

FORWARD

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**THE
REVOLUTIONARY
COMMUNIST
LEAGUE (M-L-M)
AND THE
LEAGUE OF
REVOLUTIONARY
STRUGGLE (M-L)
UNITE!**

League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L)

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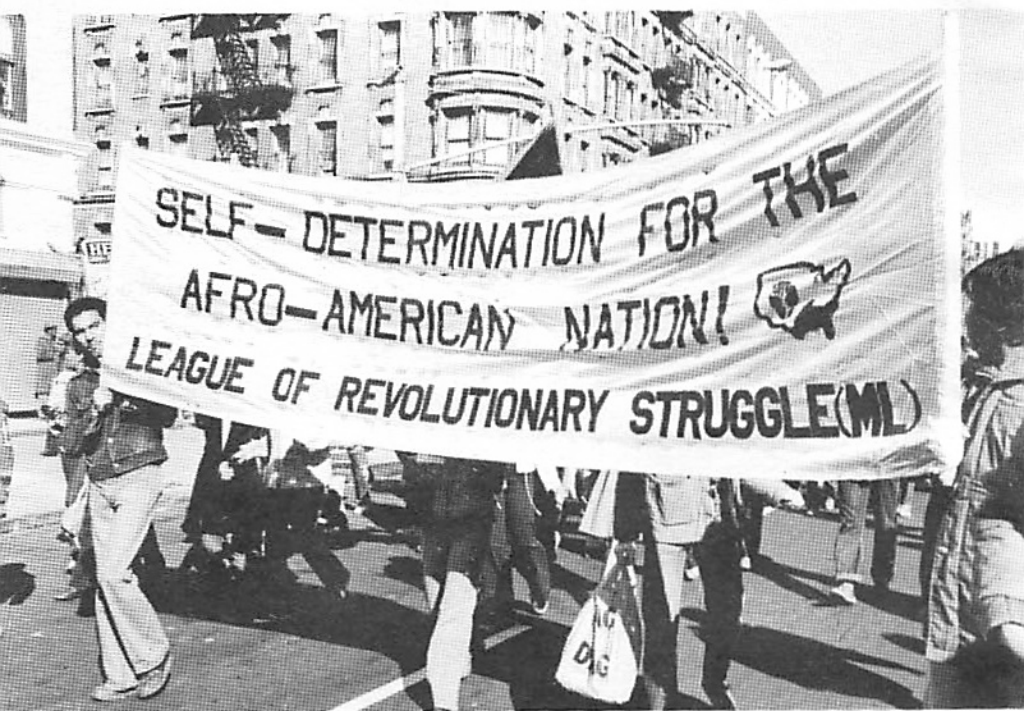
Table of Contents

The Revolutionary Communist League (M-L-M) and the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L) Unite!	1
<i>Countries Want Independence, Nations Want Liberation, and the People, the People Want Revolution</i> poem by Amiri Baraka	8
“Unity and Struggle” — History of the Revolutionary Communist League (M-L-M)	
Preface	12
Introduction: An overview of the contemporary Black Liberation Movement	15
Chapter One: Origins of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples and the Committee for a Unified Newark, 1966–70	29
I. The Black Arts movement and Spirit House, 1966–67	30
II. Three Black community groups form Committee for a Unified Newark	37
III. CFUN programs and community struggles	40
IV. Black Panther–US split — 1968	47
V. The 1969–70 Gibson election	49
Chapter Two: Congress of Afrikan Peoples — 1970–74	55
I. Atlanta founding meeting, September 1970	56
II. CAP’s activities 1970–73	65
III. Moving to the left, 1973–74	76
Chapter Three: Taking up Marxism-Leninism- Mao Zedong Thought and development as a communist organization, 1974–79	99
I. Early period of consolidation around Marxism- Leninism, October 1974–October 1975	100
II. Influence by the “Revolutionary Wing” late 1975–fall 1976	116

III. Breaking with the "left" line and rectification — fall 1976–79.....	119
Conclusion.....	132
Footnotes.....	135

**Revolutionary poetry from
the Black Liberation Movement**

<i>Afternoon Autoworker</i>	140
Pili (Michael L. Humphrey)	
<i>9 Hours 6 Days</i>	143
Pili (Michael L. Humphrey)	
<i>Black Blood Runs Red</i>	144
Pili (Michael L. Humphrey)	
<i>The Ballgame</i>	145
Amiri Baraka	
<i>A Black Belt Montage</i>	150
Baron James Ashanti	
<i>Red Poem</i>	151
Sylvia Jones	



Black Solidarity Day, November 5, 1979. Over 3,000 Blacks and other nationalities march on the United Nations to draw international attention to the struggle for Black self-determination and human rights. (UNITY photo)

The Revolutionary Communist League (M-L-M) and the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L) Unite!

Two major Marxist-Leninist organizations, the Revolutionary Communist League (M-L-M) and the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L), have united into one organization, the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L). This is a significant step forward in the struggle for Marxist-Leninist unity and the U.S. revolutionary movement.

The RCL and the League carried out a process of principled struggle for unity, a process which integrated joint discussions on theoretical questions and joint practice. The two organizations also summarized their histories. Throughout the unification process, the two organizations desired unity, adhered to Marxist-

Leninist principle, and practiced criticism and self-criticism. As a result, they were able to resolve their differences and reach unity on all major points of political line.

Political unity reached

RCL and the League had substantial political unities which in part reflected the similarity of the two organizations. Both RCL and the League have their origins in the mass movements of the oppressed nationality peoples of the 1960's, and over the years carried out extensive work among the masses. While there were also differences in each organization's development, each organization has a rich and complex history, having grown and deepened their understanding of making revolution and Marxism-Leninism through a process of twists and turns.

From the beginning of the merger process, RCL and the League had unity on the national question in the U.S. Both upheld the view that the national movements are a powerful revolutionary force and a component part of the socialist revolution. Both upheld in theory and in practice the right of self-determination for the Afro-American nation in the Black-belt South and for full and equal rights for Afro-Americans in the North. RCL and the League had unity in their view of self-determination and equal rights as democratic demands that can only be won through a revolutionary struggle for political power. The two organizations also united in seeing the necessity for building a broad united front within the national movements and waging a class struggle in the national movements for communist leadership. RCL and the League also were united in their view of the oppressed Chicano nation in the Southwest with the right to self-determination.

RCL and the League also had unity on the international situation and adherence to the theory of the three worlds; support for socialist China and the Communist Party of China under the leadership of Chairman Hua Guofeng; a general line on labor and trade union work; and other questions, including the need for communists to improve their work around the woman question.

These unities provided a strong basis to struggle over the differences, separating major and minor points, to forge a solid and principled basis for unification.

In the merger process, RCL and the League also resolved differences through criticism and self-criticism and pinpointed

weaknesses in each of the two organizations.

In the course of RCL's history of taking up Marxism-Leninism there were twists and turns and mistakes were made, such as certain tendencies of mechanicalness and abstractness and "left" line influenced by the "Revolutionary Wing." By 1976 RCL was able to criticize the "Wing" and committed itself to the break with ultra-leftism. But this occurred in the course of struggle and there were remnants of these weaknesses that still existed. For example, on party building, while under the influence of the "Wing's" line, RCL did not pay enough attention to practice and building mass ties. These are component parts of party building dialectically related to the struggle to develop a living line of the U.S. revolution and to uniting Marxist-Leninists. These errors were criticized in the merger process and unity was reached on the view of party building.

The League recognized that it had not paid enough attention to its theoretical work and that its newspaper, *UNITY*, needed more theoretical articles. This reflected a weakness of not taking up the struggle to win over independent Marxist-Leninists and make a general presentation of its line in the newspaper. These errors were summed up in the merger process.

As the political unity between RCL and the League increased, they tested unities and strengthened their ties through joint work. The two organizations worked together in the Anti-Bakke Decision Coalition (ABDC); the New York tour of the United League; and in the Baraka Defense Committee. This committee was formed to bring justice for Amiri Baraka who was beaten by the New York City Police, as well as to generally educate and organize people against police brutality and Black national oppression.

Histories affirmed

One of the significant parts of the unification of RCL and the League was the affirmation of their histories, in particular the summarization of the history of RCL.

At the time of the merger of the August 29th Movement (M-L) and I Wor Kuen to found the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L) in 1978, ATM and IWK both summarized their histories as an important part of the history of the entire revolutionary and communist movements. They affirmed the overwhelmingly positive contributions of the two organizations which grew out of

the Chicano and Asian national movements; took up Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought; and carried out communist work in the working class, national movements, student movement and other sectors. They also criticized weaknesses and errors made, as a way of learning from past experience.

Since its founding the League has grown as a nationwide, multinational organization that has made some important strides forward. Its newspaper, *UNITY*, is now published biweekly. The League also has a theoretical journal, *FORWARD*, which has included a major position on the Chicano national question. The League also broadened its work in the working class and national movements as well as among other sectors, and has also made principled efforts to unite with other Marxist-Leninists towards forging a single, vanguard party.

RCL's rich history in the Black Liberation Movement

RCL has nearly 15 years experience in the Afro-American people's struggle for self-determination, for equal rights and against national oppression. RCL has its roots in the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960's when the Afro-American people rose up in a storm of struggle against their national oppression, shaking U.S. monopoly capitalism at its foundations. Many revolutionary fighters and organizations came forth during this period even though there was no genuine communist party to lead the masses.

RCL grew out of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples (CAP), one of the major revolutionary nationalist organizations of the Black Liberation Movement between 1970 and 1974. The main predecessor of CAP was the Committee for a Unified Newark (CFUN), a community-based group in Newark, New Jersey, which was organized in 1967 by Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), a leading Black revolutionary playwright and poet. The CFUN took up mass struggles, built mass "alternative" programs like its Afrikan Free School, and also played a major role in the 1970 election of Kenneth Gibson, the first Black to be elected mayor of a major northeastern city.

The founding of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples in Atlanta in 1970 was attended by 3,000 people, representing a broad cross section of the mainstream Black Liberation Movement and community; and was attended by mass activists, and well-known and

diverse personages like Julian Bond, Jesse Jackson, Owusu Sadaukai and Louis Farrakhan. CAP brought together in a national organization some of the major currents of the cultural nationalist and Pan Africanist trends of the Black movement, with hundreds of revolutionary and progressive activist cadre in chapters in 17 cities.

CAP engaged in many mass struggles, some of the most well-known of which were the Stop Killer Cops campaign, carried out in 12 cities, and the fight for Kawaida Towers in Newark as a low- and medium-income housing project for Blacks and Puerto Ricans.

CAP also played a major role in broad united front work such as the first National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, in 1972, which was attended by 8,000 people; and the National Black Assembly (NBA) of which Amiri Baraka was the Secretary General until 1975. CAP also did extensive work in organizing the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), along with other forces, to support the liberation struggles in Africa.

CAP published a newspaper *Black Newark* and then *Unity and Struggle* that had a distribution of as high as 12,000.

As a cultural nationalist and Pan Africanist formation arising directly out of the mass movement of the 1960's, CAP fought on the side of the masses, and stood openly for revolution and an end to national oppression. But it did not have a scientific ideology guiding its work until 1974. CAP erroneously believed that white people are the enemy of Blacks. It also had certain reformist tendencies, such as its tendency to view gaining Black political power through the electoral process. This was due, in part, to CAP's desire to unite broad sectors of the Black movement and to seek alternatives to the reactionaries in power like the notorious racists Addonizio and Imperiale in Newark. But CAP learned from its own experience that the election of Blacks into political office did not fundamentally change the conditions of the masses, and that the upper stratum of the Black bourgeois politicians, more often than not, actually sided with the bourgeoisie against the mass movement of their own people. At the same time, CAP gained significant experience in major electoral political campaigns.

Through its work and experience, CAP gradually broadened its political outlook and gained a more scientific understanding of

the conditions of the Afro-American struggle and its relationship to the international and domestic revolutionary struggle. CAP began to study Marxism-Leninism in 1974, and in that year, summarizing its own experience and influenced by struggle in the NBA and ALSC, adopted Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as its ideology. This was a major turning point for the organization. CAP, and later RCL, went through a process of transforming itself into a communist organization.

As a communist organization RCL did work in a number of midwestern and northeastern cities and made contributions to the developing communist movement. It continued its involvement in the mass struggles of the Afro-American people, including work against police brutality, against national oppression in education, the building of the Black Women's United Front (a mass organization of Black women) and revolutionary cultural work. RCL also developed work in the industrial working class. It continued to publish *Unity and Struggle* and also made important theoretical contributions in applying Marxism-Leninism to the U.S. revolution on the Afro-American national question.

In late 1975-76, RCL came under the influence of the ultra-left line supported by the "Revolutionary Wing." Later it struggled to break with the "Wing's" influence and establish a more correct orientation and line.

Merger means greater contributions are possible

The history and development of CAP/RCL provide valuable lessons on revolutionary work in the Black Liberation Movement. They have gone through a process of struggle to recognize the path which will lead to winning Black liberation and the overthrow of imperialism — the path of Marxism-Leninism. They have learned many lessons. They have also made contributions to the Black Liberation Movement in the U.S., a struggle which is vital and a component part of the U.S. revolution.

The merger of RCL and the League means it will be possible to broaden the scope of work and to do more to take up the struggles of the masses, to integrate Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the U.S. revolution, and to seek unity with other Marxist-Leninists towards forging a single party. The League has a wealth of experience, and its cadre have been tempered in the

heat of class struggle. At the same time the League recognizes that there is a continuing struggle against weaknesses, and that much needs to be done to improve its theoretical work and newspaper work; to deepen its ties with the masses and to improve its united front work; and to play an active and aggressive role in fighting opportunism and uniting Marxist-Leninists in party building.

As was presented in a statement by the Central Committees of the RCL and League upon the two organizations' merger, "Our unity signals a big advance in the struggle for Marxist-Leninist unity and for a single, unified, vanguard communist party. It represents a strengthening of the communist forces and a blow against revisionism, Trotskyism and opportunism . . . Both our organizations have rich histories and experience in the U.S. revolutionary movement. There are many similarities in our histories, as well as differences in the way we developed. In the course of our unity talks, the histories of both organizations have been affirmed, and we are determined to carry on the revolutionary tradition and Marxist-Leninist stand and attitude in the ranks of a single organization, the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L)." □

**COUNTRIES WANT INDEPENDENCE,
NATIONS WANT
LIBERATION, AND THE PEOPLE,
THE PEOPLE WANT REVOLUTION!**

A Poem for the Unity of RCL (M-L-M) and LRS (M-L)

— Amiri Baraka
October 1979

*Revolutionary Unity
gained only thru
struggle
long sought for
must be fought for*

*Revolutionary Unity
a fiery beacon in a world made perpetual night
by imperialism
The basis of struggle Unity Revolutionary Unity
Unity gained thru struggle
The basis of the party yet to be built
in a land of "instant everythings"
& Disco con Fusion
Revolutionaries Unite*

*From the iron streets of Black Blood Hurricanes
The Spanish speaking avenidas of gringo racist ugliness
The oppressed Chinatowns and Japantowns and Asian
struggle history arenas — from exploited white workers
sons and daughters of indentured servants east European
& south European original ghetto dwellers
from the red nations whose rich history
is this land itself, whose struggle against
brute genocide goes on this very hour
from the struggle of the women, twice oppressed
and our third world sisters, with three strikes already thrown
by our enemies. Unity of our struggles means terror
in the enemy's eyes
Unity of just struggles, means
death to imperialism and revisionists sweat gallons of dead lies*

thinking of ways to obstruct our revolutionary construction. They weep into our fires trying to put them out Revolutionaries Unite is what the fire says Revolutionaries Unite.

*Witness our motion here
our courageous building
from smaller to larger, from larger
to*

*formidable, from
formidable, to ascendant to
obviously irresistible. From the people themselves
we draw our strength, Unite Revolutionaries
Unite, for in that struggle for Revolutionary Unity
is won the heart of the masses, the advanced are won
to Communism! And so we build, from small to large
from large to irresistible, irresistible to
invincible, and then with hot struggle flame as our fuel
Revolutionaries Unite, and win the advanced
Revolutionaries Unite, raise the struggle even higher
from small to large from larger to irresistible and finally
to invincible and then to Victorious, Revolutionaries Unite
a World to Win. Revolutionaries Unite
A World to Win
what the comrade
said, Revolutionaries Unite,
You've got a world
to win A whole
world! Victorious!
A whole world
to Unite!*



THERE ARE BUT TWO
SIDES IN A WAR - SHE
FIGHTS ON THE SIDE OF
AFRICAN FREEDOM -
GULF FINANCES
THE OTHER.



ONE
LE
NATION
TIME

BOYCOTT 

ICE

**“UNITY
AND
STRUGGLE” —
HISTORY OF THE
REVOLUTIONARY
COMMUNIST
LEAGUE (M-L-M)**

1973 African Liberation Day, Newark, New Jersey. (UNITY Photo)

Preface

The Revolutionary Communist League (Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought) (RCL-MLM), is a Marxist-Leninist organization which grew out of the contemporary Black Liberation Movement in the U.S. Formerly known as the Congress of Afrikan Peoples (CAP), the organization was one of the major representatives of cultural nationalism and Pan Africanism in the Black movement until it adopted Marxism-Leninism in 1974. Since that time, RCL/CAP carried out work in several cities in the northeastern and midwestern United States, focusing its work in the Black Liberation Movement and in the industrial working class. It published a newspaper, *Unity and Struggle*.

RCL/CAP has a long and rich history of struggle and experience. Its origins go back to the upsurge of Black revolutionary nationalism that shook America in the middle- and late-1960's. The organization played an active role in the Black Liberation Movement and made many contributions to that struggle. It developed as an influential force, whose actions and stands were emulated by some and sparked controversy among others.

The road traversed by RCL/CAP over the last decade and more has been full of twists and turns, but it has been a road of forward motion and development. As a Black nationalist organization, CAP and its main predecessor, the Committee for a Unified Newark (CFUN), had from its beginning a revolutionary core in resisting Black national oppression and reflecting the Afro-American people's struggle for self-determination and equal rights.

Throughout its history, the organization stood on the side of the Black masses and continually sought to clarify the path which would lead to their liberation. This was a process and there were erroneous views and mistakes along the way. But because the organization fundamentally stood for self-determination, and persevered in the struggle, it was able to deepen its understanding of how to win Black liberation and make revolution. This process ultimately brought the organization to a scientific understanding

of the root cause of Black oppression — the system of imperialism; and how Black liberation could actually be fought for and won — through a revolutionary struggle for political power, a struggle that is a component part of the U.S. socialist revolution.

The following history of RCL sums up this history of experience and development. It is a history of how CFUN and CAP emerged out of the Black national struggle, and the process through which the organization became Marxist-Leninist. It is a history of the many contributions of the organization, as well as a summation of its weaknesses and errors. It is part of the whole history of the Black Liberation Movement and the struggle for Marxism-Leninism in the U.S.

The summation of RCL's history is the product of the unity process between the RCL and the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L)¹ that culminated in their merger into one organization, the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L), in September 1979. Both RCL and LRS recognize the importance of summing up their histories as part of the struggle to unite Marxist-Leninists and forge a unified, vanguard communist party to lead the U.S. revolution. It is necessary to sum up the past — to affirm what was correct, to criticize what was incorrect and to understand the reasons — in order to firmly grasp the tasks of the present and point out the direction for the future. □



Introduction: An overview of the contemporary Black Liberation Movement

The Congress of Afrikan Peoples (CAP) was one of the many Black revolutionary organizations that arose out of the upsurge of the Afro-American struggle in the late 1960's. To understand the historical origins of CAP, it is necessary to look first at the background of the modern day Black Liberation Movement.

The 1950's and 1960's were two decades of massive struggle on the part of millions of Afro-Americans. The struggle during these years started out in the homeland of the Afro-American people, in the oppressed Black nation in the Black-belt South. It spread to all corners of the U.S., inspiring Blacks and oppressed and working people of all nationalities to rise up in a revolutionary struggle.

The target of the Afro-American people's struggle was the system of national oppression, born in the slave trade and forged through centuries of forced enslavement of Africans and later Afro-Americans in the South. This system of slave labor formed the foundation for the rise of U.S. industrial capitalism on the one hand, and on the other produced the foundation for the later development of the Afro-American nation. The Civil War ended the formal system of slavery in the South, but it did not end Black

Adhimiri Chonga, 18-year old Board of Education member speaking at rally during 1973 education struggle in Newark schools. (UNITY photo)

oppression. The system of slavery left its mark on American society and the legacy of slavery continued to plague Afro-Americans.

After Black Reconstruction was overthrown in the post Civil War period, through terror and trickery Blacks were forced back onto the plantations, into a semi-slave status as sharecroppers and tenant farmers. The Afro-American people were forged into a distinct nation, with all the characteristics of modern nations. This nation was formed when the overthrow of Reconstruction left no possibility of Blacks being integrated as equals into a “democratic” capitalist America. The overthrow of Reconstruction also meant that the Afro-American nation would be oppressed and denied its right to self-determination by U.S. imperialism.

Violence and poverty forced many Blacks out of the Afro-American nation and into northern ghettos of the U.S. where they faced continued oppression. They found themselves in the lowest stratum of the working class. As an oppressed people Blacks were denied equal rights — politically, economically and socially — and faced a bitter racism which was perpetuated throughout society by the ruling class. This continues today.

In the 1950’s, the Afro-American people faced a difficult period. National oppression weighed down heavily on the people. In the South things were barely different than in the time of slavery. The system of Jim Crow segregation legally enforced the political and social subjugation of Blacks in the South. It was little different than South African apartheid and symbolized the status of Black people in the U.S. — separate and unequal.

During this time, the Communist Party (USA) abandoned the Afro-American people’s struggle. In the past, the CPUSA had been active in taking up the struggle of Black sharecroppers and workers, and led many struggles against Black national oppression. It was even known as “the party of the Negroes.” But by the 1950’s, the CPUSA had adopted a chauvinist and reformist line. It no longer viewed Black people in the Black-belt South as an oppressed nation with the right to self-determination, whose struggle for liberation was part of the overall struggle of the working class and oppressed nationalities for democracy and socialist revolution. The CPUSA began to say that Black people had already exercised their right to self-determination, and had opted for integration under imperialism as the solution to their oppression! This traitorous stand was a long step to the complete

degeneration of the CPUSA into revisionism which was completed in the 1950's.

The Civil Rights Movement

The fact that the CPUSA betrayed the Afro-American people's revolutionary struggle meant there was a vacuum of revolutionary leadership of the movement. But this did not stop the forward development of the mass movement. In the 1950's, the Black Civil Rights Movement rose up in the South against the system of Jim Crow segregation.

The Civil Rights Movement was sparked by the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott, initiated by the resistance of Rosa Parks, and eventually led by Dr. Martin Luther King. The movement represented Black mass resistance to national oppression. It spread throughout the South as Blacks demanded the desegregation of all-white southern colleges, staged massive sit-ins in "white only" lunch counters, libraries, movie theaters, swimming pools and other public facilities. Voter registration drives were organized throughout the South. There were massive marches of thousands of people in big cities like Birmingham and small towns like Selma, Alabama.

The people's movement was met with a reactionary onslaught of violence. Black people were attacked by police dogs, water cannons and clubs. Freedom riders were dragged off buses and beaten by racists. Students at lunch counters were spat upon. Homes and churches were firebombed. Thousands were carted off to jail and many heroic fighters gave up their lives.

In the face of these attacks, the Afro-American people persisted in their struggle. Militant mass organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) rose out of the fight. By the early 1960's, the Afro-American struggle had come to occupy the center stage of U.S. domestic turmoil, shaking the system of U.S. monopoly capitalism to its foundations. Internationally, the Afro-American struggle exposed to the world the barbaric system of national oppression existing in the very heartland of 20th century America.

In 1964, the U.S. government was forced to concede certain reforms granting formal equality to Blacks. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 declared that Blacks would have equal access to job opportunities and public accom-



Dr. Martin Luther King spearheaded the methods used in the 1950's Civil Rights Movement of mass collective and direct action. Above is the 1963 March on Washington led by Dr. King.

modations, and equal voting rights. These reforms were gains in the struggle against the oppression of the Black masses, but they could not eliminate the system of national oppression rooted in the system of U.S. monopoly capitalism itself.

Since U.S. monopoly capitalism was built and exists to a large degree upon the national oppression of Black people, the system of national oppression can only be ended through a revolutionary struggle for self-determination and equal rights. This struggle will be a powerful force contributing to the final overthrow of U.S. monopoly capitalism and the establishment of socialism, which will finally rid U.S. society of national oppression and class exploitation.

The civil rights leaders of the 1950's and early 1960's represented mainly an upper stratum of the national movement, the Black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. The Black national

bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie themselves suffer from national oppression and can be united with in the struggle for self-determination and equal rights. The Black bourgeoisie also has interests in maintaining the system of capitalism, and the Black petty bourgeoisie occupies an economic and social position between the Black bourgeoisie and Black working class. They are vacillating forces in the national movement. The civil rights leaders articulated certain democratic demands such as for equal access, voting rights and an end to segregation. But they could not lead the mass movement beyond the winning of certain limited reforms to the revolutionary goal of achieving self-determination and full equality for the Black masses.

Dr. King was one of the most progressive of the civil rights leaders in comparison with those tied more directly to the large multinational corporate interests. King generally stood on the side of the masses and fought in their interests. He spearheaded the methods used in the 1950's Civil Rights Movement of mass collective and direct action. But his advocacy of "peaceful and non-violent" struggle, "turn the other cheek" to the enemy, and his faith in the Democratic Party caused him to vacillate in the struggle and foster illusions that a fundamental change could come through peaceful means. For example, the 1963 March on Washington had originally been planned as a mass action to shut down the capitol until some basic demands were met. But before the march, then-President John F. Kennedy hastily called together a meeting with the top reformist civil rights leaders and those tied to white corporate interests, to change the rally to an endorsement of his civil rights bill. King and other civil rights leaders capitulated to Kennedy's attempts to subvert the march.

Some of the top "civil rights leaders," especially those with connections to big corporations, advocated outright capitulation to the bourgeoisie, preaching full reliance on the Democratic or Republican parties, the courts and the legal system. They opposed relying on mass and direct action, and helped the imperialists try to keep a lid on the mass struggle.

The masses began to draw lessons that reforms like civil rights legislation were not enough, and the top leadership of organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) could only lead the movement to a dead end. A

dramatic transformation began to take place in the Black movement.

Malcolm X

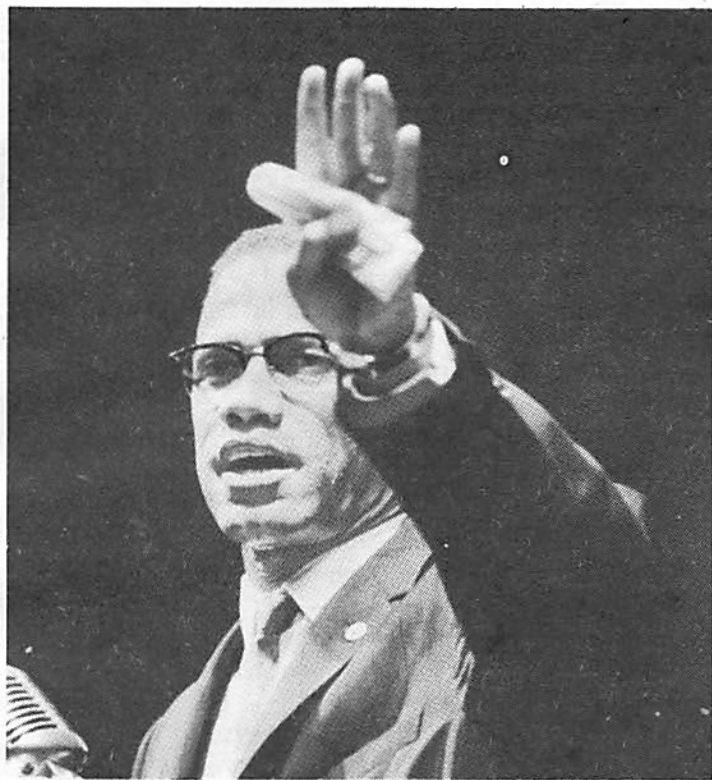
From the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, there had been a struggle in the movement around the question of pacifism. As early as 1957, Robert Williams, head of the Monroe County, North Carolina, chapter of the NAACP, rejected the path of non-violence. He organized a chapter of the National Rifle Association, training the Black community in armed self-defense. He was criticized and finally expelled in 1961 by the NAACP leadership for this stand. In the mid-1960's, many activists in the Black Liberation Movement as well as the masses themselves, began to recognize the limitations of reformism and pacifism. New revolutionary organizations and leaders began to emerge.

