



YSA

**DISCUSSION
BULLETIN**

Vol. 8 No. 2
October 1964

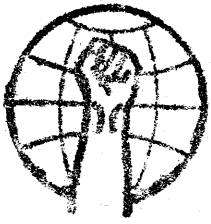
CONTENTS

Draft Resolution on the Negro Struggle

10 ¢

Young Socialist Alliance

P.O. Box 471, Cooper Station, New York 3, New York



YSA

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Vol. 8 No. 2
October 1964

CONTENTS

Draft Resolution on the Negro Struggle

10 ¢

Young Socialist Alliance

P.O. Box 471, Cooper Station, New York 3, New York

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE NEGRO STRUGGLE

The Deepening of the Struggle

The Freedom Now movement continues to deepen in consciousness and methods. New leaders are coming to the fore with concepts of more radical action; the most important of these are developing a revolutionary perspective for the struggle. The last year has seen actions of a mass character, with increased participation by the Negro masses of the ghettos: school boycotts, rent strikes, and mass demonstrations. These actions have brought a confrontation between Negroes and big city governments—run for the most part by the Democrats—over the issues of education, welfare, housing, jobs, and police brutality. They have helped expose the ruling class; they have made it more costly for the ruling class to maintain discrimination; and they have helped to show the potential power of an organized Afro-American minority to change society.

In the Northern ghettos, a conscious nationalist leadership is developing which projects forms of struggle and a determination to lead and control black organizations without the help of "good" white people regardless of what they say about it. GOAL in Detroit, Malcolm X's Muslim Mosque and the OAAU in New York and the Freedom Now Party nuclei are examples of the black nationalist organizations which have grown up.

The big city ghettos of the South, as in the North, are the strategic centers of a potentially powerful Negro movement. But as of now, none of the established Southern organizations has secured a base in or offered a program for the big city Southern ghettos, although they have led actions and demonstrations which have drawn the ghetto masses into action. The Southern ghetto masses tend to go beyond the "non-violent" limits set by groups like the SCLC, CORE and even SNCC, and meet racist violence with self-defense, as in Birmingham, Jacksonville, and Cambridge.

The failure of the capitalist class to give any real concessions has led such leaders as Malcolm X to conclude that the present system cannot and will not grant equality. Since his break with Elijah Muhammed, Malcolm X has developed more explicitly revolutionary ideas and is attempting to project a translation of these ideas into action. He has uncompromisingly exposed the hypocrisy and bankruptcy of the ruling class, and has attacked its political parties. He has stressed the need for self-defense, for solidarity with the colonial revolution, and for struggle against the entire American white power structure. His recognition of the successes of revolution abroad has led him to express an interest

in socialism and to state explicitly that under capitalism equality cannot be achieved. His analysis leads him to see the limits of actions to reform the system, but his ideas are still developing and he has not yet formulated a clear program of struggle to change the system.

There is also a radicalization going on among militants in formally integrationist direct action organizations in the face of the inability of the struggle so far to bring significant concessions. Many activists are becoming more nationalist. Some leaders have voiced support to the Freedom Now Party. But the leftward motion of most of these activists is still contained within the framework of improving and radicalizing, rather than politicalizing, their activism.

The most radical idea to come out of the direct action groups is that of a new type of mass civil-disobedience. Rev. Cleage calls this tactic the "strategy of chaos." Diane Bevel first suggested such a policy at an SCLC conference where she called for such actions as sitting down on roadways and air strips. The stall-in advocated by Brooklyn CORE at the World's Fair was an example of this idea. Many of the prominent militant leaders showed agreement with the "strategy of chaos" by voicing support to the stall-in.

A large part of the activities in such organizations as the NAACP, CORE, SCLC, and SNCC are still aimed at reforming the system through direct action. Many see hope in the liberals of the Northern Democratic Party, even though these liberals are part of the city machines which they opposed in the boycotts and demonstrations of this last year. Some are frightened by militant nationalism, but the more serious elements can be won to militant opposition to the system and to independent political action.

