgomery Bus Boycott which found an immediate, intense response with Black South Africans, who launched a bus boycott of their own. On the other hand, the most well-known young leaders were everywhere but where the uprisings were taking place, as they reached the high-point of the Detroit rebellion. When the Black rebellions were on the verge of burning every American city, making it impossible for the capitalist economy to function, Carmichael was in Cuba praising the "socialist successes" of Castro.

Since then, Carmichael has been to Africa to see Nkrumah after his removal from power, in Ghana, and now in the '70s, Carmichael has come back with his All African People's Revolutionary Party, which proposes the total abandonment of any idea of serious mass action for African-Americans. He has subordinated ideologically the entire question of African-American liberation to the achievement of African socialism. For him the question facing Black liberation in the U.S. is the liberation and unification of Africa under "scientific socialism." But he never bothered to question what happened to his leader Nkrumah and his call for Pan-Africanism, except to say "neo-colonialism."

MALCOLM X GAINED a reputation as the angry young man of the Black Revolt. To this day, his great appeal is that he was a northern city Black man addressing himself, to use his own words, "to grass roots out there in the streets." He was not a part of the middle-class Blacks who were leading the Movement, but he was the representative of urban northern Blacks, who cared little for the non-violent philosophy which was dominant in the Civil Rights movement, and who saw the goals of desegregation as a maneuver to stave off the real revolution. He spoke the language and the thoughts of the disinherit ed urban Black people that could not be articulated by any other prominent Black leader.

Malcolm X's rhetoric was the rhetoric of the class differences that exist between the Black masses and the Black leadership. In his speeches this was a reality of the movement, and he sought to illustrate these differences by drawing the analogy of the "house Negro" who had the thoughts and feelings of the master. He used the collective pronoun "we," when talking about himself and the other one, the "field Negro," who wanted to see the master's house burnt to the ground and the master dead.

Malcolm pinned the quality of "house Negro" onto the official Black leadership, with the warning to his audience that such leadership only desires a "Negro revolution and not a Black revolution." In projecting this idea, Malcolm's language was colorful and often derisive, but it wasn't fantasy — it made a lot of sense to urban Blacks and exposed the fundamental lack of a philosophy of change which prevented the Civil Rights movement from advancing beyond integration and voting rights toward a real revolution.

It was the mass action of Black America that caused Malcolm to turn his back on the Black Muslims' mystification and retreat from the Black rebellion. He reluctantly left the folds of the Black Muslims when he began to reject capitalist institutions along with the false idea of the total separation of Blacks in white America. It was at this point, in 1965, that he, too, was felled.

Today, in the 1970s, we are witness to such separation of Black intellectuals from Black masses that there are no recognized national leaders. We are witnessing the maneuverings of Left Black intellectuals in the absence of any philosophy of revolution. There are some, like Baraka and Sadauki, who have some roots among Black workers and claim to be looking for theory — what Baraka calls an "ideology with three cutting edges" — from nationalism to Pan-Africanism to socialism.²⁰ But that view does not base itself either on the self-activity of the Black movement as it has developed over the past two decades, or on the socialism of Marx as he developed it both in relation to the Black Dimension in his day, and as separated from "vulgar communism" which had sought revolutionary change merely in the abolition of private property.²¹

Rather, there is an attraction to various types of vanguardism, most especially Maoism, which they think is a short-cut to a new society. One would think that Mao's alignment with South Africa against Angola, an alignment which remains unchanged in post-Mao China, would have been enough. But Maoism is still in vogue among many Black intellectuals. That is not true among the Black masses. Even if we only look at fads, like Mao jackets, that swept the intellectual community here and in Europe, the fact is that it never caught on in the Black community. And in the movie "Car Wash," the unforgettable scene was when the young Black Muslim turns on the son of the car wash owner, who, complete with Mao shirt, has been agitating among the workers and spouting quotations from Chairman Mao about the revolution. The young Black worker says, "When the revolution comes, we'll be running the place and you'll be washing the cars, and you can sing 'We Shall Overcome' in Chinese." Whereupon, he grabs the Little Red Book and throws it into the car wash.

This may not be a rejection of Mao's Thought as thought, but it is a fact that the Black masses could never be deluded that Maoism was synonymous with liberation, once the Sino-Soviet conflict led China to make its priority one and one thing only — anti-Russia — and thereby brought it close to apartheid South Africa in opposition to the MPLA's liberation struggle in Angola.

²⁰ See *Marxism and Freedom* by Raya Dunayevskaya (Pluto Press, London, 1975, fourth English edition), especially Chapter V, "The Impact of the Civil War in the United States on the Structure of Capital," and Chapter III, "A New Humanism: Marx's Early Economic-Philosophic Writings."

