Liberation at the End of a Pen: Writing Pan-African Politics of Cultural Struggle

Anthony James Ratcliff

University of Massachusetts Amherst, aratcliff@afroam.umass.edu

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LIBERATION AT THE END OF A PEN: WRITING PAN-AFRICAN POLITICS OF CULTURAL STRUGGLE

A Dissertation Presented

by

ANTHONY J. RATCLIFF

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2009

W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies
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Approved as to style and content by:

__________________________
John H. Bracey, Jr., Chair

__________________________
Agustin Lao-Montes, Member

__________________________
James Smethurst, Member

__________________________
Dorothy Mosby, Member

________________________________
Amilcar Shabazz, Department Chair
Department of Afro-American Studies
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank everyone who has helped and supported me in completing my Doctor of Philosophy degree in Afro-American Studies from the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies. It has been a long haul, but my friends, family and committee members have assisted me to “see it through.” I wish to start by thanking my dissertation advisor Professor John Bracey for your patience, recommendations, and vision. I would also like to thank my dissertation committee: Professor Agustin Lao-Montes, Professor James Smethurst, and Professor Dorothy Mosby for your valuable time and consideration of my work. I know it has been difficult these past few years, but your guidance and feedback has helped me through the “process” of writing a dissertation. A debt of gratitude goes out to the other hardworking faculty members of the Afro-American Studies Department, especially those I had the honor of taking a course or two with. In addition, I want to send a special thank you to Tricia Loveland for all the assistance you have given to me and everyone else in the department over the years. I shutter to think how the department would manage without you.

Next, I need to thank my soul mate Cruz Caridad Bueno for all the encouragement and love you have rained on me as I limped toward the end of my graduate studies; this includes the loving support of the Bueno family for opening your world to me. Of course, I have to give a major “shout out” to my brothers in arms: Jonathan Fenderson, Chris Tinson, Carlos “Rec” McBride, Mike Funk, and the other Kings, you made Amherst a little more bearable over the past six years. I cannot forget to mention Shelly Perdomo and Rebecca Hasson for brightening the valley with your smiles, compassion, and home-cooked meals. And, of course, to my mom, thanks for being so supportive and seeing potential in your son, especially when I wanted to pack it all in. It was you who instilled the importance of education and a love of learning in me.
I am extremely grateful for the funding and financial support I received while writing my dissertation: a Teaching Fellowship at Capital Community College in Hartford, CT (2006-2007); a Teaching Scholar fellowship with Frederick Douglass Institute at West Chester University in the (Summer 2007); and a Northeast Consortium for Faculty Diversity Dissertation Fellowship at Stonehill College (2007-2008). Each of these fellowships gave me much needed teaching experience, while allowing me the opportunity to write my dissertation in a timely fashion. In all, I have to acknowledge how much of a collective effort this dissertation project has been. While there were times when it seemed I was locked in my apartment writing, in Raos or Amherst Coffee finding inspiration in a song by John Coltrane or Madlib, or deep in the basement of some library on the East Coast feeling isolated and alone, I now realize that there were always countless people who were “there” supporting me in my journey. To you all I must again say THANK YOU!
As a political, social, and cultural ideology, Pan-Africanism has been a complex movement attempting to ameliorate the dehumanizing effects of “the global Eurocentric colonial/modern capitalist model of power,” which Anibal Quijano (2000) refers to as “the coloniality of power.” The destructive forces of the coloniality of power—beginning with the transatlantic slave trade—that led to the dispersal and displacement of millions of Africans subsequently facilitated the creation of Pan-African political and cultural consciousness. Thus, this dissertation examines diverse articulations of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle as a response to racist and sexist oppression and economic exploitation of Afro-descendants. I am specifically interested in the formation of international politico-cultural movements, such as the Black Arts movement, Négritude, and the Pan-African Cultural Revolution and their ideological alignments to political liberation struggles for the emancipation of people of African descent. With varying degrees of revolutionary commitment, intellectuals in each of these movements utilized literary and cultural production to raise the political consciousness of Africans and Afro-descendants to combat forces that oppressed their communities.

To demonstrate this, my dissertation historicizes and analyzes the numerous Pan-African festivals, congresses, and conferences, which occurred between 1965 and 1977, while interrogating the specific manifestations of “translocal” contacts and linkages
between movement intellectuals. I chose to focus on these years because they roughly correspond with the historical time period known as the Black Arts movement in North America (1965-1975), which had a vibrant, yet understudied Pan-African worldview. Moreover, while Pan-Africanism gained considerable traction after World War II, it was particularly between 1966 and 1977 that intellectuals aligned with Négritude and Pan-African Marxism competed for ideological hegemony of the movement on the African continent and in the African Diaspora.
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INTRODUCTION

As a political, social, and cultural ideology, Pan-Africanism has been a complex movement attempting to ameliorate the dehumanizing effects of “the global Eurocentric colonial/modern capitalist model of power,” which Anibal Quijano (2000) refers to as “the coloniality of power.”\(^1\) The destructive forces of the coloniality of power—beginning with the transatlantic slave trade—that led to the dispersal and displacement of millions of Africans subsequently facilitated the creation of Pan-African political and cultural consciousness.\(^2\) George Shepperson and St. Clair Drake (1993) each divide Pan-Africanism into two traditions: the Pan-African Congress movement represented by a capital “P” and pan-Africanism which refers “to the activities and individuals and groups that kept alive the memory of African origins, to churches in North America that sent missionaries to Africa, and to informal activities of various sorts.”\(^3\) However, both Ronald Walters’ *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora* (1993) and Sidney Lemelle and Robin Kelley’s *Imagining Home* (1994), challenge the bifurcation of Pan-Africanism. Instead, they argue that one should see the Pan-African Congress movement, Garveyism, Negritude, Nkrumahism, Pan-African Marxism, etc. as varied manifestations and trajectories of Pan-African ideology.\(^4\)

With this in mind, my dissertation examines diverse articulations of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle as a response to the racist and sexist oppression and economic exploitation of Afro-descendants. I am specifically interested in the creative

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\(^1\) Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1.3, (2000): 533-580. Agustin Lao-Montes posits that the key aspects of the coloniality of power are identity definition (how we are racialized, classed, gendered, etc.), labor exploitation (the world economy), authority (the question of the modern state, the interstate system, and geopolitics), patriarchy, and knowledge creation. See, “For an Analytics of the Coloniality of Power” in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, forthcoming (2007).


intellectuals who participated in transnational cultural movements, such as the Black Arts movement, Négritude, and the Pan-African Cultural Revolution as well as their ideological alignments to political liberation struggles for the emancipation of people of African descent. With varying degrees of revolutionary commitment, intellectuals in each of these movements utilized literary and cultural production to raise the political consciousness of Africans and Afro-descendants to combat forces that oppressed their communities.

Pan-African consciousness has historically been the basis for enhancing the “African” aspects of Afro-descendant cultural particularity, such as religious practices, music, dance, and oral/written literature. In addition, it has facilitated the mental and physical re-connection of Afro-descendants differentiated by history, language, and culture in the African Diaspora (the Caribbean, Europe, North, South, and Central America) with each other and to their long, lost “kin” on the African continent, through the organization of numerous Pan-African congresses, festivals and other cultural exchange. What is more, Pan-African consciousness has especially been vital in the global struggle for African, Afro-descendant and Third World human rights, economic justice and liberation. However, in this age of United States global hegemony, hyper-capitalism, multinational corporations, and unilateral military interventionism, one is left to meditate on the currency of Pan-Africanism. This is further complicated due to the continued fragmentation of the African continent. In his study, The African Condition (1980), political scientist Ali Mazrui formulates a “seven-tiered” pyramid of fragmentation, which begins with one

Africa; two permanent racial-cultural complexes, the Arab North and the black South; three religious systems, African traditional religions, Christianity and Islam; four dominant international languages, English, French, Arabic and Portuguese; five external hegemonic systems competing for either influence or profit within Africa, Western Europe, North America, the Soviet bloc, China and Japan; six political traditions partly fed by those five hegemonic systems and partly in opposition to
Despite the seemingly insurmountable fissures on the African continent, the one socio-historic movement that has attempted to reconcile these inherent contradictions has been revolutionary Pan-Africanism. Moreover, I argue that because of the continued marginalized state of Blacks worldwide (based upon economic status, health indicators, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and incarceration rates), Pan-African politics of cultural struggle, which considers issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, language, miscegenation, and ideology, is an essential theory and praxis for raising the consciousness of Afro-descendant and African intellectuals and activists to resist racist, sexist, imperialist, and neocolonial regimes both locally and internationally.

To demonstrate this, my dissertation historicizes and analyzes the numerous Pan-African festivals, congresses, and formations, which occurred between 1965 and 1977, interrogating the specific manifestations of “translocal” contacts and linkages.⁶ I have specifically chosen these years because they roughly correspond with the historical time period known as the Black Arts and Black Power movements (1965-1975) in North America. I also focus on these years because it was between 1965 and 1977 that contested interpretations of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle manifested on the African continent as the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture was held in Dakar, Senegal in 1966 and the Second World Festival of Black and African Arts and Culture was held in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977. Moreover, a number of other important Pan-African conferences and mobilizations occurred during these years in Africa: the Pan-

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African Cultural Festival in Algiers, Algeria in 1969; the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1974; and in North America: the Congress of Afrikan Peoples in Atlanta, Georgia in 1970; and the Afrikan Liberation Day Celebrations in numerous cities in 1972 and 1973. At each of these gatherings, intellectuals and cultural workers interrogated the relationship of politics and culture in the liberation of African peoples globally.

Throughout my study, I plan on analyzing the usefulness of these Pan-African congresses and festivals as political and cultural spaces for African and Afro-descendant solidarity. I contend that it was at these meetings that intellectuals, artists, and politicians from throughout the African world, assembled to discuss, debate, and demonstrate the discursive and ideological language, meanings and visions of contested Black solidarity. They were also places to establish networks, organizational models, and international community to strategize methods of struggle against the racist, colonial and imperialistic forces that oppressed them. Even though the festivals and congresses in and of themselves did not constitute a mass social movement, they nevertheless facilitated international contacts and linkages that extended local and national issues affecting people of African descent into a global context. Consequently, I will show that participants at the Pan-African festivals and congresses were also able to apply the information and ideas garnered at these events to their local and national political liberation movements. My study also investigates how various forms of sponsorship—whether local community organizations, governments, international cultural foundations (such as UNESCO), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), labor unions, corporations or political parties—affected the organization and outcomes of specific Pan-African gatherings.

This project specifically concentrates on the role of Afro-descendant writers and intellectuals who organized and participated in these international gatherings and
movements. It discusses cultural workers, such as Amiri Baraka, Ted Joans, Alicia Johnson, Askia Muhammad Touré, Jayne Cortez, Larry Neal, Sarah Webster Fabio, Haki Madhubuti, Hoyt Fuller, Alicia Johnson and others from North America; Paulette and Jane Nardal, Aimé Césaire, Leon Damas, Nicolas Guillén, and René Depestre from the Caribbean; and Abdias do Nascimento from South America. Hence, in addition to analyzing their involvement in the political culture of the various gatherings, I also examine the ways in which they evoke Pan-African politics of cultural struggle (either subtly or proactively) in their art and intellectual production. In order to accomplish this, I consider the socio-historical (the writer's social location) and textual elements (content and form) of their literary production in the context of these gatherings by employing a “dialectical theory” of Pan-African literature as articulated by African Marxist critic Chidu Amuta.⁷

As part of my analysis, I highlight the politico-cultural ideologies engaged by these writers while considering the complexities and contradictions of nationalism, race, class, gender, sexuality and linguistic differences in formulating solidarity among and between Afro-descendants and Africans. These ideologies—often expressed in the form of poetry, drama, and fiction—have been (and continue to be) essential in creating positive and dynamic representations of Blackness, which challenge oppressive political and ideological regimes conditioned by the coloniality of power: monopoly capitalism, imperialism, racism, and sexism. I am especially interested in how the Afro-descendant artists and intellectuals as well as the numerous politico-cultural formations they took part in, collaborated with and responded to African writers and intellectuals, such as

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⁷ Chidu Amuta’s *The Theory of African Literature* applies the Marxist literary criticism of Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, and Frederick Jameson to African literature. Speaking of a “dialectical theory” of literature, he writes: “Such a theory must pay attention to the complex relationship between literature and the equally complex set of relationships in it informing society. It must also study the various components of the literary event as approximations to what I choose to refer to as the ‘dissonant harmony’ of social experience which is the ultimate source of literary form. Thus, context, content, and form, the main cardinal dialectical coordinates of literature, are seen as functions of variable relationships.” See, *The Theory of African Literature: Implications for Practical Criticism*, (London: Zed Cultural Studies, 1989): p. 8.
Keorapetse Kgotsile (South Africa), Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana), Amilcar Cabral (Guinea-Bissau/Cape Verde), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Leopold Senghor (Senegal), Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), Sekou Touré (Guinea), and others who expressed anti-colonialist, Pan-Africanist, and anti-imperialist ideologies.

Africans and Afro-descendants have historically employed diverse methods in their struggles for self-determination and liberation. Dialectically related to these struggles are the objectives of attaining positive cultural identity formation and self-respect. Historian Ernest Allen (2005) asserts that a person’s identity directly corresponds with her/his location in a social/political structure; at the same time, her/his location (or “locations”) “in the social structure confirms in practical terms the existence of one’s social identity.”

Because of slavery, racism, colonialism, and economic exploitation (which effects groups differently based on the temporal and spatial context), the majority of Afro-descendants tend to remain structurally marginalized at the periphery of their respective societies. One of the most consistent—although at times indirect—strategies that Afro-descendants have utilized to contest oppression and struggle for the improvement of their social location(s) and political liberation has been through the deployment of cultural expression and production. Amuta (1989) recognizes the important role of cultural production, especially literature, in the evocation of social consciousness:

Accordingly, literature is a product of people in society and a producer and reproducer of the cognitions and values of society; in short a social institution, a superstructural manifestation of a fundamentally material process, the process of creation of ideas and values within limits prescribed by the social essence of language. Literature is, in addition, one (only one!) of the instruments for the sharpening and mobilization of social consciousness in pursuit or negation of qualitative change, an instrument for the preservation or subversion of the existing order.

Often, however, in many countries, the national bourgeoisie have appropriated working

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class and popular forms of Afro-descendant cultural production, positing them as aspects of the hegemonic national elite culture, as is the case of samba and Carnival in Brazil, merengue in the Dominican Republic, rumba in Cuba, and jazz (and increasingly Hip-Hop) in the United States. This appropriation ultimately further marginalizes Afro-descendant cultural politics by negating the potential counter-hegemonic usage of some cultural expression, thereby making them consumable to bourgeois tastes.

Thus, in order for Pan-African cultural expression and production to maintain or regain its oppositionality to cultural appropriation and domination, many radical cultural workers have engaged in Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. This practice extends the concept of “cultural resistance” into the broader context of political praxis and liberation where raising anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist consciousness are important strategies in subverting external domination and challenging marginality. Political theorists Sonia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar (1998) suggest that the cultural becomes “political because meanings are constitutive of processes that, implicitly or explicitly, seek to redefine social power. That is, when movements deploy alternative conceptions of women, nature, race, economy, democracy, or citizenship that unsettle dominant cultural meanings, they enact” the politics of culture.\footnote{See, Sonia Alvarez, et al, “Introduction,” in Cultures of Politics and Politics of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements, eds. Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998): 7.}

Within the domain of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle, therefore, works of “art” may evoke deeper implications for the opposition, contestation, and transformation of oppressive discourses and structures.

Despite the dialectic between politics and culture within the Pan-African movement, some recent scholars have asserted that the two realms are actually disconnected. For example, in “What is ‘Cultural Patrimony’?” (2003), literary critic Tejumola Olanyian argues that a long history of political resistance by people of African
descent was supplanted by cultural resistance in the 1970s, and “by the 1990s, the
cultural was already established as global Africa’s favored mode of resistance to Euro-
American hegemony.” His main concern with this is that “the subordinate position of the
African in modernity is not primarily a ‘cultural’ problem.” What this formulation misses
is the dialectical relationship between earlier political movements—the New Negro and
Black Power—with concurrent cultural movements—the Harlem Renaissance and the
Black Arts movement. In contrast to Olanyian, African poet-revolutionary and theorist
Amilcar Cabral makes some of the most cogent and relevant analyses of the relationship
between “cultural resistance” and national liberation struggles in works such as “National
Liberation and Culture” (1970), and Return to the Source (1973). These ideas were
synthesized in his posthumously published book of political essays Unity and Struggle
(1979), in which Cabral argues:

The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies
in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation, on the ideological or
idealist level, of the material and historical reality of the society that is
dominated or to be dominated. Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a
people’s history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative
influences it exerts on the evolution of relations between man [and
woman] and society, as well as between different societies. Ignorance of
this fact might explain the failure of several attempts at foreign domination
as well as the failure of some national liberation movements.

For Cabral, and many other African revolutionaries, therefore, culture and politics each
have a “dependent and reciprocal” and historical connection to the economic modes of
production. Attempts to privilege one or dislocate another have often led to the
subversion of African liberation movements and the prospects for Pan-African unity.

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Patrimony, New World Connections, and Identities, ed. Niyi Afolabi, (Trenton, NJ: African World Press,

12 Amilcar Cabral, “National Culture,” in Unity and Struggle; Speeches and Writings, Texts selected by the

13 This is why I argue for the re-conceptualization of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle, which has two
objectives. First and foremost, it seeks to define and propagate conceptions of international Black identity,
recognizing the complexity and diversity of Africans and Afro-descendants. In social contexts where Blacks
have been subjugated by the conflation of racial, class, and gender oppression, the development of a Pan-
this time it is important to briefly sketch the early history of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle in order to illustrate the complex relationship between political and cultural forms of activism.

A Brief Genealogy of Pan-African Politics of Cultural Struggle

One of the first enactments of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle is Martin Delany’s *Blake; or The Huts of America* (ca. 1859), which serves as a seminal politico-cultural statement. Clearly, Delany is best remembered for his political abolitionism in North America, as well as his advocacy of Black nationalism and the emigration of Afro-descendants to Nigeria or Central America. However, his production of *Blake* marks one of the earliest attempts by an Afro-North American to explicitly utilize literary expression in a call for Pan-African solidarity and revolutionary struggle. At the same time, literary historian Bernard Bell (1989) notes that Delany’s writing was influenced by his debates with Frederick Douglass, as well as radical abolitionist tracts such as David Walker’s *Appeal* (1829) and Henry Highland Garnet’s *An Address to the Slaves* (1843), specifically their moral justifications for the use of violence by people of African descent to liberate themselves from enslavement. In serializing *Blake* between 1859 and 1862 in *The Anglo African Magazine* and *Weekly Anglo African Magazine*, Delany’s “novel” was not only a radical condemnation of slavery, but it also served as an archetypal literary articulation of Pan-African self-determination with its lead character’s objective of

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African consciousness is an important step in combating these forces. However, once consciousness has been raised, politicized cultural productions must be employed that mobilize people to challenge hegemonic discourse and forms of power. In this context, the Pan-African politics of cultural struggle may become a weapon in the fight against the coloniality of power and oppression.


fomenting slave insurrections and ultimately revolution in the U.S. and Cuba.\textsuperscript{16}

When Delany wrote the serialized novel, though, the vast majority of Afro-descendants in North American and Cuba were enslaved, and therefore were overwhelmingly illiterate. In fact, they had little access to (or in some cases interest in) northern literary journals such as \textit{The Anglo-African Magazine}. Thus, the very “laboring masses” of Afro-descendants who could enact Delany’s vision of revolutionary slave insurrection had no connection to his writings. Then again, it is clear that the text’s intended audience was members of the miniscule northern Black intelligentsia and artisan class in antebellum North America,\textsuperscript{17} or in the even rarer cases, individuals like his main character Henry Blake: a literate enslaved African originally from a landed Afro-Cuban family. In fact, literary historian Elizabeth McHenry (2002) discusses Afro-North American literary societies, which began to form in the 1820s and 1830s, and their importance in disseminating information and teaching literacy. She specifically suggests that \textit{Blake} found an audience among literary groups affiliated with the AME Church\textsuperscript{18}

Though Blake was a \textit{fictional} character, his literacy, artisanship and maritime skills, as well as his ability to enter Afro-Cuban petit bourgeois environs through his contacts with the Afro-Cuban poet Placido, makes him an iconic nineteenth century Pan-Africanist “race-leader.” In many ways, Delany modeled Blake after David Walker, Henry Highland Garrett, and himself.\textsuperscript{19} This group of Afro-descendant race men, along with later leaders

\textsuperscript{16} Floyd Miller compiled the incomplete manuscript of Delany’s serialized attempt at fusing together the disparate forms of adventure tale, romance melodrama, and political exposition into \textit{Blake, or the Huts of America}, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

\textsuperscript{17} According to Donald F. Joyce, when Delany first began serializing \textit{Blake}, the \textit{Anglo-African Magazine} had a readership of 500 and in March 1860 it briefly ceased publication. However, later that year, the newly reestablished \textit{Weekly Anglo-African} magazine became the official “medium of communication” of the AME Zion Church of New York City, which greatly increased its readership among African Americans. See, Joyce, \textit{Black Book Publishers in the United States: A Historical Dictionary of the Presses, 1817-1990}, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1991): 118-119.


such Alexander Crummell, Henry McNeal Turner and Edward Wilmot Blyden, helped develop the concept of Pan-Africanism, which Trinidadian lawyer Henry Sylvester-Williams popularized with his organization of the first Pan-African Conference in 1900.²⁰

Even more important to the development of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle is W.E.B. Du Bois.²¹ He was a central figure in the evolution of both the Pan-African Congress movement (1900, 1919-1945) and one of the first Afro-descendant intellectuals to specifically articulate the potential for cultural production to be used in opposition to white supremacy and politico-cultural hegemony. Between 1919 and 1927, Du Bois, with the financial support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), organized Pan-African Congresses in Paris (1919); London, Paris, and Brussels (1921); London and Lisbon (1923); and, with the organizational leadership of Addie Hunton and the National Association of Colored Women, in New York City (1927). While he planned a fifth PAC for 1929 in Tunis, the French colonial government thwarted his vision of convening a Congress in Africa. However, in 1945, Du Bois would attend the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, England, organized by Caribbean and African trade unionists, and African nationalists, radical students, such as George Padmore of Trinidad, Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast (Ghana), Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Ja-Ja Wachuku and O. Awolowo of Nigeria, among others. With this PAC occurring on the heels of WWII, Pan-Africanism had rapidly transitioned from a petit bourgeois forum advocating the improvement in conditions for colonial subjects, to a radical anti-colonial social movement demanding self-determination for Africans and other Third World peoples.²² Despite the elitist class outlook of the previous PACs

²² See, George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, (New York: DoubleDay, 1971) and Hakim
organized by Du Bois and others, which sought redress directly from colonial
governments, he nonetheless helped established Pan-Africanism as a legitimate political
framework in which to address problems besieging people of African descent
worldwide.23

Around the same time that Du Bois was organizing Pan-African Congresses, he
also began formulating a distinctly Afro-descendant politics of cultural struggle. In fact,
Du Bois placed into theory ideas about the utility of “art” to the political struggle of Afro-
North Americans that had been expressed earlier in slave narratives and by nineteenth
century writers such as Frances E.W. Harper, Pauline Hopkins, and Paul Lawrence
Dunbar. His initial postulations on utilizing the arts in the struggle for human rights and
self-respect can be found in The Souls of Black Folk (1903), and are later expressed in
his novels and essays Quest of the Silver Fleece (1911), The Negro (1915), Darkwater
(1920), Dark Princess: A Romance (1928), and Dusk of Dawn (1940). In The Souls of
Black Folk, Du Bois made his prescient contention that the major problem of the
twentieth century would be the color line and also launched his first public criticism of
Booker T. Washington’s project. However, he would specifically focus on the centrality of
Afro-North American artistic expression to U.S. culture in two essays entitled “Of Our
Spiritual Striving” and “Of the Sorrow Songs.”

In the first essay he argues that “there is no true American music but the wild
sweet melodies of the Negro slave; the American fairy tales and folktales are Indian and

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Adi, Marika Sherwood, and George Padmore, The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited,
(London: New Beacon Books, 1995). Further demonstrating the progressive tendencies of Fifth-PAC was its
adoption of a resolution on Indo-China:

“The Pan African Congress comprising of peoples of Africa and African descent now in
Session in the City of Manchester, extends its fraternal greetings to the struggling peoples
of Java and Indo-China in their fight against Dutch and French Imperialism, and pledges
its solidarity in their struggle for freedom. HANDS OFF JAVA! HANDS OFF INDO-
CHINA!” Many of those involved with the Fifth PAC would go on to attend the Bandung
Conference in 1955, which established the “Non-align Movement.” For the PAC resolution,
see Messages Sent to the Pan-African Congress, “Resolution on Indo-China,” October 15,
1945, in Du Bois Papers.

23 James L. Conyers, Jr., Reevaluating the Pan-Africanism of W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey:
Du Bois builds upon this assertion in the essay “Of the Sorrow Songs,” positing that “by fateful chance the Negro folk-song—the rhythmic cry of the slave—stands to-day not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas.” At this time, he sincerely believed that by demonstrating the unique cultural “gifts” of Black folk to America, this would eventually ameliorate racial discrimination.

Du Bois specifically discusses the important role the Fisk Jubilee Singers had in spreading the beauty of the Sorrow Songs throughout the North and into Europe. After co-founding the NAACP in 1909, Du Bois established *The Crisis* magazine, and along with writer Jessie Fauset, the magazine combined the liberal civil rights advocacy of the organization with his vision of politics of cultural struggle and Fauset’s arts editorship, helping to usher in a “renaissance” of Afro-North American politics and culture shortly after World War 1.

During the New Negro movement (ca. 1919-1930), a number of Black intellectuals and artists borrowed from and built upon the Pan-African politics of cultural struggle posited by Du Bois. For example, Alain Locke was a major theoretician of the movement, with his editorship of the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic*—later published as the seminal anthology of the period *The New Negro* (1925)—and his collaboration with sociologist Charles S. Johnson in transforming the National Urban

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25 This idea was first introduced to me in a graduate seminar by Ernest Allen, “The Life and Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois,” Afro-American Studies 610, University of Massachusetts, March 2004.
26 Ibid, 256. One of the main intellectual influences on Du Bois’s theory was German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder. For Herder, the development of “high” artistic culture originated within folk culture. Du Bois argued that this theory could be adapted to the Afro-North American context, primarily through the cultivation of the Negro spirituals and folktales, which could subsequently become the basis for an Afro-North American “high art.” See, Bernard Bell, “Folk Art and the Harlem Renaissance,” *Phylon*, 36,2, (1975). In this article, Bell argues that the major theorists of the Harlem Renaissance, particularly W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and James Weldon Johnson, appropriated their formulations of a Black aesthetic from “Anglo-American interpretations of Herder’s theory that folk art laid the base for high art,” p. 155.
League’s *Opportunity* into a premier literary magazine. His essay “Enter The New Negro” captured the Pan-Africanist sensibilities of the Harlem Renaissance:

The pulse of the Negro world has begun to beat in Harlem. A Negro newspaper carrying news material in English, French and Spanish, gathered from all quarters of America, the West Indies and Africa has maintained itself in Harlem for over five years. Two important magazines, both edited from New York, maintain their news and circulation consistently on a cosmopolitan scale. Under American auspices and backing, three pan-African congresses have been held abroad for the discussion of common interests, colonial questions and the future cooperative development of Africa.28

Though Locke did not match Du Bois’s commitment to Pan-Africanism, he did support the latter’s call for the 1919 Pan-African Congress, and Locke also asserted that African aesthetics were specifically important reservoirs for Afro-North American artists to mine for creative inspiration.29 Also, writers such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay would explore Pan-African themes in their literary production during this era, as visual artists Aaron Douglas, Palmer Hayden, and Archibald Motley, Jr. invoked “forms and content informed by Africa” and the African Diaspora.30 Furthermore, the network of ideas and politico-cultural concepts that originated among Afro-North American creative intellectuals during the New Negro movement also inspired and influenced the international literary and theater movements of *poesia negra* in the Spanish-speaking Antilles, *Nègritude* in the French-speaking Caribbean and African countries, and the *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (TEN) in Brazil.31 In fact, Langston Hughes was an important conduit between Harlem and Latin America with his friendship

with Afro-Cuban poet Nicolas Guillén. Their comradeship was further strengthened through Hughes’s translations of many of Guillén’s poems that consistently condemned racism and exemplified his support for Afro-North American struggles.³²

However, the Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey and his politics of Black nationalism seriously challenged Du Bois’s ideological “leadership” of the Pan-African and New Negro movements. Garvey’s advocacy of diasporic Black pride, self-determination, and his “back to Africa” movement resonated with large segments of the Black working-class, which included a sizable West Indian population, who saw little prospect of attaining genuine equality in the United States. Moreover, he attempted to formulate a working-class oriented form of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle through his and his first and second wives’—Amy Ashwood and Amy Jacques—publication of the *Negro World*. The newspaper featured news articles, essays, poetry, and other forms of literary and cultural expression from throughout the Pan-African world. In fact, Garvey historian Tony Martin asserts that by 1920, “two years after its inception, the *Negro World* was already well on its way to becoming the focal point of a mass preoccupation with the arts, especially poetry, unequally by any of the better-known publications of the Harlem Renaissance.”³³

Though the *Negro World*’s intended readership was definitely Afro-descendant working people, Garvey’s articulation of a racially (Black) exclusive politics and his embrace of capitalist ventures with the Black Star Line in the Americas and Africa were vehemently opposed by Black leftists. Radical intellectuals such as the Cyril Briggs of the African Blood Brotherhood and the Communist Party USA, A. Philip Randolph’s Socialist Party in Harlem, and Du Bois each condemned Garvey in the pages of their


respective journals. This point notwithstanding, Garvey’s project of racial self-
determination and expatriation to Africa resonated much more with the masses of
working-class Afro-descendants than any of the alternative programs posited by Briggs,
Randolph, or Du Bois. Despite Garvey’s later “collaboration” with fascism after his arrest
and expulsion from the United States for mail fraud in 1927, he would maintain a lasting
influence on Black nationalism and Pan-Africanism throughout the 1960s and 1970s.\footnote{34}

A clear successor to Du Bois’s leadership of the Pan-African Congress
movement was the Trinidadian intellectual George Padmore (Malcolm Nurse) who had
cultivated his internationalist radicalism as a journalist for the Communist Party USA.\footnote{35} In
1929, Padmore moved to the Soviet Union where he led the Negro Bureau of the
Communist International of Labor Unions and wrote *The Life and Struggles of Negro
Workers* (1931), an important text about the place of African and Afro-descendant
workers in the Communist movement.\footnote{36} However, after relocating to London in 1934
following his resignation from the CP due to what he felt was its waning support for
organizing Black workers, Padmore and his Trinidadian comrade C.L.R. James became
leading members of the growing Black labor, anti-colonial, and Pan-African movements
in England.

James, who would become one of the foremost Marxist and Pan-Africanist
intellectuals of the twentieth century, had moved to England in 1932 to pursue a writing
career. While there, he published *The Life of Captain Cipriani: An Account of the British


Government in the West Indies (1932), The Case for West-Indian Self-Government (1933), his first novel Minty Alley (1936), World Revolution 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International (1937) and A History of Negro Revolt (1938), which was later republished as A History of Pan-African Revolt (1969).\(^{37}\) By far, his most widely acclaimed work from his London days was The Black Jacobins (1938), a thoroughly researched historical novel of the Haitian Revolution and its “tragic” leader Toussaint L'Ouverture.\(^{38}\) With The Black Jacobins, James sought to situate the only successful slave rebellion and first Black republic directly into the discourses of revolutionary history, Marxism-Leninism, and Pan-African politics of cultural struggle.\(^{39}\)

Following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, James and Padmore organized the International African Service Bureau (IASB), which later became the Pan-African Federation (PAF). In addition to the two Trinidadians, the IASB was built from a network of Afro-descendant and African activist-intellectuals who resided in England during the 1930s, such as Amy Ashwood Garvey (Jamaica), T. Ras Makonnen (Guyana), Wallace Johnson (Sierra Leone), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Paul Robeson (US) and others.\(^{40}\) By the early 1940s, however, James had relocated to the U.S., where he became a leading Trotskyist intellectual and labor organizer, while Padmore remained in London furthering the cause of anti-colonialism and Pan-African unity there. Padmore would be a major initiator of the Fifth Pan-African Congress, held in Manchester, England in 1945, where St. Clair Drake (1966) suggests that much of the imperative of the Pan-African


\(^{38}\) In 1936, James wrote the play Toussaint L'Ouverture staged at London’s Westminster Theater, which starred Paul Robeson.


movement shifted from the tradition of “racial” to “continental” Pan-Africanism. In stating his desire in organizing the Fifth PAC with Du Bois, Harold Moody of the London-based League of Coloured Peoples, and Amy Jacques Garvey, Padmore expressed the feeling of the colonized masses:

Living under alien rule, their first manifestation of political consciousness naturally assumes the form of national liberation, self-determination, self-government—call it what you may. They want to be able to rule their own countries, free from the fetters of alien domination. On this all are agreed, from even the most conservative to the most radical elements. There might be differences as to the rate at which improvement is made towards the goal and regarding the political form which the objective should take.

The more Padmore became involved in the anti-colonial struggle, the more he distanced himself from his previous Communist affiliation. He specifically suggests in his text *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* (1955) that it was imperative for Africans and people of African descent to repudiate Marxism for its apparent Eurocentrism. It is difficult to exaggerate Padmore’s fundamental intellectual and political influence in the development of Pan-Africanist and anti-colonialist movements in the English-speaking Diaspora and Africa, specifically Ghana. For his part, Kwame Nkrumah, who became Prime Minister of Ghana following its independence in 1957, invited Padmore to serve as an advisor to his government. In fact, it was Padmore who urged Nkrumah to convene the All-African People’s Congress in Accra in 1958, becoming the first formal Pan-African meeting on African soil, with the desire of creating a United States of

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Africa. While 1960 would be labeled the “Year of Africa” due to the 17 African countries gaining independence that year, the Casablanca/Monrovia split in the Pan-African movement beginning in 1961 seriously challenged attempts at continental solidarity. Moreover, although the processes toward unification would gain some stability with the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, after Nkrumah’s overthrow in 1966 prospects for continental Pan-African unity would become even more complicated than previously envisioned.