Malcolm X has called for unity in the struggle, unity between the uncompromising integrationists and the separatists. He points out that both are for the same goal: Freedom Now from oppression and segregation. He and other leaders who call for unity on this basis make a sharp distinction between the integration fight (against segregation and exploitation) and total assimilation into white America. Rev. Cleage explains this seemingly paradoxical position as follows:

"Let us underscore the apparent paradox of the Negro's position. In effect he will be saying: 'Listen Mr. White Man, we demand the right to live with you in your "white neighborhoods" to go to school with you in your "white schools" to work with you "at your white lunch counters" even though we despise everything you represent. We don't want to live with you, work with you, but for our

right to do all of these things which we really don't want to do, we will protest, fight and die if need be."

With the entrance of many separationists into the active struggle and with activists gaining more nationalist consciousness, there is real potential for the growth of black radicals in the fight for freedom.

Black Nationalism, Its Roots and Potential

A large majority of black people in America today are born, live, and die in the big city slum ghettos of the North and South. They are forced to exist under the worst living conditions, forced to accept dirty back-breaking underpaid jobs, have few educational opportunities and see little hope of ever improving their situation. Everywhere they see the white man living the best, eating the best, getting the best jobs and displaying little real concern over the black man's plight, and in most cases perpetuating the conditions of the black masses. Instead of having a job and the dignity that goes along with earning one's own way, the black man often gets relief or nothing. Instead of good housing, he gets prison-like projects designed to enlarge the already over-crowded ghetto and at the same time to make it more compact. Instead of better education for his children he gets promises of more integrated schools.

White capitalist America has proven by four hundred years of oppression, brutality, and rejection that it cannot and will not accept the black man as a human being with the right to a hopeful and decent existence. Everything offered the bulk of black people is "second class." The net result is that a large majority of black people have a deep bitterness and hatred toward white capitalist America as a whole for being responsible for creating and maintaining the black man's position in this country. At least in the ghetto, among his own, the black man is regarded as a human being, and the value of everything isn't measured by the "whiteness" of it. He isn't interested in persuading the white man to love and accept him. He isn't interested in going to white schools or living in white neighborhoods merely because they are white.

In general, middle class Northern civil rights leaders have adapted the methods of the Southern non-violent struggle in order to break down the more subtle walls of segregation in the North. The projected goal has been more integration. But black people living in the already "integrated" liberal North are becoming aware of the fact that more "integration", at least more tokenism, isn't the answer to their problems. The majority of black people in this country will not become

involved in a form of struggle that only results in providing a few "good" Negroes with the so-called "fruits" of this society.

Although its roots are there, black nationalism is not the conscious philosophy of the masses of the ghetto. It has the potential to become so but now the average black man who lives in the ghetto does not consider himself either an integrationist or a separationist, an assimilationist or a nationalist. He cannot see how picketing a store will help his immediate needs as an individual nor can he see how going back to Africa or creating a separate state will help him either.

Where civil rights organizations with white liberal and middle class black leaderships have failed to achieve a response from the black masses new nationalist organizations can succeed because they speak a common language with the workers that fill the black ghettos in this country: black dignity, black economic and political power. Black radicals can and will inspire the ghetto with the example of the successes of the colonial revolution.

Given the level and intensity of their struggle for Freedom Now the black people will play the leading role in bringing about the coming American revolution. Black nationalism represents not only a rejection of the status quo but a determination to change it. This should be viewed as a gigantic step toward the abolition of capitalism. When the black workers of the ghettos North and South, the most concentrated proletarian mass in the U.S., become determined to control their own destiny they will be equally determined to create a system that makes it possible for them to do so. Thus, black nationalism is the most progressive and revolutionary mass tendency on the American scene today. This is reflected, among other things, in the friendly response of many militant nationalists to the SWP, the YSA, and the Militant. The most advanced nationalists and most militant integrationists look for a dialogue and bridges not only to one another but also to the revolutionary Marxist movement.