In 1963, the bombing of a Birmingham church left four Black children dead, and the masses were burning with bitter anger. The civil rights leaders' promise of "Free by 1963" had proven to be impossible. The racists never "turned the other cheek."

Malcolm X came forward in this period as a revolutionary leader. A revolutionary nationalist and anti-imperialist, his articulation that Black people were an oppressed nation with the right of self-determination, self-respect, and self-defense struck a deep chord among millions of Afro-Americans in the U.S. He was the most significant and far-sighted leader of the Black Liberation Movement during this entire period.

Once Malcolm X emerged as a leader of the Black masses, even though he came out of the religious framework of the Nation of Islam, he consistently developed a revolutionary Black nationalist position. It was this revolutionary stand that led to the dramatic split between Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam in 1963. Malcolm was fired from the Nation of Islam after he called President Kennedy's assassination "chickens coming home to roost."

Malcolm knew that Black liberation was a political struggle and not a religious struggle. He knew it was an anti-imperialist struggle, not one for Black capitalism. Malcolm knew it was an international struggle and he supported the struggle of third world people against imperialism. As a result of his leadership, the Black student movement spearheaded by SNCC began to turn around under the leadership of Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown.



Malcolm's articulation that Black people were an oppressed nation with the right to self-determination, self-respect and self-defense struck a deep chord among the millions of Afro-Americans in the U.S.

Malcolm X also boldly challenged the reformist civil rights leaders. In 1963, he called the March on Washington a "takeover," "a Black bourgeois status symbol." He said, "The government told the marchers what time to arrive, where to arrive, and how to arrive . . . what signs to carry, what songs to sing, what speeches to make, and then told the marchers to be sure to get out of town by sundown . . . and all of them were out of town by sundown."¹

As the struggle sharpened between the reformist leaders and the emerging revolutionary nationalists like Malcolm X, a transformation was also taking place within the movement as a whole. More people began to apply the lessons of Malcolm X. In 1965, SNCC was the first major civil rights group to come out and oppose the Viet Nam War despite pressure from the older, more "established" groups like the NAACP and the Urban League. In 1966, the SNCC leaders coined the phrase "Black Power" and soon wrote the "nonviolent" out of SNCC's name.

Starting in 1964, a wave of violent and heroic rebellions swept the northern Black ghettos — Harlem in 1964, Watts in 1965, Cleveland in 1966, Detroit and Newark in 1967, and eventually a hundred cities went up in flames. The mass upsurge was on a scale unprecedented in the history of the U.S.

Malcolm X recognized this transformation taking place. In 1964 he stated,

. . . last night at this same time in Cleveland, where the police were putting water hoses on our people there and also throwing tear gas at them — and they met a hail of stones, a hail of rocks, a hail of bricks. A couple of weeks ago in Jacksonville, Florida, a young teen-age Negro was throwing Molotov cocktails.

Well, Negroes didn't do this ten years ago. But what you should learn from this is that they are waking up. It was stones yesterday, Molotov cocktails today; it will be hand grenades tomorrow and whatever else is available the next day There are 22 million African-Americans who are ready to fight I don't mean any nonviolent fight, turn-the-other-cheek fight. Those days are gone. Those days are over.²

The established civil rights leadership of the SCLC, NAACP and Urban League would not go along with the rising mass movement, let alone lead it. They were, on the whole, satisfied with the civil rights legislation and many had been bought off with social and political positions or represented white, corporate interests. President Johnson had poured millions of dollars into the Black communities with his "war on poverty" and coopted an upper stratum of Black bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements.

The revolutionary nationalist movement in the late 1960's

The assassination of Malcolm X by agents of imperialism in 1965 created a vacuum of leadership in the movement. The cry of "Black Power!" continued to be picked up by many independent revolutionary nationalists. The representatives of the Black national bourgeoisie also attempted to reassert their leadership after Malcolm's death. The struggle between the revolutionary nationalists and reformist leaders representing the Black national bourgeoisie and the more conservative sections of the petty bourgeoisie continued.

In the late 1960's, a number of Black revolutionary nationalist organizations arose and came to the fore. These organizations opened up a new chapter in the history of the Black Liberation Movement. The writings and example of Malcolm X were central in influencing them as they took a forthright stand for revolution, self-determination and full equality for the Black masses "by any means necessary." They carried Malcolm's message to a higher level and served notice to the U.S. imperialists that the Black Liberation Movement could not be stopped by either violence or the granting of piecemeal reforms.

The Black Panther Party was one organization that played a leading role in the Black Liberation Movement and in the rebirth of the revolutionary movement throughout the country in the late 1960's. Their call for Black "self-defense" was inspired by Malcolm's teachings. The Panthers started out as a community organization for self-defense and grew to lead many militant mass community struggles — around issues of education, housing, police brutality and community control. They emphasized Malcolm's teaching on the need for armed struggle against imperialism.

Of the various Black revolutionary nationalist formations, the Panthers developed a relatively advanced understanding of the need to direct the mass struggle against the system of imperialism and unite with the working and oppressed peoples of other nationalities. In their early period, the Panthers took a militant stand against the revisionist CPUSA, the Trotskyite Progressive Labor Party and against the reformist leadership in the Black national movement.

Since they did not form as a Marxist-Leninist organization, the



Members of the Black Panther Party march along 42nd Street in New York to a press conference at the United Nations. The conference was called to protest the frame-up murder trial of Black Panther Party Minister of Defense Huey P. Newton in Oakland, California.

Panthers did not have a scientific understanding of imperialism or revolution.³

The Panthers were plagued with internal contradictions, some elements having reformist tendencies and others advocating anarchism and terrorism. They were also the target of a systematic and murderous campaign by the state to kill or jail its leaders. This caused tremendous setbacks for the organization, and in 1971, the Panthers split into rival factions.

Other Black revolutionary nationalist organizations emerged out of the struggle of Black workers in the industrial heartland of the U.S. in cities like Detroit. The Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), for example, inspired the formation of a host of "RUM's" in other auto plants and industries. This led to the formation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, a mass anti-imperialist organization, and later out of this, the Black Workers Congress, a Marxist-Leninist organization.

A militant Pan Africanist and cultural nationalist movement also arose from the Black liberation struggle of the late 1960's. This movement was inspired by Malcolm's call for Black people in the U.S. to recognize their African origins as part of the struggle

against the cultural aggression that is part of imperialism.

Originated in the early 1900's by W.E.B. DuBois, Pan Africanism was an international movement that called upon African nations and people to unite in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism. It called for people of African origin living in Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean and other parts of the world, not only to support the African liberation struggle but to see their struggles as Black people outside Africa as part of an international Pan Africanist movement. In the 1920's, the Garvey movement organized around Black pride and African international solidarity, expressing Pan Africanism on a mass scale.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, various Pan Africanist groups developed in the U.S. These included groups like the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU), the Congress of Afrikan Peoples (CAP), and the All Afrikan People's Revolutionary Party (AAPRP) organized by Stokely Carmichael. Some Pan Africanist forces like the SOBU and AAPRP called on Blacks to "go back to Africa" as the means of liberating themselves. Still others, like CAP, viewed Africa as a "base" for the liberation of Black people in the U.S. but did not call for Afro-Americans to physically return to Africa.

The Pan Africanist movement in the U.S. grew out of the recognition that the Afro-American people have a special relationship to Africa — a commonality of history and culture. Generally all these groups opposed not only the political and economic subjugation of Africans but also the bourgeois racist "theories" that "Europe is the center of world civilization" and that Africa had "no civilization," which were created by the colonizers to justify the carving up of Africa.

Also growing out of the movement for Blacks in the U.S. to re-embrace their African cultural heritage was a cultural nationalist tendency. Black cultural nationalism proceeds from the premise that the African heritage of Blacks in the U.S. was destroyed by slavery and national oppression, and only by reclaiming and rebuilding an African culture can the Black masses become conscious enough to liberate themselves. The cultural nationalists saw the enemy of Black people as a system of "white oppression," and white racism imbedded in American society and institutions. Their general orientation consequently was "anti-white."

Cultural nationalism was incorporated into the thinking and

practice of many Black nationalist organizations in the 1960's. In its most narrow form, cultural nationalism focuses solely on cultural aspects, building "Black consciousness," and upholding "neo-traditionalist" African culture, and doing little else.

Black consciousness as *national* consciousness is necessary for Black liberation since it is the recognition that Blacks are an oppressed people with a commonality of history, culture, psychological makeup and experience. Black consciousness is necessary to build in order for the oppressed people to unite and fight against their oppression. However, to separate the building of national consciousness from political revolution is simply to push "Black is beautiful" or "We are African people" with little substance. One other form that cultural nationalism took was the advocacy of "cultural national autonomy" for Blacks in the U.S. — the building of separate Black economic, political, social and cultural "institutions" as part of a "Black nation" *wherever* Blacks live regardless of whether there is a continuous territory of concentrated Black population, and with insufficient attention to the question of seizing political power.

One of the most well-known cultural nationalist groups in the late 1960's was Ron Karenga's US organization. The US organization held to a narrow cultural nationalism, seeing the Black revolution almost solely as a "cultural revolution," downplaying in practice the need for mass political struggle and also promoting certain backward practices because they were supposedly "African." The cultural nationalists, however, did play a positive role insofar as they stressed the importance of Blacks opposing cultural aggression and inspired pride in Black culture and heritage.

The Congress of Afrikan Peoples (CAP) grew out of the cultural nationalist and Pan Africanist sectors of the Black Liberation Movement. Its main predecessor was the Committee for a Unified Newark, a community-based cultural nationalist organization that formed in the late 1960's. It was initially heavily influenced by Karenga's cultural nationalism but was different in that it was active in leading mass community struggles and participating in Black electoral struggles, especially in Newark, New Jersey.

The formation of CAP represented an advancement beyond orthodox cultural nationalism to a militant Pan Africanism in sup-

port of the African liberation movement and self-determination for the Afro-American people in the U.S.

There were also other revolutionary nationalist organizations that raised the revolutionary demand for self-determination and were also cultural nationalist. The Republic of New Afrika (RNA), for example, advocated that Blacks should form a separate state in the South and focused their work in this direction.

The development of these various trends among revolutionary nationalist forces in the 1960's reflected the broad united front character of the national movement and the diverse tendencies within it. Other political trends included the liberal-reformist groups such as the established civil rights organizations. These continued to see "bourgeois-integration" as the road to equality for Blacks in the U.S. There were also various religious nationalist organizations such as the Nation of Islam and Black Christian nationalists which incorporated within them some revolutionary-minded elements as well as nonrevolutionary elements.

As the revolutionary nationalist organizations formed, there was no vanguard communist party to lead them through the twists and turns of the struggle. But still revolutionaries came forth from the national movements and spread the word of revolution among the masses. They played a vanguard role in the rebirth of the contemporary revolutionary movement after the CPUSA's degeneration into revisionism, and helped pave the way for the emergence of a new anti-revisionist communist movement in the U.S.

As some of these revolutionary nationalist forces took up the science of Marxism-Leninism, they brought their revolutionary tradition, experience and energies into the young Marxist-Leninist movement. They were a vital force in the building of a truly multinational communist movement in the U.S. and helped lay the foundations for the future formation of a multinational, vanguard communist party. At the same time they struggled to integrate Marxism with the realities of the Black Liberation Movement — to make Marxism a living weapon in the struggles of the Black masses for self-determination, full equality and an end to national oppression; and to unite their struggle with the struggle of the other oppressed nationalities in the U.S. and the multinational working class. □



Chapter One:

Origins of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples and the Committee for a Unified Newark — 1966-70

The leading organization that shaped the formation of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples (CAP) and its overall orientation was the Committee for a Unified Newark (CFUN).

CFUN was a mass community organization which formed in Newark, New Jersey, in 1967. Through its mass ties and involvement in community struggles, its electoral work such as the campaign to elect the first Black mayor of Newark, and its extensive cultural nationalist programs and activities, CFUN became one of the leading forces in the Black nationalist movement in the U.S. in the late 1960's, representative of militant cultural nationalism in particular.

CFUN was formed by revolutionary and progressive forces from the Black Arts movement, cultural nationalists and some elements who saw the electoral process as the main way for Blacks

Because of the intensity of Black national oppression, the 1967 Newark rebellion was one of the fiercest of the Black urban uprisings of the late 1960's.

to achieve political power. It upheld the *Kawaida* doctrine developed by Ron Karenga. *Kawaida* emphasized the development and practice of Black culture based on African tradition as necessary for the liberation of Black people from white domination, and for providing the political direction for gaining Black power. *Kawaida* had a core of revolutionary nationalism, for at its essence was the call for self-determination. This basic revolutionary stand would be deepened and become more consistent over the years as the organization grew and developed.

I. The Black Arts movement and Spirit House

Much of CFUN had its roots in the resurgent Black Arts movement of the 1960's. Black writers, playwrights, poets and artists were inspired by Malcolm X and the struggles of the Black masses. A new wave of cultural workers emerged to express the sentiments of the Black masses.

The Black Arts movement embraced the whole spectrum of views on self-determination and was militantly Black nationalist. It included various views of cultural nationalism, including the influences of the Nation of Islam, especially as reflected in Malcolm's earlier speeches; the influence of *Sunni* (orthodox) Islam, since Malcolm had embraced orthodox Islam in his last year; and the *Yoruba** influence which emanated out of New York from various groups put together by musician and poet Baba Oserjeman.

In 1966, Amiri Baraka / LeRoi Jones (one of the leading figures in the Black Arts movement), a group of people who had been active with him in Harlem at the Black Arts Repertory Theater, and local people from Newark formed the Spirit House in Newark. The Spirit House worked together putting on "Black theater" at a frame building on Stirling Street. The plays they produced all put forward the theme of Black nationalism and had a widespread impact and audience in the community. The Spirit House artists also traveled throughout the country and sponsored cultural events and festivals with speakers like Stokley Carmichael, Baba Oserjeman, Harold Cruse and others.

* A West African nationality.



Amiri Baraka standing in front of the Black Repertory Theater in Harlem, 1965. (UNITY photo)

The Spirit House artists quickly became involved in organizing in the Black community as well. Black national oppression in Newark was incredibly intense. The largest city in New Jersey, Newark had a population of 380,000 — 61% of which was Black and 11% Puerto Rican. Though Blacks comprised the majority of the population, they lived in a subjugated status as a people. The overall unemployment rate in Newark was 14%, but for Blacks it was 30%. With one of the largest concentrations of Blacks in any of the northern cities in the U.S., it was no accident that compared to the whole country, Newark had the highest percentage of sub-standard housing, the highest rate of infant and maternal mortality and tuberculosis, and the lowest per capita income of cities of comparable size. The mayor of Newark, Hugh Addonizio, was a notorious racist and corrupt politician, and a symbol of the system of Black oppression.

The Spirit House artists became involved in the struggles of “Black Newark.” They attended meetings on community control of anti-poverty programs. They got involved in organizing against the city’s plans to rip off 155 acres of land in the central city to build a medical school. This plan caused the forced dispersal of 23,000 people in the Black Central and West wards, and was also aimed at breaking up Black political concentration.

The Spirit House artists also went to meetings denouncing Addonizio for failing to appoint a Black as secretary of the Board of Education in favor of a crony of Addonizio’s with less qualifications. They propagandized throughout the city about police brutality and the emergence of racist organizers like Anthony Imperiale. They produced a newspaper for the youth.

The Spirit House artists also got active in the struggle for quality education and community control of education when they tried to do plays for the youth and found the youths couldn’t read the scripts.

Through all its activities, the Spirit House became one of the centers of struggle in “Black Newark.” At one point, police came into a Spirit House rehearsal and seized the scripts. At another point, just before the 1967 rebellion, the police blocked a poetry reading at an artist’s loft and threatened to arrest those who wanted to read or attend.

During 1967, the Spirit House artists traveled to the West Coast, contributing to the spread of the Black Arts movement

nationally. While there, they established contact with other forces in the Black Liberation Movement, in particular the Black Panther Party in San Francisco and Oakland, and Ron Karenga's US organization in Los Angeles. This was to have a major impact on their political development.

In San Francisco, Amiri Baraka, then a visiting professor at San Francisco State College, and others helped set up the first Black studies program. Under the heading of the Black Communications Project, plays were performed up and down the West Coast with the Black Arts Alliance.¹ Rehearsals were held at the Black House, which was also the residence of Eldridge Cleaver and Marvin X. The group worked with the Black Panthers, doing benefits for the Panthers in San Francisco, with the Panthers helping with security at public events at the Black House. A number of Panther members were among the many actors and cultural workers participating in these performances.

The rise of the Panthers during this time as a leading force in the Black Liberation Movement had a big impact on the Spirit House artists. During the spring of 1967 the Panthers went into the California State Legislature carrying guns, drawing national attention to their call for Black people to organize themselves for self-defense. The Panthers' bold revolutionary stand influenced the Spirit House artists to organize themselves more politically when they later returned to Newark.

The potential for a close working relationship with the Panthers was set back when one of the Panther leaders, Eldridge Cleaver, single-handedly pushed a split in the Black House and got the Panthers to kick out the Spirit House artists. Cleaver held an incorrect line that the cultural workers and the Black Panther Party could not work together because of the artists' Black nationalism and cultural nationalism.

The Panthers and the cultural workers did come from different sectors of the Black Liberation Movement and there were differences between them. But to push the differences to the level of antagonism was destructive since the forces who held cultural nationalist ideas, like the Spirit House artists, were revolutionaries who stood on the side of the masses.

The Panthers' criticism of the narrow nationalism of the cultural workers was correct. The artists did not recognize the importance of the unity of all oppressed peoples and many held anti-

white views. Narrow nationalism was particularly prevalent in the Black Liberation Movement because of the history of chauvinism towards Blacks by so-called "left" forces, such as the revisionists and Trotskyites. The CPUSA called the nationalism of Malcolm X the same as the nationalism of the Ku Klux Klan, and called Malcolm X a police agent. They also held a bourgeois integrationist line. All this served to increase anti-white feelings among Black nationalist forces who didn't see clearly that the CPUSA and Trotskyites were really just opportunists masquerading as "communists."

At the same time, the Panthers themselves did not have a correct understanding of many other questions. They did not recognize clearly the role of cultural workers as a vital and positive force in the revolutionary movement and the Black Liberation Movement in particular. Thus, Cleaver, who later degenerated and played a destructive role within the Panthers, was able to label these Black Arts forces as reactionary and initiate a destructive split. He completely negated the revolutionary content of their cultural work in promoting the concepts of Black power, self-determination and the awakening of a Black national consciousness. Unfortunately, this split between the Panthers and the Black Arts forces never really healed.

While the Black artists were being ejected from the Black House by Cleaver and the Panthers, Amiri Baraka was in Los Angeles making contact with Ron Karenga's US organization. Karenga had developed an entire cultural nationalist doctrine called *Kwaidia* ("tradition" in Swahili).² Karenga carried cultural nationalism to the extreme of negating in practice the need for the Black masses to take up collective mass struggle, and focusing almost entirely on Black "consciousness raising."

There was a basis for the Black artists from the Spirit House to identify with Karenga's cultural nationalism. The artists were impressed with Karenga's talk about the importance of culture for the revolution and the need for revolutionary Afro-American art. The Black artists were also impressed by the highly organized character of Karenga's doctrine, which was systematized for easy memorization and recitation, and by his close-knit group of loyal followers. The artists began to see the disorganized and undisciplined character of the Spirit House as backward. They wanted to more tightly organize the Spirit House when they

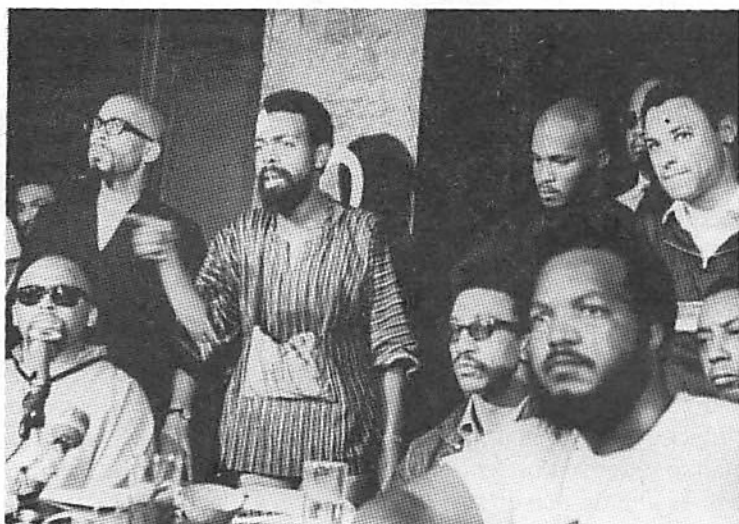
returned to Newark, and utilize the *Kwaido* doctrine as a guide in their work. They never actually carried it to the extremes Karenga did, however, in liquidating political mass struggle. In fact, when the Spirit House artists returned to Newark in the spring of 1967, they saw the need to organize the Spirit House along with other forces in the Black community into a mass political organization which would promote cultural nationalism and be involved in mass community struggles.

Almost as soon as the Spirit House artists returned the Black rebellion which had been building up not only in Newark but across the country erupted.

The rebellion in Newark was one of the fiercest of the Black urban uprisings in the U.S. during the late 1960's. The rebellion had been brewing due to the heightening contradictions between "Black Newark" and the city government, particularly with the plan to disperse the Central and West wards to build the medical school, and the mayor's refusal to appoint a Black to the Board of Education. The rebellion itself was sparked by the arrest and beating of a Black cab driver in the summer of 1967. Thousands of Blacks rebelled in the streets. The state police and National Guard were sent in and held the community in a state of siege. Armored tanks patrolled the community, and guardsmen gunned down people in the streets. By the end of two weeks the state had killed 23 Blacks and injured thousands more.

Amiri Baraka and others were beaten and arrested in the rebellion while they were picking up wounded people off the street and taking them to the hospital. The savage beating of Baraka and the others, and the publicity that followed, added still another shock to the general outrage the Black community felt in the wake of the police murders during the rebellion. This focused much attention on the Spirit House and the political work developing from there.

Soon after the rebellion, the 1967 Black Power Conference took place in Newark.³ Some of the more politicized forces in the Spirit House brought forth Malcolm's idea that a petition should be presented to the UN accusing the U.S. government of violating the human rights of the Afro-American people. Some of the signers of the petition were Huey P. Newton, H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael, Amiri Baraka, and Imari Obadele of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA). A press conference presented the



During the Newark rebellion the state murdered 23 Blacks and injured thousands more. One Black youth was shot 35 times. Acting on Malcolm's idea of presenting a petition to the United Nations accusing the U.S. of violating Black human rights, participants of the Black Power Conference called a press conference at Spirit House. Attending were: (Seated from left to right) Ron Karenga of the US organization; H. Rap Brown of SNCC; unidentified man; and Floyd McKissick, chairman of CORE. (Standing from left to right) unidentified man; Amiri Baraka of CFUN; unidentified man; and Phil Hutchings of SNCC. (UNITY photo)

petition, and attending that press conference were H. Rap Brown, Ron Karenga, Amiri Baraka, Floyd McKissick and Brother Gaidi of the RNA.

The Newark rebellions and Black Power Conference in 1967 signaled a progression in the Spirit House artists' development to the point where they were now emphasizing the political struggle for Black Power and a tighter organization. The Spirit House forces had attempted to put into concrete political use the message of Malcolm X and put forth a revolutionary interpretation of the Black Power message, including pointing out the need for revolutionary violence. The spread of the Black Arts movement nationally was another advance and contribution.

But while a revolutionary concept of Black Power was put forward, the Spirit House artists had no scientific or complete method or theory as a basis for struggle in the movement. The

Spirit House artists were proceeding from their own limited experiences and perceptions, and this is one reason why Karenga's cultural nationalist doctrine seemed so "profound," as it seemed "systematized."

In general, the Spirit House did not have a unified ideology but combined within it different perceptions and tendencies from the Black Liberation Movement. Taking Malcolm X as the lead, they were influenced by the Nation of Islam, *Yoruba* cultural nationalism, aspects of Mao Zedong's teachings, Garvey and Pan Africanism, and a host of other theories. They were in the process of just beginning to deepen their understanding of how the struggle for Black political power and self-determination should be waged.

II. Three Black community groups form Committee for a Unified Newark

As the Spirit house began to broaden its activity, and political work began to supercede the dramatic work, it identified itself more and more openly with the Black Power movement. This was a forward development for the Spirit House and as a result it began to attract people not only because of its plays and as a center for Black Arts, but also because of its open Black revolutionary nationalist political stand.

The involvement of the Spirit House more openly and actively in politics did not come without struggle. The Spirit House drew groups and individuals of a wide range of persuasions, and not all of them agreed on taking up a more political orientation.

For example, one of the groups that came to the Spirit House in late 1967 was the *Sunni* (orthodox) Muslims. They promoted the idea that since Malcolm X had become an orthodox Muslim, the Islamic faith was the true road to Black liberation. They set up classes in the Spirit House in Arabic and Islam, and for a brief time the Spirit House became a *Jamat*, or a place for the gathering and teaching of orthodox Islam. They did not have Malcolm's revolutionary and anti-imperialist consciousness. As the conflict sharpened, the idea of turning the Spirit House into a *Jamat* was rejected.

Around this same time a group of community activists, organizers and aspiring Black politicians seeking elected office in Newark also came together in the Spirit House for regular meetings to discuss Newark politics. These elements were all interested in achieving some form of "Black power" in Newark, but the tendency which emerged was to see "Black power" as something that could be achieved almost exclusively through the electoral process to "transform" the municipal government and local agencies. This group became formalized as the United Brothers.

Another group that came together during this time with the Spirit House and later established a relationship with the United Brothers was the Black Community Defense and Development (BCD). The BCD was from its outset a much looser, smaller and weaker version of Karenga's US organization. It was put together by Balozzi Zayd Muhammad, a small dealer in African arts and crafts; and a martial arts *sensi*, Mfundish Maasi. The BCD attempted to combine the surface images of Karenga's US organization with a small merchant outlook and martial arts "philosophy." A characteristic of one sector of cultural nationalism was the view of karate and the martial arts as a key element in the Black revolution. The BCD promoted a metaphysical image of the "Black revolutionary" as one who simply wore African clothes and could "fight" by being a karate expert.

The BCD had a sister organization, Sisters for Black Culture. There was also the United Sisters, a group that never formalized, but represented the wives of some of the United Brothers.

All of these groups came together around the Spirit House, drawn by its focus on Black self-determination and the influence of Karenga's *Kwaidia* doctrine. At first, the three groups represented three distinct but interrelated trends. There was Spirit House itself, which represented the Black Arts movement and which had moved to take up political work. There was the United Brothers which saw Black power in terms of gaining elected office in local government and "transforming" the political structure from within. And there was the Black Community Defense and Development which modeled itself after Karenga's US organization.

While the three groups functioned together, they remained to a certain extent separate. The United Brothers met to discuss



CFUNICAP headquarters, Newark, New Jersey. (UNITY photo)

Newark politics. The BCD held Sunday night "Soul Sessions" patterned after the US organization. These were a combination of a rally and church service where people spoke on various parts of the *Kwaido* doctrine, and the leadership spoke to inspire the people. The Spirit House elements held rehearsals and performances, did street theater and traveled to colleges and other places in the area. They continued to do benefits for other Black nationalist forces including the Black Panthers on the East Coast.

In 1968, the three groups worked together to sponsor the first Black political convention in Newark. Later they ran several candidates for city councilmen. None of the candidates put forward

by the United Brothers / Committee for a Unified Newark won that year, but more Black people in Newark voted than ever before in an election.

These were the beginnings of electoral work to attempt to win Black representation as a means to gain political power. The United Brothers organization actually contained within it at one period most of the Black politicians who later became councilmen and the mayor of Newark.