NOR HAVE THE BLACK MASSES been much enamored of Communism. Even at the very high point of support for Angela Davis and opposition to U.S. imperialism which was trying to railroad her to jail, the support was by no means uncritical. A Black production worker with long experience in both the labor movement and the freedom struggles put it this way:

"Some younger Blacks see in Angela Davis a martyr, and support her beliefs. They have no experience with the Communist Party in the 1940s and before. They only say that the Party went all out to support Angela. But if you talk to some older Blacks, they remember only too well the betrayal of the Black struggle in this country by the Communist Party during World War II. They remember how the Party betrayed the 'Doubt' V' movement, and the March on Washington that brought into being the Fair Employment Practices Committee. They also saw the Communist Party crush the Hungarian workers' revolt . . . Angela stated that she will work to free political prisoners all over the world. She could begin in Russia, where there are more political prisoners than in any other country in the world . . . One can understand the support people have had in this country for Angela because she was a political victim, and a Black woman, but that is where much of the sympathy ends."

What is distinctive about the 1970s is that the absence of any accepted national leader, far from signalling a theoretic void, signals that there are new beginnings in the movement from below to work out a totally new relationship of theory to practice. Listen to these voices:

● **A YOUNG BLACK STUDENT** from Michigan State University, in a review of *Stokely Speaks: Black Power Back to Pan-Africanism*, by Stokely Carmichael, wrote:

"Blacks had asked Stokely why he was "going away when we need him most over here." They asked him "what does that (Africa) have to do with us when Harlem is on fire over here." And one sister spoke for many when she asked if he "had gone over to Africa and found another cause" (p.xiii). This book is an attempt to answer these questions. However, Stokely succeeds in doing the exact opposite. The trail follows a Black intellectual from Mississippi and Black America to Guinea and Osagyefo Nkrumah's arms.

The crucialness of historical moments is completely separated from Stokely's talks, so much that he is removed from actual mass events on the historical stage. One speech, for instance, "Dialectics of Liberation," was given in England at the very moment Detroit and Newark burst forth with voices of revolt. Far from labeling Carmichael as an omniscient prophet, the fact that the Blacks did this without cue from Carmichael and other "leaders" gives the lie to Carmichael's "dialectics" which is a "program" for revolt. After this great mass-activity, Carmichael rose to take credit, but not until Black people asked him, "where were you, when we did our thing?"

. . . Pan-Africanism is an umbrella that Stokely Carmichael seizes for shelter from the "storms of Black America" where unemployment, racism, and protest are rampant. Thus, "Stokely Speaks," but is anybody listening??

● **A YOUNG AUTO WORKER IN DETROIT:**

"The need for workers controlling production is a daily demand in my shop. One woman had to work with a broken hand although the company doctor excused her from work. Metal shop workers never see a day go by without someone getting gashed. A worker forced to do poor work because of speedup was disciplined without protest from the union representative.



Black and Puerto Rican construction workers join forces to defend and fight for expansion of affirmative action.

Every worker knows exactly what problems he or she faces due to production, at work and at home.

At the factory where I work, Maoists represent the old left. During recent contract negotiations, you could see how the Maoist factions and the union bureaucrats are similar. Neither wanted to hear the ideas of the workers. They always speak "for" the workers.

Take the Women's Liberation Movement. One article in a Maoist paper said that only after successful struggle by the proletariat can women be liberated. This "strategy" is in spite of the fact that working women everywhere are demanding freedom by not separating their oppression as workers and as women.

The Maoists ask you to come to their rallies, read their literature and ask them questions, even to wildcat. They ask you for everything except your ideas. They would have you believe they could negotiate a "better" contract with the capitalists, and that their Party rather than the Democratic Party needs to control the union. But why not rank-and-file control of the union? If workers gained control of production they would replace the union and the party with the workers' own organizations."

• A YOUNG BLACK LAUNDRY WORKER AND FEMINIST, invited to speak at a celebration of International Women's Day in 1978, said:

"In my opinion, we need a new direction today. The women's movement is at a critical stage. There are many forces of counter-revolution fighting to keep women "in their places." At the same time, the women's movement has developed a schism within itself.

I participated this year in the National Alliance of Black Feminists,

that gears their membership around professional women. They have totally separated themselves from working women and welfare mothers. They have become so narrow-minded by thinking that the answer is to become an integral part of this society, that it limits their capacities to express their ideas on what feminism means.