While the direction of the Fifth Pan-African Congress and continental Pan-Africanism came primarily from the Anglophone African and Afro-descendent world, there were important cultural developments occurring in the French-speaking African Diaspora at this time. Two years after the Fifth PAC, Alioune Diop from Senegal, along with Leopold Senghor from Senegal and Aimé Césaire from Martinique began publishing *Presence Africaine*, a Black literary and cultural journal in Paris that championed Negritude. Moreover, in 1956, following on the heels of the historic Bandung Congress in Indonesia, *Presence Africaine* and the newly formed *Société Africaine de Culture* (Society of African Culture) in Paris convened the First International Congress of Negro Writers and Artists, with a second congress held in Rome in 1959. A number of nationalist organizations attended the conference. The will to unify which the conference expressed was at least equal to the determination to carry forward the process of independence throughout Africa,” see, *Africa Must Unite*, (London: Panaf Books, 1963): p. 137.

Nkrumah worked along with Sekou Touré of Guinea, Ben Bella of the provisional Algerian government, Gammel Abdel Nasser of Egypt, King Mohammed V of Morocco, and Modibo Keita of Mali to form the Casablanca bloc in 1961. These six African nations advocated an anti-imperialist form of Pan-Africanism, placing emphasis on supporting armed struggle and socialist economic development. In contrast, a much larger and more conservative bloc of newly independent African nations supported the Monrovia-Brazzaville group, consisting of Liberia, Senegal, Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Gabon, Dahomey (Benin), Ethiopia, Nigeria, Niger and others. The Casablanca-Monrovia split, as it became known as, was partially reconciled with the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, however, ideological struggle continued between the left and right wings of the Pan-African movement. For a fuller discussion of the split see David J. Francis, *Uniting Africa: Building Regional Peace and Security Systems*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Co, 2006): 19-20; and Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, p. 421.


important intellectuals and writers from Africa and the African Diaspora attended both of these congresses, such as Richard Wright, Aimé Césaire, George Lamming, Horace Mann Bond, Jacques Alexis, John A. Davis, Jean Prince-Mars, James Baldwin, James W. Ivy, Chester Himes, René Depestre, Cheikh Anta Diop, Mercer Cook and Frantz Fanon.⁴⁹

Even though Négritudists and other cultural nationalist tendencies dominated the writers' congresses, a handful of African and Afro-descendant Marxists and left nationalists posed ideological challenges at the proceedings. Speeches like Fanon’s “Racism and Culture” in 1956 and “Reciprocal Bases of National Culture and the Fight for Freedom” in 1959; Wright’s “Tradition and Industrialization” in 1956; and Alexis’s “On the Marvelous Realism of the Haitians,” in 1956 each highlighted the shortcomings of Negritude and cultural nationalism. Even the “preamble” of the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists expressed that “political independence and economic liberation are the essential conditions for the cultural advance of the underdeveloped countries in general and the Negro-African countries in particular.”⁵⁰ By the time Senghor and Alioune Diop with the support of UNESCO, organized the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in Dakar in 1966, “cultural advance” was no longer considered related to political or economic liberation. However, I will discuss this shift and the overall political culture of the Dakar Festival in greater detail in chapter two of my study.

As the historic writers’ congresses were taking place in Paris and Rome, the United States was mired by the Cold War and the remnants of McCarthyism, which silenced most radical manifestations of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. Despite the Cold War’s effect on domestic and international radicalism, organizations such as

⁴⁹For a full list of attendees, see Presence Africaine: Full Account of the First International Conference of Negro Writers and Artists, (June-November 1956) and Presence Africaine, Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists, Rome, Nos. 24-25, February-May, 1959.
the African-American Institute (1953), the American Committee on Africa (1953), and the
American Society of African Culture (1957) a North American version of the Society of
African Culture, founded after the Congress of Negro Writers in 1956, still worked to
maintain some cultural and policy links between the Africa Diaspora and Africa. In fact,
AMSAC held a number of conferences in the U.S., from which it published the books
_Africa as Seen by American Negro Scholars_ (1958), _The American Negro Writer and His
Roots_ (1960), _West African Vignettes_ (1960), and _Pan Africanism Reconsidered_ (1962).
However, while most of its membership did not know of AMSAC’s secret relationship to
the U.S. government, the organization was actually funded by the CIA, which “aimed to
channel African American anti-colonialism and Pan-Africanism away from the
Communist Left (and radical nationalists).”

It was clear that the Cold War disrupted the days of the New Negro Renaissance
and subsequent Communist-led Popular Front—where Harlem had existed as a locus of
Afro-descendant cultural politics. As domestic anticommunism forced radical intellectuals
and creative artists to either repudiate their past affiliations or go “underground” or to jail,
few cultural or political activists were intrepid enough to challenge the assault on civil
liberties. In the midst of all this, though, a nascent writers’ collective began meeting in
Harlem to exchange artistic and political ideals, as well as to critique each other’s work.
This formation, which eventually became the Harlem Writers’ Guild, was able to make a
small cultural and political space for Afro-descendant writers and intellectuals to resist
the entrenchment of reactionary forces.

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51 Bill Mullen and James Smethurst, _Left of the Color Line: Race, Radicalism, and Twentieth-Century
Literature of the United States_, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003): 264. Also, see
Hugh Wilford who documents AMSAC’s relationship with the CIA, _The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played
52 Many African American cultural workers who refused to renounce their leftist inclinations, such as Paul
Robeson and Canada Lee, were “blacklisted” by the US Government, resulting in the loss of livelihoods,
passports, and friends.
For the founding members of the Guild—Rosa Guy, John Oliver Killens, Walter Christmas, and John Henrik Clark—politically engaged literature and art had the potential of raising consciousness that could lead to social change. This sentiment, however, ran counter to America’s Cold War cultural mainstream that propagated New Criticism and abstract expressionism for their apparent apolitical and ahistorical content and form. Nevertheless, most early members of the Harlem Writers’ Guild had been active in the Communist and labor movements of the 1930s and 1940s that had a profound influence on the political proclivities of the members of the collective. What is more, much of the Guild’s cultural work was influenced by socialist, Black nationalist and Pan-Africanist tendencies. Indeed, by combining social realist ideologies with African diasporic worldviews, members of the HWG helped nurture a cultural internationalism that would become a foundation for the early 1960s cultural radicals around Freedomways magazine, On Guard for Freedom, the Liberator magazine, Umbra, and subsequently the Black Arts movement (BAM).  

Theoretical Framework and Research Methods

In order to conceptualize my study, I engage numerous theories, such as Pan-Africanism, revolutionary and cultural nationalism, Third World Marxism, and the dialectical theory of literature. Of all the secondary texts I utilize though, James Smethurst’s The Black Arts Movement (2005) and Brent Hayes Edwards’s The Practice of Diaspora (2003) are the most helpful sources in writing my dissertation. Smethurst’s study of the Black Arts movement identifies both the socio-historical contexts that produced BAM, as well as the political and cultural networks from which its cultural workers and productions emerged. His text magnificently sketches the local, regional and national scope of the Black Arts movement, while demonstrating the important ways

that it challenged and altered North American concepts of the arts, culture, politics, and race. Though my dissertation builds upon many of the points made in *The Black Arts Movement* about the dialectical relationships between culture / politics and aesthetics / ethics, I extend the discussion into the international realm in order to consider the connections between the Black Arts/Power movements and Pan-Africanism/Third Worldism.

By situating Paris and Harlem as international nexuses of cultural and political activity, Edwards’s *The Practice of Diaspora* examines the international links and subsequent contradictions that existed between Afro-North Americans and Francophone Caribbean and African writers and intellectuals during the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, Edwards’s study demonstrates the central role that Black women (the Nardal sisters) had in developing cultural networks between Afro-North American and Afro-Caribbean creative intellectuals. Unfortunately, one of the shortcomings of Edwards’s text is how it supplants “Pan-Africanism” with “Diaspora” as the main Black internationalist theory and praxis employed by Africans and Afro-descendants in the 20th Century. Not only does my study re-deploy the concept of Pan-Africanism as the central heuristic in which to understand Black internationalism during this period, but it also extends the discourse spatially (onto the African continent and Caribbean) and temporally (into the late 1970s). Though post-modernist scholars such as Paul Gilroy (*The Black Atlantic*) and K. Anthony Appiah (*In My Father’s House*) oftentimes reduce Pan-Africanism to a monolithic movement devoid of nuances and complexities, I have employed the term *contested Black solidarities* to denote the intense ideological, political, and cultural struggles that ensued between different partisans of the movement.

The method that I employ in conducting my research and writing is inter-disciplinary, combining cultural history, literary criticism, and political theory. My specific methodological approach is *cultural historicism*, which recognizes the importance of
analyzing cultural “texts” (be they poems, essays, books, newspapers, musical pieces, theatrical performances, films, archival documents, etc.) within the socio-historical contexts that they were produced. It also takes into account who produced the “text”: her/his race, class, gender, nationality and relationship to power. This not only applies to literary/cultural productions, but also political tracts, historical documents, and other sources. In addition, I conduct content analyses of periodicals and literary/cultural journals from this period, such as Présence Africaine from Paris; and Soulbook, Black Dialogue, Liberator, the Negro Digest/Black World, The Black Scholar, The Black Panther, and SOBU Newsletter/The African World from the United States. Moreover, I examine the published proceedings of the various Pan-African Congresses and Festivals between 1966 and 1977. Where available, I also consult archival documents, such as unpublished writings, correspondences and pamphlets of the individuals and formations that helped articulate disparate manifestations of Pan-Africanism.

Scope and Structure of the Study

As I previously mentioned, the global movement for Pan-African solidarity and liberation was a direct response to the forces that led to the formation of the African Diaspora (enslavement, racism, economic exploitation, etc). Although the Pan-African Congress movement formally began in 1900 under the leadership of Henry Sylvester Williams and was later continued by W.E.B. Du Bois, the endeavors of Pan-African solidarity have a much longer history. For instance, the seeds of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle are found in the resistance of enslaved Africans against their predicament and in the coalescing of diverse African ethnic groups in the “new world” environment. Thus, the very process of cross-cultural negotiation, transfer, and exchange between diverse West and Central African ethnic groups during slavery, which eventually resulted in Afro-descendant people in the Americas, may be conceptualized
as a form of Pan-African identity formation.

Afro-Brazilian cultural nationalist Abdias do Nascimento argues that the attempts of enslaved Africans to rebel, escape and recreate autonomous communities (maroons, quilombos, palenques, cumbes, etc.), such as the Republic of Palmares (1595-1695) in Brazil, had direct pan-African (small “p” to cite George Shepperson) political and cultural implications, in addition to the demands for repatriation and emigration to Africa by slaves and free Blacks. Moreover, as historian Imanuel Geiss points out in his study *The Pan-African Movement* (1974), the abolitionism, political activism and intellectual work of numerous Afro-descendants from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Olaudah Equiano, Paul Cuffe, Toussaint L’Ouverture, Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, Alexander Crummell, Edward W. Blyden, among others, laid the groundwork for the twentieth century Pan-African Congress movement (1900-1966).

The structure of my dissertation is divided into an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. It historicizes and analyzes Pan-African cultural festivals and other forms of internationalist consciousness among Afro-descendants in North America, the Caribbean, and Africa that occurred between 1965 and 1977, exploring the role of cultural workers in articulating discursive forms of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. Chapter one examines the international manifestations of the historic moment known as the Black Arts movement. Even though contemporary scholars often consider BAM primarily in the context of US cultural history, my dissertation discusses cultural

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55 Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, pp. 30-174. For Geiss’s discussion of the intellectual and social backgrounds of Pan-Africanism, see specifically chapters 3 and 6-9. However, Geiss’s study ends in 1966 and the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah’s government, while my dissertation brings the cultural history of Pan-Africanism forward in the late 1970s.

production from this time period to illustrate the Black Arts movement’s translocal and international status as an articulation of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. As many younger Afro-North American radicals intensified their criticisms of what they saw as the failures of integrationism advocated by traditional leaders of the civil rights movement, the Black Power/Arts movements began to gain national and international recognition, especially after 1965.

Larry Neal referred to BAM as the “cultural front” of the Black Power concept and he notes that a radical “Black Consciousness” grounded each movement. Subsequently, Afro-descendant political and cultural activists—from North America and the Caribbean, and Latin America—sought to challenge not only negative representations of *Blackness*, but also the international political, cultural, and economic regimes that propagated them. During the height of the Black Power/Arts movements, revolutionary Black Consciousness was specifically prevalent in the flowering of literary production in the form of “little magazines” that also identified racism, capitalism, imperialism and US militarism in Vietnam and Africa as central factors in the oppression and exploitation of Black and Third World peoples in North America and globally. From the outset of the respective movements, however, there were ideological differences among the Afro-descendant cultural workers aligned with the Black Arts/Power movements. Nonetheless, chapter one asserts that despite the fractures that occurred within the respective movements, the mid-1960s remained a time of monumental political and cultural change, exchange, and contested solidarity between Africans, Afro-descendants, and Third World peoples.

This is particularly evident in the proliferation of international gatherings that

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occurred to discuss and debate the plight of African and Afro-descendant people and theorize possible solutions. For example, following Senegal’s independence in 1960, Leopold Senghor sought to establish Negritude as the political and cultural philosophy of his government. After doing so, he, with the support of UNESCO organized the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in Dakar in 1966, which built upon two earlier Presence Africaine-organized conferences in Paris (1956) and Rome (1959). In chapter two, I explore the 1966 Dakar Festival and what effect the joint sponsorship of the Senegalese government, UNESCO, and the U.S. State Department had on the articulation of Pan-Africanism and the international Black Arts movement. As a source of comparison, I juxtapose the Dakar Festival with the Pan-African Cultural Festival that occurred in Algeria in 1969 and the subsequent Pan-African Cultural Manifesto ratified by its participants. Here, I attempt to demonstrate that the “Algiers Festival” and manifesto marked a clear turn in the international Pan-African Arts movement from the primarily cultural and artistic showcase of Negritude that Senghor held in Dakar in 1966, to a more radical demand for Pan-African revolutionary culture.

Since Black Panther Party Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver was in exile in Algiers at the time, I explore the reluctant Pan-African politics of cultural struggle that the Black Panther Party expressed in its newspaper and public speeches in chapter three. While some of this occurred as the general level of Pan-African consciousness increased among Afro-North Americans, it must also be understood in the context of the Nixon Administration and FBI’s attempted disruption of the Black liberation movement. This chapter also explores the response Afro-descendant cultural workers in the Americas had to the Algiers Festival. In order to do this, I analyze pre- and post-festival literary works of key figures from the Black Arts movement who attended the Pan-African Cultural Festival to ascertain what influence, if any, this international gathering had on their ideas of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. I specifically consider works by Ed
Bullins, Don L. Lee (Haki Madhubuti), Ted Joans, Hoyt Fuller, and others, as well as their recollections of the Algiers Festival. What is more, I conduct content analyses of important Afro-North American journals and magazines published between 1968 and 1971, such as the Negro Digest/Black World, The Liberator, the Journal of Black Poetry, Black Theater, Black Dialogue, the Black Scholar, and other sources for works by Afro-descendant writers that generally explore the growth in Pan-African consciousness, as well as the Pan-African Cultural Festival in particular.

In chapter four, I sketch the emergence of the “two line struggle” within the Pan-African and Black Arts movement with the advent of the 1970s. First, I focus on the founding of the Congress of Afrikan People (CAP), which competed with the Black Panther Party’s Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention (RPCC) held on the same weekend in September 1970. Interestingly enough, early on neither formation had any clear program or strategy for organizing Black workers as an important constituency of their “revolutionary” objectives. This conflict would come to a head with the struggle between Pan-African nationalists and Marxist-Leninists over ideological control of CAP, the Student/Youth Organization of Black Unity (SOBU/YOBU), and the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), as well as which faction should lead Afro-North Americans at the Sixth Pan-African Congress in 1974.

I then examine the ideological struggle that ensued following Haki Madhubuti’s publication of the polemical essays: “The Latest Purge” published in The Black Scholar (September 1974) and “Enemy: From the White Left, White Right and In-Between” published in the Black World (October 1974). These essays and the ideological contestation that followed are important in understanding the politics of cultural struggle of North American Pan-Africanism, because they exemplify the notion of contested Black solidarities. Furthermore, they represent the ideological and literary break between Madhubuti and Amiri Baraka, who although a co-founder of the Pan-African nationalist
CAP, he and the formation moved from this position to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong. Though after Sixth PAC. Due to the split in the US-based Pan-African movement following the Congress in Tanzania, I conclude chapter four by arguing that because the Afro-North American delegation of over 400 cultural workers and intellectuals accepted U.S. government and corporate funding to participate in the Second World Festival of Black Art and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977, this marks a serious diminution of the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-racist oriented Pan-African political culture established in the earlier part of the decade.
CHAPTER 1

“...CALLING ALL BLACK PEOPLE...” THE INTERNATIONAL CONTOURS OF THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

Calling black people
Calling all black people, man woman child
Wherever you are, calling you, urgent, come in
Black People, come in, wherever you are, urgent, calling
you, calling all black people
calling all black people, come in, black people, come
on in.¹

Issuing this “SOS” in 1965, shortly after the assassination of Malcolm X, Amiri Baraka (then known as LeRoi Jones) anticipates the urgency of the Black Arts and Black Power movements, which began to coalesce both nationally and internationally among radical political and cultural activists in the mid-1960s. He also situates the struggle for Afro-North American liberation beyond the parameters of the United States, into a global context. By constructing this seven-line free verse poem as a radio broadcast or global distress signal, Baraka articulates a collective and international call-to-action for Afro-descendants. His political shift from the jazz inspired Beat bohemianism to Black nationalism initially began with his travels to Revolutionary Cuba in 1960 and his participation in the Black nationalist literary group On Guard for Freedom founded by Sarah Wright and Calvin Hicks.² The following year, the poet would be involved in a militant Pan-Africanist protest at the United Nations of Patrice Lumumba’s kidnap and

eventual assassination at the hands of his rivals and Western imperialist powers in the former Belgian Congo.³

Between 1961 and 1965, Baraka published a number of important literary works that anticipated the burgeoning cultural movement. These pieces include “The Myth of Negro Literature” (1962), *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (1963), the plays *The Toilet* (1963), *The Slave* and *Dutchman* (1964) and his polemical essay “The Revolutionary Theater” (1964). However, it was his move uptown to Harlem in March 1965 following Malcolm X’s death and the founding of the Black Arts Repertoire Theatre/School (BARTS), with Larry Neal and other cultural workers, that disparate Black nationalist artistic and political tendencies in Harlem merged into what would become known as the Black Arts movement. As one of the first poems Baraka wrote after launching BARTS, “SOS” illustrates that from the outset, the Black Arts movement had an internationalist consciousness developed from earlier Black nationalist and Pan-Africanist legacies. Literary critic Phillip Brian Harper (1995) suggests that the poem “embraces all members of the African diaspora, as it is directed explicitly and repeatedly to ‘all black people,’ thereby invoking a political Pan-Africanism posited as characteristic of the Black Arts project.”⁴

The poem’s *Pan-African* linkages become even more apparent when one reads Baraka’s “SOS” in relation to Léon-Gontran Damas’s “SOS” published in his first volume of poetry *Pigments* (1937).⁵ Born in French Guyana in 1912, Damas is recognized as one of the “founding fathers” of Négritude, along with Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor. He issued his “SOS” in response to the brutal treatment of Afro-descendant

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colonial subjects living in France. It decries how white Frenchmen were “coldly / beating up / knocking down / laying out / the blacks and cutting off their genitals / to make candles for their churches.” This poem specifically condemns the horrors of racial lynching as well as the complicity of European religious institutions to such actions.⁶ In contrast to Baraka’s poem, which speaks directly to Afro-descendants, Damas’s speaker appears to be making a protest to the colonial authorities. Nonetheless, taken together, both pieces begin to highlight the global consciousness and continual evolution of politico-cultural movements for African and Afro-descendant unity and liberation: from the New Negro/Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, the Négritude movement of the 1930s and 1940s, through the Black Arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

In this chapter, I seek to illustrate the widening international consciousness among Black creative intellectuals affiliated with the early Black Arts movement (roughly 1965-1968). This, I argue, was partially evidenced by the increased expression of Pan-African and Third World solidarity in the pages of radical Black “little magazines.” Indeed, there had been a long lineage of Afro-North Americans who recognized the relationship between Blacks in the U.S. and those in the Diaspora and African continent, from Martin Delany and Marcus Garvey to W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, Alphæus Hunton and the radicals associated with the Council of African Affairs (1937-1955). However, the Cold War and anti-communist witch-hunts of the 1950s succeeded in marginalizing the most radical advocates of Pan-Africanism. In fact, on the eve of the world-historic Bandung (Afro-Asian) Conference in Indonesia in 1955, Du Bois argued that most Afro-North American leaders had traded “equal status [in America]…for the slavery of the majority of men.” Clearly, the post-World War II civil rights social movement gained momentum in 1955 with the Montgomery Bus Boycott, but Du Bois felt that the focus of integration into

the U.S. society as the government intensified its imperialist domination of Third World countries in the Cold War was untenable.\(^7\)

It is true that during the McCarthy Era there existed a handful of organizations in the U.S. that sought to maintain connections between Afro-North Americans and Africans. For example, two “Pan-African” groups that started in the 1950s are the American Committee on Africa (founded in 1953) and the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC founded in 1957). However, as historian Penny Von Eschen (1997) notes, in the case of AMSAC, it emphasized cultural exchange at the expense of advocating political solidarity and liberation.\(^8\) For some Black radical intellectuals, such as Du Bois and his wife Shirley Graham, Hunton, Julian Mayfield, Maya Angelou and others, they chose to expatriate to Ghana after its independence in 1957 to escape the repression and help actualize Kwame Nkrumah’s project of continental Pan-African solidarity.\(^9\) However, as I suggest in this chapter, it was in the 1960s that a new generation of Afro-North American creative intellectuals aligned with the Black Arts/Power movements—namely Askia Muhammad Touré, Larry Neal, Hoyt Fuller, Sarah Webster Fabio, S.E. Anderson, Alicia Johnson, among others—began to direct their cultural and intellectual production toward the prospects of Pan-African/Third World unity and liberation.

\(^7\) Du Bois, “American Negroes and Africa,” *National Guardian*, February 14, 1955. As it appeared that most African Americans were distancing themselves from internationalism, the Bandung Conference in April 1955 signified the confluence of African and Asian anti-colonial movements and their desire to self-determination, which impressed Du Bois.

\(^8\) Penny Von Eschen in *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997) argues that AMSAC specifically described “its goal as defending ‘the great cultural contributions of man against the perversions of political, economic and national movements’” (175).

A number of the cultural workers I discuss in this chapter published pieces in pre-
Black Arts movement literary and political magazines, which helped to establish
important publishing networks for the nascent politico-cultural movement. Moreover, it is
interesting to note that most of these newspapers and magazines had begun publication
in 1961, such as Calvin Hick’s On Guard, Esther Jackson’s Freedomways, Dan Watts’
Liberator, and the Nation of Islam’s Muhammad Speaks, while the Umbra Writers
Workshop initiated Umbra in 1962. Though the Negro Digest began in 1942 and Hoyt
Fuller assumed editorship in 1961, Kalamu ya Salaam (1997) writes that it would be one
of the few pre-BAM little magazines directly aligned with the Black Arts movement.
However, the majority of the creative intellectuals I concentrate on published either in the
Negro Digest/Black World, or one of a number of other little magazines and Black
publishing houses founded in the mid-1960s: Soulbook, Black Dialogue, the Journal of
Black Poetry, Dudley Randall’s Broadside Press or Haki Madhubuti’s (then Don L. Lee)
Third World Press.  

Internationalizing the Black Arts Movement Scholarship

Timothy Tyson (2000), Fanon Che Wilkins (2001), Peniel Joseph (2006), Kevin
Gaines (2006) and other scholars have begun the important work of sketching the
international contours of the Black Power movement.  

What is more, their studies and those written about BAM activists and institutions by William L. Van Deburg (1992),
Komozi Woodard (1999), James Smethurst (2005), and Lisa Gail Collins and Margo
Natalie Crawford (2006) also demonstrate the necessity of not making hard distinctions

10 Kalamu ya Salaam, “Historical Overviews of the Black Arts Movement,” The Oxford Companion to African
University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Fanon Che Wilkins, “In the belly of the beast”: Black Power, Anti-
2001; Peniel Joseph, Waiting ’Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America, (New
between Black Power and Black Arts formations and participants. Smethurst’s monumental study of the Black Arts movement delineates the local, regional, and national antecedents of BAM in earlier Black nationalist discourse and cultural production, as well as in the Communist/Popular Front (1930s) and Beat (1950s) artistic circles dominated by European-American artists and intellectuals. While concentrating on the institutional histories and literary production of the Black Arts movement, he observes the multiple artistic modalities of the era with its poetry, drama, short stories, novels and criticism, as well as the visual artists, musicians, and other types of performance that made BAM a unique politico-cultural phenomenon. Focusing his fifth chapter on the development of the North American Third World Left, Smethurst examines the connections between domestic Black, Chicano/a, and Asian American “popular avant-garde” cultural workers on the West Coast of the U.S. during the late 1960s, titling the chapter “Bandung World.”

But the linkages between Black Arts activists-intellectuals and Pan-African/Third World cultural workers and movements abroad are only beginning to be studied. One important example is Cynthia Young’s recent text, Soul Power (2006); however, she primarily focuses on the formation of the U.S. Third World Left. Although it is true that there are many similarities between Third Worldism and Pan-Africanism, it is imperative not to overlook the specificities of the latter movement and its primary focus on African and Afro-descendant solidarity and liberation. For example, while Haki Madhubuti (then Don L. Lee), named his publishing house Third World Press in 1967, by 1969 he and other Black Arts activists began to question some of the tendencies behind “The Third

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World Bond,” suggesting that many revolutionary brothers who constantly quoted Mao “made bonds / with the / 3rd world / thru / Chinese women / [while] the sisters waited,” in a not so veiled criticism of the Black Panther Party.\textsuperscript{14}

This point notwithstanding, there is little question that the post-World War II manifestations of Third Worldism and Pan-Africanism shared similar trajectories and influences on Afro-North American radicals. Harold Cruse observed the importance of these Third World/Pan-African leaders to “New Afro-American Nationalists” as early as 1962, in which he asserted that

they have a pantheon of modern heroes—Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Touré in Africa; Fidel Castro in Latin America; Malcolm X, the Muslim leader, in New York; Robert Williams in the South; and Mao Tse-Tung in China. These men seem heroic to the Afro-Americans not because of their political philosophy, but because they were either former colonials who achieved complete independence, or because, like Malcolm X, they dared to look the white community in the face and say: ‘We don’t think your civilization is worth the effort of any black man to try to integrate into.’ This to many Afro-Americans is an act of defiance that is truly revolutionary.\textsuperscript{15}

Moreover, their names and ideals were often found in the flowering of literary and artistic productions during the 1960s and 70s that recognized the links between racism, capitalism, imperialism, (neo-)colonialism, U.S. militarism in Southeast Asia, and Soviet interventionism as central factors in the oppression of Black and Third World peoples. In actuality, solidarity between anti-colonial forces from Africa, Asia, and Latin America had a long and tenuous history, which gained considerable traction in 1955 after the Bandung Conference, which Richard Wright labeled \textit{The Color Curtain} (1956). These Bandung networks were later strengthened with the founding of the Non-Align

Movement in 1961 and subsequent Afro-Asian Solidarity Conferences. Askia M. Touré (then Rolland Snellings), an activist-intellectual and poet in the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and the Umbra Writers Workshop, expresses the revolutionary potentialities of Afro-Asian solidarity in his “Bandung War Poem” (1965), which he sardonically dedicates to Adlai Stevenson and Martin Luther King, Jr.:

“People” say:
   “He who lives by the sword…”
Why persecute the Sword? It is an arm of man, it helps him work out his destiny upon the Human Stage. See it flash! Blue steel dripping crimson gore; catching the light of the Eastern Sun as it passes through the West: grasp the Sword within your work-scarred hands. It is your tool to make the world anew. Your dignity. Never mind what “People” say: We will bury hypocrites! when we build the world anew with the Sword.

Here, Touré’s speaker invokes the Biblical quote “He who lives by the sword,” but immediately shifts the emphasis away from the non-violent meaning the original saying signifies to an acknowledgment of the right of self-determination and violent revolution for oppressed peoples with “work-scarred hands.” The voice also critiques religious teachings that urge the faithful to be patient for God’s salvation, by suggesting that liberation through revolutionary struggle proffered colonized people the ability to “work out [their] destiny on the Human Stage.” As is the case with a number of poems by Touré, his speaker’s gaze is directed toward the “Eastern Sun,” which symbolizes the

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rising power of Third World nations on the move to liberate themselves from Western domination.\(^\text{17}\)

In January 1966, this ideal became even more salient at the inaugural meeting of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAALA), also known as the Tri-Continental Solidarity Conference, convened in Havana, Cuba.\(^\text{18}\) A resolution passed on the “Rights of Afro Americans in the U.S.A.,” recommended that although Black Americans were not spatially “a part of Africa, Asia or Latin America, the special circumstances of the oppression which they suffer, to which they are subject, and the struggle they are waging” theoretically and politically connected them to the Third World. Thus, the resolution suggested that representatives from Afro-North American “anti-imperialist organizations” should be included “in future conferences and the Organization of the three continents…” The Tri-Continental also condemned the U.S. government’s imperialist aggression in Vietnam, where a disproportionate number of soldiers doing the fighting were Afro-North Americans, the assassination of Malcolm X and imprisonment of William Epton, a Harlem street agitator and Vice-Chairman of the Progressive Labor Party, for chanting the phrase “Burn, baby, burn” during the 1964 Harlem Rebellion.\(^\text{19}\)

At the same time, the United States government viewed the Tri-Continental as a serious threat to its domestic and foreign policy and described it as a ploy by the Soviet Union and Cuba to intervene in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere. Members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs passed resolutions of its own, asserting, “That the so-called first Afro-Asian-Latin American Peoples’ Solidarity Conference constitutes a

\(^{17}\) Askia Muhammad Touré, “Bandung War Poem,” *Soulbook*, (Fall 1965): 196.


positive threat to the free peoples of the world, and, on the hemisphere level, represents the most dangerous and serious threat that international communism has yet made against the inter-American system.” The Senate resolution continued:

a. That the [proven] intervention of communism in the internal affairs of the American Republics be considered as aggression, since it constitutes a threat to the security of the hemisphere.

b. That the American governments define their position regarding the present treatment of every kind to be given to communism, and that they consequently adopt coordinated measures that will lead to the common goals.20

Labeling its actions as a defense against “communist aggression,” the U.S. government believed that it was the sole power with the “authority” to dictate how other countries should govern themselves. In fact, however, it was merely updating the nineteenth century Monroe Doctrine. Despite the fact that the Tri-Continental maintained a general “non-aligned” position in terms of the Cold War between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., its anti-imperialist sentiments as well as its vocal support for the Black Liberation movement in North America and condemnation of the U.S.’s war against Vietnam, led the U.S. Senate to call the event “the most powerful gathering of pro-Communist, anti-American forces in the history of the Western Hemisphere.” The report went on to discuss Robert F. Williams’ attendance at the Tri-Continental; his radio broadcast Radio Free Dixie and publication of Crusader as influencing “Negro terrorism” in the United States. However, as I illustrate below, the stance of the U.S. government did not completely deter radical Afro-North American creative intellectuals and activists from linking their struggle to the Tri-Continental.21

Two years later, Cuba was again the site of an international conference, this time on the role of intellectuals and cultural workers in Tri-Continental revolutionary struggles.

21 “Political Background of Conference,” Ibid.
Referred to as the Cultural Congress of Havana, the 500 assembled intellectuals, writers, artists, and scientists discussed the relationship of culture and national independence, the integral growth of man, the intellectual’s responsibility towards the problems of the under-developed world, culture and mass media, and problems of artistic creation and scientific and technical work. In addition to Fidel Castro’s important closing address to the Congress, a handful of revolutionary African and Afro-descendent intellectuals presented at the event, such as Alex La Guma of South Africa, René Depestre from Haiti, Mario de Andrade from Angola, and C.L.R. James from Trinidad. While the resolutions of the Congress called upon intellectuals to immerse themselves “into the struggle for national independence,” 22 James made the provocative assertion “that all intellectuals, those from the developed world as well as those from the underdeveloped world, should be firmly discouraged, and in fact abolished as a force.” He continued by arguing “that the function of the Congress is that intellectuals should prepare the way for the abolition of the intellectuals as an embodiment of culture.” 23 Despite James’s contempt for intellectuals as a social force, the general consensus of those assembled in Havana was that “the fate of intellectuals is linked more and more to that of working classes,” and therefore, it was vital for them to “support the struggles for national liberation, social emancipation and cultural decolonization of all the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin American, and for the struggle against imperialism waged in its very center by an ever greater number of black and white citizens of the United States.” 24

“We must see ourselves as the extension of that Third World situation in the bosom of the beast”

Poet and Black Arts movement theorist Larry Neal was an earlier observer of the formation of a distinct Black nationalist artistic movement, which he initially described as “The Cultural Front” in 1965. Writing about the then recently established BARTS project in Harlem as a member of the revolutionary nationalist formation RAM, Neal articulated a dialectical relationship between culture and politics: “those who would relegate the cultural aspects of the Afro-American’s liberation struggle to a minor role; let them consider this: The political liberation of the Black Man is directly tied to his cultural liberation.” The following year, he more specifically outlined what he saw as the responsibility of writers to the Black liberation struggle in a symposium entitled “Negro Rights and the American Future,” published in the *Negro Digest* in October 1966. In this article, Neal asserts, “As a writer and social activist, I believe it is necessary […] to address my art, ideas, and actions to the collective needs of my people.” He identified other writers such as Frantz Fanon, Charles Fuller, Bill Davis, Rolland Snellings, Harold Cruse, Max Stanford, LeRoi Jones, and James Stewart as motivating his work. Neal also directly discussed the internationalization of the Afro-North American liberation struggle:

[W]e must understand that in order for us to survive we must come together as a people, organize to confront the Western white man on all levels of conflict. We must look at this struggle from the perspective of what Fanon calls the, ‘Third World.’ That is internationally, in terms of the developing nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. We must see ourselves as the extension of that Third World situation in the bosom of the beast.