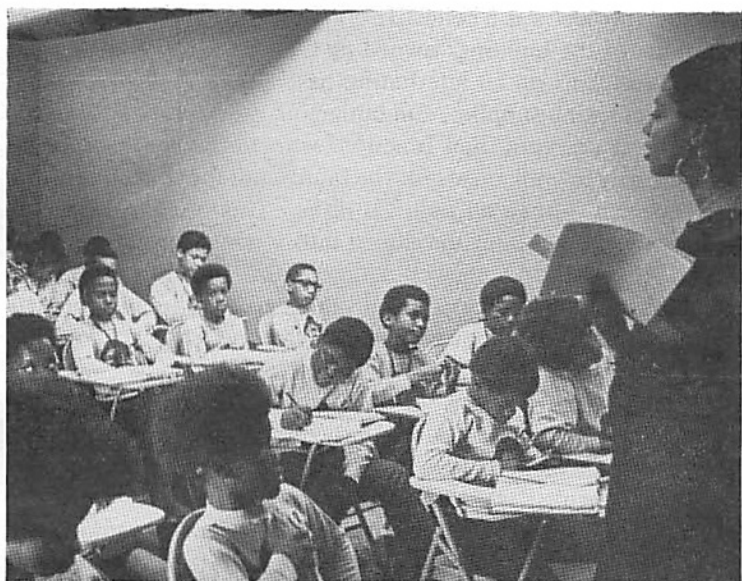
Karenga was in the city during the election and suggested the name Committee for a Unified Newark (CFUN) when the three groups joined together into one body. The BCD was seen as providing the cultural nationalist framework and security; the United Brothers, the thrust in electoral politics; and the Spirit House, the Black Arts and "spiritual leadership."

III. CFUN programs and community struggles

CFUN formally adopted *Kawaida* cultural nationalism as its ideology. Classes on *Kawaida* were taught in CFUN. The organization practiced *Kawaida* in all aspects of its work — creating a Black "way of life" and new relationships on the *Kawaida* principles. It stressed self-respect, respect for others, discipline, and unity. All members adopted African traditional names.

CFUN established many self-reliance and collective community programs as part of what it termed "social organization," that served the collective needs of the membership as well as the community. These programs were built as "alternative" institutions. The established public and private institutions in health, education and welfare failed to meet the needs of the community, and perpetuated racism towards Black people. The "alternative" institutions were supposed to be part of building a Black "cultural nation."

One of the most well-known and successful programs was the Afrikan Free School. Started in 1968 and taking its name from the first "free public school" in the United States, it offered a full academic program for elementary school students. Its curriculum emphasized African and Afro-American history, political education about international and domestic affairs and current events,



The Afrikan Free School was one of the most important of the Black alternative institutions to come out of the 1960's. Largely developed by the Congress of Afrikan Peoples' women cadre and directed by Amina Baraka, head of the women's unit, its example was widely spread throughout the Black Liberation Movement. (UNITY photo)

and a solid exposure to the Black Arts. The Afrikan Free School developed from an after-school community school program to a formal educational institution that was widely replicated by activists and educators in the Black Liberation Movement. One class of the school was even incorporated into a Newark public school as an "experimental program" and served as a model for progressive school teachers and administrators.

The program served as an organizer of the children's parents as well. A parent's group was set up to put on Afrikan Free School programs and helped put on events like the annual Youth Day which the Afrikan Free School sisters developed. Built in the main by the women in CFUN and later CAP-Newark, the Afrikan Free School was instituted later in other cities where CAP had cadre. The schools became a serious Black educational alternative.

A number of self-reliance projects were also developed which served the members of CFUN as well as the broader community.

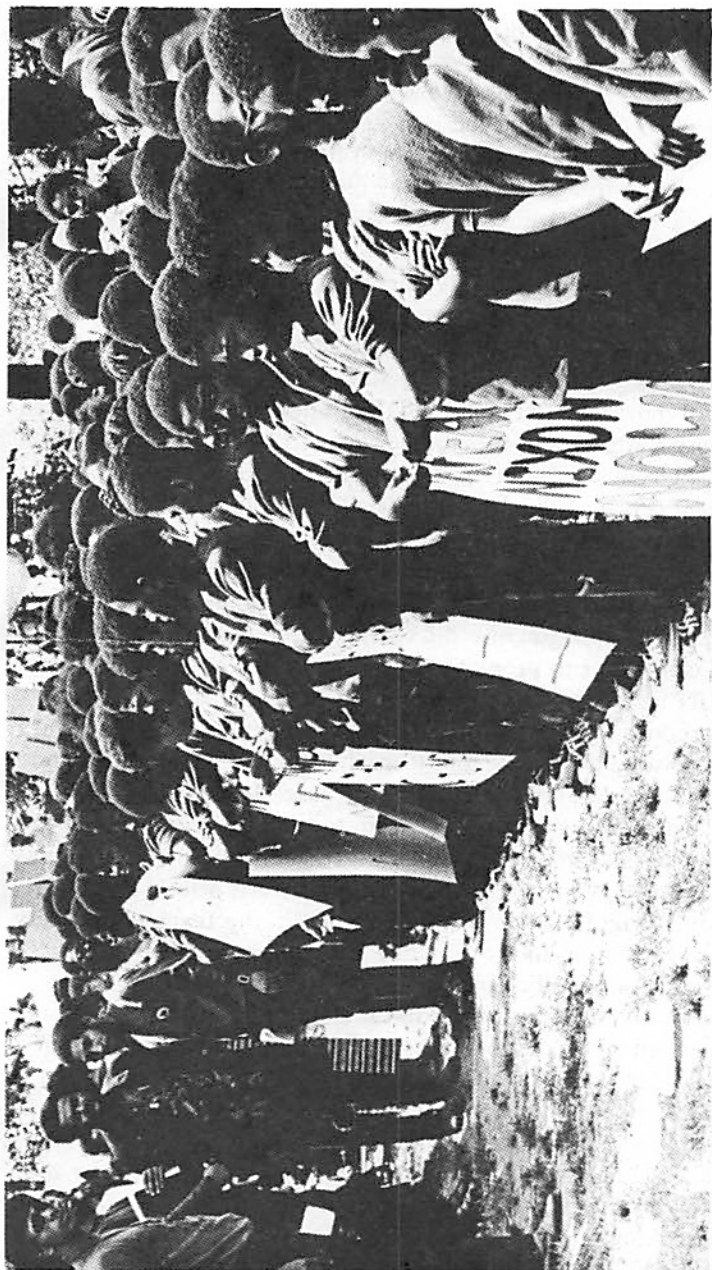
One such project was a collective cooking and eating program set up in one of the buildings owned by CFUN. Groups of women worked in teams on an alternating basis preparing and cooking meals, restocking supplies, and budgeting the operating finances. The project served a dual function: women did not have to go home nightly to cook meals for the family and the collective effort freed women to take on political tasks. This collective cooking and eating project later developed into a community restaurant geared to serve the people well-balanced meals at a low price. The restaurant was also an organizing vehicle to increase the contacts with the community by providing a service and a way to carry out political discussions with those who got involved.

Similarly, there was a 24-hour child care and nursery that allowed CFUN members, particularly the women, to participate in more political work.

Another project was a sewing cooperative which channeled the creativity of women skilled at sewing, design, pattern-making and budgeting. Originally, this served the organization by producing the uniform dress and clothes that were worn as an expression of African culture. It later developed into making children's clothes and served as a fund raising project for the Afrikan Free School. As traditional African dress became more popular in the Black community, the sewing cooperative produced the clothes at a low cost as a service to the community. The sewing cooperative also was a mechanism for organizing the community, as political education was combined with the promotion of African culture.

All these various programs were built on the theme of "self-reliance" and promoted the idea of Black people determining their own future as a people instead of being chained to the established institutions. They were similar to mass serve-the-people programs developed by other revolutionary Third World organizations in the late 1960's when the concept of self-determination was widely popularized by revolutionary nationalists and interpreted generally to mean the right of an oppressed people to determine its own life economically, politically and socially.

The way in which the programs were conceived and run had both correct and incorrect aspects. They were overwhelmingly positive in serving the community and also as vehicles for political education and organizing, but a weakness was that there was also a tendency to see that these institutions could actually *replace* the



Congress of Afrikan Peoples' youth organization, the Supersimbas, carrying signs against Nixon as they ready for 1972 African Liberation Day demonstration in Washington, D.C. (UNITY photo)

established institutions. This tendency never became full-blown and CFUN was always active in working and waging struggle within the public schools, hospitals, etc.

The programs were run largely by the women of CFUN who were organized into a women's unit headed by Amina Baraka, a major innovator of the Afrikan Free School and other projects. Women also ran much of the day-to-day functioning of the organization's office and did the bulk of the work in organizing the many programs, conferences and activities sponsored by CFUN (and later CAP).

CFUN also fought against police brutality and the racism of the white vigilante group led by Anthony Imperiale. It led a successful campaign that mobilized thousands of people and defeated the city's attempts to bring police dogs to Newark.

CFUN was active in the struggle in the schools, helping to build student organizations and organized the "Supersimbas," a revolutionary youth group. It fought to change conditions in the City Hospital, fought for affirmative action on construction sites, organized housing councils and helped lead rent strikes.

The organization also did extensive cultural work and organized campaigns to promote Black history and culture in the city. CFUN led the struggle to put Black liberation flags in Newark classrooms. Through this struggle the names of many Newark schools were changed: from Robert Treat to Marcus Garvey and from South Side to Malcolm X Shabazz High School. Schools were named after Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks. The student center at Rutgers' Newark campus was named after Paul Robeson. CFUN also led a long but unsuccessful struggle to name a major street in the Black community after Malcolm X and to rename Essex County College to W.E.B. DuBois Community College.

CFUN did cultural work in the streets and in vacant lots, and brought many cultural workers, artists and musicians into the city. It held conferences on housing, employment, culture and Black political power. It also did strike support work for hospital workers, ambulance drivers and Blue Cross workers.

CFUN held adult education programs. It set up a city-wide communications program and taught video tape techniques and film making. It opened its own printing shop and a bookstore. In 1968, CFUN began publishing a monthly newspaper, *Black*

BLACK NEWARK

The Voice of Newark's Inner City

Vol. 1 No. 2



Newark, New Jersey, July, 1968

20c

Newark's First Black Convention



At the recent three-day Black Convention, Black People made the first step toward gaining Black control of Newark. All we have to do to insure definite control by 1970 is to keep up the momentum generated by the 1,000 brothers and sisters who attended the historical event June 21-23.

Black People took care of some straight-up political business at the Convention, proving to ourselves that we could come together despite the enemy's adverse propaganda, and dispelling the myth that Black People cannot and do not want to govern themselves.

As we said, over 1,000 Black People got together at West Kinney Jr. High School to discuss how to run a Black City for Black People. Foremost on the convention agenda was the nine workshops dealing with different aspects of running a city government, and three

PLATFORM

The platform covered areas of city financing, housing and land, urban education, health and welfare, law enforcement, political fund raising, voter registration, and political organizing. We resolved that we wanted:

What We Want

+A commuter payroll tax.

-See CONVENTION, Page 12-

INSIDE BLACK NEWARK

- Max Stanford page 3
- LeRoi Jones page 4
- Phil Hutchings page 5
- Folklore page 6 & 7
- Sword & Shield page 8
- Junius Williams page 9
- Report from Harlem page 10
- Queen Esther page 11

Black Newark, 1972, the original newspaper of the Committee for a Unified Newark/Congress of Afrikan Peoples.

Newark. Black Newark had regular coverage of the political and community struggles of the Black community with constant protests and demands aimed at the racist city government. It had news and features on the African liberation struggle. It had features and columns on *Kawaida*, nationalism and the Black struggle, and

cultural features like poetry that promoted Black pride.

Black Newark was an active voice of the Black community and was widely read and supported by the people. Many Black businesses supported the paper through advertising. The circulation reached as high as 14,000.

CFUN also established a publishing house, called Jihad Productions. It published many pamphlets and booklets on Black cultural nationalism. It printed poetry by various nationalists and essays by African revolutionaries. Jihad also distributed records, video tapes and films produced by CFUN members. And from its beginning, CFUN did much propaganda and agitation around support for African liberation struggles.

Under *Kawaida*, CFUN developed as a strong organization that made many contributions and played a leading role in the Newark Black struggle. CFUN made it clear that Black people were determined to define and live their own lives and control their own institutions.

At the same time there were also weaknesses and incorrect aspects of CFUN's views and practices. One major weakness was the feudalistic and male chauvinist attitudes practiced towards women. Under the *Kawaida* doctrine, women were seen as politically correct only if they were "submissive." Separate political education classes were held for men and women, and the men and women were organized in separate units. This stifled the political development of many women and limited the contributions they could make to the struggle. But even though there were these practices, there was always a core of fighting women in the organization who sought to take the role of women to more and more progressive levels.

Another weakness in CFUN's functioning under *Kawaida* was the tendency of overly-centralized leadership. There was little democracy in the organization, with political leadership given in a "top-down" fashion. This had the effect of limiting the political development and input of the membership.

But there were always some differences and conflicting tendencies between CFUN's interpretation and practice of *Kawaida*, and Karenga's *Kawaida*. For example, Karenga often criticized the Newark leadership for saying things that would "scare the blood," like emphasizing the need for violent revolution. Karenga feared the role of the masses in political struggle.

CFUN also departed from the most backward male chauvinist practices of the US organization. For example, CFUN had always rejected polygamy. CFUN attempted to widen the scope of women's participation beyond what was defined by orthodox *Kawaida* (i.e., the women's role was to inspire the men and educate the children). CFUN added to *Kawaida* what was called a "necessary role" in social organization for women — the building of alternative institutions.

Another important difference between CFUN and Karenga was that Karenga never actually developed any significant mass work, while CFUN was extensively involved in the struggles of the community.

IV. Black Panther – US organization split — 1968

In 1968, a major split took place between the Black Panther Party and Karenga's US organization. This split was to have a far-reaching impact on the whole movement.

By 1968, the Panthers and the US organization represented two distinct tendencies in the Black Liberation Movement. The Panthers called for building a revolutionary mass movement for the overthrow of imperialism and recognized the need to build alliances with other Third World peoples and anti-imperialist whites. The US organization was cultural nationalist and saw Black liberation as Black consciousness-raising. It emphasized less the need for political revolution, and opposed alliances with whites.

But while the differences were real and based on the divergent character of the two groups, the fact that they were fanned up to the point of bloodshed has since been clearly linked to the work of the FBI.

The FBI has admitted sending agents into both groups and carrying out provocations between them. In December 1968, an FBI-inspired shootout resulted in the deaths of Bunchy Carter and John Huggins, two Black Panthers. This shootout further split the movement, in some cases into openly hostile camps. It allowed police agents to undermine, kill and corrupt members of each group as they grew intent on attacking each other. On the West Coast especially, several more were killed and imprisoned. The

FBI bombed both organization's offices, shot at their members, and then blamed it on the other organization.

After the deaths of Carter and Huggins, a much publicized "war" broke out especially in the Los Angeles-San Diego area between the Panthers and US. During 1969, many activists in Los Angeles lived under a veritable state of siege. During this time, the US organization in general developed what they called a "foxhole" mentality. They became, as an organization, more and more sealed off from the rest of the Black Liberation Movement, isolated and wary of outside contacts. This, coupled with the barrage of attacks in the press that Carter-Huggins' deaths were an "assassination" by Karenga, separated the US organization from the mainstream of the movement.

As the US organization became isolated from the movement, CFUN developed more independently, though it still maintained contact with US. CFUN still put forth Karenga's *Kawaida* doctrine, but it made further elaborations and developed a broader political interpretation of *Kawaida*. CFUN became more deeply involved in mass community struggles and in the Black political movement in Newark. After the 1968 Black Power Conference, Karenga's influence diminished and later CFUN's work in the 1969-70 Gibson-City Council election was carried out with no consistent input from Karenga. By this time, he was so isolated he didn't appreciate the dynamic character of the mass movement around Black participation in electoral politics. The US organization went on with mostly cultural nationalist programs, internal to its organization, most of which by then focused on strictly "military and security" aspects.

In 1969, as differences sharpened between the Committee for a Unified Newark and the US organization, conflicts also heightened internally in CFUN with the Black Community Defense and Development (BCD).

The Black Community Defense and Development group did not accept the move of CFUN to take up mass political work. The BCD glorified some of the superficial African "traditionalist" practices of *Kawaida*, such as the African "look," karate martial arts, and various Swahili phrases and ritualistic practices. For the BCD leadership, the "Soul Session" and karate practice were the "real nationalism," and they had little regard for politics.

Finally a split took place with the BCD leadership over whether

classes in the *Kawaida* doctrine or karate training held precedence. Soon afterwards, the BCD withdrew from the Committee for a Unified Newark and CFUN was able to become for the first time a unified organization with one general leadership, though still composed of elements from all three organizations. After the withdrawal of the BCD, the leadership of the Spirit House and the United Brothers constituted the sole leadership of CFUN. From this point on, they began to revise the *Kawaida* doctrine, reshaping it to include the ideas of cultural nationalism combined with CFUN's stress on politics and view of the electoral struggle.

V. The 1969-70 Gibson election

A major area of CFUN's work was its involvement in Black electoral politics, and in particular, the 1970 election of Kenneth Gibson as mayor of Newark. This work afforded CFUN valuable experience and lessons.⁴

The 1968 National Black Political Convention had been effective in mobilizing "Black Newark" towards the thrust needed for the 1970 elections. In 1969 another much larger and more effective Black and Puerto Rican Convention was put together by a broad coalition of forces led by the Committee for a Unified Newark. This Convention mobilized a city-wide united front, the core of which was the United Brothers and its "steering committee," which included all the soon to be successful Black councilmen and mayoral candidates. The Convention also mobilized much of the Black and Puerto Rican communities for the 1970 elections.

In the late 1960's the cry of "Black Power" had become a rallying point in the Black Liberation Movement and was actually an expression of the masses' demand for *political* power. In the oppressed Afro-American nation in the South, the demand of Blacks for self-determination is essentially a demand for political power, the only guarantee that the right of self-determination could be actually exercised by the Black masses. In the North, "Black Power" was the articulation of the masses' demand for equal rights, including some form of local or regional governmental autonomy in areas of Black concentration.

CFUN's call to rally and unite "Black Newark" to fight for Black political power had a basic revolutionary content in chal-

lenging the system of national oppression and the denial of equal rights. As in other northern cities with large Black communities, one aspect of the struggle became the fight for "community control."

One aspect of this struggle was the fight for Black political representation in government. This was the thrust of the 1969-70 municipal election campaign in Newark. It was aimed at overturning the political machine run by the racist and corrupt Mayor Addonizio, and electing a Black mayor and a slate of Black councilmen.

The 1969-70 election campaign was a massive campaign, which brought Black and white entertainers and Black political activists from all over the country. CFUN succeeded in electing Gibson and three Black city councilmen, firsts in a major northeastern city. The victory represented a reform in bringing about more Black representation in government. In addition, other democratic reforms were gained. The Newark Board of Education for the first time had a Black and Puerto Rican majority. Soon the police department would have a Black police director, and Blacks were able to dominate the "community boards" for various anti-poverty programs.

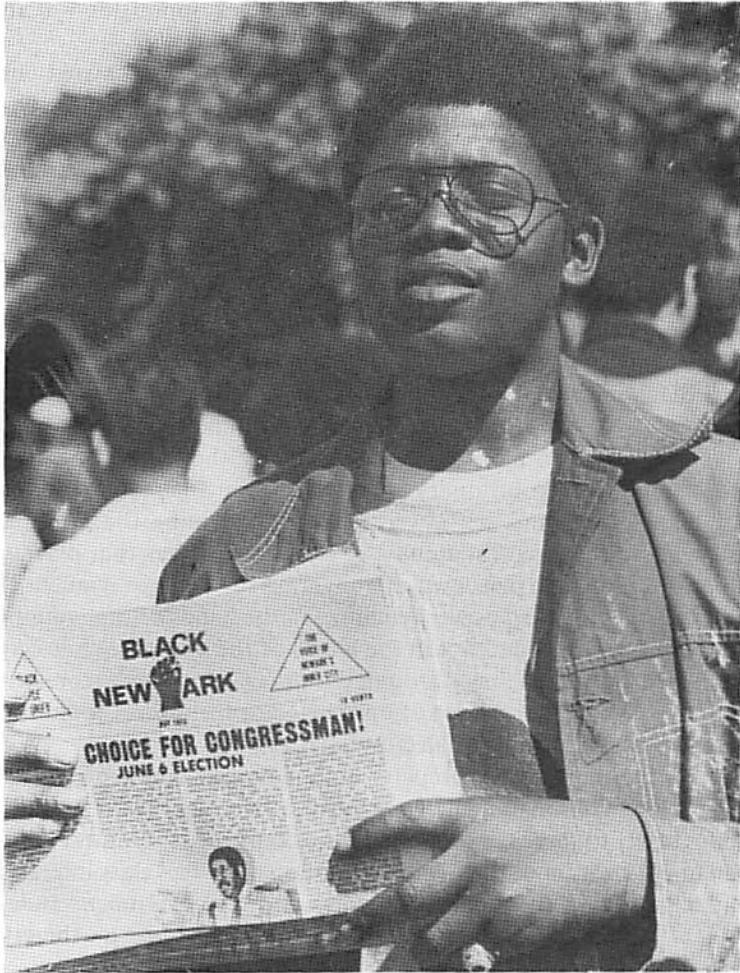
The day Gibson was elected, the organization put posters up and down the streets of Newark listing the "five criteria" the *Kawaida* doctrine had formulated for Black elected officials. These were:

1. Accountability: He/she must be responsible to the needs and aspirations of Black people at all times.

2. Expose the system as corrupt and unworkable: He/she must expose the contradictions, corruption and flaws in the political system of the country, i.e., reactionary leaders, unworkable laws.

3. Raise controversial issues: He/she must always point out the issues in society which affect Black people, must always take a hard line on issues and never become passive.

4. Alliances and coalitions: He/she must make alliances with people of color and coalitions with others when deemed necessary for the benefit of the Black community.



In 1972 the Congress of Afrikan Peoples led a redistricting fight to make Newark and vicinity a Black congressional district. It was part of the fight for equal political representation, although CAP at times relied too heavily on electoral organizing. (UNITY photo)

5. Support Black nationalism: He/she must always support Black nationalism with a passion to liberate Black people from our present conditions of oppression.

These criteria alerted the masses to the fact that they would have to continue to struggle for Black liberation and their basic

democratic rights, and that the system of Black oppression was an inherent part of the system.

However, there were problems in the way CFUN carried out the electoral campaign and in its view of the Black electoral struggle. CFUN was not clear about exactly what was necessary to achieve the goal of Black political power in Newark or in the country as a whole. For example, in an ad in *Black Newark* signed by the United Brothers of Newark, the slogan was put forth "Self-government is Possible in 1970." The ad portrayed this as being possible through the election of a Black mayor, police chief, councilmen, principals of schools, fire chief, etc. The demand for some form of self-government is a democratic and legitimate demand of the Black masses, but it cannot be achieved through the electoral process — by simply electing Blacks into public office.

In the aftermath of the 1960's rebellions, the ruling class tried to coopt the revolutionary demand of the Black masses for political power and self-government by confining the political struggle to the electoral arena and creating illusions that placing Black faces in high places was synonymous to "self-government." In fact, real political power remained in the hands of the monopoly capitalist class and not in the hands of the masses. While certain reforms were gained through the struggle for Black representation, the basic conditions of oppression of the masses could not be alleviated through the electoral process.

Furthermore, as Black petty bourgeois and bourgeois politicians like Gibson did attain elected office, they were usually bought off to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie. Representing an upper stratum of the Black population, they had class interests in maintaining the political system; and as government functionaries, served a role as part of the oppressive state machinery itself.

The most important lesson that would be drawn by CFUN and other Black nationalist forces in the aftermath of the Gibson election was that electoral struggle could not be relied upon in the fight for self-government and Black political power. Though Black mayors, councilmen, state legislators, senators and congressmen were elected, Black people still did not have *real* political power, and the conditions of national oppression and exploitation of the masses continued unabated. Later as CFUN drew these lessons in the course of the mass political struggle itself, the early recognition

it had about the inherent contradictions in the political system as reflected in the "Five Criteria" for Black public officials would be deepened, and the weakness of relying on the electoral process in winning the demand for Black power and self-government would be recognized.

* * *

CFUN's activities in helping to build an independent Black political movement by 1970 had broadened its contacts with other nationalist forces on a nationwide scale. The Gibson election was a high point in CFUN's electoral political activity, and the organization itself got larger and more influential as it touched more people in Newark. Other nationalists around the country began to look to CFUN, following its movement. The organization's political outlook was also broadening and it was acquiring valuable organizing skills. By 1970 CFUN recognized the need to form an ongoing national organization to unite the various Black nationalist forces throughout the country. This represented a major advance for the organization.

The founding of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples in 1970 came as a result of this recognition of the need to form a nationwide organization. The actual decision to convene the Congress came as a result of members of the Continuations Committee of the Black Power Conference deciding to create a stable organizational mechanism as an alternative to simply holding annual Black power *conferences*.

The formation of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples in 1970 represented an attempt to organize at a higher level and brought the CFUN forces to a new stage in their development. □



Chapter Two

Congress of Afrikan Peoples — 1970-74

The formation of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples (CAP) in 1970 was an important advance for the Black nationalist movement in the U.S., particularly the cultural nationalist and Pan Africanist sectors of the movement.

CAP united activists and local nationalist organizations into one nationwide organization. CAP cadre chapters did extensive mass work and organizing, with CFUN, now as the CAP-Newark chapter, remaining as the organization's strongest base of mass activity and struggle. At the same time, CAP continually sought to unify various class forces in the Black movement around the common struggle for Black Power. It played a leading role in efforts to build a broad national Black united front. Through its mass work and united front work, CAP developed as a major and influential force in the Black Liberation Movement.

CAP represented a move to a higher political level from

The Congress of Afrikan Peoples played a leading role in organizing efforts for the first National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana. Attending the first convention were some 8,000 people representing many different areas of the Black Liberation Movement. (UNITY photo)

CFUN, to a militant Pan Africanism. It stood for the “liberation of Black people throughout the world, based on Self-determination, Self-respect, Self-reliance and Self-defense.”

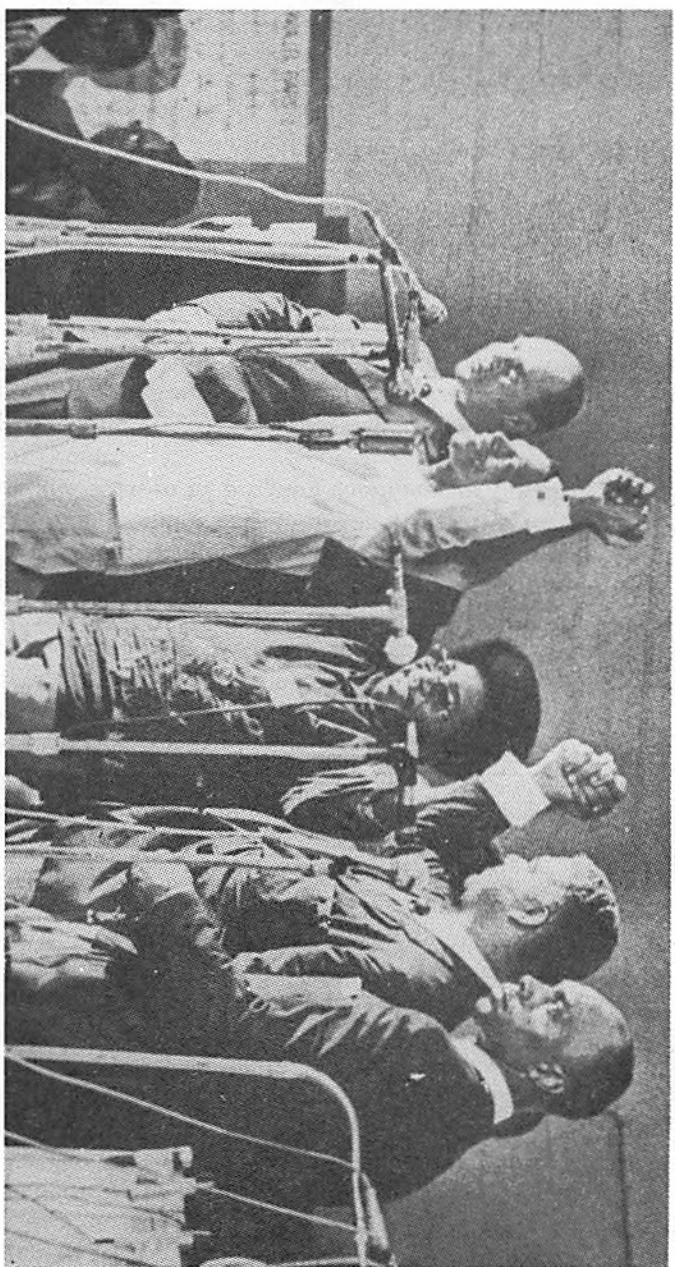
As CAP's work and experience developed and expanded between 1970 and 1974, it more and more consistently saw this struggle as a revolutionary struggle for political power and against imperialism. CAP began to revise the *Kawaida* doctrine to place it in a more political context and began to criticize some of its more narrow cultural nationalist aspects. CAP also began to understand more deeply the nature and role of classes in the Black Liberation Movement. This came about through a process of drawing lessons from its own experience and in studying various nationalist and African socialist theories, incorporating into its thinking new and more advanced ideas while discarding some of its erroneous ones.