I was also involved in supporting the women who were on strike from Essex Wire Co. in Indiana. They organized themselves to keep going for over a year. The company fired them, beat them, and shot them. The union sold them down the river. The strikers asked us to picket the UAW Solidarity House and we called NOW and other groups, but they didn't come. To me, it's a question of whether you are part of "bourgeois feminism" or "revolutionary feminism."

But even among those who say they are revolutionary, there are many Left groups who try to convince women to wait until "after" the revolution to begin to fight for their freedom. They have gotten so far away from workers' thinking and from genuine revolutionary theory, that nothing can help them. It is up to those who do see workers as thinkers, women as thinkers.

Women's Liberation has reached a new and powerful stage in the movement today. That is why the opposition is so vicious. But it has also reached a new stage in thought. Seeing "women as Reason" strips the fetishism off of women as commodities. It is the only way that sexism can be destroyed."

Puerto Ricans in New York City turn out in mass support for Puerto Rican independence from U.S. domination.



● A STUDENT, active in the occupation of the "500" building for Hostos College in New York City, wrote of it:

"The Hostos occupation shows that students are moving to use the campus themselves, not only as vehicles of protest, but also for the self-organization of their education.

The spirit of the occupation must be seen to be believed. The students are confident they can hold the building, and are even talking about building a gym in the lot outside "500" during the summer. Community support is so extensive that they have enough food donated to open a cafeteria. Students from Bronx Community, Brooklyn, Hunter and Lehman Colleges — most of them from Latino or Black groups -- have also come to give support.

The range of discussions reflects the range of people taking part in the occupation: one student arrested in the take-over of the Statue of Liberty this year; another who works with the committee to Free the Four Puerto Rican Nationalists; a recently graduated student who had intended to leave for Puerto Rico but now will stay to participate in the struggle; and participants in the struggle to save nearby Lincoln Hospital.

The power of the struggle is just too immense for the police to make any moves right away, and the students and supporting faculty will continue to transform the deserted building into a college under their own collective control. Whether or not the struggle at Hostos does spread, the power of this occupation shows that what happens to this school is a focal point for all oppressions and grievances felt by the students and community in this area."

● AND BLACK PRISONERS, who have become some of the most prolific and probing of writers, penned the following:

"They are building up this place to really be a concentration camp; it's not even conceivable in the minds of a free country or people, that this camp is really a part of the state of Illinois. They attempt to contaminate the



Huge crowd in Algeria welcomes released political prisoners on the eve of winning independence from French colonialism in 1962.

resident body here with the sick disease of hate — Would you believe that the prison officials have almost what we can call a Black House and a White House? It's like this camp has returned to the old laws of 1850.

I had a white friend here with me just a few months ago; he was forced to transfer over to the so-called good house, needless to say the almost all-white house. All this was just because I am Black and he is white. It's as open here as night and day; the prison officials will do all that they can to keep Black and white from reaching any type of understanding here behind the walls of this slave camp.

—Illinois Prisoner

Since the incarceration I have become politically aware toward our international conflict and our constant struggle for decolonization here in America. There are Third World people who have no employment, no homes or food or clothing. I am a poor Black currently locked up in the hole making 35¢ a day, five days a week, and trying to learn all he can about his people and other people's liberation movements and struggles.

—Pennsylvania Prisoner

I am a prisoner (female) and I am writing you to ask you if you could send me some books. Others will be able to share them. If I was to tell you all I have learned, seen and experienced here it would fill at least ten books; I wouldn't be able to find an envelope big enough to hold the information I could send you on these supposed-to-be rehabilitation concentration camps.

I feel I am a political prisoner and a revolutionary, an activist and a socialist. They will never have my mind, nor will they have my thoughts, womanhood, beliefs, rights of pride or dignity or how I feel about the people. I will fight this system and capitalism until the day I die.

—Ohio Prisoner

I am aware of the cold murder of Steve Biko. Things are not that much different here in this racist U.S.A., for we must struggle each day that passes to maintain our sense of purpose . . . It is a daily move here by the so-called "officers of the peace" to display their sick racism and discrimination to keep us fighting each other, while they stand aside with that sick smile on their faces.

My keeper so much desires that the bitterness created by the conditions of this hell will hurt us and destroy our souls; then the enemy can claim another victory. I will always feel pain in my soul, but I will continue to refuse to allow the fires of hell to break me and cripple my mind. I am reading and opening a new awareness in my mind that will enable me to move with understanding and not confusion.