It is useful to compare Neal’s statements in the *Negro Digest* symposium to his more recognize essay “The Black Arts Movement” from 1968. Describing the Black Arts

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movement as the “aesthetic and spiritual sister” of the Black Power movement, in this essay Neal now embraced Maulana Karenga’s cultural nationalist seven criteria for culture, which were mythology, history, social organization, political organization, economic organization, creative motif, and ethos. What is more, he calls for the establishment of a “Black Aesthetic” that would negate white Western values, forms, and symbols. This essay, along with Hoyt Fuller’s “Toward a Black Aesthetic” (1968), Addison Gayle’s Black Expression (1969) and The Black Aesthetic (1971), and Stephen Henderson’s Understanding the New Black Poetry (1973) serve as the core theoretical works on the Black Aesthetic of the 1960s and 1970s. For Neal, the central aspects of the Black Aesthetic were the “new” Black theater and poetry, which he suggests, “comes to stand for the collective conscious and unconscious of Black America—the real impulse in back of the Black Power movement, which is the will toward self-determination and nationhood, a radical reordering of the nature and function of both art and the artist.”

Though he recognized the foundation of the Black Aesthetic within the “African-American cultural tradition,” Neal goes further to state that it “encompasses most of the usable elements of Third World culture.” Here, he makes the initial correlation between the Black Arts movement in the U.S. and the Third World, to which he adds, “In a context of world upheaval, ethics and aesthetics must interact positively and be consistent with the demands for a more spiritual world. Consequently, the Black Arts Movement is an ethical movement. Ethical, that is, from the viewpoint of the oppressed. And much of the

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27 This is a point that has been cited by scholars of both the Black Arts and Black Power movements, see, Van Deburg, New Day in Babylon, p. 181; Phillip Brian Harper, “Nationalism and Social Division in Black Arts Poetry of the 1960s,” p. 166; Cherise A. Pollard, “Sexual Subversions, Political Inversions: Women’s Poetry and the Politics of the Black Arts Movement,” in New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement, p. 173.
31 Ibid, p. 29.
oppression confronting the Third World and Black America is directly traceable to the Euro-American cultural sensibility."³² Thus, while in “The Black Arts Movement” essay it is evident that Neal still saw the Afro-North American struggle in international terms, he had shifted from a revolutionary nationalist interpretation of culture as a weapon in that struggle to the more all-encompassing philosophy of cultural nationalism. This ideology, as described by Karenga’s “seven criteria for culture” above, envisions culture anthropologically from which all aspects of human existence arise: politics, economics, history, philosophy, etc.³³ Even though Neal’s pronouncements about the dialectical relationship between cultural and political liberation in 1965 and his 1966 statements that envisioned Afro-North Americans and Third World peoples confronting “the Western white man on all levels of conflict,” his later formulation specifies that battlefield in terms of aesthetic development.

Askia Touré was an even more vocal advocate of connecting the Black liberation movement to the Third World revolution. Speaking in the same 1966 Negro Digest symposium as Neal, he argues that Afro-North Americans should look to “the warriors, thinkers and prophets of the ‘Wretched of the Earth.’ From pre-World War Europe to the current Tri-continental Revolution.” Directly referencing the Tri-Continental held earlier that year, Touré was an early proponent of Black American creative intellectuals heeding the recommendation of the conference to link Afro-North American anti-imperialist struggles with the Bandung Revolution. He also called for the synthesis of the discursive ideologies Black radical intellectuals employed into a revolutionary “African-Americanism.” At the same time, Touré cautioned against the romanticization of “magic,”

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“new culture,” and other forms of mysticism, because “material progress for our broad masses will do more spiritually—and culturally—than a thousand witch chants.”

As this quote suggests, from the outset of the Black Arts/Power movements, there was ideological struggle between Black radicals. During the years I focus on in this chapter—1965 to 1968—the major ideological dispute was between the “cultural” nationalist Us Organization and the “revolutionary” nationalist formations of the Revolutionary Action Movement and the Black Panther Party, each responding to different domestic and international tendencies. In the introduction of their important edited volume, *Black Nationalism in America* (1969), John Bracey *et al*, outline the long history and ideological discursivity of Black nationalism. They define Black cultural nationalism as the belief that Afro-North Americans share “a culture, style of life, cosmology, approach to the problems of existence, and aesthetic values distinct from that of white Americans in particular and white Europeans or Westerners in general.” Conversely, revolutionary black nationalists viewed “the over-throw of existing political and economic institutions as a prerequisite for the liberation of black Americans and does not exclude the use of violence.” In practice, as is documented in *Black Nationalism in America*, many formations blurred the line between cultural and revolutionary nationalism, and most nationalists generally agreed that self-determination was a prerequisite for liberation. What is more, since ideologies, and their theorists, were often influx during the era, it is also important to observe the historic specificities of their development and articulation.

An ideal that both revolutionary and cultural Black nationalists in the mid-1960s generally shared was an endearing admiration for Brother Malcolm X, also known as El

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Hajj Malik el-Shabazz.\textsuperscript{38} Malcolm’s militant Black nationalism, his advocacy of self-defense, and his embrace of the non-Western religion of Islam made his vision for Afro-North American liberation vastly different than the “dream” of nonviolent integration posited by many civil rights leaders, specifically Martin Luther King, Jr.\textsuperscript{39} Moreover, clearly illustrating his commitment to self-determination and Pan-Africanism are Malcolm’s attempts to internationalize the problems facing Afro-North Americans by urging African and Asian leaders to bring the case of U.S. racism and human rights violations before the United Nations, a move W.E.B. Du Bois and the Civil Rights Congress had tried previously after the founding of the United Nations.\textsuperscript{40}

Upon leaving the Nation of Islam in 1964 due to serious differences with Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm initially founded the Muslim Mosque Inc., and then the secular Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), modeled after the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The primary objective of the OAAU was “the unification of all people of African descent in this hemisphere and to the utilization of that unity to bring into being the organizational structure that will project the black people’s contributions to the


\textsuperscript{39} Nancy Arnez, “Black Poetry: A Necessary Ingredient for Survival and Liberation,” \textit{Journal of Black Poetry}, (September 1980): 3-20. Ironically, Hoyt Fuller’s \textit{Negro Digest}, which was one of the most widely distributed “little magazines” of the Black Arts movement, did not initially publish any articles on the assassination of Malcolm X. What is even more interesting is that Wyatt Tee Walker, a colleague of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and devoted integrationist, was the first article to memorialize Malcolm “Nothing But a Man: On Malcolm X,” \textit{Negro Digest}, (August 1965). Walker writes, “I personally could never buy black nationalism, nor could I recommend it even if conditions for black men were infinitely worse than they are. But all the world must agree that Malcolm had the ‘book’ on white America and he read it loud and clear for all to hear,” 29.

\textsuperscript{40} In an interview with A.B. Spellman after leaving the NOI, Malcolm X discussed the importance of internationalizing the Black freedom struggle, “Once the civil rights movement is expanded to a human rights movement our African brothers and our Asian brothers and Latin American brothers can place it on the agenda at the General Assembly that is coming up this year and Uncle Sam has no more say-so in it then. And we have friends outside the UN—700,000,000 Chinese who are ready to die for human rights.” see, Spellman, “Interview with Malcolm X,” \textit{Monthly Review}, (May 1964). For an in-depth study of the early attempts at bringing the case of Afro-North American oppression to the United Nations, see, Carol Anderson, \textit{Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
world.”41 He specifically viewed the success of African national liberation struggles as reciprocally connected to Afro-descendant self-determination and emancipation:

This doesn’t mean that we’re getting ready to pack up our bags and take a boat back to Africa. This was not the impression that I was trying to give, because this is not true. You don’t find any large number of our people packing up their bags going back to Africa. That’s not necessary. But what is necessary is that we have to go back mentally, we have to go back culturally, we have to go back spiritually, and philosophically, and psychologically. And when we go back in that sense, then this spiritual bond that is created makes us inseparable, and they can see that our problem is their problem, and their problem is our problem. Our problem is not solved until theirs is solved, theirs is not solved until ours is solved. And when we can develop that kind of relationship, then it means that we will help them solved their problems and we want them to help us solve our problems. And by both of us working together, we’ll get a solution to that problem. We will only get that problem solved by working together.42

Moreover, Malcolm’s OAAU charter identified the need for an Afro-North American cultural revolution to occur simultaneously with political revolution. Building upon the ideas Harold Cruse previously articulated in the pages of the *Liberator*,43 the charter asserted that through a cultural revolution, Black Americans would develop a deeper connection with “our African brothers and sisters” and this would lead to a “journey to our rediscovery of our selves.”44 This included the belief that “Culture is an indispensable weapon in the freedom struggle.”45 By moving beyond a narrow religious nationalist theory of Blackness that he posited while a spokesperson for the NOI to a revolutionary Pan-African politics of cultural struggle, Malcolm X (in addition to Robert F. Williams and Frantz Fanon) and his posthumously published autobiography influenced a generation of Black nationalists from RAM, cultural workers at BARTS and the Us Organization, to the

Black Panther Party among others. Recognizing Malcolm’s significance and stature in the international Black liberation struggle, Larry Neal noted that he “covered everything—nation-hood, manhood, the family, brotherhood, history, and the Third World Revolution…Like Garvey and Du Bois before him, he linked the general oppression of Black America to that of the Third World. Further, he strongly advocated unity with that world, something few civil rights leaders have dared to do.”

Following his assassination in February 1965 by members of the NOI, Malcolm X became the most eulogized figure of the Black Arts movement, with hundreds of poems, plays, songs, and institutions—namely BARTS—dedicated to his memory. Writers such as Amiri Baraka, Ernie Allen, Jr. (Mkalimoto), Marvin X (Marvin Jackmon), David Llorens, Alicia Johnson, Keorapetse Kgotsitsile, Johari Amini (Jewel Latimore), Sonia Sanchez, Etheridge Knight, Edward Spriggs, Mari Evans, Julia Fields, Ted Joans, Larry Neal, Sterling Plumpp, Michael Harper, Haki Madhubuti, and August Wilson, to name but a few, crafted literary compositions invoking his name and legacy. One early tribute is Ernie Allen’s “For Malcolm,” published in Soulbook in 1965, which exemplifies the tragedy and rage felt by Black radicals following Malcolm’s murder. The poem’s speaker demands “Sleeping Warriors” to “Awaken” and “Arise…/ with the flaming torches of Revolutionary Justice, / heed the call / of the drum / of Chaka / of Vesey / of Prosser / of Turner / of Garvey / of Lumumba / of Malcolm / of Blackness!” Here, the poem links Malcolm to a long line of Pan-African liberationists who, with the exception of Marcus Garvey, were all murdered as a result of their insurrectionary activities.

Two years after Malcolm’s death, the mourning and sense of loss expressed by Black cultural workers was compiled into an anthology of poems entitled For Malcolm (1967). Dudley Randall, a poet and publisher of Broadside Press in Detroit, and

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Margaret Burroughs, a visual artist/writer and founder of the DuSable Museum in Chicago, conceived of the idea for the volume while at the Fisk Writers Conference in 1966. The anthology assembled pieces by established poets, such as Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Danner, Robert Hayden, Calvin Hernton, Ted Joans, and Margaret Walker, along with newer voices, such as Ahmed Legraham Alhamisi (Le Graham), Mari Evans, Julia Fields, Kgositsile, Sonia Sanchez, and Ed Spriggs. For Malcolm was only the second major publication on Broadside Press (after Randall’s Poem Counterpoem, 1966), and it marked one of the seminal anthologies of the Black Arts movement. Malcolm’s commitment to self-determination, his attempts to represent positive Black manhood, his contributions to the liberation struggle, and linkages of his legacy to other Pan-African heroes, were a few of the themes represented in the poems.  

Poet-playwright Julia Fields contributed the piece “For Malcolm X,” which touches on each of these themes, as she laments, “The voice has gone / Out of the wilderness… / And without his eloquence / We are mute.” Commenting further upon the absence of Malcolm’s devotion and acute perceptiveness to Black liberation, Field’s speaker declares,

His eyes were mirrors of our agony.  
They are closed.  
His lips were testaments of our hunger.  
They are closed.  
His ears were circuits for our cries.  
They are closed.  
His hands were petitioners against our bondage.  
They are closed.

In this stanza, she emphasizes the magnitude of his absence by juxtaposing Malcolm’s physical body and senses: his eyes (vision), lips (speech), ears (listening ability), and hands (institutional building) with the repetitive phrase “They are closed.” Her use of

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repetition also evokes a form of chanting that transforms this free verse poem into a rhythmic cadence, emblematic of much Black Arts poetry.\(^49\) Toward the conclusion of Field’s poem, the speaker compares Malcolm X to other fallen Pan-African freedom fighters, such as “Toussaint! Dessalines! Marcus! Patrice!” However, in comparison to Allen’s aforementioned poem, she includes the names of two leaders of the Haitian Revolution: Toussaint L’Ouverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, further extending the Pan-African linkages to Brother Malcolm X’s.\(^50\)

In addition to staking claim to Malcolm X’s legacy, Black Arts/Power activists generally concurred that Afro-North Americans constituted a “nation within a nation” or a “domestic colony.” While Black Communist Party theorist Harry Haywood articulated the former concept as the “Black Belt thesis” in the 1920s, the phrase was originally codified by the nineteenth century Pan-Africanist Martin Delany.\(^51\) Moreover, territorial separatists from the Kansas Exodus and the desires to build all-Black towns and make Oklahoma an all-Black state in the late 1800s, and the calls for “a suitable territory” in “the United States of America” by Arthur Anderson in the early 1900s to Marcus Garvey, the Nation of Islam (NOI) and other mid-twentieth century Black nationalists built upon and reformulated the concept, which was momentarily operationalized with the “founding” of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) in 1968.\(^52\) A corollary concept that many Black nationalist intellectuals theorized in the 1960s was the notion that Afro-North Americans

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\(^{50}\) Julia Fields, “For Malcolm X,” in For Malcolm X, eds. Randall and Burroughs, p. 33

\(^{51}\) In the Appendix to The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People in the United States, (Philadelphia: Privately Published, 1852) Martin Delany argued, “Situated as we are, in the United States, many, and almost insurmountable obstacles present themselves. We are four-and-a-half millions in numbers, free and bond; six hundred thousand free, and three-and-a-half millions bond. We have native hearts and virtues, just as other nations; which in their pristine purity are noble, potent, and worthy of example. We are a nation within a nation; -- as the Poles in Russia, the Hungarians in Austria, the Welsh, Irish, and Scotch in the British dominions,” p. 209.

\(^{52}\) Bracey et al, Black Nationalism in America, pp. 156-169 and 177-187.
Harold Cruse first broached the notion of domestic colonialism in the context of the Afro-North American liberation struggle in 1962. Publishing “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American,” in the New Left journal, Studies on the Left upon returning from a visit to Cuba with Robert F. Williams, Amiri Baraka, Julian Mayfield and other Black intellectuals organized by On Guard for Freedom and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, Cruse introduced many ideas into the discourse on revolutionary Black nationalism. For example, in positing the notion that Black Americans constituted a domestic colony, he argued that they shared much in common with revolutionary nationalist struggles taking place throughout the Third World, a point that he had made previously in the year in the article “Negro Nationalism's New Wave.”

Outlining the historical development of Afro-North Americans as domestic colonial subjects, Cruse argues:

From the beginning, the American Negro has existed as a colonial being. His enslavement coincided with the colonial expansion of European powers and was nothing more or less than a condition of domestic colonialism. Instead of the United States establishing a colonial empire in Africa, it brought the colonial system home and installed it in the Southern states. When the Civil War broke up the slave system and the Negro was emancipated, he gained only partial freedom. Emancipation elevated him only to the position of a semi-dependent man, not to that of an equal or independent being.

This notion theoretically connected the Afro-North American “national” liberation struggle to those anti-colonial movements occurring the Third World. Cruse goes on to assert that Black Americans were the authentic revolutionary force in the US, challenging the orthodoxy of Euro-American Marxists who privileged white industrial workers.

The primary distinction between these two concepts was that a domestic colony directly linked the struggles of Black Americans with post-WWII anti-colonial movements taking shape in Africa and Asia, while the “nation within a nation” concept, as posited by the CPUSA, NOI, and RNA, sought to create a “Black nation” within the boundaries of the United States. Critiquing this line of reasoning, poet/activist S.E. Anderson suggested that those organizations advocating the “pipedream” of Afro-North Americans appropriating land in North America, did not understand that the U.S. would never allow a “nation” of Black people to take root anywhere on this continent. See, Anderson, “The Fragmented Movement: Roads to Black Liberation,” Negro Digest, (September/October 1968): 6-10.

A decade earlier poet-activist Aimé Césaire wrote that Afro-North Americans were a “para-colony” in his radical anti-colonial tract, Discourse on Colonialism (1953).

formulations made in “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American” (later republished in Black Fire), Cruse’s theoretical pronouncements on cultural revolution and the “triple front” of building institutions that concurrently addressed political, cultural, and economic issues posited in The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual (1967) were extremely controversial yet influential to adherents of the Black Arts/Power movements throughout the era.56

Besides the ideological struggle over the strategies and/or efficacy of building a “Black nation,” Black Arts/Powe intellectuals differed as to the reasons for the marginalization of Afro-North Americans. Many cultural nationalists cited race as the primary contradiction affecting Afro-descendants, while revolutionary nationalists viewed the problem as the intersection of race (caste) and class. For instance, Maulana Karenga, one of the primary exponents of cultural nationalism posited in his philosophical treatise, The Quotable Karenga (1967), which served as the foundational text of the Us Organization, that, “The international issue is racism not economics. White people are racists not just capitalists. Race rules out economics and even if it doesn’t wipe it out completely it minimizes it. Therefore, we conceive of the problem today not as a class struggle but a global struggle against racism.”57

Conversely, Muhammad Ahmad (then Maxwell Stanford), a leading RAM theorist and self-described revolutionary nationalist, as early as 1962, focused his anti-imperialist analysis on building Black youth and working-class solidarity for the “World Black


By 1967, he argued that blanket calls for “Black Unity” were paradoxical and romanticized because the divergent Black Power organizations “represented different class interests, political interests, economic interests, and have different ideologies.”

Even though RAM advocated Marxist-Leninist tendencies, it nonetheless remained critical of the Communist Party USA and Soviet Union, which RAM described as part of the “White Holy Alliance” with the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, and Belgium, choosing rather to align their theory and praxis with China, Cuba and the revolutionary Third World.

En-gendering the Politics of Cultural Struggle

Despite the ideological struggle over whether race or race and class were the primary contradictions confronting Afro-North Americans, few of the early Black Arts/Power formations openly challenged sexist gender ideologies. Indeed, the dominant U.S. society was virulently sexist and patriarchal, which compounded the systems of racial oppression and economic exploitation that Black people faced. However, while many Black nationalist organizations sought to reorder society by deconstructing white supremacy, a number of these groups maintained problematic stances about the role of women in the movement. Some simply discounted Black women’s “triple jeopardy” (race, class, and gender oppression)—to use the title of the

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59 Ahmad, “America is the Black Man’s Battle Ground,” April 1967, 1, in Black Power III Papers.
60 Ahmad, “The World Black Revolution,” 1968, in Black Power Papers III. In this essay, Ahmad also argues that the “principle contradiction in the world is between imperialism, particularly U.S. imperialism and the colonies, between the haves and the have nots. This contradiction manifests on both a class and caste basis. In the present situation, caste predominates the question of class in that the exploitation of the have nots though initially perpetrated on class lines as of the present, maintains itself on caste (racial lines),” p. 2-4.
61 Rolland Murray, Our Living Manhoods: Literature, Black Power, and Masculine Ideology, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Murray’s text makes an important corrective to the literature on the Black Power/Arts movements by suggesting that there were indeed a few male writers aligned with the movements who confronted the masculinist tendencies. Moreover, by engaging the work by cultural critics Robert Reid-Pharr and Philip Brian Harper. Murray asserts that we must view “black nationalism as a formation that is not a cohesive totality, but a set of identity claims that are always internally divided” (5).
Third World Women’s Alliance’s newsletter—however, a few formations and individuals went further to proscribe women as subservient to Black men and solely responsible for producing the next generation of revolutionaries. For example, though the Nation of Islam proffered an important institutional and cultural alternative to integrationist politics, its strict patriarchal and masculinist ideologies kept women in subordinate positions in the organization. Poet Sonia Sanchez, who joined the NOI in the early 1970s, notes how she confronted the Black men who wanted her to remain in the background and just “have some babies.” She states,

I fought against the stereotype of me as a black woman in the movement relegated to three steps behind. It especially was important for women in the Nation to see that. I told them that in order to pull this ‘mother’ out from what it’s under, we gonna need men, women, children, but most important we need minds. I had to fight. I had to fight a lot of people in and outside the Nation due to so-called sexism. I spoke up. I think it was important that there were women there to do that.

Thus, the main focus of Sanchez’s cultural struggle was against the external system of white supremacy, but she also had to challenge the internal culture of the movement that attempted to delimit Black women’s agency.

There are a number of other examples of sexist gender politics during the Black Arts/Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s. However, two egregious illustrations are the Us Organization’s “House System,” which posited that a woman’s appeal arose from her “femininity and she can’t be feminine without being submissive,” and Eldridge Cleaver’s controversial memoir Soul on Ice (1968) in which he posited sexual violence against white women as an “insurrectionary act” that he first practiced on Black

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62 Jeffrey Ogbar states, “While the rhetoric of patriarchy was no great deviation from the predominant views of gender in much of the world, the NOI managed to offer a peculiar slant to its brand of male domination” (29-30). See, Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); William Sales, From Civil Rights to Black Liberation, p. 64-65; and Manning Marable, How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America, (London: Pluto Press, 2000): 84-85.
63 Sonia Sanchez Interview with Claudia Tate, in Black Women Writers at Work, ed. Claudia Tate, (New York: Continuum, 1990): 139-140.
women. Clearly, there are no justifications for these and other expressions of male chauvinism and gendered violence. Then again, it is reductionist to represent Black nationalist consciousness as *a priori* sexist, conservative, and bordering on the fascistic, which has been the position of some post-modernist and dogmatic Marxist scholars of late. Malcolm X is an important example of a prominent Black nationalist who would challenge his own sexist notions and those he encountered in the movement as he began to embrace revolutionary nationalist principles. Though much of his early stance on gender relations was predicated on the Nation of Islam’s hegemonic patriarchy, Black feminist cultural critic bell hooks (1994) notes that in speeches he gave after leaving the NOI in 1964, he had began to assert that “black women should play an equal role in the struggle for black liberation,” signifying a “move from a sexist, misogynist stand point to one where he endorsed efforts at gender equality.”

Therefore, by depicting all Black nationalist discourse as innately sexist and retrogressive erases its complexity as well as its dialectical relationship to other revolutionary ideologies of the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, this dislocates the agency of numerous Afro-North American women writers and intellectuals who engaged in cultural and ideological struggle to construct global Black nationalisms that were more responsive to their multiple subject positions, by challenging the masculinist rhetoric and

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66 bell hooks also notes the importance of Malcolm’s political teachings to her, Angela Davis and other Black feminists despite his early sexism. His break with the NOI allowed him to become more critical of proscribed gender roles, even questioning the idea that “black male leadership was essential to black liberation.” See, “Malcolm X: The Longed-for Feminist Manhood,” *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*, (New York: Routledge, 1994): 185-195.

actions of some male counterparts. Literary critic Cheryl Clarke’s *After Mecca* (2006) makes a vital intervention into the historiography (and literary canon) of the Black Arts movement by suggesting that Black women poets, theorists, and revolutionarists were central exponents of the “new black consciousness movement” between 1968 and 1978.\(^6^8\) Then again, she essentializes BAM as a hegemonic “circle” regulated by a “new black nationalist patriarchy,” which obfuscated the voice and presence of Black women. In her analysis of the hyper-masculinity and *heterosexism* in BAM, she also paints the discursive movement, and by extension Black nationalism, by its most narrow ideologues. What is more, since her study commences in 1968, Clarke misses earlier *dialogic* criticisms that a number of Afro-North American women writers and artists expressed in order to de-center the contradictions of the Black liberation movement and inscribe a gendered analysis into the politics of cultural struggle.\(^6^9\)

In the scholarship of the Black Arts/Power movements, few studies recognize 1966 as a pivotal moment in a burgeoning Black *feminist* consciousness. The year is better remembered for the continuation of urban rebellions in 43 cities; the popularization of the “Black Power” concept after SNCC activists Kwame Ture (then Stokely Carmichael) and Willie Ricks shouted the phrase during the Meredith March Against Fear; the founding of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense in Oakland, California; the opening of Black Arts/West in San Francisco; and the First World Negro Festival of Arts and Culture in Dakar. While there had been consistent demands for gender equality in the civil rights movement by Ella Baker, Dorothy Height, and Pauli Murray\(^7^0\) and *proto-feminist* articulations all the way back to Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, and Anna Julia

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\(^6^9\) Ibid., 48-49.

Cooper, in 1966, a new generation of Black female creative intellectuals lobbed prosaic grenades in the form of critical essays at the sexism and male chauvinism that characterized aspects of the Black liberation movement. That year there were a number of essays authored by female and male writers in the *Liberator, Negro Digest,* and *Ebony* magazine that discussed the experiences of women in the Black freedom struggle. Many of these essays were responding to both the recently published study, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (1965) by U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan as well as the growing assertion of Black *male* domination as a necessary prerequisite for Black liberation.\(^71\)

An illustration of this insurgent Black *feminist* consciousness is the poet Nikki Giovanni’s “The First Steps Toward a Real Revolution,” published in 1966. At the time of publication, Giovanni was a member of SNCC and a student at Fisk University, where she took a writer’s workshop with John O. Killens, co-founder of the Harlem Writers Guild. In April 1966, she became more committed to writing as a form of cultural struggle after attending Fisk’s First Black Writers Conference, organized by Killens and attended by Amiri Baraka, Robert Hayden, Melvin Tolson, Margaret Danner, Margaret Walker, and Dudley Randall. In “The First Steps Toward a Real Revolution,” Giovanni comments upon how sexism was impeding the formation of a truly revolutionary movement. “Now that [the Black man] is on the move,” she writes:

> I’m castigated for being a Black woman—a strong Black woman who has fed and clothed him and his children. Since he has decided the time is NOW, must I play the silent, innocuous thing who suddenly doesn’t have the strength to open a jar of pickles, let alone organize a Block Club, for

fear of “castrating” him? Is it necessary that I cease being a Black woman so he can be a man?\textsuperscript{72}

Later as a co-editor of \textit{Black Dialogue} after its relocation to New York City, Giovanni would again chastise the narrow nationalist discourse and ideologies of the Black Arts/Power movements in her essay “Black Poems, Poseurs and Power.” In this piece, she criticizes the masculinist hegemony that she saw smothering the Black liberation struggle. She was especially critical of the “culturalist” tendency within the movements, which she asserted often lacked clear political proclivities.\textsuperscript{73}

Equally important to understand the politics of cultural struggle from a gendered perspective is an essay by Betty Frank Lomax entitled “Afro-American Woman: Growth Deferred.” This is one of three pieces published in the \textit{Liberator} in May 1966 concerning Black women in the liberation struggle.\textsuperscript{74} She begins her piece with the question: “What is the role of the Afro-American Woman?” to which she retorts, “Ask any sister and you will invariably get an ambivalent reply.” For Lomax, this ambivalence was as a result of Black women being doubly oppressed by “male supremacy” and “white supremacy,” preventing them from “realizing [their] full potential.” She then challenges the notion of the “domineering” Black woman, “On one hand, she is accused by Black ‘experts’ of maintaining a matriarchal household and emasculating her man. Yet on the other hand we all know who is ‘emasculating’ whom, for no man is dominated by his woman unless

\textsuperscript{72} Nikki Giovanni, “The First Steps Toward a Real Revolution,” \textit{Negro Digest} (December 1966): 86.


\textsuperscript{74} The two other short essays also contemplated the “role” of Black women in the revolution; however, they differed from Lomax’s in tone and substance. Amelia Long concurred with Lomax that Afro-North American women had a central part to play in the liberation struggle, “it is time NOW for we women (because of the meager advantages we have in this society) to spearhead a single program geared to alleviate the continuation of this anti-human treatment.” However, she did not focus her piece on women’s marginalization, but rather asserted that the time for talking, debating, and writing was over; what was important “NOW” was “action.” Amelia Long, “Role of the Afro-American Woman,” \textit{Liberator}, (May 1966): 20. For Evelyn Rodgers, however, much of the discourse around Black women’s empowerment sounded too much like the oppressor’s “castrating game against our men.” In her estimation, the main thing that Black women could do is being supportive of Black men as they attempt to assert their manhood in the world. “What we can do that is constructive rather than castrating discussions and articles led by the older members of the struggle is to find means of helping the brothers, whether it is financial or what” (21). See, Evelyn Rodgers, “Sisters Stop Castrating the Black Man!” \textit{Liberator}, (May 1966).
it appeals to his *neurotic* need for some kind of sexual phantasy (sic), or expiation of his
guilt and hence, brutality passed off as masculine dominance.” Her argument points a
sardonic finger at the idiosyncrasies of masculinist ideology, positing that Black women
had little power to emasculate Black men, except when the latter desired sexual
domination.\(^{75}\)

Echoing many of the ideas raised in Lomax’s piece is the singer-songwriter and
cultural activist Abbey Lincoln, who issued a challenge to males in the Black freedom
movement with her “Who Will Revere the Black Woman?” featured in the September
1966 issue of *Negro Digest*. As the founder of the Pan-African-inspired Cultural
Association for Women of African Heritage, she had earlier led a group of Afro-
descendant women activists to the UN to protest the assassination of Patrice
Lumumba.\(^{76}\) However, in her 1966 essay, Lincoln centered her protest on the myth of
the “Black matriarch” and how that concept—codified in *The Moynihan Report*—
attempted to displace white capitalist supremacy as the causation of Black oppression
and inferiority, rendering Black women as the primary saboteurs of Black manhood.

But strange as it is, I’ve heard it echoed by too many black full grown
males that black womanhood is the downfall of the black man, in that she
(the black woman) is “evil,” “hard to get along with,” “domineering,”
“suspicious,” and “narrow-minded.” In short, a “black, ugly, evil,” you know
what...Then to add guilt to insult and injury, she (the black woman) stands
accused as the emasculator of the only thing she has ever cared for, her
black man...She is the scape-goat for what white America has made of the
“Negro personality.”

Lincoln's point here is very important to consider. By illustrating the problematic manner
in which some Afro-North American men negatively viewed Black womanhood, she
hoped to begin dialogue about the pitfalls of sexism and misogyny to the Black liberation
movement. Though Lincoln concludes her piece with a call for Black men to protect, hold

\(^{76}\) Peniel Joseph discusses Abbey Lincoln’s Pan-Africanist activities and the Cultural Association for Women
of African Heritage in his *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour*, 39-40.
up, and “keep [Black women] precious and pure,” which Toni Cade Bambara and other Black feminists felt reified patriarchal norms, she nevertheless began to push back against overt forms of sexism within Black communities and in the larger U.S. society making space for more revolutionary critiques of male domination. Ultimately, Lincoln’s challenge garnered a number of positive responses from Black women readers of Negro Digest, sparking a debate well into 1967.

By far, the most provocative essay published in 1966 on the relationship of Black women to the liberation struggle was Louise Moore’s “Black Men vs. Black Women.” At the time of her essay’s publication in the August issue of the Liberator, Moore, who worked as the Vice-President of the Domestic and Personal Service Union, had written two earlier pieces entitled “When Will the Real Black Man Stand Up?” (May 1966) and “When a Black Man Stood Up” (July 1966). “Black Men vs. Black Women,” however, set off a firestorm that dismayed both male and female readers due to its vitriolic language and her suggestion that Black women may have to resort to “armed struggle” against Black men in order to attain freedom. Somewhat anticipating the rhetoric employed by separatist feminists, Moore defined her “immediate oppressor” as “men – Black men,” and opened her piece with the radical proclamation, “As a Black woman I am being forced to realize that I must kill a Black man before I die if I and my Black sisters all over the world are ever to be free.” Though this assertion may appear to be “anti-male” in nature, Moore made the point that she gained the “courage to write this article” after discussing the issue with “Black men who agreed with us Black women.” What is

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79 For a few positive responses to Lincoln’s essay, see “Letters to the Editor,” Negro Digest, January 1967. In addition, the recognition of gender or (sex) oppression was not completely lost on Black men; for example, Lerone Bennett, a Black historian and editor of Ebony magazine, published a progressive essay “What Do You Say? Freedom: In Black and White,” in Negro Digest, (March 1967): p. 73, which argued, “We also need a new definition of sex which would free women for equal roles in the church, in labor unions, in the professions and every other institution of our society.”
especially important about her essay is the fact that she situates her struggle in global terms, arguing that Black women “must become familiar with guerrilla warfare as our sisters in Africa, South America and Vietnam have had to do. We must have a Mau Mau here and now.” Her essay clearly identifies the system of racism, sexism, and classism, oppressing Black women in a phallocentric society “that builds itself around the male and his masculine organ.” For Moore, the ultimate paradox of the Black liberation movement was that in the attempts of some Afro-North American men to attain power, they often ascribed to the same patriarchal norms that elite white males utilized to structure the current society.80

Many of the issues raised in the essays by Nikki Giovanni, Betty Frank Lomax, Abbey Lincoln, and Louise Moore among others were later engaged in The Black Woman: An Anthology (1970). This remains a seminal text sketching the intersection of race, gender, and class oppression, edited by the essayist/novelist Toni Cade Bambara. As a contributor to the Negro Digest, Liberator, and other Black little magazines, she collected many of the essays and poems for the anthology, while struggling against the internal contradictions of the Black Arts/Power social movements. According to literary critic Farah Jasmine Griffin (2002), the pieces in The Black Woman, which included poetry by Giovanni and Audre Lorde, as well as critical essays by Lincoln, Bambara, Alice Walker, Grace Lee Boggs, Shirley Anne Williams, Paule Marshall and Frances Beale among others, began “to theorize a black feminist politics and praxis.”81 Bambara

80 Louise Moore, “Black Men vs. Black Women,” Liberator, August 1966, 16-17. Moore's essay generated considerable enmity from both male and female readers of the Liberator who either argued her piece did not speak for most Black women (“A Black Woman” 9.1966), or that she was “the enemy” (12.1966). One letter to the editor from Norman Ralston questioned Moore’s language suggesting that her earlier essays used the pronouns “WE” to describe Black women and men, but this latter essay was framed mainly as “us vs. them” which was untenable for Black liberation. He also argued, “Sister, I agree with you and will help you [kill Black men], but you had better realize that it is for the freedom of both of us and that some few ‘sisters’ too will bite the dust,” p. 22.