This process ultimately led CAP to recognize in 1974 that Black liberation would only be won through a revolutionary struggle for self-determination and equal rights, led by the multinational working class and its party, as a component part of the struggle for socialist revolution in the U.S.; and that Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought was the only scientific theory for making revolution.

I. Atlanta founding meeting, September 1970

The Congress of Afrikan Peoples was called together initially at a convention of Black nationalists and Pan Africanists in Atlanta, Georgia, on September 6, 1970. This historic meeting was a continuation of the tradition of international gatherings of Pan Africanists, which began with the four meetings called by W.E.B. DuBois and the fifth one in 1945 in Manchester, England, in which the phrase “Pan Africanism” was first put into common circulation. More recently, it was a continuation of the Black power conferences in the U.S.

The 1970 meeting was attended by 3,500 people, including 2,700 delegates representing 220 organizations. It drew its participants mainly from a base of Black nationalist and Pan Africanist forces around the country, and its purpose was to unify them into a nationwide organization. In addition, the meeting was



Founding of the Congress of African Peoples, September 1970. In the center Hayward Henry, first national chairman of CAP, in a gesture of Black unity, holds aloft the hands of Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam on his right and Whitney Young of the Urban League on his left.

an attempt to forge a broad united front including not only Black nationalist and Pan Africanist forces, but also Black elected officials and leaders of the major civil rights organizations.

The broad united front character of the gathering was seen in the diversity of speakers. They included Hayward Henry, chairman of the National Black Caucus of the Unitarian-Universalist Church, who was elected chairman of CAP at this meeting; Ralph Abernathy, chairman of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); John Cashin, founder and chairman of the Black National Democratic Party of Alabama; Kenneth Gibson, mayor of Newark; Jesse Jackson, National Director of Operation Breadbasket of the SCLC; Whitney Young, Jr., National Director of the Urban League; Louis Farrakhan, national spokesman for the Nation of Islam; Howard Fuller (Owusu Sadaukai), Director of the Malcolm X Liberation University and also speaking for Stokley Carmichael; Richard Hatcher, mayor of Gary, Indiana; Ambassador El Hajj Abdoulaye Toure, representative to the U.S. from Guinea; Evelyn Kwanza, representative in the U.S. for the Zimbabwe Action group; Raymond Mbala, member of the Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile (GRAE); Roosevelt Douglas, member of the Organization of Black People Union in Canada; Julian Bond, Georgia state legislator; Imari Obadele, President of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA); and Amiri Baraka, founder and chairman of the Committee for a Unified Newark and soon to be program chairman for the Congress of Afrikan Peoples.

Many of these figures did not actually join CAP since the organization was established out of the congress, but participated in the congress in the tradition of the Black power conferences. Their attendance and support for the congress showed the strength of the nationalist movement in gaining support from diverse sectors of the Black movement generally.

The ideological and political thrust established for the Congress of Afrikan Peoples at the Atlanta convention was to work for the liberation of African people and people of African descent throughout the world. It raised a militant Pan Africanist call and put forth a direction for the Black Power movement, which was defined as having four ends: Self-determination, Self-sufficiency, Self-respect and Self-defense. A founding document of CAP stated:

Self-determination: To govern ourselves rather than be governed by others. That means politically, economically and socially, whatever we see as necessary, we do as a free people. We will therefore build and develop alternative political, social and economic institutions locally, nationally and internationally, viewing each of these levels of activity as part of an organic process each complementing the other.

Self-sufficiency: To provide all the basic necessities for sustenance and growth and survival of our people, i.e., food, shelter, clothing, etc., based on the principle of Ujamaa (cooperative economics).

Self-respect: To build and develop a worldwide revolutionary culture and appropriate values, images and forms that legitimize our thoughts and actions. Only when we have a revolutionary culture that affirms before the world our legitimacy can we respect ourselves.

Self-defense: Acceptance of common sense policy to struggle against those who struggle against us, and to make peace with those who make peace with us.

These Four Ends of Black Power we see not only as the priorities of Africans on the American continent or in the Western Hemisphere, but we recognize these four points as major priorities for Africans all over the world. By direct extension of this reasoning, we move to the position that all Black people are Africans and that as Africans we are bound together Racially, Historically, Culturally, Politically, and Emotionally.¹

During the four-day session, 11 workshops were held on the subjects of Black technology, economics, education, communications, creativity, community organization, history, law and justice, political liberation, social organization, and religion. These workshops were designed to produce proposals for new "alternative institutions" based on the African value system.

Amiri Baraka led the Political Liberation Workshop that passed the main political resolution and laid out how CAP saw the goals and strategy for the Pan Africanist movement. Baraka put forth the view that the continent of Africa, the "racial, historical, cultural, political and emotional home" of the Afro-American

people, must be unified as a continental state, and that a unified and independent Africa would serve as a "power base," speeding the total liberation of people of African origin all over the world. Eventually Black people in all corners of the globe should work for "International Black Unity," or the linking of all African nations. In the U.S., Baraka put forward the concept of building a "Black nation" and forming a Black political party as a preliminary organizing vehicle.

"The political party we want to set up, that is set up, should be a model for the *nation becoming*. The Black political party must be an example of how we want the nation to be *now*, not in the future. We should not live as if we believe what white boy says: that we would never be liberated. We must live on the one hand as if we were liberated people of a high value system; then more Black people will be magnetized to it and the larger our *nation becoming* will be."

The building of an independent Black political party, or World African Party, was viewed in the context of developing alternative institutions, alternatives to the ones which enslave Black people. A nation was seen as an institution, the party as a "replica, except for the extent of its realized power, of the *nation becoming*." It would be a vehicle to create a new Black value system and to actually organize the Black masses to take political power.

In laying forth CAP's political strategy, Baraka criticized the idea that revolution could be made "instantly" and emphasized the need to go among the masses and organize them at a grass roots level. He stressed the need to become skilled at organizing, saying, "You cannot achieve political power by talking bad to white people. You can only achieve political power by organizing well enough to take political power, and this is the point." He pointed out that there could be no revolution without the people "because it is the people themselves who are the only ones that have the power to make revolution." He also criticized as unrealistic those views that called for Blacks to repatriate to Africa or separate to some territory in the U.S. The majority of Blacks in the U.S. will not physically return to Africa, he stated, and though it was possible that the South would be a "strategic battleground" of Africans in America, it was first necessary to raise the political consciousness and organize the people before any such move was possible. Baraka instead called for raising Black political con-

sciousness, organizing first in the cities with major Black populations and in the intensely populated Black rural areas of the South.

In his address to the founding assembly, Baraka also linked the struggle for Black political power directly to the question of the land or territory.

Like Malcolm said, you want some land, look down at your feet. The African concept of who owns the land is who is standing on it. Who uses it owns the land . . . If somebody could sell you the concept of an absentee landlord, you're really a sucker — they could be on the moon and sell you the land! The land belongs to the people who are standing on it. And if there is enough of you standing on it, you ought to claim it.

The firm revolutionary nationalist orientation was a strength in the Ideological Statement and Baraka's addresses to the convention and Political Liberation Workshop. Baraka expressed clearly the aim of the newly forming organization to mobilize and organize the Black masses to win political power through revolutionary struggle. The goal of self-determination articulated the demand of the Black masses to govern themselves. The concept of Pan Africanism was an expression of the unity of the Afro-American people's struggle with the liberation movements on the African continent. And the idea of building a Black political party was an attempt to organize at a higher level, unifying the various Black nationalist and Pan Africanist organizations to establish a unified presence.

The idea that Blacks should build a "World African State" was one dominant trend of thinking in the Pan Africanist movement. It had a revolutionary content in opposing the imperialist and colonial enslavement of Africans and people of African descent and calling for independence. But it was idealist in calling for the formation of a single state overreaching geographic and historically constituted boundaries. The idea of "nation-building" was also prevalent in the national movement. It arose from the fact that Black people were forged as a distinct nation in the Black-belt South and an oppressed nationality elsewhere in the U.S., and that their national rights and demands are denied under the capitalist system.

The idea that Blacks have a distinct national identity and must build a movement for national liberation was revolutionary. The weakness in CAP's thinking was not linking the existence of a nation to a specific territory. There were elements of the tendency of cultural-national autonomy, or seeing the building of an "autonomous" nation on a national-cultural basis with separate Black institutions; rather than calling for self-determination in the territory of the Black-belt South, and local or regional autonomy in areas of Black concentration in the North.

The strategy for forming the Black political party also combined different political tendencies. Baraka emphasized correctly that revolution was basically a question of the people organizing themselves to seize political power, and much attention must be given to the tactics of mass political organizing and struggle. At the same time, the necessity to actually rely on the masses in the struggle for political power was not fully grasped. There continued, as there had been in the Gibson campaign, a tendency to rely on the electoral process as the means for achieving Black political power. This was evident in a paper on the strategy for forming the Black political party that was issued soon after the Atlanta congress. It stated that the party would be the mechanism for the "total transfer of power from Europeans and the European controlled to Africans," and that "elections are the simplest way of transferring power to Africans in America."²

The idea that the "white man is the enemy" and had to be overthrown was another prevalent concept in the Black nationalist movement that was put forth at the CAP founding congress. It arose from the struggle against white racism and chauvinism, but didn't distinguish between the masses of exploited white working people who are an ally of the Black Liberation Movement and the white ruling class. This anti-white orientation was the basis for Baraka opposing Marx and Lenin because they were white and "European revolutionaries" as opposed to third world revolutionaries.

These initial strengths and weaknesses in the political thinking and outlook of CAP reflected the historical origins and development of the forces it represented. CAP attempted to bring together, synthesize and formulate a new Black nationalist ideology that would combine the spectrum of views in the Black Liberation Movement on how self-determination could be

achieved. CAP's origins and thrust were nationalist, combining within the organization various nationalist trends of thinking.

The significance of the Atlanta congress was that it succeeded in its goal of forming a nationwide Pan Africanist organization. The Congress of Afrikan Peoples was not seen as the formation of a Black political party, but as a preliminary step and the beginnings toward building that party.

Another step in this direction was the decision to hold the first National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, which would try to move towards the formation of the national Black party.

The congress was also a major achievement in bringing together a broad united front of forces within the Black Liberation Movement. Thousands of progressive and anti-imperialist Blacks were brought together to discuss the way to achieve self-determination and political power for Blacks in the U.S.

The significance of the congress was heightened by the fact that on that same weekend the Black Panther Party was also holding a major national gathering, the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in Washington, D.C. This meeting drew some 6,000 people, including Third World revolutionary, white revolutionary and anti-imperialist groups and individuals from across the United States.

Both the CAP congress and the Panther convention showed that the revolutionary nationalist forces in the Black Liberation Movement were attempting to organize at a higher level. The events of that weekend also showed that while the Black Liberation Movement had been split, the groupings represented at both meetings had a common revolutionary thrust, putting forth the call for Black liberation and self-determination. While the Panthers put forth a clear anti-imperialist position and saw the need to unite the revolutionary forces of all nationalities, and CAP's position was Pan Africanist and cultural nationalist, there was a common basis to build unity between the two trends.

Baraka put forth a call at the CAP congress to establish a Black National Liberation Front, and set up a body to consolidate the Congress of Afrikan Peoples with all the various Black revolutionary movements in the U.S., including the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the Black Panther Party and the Republic of New Afrika. The move to unify the cultural nationalist and Pan



On the same weekend that the Congress of Afrikan Peoples was formed, the Black Panther Party was also holding a major national gathering, the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in Washington, D.C., drawing 6,000 people from across the U.S.

Africanist forces in the movement was thus extended to these other revolutionary nationalist groups.

The congress also called for establishing alliances with other Third World organizations and "people of color." Resolutions were passed in support of the Organization of African Unity, the Non-Aligned Conference in Zambia, and to raise money for the Tanzania-Zambia railroad project, among others. The congress also recognized the Republic of New Afrika as an African nation and the right and efforts of the RNA to organize a plebiscite among people living in the subjugated national territory in the South. These were concrete steps to implement the principle of third world unity and support for liberation movements in Africa and in the U.S.

A further significance of the Atlanta congress was that it brought about a final break with Karenga's US organization. Prior to the congress, a growing antagonistic relationship between CFUN and US had developed. Karenga and his representatives were unable to attend the Black Power Continuations Committee meetings that planned the CAP conference. When the decision to hold the Atlanta meeting was made and the reasons made clear, Karenga ordered CFUN not to go ahead with the plans and opposed the Atlanta meeting. Karenga then sent people to the conference to intimidate its callers, but this did not work. While CAP still upheld the *Kawaida* doctrine, CFUN, back in Newark following the conference, announced the formal disconnection of any alliance with the US organization.

II. CAP's activities 1970-73

After the Atlanta founding meeting, the national Congress of Afrikan Peoples was organized with chapters in 17 cities including Newark, Albany, Brooklyn, New York City, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Chicago, Gary, Detroit, San Diego, and later Houston and others. These chapters were organized as cores of cadre, which were seen as the foundation for the organization and for the work of eventually forming a Black political party.

The local chapters were organized by affiliating various locally based nationalist organizations which had attended the founding

meeting and also organizing new activists into the chapters. For example, in Newark, the Committee for a Unified Newark became the Newark chapter of CAP; in Chicago, the Institute for Positive Education became a chapter; in Brooklyn, the East; in San Diego, the San Diego chapter of the US organization and in New York, the Movement for Bronx Unity.

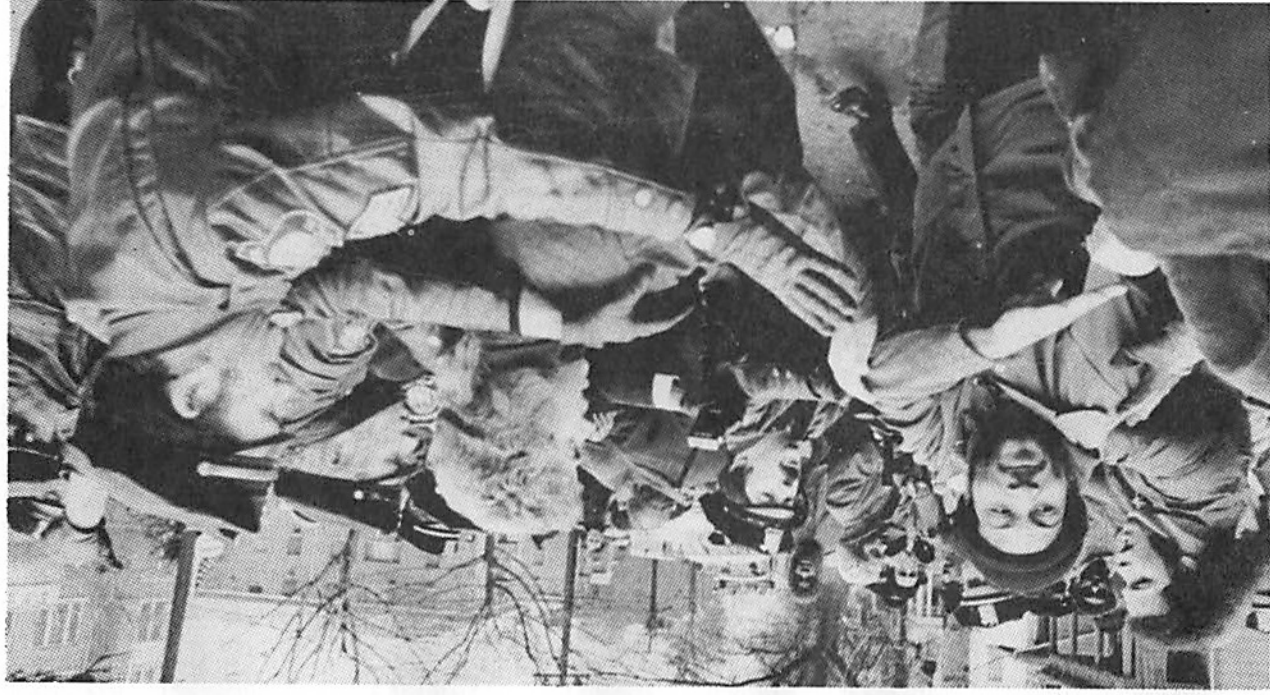
The National Executive Council consolidated the organization's work on a national level. Nationally, the Congress of Afrikan Peoples prepared to carry out the mandate of the founding Atlanta meeting to call a Black political convention in Gary.

The CFUN/CAP-Newark chapter carried out the most developed local work of the various chapters and in effect served as a model for the other chapters and a center of the organization's activities. It continued and expanded the various mass community programs such as the Afrikan Free School and was involved in many local community struggles.

One of the well-known struggles waged by the CFUN/CAP-Newark chapter during this time was for the building of a low- and moderate-income housing development called Kawaida Towers. As a result of the mass struggles for community control and more community programs in Newark in the late 1960's, the New Jersey Community Affairs Department funded a proposal by the Temple of Kawaida (a corporation set up by CFUN) to build a 16-story, nonprofit housing development. However, at the formal ground breaking, the government used a racist white politician, Anthony Imperiale, to create a reactionary movement to stop the building. The government and Imperiale said they were opposed to the building because it was to be in the North Ward of Newark, whose population was about 60% Italian, even though the section in which Kawaida Towers was to be built was a well-mixed area with a great many Blacks and Puerto Ricans.

The plans for Kawaida Towers included a day-care center, theater, closed circuit TV, security, central air conditioning, balconies, an arts workshop, and library. The fact that these services could be delivered in a low- and moderate-income housing development infuriated the reactionary forces. The state blocked the development because it did not want to see "militants" doing anything that the community at large would see as constructive.

A series of physical, legal and bureaucratic obstructions took place over the next three years. The struggle involved demon-



1973, police and other racists combined forces to oppose the building of Kawaida Towers as a low- and middle-income housing project, attacking cadre of the Congress of African Peoples at the site. (UNITY photo)

strations throughout the city and state exposing the racist trade union bureaucrats who refused to let workers in their unions go through Imperiale's picket lines. It also included numerous physical confrontations with the police and other racist whites, and continuous legal struggles in court, Newark's city council, and state agencies.³

CAP also continued to do cultural work. The Spirit House Movers performed plays promoting nationalism and Pan Africanism.

The organization also did work in support of African liberation. It held demonstrations against Portuguese colonialism in Africa, and helped recruit workers and professionals to go to Tanzania to help "nation building" there. CAP also organized fund raising and material aid collections to combat the effects of famine in the Sahel Desert of western Africa.

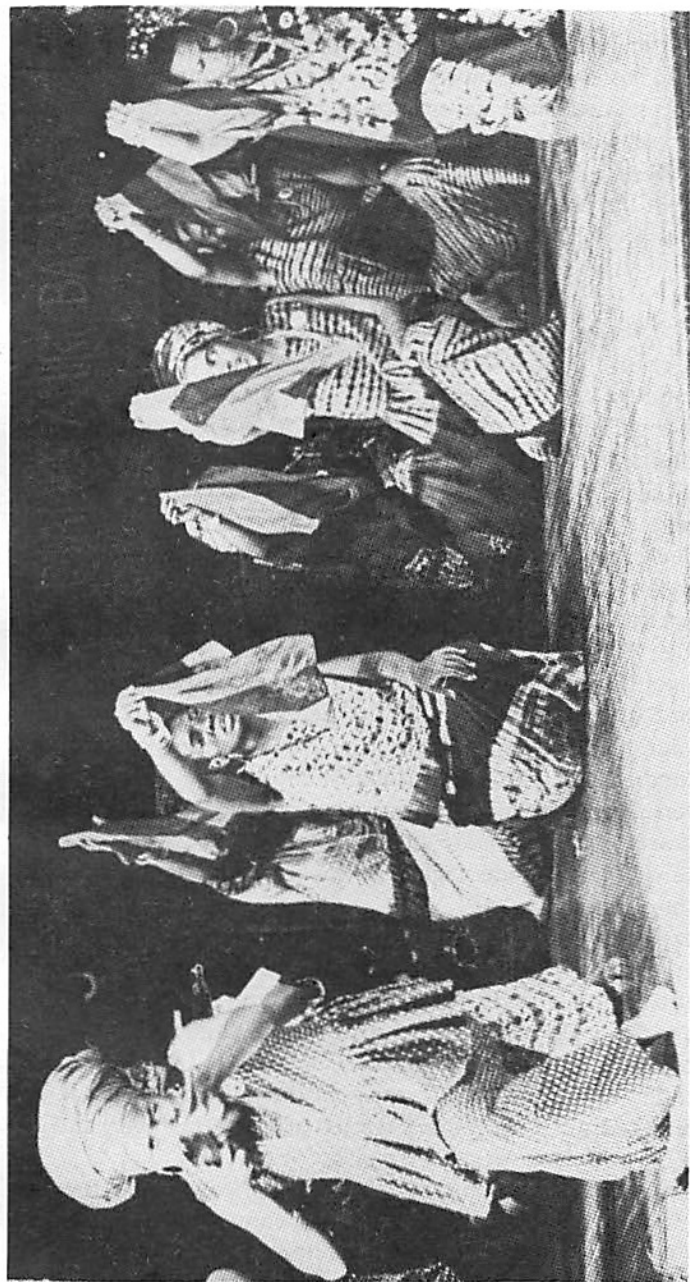
For a number of years, CAP organized annual Delegates Receptions in New York. These were receptions for African ambassadors and representatives from African liberation struggles. There would be a dinner followed by speeches and a program. The receptions were mass programs that were attended by hundreds of people, and were aimed at building ties between African countries and Afro-Americans.

CAP also continued to publish *Black Newark*, and for a while in 1973 the paper was published biweekly.

United Front Work

In addition to its work among the Black masses, CAP also did extensive united front work in the national Black movement. In organizing the first National Black Political Convention held in Gary, Indiana, in 1972, and then the National Black Assembly, CAP sought to forge a broad front with nationalist, Pan Africanist forces like itself, mass forces, local and national Black elected officials, civil rights groups and leaders, educators, cultural workers and other elements in the Black community and movement. CAP's united front work was aimed at unifying these various sectors around building a broad, nationwide movement that could actually challenge the "white power structure" that was responsible for the oppression of the Afro-American people.

CAP played an active role in trying to unite the Black move-



The Congress of Afrikan Peoples combined African culture with a revolutionary focus. Pictured is an African dance in opposition to colonialism. (UNITY photo)

ment, articulate the common aspirations for Black power and promote the basic revolutionary thrust of this common sentiment.

CAP gained more experience in working with diverse class forces, including firsthand experience in the arena of national Black politics. It began to learn more about the nature of different classes in the Black movement, particularly the petty bourgeois and bourgeois Black elected officials.

Gary Convention

CAP played a leading role in the organizing for the first National Black Political Convention. The Convention followed in the tradition of the Black political conventions dating back to before the Civil War in the North, and during Reconstruction in the South, where delegates representing Black people gathered to define their political needs and demands. The Gary Convention was held with the 1972 presidential elections in mind, as a means for Blacks in the U.S. to issue a platform that presidential candidates would have to address. This would be reflected in a progressive document shaped by the convention, the Black Political Agenda. The Black Political Agenda was also to serve as a basis for ongoing mass organizing and a direction for Black politics.

The Convention drew over 8,000 people, including 2,776 delegates and 4,000 alternates from 43 states. Various Black politicians and elected officials, nationalist and militant organizations of diverse types, national civil rights organizations, the Black Panther Party, businessmen, entertainers, and local community groups with varying ideological outlooks and commitments were all in attendance.

The leadership of the Convention was shared by Amiri Baraka, CAP program chairman; Richard Hatcher, mayor of Gary and one of the most progressive of the Black politicians at that time; and Charles Diggs, congressman from Detroit and at that time the Chairman of the House Committee on Africa. The three were chosen at the Convention to represent the unity of the Black nationalists (Baraka), local Black elected officials (Hatcher) and national Black elected officials (Diggs).

The Gary Declaration stated, "The American system does not work for the masses of our people and it cannot be made to work without radical fundamental change. Indeed, this system does not really work in favor of the humanity of anyone in America.



Opening of the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana. Pictured from left to right are: Mayor Richard Hatcher, Gary, Indiana; Congressman Charles Diggs, Detroit; Amiri Baraka, Congress of Afrikan Peoples; and Jesse Jackson, People United to Save Humanity. (UNITY photo)

“ . . . Both parties have betrayed us whenever their interests have conflicted with ours (which was most of the time), and whenever our forces were unorganized and dependent, quiescent and compliant None of the Democratic candidates and none of the Republican candidates — regardless of their vague promises to us or to their white constituencies — can solve our problems or the problems of this country without radically changing the system by which it operates.”

The Gary Declaration introduced the Black Political Agenda, “not only for the future of Black humanity, but is probably the only way the rest of America can save itself from the harvest of its criminal past.”

The Black Political Agenda, as well as numerous resolutions passed at the Gary Convention, put forth a host of demands; some

were very radical and others were reformist in their thrust, but in general the Agenda was a progressive and militant document.

Internationally, the document called for the destruction of the racist settler colonies in Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa, Southwest Africa, and Rhodesia, opposition to the Zionist state of Israel and support for the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. It also "recognized the importance of the models provided by Tanzania and the People's Republic of China for fundamental political and economic transformation of African and third world countries" and supported "self-determination for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands."

The Agenda recognized the right of the Republic of New Afrika to "hold plebiscites" in the Black-belt, to "determine whether the inhabitants of these areas wish to be part of an independent New African Nation . . . or wish to remain under the captive sovereignty of the United States." It called for local government in Washington, D.C. It demanded that the legislative bodies of the U.S. government reflect that Black people make up 15% of the population, and urged community control over the police and schools.

It demanded the release of all Black political prisoners including Angela Davis, H. Rap Brown, Imari Obadele, and the Black draft resisters. It demanded a termination of "political surveillance of Black people by the CIA and FBI," and demanded curtailing of the "defense, and space budgets by 50%" and transferring this money to "programs of social, education, economic and political development." It condemned the Nixon Administration as "racist" and urged bilingual education programs where needed, and called for a minimum income of \$8,500.

The Convention also passed a resolution sponsored by the Congress On Racial Equality that opposed forced busing. The resolution condemned the "false notion that Black children are unable to learn unless they are in the same setting as white children" and demanded "quality education in the Black community" instead of forced busing. The resolution saw that busing *could* be used as a "tool" but stressed that the main issue was Black control over education. The resolution reflected the sentiments of the Black masses for community control and against the bourgeois-integrationist line as promoted by the ruling class as well as certain forces in the Black community like the NAACP.

The Gary Convention was significant not only because of the Black Political Agenda it produced, but also because it was marked by a sharpening of struggle between the nationalist and Pan Africanist forces of which CAP was a leading force, and certain Black elected officials.

This struggle had begun prior to the Convention itself. In a 1971 conference of Black elected officials in Washington, D.C., various Black politicians had put forth ideas on a "Black Strategy for '72." Percy Sutton, for example, pushed for the "nationalization" of the Black vote through having a Black presidential candidate. Mayor Richard Hatcher called for a national fund raising mechanism to support Black candidates. Amiri Baraka, in contrast, spoke up on the need for a national Black convention as a focus for Black interests. In the context of the 1972 election year, Baraka stressed the need to voice nationally the priorities of Black people and form some kind of continuing mechanism or structure for the Black political movement. Baraka further called for convening a mass convention, one that could truly represent the interests of the Black masses and not just an elite of politicians.