—Washington Prisoner

Some of the theses that young Blacks are writing open new avenues entirely. Take an Eritrean student our attention was drawn to who is writing a work on Fanon and the early 20th century Italian revolutionary, Gramsci. It isn't that those two thinkers were contemporaries either in time or subject. But so passionate is the search for philosophy and so adamant is the youth to try to find theory separated from the single-party state, that an affinity of ideas is seen in the view of workers' councils rather than party, in philosophy rather than just "political manifestos." So deep is the view that what comes from all sorts of new forces of revolution — be they peasants, women, youth — that the supposedly quiescent '70s see new beginnings in discontinuity that is continuity with Marxism, but for our day, rather than for "orthodoxy" which had become icon-worship.

LET US DRAW THE STRANDS together. American Black thought as it moves to touch the 1980s has the richest of historical and global experiences to draw upon. With the great French Revolution which signalled the end of the "ancien régime" and gave birth to a new age of revolutions, came the Haitian Revolution.

In *American Civilization on Trial*, we have shown that the Black dimension has, since the beginning of the importation of slave labor from Africa, been the touchstone of American civilization, challenging American capitalism and putting to the test all movements to change social relations in America.

In the 19th century, the greatness of the Abolitionist Movement, Black and white, led both to the Civil War and to Marx. He not only created the International Workingmen's Association of British workers who held mass demonstrations to prevent the English ruling class from intervening on the side of the South, but changed the structure of his greatest work, *Capital*, under the impact of the Civil War and the struggle for the shortening of the working day that followed it.

The 20th century began with the Russian Revolution and its promise of new human relations; that revolution retrogressed mid-stream, but our generation has seen that premise become global with the revolutionary emergence of the Afro-Asian, Latin American world striving to unite color and class.

It wasn't only that Lenin, in writing on the self-determination of nations, singled out the Negroes in America as part of his thesis. It was, as we saw, the actual relationship to what was later to be called the Third World, that became key.

The concreteness of Marx's understanding of the American revolutionary process unfolds at every stage of social crisis in this country. Whether it was the industrial unions being born, or the emergence of a Women's Liberation Movement, or the activity of anti-war youth — all have had the Black movement for liberation act as catalyst.

And yet, both within much of the Marxist movement and within much of the thought of Black intellectuals, there has been a neglect or abuse of this Marxist dialectical concept. The significance of the historical nature of the Black fight against capitalist racism has never been grasped by the established "Marxist" parties in the U.S., i.e. the Communist, Trotskyist and Maoist parties. They have given a lot of lip service in the fight against racism, but as a matter of political policy, Black Liberation has been jettisoned or submerged when it does not meet their political necessities.

Claude McKay, the American Black Marxist, had to sharply take issue with the U.S. Communists who dismissed Garveyism as mere fakery. Instead of seeing it as an expression of a great Black nationalism which Marxists had to see as integral to any American Revolution. The Communist Party has never acknowledged its contradiction when it attempted to submerge Black liberation struggles into the interests of U.S. and Russian imperialism during the Second World War.

THE THIRD WORLD THAT BURST onto the historic stage after World War II is not alone geographic or only of color, but is human forces and ideas of freedom, independent of all state powers and all ideologies which do not release but ensnare the drive for liberation. Nor is it only the magnificent spectacle of so many African countries gaining



Karl Marx



V. I. Lenin

their independence. It is the new inter-relationship of the African and European revolutions, as witness the Portuguese revolution that started in Angola.

Just as it was the actual human contact between Portuguese soldiers and Angolan guerrillas that helped inspire the Portuguese revolution, it is the exchange of ideas today between the Angolan and Mozambiquean revolutionaries and the Soweto youth that is helping to sustain the crescendo of the South African revolt. For the Black masses of southern Africa, Angola and Mozambique have meant a renewed confidence in their own self-bringing forth of freedom, and a determination to settle for total freedom and nothing less.

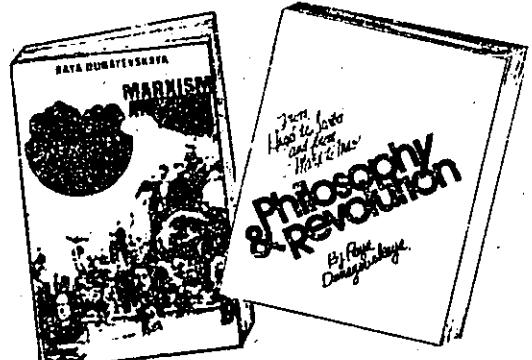
It is always easier to recognize a new stage of revolt than a new stage of cognition, especially when the movement *from practice* is first striving to rid itself of what the great English poet William Blake, in the age of revolutions — American, French, industrial, political, social, intellectual — had called "mind-forged manacles."