81 Griffin, “Conflict and Chorus,” p. 121. Fran Beale’s groundbreaking piece entitled “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,” takes the “system of capitalism (and its after birth...racism)” to task as the main entities constructing modern masculine and feminine gendered identities and relations. Then again, she also decries how “there seems to be some confusion in the Movement today as to who has been oppressing whom.
envisioned the text as a international treatise on the historical and contemporary issues confronting Afro-descendant women, going further to note that the organizations she took part in “have begun correspondence with sisters in Vietnam, Guatemala, Algeria, Ghana and the Liberation Struggle and the Women formed alliances on a Third World Women plank.” Like Moore before her, Bambara located the growth of Black feminist consciousness as having a dialectical relationship to Pan-African/Third World liberation struggles, which gained an organizational framework with the founding of the Third World Women’s Alliance in 1970. Originally organized in 1968 by Fran Beale, who was a member of SNCC’s International Affairs Commission, the poet Mae Jackson, and Gwen Patton as the Black Women’s Liberation Caucus within the New York branch of SNCC, the activist-intellectual networks that coalesced around the TWWA sought to inscribe a radical feminist critique into Third World/Pan-African politics of cultural struggle in order to develop “a new revolutionary world and humanism.”

“And by the way, the major BAM theorists…were Rev. Nationalists / Third World Socialists—not backwards ‘racialists’”

A common misrepresentation of the Black Arts movement is that its participants were all cultural nationalists; an assumption often made by leaders of the Black Panther Party. While many well-known BAM activists such as Amiri Baraka and Haki Madhubuti were at one time affiliated with Karenga and openly advocated Black cultural...
nationalism, other writers such as Askia Touré and Larry Neal were aligned with the revolutionary nationalist formation RAM. Equally problematic, however, is the reduction of all cultural production from the Black Arts era to cultural nationalism. This tendency neglects the influence of RAM, the Black Panther Party, and other avowedly revolutionary (inter)nationalist organizations on the cultural front. For instance, one can find clear revolutionary nationalist sentiments and sympathies in the literary expression of Sam E. Anderson, Charlie Cobb, Nikki Giovanni, Keorapetse Kgositsile, Carol Freeman, Mae Jackson, Alicia Johnson to cite a few. There are also examples of revolutionary poetry and visual art in the pages of the *Liberator, Black America, Soulbook, Black Dialogue, Negro Digest/Black World*, and *The Black Panther* among others. Moreover, in a recent interview, Askia Touré specifically attempts to correct the historical record about the movement: “And by the way, the major BAM theorists—Larry Neal, Carolyn Fowler, Sarah Fabio, Ernie Allen, Askia Touré—were Rev. Nationalists / Third World Socialists—not backwards ‘racialists’!”

Few BAM scholars other than James Smethurst and Kalamu ya Salaam identify RAM as an important ideological influence on the foundation of the Black Arts movement. This is partially due to the clandestine nature in which cadre members “infiltrated” organizations and because, as I mentioned previously, there is a tendency among scholars to associate Black Arts solely within the parameters of cultural nationalism. However, my interest in exploring RAM’s ideological and politico-cultural impact on the Black Arts movement is not to duplicate the important work done by Smethurst and Salaam. Rather, I hope to extend the discourse around the movement.

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85 See, “Rudy Interviews Askia Touré: On Dawnsong! And the Black Arts Movement, Part I,” *Chickenbones: A Journal for Literary & Artistic African-American Themes*. Other important post-revolutionaries were Marcelino Dos Santos, vice president of FRELIMO; Mario de Andrade, founder of MLPA; Agostinho Neto, president of MPLA; Onesimo Silveira of PAIGC; Ho Chi Minh, president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam; and Sekou Touré, president of the Republic of Guinea.

from the local, regional, and national manifestations they discuss into the broader international arena, where RAM and other revolutionary nationalists often situated their intellectual and cultural production. While RAM’s internationalist tendencies were ideologically inspired by Maoism, the Mau Mau uprising, the Bandung movement, the Cuban Revolution and Vietnamese national liberation struggle, according to Muhammad Ahmad, the organization had direct links to radical Afro-North American internationalists Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, and Queen Mother Audley Moore.  

At the same time, though RAM maintained an international approach to revolutionary Black nationalism it did not negate the importance of Afro-North American cultural expression. Thus, in counter-distinction to Karenga, who assumed that vernacular Black America lacked viable cultural vocabularies, labeling musical forms such as the blues counterrevolutionary and incapable of mobilizing the masses, RAM theorists observed a revolutionary possibility in Afro-North American culture, specifically “the Afro-American music of modernists such as Bird, Miles, ‘Trane, etc.” By making this claim, Ahmad suggested that it was the responsibility of revolutionary Black Americans to translate “the dynamism embodied in Afro-American music” into “Bandung Humanism” or “Revolutionary Black Internationalism,” a point that Askia Touré further developed in his 1965 essay, “Keep on Pushin’: Rhythm & Blues as a Weapon.”

87 In Muhammad Ahmad’s We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations, 1960-1975, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2007), he suggests that Malcolm X “agreed to become the spokesman of RAM but felt his role should remain secret because the United States intelligence apparatus would become alarmed about his connection with Robert Williams, who was in exile in Cuba,” p. 124.


89 Ahmad, “The Relationship of Revolutionary Afro-American Movement to the Bandung Revolution, Black America, Summer-Fall 1965. Though RAM generally closed their essays with “Unite or Perish,” throughout 1965, they ended some communiqués with the salutation “Keep on Pushin’, Change is Gonna Come,” riffing on the popular R&B songs from Curtis Mayfield’s The Impressions and Sam Cook, respectively. See, Black Power Papers III.

90 Askia Touré asserted, “Somewhere along the line, the ‘Keep On Pushin’ in song, in Rhythm and Blues is merging with the Revolutionary Dynamism of COLTRANE of ERIC DOLPHY of BROTHER MALCOLM of YOUNG BLACK GUERRILLAS STRIKING DEEP INTO THE HEARTLAND OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE. The Fire is spreading, the Fire is spreading, the Fire made from the merging of dynamic Black Music (Rhythm and Blues, Jazz, with politics (GUERRILLA WARFARE) is spreading like black oil flaming in Atlantic shipwrecks spreading like Black Fire...” See, ‘Keep on Pushin’: Rhythm & Blues as a Weapon,” Liberator, (October 1965): 7-8.
actuality, this notion was recognized early on by cultural workers of the Black Arts movement, who not only crafted literary pieces in tribute to the denizens of jazz, blues, and Black popular music, but also reinterpreted ideas of content, form, and functionality from those musical expressions into their cultural production. What is equally important to consider about the relationship of jazz to the Black Arts movement is that “New Thing” jazz musicians, such as John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Yusef Lateef, and Pharoah Sanders, to name a few, explored Pan-African and Third World musical themes and aesthetic forms during the early 1960s, which subsequently raised the international consciousness of other Black cultural workers.

Though identifying a dialectical relationship of the Afro-American liberation struggle to the Bandung Revolution, RAM nevertheless exclaimed, “America is the Blackman’s Battle Ground!” In a programmatic essay of the same name, Ahmad synthesizes the theories of cultural revolution posited by Mao Zedong, Harold Cruse and Malcolm X’s OAAU charter, with the call for armed struggle, which he explicated in eight stages of the “Black Cultural Revolution.” For Ahmad, the Black Cultural Revolution was not merely an attempt at subjectively rediscovering lost “African” values and customs. But rather, it was a formulated plan of action that included political and cultural


92 Jazz has historically been an important reservoir of Pan-African themes and forms. John Bracey notes that U.S.-based jazz musicians had begun working with Cuban and African musicians in the 1930s and 1940s specifically Cuban percussionists, such as Chano Pozo, Candido, Machito, Patato Valdez, and Mongo Santamaria. These and other Afro-Cuban musicians recorded with Black American jazz musicians Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, Kenny Dorham and others. See, Smethurst, The Black Arts Movement, p. 272. In the 1940s, a handful of musicians began incorporating elements of African and Middle Eastern culture/music into jazz, influenced by Art Blakey’s “pilgrimage” to Nigeria where he converted to Islam, as well as the conversion of Ahmad Jamal, Yusef Lateef, and other Afro-North American musicians to the Muslim faith. See, Richard B. Tumer, Islam in the African American Experience, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997/2003): xix-xx and 138-141.
education, national collective consciousness building, the development of Black cultural committees and propaganda organs, and most importantly, a “shock force” or “Black Guard,” whose “dual role is to organize resistance against the war in Viet Nam, while simultaneously organizing guerrilla units, prepared, trained and fit to take our people to a new level.” This is one of the clearest attempts of fusing revolutionary nationalism with a cogent cultural analysis that located the basis of revolutionary identity and struggle within the politico-cultural milieu of Black America. Moreover, his conceptualization worked toward harmonizing RAM theory and praxis with Third World revolutionary thinkers, such as Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, and Frantz Fanon, who viewed culture as nationally bound, but imperative for the dialectical development of national and international consciousness.  

While “America is the Black Man’s Battleground” did not articulate any special role for writers, in a message to the Black Writers Congress in Montreal, Canada, in 1968, Ahmad specifically posited that “Black writers must see themselves as part of the vanguard of a revolutionary nationalist elite,” and they “must unite nationally and then unite with black writers internationally to become part of a world black congress or black internationale dedicated to World Black Power.”

With the objective of influencing the perspective of the Black liberation movement, RAM activists-intellectual Ahmad, Larry Neal, Askia Touré, and Don Freeman took their revolutionary nationalist ideals about political and cultural struggle to the pages of the *Liberator* and other little magazines. Having been developed by Dan Watts following the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo and subsequent protests at the United Nations by Black radicals of various stripes, the Liberation Committee for Africa began publishing the *Liberator* in 1961. In addition to its early focus on African independence movements, the *Liberator* constituted an important synthesis

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93 Ahmad, “America is the Blackman’s Battleground” (1967) in Black Power Papers III.
between Old and New Left Marxism, Black nationalism, civil rights issues, and Pan-African unity. What is more, it featured many early pronouncements on Black arts, politics and culture by RAM functionaries, with Larry Neal serving as the magazine’s arts editor from 1964-1966, helping to orient aspiring writers and artists to the insurgent politico-cultural movement. Neal also contributed such pieces for the Liberator as “The Cultural Front” (June 1965); “A Reply to Bayard Rustin” (July 1965); “Black Revolution in Music: A Talk with Drummer Milford Graves” (September 1965); “The Black Revolution in Art: A Conversation with Joe Overstreet” (October 1965); and “A Conversation with Archie Shepp” (November 1965).

First announcing the advent of “The New Afro-American Writer” in the Liberator, Askia Touré described the militant generation of “new nationalist”/“Africanist” writers who were challenging the integrationist tendencies of “named” writers such as Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright. Clearly one of the earliest essays to anticipate the emergent Black Arts movement, Touré traced the roots of “new” nationalism back to Marcus Garvey and the Nation of Islam (NOI). At the same time, he was critical of the NOI’s embracing of “Arab culture” instead of “black African culture.” Interestingly enough, in subsequent years, Touré and a number of other BAM activists would convert to Islam, envisioning it as a counter to Eurocentric political and religious hegemony. Amiri Baraka’s play Black Mass (1965) is an early example of the “Islamification” of some Black Arts movement cultural production, which Melani McAlister details in her study “One Black Allah.” She writes that “from at least 1965 until 1973, [Baraka] and others saw Islam as a primary nationalist cultural resource an authentically black religion that would be central to the requisite development of an alternative black culture and a liberated spirituality.”

Nonetheless, in 1963, Touré maintained that while many new Black nationalists had sympathy for the Nation of Islam, they remained distant from its “religious doctrine and rigid discipline.” He concluded the essay by echoing Cruse’s postulation about Afro-North Americans signifying domestic colonial subjects and suggesting that revolutionary Black nationalism was the most cogent ideology to link North American Blacks with the oppressed masses of the world.97

Building upon this line of reasoning, Touré published four additional essays in the *Liberator* in 1964 and 1965 on the potential for Black revolutionary struggle. The first piece entitled “Unchain the Lion” identified the Black exploited masses, whom he called “Mose” (similar to Fanon’s *lumpenproletariat*), as the “lifeblood” of the Afro-North American struggle, suggesting that “they’ll NEVER rally to a basically suicidal, masochistic movement such as non-violence in a police state.”98 A few months later, the *Liberator* published “Toward Repudiating Western Values,” in which Touré criticized the race and class allegiances of bourgeois nationalists and “Negro Liberals” for assimilating Eurocentric cultural values and “white middle-class ideals.” He specifically challenged the belief that integration into a capitalist system would somehow liberate the masses of Afro-descendants:

> I would remind Bourgeois Nationalists that this exploitative system has enslaved three-quarters of mankind (our Asian, African, and Latin American brothers), so that for black America to take its (capitalist) place in white America’s mainstream helps to perpetuate this evil system.99

In order to counter this, Touré argues that Black revolutionary nationalists had to “strive to develop a revolutionary soul—total psychic unity with the masses of our people.”

Furthermore, it was imperative to “hitch the wagon of Black America” to “the Universal Age of Bandung (Asia, Africa, and Latin America), [which was] bringing with it new

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values and ideals of Universal Humanism and Justice." Touré translated these political ideals into a poem entitled “Song of Fire,” published in RAM’s journal *Black America* in 1964 and later in the anthology *Black Fire* (1968), which was one of the first poems to depict urban rebellions in North America as a part of the struggle for national liberation and related to “the Universal Age of Bandung:”

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Tears that weep for shattered Sunday schools
are lost
like diamonds leaving ebon hands – among the dark
South African sands: lost-lost…and never found!
Save your tears! Save your anguished cries!
Save your prayers to barren, silent skies:
Wait-wait awhile!
For soon the Dawn will come to men once more –
and Buddha’s eyes will smile from burning
saffron robes and charred pagodas –
Shango
will shout his rumbling song to
joyous Congo tom-toms…in the night.
   Allah
will send his flaming sword a whistling
through the “chosen land”…and bellow:
   Free-dom! Free-dom!
   Here comes the Rising Sun!
And HERE…my twenty-million, tortured,
   chosen children:
      your day will come!
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This poem invokes the imagery of Eastern deities such as Buddha, Shango, and Allah responding joyously to the revolutionary “Rising Sun” of anti-colonial liberation. Employing occasional internal and end rhyme couplets, Touré locates emancipation not in “prayers to barren, silent skies,” but in the self-determination of the oppressed masses. There is little question that the narrator embraces outright revolutionary violence, especially in response to the violent bombings that “shattered Sunday schools,” killing four black girls (Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Roberston, and Cynthia Wesley) in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963. Moreover, Touré identifies the

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100 Ibid, 26.
Afro-North American freedom struggle, and its growing radicalization evidenced by urban rebellions, as a component part of the Third World revolution, a point he raised in the adjacent essay “Long Hot Summer.”

In February 1965, the Liberator featured another of Touré’s essays entitled “Afro American Youth and the Bandung World,” which synthesized his previous criticisms of bourgeois reformism / nationalism, with assertions that Black Americans were subjects of domestic colonialism, support for armed self-defense, and advocacy of anti-imperialist Third World struggles. Similar to other theoretical essays written by RAM cadre at this time, Touré now envisioned Black youth as the vanguard of revolutionary movements. Referring to Afro-North American youth as “new people,” he argues “they have developed new attitudes and outlooks concerning the future role of Black America in world society.” Touré continued by suggesting that young Afro-North American revolutionaries were repudiating both the bourgeois reformism of civil rights leaders as well as the “escapist” bourgeois nationalist “Back to Africa” or “separate states” schemes, “to embrace the ‘Bandung’ world, and link up Black America’s struggle with the former colonial peoples.”

A major theoretical shift in this essay from his previous three was the fact that he specifically identified U.S. imperialism—“in the form of gigantic corporations, gigantic banks, trusts, and mining interests”—as the main threat against Afro-North Americans and Third World peoples. Touré noted that the present state of “Bourgeois Democracy” was merely a façade and that the forces behind monopoly-capitalism, with the support of the military-industrial complex, would soon implement a Fascist dictatorship. Therefore, “Black America must not wait!” he concludes. “She must link her struggle with those of

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103 For two articles by RAM theorists that envision Black youth as central to any revolutionary movement, see Don Freeman, “Nationalist Student Conference,” Liberator, (July 1964): 18; and Muhammad Ahmad’s “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afroamerican Student,” Liberator, (January 1965): 13-15.
her former colonial brothers, and led by the emerging vanguard of militant youth – rooted in the people: organize and prepare to survive the Final War: Armageddon!" While his final essay published in the *Liberator* in 1965 entitled “Keep on Pushin’” focused more particularly on Afro-North American music as revolutionary praxis, it nevertheless maintained his signature tone and international perspective. Through his essays, revolutionary poetry, politico-cultural activism, and later co-editorship at *Black Dialogue* and *The Journal of Black Poetry*, Askia Muhammad Touré remained an important advocate of situating the Black Arts movement as an aspect of the anti-imperialist Bandung World.105

RAM cadre in California also helped influence the shape and international perspective of the Black Arts movement with their production of *Soulbook*. Self-described as the “quarterly journal of revolutionary Afroamerica,” Donald Freeman and his brother Kenn Freeman, Isaac Moore, Ernest Allen, Jr., Carroll Holmes, and Bobb Hamilton began the publication in winter 1964. By its second issue in spring 1965, Bobby Seale, future co-founder of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense had become *Soulbook’s* printer and distribution manager. During its run, *Soulbook* was one of the first Black journals in North America to publish translations of Frantz Fanon’s major works on anti-colonialism and Third World revolution, as well as communiqués by Robert F. Williams in-exile and theoretical essays by former Black Communist Party stalwart Harry Haywood on revolutionary nationalism.106 These ideas were also incorporated into the published essays on anti-imperialism, economics, jazz, and literature featured in the journal. Moreover, each issue of the little magazine featured a section entitled “Reject Notes,” which published poetry by many BAM cultural workers, such as Ernie Allen, Ed

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106 In addition to the essays and communiqués by and about Fanon and Williams, the Fall 1965 issue of the journal describes Fanon as the *Nihil obstat*, and Robert F. Williams (RAM) as the *Imprimatur*, which are terms associated with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, p. 150. Also, Harry Haywood’s first contribution to the journal was "The Two Epochs of Nation Development: Is Black Nationalism a form of Classical Nationalism," *Soulbook*, (Winter 1965/66): 257–266.
Bullins, Carol Freeman, Keorapetse Kgotsiile, Clarence Major, Larry Neal, Patricia Parker, Sonia Sanchez, Askia Touré, Shirley A. Williams, and Marvin X among others.

Having assembled while members of the Bay Area’s Afro-American Association (AAA), the editors addressed the premier volume “To the Peoples of Afroamerica, Africa, and to all the Peoples of the World:”

We the Editors of SOULBOOK subscribe to the view expressed by the great Black martyr Patrice Lumumba that, ’...without dignity there is no liberty, without justice there is no dignity, and without independence there are no free men.’ Furthermore, we adhere to the view that it will take a radical socio-economic transformation within the United States before the freedom of the Black man in the U.S., the Congo, and anywhere else the victims of racial discrimination have been maimed...Thus to further the cause of the liberation of Black peoples we feel that this Journal and all ensuing issues of it must be produced, controlled, published and edited by people who are sons and daughters of Africa.107

By recognizing the interconnectedness of Afro-North American and Pan-African/Third World liberation struggles, the need to combat the common enemy of U.S. capitalist-imperialism, while also insuring that the journal remain completely produced by Afro-descendants, the editors of Soulbook expressed a revolutionary nationalist tendency similar to RAM’s core philosophies.108 Additionally, in the first issue alone five of the eight pieces explored the national liberation movements occurring in Africa, specifically the Congolese “civil war,” in a section of the journal entitled “Africana.”109 Continuing its focus on Pan-African solidarity, ensuing issues featured articles about the African National Congress (Spring 1965), “Africa, China and the U.S.” by Cheikh-anta Diop (Fall 1965), African liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies (Winter 1965/66), and

107 Editors, “To the Peoples of Afroamerica, Africa, and to all the Peoples of the World,” Soulbook, (Winter 1964): 1. Moreover, the editorial made clear the journal's political “commitment” in dedicating its “publication to Felix Moumié, Medgar Evers, Reuben Um Nyobé, the six child-martyrs of the Birmingham bombings of 1963, Patrice Lumumba, Ronald Stokes, Antonio Maceo, the dead Freedom Fighters of Kenya and Algeria, and the endless number of other known and unknown Black Freedom Fighters who have been gunned down by the imperialist oppressors in Afroamerica, Africa, Latin America and Asia,” Ibid, p. 2.


109 “In each issue of SOULBOOK there will be a selection from the African press concerning some controversial subject in Africa,” (Winter 1964): 21-23. However, this section only seems to have been continued in the Spring 1966 issue with the article, “Apartheid is Doomed!” p. 143.
the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah (Summer 1966). The editors also introduced their readership to political and cultural issues of the broader African Diaspora with a series of bilingual essays about the Puerto Rican nationalist movement by Alfredo Peña (Fall 1965 & Winter 1965-66), translated poetry by Nicolás Guillén and Aimé Césaire (Fall 1965), an analysis of revolutionary activists in Haiti by Paul Lantimo (Summer 1966), and Carlos Moore’s “Cuba: The Untold Story, part 1” (Summer/Fall 1968).110

Though not ideologically bound to revolutionary nationalism, the editors of Black Dialogue were nonetheless committed to international Black solidarity and politico-cultural struggle. Founded in 1965 by Arthur Sheridan, Abdul Karim, Edward Spriggs and members of the Black Students Union at San Francisco State College, the little magazine was developed as “a meeting place for voices of the Black community—wherever that community may exist.” According to Abby A. Johnson and Ronald M. Johnson (1979), Black Dialogue embodied a more “dialogic” philosophy toward Black liberation than Soulbook, by publishing a diverse array of political, literary, and cultural perspectives, even though there was considerable overlap in contributors.111 Between 1965 and 1968—prior to its relocation to New York City—Black Dialogue featured political pieces about Malcolm X (April 1965 and Winter 1967/68); the Us Organization (Autumn 1966); the Black Panther Party’s “Free Huey” Newton campaign (Winter 1967/68); and Askia Touré’s “Letter to Ed Spriggs,” criticizing what he saw as Amiri Baraka’s “Reactionary Super-Blackism” (Winter 1967/68). The little magazine also maintained a Third World outlook with essays on the prospects of economic unity in Africa (July-August 1965); Frantz Fanon's ideological influence on Afro-North Americans (Winter 1966); the Arab-Israel conflict (Winter 1967/68); and U.S. militarism in the

110 Soulbook did not publish part 2 of Moore's essay on Cuba and racial problems until the Spring/Summer 1969 issue, after almost a year publication hiatus due to changes in editorial staff and direction. See, (Spring/Summer 1969): 319.

Dominican Republic and Vietnam (July-August 1965). Furthermore, by Winter 1966, the journal had also established an international presence designating Joseph Seward as its first African editor.112

At the same time, *Black Dialogue* remained an indispensable cultural conduit for the Black Arts movement. It included many of the era’s foremost cultural workers in essays on jazz, theater, and visual arts; plays by Ed Bullins, Marvin X, and Dorothy Ahmad; as well as a poetry section entitled “Soul Street...New Black Poets,” edited by Joe Goncalves, who in 1966 developed *The Journal of Black Poetry*. A few of the BAM poets published in *Black Dialogue* were Larry Neal, Amiri Baraka, De Leon Harrison, Welton Smith, Patricia Bullins, Rudy Bee Graham, Joe Goncalves, Marvin X, Ed Spriggs, Clarence Major, and Ahmed Legraham Alhamisi. What is more, the little magazine extended the scope of BAM internationally in its printing of essays about Négritude, as well as works by a number of African and African Diasporic poets, such as Alphonse Ngoma’s “Tom-Tom: on the death of Patrice Lumumba” (July-August 1965), David Diop’s “The Vultures” and “The Renegade” (Winter 1966), Aimé Césaire’s “The Tornado” (Autumn 1966), and Keorapetse Kgotsile’s “Bleached Callouses, Africa, 1966” (Winter 1967/68).

Through his poetry and essays in *Black Dialogue*, *Soulbook*, and elsewhere, Kgotsile, an exiled South African poet-activist aligned with the African National Congress (ANC), represented a direct connection between Afro-North America and African liberation movements. He identified the Pan-Africanist implications of poetry as “movement. Force. Creative power. The walk of the Sophiatown tsotsi or my Harlem brothers on Lenox Avenue. Field hollers. The Blues. A Trane riff. Marvin Gaye or mbaqandga.” Referring more specifically to the motivation for his poetry, which was the yearning for freedom held by oppressed Black masses globally, Kgotsile declared,

“Mine is an international black language summoning the power of millions of indignant black people for the final destruction (symbolic or real) of any agency that denies the world love. This is the rumbling of the inevitable fury of millions of black people sick and tired of the role European refugees made them play for centuries.”

His poems “Carbon Copy Whiteman,” “Inherent and Inherited Mistrusts,” “For Afroamerica,” “Flirtation,” and the aforementioned “Bleached Callouses” featured in Soulbook and Black Dialogue, between 1965 and 1967, respectively, contemplate African and Afro-North American history, memory, and political struggle. “For Afroamerica” written in commemoration of the Watts Rebellion in 1965, Kgositile envisions “Patrice and Malcolm / in your step as you / dance near the sun / your hand outstretched / to embrace that long / deferred day so close.” Here, he references the martyred Pan-African freedom fighters Patrice Lumumba and Malcolm X as inspirations for the radicalized Afro-North American movement. He also alludes to Langston Hughes’ earlier poem “A Dream Deferred” in the lines “Now / there will be no ifs / red-lipped dreams too / damned long deferred / explode.” Though Hughes’ poem holds out some hope that the racial situation in the U.S. could change before the “dream” exploded, writing after the Watts Rebellion, Kgositile suggests that the explosion already symbolized emergent “volcanoes” that would ultimately overrun North America.

Black Cultural Workers Envision the National Liberation Struggle

Numerous poets affiliated with the Black Arts movement shared the opinion that Watts and the ensuing urban rebellions of the mid-1960s represented a burgeoning Black revolutionary consciousness among the masses. They envisioned that the “long hot summers” of 1965 through 1968, where hundreds of urban rebellions disrupted most major cities in the U.S. illustrated the emergence of a protracted war of national

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liberation and foretold of the impending demise of the modern *empire* known as the United States of America. Moreover, RAM theorists specifically believed that the uprisings were the domestic manifestation of the Bandung Revolution, directly connecting them to the national liberation struggles in Vietnam and Africa, and that millions of Afro-North Americans would study the lessons of Watts and elsewhere, to “develop a more comprehensive and formidable Paramilitary Strategy and Tactics.”

The U.S. government also felt that the urban rebellions signified a “calculated design of agitators, militants organizations, or lawless elements” with the intent of overthrowing the system. Subsequently, numerous state and national commissions, poverty programs, congressional hearings, and counterintelligence measures, such as the FBI’s “Ghetto Informant Program” were instituted in the late 1960s to quell what the government believed was an impending revolution.

This assertion intensified following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee, while he supported striking Black sanitation workers. As news spread about Dr. King’s murder, urban rebellions erupted in over 100 cities throughout North America, which poet Johnie Scott, of the Watts Writers Workshop, describes as “World War 3” with “the burning of modern Romes: / Harlem / Watts / Detroit / Philadelphia / Chicago / Newark / Washington, D.C.”

115 RAM theorists argued that the struggle of Afroamerican have-nots would aid and be aided by the Bandung struggles for national liberation. “This revolution will pose the supreme crisis for the United States Government (American Fascist State Power) because the American military establishment cannot subdue synchronized Bandung Wars of National Liberation and the African-american Struggle for National Liberation simultaneously. American military forces will be forced to withdraw from Asia, Africa, and Latin America to the United States. Then the Bandung revolutionaries can help immobilize the over-extended American military apparatus by following these forces in “hot pursuit.” See, Don Freeman and Muhammad Ahmad, “The Present Situation and the Struggle for Black State Power,” May 1965, in RAM Papers. Also see, Ahmed, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, p. 145.


Troupe, who was a comrade of Scott’s in the Watts Writer’s Workshop, pondered the revolutionary impact of inner-city uprisings. His composition “White Weekend,” which like Scott’s “The American Dream” was published in Clarence Major’s anthology *The New Black Poetry* (1969), recalls the unrest following Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination, where over “76 cities [were] in flames on the landscape / and the bearer of peace / lying still in Atlanta… / Lamentations! Lamentations! Lamentations! / Worldwide! / But in New York, on Wall Street / the stock market went up 18 points…”

As influential members of the Watts Writers Workshop, which itself had been organized “From the Ashes” of the Watts Rebellion in 1965, Scott, Troupe, and other writers in the workshop sought to redirect the rage of young Blacks in Los Angeles into local and national struggles for racial and economic justice.

Askia Touré’s aforementioned poem “Song of Fire,” published prior to the rebellions in Harlem (1964), Watts (1965) and the hundreds in the wake of Dr. King’s assassination, is important because it anticipates many of the tropes that radical cultural workers would continue to revisit about the revolutionary nationalist potential of urban rebellions. For instance, his assertion that the unrest illustrated the complete repudiation of nonviolent integration and a turn toward Third World liberation was a theme in many poems about ghetto uprisings. Another metaphor that Askia Touré utilized to describe ghetto uprisings is a “Rising Sun,” which in addition to symbolizing the epistemological shift toward the East, it connotes the awakening of the people as a burning mass.

The portrayal of rebellions as burning masses was reinterpreted as “volcanoes,” as Kgotsitsile depicts them, or more commonly as “fire.” Sam E. Anderson, for example, a poet and founding member of the Black Panther Party in Harlem, wrote “A New

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Dance,” about urban rebellions and the “cleansing fire” of revolution that “spreads from city to city / to country to country / to world,” admonishing the reader to “dance the Blackflame dance.” Also, a popular phrase attributed to the Watts and other rebellions invoking the trope of “fire” is “Burn, Baby, Burn,” which was a catchphrase coined by the Magnificent Montague, a disk jockey from Chicago who was based in Watts at the time of the rebellion. Though his initial utilization of the term described the moment “when I’m playing the record and I am snapping my fingers and I’m talking my talk, I have reached the epitome, the height,” it more than any other statement came to signify the uprisings of the late 1960s. In the fall 1965 issue, Soulbook published Marvin X’s (then Marvin Jackmon) poem “Burn, Baby, Burn,” where the speaker explicates many of the causations of the unrest, such as enslavement, both physical and mental, external economic exploitation, and police brutality. He also references other popular phrases of the day, from Fannie Lou Hammer’s “Sick an Tired, / Tired of being / Sick and Tired,” to Elijah Muhammad’s assertion that Afro-North Americans were “Lost in the / wilderness / Of white america.” Throughout much of the poem, the narrator employs lyrical Black American Vernacular English and end-rhyme couplets, such as

> Git all dat motherfuckin pluck,
> Git dem guns too, we ’on’t give a fuck!
> ...Burn, baby, burn
> In time
> He will learn.122

These lines anticipate what Carolyn Rodgers of OBAC describes as rappin’ poems emblematic of Gil Scott Heron, the Last Poets, the Watts Prophets, and others who are widely recognized as precursors to contemporary Hip-Hop emcees.123 Worth Long, a

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SNCC activist and poet from Atlanta, revisits the trope “Burn Baby Burn” in his “Arson and Cold Lace (or how i yearn to Burn Baby Burn)” first published in the *Umbra Anthology* in 1967 and reprinted in Major’s *The New Black Poetry*. As with Marvin X’s piece, Long envisions urban rebellions as the beginning of revolutionary struggle. This poem speaks directly to “False faced America” (read: whites) informing it of its hypocrisy. He also employs alliteration and consonance throughout the poem to emphasize frustration and the urgency of the moment. Moreover, Long repeats a number of words and phrases, such as “False farmers” and “We have found you out” to highlight the consternation felt by Afro-North Americans due to the government’s continued oppression. However, the speaker defines urban rebellions as a form of retribution, which he calls “The sparks of suspicion / [that] Are melting your waters / and water can’t drown them / These fires a-burning / and firemen can’t calm them… / Hot flames must devour / The kneeling and fleeing / and torture the masters…”

The notion that urban rebellions were preparation for future revolutionary violence found poetic voice in the pages of more commercial Black little magazines as well. Zach Gilbert published the first poem about the Watts Rebellion in *Negro Digest* in December 1965. Gilbert, a poet from Chicago better known for his verses about the civil rights movement, exemplifies the radical shift that events like Watts would have on many Black cultural workers. The speaker in his poem “For Watts” describes the rebellion as “[t]he day the volcano erupted,” in which “the volcano” serves as a metaphor of the repressed frustrations of working-class Blacks from Watts (and other cities) bursting in a “Bomb of blood / No more to be / Ignored.” Here, Gilbert’s notion that the Black masses

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125 In an April 1965 symposium published in *Negro Digest*, Gilbert maintained that the “individuality” of the Black writer was the most important aspect of his/her work. “Without art the protest is lost, the message unimportant.” See, “The Task of the Negro Writer as Artist,” *Negro Digest*, (April 1965): 56.
in Watts (and elsewhere) asserted themselves onto the historical stage shares much in common with C.L.R. James’ postulation that “ordinary people” makes history.\footnote{Zack Gilbert, “For Watts,” \textit{Negro Digest}, (Dec. 1965): 21.}

Describing an Afro-North American revolutionary struggle as “The Long March” (1968), which alludes to Mao Zedong’s historic march across China, Chicago poet Alicia Johnson’s rebellion begins ten years in the future (1978) as the “black innocence marches / left… / right… / left… / right…” raining destruction on “industrial urban cities / watts-slaugshon-chicago…” / throughout the north american continent,” and demanding reparations rather than food rations: “SAVE THE BEANS / GIVE US THE GREENS.” While the “50,000,000 strong marched / over / the atlantic / to europe… / across asia” the “children of the SUN-GOD” (Afro-North Americans) are joined by “the people of the moon-god” (Middle Easterners) and a host of Third World “poet-politicians,” reciting “poems of freeman / CONFUCIOUS’ analects,” such as Ho Chi Minh, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Mao. It is at this point where the tone of Johnson’s poem shifts, meditating on the ontological sustenance that Afro-North Americans would receive once reconnected with Mother Africa as well as the reciprocal necessity of their contribution to armed struggle against the racist colonial regimes of Southern Africa:

\begin{verbatim}
we ran like a child we ran
standing with apron-land in hand
we ran to her
entering beneath her apron hem
smith’s front door :
beating brains
crushing nuts
of all the afrikaaners i hate
most is
vorster’s dutch guts.
up to the west
cameroon & ghana
to the east
uganda & kenya
to the north pass the sahara
WE RESTED
breathless WE RESTED
\end{verbatim}
As “The Long March” reaches its apogee in 1988—ten years after its initiation—and the mass of militants has exponentially grown the speaker is able to die with the knowledge that the “SUN-GOD” has once again “set on MOTHER’S breast.” Similar to Touré’s “Song of Fire,” there is an embracing of Eastern philosophies, such as Buddhism, Confucius, Islam, and various African spiritual teachings, which serve as counter-measures to the hegemony of Western Christianity on Afro-North Americans. Then again, in both poems, reality and myth are intertwined in revolutionary poetic verses that envision the transformation of modern societies through militant self-determination, as is signified in Johnson’s repetition of the motto “SAVE THE BEANS / GIVE US THE GREENS,” not by the intervention of supernatural entities.\(^{127}\) Johnson’s poem “The Longest March” links the desires for self-determination held by Black revolutionary nationalists with Bandung national liberation struggles, which she connects to the wars for independence and against imperialism in “M-O-T-H-E-R” Africa. By far, this is one of the clearest expressions of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle produced during the height of the Black Arts movement.