Political Action

The next historical step for the Negro movement is the fight on the political arena, that is conscious action and organization against the capitalist racist parties. The mass demonstrations, boycotts, rent strikes, etc. run up against the capitalist monopoly of political power at every step. This has demonstrated the need to generalize these isolated struggles into a struggle against the system as a whole, a struggle that must be consciously political in conception and organization.

There is a growing tendency for Negroes to move further ahead of the rest of the working class and to form their own political party to fight for their own interests. This is best evidenced by the FNP's ability to get on the ballot in Michigan. However, there will be no national Negro party sufficiently organized to run in the 1964 national elections and the path toward including independent electoral work in a fight that in even its present form is political to the core will include some detours and deadends.

The Democratic Party is making a special effort during this election year to put up a liberal front. Northern Democrats wail about segregation in the South and "lack of equality for all our citizens" in the North. They try to pretend that being for a weak civil rights bill proves that they are taking a stand for equality. They demand a vote for the Texas Dixiecrat to defeat the Arizona reactionary.

The events of the past year have exposed the Democratic Party to many militant Negroes, making it easier for them to realize the need for a political expression for the Freedom Now movement. They see that the Democratic administrations in Northern cities are doing little about crowded inferior ghetto schools, unemployment and slum housing and killer cops, despite demonstrations and boycotts. It is the Democratic Party liberals who are taking part in the howl and cry against militant civil rights actions while remaining silent when the most brutal methods are used to keep the black man down, North and South.

The growth of the Freedom Now Party is the most important concrete organizational result of the exposure of the Democratic Party and the most advanced development in the struggle thus far. Under the leadership of Rev. Cleague the Detroit Freedom Now Party has collected over 20,000 signatures to get on the ballot in Michigan. This is of great importance as the first step toward building the FNP from a group of small organizing committees to a party which can someday contend for black political power.

A black political party has the potential to win elections, to expose and force concessions from the ruling class and to break up the Democratic Party, shaking the two party system, making Labor support of the Democrats untenable and providing a powerful example to the entire working class. To realize this potential is a task of great proportions and will require the development of a convincing program and a mass following. The campaign in Michigan this election year will be an important opportunity to start this process of growth.

The election tours of Clifton DeBerry and Edward Shaw confirmed the fact that many Negroes and young whites are looking for a solution to the crisis of the world today and are willing to listen to socialist views. They want explanations for such things as the colonial revolution, nuclear war, poverty, and unemployment. DeBerry and Shaw are the only national candidates who can present a viable long-run explanation and solution to these problems. Negro organizations may hesitate to formally endorse the DeBerry-Shaw campaign because they do not want to be associated with socialists or with a party made up mainly of whites. But the campaign so far shows that it can gain the enthusiastic support of many individuals who are attracted by its militant opposition to the system and the two racist capitalist parties. The SWP ticket, headed by the first Negro to be nominated for President, will be the only ticket standing for independent black political action and Freedom Now in the national campaign. As such, it is our most important weapon to propagandize for the politicalization of the Negro struggle independent of the capitalist parties.

The Tasks of the YSA

The tasks of the YSA are dependent upon its size, composition, and longrun goals. The YSA is a small organization of young people, the majority of whom are petty bourgeois in background, although we have recruited a number of young people from working class backgrounds. The YSA is still predominately white although it has gained a number of black comrades since the last convention. We are still working in an atmosphere of hostility to socialist ideas and must recruit one by one.

The purpose of the YSA is to bring Marxist ideas to young people so that they can help build the revolutionary socialist movement. All our efforts are directed to this end simply because a revolutionary socialist leadership is necessary for the attainment of freedom and the ending of poverty and war. Our most important task is to develop Marxist cadres.