In our age, the period of the East European Revolutions as they first began in the mid-1950s brought Marx's Humanism onto the historic stage. It was also the period of the first African Revolutions. On the basis of these movements from below, Fanon was the first to work out a total philosophy of liberation for the Third World that would inter-relate to world revolution — "a new humanism." As Marxist-Humanists in the U.S. who oppose world capitalist-imperialism in all its forms, be that state-capitalism calling itself "Communism," or so-called private capitalism calling itself "democracy," we have always fought those who would subordinate Black Liberation to the needs and political ambitions of either pole of world capitalism — the U.S. or Russia.

What has distinguished Marxist-Humanists from all other "Marxist" groups has been the recognition not only of the autonomy of Black liberation movements, but of *Black masses as vanguard of the American Revolution*.

Marxist-Humanists, as organization, as body of thought, as activists, have never developed separately from the Black masses in motion. What makes the unity of Marx's new continent of thought and the Black liberation movement so imperative is that this nuclear world is poised on the brink of absolute destruction. To meet the challenge of the objective situation and the human passion for freedom that is so evident in the Black dimension, this capitalist-imperialist, exploitative, racist, sexist society must be uprooted. To have revolutionary ground for totally new human relations to be established, we need to work out a totally new relationship of theory to practice. *Franz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought* is our contribution toward that end. We wish to unite it with yours as readers, activists, thinkers.

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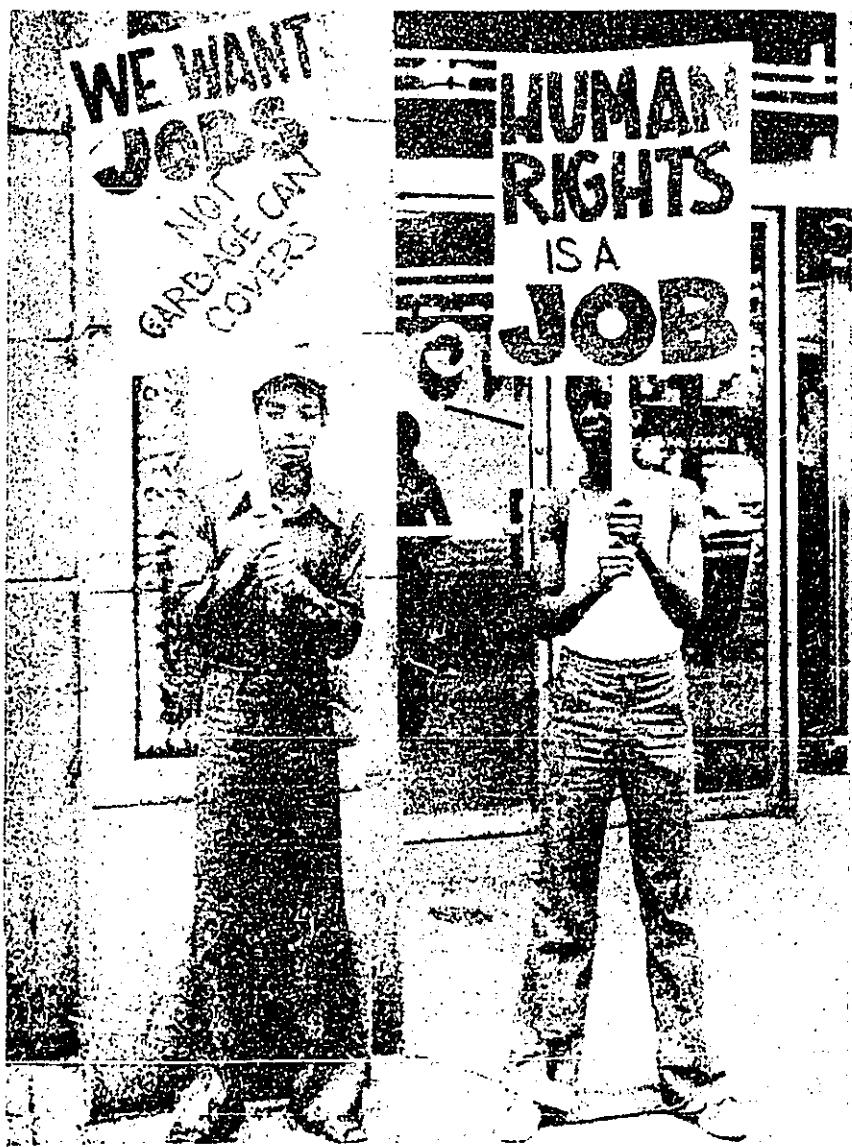
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