**Pan-Africanizing the Negro Digest**

While the *Negro Digest* began as an unapologetically bourgeois periodical in 1942, under Hoyt Fuller’s editorship, beginning in 1961, he helped to transform the journal (and the Black Arts movement) into a national and international phenomenon. Owned and produced by Johnson Publishing Company, *Negro Digest* had much wider readership than most of the other little magazines of the day, such as the *Liberator*, *Soulbook*, *Black Dialogue*, the *Journal of Black Poetry* and *Umbra*. However, this mainstream “respectability” did not preclude Fuller from making poetic and prosaic space to Black radicals of divergent ideological alignments, such as Amiri Baraka, Askia

Touré, Henry Dumas, Larry Neal, Sonia Sanchez, Harold Cruse, Carolyn Rodgers, Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), Keorapetse Kgotsitsile, Nikki Giovanni, and S.E. Anderson among others. With its annual “portfolio of poetry” each September and the handful of poems published monthly, *Negro Digest*, which he renamed *Black World* in 1970, remains one of the premier cultural artifacts of the Black Arts movement. Fuller, a world traveling intellectual who co-founded the Chicago-based Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) in 1967 with social theorist Abdul Alkalimat (Gerald McWorther) and poet Conrad Kent Rivers, specifically utilized the journal to inform Afro-North Americans of events on the African continent and the larger African Diaspora.

Initiating a monthly feature in the *Negro Digest* called the “African Scene” in 1963, Fuller kept Black readers in the U.S. aware of emergent African nations, as well as ongoing independence movements. In 1964-65, he reprinted a series of interviews by South African writer Lewis Nkosi with some of the foremost African writers and intellectuals, such as Wole Soyinka of Nigeria, Leopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, Bernard Fonlon of Cameroon, Willie Abraham of Ghana, and Chinua Achebe of Nigeria. Fuller also published essays and editorials about the oft-ambivalent relationship between Afro-North Americans and Africans, hoping to dispel misconceptions. However, on occasion these pieces exacerbated discord; an example of which is a caustic exchange between Thomas Echewa and John A. Williams. In the January 1965 issue of *Negro Digest*, Echewa, a Nigerian poet studying in the U.S. wrote that many of the issues preventing camaraderie and interaction between the two groups was due to “a mutual ignorance of the other’s viewpoint and a lack of adequate communication” and the fact that Afro-North Americans were relatively ashamed of their “color” and African heritage, symbolized by their alleged criticisms of Négritude. In the article “Open Letter to an African,” printed in September 1965, Black American writer John A. Williams, author of

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The Angry Ones (1960), Night Song (1961), Sissie (1963), and The Man Who Cried I Am (1967), and former director of information for the American Committee on Africa, responded critically to Echewa’s piece. He accuses Echewa of being “haughty” and inciting more contempt for Blacks in the U.S. He also described the reasons why Afro-North Americans who went to Africa intending to “re-connect” with their “kin” often chose to return to “racist” North America.

On my last journey [to Africa] I met and talked at length with James Meredith who had started out to do two years in Ibadan [University] in Nigeria. He lasted 11 months. I don’t know if Africa did that. Many of my good friends went to Africa, disgusted at the way things were going here for Negroes. All have returned, gladly. Did Africa do that too? One thing: Africa does make the most oppressed American black stop and think.129

Williams continued by suggesting that any hope of solidarity between “Negroes” and “Africans” that may have ensued following Ghana’s independence in 1957 was now dashed citing issues such as tribalism, rampant corruption on the continent, elitism among Africans, and their refusal to interact with Black Americans in the U.S. He added that Echewa’s advocacy of Négritude was racist and little different than white supremacy.130 Echewa’s reply, printed adjacent to Williams in the same issue, chastised the novelist for assuming that Africans came to the United States to be subsumed into the Afro-North American “sub-culture,” or participate in the civil rights movement.131

Attempting to defuse the growing discord between the two writers, John O. Killens wrote “Brotherhood of Blackness: A Plea to Africans and Afro-Americans,” published in the May 1966 edition of Negro Digest. As co-founder of the Harlem Writers Guild and author of numerous books, such as Youngblood (1954), And Then We Heard the Thunder (1963), and Black Man’s Burden (1965), Killens’ essay is a direct response to the Echewa-Williams debate in earlier issues, calling for Pan-African unity among all

130 Ibid, p. 33.
Black people by invoking the legacy of Frantz Fanon. While Harold Cruse’s *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967) berates the HWG and Killens as anti-nationalist dupes of the Communist Party, this essay somewhat challenges Cruse’s portrayal.\(^{132}\) For example, Killens is explicit in his criticism of white supremacy and the tendency for Black elites throughout the world to “seek dignity in the eyes of Whitey, who deprived us of it in the first instance.” He also points out that Africans and Afro-North Americans share a “community of experiences vis-à-vis the white man:”

> Slavery and segregation and discrimination on this side of the Atlantic at the journey’s end. Colonialism and the slave trade at the genesis in Mother Africa, where man first walked straight and upright. On both sides of the ocean the impact on our personalities, on our manhood, on our selfhood, was total.\(^{133}\)

Despite the diverse forms of oppression faced by people of African descent, Killens describes the effects of said oppression as having similar outcomes, which were material, political, and psychological. His essay then commences to pick apart the various assertions made by Echewa and Williams, demonstrating how each writer employed Eurocentric logic in their descriptions of the other’s culture. He concludes by arguing that neither Africans nor Afro-North Americans were liberated from European domination and thus they did not have the luxury of fighting each other: “we members of the Brotherhood will stand or fall together; that when the prestige of Africa rises, the prestige of black men rises all over the earth.”\(^{134}\)

As editor of the *Negro Digest*, Hoyt Fuller also endeavored to include the voices of many Afro-descendant women writers in his project of building Black and Pan-African solidarity. Essays, short stories and poetry by Julia Fields, Alicia Johnson, Nikki Giovanni, Carolyn Rodgers, Mari Evans, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Sonia Sanchez,

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\(^{134}\) Ibid, p. 10.
Toni Cade Bambara and Sarah Webster Fabio are copious in the pages of the journal. For instance, Fabio, who in addition to being an early proponent of Black Studies and a theorist of Black American Vernacular English, was a poet from the Bay Area that maintained a commitment to both domestic and international liberation for people of African descent. Her poem “Note to Jomo Kenyatta,” printed in the July 1966 issue of the *Negro Digest*, explicates the strength, determination, and dedication of Kenya’s anti-colonial “hero.” In addition to Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and Sekou Touré, Kenyatta was widely recognized as one of the founders of continental Pan-Africanism, specifically after his attendance at the Fifth Pan-African Congress.\(^{135}\) While he later distanced himself from the Mau Mau rebellion of the 1950s and also sought the support of the British military to quell internal dissent, for some Afro-North Americans in the mid-1960s Kenyatta remained an important figure. Fabio’s speaker begins, “Once I saw a sculptor / turn your mouth upward / in a smile: then, he stood by / and watched the clay / rearrange itself in / a straight line.” Despite the attempts by the artist to control Kenyatta’s countenance, he could do little but sit back and observe how his “lips pursed / full and parted / over the firm stones / of your teeth; / your beard, spreading / from the underlip, / spoke of necessity.” Here, Fabio’s speaker emphasizes the sternness of Kenyatta in his role as Kenya’s first post-colonial leader and cautious advocate of Pan-Africanism. The poem moves beyond overly simplistic or romantic depictions of Africa and African leaders, by rendering Kenyatta as a living subject, whose “rich brow” formed “an arch where past and future merge.”\(^{136}\)

Contemporary struggles for African and Afro-descendant self-determination and liberation were waged within the liminal space between “past” and “future.” Though returning to a mythic time before slavery or colonialism was impossible, re-establishing

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some consciousness of past cultural and social concepts helped to challenge Eurocentric notions that Africa and its descendants had no usable philosophies in which to base their modern nations/identities. At the same time, it was important to recognize the complexity of Africa and the African Diaspora by observing the specificities of their cultures. As W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Askia Touré, Muhammad Ahmad and other theorists posited, the basis for any viable revolutionary culture had to be located in the *popular culture* (consciousness) of the masses. Observing the national specificities and diversity of African and Afro-descendant peoples was equally imperative if a viable movement for Pan-Africanism was going to take shape any time soon. With these ideas in mind and strengthened by the imagination and possibilities engendered by newly independent African nation-states, a number of Afro-descendant cultural workers and intellectuals would attend the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in 1966 and the First Pan-African Cultural Festival in 1969 hoping to build a transformative model of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. However, as the following chapter demonstrates, at each gathering there would be radically different interpretations of Pan-Africanism and the relationship of politics to culture.
CHAPTER 2
FROM DAKAR TO ALGIERS: CONTESTED INTERPRETATIONS OF PAN-AFRICAN CULTURAL STRUGGLE

Though separated by three years and two thousand miles, the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in Dakar and the First Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers share a number of things in common. First, they were both gatherings of African and Afro-descendant intellectuals, writers, and artists to discuss and debate the meanings and interpretations of culture in post-colonial Africa. Second, each event featured artistic performances by traditional and contemporary African artists displaying the cultural diversity of the African world. A third similarity between these two festivals is the fact that they occurred in African countries—Senegal and Algeria—that had been colonized by France and thus the French language was the dominant European idiom spoken by intellectuals in those countries. Finally, the predominant religion of both countries was Islam. However, it is with religion that we also begin to see some of the major dissimilarities between Senegal and Algeria. For example, most Senegalese practiced a variation of Sufism and Leopold Sédar Senghor, the country’s leader during the Dakar Festival, was a secular Catholic.\(^1\) However, being that the Algerians were mainly Arab and Sunni Muslims, following the national liberation struggle the National Liberation Front (FLN) made Islamic-socialism and Arab nationalism, modeled after Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt, the state’s political ideologies.\(^2\)

Although Senegal remained a part of the French Commonwealth following its independence in 1960, Algeria waged an eight-year (1954-1962) armed struggle against the French. In fact, Frantz Fanon, who fought alongside the Algerians, condemned Senghor and Senegal in *Wretched of the Earth* (1963), claiming the West African nation

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sent troops into Algeria to quell the liberation movement. These divergent views of the right of armed struggle for self-determination and socialist national development that initially manifested in the Casablanca and Monrovia split in the Pan-African movement, would influence the political culture of both festivals in substantial ways. While the dominant tendency at the Dakar Festival was to evade questions of political liberation and focus exclusively on cultural expression, the Algiers Festival emphasized cultural and ideological struggle as essential to liberating the African continent and larger Third World from the yoke of colonialism and imperialism. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the preparation and political culture of the Dakar and Algiers Festivals. I specifically examine the historical contexts and the participation of African and Afro-descendant intellectuals and cultural workers at these festivals, as well as their influences on the broader Pan-African movement.

**First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture (1966)**

Following Senegal’s independence from France in 1960, Leopold Sédar Senghor established *Négritude* and “African socialism” as the cultural, political, and economic philosophies of his government. Despite describing the Republic of Senegal as “independent,” it remained a part of the French Commonwealth; a point that many critics of his regime made, most notably Fanon, suggesting the Republic was little more than a satellite of France. Not long after assuming the presidency of Senegal, though, Senghor, with the support of UNESCO, began planning for the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in Dakar from April 1-24, 1966. In actuality, Senghor, Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Léon Damas from French Guyana, and other members of the Société Africaine du Culture (SAC), which published *Présence Africaine*, convened two earlier

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international Black writers’ conferences in Paris (1956) and Rome (1959). The Dakar Festival, however, was Senghor's attempt to highlight the development of his country and “his” philosophy, Négritude. Margaret Danner, an Afro-North American poet from Chicago and attendee of the Festival referred to him and the grand fete as “a modern African artist, as host; / a word sculpturer, strong enough to amass / the vast amount of exaltation needed to tow his followers through / the Senegalese sands, toward their modern rivers and figures of gold.”

Brent Hayes Edwards’ *The Practice of Diaspora* (2003) documents the post-World War I international linkages between Africans and Afro-descendants in the Franco-phone Caribbean, North America, and Paris, which resulted in the formation of Négritude. He suggests that Paris offered “a special sort of vibrant, cosmopolitan space for interaction...boundary crossing, conversations, and collaborations.” It was within this cosmopolitan space that Pan-African connections were made between partisans of the New Negro Renaissance from the U.S. and the burgeoning Négritude movement. Even though the formulation of Négritude is ascribed to the publications of Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Leon Damas in *L’Étudiant noir* (1934) and later *Présence Africaine* (1947), as well as the literary expression of Langston Hughes in North America and Nicolás Guillén in Cuba, the cultural and political work of Jane and Paulette Nardal, two Martinican women residing in France during the mid-1920s is crucial to the theory. T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting’s (2002) important study on the Nardal sisters and Suzanne Césaire, the wife of Aimé Césaire, documents the genealogy of female Afro-Caribbean creative intellectuals in the articulation of Négritudist and Pan-Africanist cultural politics. Moreover, Sharpley-Whiting and Edwards each point out that besides

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attempting to translate Alain Locke’s *The New Negro* (1925) into French, the Nardal sisters also wrote numerous essays exploring the complex interaction between race and gender experienced by Afro-descendant women in France. According to Edwards, Jane Nardal first asserted the centrality of Black women in constructing and codifying racial consciousness, which ultimately resulted in Négritude:

> Until the Colonial Exposition, the coloured women living alone in the metropolis have certainly been less favoured than coloured men who are content with a certain easy success. Long before the latter, they have felt the need of a racial solidarity that would not be merely material. They were thus aroused to race consciousness. The feeling of uprooting which they experienced…was the starting point of their evolution.\(^7\)

Later Paulette Nardal would suggest that Jane “was the first ‘promoter of this movement of ideas, so broadly exploited later,’ and that Senghor and Césaire ‘took up the ideas tossed out by us and expressed them with more flash and brio…[W]e were but women, real pioneers—let’s say that we blazed the trail for them.”\(^8\)

The term Négritude was not officially codified until 1939 by Aimé Césaire, in his poem “*Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*” (“Notebook of a Return to My Native Land”).\(^9\)

Originally, the French word “Nègre” had the same connotation as the English pejorative “nigger,” however, Césaire succeeded in transforming it into a “positive” signifier of Francophone Afro-Diasporic identity:

> my Négritude is not a stone, its deafness dashed against the clamor of the day
> my Négritude is not an opaque spot of dead water/ on the dead eye of the earth

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\(^7\) *Ibid*, p. 125.
\(^8\) *Ibid*, p. 122.
\(^9\) David Macey argues, “By the mid 1940s, negrophilia was largely a thing of the past and had, in literary-cultural terms, been displaced by ‘négritude’. The term was used by both Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001) in poems written in the 1930s but gained much wider currency after the Second World War, and négritude was far from being an entertainment for white readers in search of exoticism. The key text was the anthology of ‘new negro and Malagasy poetry’ (*Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*) published by Senghor in 1948. The date of publication was significant: the volume was published to mark the centenary of the abolition of slavery in the French colonies. It brought together poems by sixteen writers (all male) from Guyana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Black Africa (which meant Senegal) and Madagascar. Although they would speak of and establish an African presence, as well as the important journal *Présence africaine* (published from 1947 onwards), the writers associated with négritude were not pan-Africanists. The axis was always Paris-Dakar, and there was little space for non-French speakers.” See, “Frantz Fanon, or the Difficulty of Being Martinican,” *History Workshop Journal* 58 (2004): 211-223.
my Négritude is neither a tower nor a cathedral
it plunges into the red flesh of the soil
it plunges into the ardent fresh of the sky
it pierces opaque prostration with its upright patience.

In this stanza, Césaire establishes that Négritude cannot be reduced to static objects, such as stones, dead water, a tower nor a cathedral, but instead it is an active, living subject that plunges, pierces and has patience. Robin D.G. Kelley (1999) asserts that Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* (1953) is an attempt by the poet-activist to synthesize his variants of Négritude, Marxism, and Surrealism into a “poetics of anti-colonialism.” Césaire would later build upon his socio-historical rendering of the ideology: “Negritude is not a philosophy. / Negritude is not a metaphysics. / Negritude is not a pretentious conception of the universe. / It is a way of living a history within history.” Nick Nesbitt (2003) argues “Césaire’s original conception sees the specificity and unity of black existence as a historically developing phenomenon that arose through the highly contingent events of the African slave trade and New World plantation system.” However, he notes that Senghor, who intellectually supplanted Césaire as the primary exponent of Négritude, posited an “essentialist interpretation” that “argues for an unchanging core or essence to black existence.”

By the early 1960s, Senghor had become the primary representative of Négritude ideology. In doing so, he over-emphasized the cultural aspects of African subjectivity at the expense of political and economic considerations. This was evident in both the methods in which Senghor ruled Senegal, as well as the marginal “support” he gave to liberation struggles on the African continent and elsewhere. Moreover, the

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13 Robert Mortimer argues that “During the early stages of the anti-colonial war [in Guinea Bissau] which began in 1963, Senghor sought to contain the situation by supporting the Frente de Liberacão de la Independencia Nacional de Guine (FLING). These moderate nationalists in fact had no control over the
privileging of culture was particularly apparent at the Festival in Dakar. One account of
the event actually described it as a chance for Africans to disregard “the trials and
tribulations of nation-building to rejoice for a while in their unique and rich cultural
achievements.” Here, it is important to realize that the joint sponsorship of the
Senegalese government, SAC, and UNESCO, as well as the “select” participation of
African and Afro-descendant entertainers, had a delimiting effect on the articulation of
radical Pan-Africanism and the burgeoning international Black Arts movement.

Nevertheless, the Negro Digest and Hoyt Fuller initially stood firmly behind the
idea of the Festival, publishing numerous “calls” in the journal with the hopes of
mobilizing Afro-North American participation. In the August 1965 issue of Negro Digest,
he printed the prospectus of the Association for the World Festival of Negro Arts,

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\text{To advance international and interracial understanding; To permit Negro artists throughout the world to return periodically to the sources of their art; To make known the contributions of what President Senghor has termed “Négritude”; a Negro’s pride in his race and a recognition of the Negro’s unique creative ability based on his African heritage; To make it possible for Negro artists to meet and demonstrate their talents to publishers, impresarios, film producers and other members of the international art world, who can provide them with the necessary outlets.}
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While each of these objectives was important, nowhere did the prospectus discuss
politics or African liberation as they related to cultural development. What makes the lack
of emphasis around political struggle and anti-colonialism even more problematic is the
fact that four months prior to the Festival, the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of
guerrilla forces which were commanded by the Partido Africano de Independencia da Guine e Cabo Verde (PAIGC). Senghor reasoned that there was a greater chance that the Portuguese might come to terms with FLING than with the Marxist-oriented PAIGC.” See, “From Federalism to Francophonie: Senghor’s African Policy,” African Studies Review, 15.2. (September 1972): 296.

15. Both Hoyt Fuller and Keorapste Kgotsitsile criticized the North American selection committee, which was lead by a white woman and supported by AMSAC. Though there was some protest over who should represent Afro-North Americas, which Fuller, Kgotsitsile and others felt was an attempt to exclude Black radical artists and intellectuals, Senghor agreed that AMSAC’s selection of artists was best. See, Hoyt Fuller, “Festival Postscript” Assessments and Questions,” Negro Digest (June 1966): 82; and Kgotsitsile, “I Have Had Enough,” Liberator, (July 1966): 11.

Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAALA), also known as the Tri-Continental Solidarity
Conference occurred in Cuba, strengthening the non-aligned and anti-imperialist-oriented Third World movement. Moreover, in February of 1966, one of the leaders of continental Pan-Africanism, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, was overthrown in a military coup by Western-backed forces.  

It is not completely surprising that Senghor remained silent about Ghana because even before the neo-colonialist ousting of Nkrumah, the Senegalese and Ghanaian leaders had divergent ideals about the path to African unity. As early as 1961, a serious fracture had occurred within the continental Pan-African movement with the Casablanca-Monrovia split. The former group (Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Egypt, and Algeria) advocated armed struggle, anti-imperialism, and variations of Marxism-Leninism to liberate Africa and create a Pan-African continent, while the latter group—originally the known as the Brazzaville group—(Congo-Brazzaville, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Madagascar, Benin, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, The Gabon, Libya; and later adding the Congo (Kinshasa), Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Togo, and Tunisia) maintained a gradualist approach to decolonization. What is more, the left-leaning Casablanca group accused the more conservative Monrovia group of accommodating neo-colonialism by maintaining economic ties to Western countries. With the exception of Ghana, all the other Casablanca members represented Muslim states and Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria were

17 In “Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs,” dated May 27, 1965, Komer wrote, “FYI, we may have a pro-Western coup in Ghana soon. Certain key military and police figures have been planning one for some time, and Ghana’s deteriorating economic condition may provide the spark. The plotters are keeping us briefed, and State thinks we’re more on the inside than the British. While we’re not directly involved (I’m told), we and other Western countries (including France) have been helping to set up the situation by ignoring Nkrumah’s pleas for economic aid. The new OCAM (Francophone group’s refusal to attend any OAU meeting in Accra (because of Nkrumah’s plotting) will further isolate him. All in all, looks good.” Also see, “Memorandum for the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, February 25, 1966”; “Memorandum From the President’s Acting Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Komer) to President Johnson, March 12, 1966,” Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968,” Volume XXIV: Africa, Department of State, Washington, DC. <http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_xxivy.html>
Arab countries, which further complicated matters.\textsuperscript{18} This split had serious repercussions for the general Pan-African movement that were somewhat diffused at the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Nonetheless, at the time of the Dakar Festival in 1966, ideological and tactical differences remained acrimonious.\textsuperscript{19}

Seeking to circumvent the conflict, organizers of the Festival did not want to engage political issues, focusing solely on cultural expression. The Festival Association established the event’s exhibitions and performances around visual art, literature, film, dance, plays, and music, as well as a colloquium on the function of Negro Art. Conveying the impression that the Festival was little more than an African Cultural Olympiad, however, the organizers offered prizes to the best work of art in each category. The Festival Association also sought to highlight the “cosmopolitan” aspects of Dakar by labeling it the “crossroads that links Europe, America and the whole of Africa.” Ironically, while the aims of the Festival were to build unity among African and Afro-descendant performers by illustrating the cultural developments of newly independent nations, much of the impetus behind the event became legitimizing Africa in the eyes of their former European colonial regimes.\textsuperscript{20}

Upon being elected as the president of the Festival Association, Alioune Diop, a Senegalese writer and co-founder of \textit{Présence Africaine} along with Senghor, limited participation at the Festival to nation-states. Thus, there was no representation of African liberation movements, the Afro-North American delegation had to get approval from the

\textsuperscript{18} W. Mangwende argues that since many of the Casablanca group members were also part of the Arab League, they had a "conflict of loyalties and Black Africa has from time to time nursed suspicions that some of the OAU member states let OAU affairs come second to those of the Arab world.” See, “The OAU: An Analysis of the Function, Problems and Prospects of the Organization,” \textit{Zambezia}, (1984/5): 25. Also see, Adeoye Akinsanya, “The Afro-Arab Alliance: Dream or Reality,” \textit{African Affairs}, 75.301, (October 1976): 511-529.


U.S. State Department to attend, and the Festival Association denied exiled Afro-
Brazilian writer Abdias do Nascimento entrance into the event because he was not a
member of the “official” Brazilian delegation. Later that year, Nascimento responded to
his exclusion with an “Open Letter to the First World Festival of Negro Arts,” which
chastised the Festival Association for allowing white Brazilians to represent Afro-
Brazilian culture at the event.21 In an equally ironic move, although the vice-president of
the North American Committee was John A. Davis of the American Society of African
Culture, the president of the delegation was a Euro-American woman named H. Alwynn
Innes-Brown. As head of the American National Theater and Academy and a consultant
to the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the State Department, she served as a
gatekeeper between prospective participants and the U.S. government.22 Though
Richard Pritchard, a Black classically trained musician and other Afro-North American
artists protested AMSAC and the State Department’s imposition of Innes-Brown on the
North American Committee, Senghor and Diop supported the U.S. government’s
decisions.23

Despite the fact that the U.S. government was initially reluctant to endorse an
event that championed Négritude, a concept some officials perceived as “separatist,” the
U.S. State Department gave the North American Committee $150,000 for travel
expenses believing that the Festival could improve the “Cold War” image of the United
States in Africa. In addition, Adlai Stevens, U.S. Ambassador to the UN and President
Lyndon B. Johnson’s wife were named “honorary” members of the committee, insuring
that the government had direct influence over who would “represent” Afro-North

22 “First World Festival of Negro Arts Slated for Senegal: U.S. to Be Represented By Leading Contributors,”
New Pittsburgh Courier, 3 July 1965.
Department Myopia,” Chicago Daily Defender, 30 June 1964: 11.
America. Only a handful of elite and “safe” Black American politicos and entertainers served on the committee, such as Ralph Bunche, Mercer Cook, Alvin Ailey, Marian Anderson, Fred O’Neal, Leontyne Price, Sidney Poitier, Hale Woodruff, Ossie Davis, Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes, Arthur Mitchell, and William Warfield. It should come at no surprise therefore that the North American Committee deemed few of the younger generation of Black writers and artists aligned with the burgeoning Black Arts/Power movements appropriate to represent Afro-North Americans in Senegal.

Not allowing the apparent cooptation of the North American Committee by the State Department to deter him, Hoyt Fuller continued to publicize the Dakar Festival hoping to encourage Black Americans to attend the event of their own accord. In “Festival Time in Dakar,” from the April 1966 issue of Negro Digest, Fuller reiterated many of the aims and objectives of the Festival printed in the earlier article. He also spoke approvingly of Senghor, believing that the event signified a moment of real Pan-African solidarity and possibility. “Like most serious African leaders,” Fuller wrote, “President Senghor is concerned with Africa’s achievement of genuine power and consequence in the world, and he feels that the edifice of African power and consequence must be build on a base of cultural security” (68). He went on to quote Senghor who claimed that the Festival marked the emergence of an “era of cultural independence” for Africa (69). However, as I previously mentioned, culture was over-determined by Senghor and members of the Festival Association and they muted any real deliberation of political struggle. In the context of neo-colonialism and imperialism, moreover, cultural “independence” was acceptable, as long as Western economic expropriation of Senegal’s and other African countries’ natural resources persisted.

Prior to assuming the editorship of *Negro Digest* in 1961, Fuller had spent considerable time traveling between Guinea and Senegal, which gave him intimate knowledge of West Africa. In contrast to his more cynical portrayals of Senegal in *Journey to Africa* (1971), though, at the time of the Dakar Festival, he highlighted what he perceived as the “positive” aspects of the city. Depicting the downtown area of Dakar as “French-flavored” and still heavily populated by French citizens, he claimed that although most Senegalese could not afford to live there, the city was relatively free from racial segregation. Fuller ironically asserted that the French colonial regime was “less racist than the British,” so Europeans in Dakar constructed their settlement “villas” adjacent to “African huts” (78). These statements illustrate the highly questionable nature of “independence” experienced by the masses of Senegalese, where the French still economically and physically controlled their capital city over five years after the “end” of overt colonial rule. Furthermore, the country’s “Minister of Finance” remained a French bureaucrat, meaning the former colonialists controlled the most basic considerations of economic development (78). As the Festival commenced, these contradictions would be made apparent to many Afro-North Americans who traveled from the United States.26

AMSAC charted a plane that took over one hundred artists, writers, and intellectuals to Dakar for the 25-day Festival. Some of the major artists who performed at the event were jazz legend Duke Ellington, poets Langston Hughes and Margaret Danner, novelist Rosa Guy, vocalist Marian Anderson, gospel singer Marion Williams, dancer-choreographers Katherine Dunham and Alvin Ailey, visual artist Hale Woodruff, actor Fred O’Neal, Leonard De Paur and his choir, and classical pianist Armenta Adams

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26 Hoyt Fuller, “Festival Time in Dakar,” *Negro Digest*, (April 1966): 68. He concludes this article by discussing “Festival Footnotes,” which were the cultural differences that Afro-North Americans traveling to Senegal should be prepared to experience. From the fact that most Senegalese were Muslim, the bright colored “costumes” worn by African women, the practice of bartering, to the presence of men holding hands in the street, had to be culturally shocking to most Black Americans traveling to the country for the first time.
(other performers originally scheduled to attend were Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, and Mahalia Jackson). The Festival also awarded the Grand Prize for poetry by a person of African descent written in English to Robert Hayden, for his volume of poems *A Ballad of Remembrance* (1962). Ironically, at the same time that he was receiving accolades for his poetic verse in Dakar, Hayden was at the First Fisk Writers Conference refuting the notion that he was a “Negro poet.” Further demonstrating his contempt for racial solidarity, he admonished those assembled at Fisk, “Let’s quit saying we’re black writers writing to black folks—it has been given importance it should not have.”

None of the official events sanctioned by the Festival Association nor North American Committee featured the neither performances nor voices of artists affiliated with the New Jazz, Rhythm & Blues, or Black Arts movements. The sole representative of the nascent Black Arts movement recognized for his work at the Festival was Amiri Baraka (then LeRoi Jones). He received second prize in the drama competition for his semi-autobiographical play *The Slave* (1962), written three years prior to his move uptown with the founding of BARTS. Only a handful of progressive creative intellectuals associated with the “new” Black Consciousness movements in North America were even able to attend the Festival and other events throughout Dakar, such as Jamaican poet-novelist Lindsay Barrett, Hoyt Fuller, poets Sarah Webster Fabio and Keorapetse Kgotsiile. Upon return to the United States, many of these individuals would detail the undesirable machinations of the event and how little in the way of actual Pan-African solidarity took place.

By far, the performances, art exhibitions, and prize ceremonies were the major emphases of the Festival. Nonetheless, UNESCO and SAC also organized a

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philosophical and theoretical component with the eight-day Colloquium on Negro Art. It consisted of scholarly papers and presentations concerning “African Traditions,” “The Meeting of Negro Art with the West,” and “The Problems of Modern African Art.” Allegedly organized to discursively illustrate the “function and meaning of African Negro art in the life of the people and for the people,” the conference mainly revolved around defending Négritude. Even though this was one of the initial objectives for the Festival, few dissenting voices were heard over the span of the colloquium. In contrast, the two earlier writers’ conferences convened in Paris and Rome by Présence Africaine featured papers by a number of creative intellectuals who challenged Senghor on the utility and tenability of Négritude, from Richard Wright, Frantz Fanon, and James Baldwin, to Jacques Alexis and René Depestre. Even the Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka, who was widely recognized for his comments that “The tiger knows that it is a tiger, but it does not go about prattling about its tigertude,” steered clear of open criticism in his presentation “Modern Negro-African Theatre” at the 1966 Festival. Although the New York Times, one of the few North American media outlets to cover the Festival, ran an article proclaiming, “Debate on ‘Négritude’ Splits Festival in Dakar,” the only vocal opposition to the orthodoxy of the concept was choreographer Katherine Dunham, who questioned the need to apply any “labels” to her work. Therefore, as President of the Republic of Senegal and de facto “king” of the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture, Senghor ensured that Négritude would dominate the theoretical itinerary of the conference.