Many civil rights leaders and Black elected officials tended to oppose the idea of a convention because of its mass character and independent thrust from the Democratic and Republican parties. Thus, while many elected officials did attend the Gary Convention and great efforts were made to forge a united front between the Nationalist-Pan Africanist forces and the politicians, many other elected officials did not attend.

The Congressional Black Caucus actually opposed the Convention and tried to sabotage it, but the call went out over their signature. At the last meeting in preparation for Gary, Carl Stokes and Gus Hawkins, leaders of the Caucus, raised questions about the wisdom of having such an event at the time scheduled. Hawkins implied that it was incorrect to have it before the presidential primaries, meaning that the Caucus could already make their commitments to the Democratic or Republican parties prior to the Convention itself.

The Congressional Black Caucus clearly wanted everything to focus on electing a Democratic presidential nominee, with whom they could "cooperate," giving them legitimacy as the "rep's of Black people in the U.S." and possibly even securing cabinet posts for Blacks, etc.

Baraka criticized the Caucus and its "Bill of Rights" in an article, "Toward the Creation of Political Institutions for all African Peoples," saying, "The Black Bill of Rights is conceived very simply as a bargaining document to secure for the Congressional Black Caucus some goods and services from the white Democratic nominee. It was the feelings of the Political Liberation Council of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples that no elitist self-serving brokerage structure should be allowed to be set up claiming it is dealing with all Black people. All the talk about a Black Strategy for 1972 focused . . . around the concept of who would be the power-brokers in the election year. It seems that many of the would-be activists and militants did not even understand this concept. Or thought about it so disdainfully that they would not see that this is the way the formal institution of Black *bourgeoisie* sellout nigger politics is perpetuated, by representing itself as the only formalized structure of Black politics, and negotiating with white people, or anybody else, from that false presumption."

The Gary Convention in the end did not actually call for the formation of a Black political party. To push for it would have caused a split since many of the delegates had strong ties with the Democrats and Republicans and opposed forming a Black political party. The idea was actually never brought to the floor and, instead, Baraka proposed a compromise, to form the National Black Assembly (NBA). This was adopted. The NBA was seen as a united front mechanism to lead the struggle around issues relevant to the Black masses (the Black Agenda). It would function in some ways as a party, calling a convention every two years, endorsing candidates, conducting voter education and registration drives and assessing progress in fighting for the Black demands laid out in the Agenda. The NBA would make recommendations to a biannual convention and to the community at large.

Other differences with certain civil rights leaders and politicians also emerged at Gary. The condemnation of Israeli Zionism and support for Palestinian self-determination was passed by the full convention of 8,000, but was opposed by numerous Black politicians and civil rights organizations that historically received substantial financial support from American Zionist organizations. The Convention's anti-busing resolution also generated controversy with some of these same elements. Even before the Gary Convention was over, various Black politicians were rushing

to place a great distance between themselves and these resolutions.

Nevertheless, the Gary Convention had served notice that growing numbers of Blacks would no longer follow the leadership of the Democratic and Republican parties. The differences between CAP and other revolutionary nationalist and Pan Africanist forces, on the one hand, and the Congressional Black Caucus and Black Democratic and Republican politicians, on the other, grew wider as the 1972 presidential campaign proceeded.⁴

National Black Assembly

After the Gary Convention, steps were taken to set up the National Black Assembly. The first seating of the Assembly took place in Chicago on October 21-22, 1972. Representatives from various Black organizations and delegates were chosen in proportion to the amount of Black people in each state and the percentage of the total Black population they represented.

CAP saw the function of the Assembly as a component part of the strategy for building a Black political structure or party. The steps projected by CAP were:

1. *Creating cadre.*
2. *Creating circles of operational unity in the local community.*
3. *Creating circles of operational unity with other nationalist cadre outside the local community.*
4. *Creating an African Nationalist party.*
 - a. *Creating a circle of operational unity with other larger African elements, e.g. national organizations, national caucuses, agencies, etc.*
5. *National voter registration.*
6. *Holding a national convention and running candidates.*
7. *Utilizing those mobilized by the party as a total thrust to control and transform the community. That is, move on the initiation of the platform as the legal will of African communities.*⁵

Actually steps 4a and 6 were related, with the National Black Assembly being 4a. The first part of 4 still remained to come into being. Steps 1-3 were carried out mainly by the local CAP chapters.

The Assembly was set up to function somewhat like a congressional body, discussing and passing resolutions on the main issues of the Black communities. Its program was mainly defined by the Black Political Agenda passed at Gary. Local state assemblies were also set up to deal mainly with local issues.

From the beginning, as had been witnessed at Gary, there were differences among the nationalist forces, led mainly by CAP, and the various politicians and bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements on what the character of the Assembly should be. CAP saw it as a united front mechanism for mass organizing as well as a body to build the Black electoral movement independent from the Democratic and Republican parties. The politicians and some other forces wanted to tie the movement completely to the Democratic Party. This difference widened during the next few years and became an obstacle to the Assembly carrying out fully its original intent.

Still, the Assembly played a positive role in focusing on many of the key issues facing the Black masses and calling for a broad front of forces in the national movement to rally around these issues.

III. Moving to the Left 1973-74

During its first two years as a nationwide organization, CAP became a major force in the Black Liberation Movement and played an active role in both community mass struggles as well as in the national Black movement.

During the next two years, 1973-1974, as CAP developed its work and gained more experience, it moved further and further to the left in its political stand and ideological development, a process which culminated in the organization's adopting Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as its ideology in October 1974.

CAP's motion towards the left and towards Marxism-Leninism was due to a number of factors. There was growing internal struggle in the organization over its orientation and direction. In addition, CAP was influenced through its participation in struggles taking place in the Black Liberation Movement, notably the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). CAP's experience in diverse areas of political work in the mass movement

and united front also had brought forth some important lessons, and the organization's work demanded greater political and theoretical clarity to guide it.

“Revolutionary *Kawaida*”

Since the Gary Convention in 1972, there had been developing struggles within the organization against reformism. At the second international conference of CAP in San Diego in September 1972, a struggle sharpened between the Black humanist elements in CAP, from the National Black Caucus of the Unitarian-Universalist Church, and the *Kawaida*-Pan Africanist elements in the organization.

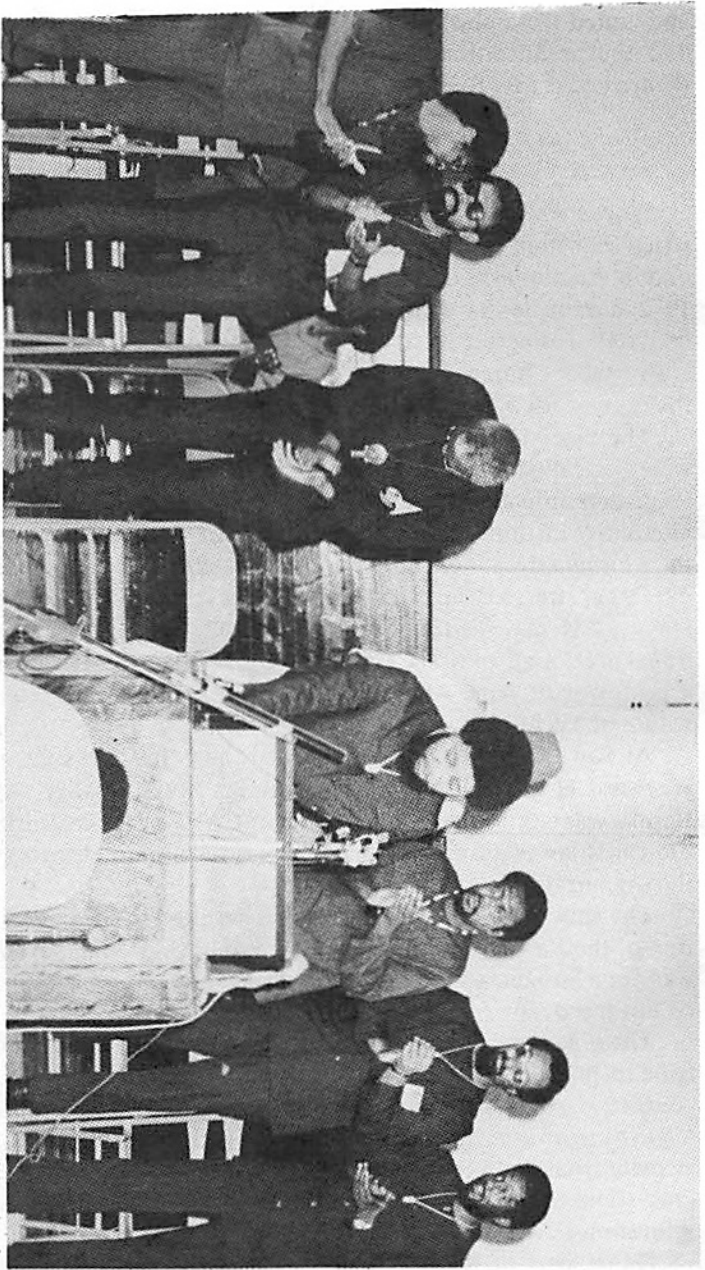
The Black humanists, or Black Christian-Nationalists as they were also called, were activists in the Black movement who defined “self-determination” mainly as promoting Black businesses, alternative institutions and electoral politics. They did not uphold the *Kawaida* doctrine, with its core of revolutionary nationalism, but rather stressed “humanism” and more straight-up reformism. Hayward Henry, the first chairman of CAP, was head of the National Black Caucus of the Unitarian-Universalist Church and also a professor of Afro-American Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

At San Diego, the conflict reached the point of a split, with Hayward Henry splitting away, although not formally. Amiri Baraka was elected the new chairman of CAP. By the end of 1973, the Christian-Nationalists and other non-*Kawaida* elements left the organization.

The split with the Black humanists resulted in the consolidation of the *Kawaida*-Pan Africanist trend in CAP, and paved the way for a struggle to unfold between right and left-wing elements of this trend.

The organization began to define and revise the *Kawaida* doctrine to put it in a more consistently political and revolutionary context. CAP now termed its own interpretation of *Kawaida* as “Revolutionary *Kawaida*,” incorporating Pan Africanist elements that had been united around at the 1970 Founding Congress. This objectively represented a growing anti-imperialist consciousness in the organization.

One aspect of Revolutionary *Kawaida* was its emphasis on



Opening of the second international conference of the Congress of African Peoples held in San Diego, California, in September 1972. (UNITY photo)

learning from "African socialist" examples. A great outcry for socialism in Africa existed as a result of the need to fight imperialism and make revolution, and the great negative example of capitalism. In many cases, African nationalists put forward variations of socialism to try to deal with the people's demand for socialism, but without taking up scientific socialism. These included Nyerere's *Ujamaa* (i.e., collective and cooperative economies as the means for the technological and economic advancement of Africa), Toure's African Scientific Socialism, and Nkrumah's use of elements of Marxist-Leninist theories. CAP's "Revolutionary *Kawaida*" stressed these ideas more heavily. For example, *Ujamaa* as one of the principles of Karenga's *Kawaida* had been defined as the collective economics expressed in "building and developing our own stores, shops, and other businesses." CAP added to its view of *Ujamaa* ". . . to struggle to create *Ujamaa*, Communalism, Socialism, as a scientific world system for the reorganization of world society and the redistribution of the world's wealth."

CAP started in 1972 to define the "three cutting edges" of "Revolutionary *Kawaida*," as revolutionary nationalism, Pan Africanism, and *Ujamaa* (socialism). The theoretical sources of "Revolutionary *Kawaida*" were identified as Malcolm X, Nkrumah, Toure, Nyerere, Amilcar Cabral and Mao Zedong.

Additionally there was increasing struggle within the organization to break with the most backward aspects of the *Kawaida* cultural nationalist doctrine. Some elements in the organization tried to re-raise the most narrow and backward aspects of Karenga's *Kawaida*, characterized by cultism and metaphysics. These elements opposed involvement in struggle, even opposing electoral politics and any kind of work in the mass movement to develop a base among the masses. Instead, they stressed narrow cultural nationalist practices including strict health-food dieting and traditional African dress, to recreate a "pregerm Africa" (Africa prior to western colonial contact). They held extreme feudal, male chauvinist practices with regards to women, including polygamy and the general view that the women's place is subordinate to the man. They also believed that the struggle was to build petty bourgeois Black institutions and become small shopkeepers and producers. Finally, they held to an extreme narrow nationalist view that only Africans have said anything of value to the world.

These views all came under criticism in the organization.

The struggle over these narrow cultural nationalist practices was extended to differences over what kind of organization CAP should be building. At the time, CAP was still characterized by the individual local organizations that had existed before CAP was formed, with its chapters operating with relative autonomy. There was actually substantive divergences in the work and orientation of CAP-East, Brooklyn cadre; CAP-Institute for Positive Education (IPE), Chicago cadre; and CAP-CFUN, Newark cadre, with the leading elements of CAP-East and CAP-IPE stressing more narrow *Kawaida* nationalism and CAP-CFUN moving more to the left. The rightist elements in CAP wanted to maintain the organization as a loose-knit formation, whereas the more left elements recognized the need for a more disciplined and unitary organization and ideology.

Towards these ends, a study program was carried out in the organization which emphasized the revolutionary aspects of *Kawaida* and criticized its most backward aspects. There were efforts to consolidate the national organization through putting out one newspaper and the establishment of one publishing house.

As the struggle against the backward and more narrow cultural nationalism was unfolded within the organization, a very similar struggle against narrow nationalism developed within the Pan Africanist section of the Black Liberation Movement as a whole, and in particular within the African Liberation Support Committee. CAP's participation in the ALSC and the struggle that took place in the ALSC, served to intensify the struggle taking place within CAP and further influenced the organization's motion towards the left, and ultimately, to Marxism-Leninism.

African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC)

Starting in May 1972, African Liberation Day became a yearly occasion for Black activists in the U.S. to demonstrate their support for the African peoples' struggles against colonialism and imperialism, culminating year-long efforts in the Black Liberation Movement. African Liberation Day, set on May 27, the anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), was celebrated as a result of a 1971 trip to Mozambique by Black liberation activists in the U.S., principally Owusu Sadaukai, then

the director of Malcolm X Liberation University in Greensboro, North Carolina. These activists spent time with FRELIMO (the liberation movement in Mozambique) and observed close-up the struggle against Portuguese colonialism. The main idea that came out of the trip was that Blacks in the U.S. could support the African liberation struggles in very concrete ways — through fund raising and resources, through agitation and propaganda, and by stepping up the struggle against U.S. imperialism in the U.S. itself.

These ideas led to the formation of the African Liberation Day Coordinating Committee, which organized African Liberation Day demonstrations in Washington, D.C., and other cities across the U.S. on May 27, 1972. Sixty thousand Blacks demonstrated that day (with 30,000 in Washington, D.C., itself). It was one of the most forceful and revolutionary gatherings of its kind to take place in the history of the Black Liberation Movement.

CAP played a very active role in helping to organize the Coordinating Committee. It had two representatives on the first steering committee and utilized its forces as field organizers. CAP's participation in the Coordinating Committee was a continuation of the African support work that the organization had done since its inception.

Following African Liberation Day 1972, the Coordinating Committee formed into an ongoing, united front organization, the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). It brought together the great majority of the major Pan Africanist forces in a militant struggle against colonialism and in support of African liberation movements. Major African Liberation Day demonstrations were held in 1973 and 1974 and a vast amount of educational and fund raising work was done across the country. The ALSC also took up day-to-day mass work in the Black communities around such issues as unemployment and police brutality.

The formation of the ALSC was a significant development in the Black Liberation Movement, as it brought together many different forces around the common goals of African liberation and Black liberation in the U.S. It included a whole spectrum of Pan Africanist and nationalist forces, including Malcolm X Liberation University, (Greensboro, N.C.), People's College (Nashville, Tenn.), Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOBUE), Congress of Afrikan Peoples, Stokely Carmichael's All Afrikan People's Revolutionary Party (AAPRP), the Pan Afrikan People's



Beginning in May 1972, African Liberation Day (ALD) became a yearly occasion for Black activists in the U.S. to demonstrate their support for the African peoples' struggles against colonialism and imperialism. Above is the Congress of Afrikan Peoples' contingent, ALD 1972, Washington, D.C. (UNITY photo)

Organization (San Francisco), the Pan African Congress-U.S.A., the Family Ntoto (Oakland), and others. CAP-East and CAP-IPE, though still part of CAP, played a more independent role in the ALSC. Also participating in the ALSC, although to a lesser extent, was the Black Workers Congress (BWC), a Marxist-Leninist organization that had formed out of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit in 1971.

The ALSC was a broad united front formed around a Statement of Principles that declared that their struggle was "anti-imperialist and anti-racist" and that imperialism was the enemy of both Africa and Blacks in the Western Hemisphere (U.S., Canada, and the Caribbean). The Statement of Principles pointed out that Black people in the Western Hemisphere suffered from "problems on the job, . . . continued neglect and cutbacks" in social services and conditions, "political-police-military repression" and "continued onslaughts on efforts to preserve and develop revolutionary culture among Black people." The Statement of Principles also called for a Black united front of "all social groups and class formations in the Black community in a common struggle."

As the ALSC brought together a broad spectrum of Pan Africanist and nationalist trends, it became an arena for debate in the Black Liberation Movement over what should be the direction of African support work and struggle for Black liberation generally.

Some of the elements from YOBU/Malcolm X University were developing a more conscious anti-imperialist view and were beginning to take up Marxism. After the ALD demonstration in 1972, these forces began to play a more active and open role in the ALSC. This brought them into conflict with right-wing narrow nationalist tendencies in the ALSC, like Carmichael's AAPRP, which stood firmly on the "back to Africa" solution for Black oppression in the U.S., as well as some of the more backward cultural nationalists who vigorously opposed taking a consistent anti-imperialist stand.

The main debate in the ALSC centered around whether or not the Black Liberation Movement should adopt a more conscious anti-imperialist orientation, as opposed to a narrow nationalist perspective that viewed white people or white institutions and culture as the enemy. The debate unfolded around the Statement of Principles which was drafted at an ALSC meeting in Frogmore, South Carolina, in June-July 1973.

The right-wing narrow nationalists criticized the Statement of Principles for its open anti-imperialist stand and in particular, its identification of monopoly capitalism as the main enemy of Blacks in the U.S. These elements also opposed the Statement's recognition of different classes within the Black community, and its use of what they called "Marxist" and "left-wing" language.

The struggle in the ALSC culminated at an ALSC conference held in Greensboro, North Carolina, in February 1974. The narrow nationalist line was defeated at this meeting and the Statement of Principles was upheld. The right-wing nationalists soon after left the ALSC.

The split in the ALSC strengthened the YOBU/Malcolm X University forces. They had represented the left-wing of the ALSC at that time because of their open anti-imperialist stand and their recognition that the imperialist system is responsible for the oppression of Black people in the U.S.

Later in 1974, these forces secretly formed a communist organization, the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL). It included elements from People's College, Malcolm X Liberation University, African-Americans for Black Liberation in Houston, Black Workers' Organizing Committee in the San Francisco Bay Area, and YOBU.

While these forces played a positive role in the ALSC, they also had some serious weaknesses. Their attempt to apply Marxism to the Black liberation struggle was positive, but their understanding of Marxism tended to be mechanical. This led to certain "workerism" tendencies, such as seeing the Black liberation struggle as mainly a struggle of Black workers and not as a national movement of an oppressed people which included different classes. Although they took up Marxism-Leninism, they did not uphold the Marxist-Leninist position that there is an oppressed Afro-American nation in the Black-belt South with the right to self-determination.

These elements also tended to put down all non-Marxists in the Black movement as narrow nationalist and reactionary, failing to distinguish between revolutionary and reactionary nationalism. They failed to see the dialectical development of these forces, even though they had been Pan Africanists themselves. They did not clearly understand the united front character of the national movements and the task of communists to unite with the pro-

gressive and revolutionary struggles of the masses in fighting national oppression, while criticizing reactionary and narrow nationalism.

During the struggle in the ALSC against the right-wing nationalists, these developing Marxists had a sectarian approach towards the many progressive and revolutionary nationalist activists in the ALSC, and did not understand how to win over the different forces in the united front. Their position paper defending the Statement of Principles, presented at the Greensboro Conference by Nelson Johnson and Abdul Alkalimat, attacked without quarter the theoretical positions of most of the people who had initially formed the ALSC! Furthermore, the paper was made to look like an "official" ALSC document, which made many activists feel that a Marxist position was being "mashed" on them in some conspiratorial fashion. The sectarianism of these developing Marxist elements, coupled with their liquidation of the national question,⁶ drove many honest nationalists out of the ALSC, in addition to the right-wing elements. Later, as the RWL developed, it would have further problems in building the ALSC. In 1975, under a "proletarianization" line, RWL sent its members into the factories and incorrectly pitted this work against participation in mass organizations and activities. With regards to the ALSC, they began to "abandon ship" — to the point where in late 1975 they proposed dismantling the ALSC so they could build the RWL.

The split in the ALSC intensified the struggle taking place within CAP. CAP stayed in the ALSC, pledging to build it in an anti-imperialist direction. Very soon after the split in the ALSC in April 1974, however, the rightist cultural nationalist elements in CAP split away. This marked a major turning point for the organization. It opened the way for the organization to now criticize more thoroughly various of the backward elements of the *Kawaida* doctrine and seek out a more scientific theory and method for analyzing society and making revolution.

CAP had begun to integrate elements of Marxism into its political thinking, although it did not yet have a fully scientific outlook. By March 1974, CAP openly put forth that elements of Marxism should be included in "Revolutionary *Kawaida*." During this period the papers "Black People and Imperialism" and "National Liberation and Politics" were written, both of which quoted from Marx, Lenin and Mao Zedong. "Revolutionary

Kawaida” was still seen as CAP’s “ideology” — a synthesis of what CAP saw as the most advanced ideas that could point the path forward for the Black Liberation Movement. But CAP’s ideological development had progressed far to the left since the early days when it upheld Karenga’s *Kawaida*.

Influenced by the RWL forces as well as the Black Workers Congress, CAP began to seriously take up Marxism. As CAP started to study Marxism, it was influenced somewhat by the mechanical and dogmatist tendencies that existed in the RWL. But CAP at this time did not adopt the “left” sectarian line of the RWL forces. CAP tried to maintain ALSC’s united front character and opposed the sectarian attacks on the progressive and revolutionary nationalist forces. CAP also held a relatively more correct view of the Black national question, upholding the right to self-determination for the Afro-American nation and stressing the revolutionary nature of the Black liberation struggle.

CAP’s move towards Marxism-Leninism was reflected in the presentation it made at the historic ALSC conference in May 1974, at Howard University in Washington, D.C. CAP’s presentation, called “Towards Ideological Clarity,” placed the oppression of Afro-Americans in the U.S. in the context of the world struggle against imperialism and utilized Lenin’s teachings on imperialism. The paper also supported the use of scientific theory to guide the struggle. It stated that “Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought is indispensable to our struggle because from it our stand is not only *revolutionary*, but our viewpoint is *international* and our method is *scientific*.” (emphasis in the original) It also stressed the importance of utilizing the “universally applicable scientific method” to the “particularity of our own struggle.”

“Towards Ideological Clarity” attempted to utilize greater elements of Marxism-Leninism to further develop CAP’s view of Black liberation in the U.S. A significant strength of the paper was that it maintained a clearly revolutionary stance on the national question and held an essentially correct view on the relationship between the national struggle and the struggle against capitalism and imperialism. This is something that some of the other Black Liberation Movement forces who had taken up Marxism had not been able to do.

For example, the paper stated that the “dual aspects of our struggle are national (racial and cultural) and against capital

(class),” and that the Black liberation struggle is a struggle for the “acquisition of power.” CAP also upheld the right of self-determination of the oppressed Afro-American nation in the South, including the right to “secede, ask for partition, and build a separate state in the South . . . if we desire this. Or else we must have a socialist ‘U.S.A.,’ and a freely entered into union of Socialist States.”

CAP also recognized the existence of classes and class struggle in the national movement, and the need to build a Black united front of various classes and strata.

There were weaknesses in the paper as it was not wholly scientific and still attempted to combine Marxism with cultural nationalism. It still upheld the “three cutting edges” of “Revolutionary *Kawaida*,” — nationalism, Pan Africanism and socialism. In addition, in coming from a nationalist perspective, it advocated the building of a revolutionary Black vanguard party, arguing against forming a multinational vanguard party to lead the U.S. revolution.

CAP’s leftward motion was further influenced and reflected in its participation in the sixth Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) held in June 1974, in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

For obvious reasons of colonialism, the sixth PAC was the first Pan Africanist conference to be held on African soil. It was the largest of its kind, with representatives from 26 African states, 7 African liberation organizations, and Brazil, the U.S., England, Canada and the Caribbean. Since much of Africa had won political independence between the last PAC in 1945 and the sixth PAC in 1974, a major emphasis of the conference was on neo-colonialism, the continuing struggle against imperialism, and the need for class struggle in Africa; as well as the continued need for national liberation from direct colonialism. CAP’s participation in the sixth PAC furthered its own understanding of the need for class struggle. It was clear that imperialism could rule through native agents, as Amilcar Cabral had pointed out. At the sixth PAC, many African governments openly opposed neo-colonialism and stated that revolutionary Pan Africanism had to be a struggle against imperialism and for socialism.

The address by the CAP Chairman to the sixth PAC, called “Revolutionary Culture and the Future of Pan Africanist Culture,” attacked imperialism and neo-colonialism, and called

Pan Africanism a “commitment to build socialism for African people worldwide and to take on the struggle against imperialism everywhere.” Amiri Baraka’s stand for socialism and his alignment with the liberation movements of Africa, as well as a similar stand taken by Owusu Sadaukai who also attended the conference, did not go unnoticed. It was shot around the world and throughout the nationalist Pan Africanist movement in the U.S.

Experience in mass struggles and united front work

The other major reason for CAP’s motion towards Marxism-Leninism came out of CAP’s own experiences in doing work among the Black masses and in united front work. Although still a young organization, CAP had already gained considerable experience in diverse areas of political work. It was learning through its own experience the need to distinguish different class forces and interests in the Black community and movement. The organization’s work was developing to a higher level, and demanded a more scientific theory to guide it through the twists and turns of the struggle.

Since Gibson’s election as mayor of Newark, CAP began to see in practice that the election of a Black mayor did not really change the fundamental situation faced by the masses of Black people. Gibson’s election put a Black into a political office that no Black in Newark or the northeastern U.S. had ever before been able to attain. It resulted in more attention and voice given to Black demands, including the gaining of some limited reforms. But it was clear that the election of Blacks into office was not going to solve the oppression of Black people. In fact, Gibson and other Black petty bourgeois and bourgeois politicians had become part of an elite of Black officials that were used to oppose the mass movement and to keep the masses chained to the system of oppression.

CAP’s criticisms of Gibson had started to develop almost as soon as he took office. He rapidly capitulated to the Prudential Life Insurance Co., one of the largest finance-capitalist interests in New Jersey. When Prudential opposed the participation of nationalists like CFUN on committees that were set up to oversee the city’s cultural programs, Gibson disbanded the committees.

In 1973, the struggle against Gibson sharpened as racist police

ing and sorting out the various nationalist and "African socialist" theories that CAP had adopted and tried to synthesize in its "ideology." One positive result of the increased study of African socialism was the growing understanding of the nature of classes and their role in society. Some African liberation forces used elements of Marxism in their theories or were Marxists themselves.

Finally, another major factor that led CAP to seek a more scientific theory to analyze class forces in the national movement was the organization's sharpening struggle with other class forces in united front formations.