If we are to take action in the Negro struggle we must first learn from it. We can learn by participating in the struggle and from the exchange of ideas that goes along with it. The black comrades are key in helping the YSA as a whole understand better the moods, organizations, and demands of the struggle. Much can be learned from reading. Every YSAer should study such articles as "Black Nationalism and White Radicals" by Robert Vernon, The SWP "Freedom Now" resolution, the YSA resolution on "Youth and the Black Revolt", "What a Minority Can Do" by George Breitman, "Documents on the Negro Struggle," and the speeches of Malcolm X and

Rev. Cleage. YSAers should become familiar with Negro history. They should follow changes in the struggle and read such papers as Muhammed Speaks, Illustrated News, and the local Negro press as well as the Militant.

In participating in the struggle it should not be forgotten that the YSA is still a small predominately white organization. Because of this the YSA cannot substitute itself for a black leadership with roots in the ghetto. Our task remains one of propaganda and our central propaganda task is to generalize the existing political struggle, to oppose the false counterposition of direct action to political action, and to urge that both be independent of dead-end capitalist politics.

When we participate in direct action projects or in struggle organizations we cannot allow ourselves to neglect our central propaganda task; rather, we join such actions to widen our contacts and propaganda opportunities. While striving to be responsible members of any direct action organization we engage in, we are not merely activists, but socialist politicians.

In choosing which actions and organizations we work in we have to keep in mind our goals. We want to go where there are young people who are becoming revolutionary whom we can influence with our ideas. We don't join actions for the sake of action, and we avoid "mass work" of the social worker variety. White students are susceptible to the idea of "going into the ghetto" to do social work to "help" the Negroes. However, it's our job to point out the real and only road to freedom, the struggle to transform society through political action based on a revolutionary program and directed by consciously revolutionary organizations.

In addition to the tendency of some activists to counterpose direct action to political action, which they narrowly construe as electoral action, there is an ultra-left avoidance of both by some black nationalist intellectuals. These intellectuals reject the perspective of the American revolution, and see victory coming only through the struggle of the non-white people outside the United States. Considering themselves to be only the advanced detachment of the colonial revolution, they abstain from the hard struggle to build a Negro political party.

Our size and composition make it imperative that our concentration for the present be on the Northern ghettos, where we have YSA units. However, we should be alert for ways to extend our propaganda work into the Southern ghettos, for example through the sale of the Militant. Our ability to do this is a tactical question dependent on our size, bases, and openings.

White comrades, as well as black, can carry out many of our propaganda functions. Through the Militant, the Young Socialist, and the International Socialist Review, and through sponsoring speakers, they can participate in the process of learning from the struggle and of projecting the socialist solution.

Every comrade, white or black, can help build our most important action and project for the next months, our support to the SWP election campaign. The campaign opens new and deeper avenues for our propaganda into the Negro movement and its white sympathizers, providing us with an unusual opportunity for reaching a wider audience with our ideas for the economic, social, and political transformation of American life.

By selling the Militant all comrades can spread information on the struggle among our contacts and in the ghetto, on what the most militant leaders are doing and projecting, on the need for political action, and the final socialist solution. Comrades can help explain and defend the ideas of independent political action and black nationalism, and they can help put the struggle in the context of the world socialist revolution. They should explain to whites why they should support the Negro struggle. We should support any effort which raises the level of the struggle and helps expose the system, making sure that we show the limits of actions not solely by criticizing them but also by projecting the next steps to be taken.

Black comrades have greater flexibility than white comrades, and are able to join all-black organizations. Exactly which organizations black YSAers as well as white YSAers should work in must be decided in the concrete, keeping in mind that we want to be where we can reach the best elements and recruit them to revolutionary socialism.

Black Leadership in the YSA

The participation of black comrades in the internal life and in the leadership of the YSA is essential to the development of the movement and is essential to their development as revolutionary socialists. We reaffirm the central importance of the recruitment of black comrades and their assumption of leadership roles as swiftly as possible. This does not mean that all black comrades should be put into leadership positions simply because a black leadership is needed. Other radical organizations such as the CP have made the mistake of doing just this. It has resulted in the Negroes not being made aware of the importance of developing to their fullest potential and the organization suffers from the lack of an effective Negro leadership.