The Colloquium commenced with his presentation of “The Defense and Illustration of Négritude,” republished in the September 1966 issue of Negro Digest. Throughout much of his paper, Senghor attempted to challenge critics of the concept,

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29 See, Full Account: The 1st International Conference of Negro Writers and Artists.
especially those who defined it as little more than “racism in reverse,” by suggesting that it was actually an “elaboration of a new humanism which this time will include the totality of humanity on the planet Earth.” This would be a point that Senghor made numerous times previously, beginning in the 1950s, which moved away from his earlier postulations that Négritude illustrated the innate racial differences between “Europeans”—whom he claimed were primarily rationalist and “Negro” Africans—whom he claimed were mainly intuitive.31 Now, Senghor was convinced that Négritude constituted an essential element of the “civilization of the universal,” and without it, there could be no claims to human universality. He suggested that this mythic “new humanism” would emerge through “complementarily…dialogue and interchange, not of opposition or racial hatred.”32

One major distinction that Senghor continued to make between Europeans and Africans was that though the former had finally begun to acknowledge the contributions of African art and culture to human civilization, they did so through defining it, while Africans, by and large, “preferred to live it.” Applying a bourgeois cultural nationalist reading of human existence, Senghor also contended that it was from the realm of culture, and by extension, art, that economic and social development sprang. Referring to art in terms of “the production of material goods and spiritual goods,” he asserted:

When I speak of Négritude, I am referring to a civilization where art is at once technique and vision, handicrafts and prophecy; where art expresses, in the words of Ogotemmeli: “the identity of material gestures and spiritual forces.”33

Unfortunately, nowhere in his speech did Senghor reference the effects that colonialism, imperialism, or capitalism had on themanifestation of contemporary African art and culture. To believe that the years of colonial rule would somehow be wiped away, simply

by returning to pre-colonial cultural practices was highly ahistorical and impolitic. What made his paper even more problematic was the fact that by attempting to construct a “universal humanism” that did not take into account the continued economic and political exploitation of Africa by Europe and the United States (both countries ironically possessing large quantities of the African art showcased at the Festival) aided by corrupt African elites allied with the West, Senghor could only posit dialogue as the remedy to the unrelenting socio-cultural imbalances.  

A paper presented by the venerable Afro-North American poet Langston Hughes drew parallels between Négritude and the concept of Soul coming into vogue among Black Americans at the time. His speech entitled “Black Writers in a Troubled World” declared that the core ingredient of both concepts has “roots deep in the beauty of black people.” Hughes delineated Soul as

the essence of Negro folk art redistilled—particularly the old music and its flavor, the ancient basic beat out of Africa, the folk rhymes and Ashanti stories—all expressed in contemporary ways so emotionally colored with the old that it gives a distinctly Negro flavor to today’s music, painting, and writing.

Although many younger participants of the Black Arts movement would agree with Hughes’ articulation of Soul, his definition, as Senghor’s Négritude, clarified little in the relationship of culture to political economy or anti-imperialism. Moreover, Hughes had choice words for the “new” generation of Afro-North American cultural workers. Engaging the turmoil occurring in the United States between the civil rights and emergent Black nationalist movements, he described the new militant writers, epitomized by Amiri Baraka, as “America’s prophets of doom, black ravens cawing over carrion.” He also questioned the tactics by which they condemned the racism and

34 Ibid, p. 9.
decadence of the United States government, suggesting that they stooped to “shocking white readers with bad language rather than with bad facts.” Interestingly enough, a year prior to the Festival, Hughes made many of these claims in a review of Baraka’s plays *The Toilet* and *The Slave* published in *The New York Post*. In that review he suggested,

> I gather that contemporary Negro playwrights do not like anybody any more – neither their stage characters, their audiences, their mothers, nor themselves. For poetry in theater, some of them substitute bad language, obscenities of the foulest sort, and basic filth which seemingly is intended to evoke the sickest of reactions in an audience.

Pronouncing the generational rift between he and Baraka, Hughes belittled the younger writer by referring to him as the “white-haired black boy of American poetry,” who if was able to control his use of profanities could possibly become “America’s new Eugene O’Neill” (*emphasis mine*). It is ironic, however, that Hughes would make this assertion considering Baraka’s essay “The Revolutionary Black Theatre” following his staging of *The Dutchman* in 1964, which called for the destruction of white Western aesthetic ideologies, and more importantly “THE DESTRUCTION OF AMERICA.”

In Hughes’ speech before the Festival Colloquium, he accepted the importance of young artists first developing their own voices and satisfying their own aesthetic tastes, harkening back to his 1926 manifest, “The Negro and the Racial Mountain.”

Then again, he posited that considerations of publication and reception were equally

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38 Hughes concludes the review by making an idiotic assertion: “for the sake of today’s sensitive Negroes and battered white liberals, I would like to offer the producers at St. Mark’s Playhouse a suggestion-double cast both plays, and alternate performances racially. Every other night let all the present Negro characters be played by white actors, and vice versa. Four times a week I would like to see WHITE school boys in “The Toilet” beating up a COLORED boy and sticking his head into a urinal. In “the Slave” let a bullying white man kick, curse, browbeat and shoot a nice liberal BLACK professor and his wire in their suburban living room.” *Ibid*, p. 113
39 In the essay’s epigraph, Baraka discussed the difficulties he faced attempting to publish the essay: “This essay was originally commissioned by the *New York Times* in December 1964, but was refused, with the statement that the editors could not understand it. *The Village Voice* also refused to run this essay. It was first published in *Black Dialogue*. See, LeRoi Jones, “The Revolutionary Black Theatre,” *Black Dialogue*, (Winter 1965).
vital. Historically complicating this, Hughes explained, was the dilemma of which audience to write for: white audiences, black audiences or both. However, as I discussed earlier, Larry Neal, Askia Touré and others aligned with the Black Arts movement asserted that the primary impetus for the cultural production was to further the cause of Black liberation, this “conflict” was relatively a non-issue. But for Hughes, and those who championed Négritude, making protests to white authorities and proving the humanity of Blacks to white audiences were major predilections of their cultural imagination.\(^{40}\)

According to the mainstream North American press that attended the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture it was a success.\(^ {41}\) However, the few radical Black cultural workers in attendance thought otherwise. Over the next two years, South African poet-in-exile, Keorapetse Kgositsile would remain one of the most vocal critics of the Festival, Senegal, and Négritude.\(^ {42}\) His essay on the Festival in the \textit{Liberator}, “I Have Had Enough!” from July 1966, exposes the layers of hypocrisy he experienced while in Dakar. Even though he believed there was nothing wrong with holding grand fêtes on the African continent, going as far to laud the performances and exhibitions, Kgositsile found the overall objectives of the Festival to be a sham. His essay decried the absence of relevant and “contemporary” Afro-North American artists, such as James Brown, at the event, as well as the complete “omission of Nkrumah’s ideas in any serious

\(^{40}\) Hughes, “Black Writers,” p. 507.


\(^{42}\) Keorapetse Kgositsile, “Paths to the Future: Young Black Poets,” \textit{Negro Digest}, (September/October 1968). “Yes, this decade—the Sixties—has produced a different caliber of Black poets in America. The majority of them have been influenced by Négritude and protest poets and writers like Césaire, Senghor, David Diop, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, W.E.B. Du Bois, and others. These young people felt the inadequacy of a purely ‘cultural’ or artistic self-determination because the arguments for it and its artifacts general boil down to an academic masturbation or deviation…” p. 40. Kgositsile goes on to assert “the younger poets realize that the most beautiful poem Senghor can write about the validity of the existence of a glorious Black culture, without attempting to make the social institutions in Senegal actually African, actually liberated from France, does not even improve the diet of a single undernourished black child anywhere in the world where black people are colonized by Caucasians; most probably not even in ‘independent’ Senegal,” p. 40. In another article in the October 1966 issue of the \textit{Liberator} entitled “Négritude: Stance or Ideology?” Kgositsile views the concept as “the poetic offspring of cultural colonization,” and its progenitors “Frenchified Black Men,” p. 8.
discussion on the dangers of neo-colonialism.” Pointing out the other major contradiction of the Festival, Kgositsele observed that the Senegalese government erected a fence around the Dakar slums, preventing the masses from attending. Thus, the vast majority of those who did attend the performances and exhibitions were Europeans, which meant that “Black culture was being ‘made illustrious’ to and for a white patronage.”

For Kgositsele, the Festival was a poor attempt by Senghor and other “Westernized” Africans to dialogue with the “racist maniacs” who dominated the world. As a countermeasure, he argued,

> Let the contemporary Black artist with a conscience take upon himself the responsibility of making his art as potent a weapon as any in the fight against Western inhumanity. I am not preaching anything like a romantic return to a mystical or even questionable glorious African past.\(^{44}\)

Kgositsele makes an important point here. He recognizes the responsibility and potential utility of art in liberation struggles while not succumbing to essentialist notions of an idyllic pre-colonial Africa that was often posited by Négritudists and other cultural nationalists. Rather, he asserts that the main objective of combat must be in deconstructing the “power of the Western maniac.” Summing up his overall position, Kgositsele concluded by paraphrasing an extended piece of dialogue by Lindsay Barrett.

It suggests that a person who is starving “understands only satisfaction: ‘I’m hungry,’ he’ll say, battered spear in his hand. ‘But you have a glorious past.’ ‘Fuck the past. My son died of malnutrition.’ ‘But you have rhythm.’ ‘When is this independence nonsense going to stop? We have had enough!’ Beware. It will be millions of unpretentious ex-natives and ex-negroes ready to slit God’s own throat.”\(^{45}\)

Kgositsele’s surreal experiences at the Festival were soon translated into poetic criticism. Though his poem “Bleached Callouses, Africa, 1966,” published in the winter


\(^{44}\) *Ibid*, p. 11.

\(^{45}\) *Ibid*, p. 11.
1967 issue of *Black Dialogue*, does not specifically mention Senegal, the Festival, nor Négritude, he nevertheless makes allusions to “Bleached” French-speaking Africans: “I sit under the sea / And watch your perverted breath / Teetering before the glare of this motion / Parlez what?” He also refers to the baobab tree throughout the poem, which has mythical significance in Senegalese national culture. However, Kgositsile finds some irony in this, considering the tendency of many Senegalese elites to identify with France, a point he would make at the Black Arts Convention held in Detroit in August 1966.46 “Don’t you know don’t you know / Even the roots of the dead baobab / Tree remain in the soil?” In contrast to the Westernized African intelligentsia that looked to Europe for its inspiration, the baobab tree represented rootedness and connectivity to the history and land of the African continent. He then alludes directly to Négritude and the Festival: “Where then where / Is the flesh of the rhythm / You preach. Your touch / Is blue-eyed rubber-stamped / FOR MASTER’S AMUSEMENT.” Here, Kgositsile is referring to Négritudists who spoke of the graceful rhythm “innate” to Africans; however, since they primarily performed for the pleasure of Europeans this had little substance or sustenance for the liberation of the African masses.47

Hoyt Fuller also publicly expressed his disillusionment with the Festival. His criticisms, however, were directed more at the North American Committee than Négritude or Senghor. Nonetheless, Fuller did assert that Senghor had some influence in who would assume the chairpersonship of the North American Committee. Much of the June 1966 issue of *Negro Digest* scrutinizes the Festival, specifically lambasting the organization of the Committee and its leadership. In the *Perspectives* section of the journal, which often served as Fuller’s personal editorial page, he wrote “Mrs. Innes-Brown and the Festival,” challenging both the chairperson’s connections to the U.S.

State Department and the fact that a European-American led the Committee. He expounds upon these ideas in the article “Festival Postscripts: Assessment and Questions,” which begins with a troubling anecdote highlighting the racial politics of the North American Committee:

One hopes that the story is apocryphal. The way it goes, the prime movers of the American Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts were considering which group of musicians to invite to Dakar as exemplars of jazz music in America. Benny Goodman and his sidemen were mentioned but it was remembered that the State Department already had sent them on such a tour. Then Woody Herman and his orchestra were suggested, and the idea was received with much enthusiasm. But then, someone asked the number of Negroes in Mr. Herman’s current Herd...

As it turned out, Duke Ellington and his orchestra were chosen as the musicians to carry the message of jazz music to Dakar, but the above story—whether apocryphal or true—tells much about the orientation of the American Committee.

In addition to the State Department imposing Innes-Brown as head of the Committee, Fuller’s description of the “deliberations” over which jazz group should represent Afro-North Americans in Dakar only compounds the discrepancies that he and Kgositsile emphasized about the Festival. What is more, Fuller also questions why the Committee chose Armenta Adams, Martina Arroyo, and Leonard De Paur to symbolize Black American cultural expression, suggesting, “There is nothing particularly ‘Negro’ about a pianist playing Bach preludes and a soprano singing Verdi arias.” While Marion Williams and her Gospel Singers were good illustrations of Afro-North American cultural performativity, the Festival Association scheduled their concert at the Cathedral of Dakar. However, Fuller notes that since Senegal was an overwhelmingly Muslim country

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48 Here, Hoyt Fuller argued, “We also tried to point out to Mrs. Innes-Brown that we shared the reservations held by some Negroes in America relative to the race of the chair[wo]man of the American Committee. We did not think that a committee for a festival of Negro arts should be headed by a white person. It simply was unseemly. Would a festival of German art, for example, be headed by a Negro? It was inconceivable.” See, “Perspectives,” Negro Digest, (June 1966): 50.
49 Fuller, “Festival Postscripts: Assessment and Questions,” Negro Digest, (June 1966): 82.
and the populace did not feel welcome in Catholic churches, the majority of the audience
was white.  

He reserved his most scathing words for the issue’s Editorial, though. Returning
to the irony of having a Euro-American serve as chairperson, Fuller suggests that
members of the *Negro Digest* editorial staff were adamantly against any non-Afro-
descendant leading the North American Committee from the outset. However, he
asserts that most elite Blacks (particularly the leaders of AMSAC) associated with the
Committee claimed there were no “Negroes” who had the connections or economic
resources that Innes-Brown did. Fuller found this line of reasoning to be preposterous,
arguing that if there were indeed no Afro-North Americans who could have undertook the
leadership of the Committee, then “the Black Revolution is a mockery and a myth.” The
whole idea behind fighting for freedom, he contended, was so that Black Americans
could determine for themselves how to exist in this society and the world. Unfortunately,
Fuller explains, for too many members of the Black bourgeoisie the struggles of the
1960s came down to becoming more acceptable in the eyes of white Americans:

> Must everything be done ALWAYS the way white people do it? What’s
> wrong with starting out by admitting that there are no Negro millionaires
> who can undertake the whole burden of chairing a Festival committee and
> then going on from there to do what is necessary? What’s wrong with
> going directly to the black masses, explaining to them what the project is
> and what the problems are, inviting them to identify with the program and
to help make it a success? What’s wrong with that?  

Even though he did not make the claim of CIA co-option in 1966, five years later Fuller
would assert in *Journey to Africa*, his politico-biography of Guinea and Senegal, that
while at the Festival in Dakar he learned first hand of the insidious relationship between
AMSAC and the CIA. Why he did not mention this in his earlier pieces is unclear. One

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50 *Ibid*, 83-84.
52 Fuller, *Journey to Africa* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1971): He continues, “One of these days, the full,
awful story of the American secret service’s role in the First World Festival of Negro Arts at Dakar in 1966
will be told, stripping of honor certain esteemed Black Americans who lent their prestige to the effort to hold
reason may have been that it was not until 1967 that allegations of the CIA bankrolling AMSAC’s endeavors in Africa had become common knowledge.\textsuperscript{53} It is evident that the U.S. State Department’s overt support and the CIA’s covert involvement in organizing Afro-North American participation at the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture momentarily undermined the prospects for Pan-African liberation and unity. However, the prospects of revolutionizing culture and building the movement for Pan-Africanism would again become possible at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival held in Algiers three years later.

\textbf{“The Battle of Algiers”: Pan-African Cultural Festival (1969)}

In sharp contrast to the Festival in Dakar, the PACF illustrated a radical shift in the international Pan-African/Black Arts movement from the primarily artistic and entertainment “showcase” of Négritude that Léopold Senghor held, to a more progressive expression of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. It was also the most revolutionary and representative Pan-African gathering since the Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester, England in 1945.\textsuperscript{54} Though Kwame Nkrumah’s First Conference of Independent African States in 1958, the following year’s All-African People’s Conference, and the subsequent founding of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 marked the emergence of continental Pan-Africanism, none of these gatherings had the global representation of the PACF in 1969. While the PACF would somewhat

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resemble the Cultural Congress of Havana from the previous year with its assembly of radical intellectuals and cultural workers, the Algiers Festival would be an opportunity for diverse African governments and Afro-descendants to contemplate the possibilities of Pan-African solidarity. Since the Revolutionary Algerian government and the OAU convened the event, UNESCO and the U.S. State Department had no direct involvement in the Algiers Festival.55 Algerian Minister of Information, M.S. Benyahia recognized the importance of African nation-states holding the event under their own accord:

The extraordinary gathering of literature and the arts, to be held at Algiers in July 1969, will comprise a whole continent, and will be one of the summits of the cultural renaissance of the Third World in general and Africa in particular. For such a Festival to be held, Africa had to be liberated and free. This goal has been achieved for almost all our countries. Henceforth Africa, having regained its rightful place in the world by virtue of its arms, intends likewise to assume its prominent place by virtue of its spirit and civilization. It is right and significant that the idea for this Pan-African Festival is due to the initiative and intention of the O.A.U.56

At the same time, Nathan Hare, San Francisco State Professor, founder of The Black Scholar, and attendee of the PACF described it as “The Battle of Algiers," after Gillo Pontecorvo’s 1966 film of the same title.

After emerging as one of the first African countries to win its independence through armed struggle, Algeria became “a veritable sanctuary” for African and Third World revolutionaries.57 Though it received tacit military assistance from the Soviet Union during its national liberation struggle against France, the FLN associated itself more closely with the non-aligned, anti-imperialist Third World states that constituted the Tri-

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56 Wizarat al-Akhbar wa-al-Thaqafah, The First Pan-African Cultural Festival, (Algiers, Ministry of Information and Culture, 1970): 2; from here on out, I will refer to this as “Birth of a Festival.”
Continental Movement, specifically receiving guerrilla training and assistance from the Cubans.\textsuperscript{58} As a result, most of Africa’s Left nationalist guerrilla armies, at one time, had headquarters in Algiers and received financial and military training from the FLN, such as Amilcar Cabral and the PAIGC (Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde), Mario de Andrade, the poet-revolutionary and founder of MPLA (Angola), Johnstone “Johnny” Makatini and Magalene Resha of the ANC (South Africa), Samora Machel and Jose Oscar Monteiro of FRELIMO (Mozambique), Ewald and Patience Katjivena of SWAPO (Namibia), and Stephan Nkomo of ZAPU (Zimbabwe), along with El Fatah (the PLO), Viet Cong, and other Bandung movements.\textsuperscript{59} In addition, radical activists established several important Pan-African organizations in Algiers, such as the Pan-African Women’s Organization (PAWO) founded in Mali in 1962, but relocated to Algeria in 1968, and the Pan-African Youth Movement (PAYM), initially organized in Sekou Touré’s Guinea in 1962. Moreover, in 1963, the FLN began publishing the anti-imperialist journal Révolution Africaine, which featured essays about anti-colonial and national liberation struggles, political economy, and the poetry and prose of progressive writers from throughout Africa and the Bandung World, making it a radical alternative to the more culturally focused Présence Africaine. The journal also published essays by Amiri Baraka, Liberator correspondent Richard Gibson and other Black radicals about the politico-cultural situation in the Americas.\textsuperscript{60}


\textsuperscript{60} See, Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), \textit{Revolution Africaine}, (May 1963). In 1965, the editors at Soulbook implicated Richard Gibson as a potential government agent that infiltrated Revolution Africaine to spy on leftists. They urged the editors at Liberator magazine to look into the charges and if they were found to be
An internal military coup against Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella led by Minister of Defense Colonel Houari Boumédiene in June 1965, however, somewhat mollified the more radical elements of Algeria’s policy toward African anti-colonialism. The coup specifically led to considerable discord between Algeria and its former ally during its war for independence Cuba. Nevertheless, as president, Boumédiene sustained Algeria’s focus as an Arab-nationalist/Islamic socialist state modeled after Nasser’s United Arab Republic (Egypt), with deep Pan-Africanist commitments that had been initiated since independence. His government also convened the Second Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in 1965—often referred to as Bandung II—only a few months after the coup, it attended the “revolutionary summit” of African nations in 1967, and sat on the OAU Liberation Committee. To strengthen the country’s image as one of Africa’s foremost advocates of Pan-African solidarity, together with the Algerian National Commission, Boumédiene also worked incessantly to bring the First Pan-African Cultural Festival to Algiers in 1969. He sought to establish the most inclusive definition of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle possible by inviting French, English, Portuguese and Arab-speaking nations from the continent and the African Diaspora.

For sure, a notable distinction between the Festival in Algiers and the earlier Dakar Festival was the participation of governments from the entire continent, making it truly Pan-African. For instance, those states generally referred to as “Black” African were there: Guinea, Senegal, Mali, Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana, Dahomey, Tanzania, Zambia, Chad, Cameroon, Sudan, and the two Congos (Brazzaville and Kinshasa); as were the “Arab Republics” of the Maghreb (Northern Africa): Algeria, Libya, Morocco (Kingdom), Mauritania, the United Arab Republic (Egypt) and Tunisia. Moreover, representatives

\[\text{true, then Gibson should be repudiated. See, Tinson, "'The Voice of the Black Protest Movement': Notes on the Liberator Magazine and Black Radicalism in the Early 1960s," Black Scholar (Winter 2008): 15.}\]
\[\text{61 Mortimer, "The Algerian Revolution," p. 380.}\]
\[\text{62 Gleijeses, "Cuba's First Venture in Africa," p. 190-191.}\]
\[\text{63 Mortimer, "The Algerian Revolution," p. 382.}\]
\[\text{64 "Birth of a Festival," p. 5.}\]
from six African liberation armies participated in the proceedings: the Confederation of Nationalist Organizations in Portuguese Colonies (CONCP), FRELIMO, ZAPU, SWAPO, MPLA, and the ANC. In addition, members of Al Fatah (PLO), North and South Vietnamese revolutionaries, and representatives from Eastern Bloc countries attended. Further differentiating the PACF from the Festival in Dakar was its subtitle, “Africa on the march, Africa at war, and Africa in exile” (Birth of a Festival). In addition to musical, dance, and theatrical performances, as well as cinematic and visual art exhibitions, the Festival’s Symposium adopted the themes: “African culture: its reality, its role in the struggle for liberation, in the condition of African Unity, and the economic and social development of Africa.” Thus, from the outset, organizers of the Festival in Algiers envisioned deliberations of “cultural” expression as interconnected to the processes of national liberation, socio-economic development, and Pan-African solidarity, clearly illustrating Fanon’s assertion that the foundation of international consciousness rested in national consciousness. What is more, most of the Left nationalist delegations observed similar imperialist forces at work in the colonial wars in Southern Africa: Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau/Cape Verde, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia; the United States’ war against Vietnam; and Israel’s role in the Middle East.

Culture as a “Weapon in Our Struggle for Liberation”

President Boumédiène opened the twelve-day Festival on July 21, 1969, with a rousing speech that established the radical tone of the event. Implicitly critiquing the earlier Festival in Dakar, he suggested that delegates should not view the PACF as “merely an entertainment designed to distract us momentarily from our daily tasks and problems,” but instead it should contribute to their struggles for decolonization and development (African Culture: Algiers Symposium ACAS 14). Boumédiène’s discourse then condemned European colonialism, which he described as an “evil” political, cultural
and economic system of domination and exploitation that not only drained African societies of their resources, but also attempted to negate African people of their “very existence as...thinking individual[s],” in a perverse “genocide of the spirit” (ACAS 14-15). However, he envisioned the PACF as a space “of renaissance and hope” in the struggle to reclaim and develop “our specific personalities” (ACAS 15). For President Boumédiennne the logic of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle lie not in abstract and trans-historical concepts, but rather in the particularities of each emerging nation-state on the continent and their shared experiences of colonialism and imperialism. This sentiment is further spelled out in his definition of culture, which is

the cement of our resistance, the source of our identity, our key of admission to the concert of nations, the basis of our personalities, and a weapon in our struggle for liberation, [it] is also one of the essential elements in Africa’s development and social progress (ACAS 16).

In contrast to the tendency of some Négritudists to over-determine culture, Boumédiennne defined it as both a basis of African personalities and a “weapon in our struggle for liberation” toward national and continental institution-building, which should “keep pace with economic development” and political independence (ACAS 16). His speech went on to suggest that the PACF was “a primary assertion of African unity; unity of thought, heart and soul, and of the recognition of the part that ‘Africanity’ has played in the preservation of national identities and in the fight for freedom” (ACAS 17). Though Senghor and adherents of Négritude had earlier coined the term “Africanity” to describe the shared “racial” heritage of “Negro” Africans, Boumédiennne’s ideological usage extended the term to include “Arab” Africans whose contemporary realities were historically conditioned by similar experiences of colonialism and imperialism (ACAS 17).65

65 In his Message to PACF, Senghor also described Africanity as the “dialogue between Arabo-Berbers and African negroes,” see, ACAS, p. 38-39.
Anticipating postcolonial theorists such as Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o,
President Boumédienné argued for the recovery of “national languages” and vernacular
knowledge long suppressed by colonialism. He posited, “From the time when our
development was suspended, our cultures denied and the teaching of our languages
forbidden, we have been under the clear obligation to double our efforts to make all
African languages efficient instruments for our development” (ACAS 17). While making
this statement, he was careful not to privilege any particular language, cautioning
against xenophobia and ethnocentrism, and he did not outright condemn colonial
languages, such as French, English and Portuguese. However, observing Fanon’s
postulations on the ways in which “native intellectuals” often assimilated the language,
mores, and world-view of the colonizer, thereby distancing themselves from the
colonized masses, Boumédienné stressed that African intellectuals and artists must
reconnect with and gain creative inspiration from the culture(s) of “the mass of the
people.”

He believed that the Algiers Festival was a historical opportunity to illustrate
“our determination to make an individual and original contribution of our thought and our
art, within a common framework and impelled by a single dynamic of social revolution
and progress” (ACAS 18).

The Pan-African politics of cultural struggle expressed in President
Boumédienné’s opening remarks was echoed in a number of the other Symposium
addresses and messages from African leaders and national liberation movements at the
PACF. The delegation from the Algerian Democratic and Popular Republic, reiterated
many of the points raised in Boumédienné’s address. One important idea their address
added was the connection of the Festival in Algiers to earlier Pan-African and Third

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66 In Prison Notebooks, written between 1929 and 1935, Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci made a similar
assertion in reference to organic intellectuals, “The same distinction can be made between the notion of
intellectual élites separated from the masses, and that of intellectuals who are conscious of being linked
World gatherings: “It is worthwhile noting that the problem of the reciprocal bases of culture and liberation movements has been raised in several meetings: the Bandung Conference, the various congresses of black artists and writers, and lastly the latest congress of Third World Intellectuals in Cuba, during which particular attention was given to the definition of the aspects of a fight against cultural underdevelopment” (ACAS 63). While articulating the significance of African nation-states funding the Festival, and Algeria’s role in fostering anti-colonial and Pan-African struggles, OAU secretary-general Diallo Telli described the event as a forum “for an Africa which is waging a decisive struggle to pool its efforts and resources, so as to offer better living conditions to its people”; as well as a “fight of Africans to free themselves from all kinds of alienation, mystification and servitude.”67 The Tanzanian delegation, led by Sam Ntiro, the Commissioner of Culture and a visual artist, viewed the process of cultural alienation and mystification begun during colonization as resulting in the desire of some African intellectuals to become “Black Europeans.” In order to counter this, he argued, progressive leaders of OAU member-states had to deconstruct the inferiority complexes imposed upon the colonized and “involve the masses of our people in our cultural activities. They must know that it is their culture” (ACAS 158).

The delegation submitted Tanzanian President Mwalimu Julius Nyerere’s contentious Arusha Declaration of 1967, with its core principles of African socialism and self-reliance, as an exemplar of the popular-masses participating in a country’s social, economic, and cultural development.68 “The result has been the mobilization of all the Tanzanians, as inspired by [our] own cultural background for all the activities geared towards the uplifting of the lives of our people” (ACAS 158). At the same time, they recognized that political liberation was a prerequisite for actual cultural development to

67 “Address by Mr. Diallo Telli,” in the ACAS, pp. 21-22.
ensue on a continental scale and while issuing statements of solidarity at conferences and festivals was an example of *symbolic action*, they argued that although “freedom cannot be won only by resolutions; it can be won by the gun in the bush” (ACAS 158). In other words, the Tanzanian delegation admonished those in attendance that it was the political imperative of the OAU to support liberation struggles with more than words, but by also deploying African troops into battle against the remaining racist and fascist colonial regimes.⁶⁹

Next to Algeria, Guinea, and Nkrumah’s Ghana, Tanzania was one of the most committed OAU member-states openly supporting African national liberation struggles. Moreover, under Nyerere’s leadership the country maintained active involvement in radical Pan-Africanist projects, inviting African and Afro-descendant activist-intellectuals such as the Marxist scholar Walter Rodney, and the SNCC-initiated Pan-African Skills Project, to assist in developing the socialist African state, which culminated in its hosting of the Sixth Pan-Africanist Congress in 1974.⁷⁰ In addition to the OAU headquartering its Liberation Committee in Tanzania, FRELIMO was founded in Dar es Salaam in 1962 and the Nyerere government gave refuge and material support to MPLA, SWAPO, ⁶⁹

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⁶⁹ However, the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto caused some trepidation among national liberation movements present in Tanzania. “The document, which had been written by Nyerere and adopted by the leaders of the Frontline States, put forward the position that the heads of state would dissuade the liberation movements from continuing the armed struggle if the Portuguese and South African regimes accepted the principles of independence and majority rule and agreed to start the process of negotiations to that end. The liberation movements were incensed by this position. In the first place, they argued, it had been taken without consulting them. Second, the decision on the means by which to pursue the struggle was a sovereign decision that only they and no one else could take. Third, each struggle had its own character and there could not be one position that would fit all. The Lusaka Manifesto was adopted by the OAU. We argued with the liberation movements that armed struggle was not an end but a means toward an end, and if that end could be secured peacefully, there would be no reason for war. But the liberation movements never quite accepted the position. In 1971 I had the honor to be assigned to draft the Mogadishu Declaration, which nullified the Lusaka Manifesto. The declaration argued that since the Portuguese colonialists and the apartheid regime had not responded positively, frustrating the hopes of the OAU, there was no alternative but to continue to support the armed struggle.” See, Walter Bgoya, “From Tanzania to Kansas and Back Again,” in *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950-2000* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2007). At [http://www.noeasyvictories.org/select/04_bgoya.php](http://www.noeasyvictories.org/select/04_bgoya.php).

ZAPU, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azani (South Africa) and the ANC. Two months prior to the Festival in Algiers, the ANC held its historic Consultative Conference at Morogoro, Tanzania, where it redefined its strategies and tactics around the concept of “total liberation” in a “Revolutionary People’s War.” The ANC delegation at the PACF, led by South African poet Mazisi Kunene, author of *Zulu Poems* (1970) and *Emperor Shaka the Great* (1979), Johnny Makatini, leader of the Pan-African Youth Movement, and ANC representative to the Pan-African Women's Organization, Magdalene Resha, outlined the ideology behind the concept “total liberation,” which went beyond simply opposing the racist policies of Apartheid. Since European colonialism was a *total form of domination* of African social, economic, political and cultural ways of life, then liberation had to totally destroy the oppressive systems.⁷¹

Even though the ANC delegation was at a “Cultural Festival,” they too cautioned against considerations of cultural expression separate from political and economic development. The compartmentalization and fragmentation of *culture* from the other forms of human experience was a systematic ploy by imperialists and their collaborating African elite to keep the masses of Africans alienated and in abject poverty. What is more, the dislocation of African personalities and societies was intensified by the imposition of colonial logic that not only divided Africans based upon nation, class, ethnicity, gender, and language, but also by constructing false demarcations between “Africa north of the Sahara and African south of the Sahara” (ACAS 59). Rather, the ANC delegation urged those in attendance to view the PACF “as a combative and an assertive force. It presents new perspectives of a revolutionary dynamic for African liberation. It presents a challenge to us who inherit the fruits of the revolution. It is also a challenge to the enemies of that African revolution” (ACAS 57). They concluded by

asserting that the struggle for “total liberation” was not Black South Africans seeking equality in a racist and fascist government, but instead it would necessitate the complete transformation of South Africa into a “socialist state”; informing those in solidarity and the forces opposing their “Revolutionary People’s War” that, “We shall not lay down our arms until these ideals have been achieved” (ACAS 60).

Despite concurrently fighting wars for national independence in Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, a number of revolutionary cultural workers from the various guerrilla movements also attended the PACF. Representing FRELIMO, MPLA, and PAIGC, the address by the delegation of the Confederation of National Organizations in the Portuguese Colonies (CONCP)\(^\text{72}\) articulated the linkages between anti-colonialism, national liberation, armed struggle, cultural development, and African unity.\(^\text{73}\) Furthermore, many of the postulations made in their remarks anticipate PAIGC leader Amilcar Cabral’s more recognized treatise “On National Liberation and Culture,” which he first delivered at the memorial for FRELIMO’s assassinated leader, Eduardo Mondlane on February 20, 1970.\(^\text{74}\) In addition to their presentation at the Symposium, CONCP delegates also participated in exhibitions of dance, visual art, poetry, and photography, as well as the cinematography symposium, where they displayed a short documentary entitled Monagambee (1969), by the radical feminist filmmaker from Guadeloupe, Sarah Maldoror. Based upon the short story of Luandino Vieira, a leftist Portuguese-Angolan, the eighteen-minute film briefly highlights the Angolan liberation struggle against Portuguese colonial forces. Maldoror, who at the time was married to

\(^\text{72}\) The Confederation was initiated in 1961 at the Casablanca Meeting of radical Pan-African States, which ultimately resulted in the split between the Casablanca and Monrovia blocs.