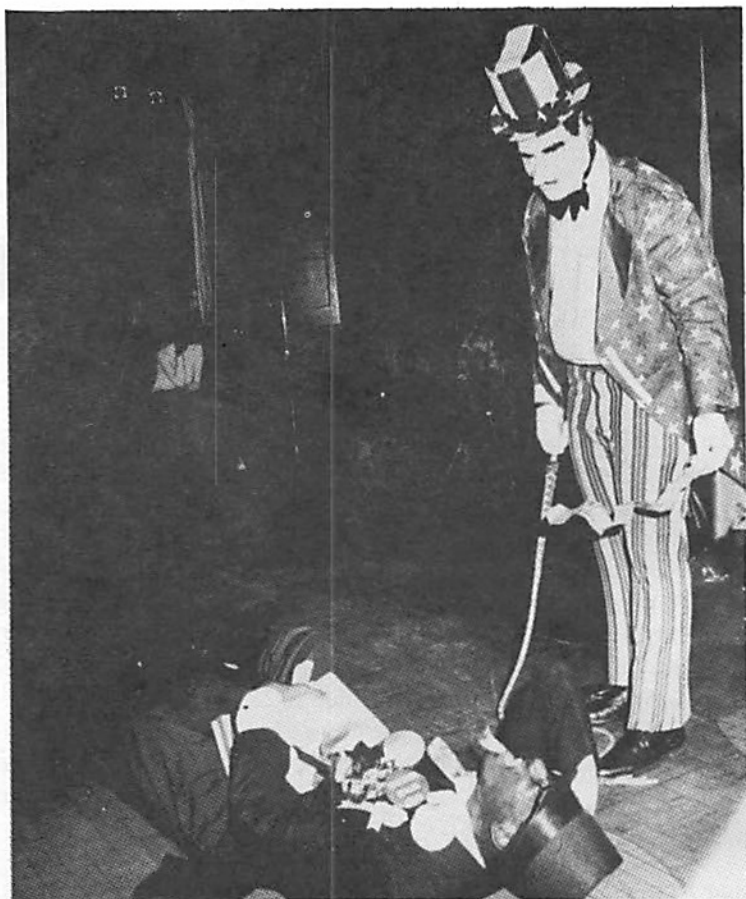
In the National Black Assembly, CAP was waging more struggle with the Black petty bourgeois and bourgeois politicians to prevent them from tying the Black movement completely to the Democratic Party and leading it down a fully reformist path. During the Miami Democratic Party Convention in 1972, CAP had seen the sellout of many Black politicians and leading reformist elements. These elements were more concerned with getting a position from the Democratic Party than they were about building a mass political movement of Blacks.

The different viewpoints in the NBA were reflected at the April 1974 second National Black Political Convention held in Little Rock, Arkansas, which was attended by 2,000 people. For one thing, many of the Black politicians and leading reformists who had flocked to Gary two years before did not even show up at Little Rock. This was because 1974 was not a national election year, and there was little "brokerage" to be done.

At Little Rock, divergent political views were expressed, ranging from emphasis on the electoral path, to stress on grass roots work, to views which upheld both. Many delegates wanted to form an independent Black political party, but this was tabled based on the recognition that such a party, while not incorrect, would have to be built out of a developing mass base.

Amiri Baraka's speech at Little Rock openly called for the destruction of capitalism and for socialist revolution as necessary to win Black liberation. He outlined the history and role of capitalism and imperialism in carrying out Black oppression. Baraka also criticized those aspects of cultural nationalism that stressed mysticism and over-glorification of feudal Africa. This speech showed CAP's motion towards Marxism-Leninism taking place.

During this time, the newspaper *Black Newark* reflected more



Columbia, The Gem of the Ocean, a play about the need to fight the repression of the state, performed by the Afrikan Revolutionary Movers. (UNITY photo)

and more the growing anti-imperialist consciousness of the organization. In March 1974, the name of the newspaper was changed to *Unity and Struggle*, to reflect CAP's understanding of the dialectical requirements of revolution. Articles in the newspaper targeted the capitalist and imperialist system as the cause of the oppression of the masses both in the U.S. and internationally.

The drama group, the Spirit House Movers, also was renamed the Afrikan Revolutionary Movers (ARM) and a singing group, the Anti-Imperialist Singers, was formed in Newark. ARM put on

plays and skits such as *Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean*, about the need to fight the repression of the state.

Taking up Marxism-Leninism

As CAP drew lessons from all these experiences, its scientific understanding of imperialism, revolution, class struggle and socialism increased. After the ALSC conference at Howard University, it was clear to the most advanced forces in CAP that the organization needed to go in the direction of becoming a Marxist-Leninist organization. It became clearer and clearer that the rightist cultural nationalists could not carry the forceful and revolutionary motion that CAP's revolutionary nationalist history called on it to follow.

Between April 1974, when the rightist cultural nationalists resigned from CAP, and October 1974, the organization moved to take up Marxism-Leninism as its theoretical guide. During this period, new reading lists were issued in the organization on Marxism-Leninism.

The organization also began to abandon many of the social practices identified with its nationalist period. For example, cadre no longer had to wear African dress. CAP also abandoned male chauvinist practices that had been carried out as part of its "African traditionalism" such as holding separate political education classes for men and women. The historical CAP holiday, "Leo Baraka" (the birthday of the Chairman of CAP, Amiri Baraka), was redefined to be an occasion to emphasize cadre development, study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, and to concentrate on doing education around the woman question.⁸ The latter point was stressed because the male chauvinist practices connected to the cultural nationalist period had stifled the participation of women and had resulted in deep-rooted male chauvinism in the organization.

During this time, CAP issued a statement called "CAP Going Through Changes," published in *Unity and Struggle* and also as a separate pamphlet that was given out free. This statement tried to give, in a brief and concise form, an explanation of the motion that CAP was going through to embrace Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought.

It explained how CAP had come to see Marxism as the only

scientific theory of revolution. Out of the struggle CAP had waged within and as part of the Black Liberation Movement, it had seen the correctness and strength of Marxism and also seen that many of the revolutionary African leaders like Nyerre, Toure, Nkrumah and Cabral had drawn from elements of Marxism. "CAP Going Through Changes" pointed out that the organization's motion to adopt Marxism had come through its continuous commitment to struggle to clarify ideologically the direction of the movement.

The pamphlet also summarized the organization's nationalist history. In doing so, it pointed out how it was essential to uphold the revolutionary character of the national question. This was significant because one of the key ideological struggles taking place in the communist movement at that time was a struggle against chauvinist lines which liquidated the national question under the guise of saying "everything is a *class* question." The national struggles in the U.S. in the final analysis are a question of class struggle since they are aimed at the ruling class, but they have their own distinct and revolutionary character. To unleash this potential is a strategic task of the revolution.

One error made in the pamphlet, however, was that in trying to summarize CAP's nationalism, it didn't make a clear distinction between the overall revolutionary nationalist thrust and history of the organization, and the various narrow and incorrect theories it held to at various times. It referred very generally to "CAP's well-known espousal of reactionary nationalist theories," as if all of CAP's nationalism had been "reactionary." It is true that CAP had held to certain narrow and backward nationalist ideas in its history, such as anti-white narrow nationalism. But overall, CAP's ideological development had been one of first trying to bring together various Black ideological and political trends, progressively trying to adopt the most revolutionary aspects of these and finally coming to Marxism. CAP's transition actually testified to the commitment of the organization to the masses of people and revolution and to the strength of Marxism.

At CAP's General Assembly in October 1974, the organization decided to adopt Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as its guiding ideology. This historic General Assembly stated, "We must go forward in tune with the march of the oppressed people throughout the world carrying a banner and fiery torch of libera-



In 1974 CAP changed the name of its paper from Black Newark to Unity and Struggle to reflect its understanding of the requirements of revolution.

the old centralism and were reluctant to speak their minds. This slowed the development of the organization to a certain extent.

The leadership's and general membership's understanding of the Marxist style of study was weak. Marxist "definitions" and formulations tended to be viewed rigidly and translated mainly as slogans, rather than studying Marxism to grasp its essence and use it as a tool to analyze concrete problems.

These two factors combined meant that the initial study tended to be conducted in a "classroom" or bookish fashion without concretely linking theory and practice.

There was also continuing struggle with cadre who held to the cultural nationalist ideology that remained in the organization, since the organization's outlook and practice could not be transformed overnight. As the overly bureaucratic centralist structure of CAP was criticized, some wanted to go to the opposite extreme by becoming anti-organization and anti-discipline, returning to the pre-nationalist days when many members led a non-revolutionary lifestyle.

One of the most important struggles was over the role of women in the organization and in the revolution. There were intense struggles against chauvinist views towards women left over from the cultural nationalist period. The idea that women should be submissive was deeply imbedded and it could not be simply erased. Women were promoted to more levels of leadership, but there was resistance from some male comrades who continued to believe women could not be leaders. There was also continuing struggle against male chauvinism in the home.

The organization deepened its study of the woman question and came to recognize that "women hold up half the sky." Revolution is impossible without unleashing the full potential of the masses of women and taking up the struggle for women's emancipation. But this recognition came about gradually and only through the education of the entire organization, and especially through the struggle of the women comrades.

Gradually by confronting these problems, the organization learned how to implement a collective internal life and democratic centralist principles of organization. However, the weaknesses of mechanicalness and dogmatism were not really recognized and would later be accentuated when the organization came under the influence of the "Revolutionary Wing."

During late 1974 and into 1975, a struggle unfolded in the organization with some of the cadre from Houston who were influenced by the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL). These elements held some correct criticisms of the tendencies towards bureaucratic centralism and the "cult of personality." But as these weaknesses in the organization were recognized and began to be corrected, some of the Houston cadre went to the other extreme in promoting ultra-democracy and anti-leadership views.

These elements also belittled open communist work, which was due in part to the influence of the RWL line that the masses were not "ready" for communism but only for "anti-imperialism." These cadre also held and practiced an incorrect line on what role CAP should play in the National Black Assembly (NBA). CAP wanted to build the NBA as a mass, united front structure independent of the Democratic and Republican parties. Some of the Houston cadre, though, tended to tail the petty bourgeois and bourgeois politicians that wanted to tie the NBA to the Democratic Party. They also opposed CAP's open communist stand in the NBA. This dovetailed with the Democrats' anti-communist red-baiting against the organization.

The struggles with the Houston cadre finally came to a head in 1975 when they resigned from the organization. This struggle was important because it helped CAP contrast its developing line with other lines on basic questions like democratic centralism and the role of communists in the united front. Out of this struggle, CAP cadre became better equipped to distinguish a correct Marxist-Leninist line from incorrect lines.

Also during this early period of consolidation, CAP identified five major questions around which to focus developing its theoretical line. These were the national question, the woman question, trade unions, party building, and the international situation. Work around developing these positions proceeded at a slow pace, however, since the organization's theoretical understanding was not very developed and because of its weaknesses in not knowing how to link theoretical and practical work.

Areas of mass work

As CAP went through this period of consolidation around Marxism-Leninism, one of the most difficult questions it con-

fronted was how to reshape and expand its mass work from a Marxist-Leninist perspective.

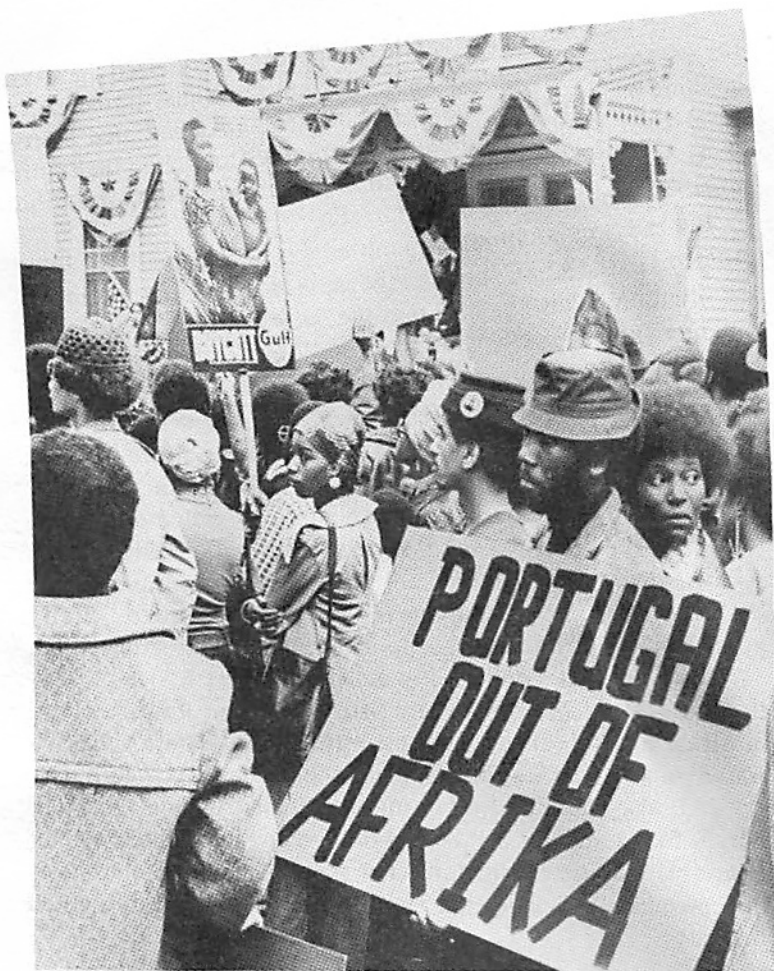
At first, some of the mass community programs were continued with the old methods from the nationalist period. Later, the error was made of abandoning some programs that were necessary and beneficial, rather than reconstructing the work based on a Marxist analysis.

One important example was the Afrikan Free School. It was closed in late 1974, even though the parents of the children were some of CAP's staunchest supporters and opposed the closing. The school had grown to a full-fledged educational institution with grades one through eight, and running the school required more and more of the organization's resources and manpower. The organization felt the school was a "legacy of CAP's cultural nationalism," and that it was better to go into the public schools and struggle for change in those institutions where the majority of the Black masses have their children.

It was correct to recognize the limitations of building "alternative institutions" alone and the need to go into the public schools to do mass organizing. During CAP's nationalist period, there had been an incorrect view which saw "alternative institutions" replacing the established institutions. But in actual practice, CAP had never really negated doing mass organizing in the public schools, and in fact had done a great deal of work in them. The criticism of reformism and cultural nationalism though was carried out mechanically, downplaying the positive aspects of these programs as vehicles for mass organizing and as fulfilling a need in the community. The organization did not understand that as long as the oppressed nationality people suffered from inferior schools, they would inevitably demand their own schools as part of the struggle for decent and equal education.

CAP continued its work in the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), although the ALSC never regained its mass and united front character since the 1974 split with the right-wing narrow nationalists. This was due in large part to the "left" line held by the RWL which was in the leadership of the ALSC. The RWL's "left" sectarianism and dogmatism, coupled with its liquidation of the national question, had already driven many progressive and revolutionary nationalist forces out of the ALSC.

By late 1974, most of the forces left in the ALSC were Marxist-



African Liberation Day 1973, Newark, New Jersey. Marching to the site of Kawaida Towers. (UNITY photo)

Leninist organizations, including the RWL, CAP, the Revolutionary Workers Congress (a split-off from the Black Workers Congress), and later the Workers Viewpoint Organization. Already it would be a difficult task to build the ALSC back up as a broad united front formation that could mobilize the masses to support African liberation. This was never really done due to the incorrect line of the RWL. By late 1975, the ALSC had declined considerably due to the incorrect line, and the RWL proposed that it be dismantled.

CAP vigorously opposed this proposal and criticized the RWL for its sectarianism and "left" dogmatism which pitted party building against work among the masses. CAP initiated a proposal to establish a continuations committee to discuss the future of ALSC. The majority of local ALSC chapters supported this proposal, and the RWL agreed to stay.

But the Continuations Committee was plagued with the same problems as the ALSC, because the same incorrect line dominated the situation. This line held that the ALSC should discuss party building and engage in "line struggle." CAP saw that this was inappropriate for a united front organization and criticized the other organizations for practicing "hegemonism" in the ALSC — i.e., placing their narrow organizational interests above the need to build a mass movement to support African liberation. But CAP was unable to turn the situation around due to a number of factors. For one, most of the mass elements had already left the ALSC. Secondly, CAP was not clear enough to deal with the "leftism" of the RWL, and due to CAP's own desire to "clarify political line" fell into abstract political debates within the ALSC.

However, CAP continued to actively support African liberation. *Unity and Struggle* had consistent coverage of the situation in Africa, and did educational work especially in opposing the civil war in Angola that was instigated by the two superpowers.

CAP also supported other international struggles. In Pittsburgh, for example, CAP helped build a coalition in support of Palestinian self-determination which staged a mass demonstration in September 1975, when the Zionist leader Moshe Dayan visited that city.

The split in the National Black Assembly

The organization's work in the NBA also reached a critical turning point. Objectively differences already had sharpened within the NBA. On the one hand, CAP and other progressive mass forces wanted to build the NBA as a united front mechanism for mass organizing around basic issues of the Black masses and to build an independent Black political movement, as was laid out at the 1972 Gary Convention. On the other hand, there was a trend of Black petty bourgeois and bourgeois politicians, who wanted to bring the NBA under the wing of the Democratic Party. These petty bourgeois and bourgeois reformists and politicians began to

take over the leadership of the NBA for their own purposes. They decertified chapters they opposed and held fake conventions to certify new chapters under their control. They blocked and stifled the mass work of the NBA on both the national and local levels, and undermined the united front character of the NBA by limiting membership to those classes and political tendencies in the Black community that were harmonious with their own. By early 1975, the mass character of the NBA had fallen off steeply.

Now that CAP was a communist organization, the struggle sharpened even more. The petty bourgeois and bourgeois elements aligned with the Democratic Party wanted Amiri Baraka, then-Secretary General of the NBA, out of the leadership on the grounds that he was an "avowed communist."

CAP continued to struggle for the NBA to be built in the direction laid out at the Gary Convention and opposed attempts to attach the NBA to the Democratic Party. It proposed a "Strategy 76" for the NBA to take up around the 1976 Presidential elections. "Strategy 76" called for a broad-based coalition that would run an "anti-depression, anti-repression, anti-Democrat and anti-Republican" platform and candidate, and would be a way to do organizing around the main issues facing the masses. CAP's objectives in proposing "Strategy 76" in the NBA was to concretely counter the moves towards the Democratic Party.

At the same time, CAP proposed "Strategy 76" to other Marxist-Leninist groups, as a way to further Marxist-Leninist unity around what stand to take towards the elections. CAP also wanted to use "Strategy 76" to hook up the NBA with the progressive and Marxist-Leninist movement.

The NBA passed the resolution for "Strategy 76" but the reformists stalled on it for half a year, never wanting its implementation. CAP later abandoned "Strategy 76," summing up that while it was not incorrect in principle, CAP could not implement the plan without the support and participation of other Marxist-Leninists and Black Liberation Movement forces. CAP had overestimated the strength of the left and the Marxist-Leninist movement in being able to deal in national electoral politics.

CAP also played an active role at an NBA-sponsored Economic Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia, in August 1975. The conference brought together representatives from various schools of thought on the question of the economic crisis and its

impact on Black people. A struggle unfolded there between CAP and the Nation of Islam over the question of socialist revolution versus Black capitalism as the answer to Black oppression.

Since Malcolm X's death, the Nation of Islam had grown increasingly conservative and business-oriented, and less involved in any mass struggle against national oppression. CAP defeated the Muslim line at the Economic Conference, and the masses roared their approval. The reformists in leadership of the NBA, however, cast aside the results of the Conference and never acted upon them.

The Atlanta Economic Conference was the last major program pushed by CAP in the NBA. This was due to a "left" error that CAP made of seeing the struggle against the reformists and politicians as mainly a question of "line struggle" to be conducted at meetings. CAP fell into "left" phrase-mongering at meetings and did not really go out and organize the mass forces that were still in the NBA. Consequently, CAP became more isolated and also became more vulnerable to the attacks and maneuvers by the leadership aligned with the Democratic Party.

The struggle in the NBA reached the point of a split in October 1975, at the NBA meeting in Dayton, Ohio. The petty bourgeois and bourgeois reformists and politicians in the NBA, led by NBA President Ron Daniels, an ex-CAP member and right-wing Pan Africanist, staged an all-out coup to force the progressive elements out of the NBA. Bonafide delegates from many states including Michigan, New York, Illinois, Louisiana and Ohio were not allowed to register and their protests were met with charges of "disruption." Instead, Daniels seated bogus "delegates," some of whom had never even been in the NBA before. Many of these people were staff workers from anti-poverty agencies who were told by their bosses they had to attend the conference in order to get their pay!

The right-wing elements in addition resorted to disenfranchising entire delegations, such as cutting Cleveland out of the Ohio delegation. The fraud was so great that a Black studies professor known to be living and working in Michigan was admitted as a Massachusetts' delegate. Over the protests of the Women's Caucus, Daniels even railroaded the seating of a woman whom he claimed represented the Caucus, although both she and Daniels had always opposed the Women's Caucus.

On top of all this, it was soon discovered that one of the major documents handed out in the registration packet was a fraud. This document was supposed to have presented a proposal for changes in the NBA Charter, based on a recent meeting of the Charter Committee in Chicago. In passing out the proposal, the right-wing elements completely deleted all references that pointed to the capitalist system as the source of Black oppression. The Chicago meeting had added to the Charter, "Actually, most whites do not totally benefit from those institutions which only benefit a small class of whites and an even smaller class of Blacks that benefit from them." These sections were all deleted from the document that was passed out in Dayton!

These underhanded moves were obviously aimed at thwarting any anti-capitalist motion in the NBA. The right-wing petty bourgeois and bourgeois elements wanted to promote a view of "Black versus white" nationalism. This allowed them to profit and rise up in the system of monopoly capitalism while all the time they could cry their opposition to "white oppression."

Actually, their idea of "white oppression" was narrowly defined as the exclusion of Blacks from bourgeois politics. And their idea of fighting "white oppression" was to get some Black faces — namely themselves — into those high places. They were not concerned with the harsh realities of national oppression faced by the masses of Black people, let alone waging a mass movement to change the situation.

Other sections also were deleted from the documents, such as the calling for a united front in the NBA that included different political tendencies. The right-wing elements wanted the NBA to be composed of only one political tendency — Democratic Party reformism.

At the Dayton meeting, the Daniels leadership refused to deal with many matters of importance that delegates raised, but concerned itself mainly with railroading the election of new officers to consolidate the takeover. Because of the demands of many people present, Daniels finally agreed to take up the concerns of the Women's Caucus and other key issues including a presentation on prisoners' struggles. But when people showed up for this session, they were told it was canceled.

It was clear that Daniels, and company's "Dayton Strategy" was to completely take over the NBA and squash all aspects of its

united front character. Due to the maneuvers and attacks of the right-wing, Amiri Baraka was forced to resign as Secretary General in order to disassociate himself and CAP from the takeover.

In January 1976, NBA members from ten states and Washington, D.C., met in Pittsburgh and decided to resign from the NBA. These forces were either connected to or supported CAP. They stated their reasons for leaving as the new leadership's lack of commitment to build a Black united front, and the continuous lack of work on the many proposed programs of the NBA. They criticized the NBA leadership for its betrayal of the mandate from the Gary Convention to build a Black political movement independent from the Democratic and Republican parties. (This was soon confirmed in full when the NBA threw its weight behind the Democrat Julian Bond's candidacy for the presidency.) The resigning chapters pledged to continue to organize the masses of people and to build fighting mass organizations in their areas.

While it was correct and necessary to make a break with the sellout leaders of the NBA, it was an error for the CAP forces to completely withdraw from the NBA. There were still some mass forces left in the NBA, and CAP could have exerted some influence had it remained.

New areas of work

While these developments were taking place in established mass work and united front situations, CAP broke new ground in some other areas of work around labor issues and in the Black Liberation Movement.

CAP cadre began to work in auto plants, steel mills, foundries and mines in the Northeast and Midwest. The first major campaign around labor issues was initiated in November 1975, called Workers Solidarity Day. CAP organized demonstrations in several cities, linking the economic recession to the nature of the capitalist system and raised the need for socialist revolution as the final answer to the problems of the masses.

During 1974, CAP participated in the Boston busing struggle. This struggle was a focus of national attention as well as a key issue of struggle within the communist movement on the national question.

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African Liberation Day 1973, Newark, New Jersey. Marching to the site of Kawaia Towers. (UNITY photo)

Leninist organizations, including the RWL, CAP, the Revolutionary Workers Congress (a split-off from the Black Workers Congress), and later the Workers Viewpoint Organization. Already it would be a difficult task to build the ALSC back up as a broad united front formation that could mobilize the masses to support African liberation. This was never really done due to the incorrect line of the RWL. By late 1975, the ALSC had declined considerably due to the incorrect line, and the RWL proposed that it be dismantled.

CAP vigorously opposed this proposal and criticized the RWL for its sectarianism and "left" dogmatism which pitted party building against work among the masses. CAP initiated a proposal to establish a continuations committee to discuss the future of ALSC. The majority of local ALSC chapters supported this proposal, and the RWL agreed to stay.

But the Continuations Committee was plagued with the same problems as the ALSC, because the same incorrect line dominated the situation. This line held that the ALSC should discuss party building and engage in "line struggle." CAP saw that this was inappropriate for a united front organization and criticized the other organizations for practicing "hegemonism" in the ALSC — i.e., placing their narrow organizational interests above the need to build a mass movement to support African liberation. But CAP was unable to turn the situation around due to a number of factors. For one, most of the mass elements had already left the ALSC. Secondly, CAP was not clear enough to deal with the "leftism" of the RWL, and due to CAP's own desire to "clarify political line" fell into abstract political debates within the ALSC.

However, CAP continued to actively support African liberation. *Unity and Struggle* had consistent coverage of the situation in Africa, and did educational work especially in opposing the civil war in Angola that was instigated by the two superpowers.

CAP also supported other international struggles. In Pittsburgh, for example, CAP helped build a coalition in support of Palestinian self-determination which staged a mass demonstration in September 1975, when the Zionist leader Moshe Dayan visited that city.

The split in the National Black Assembly

The organization's work in the NBA also reached a critical turning point. Objectively differences already had sharpened within the NBA. On the one hand, CAP and other progressive mass forces wanted to build the NBA as a united front mechanism for mass organizing around basic issues of the Black masses and to build an independent Black political movement, as was laid out at the 1972 Gary Convention. On the other hand, there was a trend of Black petty bourgeois and bourgeois politicians, who wanted to bring the NBA under the wing of the Democratic Party. These petty bourgeois and bourgeois reformists and politicians began to

take over the leadership of the NBA for their own purposes. They decertified chapters they opposed and held fake conventions to certify new chapters under their control. They blocked and stifled the mass work of the NBA on both the national and local levels, and undermined the united front character of the NBA by limiting membership to those classes and political tendencies in the Black community that were harmonious with their own. By early 1975, the mass character of the NBA had fallen off steeply.

Now that CAP was a communist organization, the struggle sharpened even more. The petty bourgeois and bourgeois elements aligned with the Democratic Party wanted Amiri Baraka, then-Secretary General of the NBA, out of the leadership on the grounds that he was an "avowed communist."

CAP continued to struggle for the NBA to be built in the direction laid out at the Gary Convention and opposed attempts to attach the NBA to the Democratic Party. It proposed a "Strategy 76" for the NBA to take up around the 1976 Presidential elections. "Strategy 76" called for a broad-based coalition that would run an "anti-depression, anti-repression, anti-Democrat and anti-Republican" platform and candidate, and would be a way to do organizing around the main issues facing the masses. CAP's objectives in proposing "Strategy 76" in the NBA was to concretely counter the moves towards the Democratic Party.

At the same time, CAP proposed "Strategy 76" to other Marxist-Leninist groups, as a way to further Marxist-Leninist unity around what stand to take towards the elections. CAP also wanted to use "Strategy 76" to hook up the NBA with the progressive and Marxist-Leninist movement.

The NBA passed the resolution for "Strategy 76" but the reformists stalled on it for half a year, never wanting its implementation. CAP later abandoned "Strategy 76," summing up that while it was not incorrect in principle, CAP could not implement the plan without the support and participation of other Marxist-Leninists and Black Liberation Movement forces. CAP had overestimated the strength of the left and the Marxist-Leninist movement in being able to deal in national electoral politics.

CAP also played an active role at an NBA-sponsored Economic Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia, in August 1975. The conference brought together representatives from various schools of thought on the question of the economic crisis and its

impact on Black people. A struggle unfolded there between CAP and the Nation of Islam over the question of socialist revolution versus Black capitalism as the answer to Black oppression.