\(^\text{73}\) In addition, the CONCP delegation made a number of concrete recommendations for strengthening cooperation between OAU member-states and national liberation movements, such as “exchanging experiences of cultural decolonization,” consolidating “African cultural languages,” initiating “mass literacy campaigns,” appropriating the “cultural infrastructures” – newspaper, radio, film – for the liberation struggles, and establishing bases of influence at African universities (ACAS 75).

\(^\text{74}\) Cabral’s presentation was made at Syracuse University, where Mondlane had been a professor prior to organizing FRELIMO. See, Amilcar Cabral, “On National Liberation and Culture,” in Return to the Source, (Monthly Review Press, 1974).
MPLA co-founder Mario de Andrade, was no stranger to revolutionary Third World filmmaking, having worked as an assistant on Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers* (1966). Many of the themes she documented in the short film and her experiences on Algiers were later translated into the feature-length and award-winning film entitled *Sambizanga* (1972), about an Angolan woman coming into revolutionary consciousness during the guerrilla movement.75

The emergence of revolutionary consciousness was a common subject in many cultural texts produced during the wars for national independence in the former Portuguese colonies. At the PACF Symposium in Algiers, the CONCP delegation specifically asserted that it was during their guerrilla wars against colonialism “that our peoples’ cultural physiognomy becomes apparent” (ACAS 72). Describing the “dialectical relationship” between national liberation and cultural development, the address continued, “the liberation struggle provides the material framework and ideal conditions for the development of culture. The latter is, in turn, the fertilizing element of the liberation struggle” (ACAS 73). The primary obstacle to reconciling this dialectical relationship was the colonial imposition of *cultural duality* based upon class hierarchies and occasionally racial intermixture, where the national culture of the working masses and rural peasants was set in opposition and viewed as inferior to the bourgeois culture of the Portuguese and their elite African *assimilados*. However, CONCP observed two variations of “cultural resistance” taking place among the colonized. First, from the outset of colonization large segments of the popular-masses had refused assimilation by maintaining their “traditional heritages”; and second, a small percentage of the “integrated” intelligentsia had come “to understand the true nature of colonialism, [and]

oppose alienation, i.e. cultural alienation,” thereby utilizing their “privilege” and intellectual production in opposition of colonial domination (ACAS 73).  

Then again, the CONCP delegation argued that the politico-cultural “awakening” of “integrated” intellectuals alone would not “overcome the contradictions induced by dual culture.” Instead, it required the initiation of the “armed struggle for national liberation” in order for the embryonic seeds of a “people’s culture” to manifest (ACAS 73). Though they identified a new revolutionary praxis foregrounding theatre production and in the cadre of “soldier-artists” producing “wood and terra cotta images representing guerrilla fighters or women militants,” it was in the sphere of literary production, both oral and written, that the greatest example of “people’s culture” in support of independence and revolutionary struggle emerged. Reciting a series of poems written by MPLA and FRELIMO militants, such as Agostinho Neto, Mario de Andrade, Marcelino Dos Santos, Eduardo Mondlane and others, the delegation explained how popular songs and chants had been transformed into revolutionary poems of inspiration: “Our valiant ancestors / Overcame the colonialist invasion / Let us follow the example of our ancestors / Let us heed their advice / Let us destroy old ideas / By creating a new spirit of patriotism” (ACAS 73). They also describe revolutionary poetry as a “medium of direct mobilization” to raise the politico-cultural consciousness of the masses:

What are you waiting for, brother?  
The days are passing  
And the Portuguese will never change  

Join the others  
And to-morrow  
Your brothers in oppression will be freed.

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76 More specifically, a number of the founders and leaders of the CONCP revolutionary armies received formal education in Europe and North America and were established cultural workers prior to joining their respective national liberation movements. For example, from the PAIGC, Amilcar Cabral (University of Lisbon) and Onesimo Silveira (Uppsala University in Sweden); from FRELIMO, Eduardo Mondlane (Oberlin College) and Marcelino Dos Santos (University of Lisbon); and from the MPLA, Agostinho Neto and Mario De Andrade (both from University of Lisbon).
Additionally, it was a modality in which to inspire those already engaged in armed combat: “Guerillero, / The time for rejoicing has come, / It’s the revolution.” In 1971, FRELIMO published a volume of revolutionary poems entitled, *Poems of Combat*, written by “militants, all of whom are directly involved in the armed struggle for national liberation.” A handful of Afro-North American cultural workers reiterated these sentiments about the revolutionary potential of poetry. Ted Joans defined the responsibility of committed poets to the struggle for transnational Black liberation as crafting “[t]he correct word / at the correct time / calculated to explode / inside of the target’s brain / is the right way / to write / read / or recite / revolutionary poetry.”

Moreover, imprisoned cadre of the Black Liberation Army (BLA) during their “armed struggle” against the United States government published *The Soul of the Black Liberation Army* (1981), one of the clearest examples of revolutionary poetry by Black Americans approximating FRELIMO’s *Poems of Combat*.

Though historically Guinean President Ahmed Sékou Touré is better remembered for his radical trade unionism, spurning of de Gaulle’s “commonwealth,” Marxist dialectics, advocacy of Pan-Africanism, and autocratic leadership, he too modeled himself a poet-revolutionary. In his message read before the First Pan-African Cultural Festival, Touré concluded his lengthy paper with a poem that in addition to calling for “African Unity,” expressed what African literary critic Chidi Amuta terms the “dialectical sociology of literature.” Poetically proclaiming, “All real value is social or historical,” Touré depicted the committed producer of revolutionary culture, which he

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81 According to Amuta, the “sociology of literature perceives the context of literature, its content and form as dialectically interconnected areas for comprehending the social essence of literature” in *The Theory of African Literature*, p. 9.
included himself, as “Both object and subject of history, / Of that process of transformation without end… / Perpetually moving, perpetually evolving…” Moreover, his poem and speech echoed many of the substantive points that would be raised by other delegations, such as the need to forge Pan-African alliances against colonialist, imperialist and capitalist regimes in Africa and globally, the importance of intellectuals utilizing their intellectual production in support of the working-class masses, and the centrality of cultural struggle, both artistic and technological, in national and continental liberation.

These last two objectives could only be realized through the development of a “Cultural Revolution,” which Touré asserted, “relies on popular capacities alone, necessarily places culture, all culture, on par with the popular masses, that they may accede to all the knowledge and all the aptitudes which justice, solidarity and social peace call for in every sphere” (ACAS 32). During his message, though, Touré offered few concrete specifics about Cultural Revolution; instead, the members of Guinea’s delegation at the Festival provided that explication. Mamadi Kéïta, Secretary General for National Education, presented the official address of the Republic of Guinea, where he defined this process as the “revolutionarization of culture” (ACAS 100), which was dialectically linked to “the struggle for national and continental liberation and social promotion” (ACAS 100). He continued by suggesting that the particular objectives of the Guinean Cultural Revolution were to (1) identify the progressive tendencies of a society’s cultural past while rejecting “useless and reactionary” elements; (2) transform and democratize all aspects of culture; (3) advance “the cultural and scientific level of the working class” in order to develop the forces of production; (4) re-educate older generations of intellectuals; (5) cultivate a “new type of intellectual”; and finally, (6) engage the entire population in strengthening and defending socialism (ACAS 101). Guinea had begun to implement much of this through the organization of rural, political,
and economic units called Local Revolutionary Authorities (PRL), ostensibly situating the “power” of the “State in the hands of the people,” as well as with the development of Centers for Revolutionary Education (CER), that were not only schools, “but a centre of economic and ideological radiation” (ACAS 103). Furthermore, Kéïta asserted that a representation of the Guinean Cultural Revolution in praxis was the “epic” play *Et la nuit s’illumine (And the Night is Illuminated)*, which served as the country’s theatrical contribution to the PACF (ACAS 102).

“*There can be no decolonization without revolution*”

One issue that Touré and the Guinean delegation both made evident was their contention that Négritude was antithetical to any articulation of African Cultural Revolution. While Négritude was a cultural theory that originated among French-speaking African and West Indian intellectuals educated in the metropole of Paris, and its most vocal opponents were often English-speaking Africans, such Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), Ezekiel Mphahlele (South Africa), and Keorapetse Kgositsile (South Africa), French-speaking Afro-descendant and African radicals such as Frantz Fanon, Ousmane Sembene, and Sékou Touré were also ardent critics of what they viewed as its ahistoricity and irrationality. Since the Casablanca-Monrovia split of the Pan-African movement in 1961, moreover, Touré maintained long-standing suspicions of Léopold Senghor’s allegiances that became full-fledged hostility in 1967 after he accused the Senegalese of “harboring a French-supported anti-Guinean military training camp.” At the PACF, his critical comments initiated a fire-storm when he suggested: “*Négritude is therefore a false concept, an irrational arm furthering the irrational, based on racial discrimination as arbitrarily practised on the people of Africa*

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and Asia and the coloured population in America and Europe” (italics in original ACAS 32). Toward the conclusion of his message, Touré again advised those in attendance not to be swayed by the falsity of negritude and so-called cultural cross-breeding or by the neo-colonialist tactics which split our continent up into French-speaking Africa and English-speaking Africa, into Africa North of the Sahara and Africa South of the Sahara, but [we] should be influenced purely by the aspirations of the progressive peoples who, over and beyond problems of colour, religion or nationality, constitute one and the same force, that of the Revolution already under way in a large number of the countries in the world (ACAS 36).


Criticism of Négritude at the Festival did not solely come from the Republic of Guinea, though. “Negritude is not so much the awareness of the skin’s dark pigmentation as it is of the fact of not having white skin,” argued the H.E. Aboubakr Osman, Ambassador to Algeria from the Republic of Sudan. He continued, “In the end,
the followers of negritude serve the interests of the colonizers who worked for two centuries to differentiate the peoples of the various continents according to racial criteria” (ACAS 154). The National Revolutionary Council of the People’s Republic of Congo-Brazzaville (PRCB, formerly the French Congo) also challenged the concept due to its reification of racist discourse imposed on Africans by European colonialists; basing their assertions on many similar points raised by the Sudanese and Guinean delegations. Initially after independence in 1960, however, Congo-Brazzaville opposed the socialist-leaning states of the Pan-African Casablanca Group (Guinea, Ghana, Algeria, Egypt, etc.), aligning itself with Senegal and the Monrovia Group, while also maintaining close relations to France, its former colonial master. Following a series of coup d’états, first in 1963 against the pro-French government, and later in August 1968, led by Captain Marien Ngouabi and a radical Marxist-Leninist régime, the newly established “People’s Republic” of Congo-Brazzaville, now envisioned itself as a fellow-traveler on “the socialist path” (ACAS 78), renaming the National Revolutionary Council to the Congolese Labour Party (PCT). For Eldridge Cleaver and the international section of the Black Panther Party, the PCT represented an important “synthesis between the cultural aspects of our Africanness and the revolutionary aspects,” that could directly inspire the Black Liberation movement in North America.

At the Festival in Algiers, the PRCB delegation was led by a number of radical Congolese cultural workers, such as writer Henri Lopes, who served as the Minister of National Education, poet/playwright Maxime N’Debeka, the Director General of Cultural Affairs (1968-1972), and writer Jean-Baptiste Tati. Despite Lopes’ political position in the

87 Eldridge Cleaver continued, “Returning to the Congo, finding here in the Congo a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist state, with a Marxist-Leninist Party, and a People’s Army built along the lines discovered for the formation of a true People’s Republic, to deal with safeguarding the construction of a socialist society from both the internal and external enemies—this, we see very clearly, will have a profound effect of hurling the Afro-American liberation struggle onto a higher level, making possible an unprecedentedly tighter unity.” In Revolution in the Congo, (London: Stage 1 for the Revolutionary Peoples’ Communications Network, 1971): 7.
government, according to Dominic Thomas (2000), he was not an “official” writer for the PRCB; however, his first published work, *Tribaliques* (*Tribal Stories*, 1971), is clearly anti-Négritude and emblematic of the aesthetic ideology of socialist realism that dominated most cultural production from the Republic during the late 1960s and 1970s.\(^88\) While N’Debeka authored several books of poetry, such as *New Sun* (1969) and *The Sorrel/Lemons* (1975), he is better known for his sardonic play *The President* (1970), which condemns neo-colonial and authoritarian rulers of Africa, specifically Congo-Brazzaville’s neo-colonialist neighbor Mobutu Sese Seko. However, N’Debeka’s participation in an attempted *coup* against Ngouabi’s regime in 1972, resulting in a death sentence (which was later commuted), leads one to believe that he may have also intended his criticisms of authoritarianism for the PRCB. Thomas argues that despite his imprisonment N’Debeka remained committed to Marxism-Leninism, despite his criticism of the ruling party in Congo-Brazzaville.\(^89\)

Nevertheless, at the Pan-African Cultural Festival in 1969, N’Debeka and Lopes stood with Pierre Nze, of the Directory of the National Revolutionary Council and PRCB spokesperson, who expressed his nation’s concerns about “false cultural regionalisms” that create more division between African nations than build solidarity:

> The Pan-African Cultural Festival gives us all an opportunity to look beyond race and thus to call to question the idea of ‘negritude’, without any intention of starting a dispute…As from now we will no longer be able to define ourselves by race or by any other physical characteristic, but by geography and, above all, by our common determination which is the best basis for national and international unity (ACAS 78).

Therefore, with its repudiation of race-based definitions of Pan-Africanism for those grounded in geographical and political realities, the People’s Republic of Congo-Brazzaville associated itself with the revolutionary wing of the African liberation

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\(^{88}\) Dominic Thomas, “Officials Writers: The Engineers of the Congolese Soul,” *South Central Review*, 17.2 (Summer, 2000): 86.

\(^{89}\) *Ibid*, 89.
movement. Nze concluded his address with an extended quote from President Ngouabi, echoing many of the arguments made by other delegations about the appropriate utilization of culture, “The aim of our culture is not to lull our friends with fairy stories, nor to boast of our art or civilization—i.e. our knowledge of human sciences. It has a more important part to play, “namely to awaken in the African a sentiment of striving for the national liberation of the continent” (italics in original ACAS 79).

Rene Depestre, a Marxist and surrealist poet from Haiti, exiled in Revolutionary Cuba during the 1960s, similarly criticized Négritude as archaic and reactionary. In his remarks before the Symposium, he challenged proponents of the concept who asserted that it was necessary in validating the humanity of people of African descent, and thus also facilitated the decolonization of Africa. In response Depestre argued, “There can be no decolonization without revolution … The revolution is the only historic force able to lead our respective peoples towards the incandescent centre of themselves, to bring about a reconversion and mutation of their socio-cultural history. Where there is a revolution, the people make a fresh start in their history, in a manner that is fully creative” (italics in original ACAS 255). Throughout much of Depestre’s cultural work, he maintained a dialectical “relationship / Between poetry and the Revolution,” which was more than rhetorical.\textsuperscript{90} Following the publication of his first volume of poems \textit{Enticelles} (Sparks) in 1945 and his co-founding of the subversive literary weekly newspaper \textit{La Ruche}, which published essays on surrealist Andre Benton’s visit to Haiti and condemnations of capitalism, the Haitian dictatorship of President Élie Lescot suppressed the journal. This culminated in Depestre’s arrest—writing his second volume of poetry \textit{Gerbes de sang} (\textit{Bursts of Blood}) while in prison—and exile to France in 1946;

but not before he and other leftist students organized a general strike that crippled Haiti in January 1946, leading to Lescot’s overthrow by a military junta.\(^{91}\)

As a result of his expulsion from Haiti, Depestre became a revolutionary “nomad” of sorts, traveling between France, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, finally settling in Cuba.\(^{92}\) All throughout, he agitated for the decolonization of Africa while debating Aimé Césaire and others about the utility of Négritude in the pages of *Presence Africaine* and at the First Negro Writers Congress in Paris (1956), positioning Afro-descendant cultural production “within a Marxist historical perspective.”\(^{93}\) After temporarily returning to his native Haiti in 1959, which was then under the brutal control of François “Papa Doc” Duvalier and his *Tontons Macoute* (secret police), Depestre wasted little time in condemning the dictatorship and its “totalitarian Négritude” as a means of mystifying and oppressing the masses. His vociferous criticisms led to his second expulsion from Haiti the same year as his return; but at the request of Ernesto “Che” Guevara, he was invited to Revolutionary Cuba to direct the National Publishing House, the National Council of Culture, and other cultural agencies on the island.\(^{94}\)

It was during his time in Cuba that Depestre finally visualized many of his revolutionary ideals in praxis. There he published three volumes of poetry: *Un acr-en-ciel pour l’Occident Chrétien* (*A Rainbow for the Christian West*) in 1967; *Cantate de Octubre* (*Singer of October*) in 1968, written in memory of the recently assassinated Che Guevara; and *Poète à Cuba* (*Poet in Cuba*) in 1973; as well as publishing a major critique of Négritude, *Pour la révolution, pour la poésie* (*For the Revolution, For Poetry*)

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92 Depestre’s politico-cultural radicalism and challenging of the Haitian elite led to what Joan Dayan calls his identity as “a rooted nomad,” which represents his continual connections to his “homeland” of Haiti, despite living outside the country for most of his life. Dayan argues that Depestre prefers to call himself as opposed to an “exile” or “refugee.” See “France Reads Haiti: René Depestre’s Hadriana dans tous mes rêves,” *Yale French Studies*, 83 (1993): 155.
93 Dayan, “René Depestre’s and the Symbiosis of Poetry and Revolution,” p. 76.
in 1974. Though he eventually left the island in 1978 over political differences with Fidel Castro, while at the Festival in Algiers, Depestre acknowledged the historic position of Négritude as a form of cultural “escape” for colonized peoples; however, because of its failure to produce revolutionary consciousness, it had become little more than a form of socio-cultural control propagated by the “enemies of liberation.”

Négritude, as a concept linked to the search for identity, had accordingly given us a new and refreshing perception of ourselves after centuries of denigration and profanation of the Negro. But, with Duvalier, the ideology of Négritude has become an aberrant obstacle marking the historic exhaustion of a social regime. Enmeshed in hysterical excesses, the Négritude of Papa Doc is fed on a completely hallucinating herbal mixture...Négritude, which had been a state of healthy opposition to the colonial powers, has become a process of neo-colonial degeneracy. It killed the great novelist Jacques S. Alexis. It has massacred numerous other intellectuals of our country (ACAS 254).

African Marxist philosopher Stanislas Adotevi, then Commissioner General for Culture and Youth of Dahomey (now Benin), however, launched a scathing theoretical assault on Négritude, which according to Nathan Hare was one of the most popular speeches at the Festival. Though many of the presentations at the Symposium by African Marxists elided discussions of “race” in lieu of class struggle, Adotevi’s paper ultimately established a link between the African Left and Afro-North Americans whose experiences of oppression had historically been racialized. Originally entitled “Discours sur la melanisme,” but published as “Negritude is Dead: The Burial,” in the Spring/Fall 1969 issue of the Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts and later as “The Strategy of Culture,” in the Black Scholar’s first issue in November 1969, Adotevi argued that while radical ideologies were imperative for African unity and revolutionary consciousness, Négritude was “purely literary...political mysticism” that “has become

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hostile to the development of Africa” (ACAS 28). He later published an extended critique of the concept entitled *Négritude et négrologues* (1972), which identified the source of African underdevelopment and exploitation in a Marxist critique of international capitalism and not simply in racial terms. As with Depestre's paper, Adotevi recognized that at its inception, Négritude “shook a few consciences and brought a few negroes together, and this is a good thing”; but, because most adherents of the concept focused heavily on rescuing the past, he contended that they wanted Africans to “forget the present” (ACAS 29). To Adotevi, adding to the “intellectual confusion” of Négritude were the concomitant philosophies of “Negro soul” and “African socialism”: the latter notion based on the fallacy “that socialism already existed in traditional communities”; an assumption he argued French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre reified in 1948, in his critical assessment of Négri
tude, “Black Orpheus” (ACAS 29).

Pronouncing the death of Négritude, therefore, Adotevi posited an alternative philosophy referred to as the theory of Melanism, which was not “a new racialism but an identification” (ACAS 32). At the same time, by emphasizing the intersectionality of racism and economic exploitation in the oppression of people of African descent globally, he moved beyond orthodox Marxism that tended to obscure race as an integral point of domination. With this in mind, Adotevi detailed his concept as a dialectical synthesis of anti-racist politics, revolutionary nationalism, and Marxist economics,

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98 In actuality, Kwame Nkrumah made a similar criticism of the term “African socialism” in a 1967 speech in Cairo, Egypt, entitled “African Socialism Revisited.” He argued, “It was no accident, let me add, that the 1962 Dakar Colloquium made such capital of “African socialism” but the uncertainties concerning the meaning and specific policies of “African socialism” have led some of us to abandon the term because it fails to express its original meaning and because it tends to obscure our fundamental socialist commitment. Today, the phrase “African socialism” seems to espouse the view that the traditional African society was a classless society imbued with the spirit of humanism and to express a nostalgia for that spirit. Such a conception of socialism makes a fetish of the communal African society. But an idyllic, African classless society (in which there were no rich and no poor) enjoying a drugged serenity is certainly a facile simplification; there is no historical or even anthropological evidence for any such society. I am afraid the realities of African society were somewhat more sordid.” See, “Africa: National and Social Revolution,” *African Seminar in Cairo, Egypt*, (Prague: Peace and Socialism Publishers, 1967).
asserting that it was broad enough to unify all Africans (not just “Negro” Africans) on the continent as well as Afro-descendants in the Americas. The specific objectives of the philosophy were: the building of “modern” nation-states; democratizing and nationalizing their economies; repudiating ideologies that “persist in discovering cyclic returns” while obfuscating progressive development; intellectual and moral development; and finally, the “creation of ourselves by ourselves and for a constant creative activity” (ACAS 34). While Adotevi noted that Melanism was intended merely as a transitional philosophy on the path to Marxism, he also acknowledged the importance of mental decolonization for Africans, proclaiming, “Before socialist recovery, must come the recovery of ourselves” (ACAS 35).

Over the twelve-day Festival in Algiers, few African nation-states openly supported Nègritude. One country that did so was the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Its delegation’s address before the Symposium asserted that “the forces of Negritude” were important in awakening Africans and people of African descent to begin challenging the “obstacles” of racial oppression, while placing “before human conscience the destiny of man threatened by colonial immoderation. At the sound of their voices Africa, a shrouded corpse, rose again from the grave” (ACAS 70). For Cameroonian, colonialism imposed many obstacles to nation building, such as racial oppression, ethnic divisions, assimilation, economic exploitation and integration into Europe’s economy. However, in addition to the ethnic and religious diversity of the pre-colonial Cameroonian, the delegation noted how the country faced a severe post-colonial identity crisis since it was a disjointed construction of European colonial logic, beginning as a colony of Germany in 1884, and after WWI, being divided in two by France and Britain (ACAS 70). After

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99 Adotevi outlined five objectives of Melanism as “the establishment of a modern state”; “a democratic national economy”; “rejection of all systems which persist in discovering cyclic returns and deny indefinite progress”; intellectual and moral development; and the “creation of ourselves by ourselves and for a constant creative activity,” p. 34.
French Cameroun received “official” independence in 1960, followed by British Cameroon in 1961, the former colonies attempted an unequal reunification as a Federal Republic, under the leadership of strongman (and close ally of Léopold Senghor) President Ahmadou Ahidjo and the Cameroon National Union (CNU). Though the delegation described Cameroon as a model of Pan-African unity which was developing a bilingual and bicultural nation-state—with both French and English as official languages—President Ahidjo nevertheless privileged the French aspects of the country, remaining economically and politically dependent on France. Moreover, the Cameroonian government suppressed all left-wing opposition, waging a protracted war against the Marxist guerrilla movement, the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (UPC), which was initially a radical political party outlawed by the French colonial government in 1955 due to its agitation for national independence. While the delegation at the PACF spoke of its support for African liberation and cultural politics, positing its nation’s post-colonial history as an example, many of Cameroon’s most progressive creative intellectuals, such as Marcien Towa, Rene Philombe, Patrice Kayo, and Mongo Beti (who lived in exile during the 1960s), remained opposed to Ahidjo’s autocratic “négritude-influenced cultural nationalism.”

Tacit support for Négritude also came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly the Belgian Congo), led by the virulently anti-communist (and neo-

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colonialist) dictator Lieutenant-General Joseph Desiré Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko). As a result of the Cold War instigated “Congo Crisis” (1960-1965), resulting in Patrice Lumumba’s tragic assassination in January 1961 (which the Lieutenant-General himself had a hand in), Mobutu officially took power in a reactionary military coup with the support of the CIA in 1965. The year after Mobutu’s assumption of power, Martinican poet/playwright Aimé Césaire wrote the play Une saison au Congo (A Season in the Congo, 1966), which dramatized the life and death of Lumumba, his embodiment as a radical African nationalist, and Mobutu’s neocolonialist betrayal. The play is divided into three acts, which depict moments in Lumumba’s life: from the moment of “conquest,” to “crisis, and assassination.” In Janis Pallister’s Aimé Césaire (1991), she identifies the central tragedy of the play: “The hero Lumumba is destroyed not by flaws in his personality but by the ambitious Mokutu, a thinly disguised caricature of Mobutu Sese Seko, the [then] president of Zaire in concert with the imperialist Belgian, French and American forces.”

Paradoxically, the Congo-Kinshasa delegation at the PACF attempted to align itself with Africa’s Left nationalists by invoking the names of Fanon and Lumumba as a “heroes,” calling the latter, one of the Congo’s “greatest martyrs” (ACAS 81). In their presentation, moreover, the delegation problematically appropriated the revolutionary language and legacies of the two men, as well as the historic independence struggles in Algeria and Lumumba’s Congo by conflating them with Mobutu’s mythic neo-African cultural nationalism, which he would later define as authenticité (authenticity). As early


104 Ibid, p. 68.

105 By doing so, the delegation was attempting to connect the histories of Algeria and Congo, “This is as much as to say that our hearts, in Kinshasa or in Algiers, have often beaten to the same rhythm, have felt the same emotions, have known the same sufferings and nourished the same hopes. We believe that these realities form the soundest foundation for culture” (81).
as 1966, Mobutu had begun a process of “Africanizing” former symbols of European colonialism, such as renaming cities: Léopoldville, Elizabethville, and Stanleyville to Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, and Kisangani respectively; and in 1971, he would change his name from Joseph Desiré to Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga, as well as the country’s to the Republic of Zaire.106

Though the Congolese delegation at the PACF outlined the preliminary sketches of authenticié, it recognized Négritude as an inspiration for its conceptualization. “Let us frankly acknowledge that Negritude, despite its limitation and even deviations, has given to many of us the consciousness of being something other than mere beasts of burden under foreign masters. By doing so, negritude implanted one of the first signposts to national liberation by restoring to us our identity and, quite simply, our status as human being” (ACAS 82). Despite referencing national liberation struggles, Mobutu’s regime, with the financial and military assistance of the United States and other imperialist nations, actually waged a prolonged war against Lumumbists and leftist Congolese rebels who were backed by Cuban guerrillas. In the end, however, Mobutu’s articulation of authenticié, which he modeled after Senghorian Négritude,107 was little more than camouflage for his reactionary alliances with the CIA, Belgium, France, Israel, and South Africa in the Cold War as well as his plundering of Congo-Zaire’s national resources and economic assets.108


107 In 1989, Mobutu himself suggested, “President Senghor of whom I’ve read many publications, has been a model for me. I welcomed his appointment to the Academie francaise as a token of recognition of the rationality and dignity of the Black man. Because the negritude which he preached and the authenticié which I defend are but one…” Quoted in Jan Blommaert, Language Ideological Debates: Language, Power, and Social Process. (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999): 391.

By far, the most substantial defense of Nègritude at the Algiers Festival came from Léopold Senghor and the Senegalese delegation, however. Although at the time of the event Senghor was “vacationing in France,” he sent a telegram read on the second day of the Symposium by Amadou Mahtar M’Bow, the Minister of Education and Culture from Senegal. 109 Referring to the richness “and the value of African negro civilization,” Senghor’s message acknowledged that “Negritude and Arab consciousness are complementary” theories that should ultimately be used in the “battle for economic and cultural revival” (ACAS 38). While he spoke of his desire to see an end to colonial domination and “the clash of arms,” Senghor also employed much more conciliatory language than many of the other leaders of African states, going as far to suggest that Africa “has been able to grasp recent European influences and assimilate them in a newly-found friendship and independence” (ACAS 39). Ironically, few of the other messages or addresses at the Festival referred to the connection between Africa and Europe as representing anything close to “friendship.” Similar to his speech at the Dakar Festival three years earlier, Senghor appeared to apologize for colonialism, especially since Senegal had maintained an amiable relationship to the former colonial empire of France.

A few days later, M’Bow delivered Senegal’s official address at the PACF, in which he responded directly to the attacks on Nègritude. Though he acknowledged the interconnectedness of culture and politics, he immediately contradicted himself by arguing that it was problematic for a “cultural” Symposium to degenerate into a “political forum” (ACAS 148). Paradoxically, since he had just stated that the cultural and political realms were “inseparable,” it is unclear why M’Bow felt deliberations of political ideology were somehow an erosion of the Festival’s intentions, specifically because the primary focus of the Symposium was to analyze the “role of culture in the struggle for liberation”

109 Pace, "Africans at Algiers Festival Denounce Concept of ‘Negritude’ as Outmoded," p. 4.
(ACAS 148). Nevertheless, throughout the rather lengthy address, he shifted back and forth between supporting the idea that culture was an aspect of political struggle, and then to the notion that it predetermined all aspects of human existence; arguing in one instance, “Culture encompasses the whole of man’s activities” (italics in original ACAS 150). From this positionality, M'Bow asserted that the intention of the Festival was the development of “cultural unity,” which predicated any form of political unity. This formulation, however, was in direct conflict with those posited by other radical delegations at the Symposium; namely, that political and economic unity was imperative for African nations to develop and control their cultural production (ACAS 150).

**Manifesting Pan-African Solidarity**

Contrary to the interests of the Senegalese delegation and others that the Symposium focus singularly on cultural expression, delegates at the Festival ratified a comprehensive set of proposals and policies that synthesized ideas put forth by the most radical delegations. Labeled the “Pan African Cultural Manifesto,” it outlines the realities of African culture, the role of African culture in national liberation struggles and in the consolidation of African unity, and the role of African culture in the economic and social development of Africa, while making forty recommendations for enhancing Pan-African unity. The Manifesto specifically asserts that Africans should look to the origins of their cultures to assess and eradicate those aspects that are “archaic and stultifying,” and keep only those which are contemporarily relevant. It continues with the proposal that progressive African societies had to “modernize” and enhance their cultures “with the benefits of the scientific, technical and social revolutions.” At the same time, the Manifesto emphasizes that all articulations of “African personality” must be predicated on the historical realities and material/spiritual culture of the masses in specific societies (Cultural Manifesto 2).
Arguing that colonialism began with the slave trade and continued with socio-political and economic domination of African societies, the drafters of the Manifesto recognize that colonization was a complicated process, unable to “be simplified into a single operation.” Rather it constituted a “total action” consisting of political, economic, and social “logics,” that must be resisted by a “total liberation struggle” (CM 5). Here, the delegates adopted the language put forward by the ANC, which had previously articulated its new philosophy of “total liberation” in a “Revolutionary People’s War.” The Manifesto also acknowledges that the moral and intellectual maintenance of the system of colonial domination occurred by coercion and violence and particularly through its “concrete and material hegemony…over the ruling classes on which it relies” (CM 2). In other words, for the system to fully function, the culture of the colonizer had to make African intellectuals uncomfortable with their “national realities” by “depersonalization” and “alienation” (CM 2).

Dialectically, it was due to enslavement and colonialism that the seeds of Pan-African unity—also referred to as “Africanity”—were initially cultivated. However, in addition to the global system of white capitalist supremacy and colonial hegemony, a major obstacle to developing a full-fledged movement for Pan-Africanism had been the collaboration of African intellectuals and political elites with these systems of domination. Therefore, the Manifesto asserts that in order to counter the hegemony of colonial logic, it was vital for, “The African man of culture, the artist, the intellectual” to “integrate himself into his people and shoulder the particularly decisive responsibilities incumbent upon him” (emphasis mine CM 2). Despite their over-utilization of masculine terminology, the drafters of the Manifesto nonetheless envisioned the responsibility of intellectuals and cultural workers in fostering Pan-African unity as raising the politico-cultural consciousness of the masses, an idea conceptually indebted to Frantz Fanon. Moreover, the delegates anticipate the theoretical work of Amilcar Cabral, Ngugi wa
Thiong’o, and other African Marxists on the role/responsibility of intellectuals and cultural producers in national liberation and class struggles; specifically their importance in decolonizing language and intellectual production. For example, building upon the points raised in President Houari Boumédiène’s opening address, the Manifesto proposes that the reconstitution of national languages and the decolonization of educational systems were indispensable elements of national cultural development, which was in turn necessary for African unity (CM 4).

The Cultural Manifesto is particularly critical of Négritude, aestheticism, and other philosophies that do not emphasize the dynamism of revolutionary culture or its interdependency on economic and socio-political development. Alluding to Négritude, the delegates caution against “a complacent and unfruitful evocation of the past,” asserting instead that the role of the Festival was to inspire “an innovating effort and an adaptation of African culture.” They also identify the primary function of culture as being “in the service of the liberation of Africa from Colonialism in all its forms and from all forms of alienation, and to serve the economic and social betterment of the people” (CM 7).

Though the Manifesto does not particularly advocate Marxism-Leninism, it is clearly anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist in sentiment and language. It also promotes the socialization of “scientific organization and the rationalization of our productive activities, as well as the methods of appropriating the means of production (land, natural resources, industry, etc.) and the distribution of the goods produced” (CM 9).