Since Malcolm X's death, the Nation of Islam had grown increasingly conservative and business-oriented, and less involved in any mass struggle against national oppression. CAP defeated the Muslim line at the Economic Conference, and the masses roared their approval. The reformists in leadership of the NBA, however, cast aside the results of the Conference and never acted upon them.

The Atlanta Economic Conference was the last major program pushed by CAP in the NBA. This was due to a "left" error that CAP made of seeing the struggle against the reformists and politicians as mainly a question of "line struggle" to be conducted at meetings. CAP fell into "left" phrase-mongering at meetings and did not really go out and organize the mass forces that were still in the NBA. Consequently, CAP became more isolated and also became more vulnerable to the attacks and maneuvers by the leadership aligned with the Democratic Party.

The struggle in the NBA reached the point of a split in October 1975, at the NBA meeting in Dayton, Ohio. The petty bourgeois and bourgeois reformists and politicians in the NBA, led by NBA President Ron Daniels, an ex-CAP member and right-wing Pan Africanist, staged an all-out coup to force the progressive elements out of the NBA. Bonafide delegates from many states including Michigan, New York, Illinois, Louisiana and Ohio were not allowed to register and their protests were met with charges of "disruption." Instead, Daniels seated bogus "delegates," some of whom had never even been in the NBA before. Many of these people were staff workers from anti-poverty agencies who were told by their bosses they had to attend the conference in order to get their pay!

The right-wing elements in addition resorted to disenfranchising entire delegations, such as cutting Cleveland out of the Ohio delegation. The fraud was so great that a Black studies professor known to be living and working in Michigan was admitted as a Massachusetts' delegate. Over the protests of the Women's Caucus, Daniels even railroaded the seating of a woman whom he claimed represented the Caucus, although both she and Daniels had always opposed the Women's Caucus.

On top of all this, it was soon discovered that one of the major documents handed out in the registration packet was a fraud. This document was supposed to have presented a proposal for changes in the NBA Charter, based on a recent meeting of the Charter Committee in Chicago. In passing out the proposal, the right-wing elements completely deleted all references that pointed to the capitalist system as the source of Black oppression. The Chicago meeting had added to the Charter, "Actually, most whites do not totally benefit from those institutions which only benefit a small class of whites and an even smaller class of Blacks that benefit from them." These sections were all deleted from the document that was passed out in Dayton!

These underhanded moves were obviously aimed at thwarting any anti-capitalist motion in the NBA. The right-wing petty bourgeois and bourgeois elements wanted to promote a view of "Black versus white" nationalism. This allowed them to profit and rise up in the system of monopoly capitalism while all the time they could cry their opposition to "white oppression."

Actually, their idea of "white oppression" was narrowly defined as the exclusion of Blacks from bourgeois politics. And their idea of fighting "white oppression" was to get some Black faces — namely themselves — into those high places. They were not concerned with the harsh realities of national oppression faced by the masses of Black people, let alone waging a mass movement to change the situation.

Other sections also were deleted from the documents, such as the calling for a united front in the NBA that included different political tendencies. The right-wing elements wanted the NBA to be composed of only one political tendency — Democratic Party reformism.

At the Dayton meeting, the Daniels leadership refused to deal with many matters of importance that delegates raised, but concerned itself mainly with railroading the election of new officers to consolidate the takeover. Because of the demands of many people present, Daniels finally agreed to take up the concerns of the Women's Caucus and other key issues including a presentation on prisoners' struggles. But when people showed up for this session, they were told it was canceled.

It was clear that Daniels, and company's "Dayton Strategy" was to completely take over the NBA and squash all aspects of its

united front character. Due to the maneuvers and attacks of the right-wing, Amiri Baraka was forced to resign as Secretary General in order to disassociate himself and CAP from the takeover.

In January 1976, NBA members from ten states and Washington, D.C., met in Pittsburgh and decided to resign from the NBA. These forces were either connected to or supported CAP. They stated their reasons for leaving as the new leadership's lack of commitment to build a Black united front, and the continuous lack of work on the many proposed programs of the NBA. They criticized the NBA leadership for its betrayal of the mandate from the Gary Convention to build a Black political movement independent from the Democratic and Republican parties. (This was soon confirmed in full when the NBA threw its weight behind the Democrat Julian Bond's candidacy for the presidency.) The resigning chapters pledged to continue to organize the masses of people and to build fighting mass organizations in their areas.

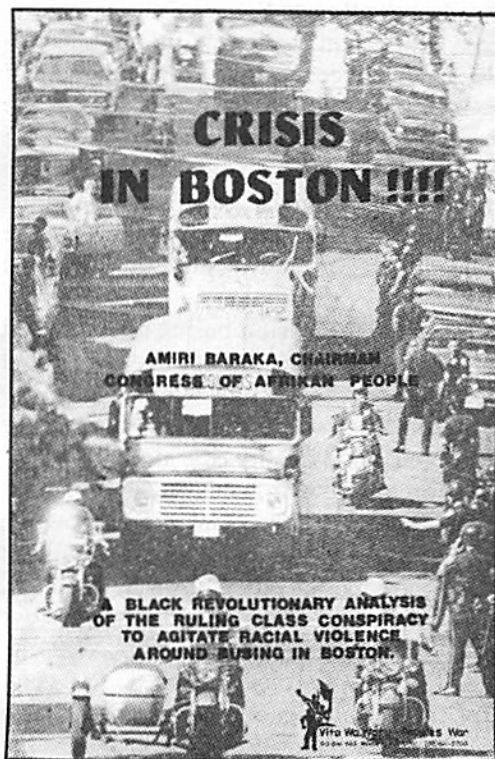
While it was correct and necessary to make a break with the sellout leaders of the NBA, it was an error for the CAP forces to completely withdraw from the NBA. There were still some mass forces left in the NBA, and CAP could have exerted some influence had it remained.

New areas of work

While these developments were taking place in established mass work and united front situations, CAP broke new ground in some other areas of work around labor issues and in the Black Liberation Movement.

CAP cadre began to work in auto plants, steel mills, foundries and mines in the Northeast and Midwest. The first major campaign around labor issues was initiated in November 1975, called Workers Solidarity Day. CAP organized demonstrations in several cities, linking the economic recession to the nature of the capitalist system and raised the need for socialist revolution as the final answer to the problems of the masses.

During 1974, CAP participated in the Boston busing struggle. This struggle was a focus of national attention as well as a key issue of struggle within the communist movement on the national question.



During 1974 the Congress of Afrikan Peoples played an active role in the Boston busing struggle, stressing the need to end the racist violence against Blacks and upholding the right of the Black community to armed self-defense. Pictured is a pamphlet by CAP on the struggle.

A mandatory busing plan ordered by a federal court was implemented in Boston in 1974. It called for the forced busing of Black school children to historically all-white schools in white working class districts in Boston. The Boston busing plan did not meet the Black masses' demands for desegregation and quality education. Rather, it further violated the Black masses' democratic rights by imposing upon them a plan that forcibly dispersed Black students into schools where the education was no better, and where a racist atmosphere had been stirred up against them. In fact, the city of Boston was ripped open as mobs of racist whites stoned the buses, attacked and beat Black children and adults. An hysterical atmosphere was fanned up by white racist forces led

by the notorious segregationist Louise Day Hicks, a South Boston slumlord and former head of the Boston School Committee.

This situation posed an important challenge for U.S. Marxist-Leninists. The struggle demanded communists take a stand and organize the masses to beat back the racist violence against the Black people of Boston, and to firmly support the struggle of the Black community against national oppression in the schools. The Boston situation required Marxist-Leninists to strive to build the multinational unity of the working class based on support for the struggle against national oppression and against the capitalist system.

CAP played an active role in the Boston busing struggle, and stressed the need to end the violent attacks on Blacks, and uphold the right of the Black community to armed self-defense. CAP saw the basic issue as one of national oppression and fighting for "democratic rights, self-defense and quality education."

CAP opposed the Boston busing plan, correctly pointing out that the plan did not serve to combat segregation or to improve the quality of education for the Black masses. CAP pointed out that the plan, being wholly conceived and handed down by the state, had no input from the Black masses. In fact it took the initiative out of the hands of the masses and gave it to the NAACP and Democratic Party. Lastly, CAP correctly stressed that communists had to fight for the multinational unity of the working class. This could only be done by taking a firm stand against national oppression and racism, and by educating white workers as to their real class interests. CAP pointed out that the schools for working class whites in South Boston were only minutely better than the Black schools, and that communists had to educate white working people to see their enemy was not Blacks but capitalism.

CAP played a major role in struggling against incorrect lines that were being put forth by different forces in the struggle. It vigorously opposed the line of the NAACP that promoted bourgeois integrationism. It also opposed the chauvinist lines of the Revolutionary Union (RU) (now the Revolutionary Communist Party) and the Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO), which attacked busing as the key issue and tailed the backward white workers who were attacking the Black masses. Both the RU and the WVO refused to support the struggles being waged by the Black community against national oppression and fascist attacks.

"ABOLITION OF EVERY POSSIBILITY OF OPPRESSION & EXPLOITATION That is our slogan!"

(A continuation of the International African Women Conference)
(held July 27, 1974)



Join with us to
Build an Anti-Racist, Anti-Capitalist,
Anti-Imperialist
BLACK WOMENS UNITED FRONT
to join the struggle of the
WORKING MASSES.



Sponsored by
Congress of African People
Youth Organization for
Black Unity
Pan-African Student
Organization in the
Americas
Black Women's Caucus
Emmanon Sisters
A. African Women
Organization Party

WORKERS! STUDENTS! ORGANIZATIONS!
North End Family Center 150 Belmont Detroit, Mich.
Saturday, January 25, 1975 10am - 10pm

1974 poster for the first meeting of the Black Womens' United Front held in Detroit.

WVO even refused to support the right of the Black community to self-defense, attacking CAP as “narrow nationalist” for raising this demand!

CAP worked to build the Black Women’s United Front (BWUF), a mass organization of Black women which developed out of the Afrikan Women’s Conference of 1974. The first meeting of the BWUF was held in January 1975, in Detroit, drawing over 600 women from all over the country. Throughout the year there would be several more such gatherings in Detroit and Atlanta.

The BWUF was an important mass organization that focused on Black women’s struggles. It was also intended to help raise the level of struggle around the woman question in CAP and in the Black Liberation Movement generally, and to win Black women to Marxism.

One notice to join a local BWUF chapter in Newark stated, “Black women workers, students, unemployed, old and young, join in and help build the local Black Women’s United Front. A fighting organization of Black women for quality education, free medical care, a shorter work day, child care for working mothers, family planning not genocide, stop killer cops, help us fight inflation, high prices and unemployment. Join in with us to struggle for the Democratic Rights and Self-determination of all Black people.”

Local chapters of the BWUF existed in many cities including Newark, the Bronx, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Detroit, South Bend, Washington, D.C., Columbia, South Carolina, Albany, and Baltimore. These local chapters got involved in a whole variety of mass issues and struggles. The Baltimore local took up a struggle against a racist policeman who raped a 15-year old Black student. The chapter conducted demonstrations, public forums, media outreach and distribution of leaflets.

Chapters in Albany and South Bend got involved in local education struggles. The Pittsburgh local fought a reactionary welfare reform law that threatened to impose gross stipulations on welfare recipients. In Washington, D.C., the BWUF got involved in prisoner support work. All over the country, BWUF chapters took up mass struggles, and did educational work around understanding the causes of women’s oppression and how to fight it. CAP’s work in the BWUF was significant as it brought out the



The Congress of Afrikan Peoples initiated the Black Women's United Front in 1975 to take up the struggle of Black women. Local chapters around the country were involved in issues concerning education, welfare rights, police brutality and others. (UNITY photo)

need to fight women's oppression, got women concretely involved in mass struggle, and did education about the nature of women's oppression as part of capitalism.

Through its work in these various struggles and continuing campaigns like Stop Killer Cops, CAP carried out Marxist education to large numbers of people. CAP successfully popularized basic Marxist-Leninist concepts about imperialism, the state, the necessity to organize and rely on the masses, the leading role of the working class, the need for multinational unity and the revolutionary role of the national movements.

CAP continued to publish its newspaper, *Unity and Struggle*. The newspaper explained CAP's development into a Marxist-Leninist organization and why it saw socialist revolution as the only solution to the oppression of the masses of people. *Unity and Struggle* also continued with topical domestic news coverage and analysis, including national politics, issues like the economy, and coverage of struggles of workers, and oppressed nationalities. There was also international coverage, especially of the third

world. The newspaper ran regular cultural features and columns.

In this period, CAP sought to place its work in the context of the anti-revisionist movement and build unity with other Marxist-Leninist forces, and struggle against opportunism. While CAP had not fully developed its line on party building, it did recognize that uniting Marxist-Leninists and party building could not be separated from communist work in the mass movement. It saw the need for principled struggle in the communist movement to arrive at a correct line. Through its work in various struggles, CAP gained a better understanding of different organizations' views.

Through the Boston busing struggle CAP learned firsthand the opportunism and chauvinism of the RU and the WVO, and recognized that the inability of the communist movement to arrive at a correct view of the national question and implement it in the mass movement was a critical weakness. Towards forging a correct line on this issue, CAP participated in forums on Boston busing held in 1974.

CAP also tried to build greater unity with various Marxist-Leninist forces. During 1974-75 for example, CAP developed some joint work with the October League (OL) although this later declined due to differences CAP had with the OL, particularly on the national question. CAP criticized the OL for tending to equate the Black masses' struggle against national oppression to bourgeois integrationism. This tendency manifested itself in the OL's line on the Boston busing struggle which tailed after the liberal reformist NAACP. CAP criticized the OL for upholding the right of self-determination for the Afro-American nation on the one hand, while at the same time stating that it opposed secession. CAP correctly maintained that to oppose, in the abstract, one of the Afro-American nation's options to self-determination was to in fact liquidate the right to self-determination.

II. Influence of the "Revolutionary Wing" — late 1975 to fall 1976

By late 1975, the so-called "Revolutionary Wing" began to form, and the lines of the "Wing" started to have an influence on CAP.

The basic unity of the "Wing" was seven idealist and metaphysical formulations which supposedly demarcated genuine "Bolshevism." The "Wing" promoted a number of ultra-left lines, although there were differences inside the leading organizations in the "Wing." For example, in the "Wing," the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Worker's Organization (PRRWO) promoted a "left" dogmatist line, saying that "party building as the central task" meant communists should not do mass work.

The Workers Viewpoint Organization, another member of the "Wing," was a counterrevolutionary organization which had conspired and maneuvered ever since its inception to wreck the communist movement. It sometimes took on a rightist line and at other times promoted a "left" line. For example, WVO liquidated the revolutionary nature of the national movements saying they were for bourgeois democratic rights. They advocated unity with the labor aristocracy under the line of "unite to expose" the union bureaucrats. In party building WVO advocated an idealist line of absolutizing theory and negating the need to link theory and practice and that practice is the sole criterion of truth. In practice WVO tailed right-wing elements and red-baited other communists in the mass movements, whipped up national chauvinism and racism towards the oppressed nationality peoples, and promoted the revisionist CPUSA and social-democratic types. WVO attacked the whole history of the revolutionary and communist movements to promote itself as the group with the "only correct line."

RCL (CAP formally changed its name to the Revolutionary Communist League (M-L-M) in 1976) was never formally a part of the "Wing" and opposed its sectarianism and the lines of the "Wing" forces on a number of key questions. The RCL engaged in vigorous debate with WVO and other forces in the "Wing" around the issue of Boston busing and their chauvinism on the Afro-American national question. Around International Working Women's Day (IWW) in 1976, RCL, I Wor Kuen (IWK) and the OL had opposed the "Wing's" opportunism. WVO united with the CPUSA's attempt to link up IWW to the international revisionist's "Women's Year" campaign for "detente" and later, WVO, PRRWO and RWL attempted to turn an IWW coalition into an arena for their own "internal" "Wing" debates.

But while RCL opposed the formation of the "Wing" and

criticized it, it was still influenced by the "Wing's" "leftism" and began to adopt much of the "Wing's" ultra-left, phrasemongering style, mistaking this style for being "revolutionary." RCL's own tendencies towards mechanicalness and dogmatism were the basis for it being influenced by the "Wing." In addition, as RCL's political lines were not all that well developed, and because it was genuinely concerned with achieving clarity and unity around questions of party building and political line, it became susceptible to the "ruthless struggle, merciless blows" atmosphere that the "Wing" created in the communist movement at that time.

RCL for example was influenced by the line of PRRWO on party building, which reduced party building to going to party building forums and studying party building completely divorced from any practical tasks or the masses.

RCL furthermore adopted a "left" line on the role of its mass organizations and mass work in general. The BWUF was put down after the "Wing" published an article by the Albanians saying they never organized a mass organization until "after the party was built." Some comrades in RCL then wanted to turn this vibrant mass organization into a study circle. The host of mass work that had always been a CAP/RCL tradition began to be liquidated. The police review board work, the Stop Killer Cops campaign, work in the ALSC, NBA and BWUF all came to an end based on the increasing ultra-leftism of the "Wing's" influence. This error had a serious impact in cutting off the ties of RCL from many of the mass elements it had historically influenced.

The "Wing's" mechanicalness and dogmatism also increased the tendency in RCL to look at its own history one-sidedly. The organization had already made the mistake of one-sidedly putting down its whole history. The "Wing" served to make RCL feel even more "guilty" about its nationalist past.

By May of 1976, as the "Wing" was breaking apart, most of RCL's time was taken up waging polemics or bearing the brunt of polemics from the "Wing." And even though the leadership of RCL confronted the "Wing" in polemics, the organization was still influenced by their line.

Finally, as a result of this "leftism," some comrades wanted to liquidate *everything* the organization had ever done, liquidate the organization's basically correct line on the national question, and said that all of the organization's lines were incorrect. Some

thought that they could solve the organization's problems by tailing after other Marxist-Leninist forces. As a result of this "leftism" people ceased to have initiative, and under a barrage of "left" phrasemongering did little or nothing. Participation in mass work and programs dried up.

Most of the organization's time at this point was taken up in meetings discussing the paper on party building that had still not been completed. Meeting after meeting was given over to this, dotting the "i's" and crossing the "t's." BWUF meetings, mass work around housing, Stop Killer Cops work — all were postponed and actually eliminated "until the organization came to a correct line around party building."

And so while a core of the organization fought the "Wing" line in its most obvious manifestations and also criticized other deviations in the Marxist-Leninist movement, the organizational processes were patterned more and more as a "left" study circle growing isolated from the masses.

During the 1976 period of discussion and struggle around party building, *Unity and Struggle* ceased to come out regularly.

III. Breaking with the "left" line and rectification — fall 1976 to present

Finally, after a long series of meetings, RCL's paper on party building did appear. And though there were still obvious traces of influence by the "Wing," sections of the paper were the basis for a pamphlet criticizing the "leftism" of the "Wing." This was outlined in September 1976 and entitled, "PRRWO and RWL: Not a Revolutionary Wing, but a Dangerous Duo." This marked RCL's formal break with the "Wing's" "leftism," even though aspects of it were to last for some time to come. But this was a break and a commitment by RCL to fight against the negative effects of the "Wing's" "leftism," sectarianism and dogmatism.

Development of political line

This paper in particular criticized the view that all participation in mass struggles was "bowing to spontaneity" and detracted

from party building. It also criticized the line that mass organizations should be turned into study circles and forums for “communist polemics” divorced from the real life issues facing the masses of people. The paper criticized the view that ideological struggle and development of a correct political line are two “separate stages” in party building. It concretely stated that the struggle for a correct line meant integrating the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought with the concrete conditions in the U.S. — to answer the concrete questions posed by the revolutionary struggle.

Later, the organization further elaborated its line on party building, the international and domestic situation, the Afro-American national question and trade union question. Over the next two years, as the organization tried to criticize and make a deeper break with various “left” lines it held, more correct views were clarified and adopted.

One important struggle that took place was to analyze the “gang of four” in China and uphold and defend the Communist Party of China (CPC) under the leadership of Chairman Hua Guofeng. The RCL leadership correctly opposed the “gang of four” and supported the CPC and Chairman Hua, but there was some struggle to unite the organization around this due to the remaining influences of the “Wing.”

This was an important struggle for the organization because it aided in defeating the influence of the “Wing.” RCL recognized that the “gang of four” held a similar ultra-left line as the “Wing.” It recognized similarities in the “gang of four’s” and the “Wing’s” metaphysics and idealism, sectarianism, and dogmatism.

Similarly, some comrades still under the influence of the “Wing” opposed Chairman Mao’s theory of three worlds, and this too had to be struggled out. RCL correctly supported the theory of three worlds, recognizing that it is based on the actual concrete realities of the current international situation. RCL recognized that the opponents of the three worlds theory, which included the “Wing” (or what was left of it), held to a metaphysical view, proceeding “from abstraction to abstraction denying the obvious real life situation in the world today.”

RCL defended the theory of three worlds from attacks by both the ultra-leftists as well as centrists and revisionists. RCL pointed

out that the three worlds theory “sets the basis for a world united front against imperialism, showing who are the proletariat’s friends and who are the enemies, who is the main danger and what the strategy and tactics are for the world proletarian revolution,” and that the third world is the main force in the struggle against the two superpowers. RCL criticized the ultra-left view that refused to support efforts by the second world countries to strengthen their independence from the superpowers or the struggles on the part of third world countries for independence — even those third world countries ruled by “reactionaries.”

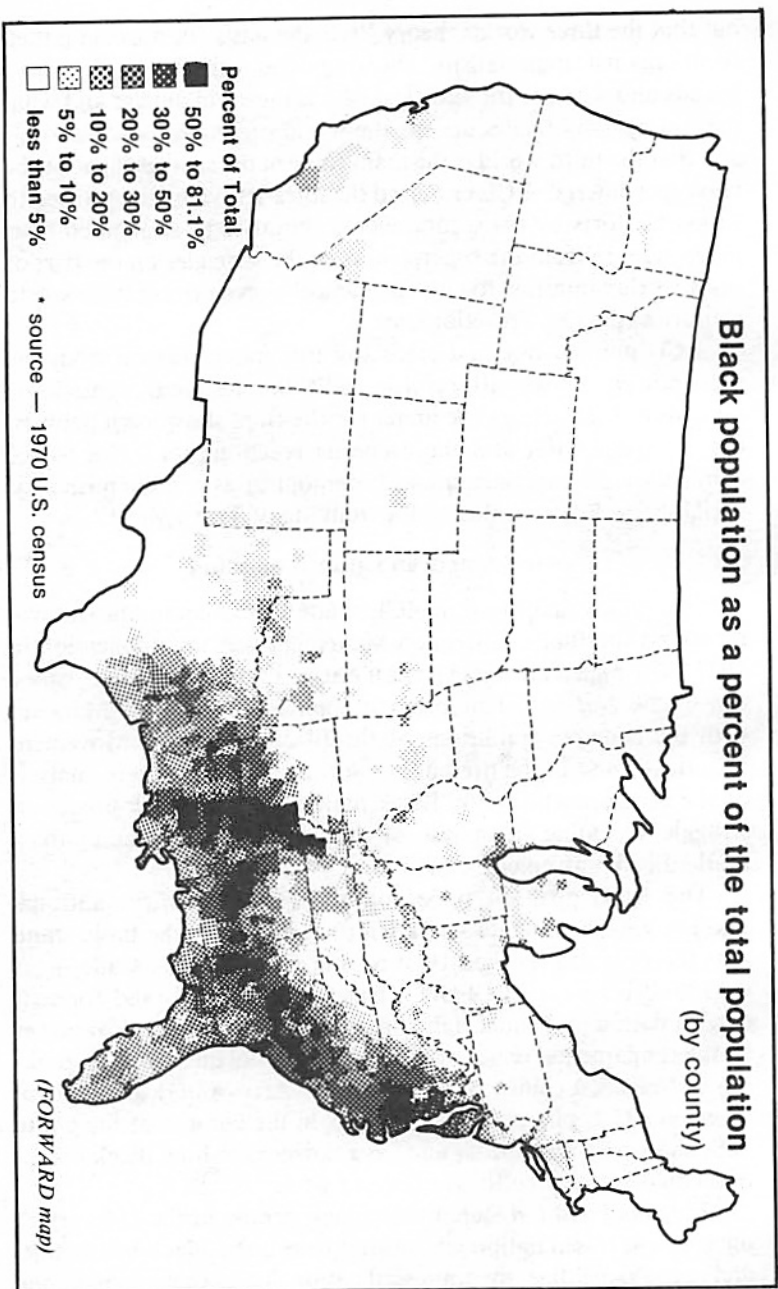
RCL pointed out that steps towards independence from the superpowers, “like all reforms and the national democratic revolution itself, clears the arena for the final showdown between the . . . proletariat and the domestic reactionaries. Not to see elimination of imperialism and hegemonism as a prerequisite for socialist revolution is akin to the thinking of Trotskyites!”

Afro-American national question

One major contribution RCL made to the communist movement and the Black Liberation Movement was the publication in 1977 of a paper on the Afro-American national question called *The Black Nation*. This paper attempted to integrate Marxism with the concrete conditions of the Black Liberation Movement historically and in the present period. It made a concrete analysis of the development of the Black nation and the Black liberation struggle, including an analysis of classes and their role and impact on the Black movement.

The RCL position paper on the Afro-American national question gave a concrete and scientific analysis to the basic stand that the organization had been raising for the past decade — as CAP and before it as CFUN. This was the basic stand for self-determination and equal rights, for revolution and political power — the fundamental issues of the Black national question. By making a Marxist-Leninist analysis of the Afro-American national question, RCL placed these questions in the context of the entire U.S. and world revolution, and gave clarity as to how Black liberation could actually be fought for and won.

The Black Nation stated that Black people in the U.S. are at once an oppressed nation whose land base is the Black-belt South, and at the same time, an oppressed nationality in other areas of the



U.S. These other areas where Blacks live in concentrations exist in about 26 major cities with populations over 100,000. There, Black people are redeposited in ghetto versions of the Black-belt, reinforcing or extending the national character of their lives throughout the U.S.

RCL correctly stressed that the heart of the Afro-American national question was the struggle for self-determination and equal rights. It is a struggle for political power — for Black political power. Thus, RCL stressed “we are anti the bogus line of imperialist assimilation or ‘integration’ as pushed by the bourgeoisie; because these are used to oppose the democratic rights and political ‘control’ of Black people” In addition to fighting for self-determination for the Afro-American nation in the Black-belt South, RCL put forth that the struggle of Blacks living outside of the Black nation was one for political control of those areas where they are a majority, i.e., some form of regional or administrative autonomy.

The RCL paper outlined the development of the Black nation historically and attempted to trace the development of classes economically. The paper linked these to the role of various classes in the Black Liberation Movement. This was a contribution towards a Marxist-Leninist class analysis of the Afro-American people. It showed that the democratic sentiments of the petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie formed a basis for a united front and helped to concretely show why only the working class is capable of leading the Black liberation struggle through to a revolutionary conclusion.

Another important contribution of the RCL paper was its understanding of the relationship between the demand for self-determination and the struggle for socialism. RCL recognized that a common error by some Marxists on the national question was to belittle or negate the struggle for self-determination and against national oppression, with the view that everything was a struggle for socialism. RCL put forth a correct view which saw the distinct character of the national movement as being a democratic struggle for self-determination, but also recognizing the *revolutionary* character of this struggle in the era of imperialism. The struggle for self-determination furthermore must be a component part of the struggle of the proletariat for socialist revolution because national oppression is a pillar of imperialist rule and op-

pression, and because the struggles of the oppressed peoples are a powerful ally of the working class. The struggles are aimed at a common enemy, the monopoly capitalist class. RCL stated that "our slogans must touch the thrust for equal rights and self-determination, but seek to join the Black Liberation Movement with the movement for proletarian revolution. But we should not make Black liberation appear that it is an 'automaton of socialism,' rather that the struggle for Black liberation is a part of the struggle for socialist revolution."

Mass work

During 1977 and 1978, the organization resumed its mass work as a result of criticizing the "Wing's" influence, and struggle within the organization.

An important area of mass work was in the Black community and in the Black Liberation Movement.

RCL began to work in the Black United Front (BUF) in New York City in 1978. The Black United Front was a mass organization led by the Reverend Herbert Daughtry, a progressive Black minister from Brooklyn. The BUF brought together a broad cross section of forces in the Black community and the Black movement against national oppression, and in particular in the struggle against police brutality in New York. The BUF led demonstrations of tens of thousands of people protesting the police murders of Blacks throughout the city. It grew in just a few years to wield enormous influence in the Black movement in New York.

RCL joined Black United Front chapters in several boroughs in New York and did mass work around police brutality as well as other issues the BUF was involved in, such as housing. The organization attempted to build greater unity with various other class forces and nationalist forces working in the BUF. At the same time RCL criticized incorrect views such as narrow nationalism and put forth its own independent line on why it upheld Marxism-Leninism and multinational unity. Although there were twists and turns, RCL was able to establish a principled relationship with other forces and gain the respect of activists and masses because of the consistent work it did. RCL's stand and practice distinguished itself from sham Marxist-Leninists like the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and Workers Viewpoint



In 1978, the Revolutionary Communist League began to work with the Black United Front of New York, especially around the issue of police brutality. (UNITY photo)

Organization (WVO) who both tried to wreck and split the BUF in 1979. This caused some confusion about the nature of communism and multinational unity since the RCP and WVO both mouthed these concepts. RCL pointed out that RCP and WVO were not genuine communists as they attacked the BUF and the mass movement. RCL pointed out that neither RCP nor WVO stood for the unity of all oppressed peoples as each has a long history of chauvinism towards the struggles of oppressed nationality peoples.

RCL also participated in other mass struggles against Black national oppression. One important struggle was around the education crisis in Newark.

In 1977, RCL had developed some work in the strike of cafeteria and maintenance workers in the Newark schools. In 1978, their work in the schools escalated and RCL successfully organized a People's Committee on Education. This committee led a militant movement opposing budget cutbacks and the removal of art, music, physical education, recreation programs, and library services from the Newark elementary schools. RCL also waged struggle with the WVO which consistently undermined the struggle by taking anti-communist stands, splitting the committee, and opposing putting out any militant propaganda from the committee.

In Pittsburgh, RCL participated in a struggle protesting the police murder of a Black youth, Richard Hayes. It also participated in the Anti-Bakke Decision Coalition around organizing the East Coast tour of the United League, a fighting Black mass organization in Mississippi.

During the summer of 1979, RCL played a leading role in a defense committee for Amiri Baraka who was beaten by police and then arrested on phony charges. The Baraka Defense Committee linked this case with the issue of Black national oppression and drew mass support in Newark and New York.

In addition to getting involved in these mass struggles, RCL also held a number of activities in the Black Liberation Movement aimed at propagating a communist line on the Afro-American national question. RCL held conferences on the Afro-American national question in Detroit, Harlem, Pittsburgh and St. Louis. It also worked on commemorative programs on the rebellions in Newark and Detroit.



Hundreds of supporters turned out to demand that the false charges against Amiri Baraka be dropped. The Baraka Defense Committee (now the People's Defense Committee) linked the case with the issue of Black oppression and drew mass support from Newark and New York. (UNITY photo)

During this period RCL also did work in the labor movement. The organization took up the day-to-day struggles of the workers on the shop floor and in various movements for greater union democracy, particularly in the auto and steel industries in the Midwest and East. It also developed some work in the coal mines.

RCL participated in the formation and building of rank and file caucuses that fought for workers' demands like affirmative action. In auto, RCL participated in struggles around discrimination, job conditions, the 1979 auto contracts, and some local union elections.

Revolutionary cultural work

During this same period, RCL made fresh contributions to building revolutionary culture in the U.S. movement. It developed and encouraged revolutionary cultural work in a number of cities, linking the newly revitalized cultural movement with the working class and oppressed nationality peoples' struggles. RCL stressed the important role of revolutionary culture for the mass movement and the dangers of allowing bourgeois art and culture — which poison the minds of the masses by spreading individualism, pessimism and chauvinism, and apologies for capitalism and imperialism — to thrive with only scattered and spontaneous opposition. Based on this view, RCL organized numerous cultural activities and groups.

One of the most successful cultural activities that was held as part of this work was a Black Writers Conference sponsored by *Unity and Struggle* in February 1978, at the Rutgers University, Newark campus. Featured were four Black writers, Nathan Heard, author of *Howard Street*; Amiri Baraka, poet and playwright; Claude Brown, author of *Manchild in a Promised Land*; and Richard Wesley, screen writer of two well-known Sidney Poitier films, *Uptown Saturday Night* and *Let's Do It Again*. The four writers led writers' workshops, a forum, and read from their writings to a capacity audience of 400 people.

The Black Writers Conference concretely addressed questions facing progressive and revolutionary Black writers today. A central part of the discussion was the question of self-determination of the Afro-American nation in the Black-belt South, how the Black Arts movement had historically reflected the Black liberation struggle, and how the struggle of Black writers is directly con-



In St. Louis, RCL helped start the Proletarian Ensemble in 1977, a dynamic musical group which performs revolutionary songs in a popular style. (UNITY photo)

nected to the Black Liberation Movement as a whole. The Conference also took up questions like the nature of the publishing business, how it operates like any other capitalist enterprise, and how it is impossible for the majority of writers, especially Black writers and certainly revolutionary writers, to make a living from writing.

RCL helped form the Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union (AICU) in New York, as a multinational cultural worker's organization. RCL strived to build AICU as a cultural organization that would be linked to the mass movements of the working class and oppressed nationalities. AICU sponsored a successful Festival of People's Culture in November 1978, where 500 people came to hear poets like Askia Toure, Yusef Iman, Miguel Algarin and Sylvia Jones; singers and musicians like the Proletarian Ensemble; and revolutionary films and drama.

The most active group in the AICU was the Yenon Theater Workshop, which produced the play by Amiri Baraka, *What was the Lone Ranger's Relationship to the Means of Production?* and



Play by N.M. Davidson, El Hajj Malik, performed in May 1979 in Detroit. The play portrays experiences in Malcolm's life which laid the basis for his revolutionary ideas. In this scene, an unwelcome social worker "comes like the plague" to the home of poor Blacks. (UNITY photo)

the collectively written *Images of Struggle and Revolution*. The Yen-an Workshop was able to involve many cultural workers and helped them see their cultural work in the context of the progressive and revolutionary movement.

RCL also made contributions to the cultural movement in other areas. In Detroit, RCL was active in the Detroit Black Arts movement. In July 1978, *Unity and Struggle* sponsored a cultural event called "Hard Facts — an evening of Revolutionary Culture" which featured local poets, actors and actresses. There was also a dramatic presentation of combined scenes from two of Amiri Baraka's recent plays, *S-1* and *The Motion of History*, as well as musical performances.

In 1979, RCL worked with local actors in Detroit and produced the play by N.M. Davidson, *El Hajj Malik*, about the life of Malcolm X. Activities like these helped lay the basis for forging the People's Theater Movement in Detroit.

In St. Louis, RCL participated in founding and building the Proletarian Ensemble, a dynamic musical group which performs revolutionary songs in a popular style. The Advanced Workers was another musical group active in Newark.

Unity and Struggle also continued to run many articles and features on revolutionary culture including reviews, original work, and news of the cultural movement.

Through these various efforts, RCL made important contributions in both developing and spreading progressive and revolutionary culture, as well as in bringing cultural workers into the people's movement.

In 1978 and 1979, RCL began to carry out more systematic relations and discussions with other Marxist-Leninist organizations, seeking to determine areas of unity, and struggling over areas of difference. RCL held as its central task the construction of a genuine, vanguard communist party and in this context saw the struggle for Marxist-Leninist unity as an essential component of party building. During this period, RCL established systematic relations with the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L), and went through a successful process of forging Marxist-Leninist unity on all major points of political line and summing up each organization's history. In September 1979, the RCL and LRS merged into one organization, the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L). □

Conclusion

The history of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples/Revolutionary Communist League (M-L-M) is a revolutionary history. It is a history of the contemporary Black Liberation Movement as well as the contemporary anti-revisionist communist movement. It is the history of the development and fusion of these two movements, and represents an advance towards that goal. That is its most important lesson.

Throughout the course of the development of the CAP/RCL, one thing that always remains clear is that it was an organization committed to the task of making revolution in America, of changing the basic structure of this society. From the early years with the call for Black Power and Black consciousness, to the struggle to link the Black Liberation Movement to the revolutionary struggles on the African continent and throughout the third world, to the struggle to organize the working class and unite the movement for Black freedom with the struggle for socialist revolution, it has been a revolutionary history.

It is reflective of the struggles of the Black masses for revolution. The development of CAP/RCL is living proof that the struggle for Black liberation will not be confined to reforms. It will not be stopped within the confines of the American capitalist system, but will continue to strive for real liberation.

It is also reflective of the twists and turns that the revolutionary movement must go through as a part of its process of development. It reflects the struggle for revolutionary truth, discovered through struggle. And so the various ideological trends and tendencies that CAP/RCL was influenced by, from the *Kawaida* doctrine of Ron Karenga to the dogmatic and mechanical "Marxism" of the so-called "Revolutionary Wing," should be seen in that light. It was a search for revolutionary truth. The fact that CAP/RCL was able to develop past certain negative influences and break with them shows the strength of the mass movement itself. It shows the ability of the masses to fight through all of the

various obstacles in its path and continue to march forward on the revolutionary road.

In the course of its history, CAP/RCL made many errors. But these errors must be viewed in the light of the developing struggle for revolution. Certainly, the overwhelming aspect of the development was positive, and at each step overcoming the errors added to the strength of the organization. In the course of its development CAP/RCL made many friends. And in some cases the errors that were made alienated some of these friends. The summation and study of the history of the organization has helped to put that, too, in its proper perspective and hopefully many of those people will be able to understand what has happened and contribute to the further development of the organization and the movement.

The struggle of CAP/RCL to contribute to making revolution in the United States, and becoming a Marxist-Leninist organization engaged in the process to build a new revolutionary communist party, holds many lessons for the overall movement. The dynamics of the Black Liberation Movement and the anti-revisionist communist movement are somewhat revealed in this history. The importance of the many communist activists who came out of the Black Liberation Movement as well as the other national movements must be upheld as being of major significance to understanding the U.S. revolution. This history is a tool towards that end.

The summation of the CAP/RCL history was of major importance for the comrades of CAP/RCL in order to draw out its years of valuable experience. It is also of major importance for the entire communist movement in understanding the relationship between the Black Liberation Movement and the struggle for socialism.

Hopefully this history will also be used by Black Liberation Movement activists as a tool for summing up other aspects of the Black Liberation Movement of the last 20 years, and drawing lessons from the experiences of other Black Liberation Movement organizations and tendencies. This is a major step towards having a deeper grasp of the revolutionary process of development in this country and moving forward.

The struggle to unite the RCL and the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L) shows again the determination of revolutionaries

to unite and actually make revolution in America. It is an important and historic step in the process of building a new communist party. The method used to unite the two organizations also shows that principled unity can be achieved between Marxist-Leninists. The similarities in the history of the two organizations show the strength of the national movements as a part of the revolutionary struggle in this country, and the determination to link together those movements and the overall struggle of the working class for revolution.

The history of the CAP/RCL is a revolutionary history. It is a history of the contemporary Black Liberation Movement as well as the contemporary communist movement. It is the history of the struggle to fuse these two movements and represents an advance towards that goal. It is now a part of the revolutionary history of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L), and we move forward enriched and strengthened by it. □

Footnotes

Preface

1. The League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L) was founded in September 1978, out of the merger of two Marxist-Leninist organizations, the August 29th Movement (M-L) (ATM) and I Wor Kuen (IWK). For the histories of ATM and IWK, and the basic political line of the League, see the book, *Founding Statements of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L)*.

Introduction

1. "God's Judgment of White America," *Malcolm X The End of White World Supremacy*, Benjamin Goodman, Editor, (New York, New York: Merlin House, Inc., 1971) p. 145.
2. "The Black Revolution," *Malcolm X Speaks*, George Breitman, Editor, (New York, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1966), p. 49.
3. Within the Black Panther Party there were also incorrect tendencies. They later held the view, for example, that the "lumpen proletariat," and not the working class, was the vanguard of the revolution. The "lumpen proletariat" are the declassed elements who live parasitically off of the laboring masses through criminal activity like dealing drugs or pimping. They can be won to support the revolution, but they are also a base of support for imperialism. The Panthers actually largely were referring to "street" elements who were not all lumpen, but rather permanently unemployed Black youth.

Chapter One

1. The Black Arts Alliance consisted of the Black Student Union of San Francisco State and Black Arts West, with Ed Bullins, Marvin X and others.
2. The *Kawaida* promoted a "Black Value System" as found in the "Nguzo Saba," or the Seven Principles:
 - 1) *Umoja* (Unity) — To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.
 - 2) *Kujichagulia* (Self-determination) — To define ourselves, name ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined and spoken for by others.
 - 3) *Ujima* (Collective work and responsibility) — To build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them together.

- 4) *Ujamaa* (Cooperative economics) — To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit together from them.
- 5) *Nia* (Purpose) — To make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.
- 6) *Kuumba* (Creative) — To do always as much as we can, in the way we can in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it.
- 7) *Imani* (Faith) — To believe with all our heart in our parents, our teachers, our leaders, our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.
3. The first Black Power Conference had been organized by Adam Clayton Powell in 1966 in Washington, D.C., as a small gathering. It, however, attracted a great deal of attention, particularly because Powell called on Blacks to seek “Audacious Power.” The Black power conferences became a tradition which ran until the end of the 1960’s. In 1967 the Black Power Conference was held in Newark, New Jersey, in 1968 in Philadelphia, in 1969 in Bermuda in a smaller form because of interference from the state, and in 1970, the Black Power Conference became the founding meeting of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples.
- At each of the conferences, Blacks from all over the country and the world would attend, including some of the best-known activists and militants. Essentially they were meetings of a broad united front of forces in the Black national movement, and were organized along lines that were supposedly most relevant to Black people. There were workshops in politics, economics, education, creativity, etc., and supposedly there was an elected continuations committee to see that whatever resolutions were passed in each workshop were brought to reality. But this did not happen with consistency, which is why in 1970 the Congress of Afrikan Peoples was formed.
4. The powerful Black national movement of the 1960’s gave rise to this increased Black political representation. In 1973, the Joint Center for Political Studies in Washington, D.C., would report that more than 3,000 Black elected officials were serving on local, state and national levels. This was a 19% increase since 1969. Prior to this period, Black people had barely any political representation. For example, there were no Blacks in Congress between 1901 and 1945. There has been only one Black Senator since the time of Black Reconstruction (Brooke — 1967, when rebellions were at a high point); and only six Black congressmen between 1945 and 1965. Of the present 16 Black congressmen, half were elected since 1971. These reforms in increas-

ing Black political representation demonstrated during these years the powerful force of the Black national movement in the American political arena. But even still, Black people, who are 15% of the U.S. population, account for less than 1% of all elected officials in the U.S.

Chapter Two

1. Ideological Statement of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples, adopted by delegates in attendance of the first annual meeting.
2. *Strategy and Tactics of a Pan Africanist Nationalist Party*, from the founding congress of the Congress of Afrikan Peoples.
3. Finally in 1974, the building of Kawaida Towers was ready to be resumed. But in that period, inflation sent prices up 12% — an additional \$600,000 was needed to meet the original budget. The Department of Community Affairs refused this money, saying Kawaida Towers should be cut to eight stories and that one- and two-bedroom apartments would be eliminated and replaced with “efficiency” apartments. This would have made it impossible for working class families to live there. At this point CAP disassociated itself with the project.
4. At the Miami Democratic Party Convention, members of the Caucus and the majority of the Black delegates threw their support to McGovern. Others, for tactical reasons, gave their vote to Shirley Chisholm and Humphrey. CAP was pushing a different emphasis in the Black delegate caucus: the need for forming a national Black political assembly as a mechanism for the Black power struggle. And while there was a vote taken to form the Assembly, the formation of an independent mass united front was never the politician’s real intent.
5. *Strategy and Tactics of a Pan Africanist Nationalist Party*, pp. 16–18.
6. The Alkalimat/Johnson paper stated openly that there is no Black nation and the the Black struggle should be mainly that of workers.
7. SPEDY was a federally funded program to provide summer jobs for youth.
8. Later “Leo Baraka” was totally eliminated.



REVOLUTIONARY POETRY FROM THE BLACK LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Scene from the Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union's production of Amiri Baraka's play, What was the Lone Ranger's Relationship to the Means of Production? (Photo: AICU)

Afternoon Autoworker

Pili (Michael L. Humphrey)

a clock waits to be
punched.
it stands
waiting with the
same blank look
you left it with
a few short short hours ago,
and the day before
and the 4 or 5 before that.
driving along
you see the
wooden windows
of unoccupied houses
while your mind drifts off
to wonder
why won't they
give them to
people in need of housing.
you look by habit
at the gas gage
and curse the goddamn price of gas
looking out the window
you see a brother and sister
huddled together
at the bus stop
shaking and waiting
against the snow and wind
you know they've got 20 minutes or so
before the bus gets there
the better side of you says
stop and offer them a lift,
but the side of you conditioned
by american life
by individualistic images
thrown at you everyday
in the paper, on the t.v. etc.
makes you ride on,
disappointed in yourself
and upset with how fucked up
things are.
you greet your friends going in the gate
and exchange hellos
smiles and the brief news
you've heard since last you saw each other.

on the line you cuss,
the tools, the line, the job, the foreman
and any and everything else.
smoke a joint, have a drink, cool out
listen to the bullshit,
"did you hear jerry got killed," "hey man, you
still fucking that chick upstairs,"
"this dude on the trim line got the bomb smoke,"
"you hear that foreman in the
back got his ass kicked,"
"who won the football game"
and on and on
like a record playing
over and over again
like old reruns shown on
late night t.v.
you want to change the station.
you run to the phone on
your break
to call your loved one
to hear someones voice
who cares about you,
make you feel better
takes your mind
off the shit for
10 min. or so.
the clock waits to be
punched
again
the blank stare comes not
only from the clock,
but some of those around you
look thru eyes
that stopped shining
an hour after the shift started
you look around and say outloud,
"this shit is fucked up"
even tho you weren't speaking
to anyone in particular
you hear low sounds of agreement,
whistle blows
the rhythm of the cards
being punched
reminds you of an offbeat drummer.
into the parking lot
to see the folks speeding
away,
different directions

same life.
you open the door
to the crib
and the quietness reminds you
of days alone
wanting to have someone to come home to.
a plate waits in the oven
a beer sits in the box.
you look in on your kids and think
they'll be gone when i get
up and i'll be gone when
they get home form school.
your woman lays sleeping
and even tho you want to talk
you don't wake her
turn on the T.V.
nothing really worth watching
but the sound keeps you company,
sitting down to eat and drink your beer
your mind reflects
on everything it registered
today
slowly at first
then it races
to other days
like that one
and the strike 2 years ago
and the communist meeting you went to
and the marches and demonstrations
you saw and heard about
and the revolutions
that you read about
at different times
in your life,
and the thoughts light a fire
in you and
you are excited
and alive and want to know more
your mind burns
but the connection is
made,
you lay down to sleep
feeling restful
but still excited
looking forward to greeting
your fellow workers,
you whisper to yourself
"tomorrow you come too slow"

9 Hours 6 Days

Pill (Michael L. Humphrey)

something, somebody says
wake up —
alarm clock sun blowing through the window
wife, husband, children
get up.
body still begging for rest
mind wants some peace —
get up.
run to the bank, the store, get the car fixed pay some bills
time to go to work.
punch in
work, work, work, moreworkmoreworkfasterworkmoreworkmore
workfaster work. . . .
punch out.
go home.
eat (maybe), shower, drink a beer,
look in on your children,
kiss your loved ones while they sleep,
in the morning they'll do the same for you
payday thursday —
more work friday, saturday,
sunday need to rest
but,
things to do.
9 hours 6 days,
your life shrinks up
everybody gets on your nerves
pain in your body
mind wants some peace
need some time to
introduce yourself
to your children,
see your lady or your man
9 hours 6 days
your life breaks up
money good need the money
but damn
need to rest
mind wants some peace

children want to see you
your baby is lonely for you too,
9 hours 6 days
sending you to the grave
and the capitalists
pass out some applications
and make arrangements
for your children
to meet you on the assembly line.

june 78

Black Blood Runs Red

Pili (Michael L. Humphrey)

we have tasted the salt
of the atlantic
and the sweat from our labor
and the tears of our pain

we have carried the scars
of slaveries chains
and chain gang shackled
and broken heads and bodies

we have felt the earth tremble
when we have attacked our oppressors
and we have wished our
martyrs peace.

we have been welcomed to the North
by the deafening sound of industrial machine
and kissed the southern soil hello
when we go down home.

We have fought — battles on all fronts
against slavery for freedom
against lynchers for life
against landlords for land
against liars for truth
against hunger for food
against unemployment for jobs
against ignorance for knowledge
against capitalism for our humanity
against all that is against us and for all that we need
we have fought and fought
yet our weary army fights on still seeking final victory

Dots, and yellow
flowers

We were there alone with the kids
we spotted them from the road, dark faces the sun
got sucked
in
to

Full of great black energy like their running
is hurrahs really the promise in our suffering
their glitter is our reason
for right now struggling continuing
to struggle
to see
& blow our horns
& talk about
Free.

We watched, & looked, all around.
We waved, and hunched
each other, that we, each other
were there
& laughing, slowly now, still cool
In new
surroundings
(and the slightly covered
hostility of these towns —
we are all carrying
knives!

And some
with
whiskey
(we wdn't smoke

And yeh, we knew each other
went to school, my wife
& this sister in the other
bleacher
together

& got together
then

stretching the feeling between us
dug up new life

till we talked in unison
about history, children, baseball
until the bus came with the white team
(hey they had a couple bloods
w/ Vburg this year

We understood again the separation
the need for the black nation to be free
we looked back at the field & remembered
it was only
baseball.

But the hair stood on our neck
with air of con-
frontation

It was a contest,
we knew
the odds
they dont spend no money
on
our
kids,

they got their uniforms
this afternoon, just before
they drove up here.

All Stars!
little boys
suffering the dredges
of capitalism.

By the time the game began
some people
were already wet lipped & giggling
started talking loud. this is the little league
im talking about. up to age 12, but their parents &
friends, & brothers and sisters
can be older. . .

They sd play ball
we had managed to laugh
with each other. And even when
the white parents came, we didnt feel
anything, just seeing some people, distant across
the field show up, and sit behind the other dugout.
Named after an english crazy man, sir assbreath nutley,
it is a refuge
for technically occupied
space

class essences?? (inter cept
con cepts
lower depths
killed for
debts. treasury john
me mugger's
eyes, 11% inflation
leaflets stuffed up his nose
an afternoon, of Beisbol!!

The score surged back

& forth, the white boys won
& their rascally colored
friends
Can you all ways make it afternoon?

Our talk and laughter
surges
back & forth, the funny wind
batting
its
eyes

Our kids ran, and got
mad. They got some hits
and slid, and scored

This aint even a very slick neighborhood
but money talks
and we could rarely
get a walk
but we kept walking
them.

The brother meanwhile talked of Gibson
& other

nuts, & what happened to you
(about the killer cops)
& asked your reporter
to run
for mayor

that wdnt work, we'll get
someone

until the white boys
hd scored bunches of runs and led
11 to 6, going into
the last inning.

We had had bravado
& noise, in stretches
even up in the not even woods
our sons had tears
in their eyes/ at the end
taught white supremacy, the hard way
a stadium, with announcer, groundkeeper, and electric
scoreboard —

unable to be spared that
even on a cool bright day
even by the middleclass negro
who heads up our league
or his wife, who coaches
our tiny all stars
or their son
who plays,
second base
none of these
cd help much
their
message

((is it an sos in bubbles
you know, an un-coola

is it the tears of little boys
like mine, who did not even
play, and brought half their tribe up
to see, they know they can

the message, out there just beyond Newark
where it aint even got good yet
the dark brown woman passed the bottle
thru her brother to me
and we let em know who we cared
about — they were our children
we gonna raise em
we gonna help em
this ain the end

she was holding her own tears back
I aint done much with my
life, walking away with us
her son was starting pitcher
got knocked/ out the box
you see she was telling us about the case
I want to help, and you all come to dinner
chicken and greens, get down afroamerican style
I've got to do something, you know, to make things
better, for my children (the kids were hanging their heads

but they'll come back
we all wanted to say
like the sun does
and we stood and talked, and managed laughs
like we do, anyway, until
the kids
came'

we'll see you
we hoped we would
like the strength we exchanged
we know its real

& then back
on the hiways
would yall but understand
the orchestration of the situation
the machinations in hi stations the scum that control
the wealth
of the
nation

Our little boys tears
are enough
dont you think. Their hot disgust
that they cd be beaten/ by white
boys
like they had dollar bills
for bats
& grins banging
like cash
registers

It is enough, all you different kind of negroes
& colored people
you afro americans, and black afternoon blue tinged
singers
& laborers
it is enough, meaning, catch what light there is as you wave
& hug the little dudes just a split second
close
if you cd teach them, reality, so their eyes wd dry and fly
open, the future, you know
wd be, hpper than this . . . much much hipper

A Black Belt Montage

Baron James Ashanti

Dusk walks a red rimmed spectre
across
nerves cranked into tight rope
sway
beneath summer eaves of blistering
heat —

Where resistance flaws crystal
silence
a scuffling moon-rise confronts
shotgun and scattershot that drips
on the china berry's lilac flame
sweeping the country road with
fragrance at harvest/

A black skyline facial crease touches
the whisper of gunsmoke and smiles
at the frustrated rancor of old
cotton eyed joe being whisked away by
everyday acts of heroism/

There's trouble in tupelo — men & women
dark of hue refuse the old rugged
cross crackling with hatred where
christian fellowship is tragic realism
while jimmy carter's "born again"
justice becomes a mock trial of
freedom . . . mississippi and the
tradition of caste — the mission school
chump change spent on the worlds'
edge

pitted against the current of the
whirlpool's first water and mahogany
peasant stock offer a peep-hole
bullet singe for klansmens' hoods. . .
the new south rumbles in disbelief as
the united league stings the reign
of racist cowards like a mosquito and
old jim crow has come down with a fatal
case of malaria/

Red Poem

Sylvia Jones

I'm gonna
throw my head back
and holler
me a red
poem
red on white
red on black
red on yellow
red on brown

red on red
poem
I'm gonna
sing
a red poem
that will
guide
advanced workers
to science

a red poem
that will
arm the people

I wanna
throw my head back
cry out
my mind

screaming
a mighty
bright red
poem
that will
organize
multi-colors
of people

a red poem
that would
reach
the black belt
south
singing

liberation for the Afro-american nation!

a gunfire
red poem
burning down the bourgeoisie's ass
calling out

free Puerto Rico!

a blood
red poem
that will
be
heard
in South Africa
chanting
armed struggle is the only solution!
free zimbabwe!

yeah, yeah.....

a red poem
fighting both superpowers

a sun red poem
relying on the revolutionary people

a red poem
that could be
sung around the world

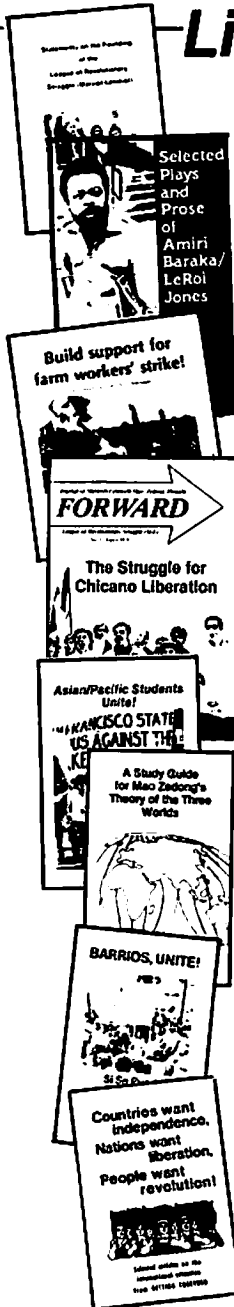
a real
red poem
will shoot
& kill
the enemy

Yeah, yeah, yeah,

a red red poem

uhuh
a red poem
we can
sing till
the
whole
world
is
forged
a communist red

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