According to the Manifesto, in the narrowest sense culture is a weapon of national liberation, socio-economic development and continental unity, not an end in itself. This, I argue, is the essence of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. Therefore, the recommendations made in the Manifesto recognize the imperative of waging struggles for independence from colonialism and for Pan-Africanism in the sphere of cultural production by suggesting the establishment of a Pan-African Institute of
Filmmakers, a Pan-African News Agency, collective publication and distribution of literary and scholarly texts by the OAU, as well as the recovery and protection of African artistic and intellectual production from colonial powers. Furthermore, it seeks to strengthen all levels of continental education by ensuring that “all children regardless of sex, race or religion,” had access to primary education, establishing a “massive campaign” against adult illiteracy, and advocating “the Panafricanisation and regionalization of the universities and the technical institutes” (CM 12). Complementing the progressive pronouncements on cultural and knowledge production, the Manifesto also recommends that countries translate Africanity into “a unified African Trade Union Movement” while developing “mass organizations (youth organizations, women’s organizations, etc.)." By connecting Pan-Africanism with trade unionism and social movements, the delegates endeavored to demystify and democratize the concept, making it relevant to local struggles of workers, youths, and women throughout Africa (CM 12).

In all, the pronouncements made in the Manifesto established a clear blueprint for engaging Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. While the earlier Festival in Dakar elided any considerations of the role of culture in national liberation movements, most of the intellectuals and cultural workers who gathered in Algiers viewed culture as a “weapon in our struggle for liberation.” The ideological struggle over the uses of Pan-African culture went back to the first and second writers congresses in Paris (1956) and Rome (1959) and were solidified with the Casablanca/Monrovia split in 1961. However, Senghor’s control over the preparations and agenda of the Dakar Festival kept most leftwing intellectuals out of deliberations. For the revolutionary nationalists and African Marxists at the Festival in Algiers, however, ideological struggle constituted the central analytical process of clarifying the best long-term strategies to emancipate African peoples from colonial and capitalist oppression and exploitation. This included exposing those African regimes that had aligned themselves with imperialism. Although
revolutionary Pan-Africanism or Third World Marxism never fully coalesced let alone succeeded in overthrowing global capitalism and imperialism, for a brief moment in July 1969, the possibilities generated at the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers seemed limitless.
CHAPTER 3

“ALGIERS WAS THE BLACK WORLD COMING OF AGE”

The ideological “Battle of Algiers” that occurred at the Pan-African Cultural Festival between revolutionary nationalists / African Marxists and cultural nationalists / Négritudists reverberated throughout the Pan-African movement in 1969. Much of the ideological struggle at the PACF went back to the Casablanca and Monrovia blocs, and it had been intensified with the “Congo Crisis” of the early 1960s and the advent of armed struggles in the Portuguese African colonies and Southern Africa. At the same time, ideological struggle in the Black Power/Arts movements had become equally pronounced in the United States. A few of these conflicts played out internationally as Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panther Party (BPP) and Kwame Ture (then Stokely Carmichael) of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) took their mounting feud to the Algiers Festival.

In fact, by the time of the PACF in July 1969, some Black Power formations had turned their rhetoric and assaults on each other instead of the systemic causalities of marginalization, racism, and economic exploitation. This was no doubt exacerbated by the subversion and violent repression of the Nixon Administration and its “law and order” platform, and the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) of the FBI, CIA, and local law enforcement agencies. While the primary objective of this chapter is to analyze the reception and influence of the PACF on Afro-North American creative intellectuals aligned with the Black Arts and Black Power movements, it is also important to begin with a brief cultural history of the effect the U.S. government’s intervention had on the ideological and political contestation that ensued between various factions within the Black liberation movement.

As early as 1965, poet-playwright Larry Neal observed the covert machinations of the U.S. government and its usage of infiltrators and assassins to destabilize Black
revolutionary movements globally in his poem “Year of the Snake.” It specifically connects the assassinations of Malcolm X and Patrice Lumumba, where “C.I.A. Agents / with tin cups and dark glasses; / and / taxi-cab drivers with poison / in their eyes / shoot toward Harlem, / pop up in Congo / sporting death in Black embassies.”¹ Many of the covert tactics that Neal depicts as the CIA’s modus operandi in spying on and assassinating Black radicals internationally were “illegally” employed on domestic dissidents with little regard for civil/human rights or due process. In 1967, the editors of Black Dialogue made these connections more bluntly: “racist White America is waging an all-out war against the captive Nation, Black America. Led by its vicious right wing (the CIA, FBI, military-industrial complex, Birchers, police, Minute Men, etc.), it is attempting to wipe out the young, militant leadership of Afro-America domestically, while suppressing national liberation movements in Africa, Asia, South and Central America: the Third World.”²

After honing his counter-intelligence techniques against the Garvey movement in the 1920s and the Communist Party USA and Socialist Workers Party in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI initiated COINTELPRO in August 1967 to “disrupt” and “neutralize” so-called Black nationalist “hate groups.” These groups included the Nation of Islam (NOI), the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), and SNCC; with much of the program’s early energy spent on surveilling and discrediting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).³ Even before Hoover “officially” started COINTELPRO, local law enforcement agencies in cities such as New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and Los Angeles had established intelligence apparatuses to investigate burgeoning Black radical movements that they

³ “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Case Study,” Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, Book III, United States Senate, 23 April 1976. From here on out I will refer to this as FBI-KING. The FBI specifically went after Max Stanford, Elijah Muhammad, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown.
saw as responsible for the nearly ubiquitous urban rebellions occurring since the early 1960s. In fact, the covert activities of the New York City Police Bureau of Special Services led to the specious arrests of Herman Ferguson, Muhammad Ahmad (then Maxwell Stanford) and fifteen other members of RAM, who the police described as “Negro terrorists,” intent on fomenting a “race war” by assassinating “N.A.A.C.P. Executive Director Roy Wilkins, Urban League Executive Director Whitney Young Jr. and at least three other moderate Negro leaders” and blaming it on white supremacist organizations. However, with the implementation of COINTELPRO, the level of governmental subversion, disruption, use of agent provocateurs and general warfare against Black nationalist formations exponentially intensified. As a result, some ideological (and at times egotistical) conflicts between organizations became violent, leading to the murders of several rival members of the movement for Black liberation.

“The Year of the Panther?” From Black Power to Reluctant “Pan-Africanists”

On January 4, 1969, the editors of The Black Panther, the Party’s official newspaper predicted that it would be “The Year of the Panther,” invoking the formation’s

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5 For information on the arrests and the response of Black Power activists see, “Busting RAM,” Time Magazine, 30 June 1967; Robert F. Williams, “On the Frame-Up of Afro-American Freedom Fighters,” Black Dialogue, (Winter 1967/68): 18; and “Resolution: At the Newark Black Power Conference,” Black Dialogue, (Winter 1967/68): 19. Herman Ferguson was a co-founder of the Organization of Afro-American Unity with Malcolm X, and following the latter’s assassination, Ferguson organized the Jamaica Rifle and Pistol Club modeled after Robert F. William’s earlier gun club in Monroe, NC. Ferguson and Arthur Harris were eventually found guilty of the plot to kill Wilkins and Young, which led to him jumping bail and fleeing to Guyana, where he remained for 19 years. However, Ferguson maintained his innocence and described his arrest and trial as a conspiracy by the New York City Police Bureau of Special Services (B.O.S.S.) and FBI. When he returned to the U.S. in 1989, he continued to fight the charges and demanded that the FBI make his file available. Ferguson had been under investigation by both NYC BOSS and the FBI since 1965, after the NYC police alleged foiled a plot by the Black Liberation Front to blow up national monuments. After serving three years in prison, he returned to Queens, NY, to continue his community activism. See, Karen Juanita Carrillo, “Exile is Death,” Colorlines Magazine, 22 September 2005; Michael Kaufman, “60s Militant To End Flight after 18 Years,” New York Times, 4 April 1989; and Ferguson v. F.B.I., 762 F.Supp. 1082 (S.D.N.Y., 1991).

6 In addition to Black nationalist groups, COINTELPRO went after Euro-American anti-war radicals and the New Left. See, Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI’s Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States, (Boston: South End Press, 2002); and “COINTELPRO: The FBI’s Covert Action Programs against American Citizens,” Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, Book III, United States Senate, 23 April 1976.
“maturing” Marxist-Leninist-Maoist tendencies as well as its growing stature locally, nationally, and internationally. The editorial asserted: “The statement is intended to affirm that 1969 is the year that the Black Panther Party will demonstrate its dominance in the sphere of revolutionary politics.” When the BPP Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver surfaced from underground in Algiers weeks prior to the Pan-African Cultural Festival, it added some international intrigue to this assertion. Though scholars rarely consider the Black Panther Party within the context of Pan-Africanism, in 1969, the Party would be the most well represented Afro-North American delegation at the Algiers Festival, solidifying its connections with African and Third World revolutionary movements. At the same time, 1969 become a paradoxical year for the Black Panthers demarking its rapid demise as a mass-based organization, which culminated in the eventual split of the BPP and its retrenchment in Oakland, California, in 1971. Thus, at the very moment the Panthers had expanded to include chapters in nearly every city with a sizable Afro-North American population, its development of dual power “survival programs,” such as free breakfast, medical care, and liberation schools, as well as the international solidarity garnered by the “Free Huey” Newton campaign in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe, its anti-war activities and pro-Viet Cong pronouncements, and the establishment of an international section in Algiers, it increasingly became the primary target of COINTELPRO, which fomented conflict and confusion between (and within) the BPP, Us Organization, and other Black nationalist groups of various ideological tendencies.

The year commenced with the FBI instigated murders of Los Angeles Black Panthers Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter and John Huggins by affiliates of the Us

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8 “The FBI's Covert Action Plan to Destroy the Black Panther Party,” Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, Book III, United States Senate, 23 April 1976. From here on out I will refer to this as FBI-BPP.
Organization at a UCLA Black Student Union meeting in January 1969. Subsequently, in May and August 1969, Us members in San Diego killed BPP cadre John Savage and Sylvester Bell.\(^9\) The year also brought overt police repression against the Panthers with assaults on chapters from Des Moines, Iowa to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and most cities in between, which included the high profile arrests of the New York 21, San Francisco 16, Chicago 8, and New Haven 14.\(^10\) Most notoriously, throughout 1969, the state increased its targeted “assassinations” of BPP cadre it had initiated with the killings of Bobby Hutton, Tommy Lewis, Robert Lawrence, and Steve Bartholomew in 1968, by gunning down Walter “Pope” Toure in Los Angeles and the December 1969 coordinated murders of the Chicago BPP Chairman Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, among others.

While the Party’s vociferous usage of the slogan “off the pigs” to signify its disdain for authorities of the state,\(^11\) its organizational focus on politicizing the Black lumpen-proletariat (the unemployed, gang members, and assorted criminal elements), displays of weaponry in the public sphere, which Muhammad Ahmad described as “leftwing adventurism,” and occasional skirmishes with police departments may have exacerbated the response of the U.S. government to the Panthers, it does not legitimize the reactionary and corrupt nature in which COINTELPRO violently murdered its leaders and disrupted the formation’s activities.\(^12\)

\(^11\) Radical anti-police slogans such as “the revolution has come, off the pigs!” were translated into poetic expression published in the Black Panther newspaper and elsewhere. Pieces such as Sharon Moot’s “Off the Pig,” which suggests, “When the pigs pick up their guns, / Don’t lay yours down / cause we gonna spread the / Pigs blood all over the ground,” (11.2.68) and Iris Wyse’s “Pigs”: “Because the pig is the dirtiest animal on earth. I am / telling you we’ve got to wipe them out. Do / exactly this. The next time you see a pig, / Dig! OFF HIM right on.” (11.16.68) to cite only two definitely raised the state’s resolve to disrupt and destroy the BPP.
\(^12\) Muhammad Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, p. 147. The Church Commission report notes that although COINTELPRO began in 1967 to “neutralize” so-called “Black Nationalist Hate Groups,” such as RAM, SNCC, SCLC, and the NOI, by June 1969, the BPP had become the “target of 233 of the total 295 authorized ’Black Nationalist’ COINTELPRO Actions,” see FBI-BPP, p. 186-188.
The intensification of police violence against the Black Panther Party did not go unnoticed by Black cultural workers, however, even those who had otherwise been critical of the Party’s tactics and brand of revolutionary nationalism. For instance, Chicago poet-activist and founder of Third World Press, Haki Madhubuti (then Don L. Lee), who earlier criticized the Panther’s ideological alignment with Maoism and the “The Third World Bond,” wrote a poem in dedication to Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, entitled “One-Sided Shootout,” first published in the January 1970 issue of *Negro Digest*. While his speaker encourages Black radicals to “remember fred” and yell “rite-on mark,” it was equally important for them to comprehend the severity of state repression against Black revolutionaries. “but maybe, / just maybe we'll finally realize that ‘revolution’ to the real- / world / is international 24hours a day and that 4:30AM is like / 12:00 noon, / it’s just darker. / but the evil can be seen if you look in the right direction.”13 Additional statements of solidarity were poetically expressed by Black Arts activists, such as in Sarah Webster Fabio’s, “For Huey, Bobby, Eldridge: Free By Any Means Necessary,” Sonia Sanchez’s “Memorial 2, bobby hutton,” James Emanuel's “Panther Man,” Lucile Clifton’s “apology (to the panthers),” charles k. moreland jr.’s “a panther, named paul,” charyn sutton’s, “Poem for a Panther (for Johnny Huggins, killed in L.A.),” and Desmond Jolly’s, “Incident,” which is an elegy to assassinated Panther Fred Hampton, to cite but a few.14

Nevertheless, COINTELPRO subversion and manipulation also nearly incited a violent confrontation involving Eldridge Cleaver and Kwame Ture (then Stokely Carmichael).15 As a tenuous “coalition” of the Black Panther Party and SNCC disintegrated in 1969, it led to a series of public recriminations between Ture and

14 Sarah Webster Fabio, “For Huey, Bobby, Eldridge: Free By Any Means Necessary” *The Black Panther*
Cleaver, which included accusations (intimated by the FBI) that Ture was a government agent; and in July 1969, the two ideologues brought their simmering dispute to the Algiers Festival. Ironically, the Trinidadian-born Ture, as a maverick organizer with SNCC, had helped produce the iconography of the “Black Panther” to signify the all-Black political party in Lowndes County, Alabama in 1965; and he and Willy Ricks popularized the slogan “Black Power” the following year, marking his and SNCC’s final repudiation of the politics of integration. Ture, along with political scientist Charles V. Hamilton later wrote *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (1967), which was one of the first book-length studies of the concept, explicating the endemic system of racial oppression in the United States and the necessity of Black “national” unity.

Sarah Fabio, who was a poet, playwright and English professor at Merritt College as well as a vocal supporter of BPP co-founders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, published her first poem on Broadside Press entitled “Race Results, U.S.A., 1966,” which signifies the ascendancy of Black Power as a horse race against the white power structure and Ture represents

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the black jockey,
eyeing the hateful hurdles blocking him, grips tight
his reins for a quickening
thrust:

noses forward,
testily, heads out from
the dusty herd, and jeers
back at those who mourn
the lost purses of their
thoroughbreds. He spurs
on the dark horse to
the finish, toward his
fully reckoned, time-honed
hour of triumph."
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Moreover, as a writer for *Ramparts* in 1967, Cleaver himself had lauded Ture as one of the preeminent spokespeople and activists in the struggle for Black Power, in his essay

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“My Father and Stokely Carmichael.” 17 During the brief alliance between SNCC and the BPP from late 1967 to 1969, it appeared that the iconic symbols of Black student radicalism and revolutionary nationalism would establish an indomitable force with national and international scope. Ture (who Newton “drafted” as BPP Prime Minister in 1967), James Forman, and H. Rap Brown of SNCC negotiated the coalition with Cleaver and Seale of the Panthers initially in support of the campaign to “Free Huey” Newton, who languished in prison for allegedly shooting two Oakland police officers, killing one, in October 1967.

In fact, the Free Huey Campaign, which eventually won his release in 1970, was one of the Black Power movement’s high water marks, gaining national and global support for his case and the Black Panthers. It also became a point of struggle for members of the Black cultural left, manifested in the production of numerous poems, cultural performances, and documentaries around Newton’s case, as well as the dedication of complete issues of The Black Panther newspaper and Black Dialogue to his campaign. 18 At the time of the coalition, Kathleen Cleaver related Newton’s importance to that of Malcolm X and Kwame Ture, suggesting that “BLACK POWER” was “Brought alive by Malcolm, brought awake by Stokely” and it would be “brought in motion by Huey P. Newton.” Her poem “The Black Mass Needs But One Crucifixion,” published in the March 16, 1968 issue of The Black Panther begins by lamenting, “Malcolm X died for us / We will have no more religious executions / no more political assassinations / no more murdering of black men / in the streets of Babylon.” Here, Cleaver advocates that the masses of Black people would not sit idly by and wait for the

state to execute / assassinate / crucify Newton. Rather, referring this time to Malcolm X’s oratory, she argues the people will

Demand that he be free
By any means necessary, demand that he be free
And take his freedom from those that own him
Take his freedom by any means necessary.
If death in the gas chamber stare him in the face
Malcolm told us that he would be killed
And when he died his words came true
Huey told us to defend our lives
To stop the tide of genocide
The gas chamber will not be his fate
By any means necessary
HUEY P. NEWTON MUST BE SET FREE:
The black mass needs but one

  crucifixion.  

Ironically and unfortunately, two weeks after this poem ran in The Black Panther, Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed in Memphis, Tennessee, and two days later “Lil” Bobby Hutton was ambushed by members of the Oakland Police Department, which demonstrated the brutality of reactionary white supremacists and the state to demands for human rights and self determination. Sonia Sanchez’s aforementioned poetic eulogy to Hutton also ran in The Black Panther, proclaiming that “he was / part of a long / term / plan / for blk / people. / he was demark / vessey. / malcolm. / garvey all the / dead / blk / men / of our now / time / and ago / time.” In the case of King’s assassination / “crucifixion,” however, the “Black mass” responded with urban rebellions in over 100 cities throughout the United States. These incidents also intensified the Black Panther Party’s desires of transforming the frustration of the “lumpen” from uprisings into disciplined revolutionary action, or as one poet who interpreted Newton’s admonition of “no more rioting…two’s

20 Sanchez, “Memorial 2,” The Black Panther, p. 16.
and three’s” into verse, “So now Black People— / stop swarming like bees / Deal with that dog / in Two’s and Three’s.”

Because of ideological divergences and governmental “dirty tricks,” however, the SNCC/BPP coalition fractured ending in Ture’s decision to expatriate to Conakry, Guinea in 1969. Two years prior to his exile, he had made a monumental trip to Latin America, Vietnam and the African continent where he established connections with a number of Third World and Pan-African leaders, such as Fidel Castro, Ahmed Sekou Touré, the President of the Republic of Guinea, and the recently overthrown Kwame Nkrumah, whom Touré named honorary co-president of the Republic. It was during this trip that he began developing a Pan-African socialist positionality, which he eventually articulated as the “highest political expression of Black Power,” predicated on the attainment of land. Upon relocating to Conakry, Ture, with his wife Miriam Makeba, the exiled South African singer, served as an advisor to the President and acolyte of Nkrumah (then changing his name to Kwame Ture in tribute to both men). What is more, it would be from Guinea that he publicly announced the reasons for his departure in a letter of resignation as the BPP’s Prime Minister. For instance, he disagreed with Panther tactics, leadership style, and most critically, the Party’s willingness to affiliate with the white New Left in the Free Huey campaign and elsewhere. Despite his earlier celebration of Ture, by the time of the PACF in 1969, Cleaver then described his politics of “closing ranks” in a Black United Front as reactionary. “In short, your habit of looking at the world through black-colored glasses would lead you, on the domestic level, to close ranks with such enemies of black people as James Farmer, Whitney Young, Roy

21 Following urban rebellions in Newark in 1967 and the many that ensued after King’s assassination in 1968, The Black Panther ran short articles entitled, “No More Riots…Two’s and Three’s,” which described the importance of disciplined revolutionary action. See, The Black Panther, 28 September 1968. For the complete poem see, Ashanti, “Two’s and Three’s,” The Black Panther, 10 December 1968.
23 Ture (Carmichael), “Message from Guinea,” Stokely Speaks, p. 188.
Wilkins and Ron Karenga; and on the international level you would end up in the same bag with Papa Doc Duvalier, Joseph Mobutu, and Haile Selassie.”

He also criticized Ture’s decision to remain in Africa, when it was equally important to struggle against U.S. imperialism in North America. Although Ture and Cleaver attempted a brief exchange about their disagreements at the Algiers Festival, the ideological and historical fissures between them were too entrenched.

In spite of the continued factionalism between Ture and Cleaver, Algiers did proffer an opportunity for Cleaver and playwright-poet Ed Bullins to dialogue about their past conflict. In 1966, Bullins, originally from Philadelphia but then living in the Bay Area, along with San Francisco poet Marvin X (then Jackmon), and other cultural workers established Black Arts/West (BAW), modeled on Amiri Baraka’s BARTS in Harlem. His early plays *How Do You Do?*; *Dialect Determinism (or The Rally)*; and *Clara’s Ole Man*, each written and staged in 1965, as well as *The Theme is Blackness* (1966) and *The Electronic Nigger* (1968) established Bullins as a leading experimental playwright in the burgeoning West Coast Black Arts movement. His minimalist play, *The Theme is Blackness*, contains only two lines of dialogue spread over the one-act performance, in which the ("Predominately White") audience is thrust into “blackness” and inundated with dislocating sensory experiences. Theater scholar Mike Sell (2006) notes that for the play’s premier “at San Francisco State College in 1966, Chebo Evan’s Third World Three Black music trio improvised jazz against a sonic background of rattled chains, moans, and groans, while performers crept under the seats, grabbing ankles and such.”

The anonymous speaker begins the piece with a short statement: “The theme of our drama tonight will be Blackness. Within Blackness, One may discover all the self-

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illuminating universes in creation. And now BLACKNESS," after which the theater goes dark for twenty minutes. Throughout the play, all spatial and temporal referents are blurred as the audience sits in the pitched black, cramped, and discomforting theater with free jazz being played at deafening levels, forcing them to negotiate the simultaneous and contradictory states of perception: visibility/invisibility and ubiquitousness/liminality. After twenty minutes of sensory deprivation, the lights return giving the impression that the experience has come to an end, when the speaker utters, “Will blackness please step out and take a curtain call?” and the theater again ascends into Blackness.27

After meeting Cleaver, who upon his release from prison secured a publishing deal for his controversial memoir, Soul On Ice (1968), Bullins, Cleaver, Marvin X, and Ethna Wyatt organized the Black House in San Francisco.28 A number of other BAM cultural workers performed at the politico-cultural space during its short tenure such as Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, Askia Muhammad Touré, Sarah Webster Fabio, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Reginald Lockett, Emory Douglas, Samuel Napier, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and Jimmy Garrett, who was an aspiring playwright and leader of the Black Students Union at San Francisco State College (now University). Moreover, at the request of Professor Nathan Hare and the BSU many of these artist-activists became visiting professors at SF State, helping to lay the foundation for North America’s first Black Studies program at a historically white institution, which the university officially recognized in 1969 following a protracted student strike led by the Third World Liberation Front.29

28 Smethurst, pp. 281-284.
Before joining the BPP, Cleaver had worked as a writer for the New Left magazine *Ramparts*, where he initially encountered Newton, Seale and other Panthers, who provided security for Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X’s widow, during an interview with the magazine in early 1967.\(^{30}\) For a brief moment, he maintained an untenable relationship between the cultural workers at the Black House, most of whom advocated variations of Black nationalism (primarily in the form of Black-controlled institutions), and members of the Bay Area white Left. Ironically, Newton and Seale had also taken part in “cultural” activities at the Black House from poetry readings to theater productions. However, following the May 1967 armed take over of the California State capitol demanding their right to carry loaded weapons (in what Ahmad called a display of leftwing adventurism), the BPP appropriated the Black House as a Party headquarters and publishing house for *The Black Panther* newspaper, with Cleaver serving as lead editor. BAM historian James Smethurst asserts, “Cleaver saw in the BPP an instrument much more amenable to advancing his Marxist-Leninist vision of armed revolution (and his position as revolutionary leader) than the Black House, which was dominated by nationalist artists…”\(^{31}\)

At the same time, Bullins’ biographer, Samuel Hay, argues that the playwright remained somewhat ambivalent about taking sides in a brewing conflict between Marvin X and Baraka on one side and the Black Panther Party on the other.\(^{32}\) This eventually led to his “expulsion” along with Marvin X and other cultural workers from the space, with

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\(^{31}\) Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, p. 283; Bullins claims that much of the discord between the cultural workers and Cleaver developed over the latter’s insistence that white leftists have more involvement in the activities of the Black House.

\(^{32}\) Samuel Hay, *Ed Bullins: A Literary Biography*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997). He argues further that Bullins “had often observed fights of all kinds without taking sides, as, for example, when the nationalist leaders and organizations vied for supremacy in Southern California during 1960-1964. Bullins’ relocation to Northern California in 1964 was probably motivated in part by his indifference to both the US organization of cultural nationalists and the opposing Slauson gang of five thousand, led by the fearsome Slauson Renegades, which later became the nucleus of the Black Panther Party,” pp. 62, 79.
Cleaver, Newton, and Seale now disparaged them as cultural nationalists.\(^{33}\) Though Bullins had briefly served as the Black Panther Party's Minister of Culture, following the Black House incident he quit the Bay Area with the objective of leaving the country altogether. However, Robert Macbeth, founder of the New Lafayette Theatre in Harlem, convinced him to become the theatre's playwright-in-residence, where his plays *In the Wine Time* (1967/8) and the contentious *We Righteous Bombers* (1969), under the pseudonym Kingsley B. Bass, Jr., were initially staged. While in Harlem, Bullins maintained limited contact with the Panthers on the East Coast, even organizing a benefit for Huey Newton in 1968, but he did not directly interact with Cleaver again until the PACF in Algiers.\(^{34}\)

One point that is made clear when examining *The Black Panther* newspaper is that the leadership in Oakland had a very contentious relationship with Black cultural workers. However, I believe it is incorrect to label it “anti-cultural,” because from the first issue of the newspaper into the 1970s, there is ample representation of politics of cultural struggle, from poetry and visual art, to music reviews, with an “entertainment” section appearing in 1971. Then again, the Party did view culture from a subordinate position to that of politics and economics. This ambivalence is even more glaring in the BPP's relationship to Africa and African cultures. While there were a number of published articles and essays about African liberation movements, due to the editors’ growing embrace of Maoism, *The Black Panther* focused much of its international news coverage on general Third World revolutionary struggles, specifically those in Southeast Asia. As Minister of Information, Eldridge Cleaver set the editorial tone of the


\(^{34}\) Regarding his relationship to the Black Panthers, Bullins asserted, “Cleaver and Emory Douglas appointed me the first minister of culture for the Panthers, [a post] which I used to raise money and get media attention. Later, I took a trip to Algeria to meet with Cleaver under the auspices of the First Pan African Cultural Festival, sponsored by the Pan African Congress. I usually took the mediating approach among various activists and revolutionaries. Therefore, I retained most of their friendships for many years,” Quoted in Hay, *Ed Bullins*, pp. 61-62.
newspaper, which became even more ambivalent toward African heritage and culture as
the feud between the Party and cultural nationalist organizations intensified. He would
later admit that the Black Panthers “even stopped wearing dashikis and emphasizing our
Africanness as part of our struggle against cultural nationalists who had turned African
culture into either a fetish or marketable commodity, and at the same time completely
repudiating the gun. We wanted to call people’s attention to the gun. So we became
extremely related to the gun in a dialectical contradiction with the cultural nationalists
who became extremely and totally wrapped up in African culture.”

However, in early issues of the newspaper there are various allusions to “African”
culture and its relationship to Afro-North Americans. For example, after the Free Huey
campaign began in late 1967, the editors often reprinted an iconic image of Newton
sitting on a wicker chair with a spear in one hand and a rifle in the other, surrounded by
African shields and a zebra skin rug. This picture was definitely intended to connect the
Black Panther Party and its Minister of Defense to “African” symbols of power and
strength. As each issue of the newspaper featured artwork and layout design by graphic
artist Emory Douglas, the BPP Minister of Culture, he endeavored to represent people of
African descent in revolutionary situations. In one popular piece that he produced
entitled “Revolutionary Mother and Child,” Douglas depicts an Afro-descendant woman
wearing African clothing and a head wrap, while carrying a child with a rifle on her back.
Similarly, visual artist Matilaba (Tarika Lewis), who was the first woman to join the Party,
regularly contributed artwork to the paper; one recurring drawing being a visual

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36 The ubiquitous image of Newton in the wicker chair was first taken in 1967, and it appears in a number of issues of *The Black Panther*. The occasions I am referring to are from 20 July 1967, p. 3 and 4 May 1968, p. 7.
What all of these iconographic representations communicate is the Black Panther Party’s early attempt at synthesizing revolutionary nationalism symbolized by the omnipresent depiction of rifles with renderings of African cultural heritage. Though, by 1969, as the Party became more embroiled in conflict with cultural nationalist formations, such as Us, most of these overt images were no longer published. Equally telling of their ideological shift is the fact that the editors of *The Black Panther* changed the recurring poetry section from “Black Revolutionary Poetry” to simply “Revolutionary Poetry” in July 1969.

This does not mean that it no longer featured essays, articles, and visual depictions of struggles in Africa. On the contrary, in 1969 there became a marked increase in the paper’s coverage of African liberation movements as a component of a broader Third World revolution. At the same time, most of these pieces eschewed any analysis of African aesthetics or art/culture for in-depth discussion of revolutionary struggles that could be inspirational to Afro-North American liberation activists. In February 1969, *The Black Panther* featured a four-page essay and pictorial narrative entitled “The True Culture of Africa and Africans,” which documented the numerous national liberation movements occurring on the African continent. By focusing on the concurrent armed struggles in Congo-Kinshasa, Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Zimbabwe against colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism, the editors of the newspaper sought to displace the image of African “culture” as solely consisting of “commodities,” such as dashikis, fetish masks, and other artifacts. Instead, the essay

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38 The editors of *The Black Panther* began featuring the “Revolutionary Black Poetry” section in September 1968. Though it did not appear in every issue until June 1969, before the name change to “Revolutionary Poetry,” the section was relatively regular in the latter part of 1968.
explains how the liberation armies of each territory had begun producing their own form of revolutionary culture that inspired militants and raised the consciousness of those yet to engage in struggle. It begins with the dispiriting image of Patrice Lumumba awaiting his execution, which is juxtaposed by a picture of the MPLA in Angola preparing for battle against the Portuguese army. In printing these images on the same page, along with a series of other images of Africans engaged in armed struggle, they serve as visual metaphors for Afro-North American revolutionaries of the serious “life and death” consequences that confront militants, as well as the possibilities of disciplined guerrilla warfare against imperialist forces. Though the essay never directly espouses Pan-Africanism, this piece is unquestionably a pragmatic illustration of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle and solidarity, which considered the realities and complexities of contemporary Africa and the inspiration its liberation movements gave to Afro-descendants in North America. Furthermore, the Black Panther Party would develop an even more concrete association to Africa as a result of Eldridge Cleaver seeking refuge in Algeria just before the Pan-African Cultural Festival.39

Cleaver’s evasion of parole and exile to Algeria (by way of Cuba)—following the Oakland Police “assassination” of Bobby Hutton—came at a world historic moment. Many Black revolutionary nationalists in the U.S. had first been introduced to Algeria’s National Liberation Front (FLN) against French colonialism through the writings of Frantz Fanon. They were specifically drawn to his political essays in The Wretched of the Earth (1961), which elevated the struggles of anti-colonial and national liberation movements of Third World countries into the forefront of post-World War II revolutionary vanguard. In addition to the reviews and analyses of Fanon’s work published in Soulbook, Black Dialogue, and Negro Digest, these little magazines also featured translations of his

essays. For instance, Fanon’s assertion that “it is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is ultimately the source of all culture,” as well as his reformulation of Marxist ideology, locating revolutionary potential among the colonized lumpenproletariat (and peasantry) evidenced by the struggle in Algeria, had specific influences on theorists of revolutionary nationalism in North America.

Arriving to Algiers as the government was in the midst of organizing the First Pan-African Cultural Festival, Eldridge, his wife Kathleen Cleaver and other Panthers who established the BPP international section there, helped strengthen linkages between Afro-North American and African revolutionaries. It also briefly situated the Party as a Black Power organization with authentic international presence. At the same time, COINTELPRO subversion intensified a growing rift in the Party between Newton and Cleaver, which eventually exploded in 1971, with the expulsions of the international section and New York chapter. Nonetheless, during the Festival, several Panthers joined the Cleavers at the Afro-American Center (AAC), such as Chief of Staff David

41 “Reciprocal Bases of National Culture and the Fight for Freedom,” Statements made at a speech to Congress of Black African Writers, 1959, Reprinted in The Wretched of the Earth, p. 248. Interestingly enough, in the same text, Fanon published “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness,” where he was careful to differentiate between “national consciousness” and “nationalism,” the latter he viewed as potentially leading to chauvinism and racism, “if it is not made explicit, if it is not enriched and deepened by a very rapid transformation into a consciousness of social and political needs, in other words into humanism, it leads up a blind alley,” p. 204.
42 “Fanon’s analysis seemed to explain and to justify the spontaneous violence ravaging Black ghettos across the country, and linked the incipient insurrections to the rise of a revolutionary movement. The opening sentence of The Wretched of the Earth said, ‘National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to a people... whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon.’” Kathleen Cleaver, “Back to Africa,” in The Black Panther Party Reconsidered, (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998): 214.
43 BPP Field Marshall Donald Cox, and NY Panthers Sekou Odinga, Larry Mack, and Michael “Cetewayo” Tabor all worked with Cleaver in establishing the BPP international section in Algiers. In 1971, Newton would expel everyone associated with Cleaver.
44 According to the Church Committee report, in September 1969, J. Edgar Hoover encouraged his field offices to develop projects aimed at splitting the BPP on a national and international basis. This included the falsification of Party directives denouncing Cleaver purportedly sent from the Oakland office. See, Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Newark, New York, and San Francisco Field Offices, 9/18/69; and Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Legat, Paris and San Francisco Field Office, 4/10/70, in FBI-BPP.
Hilliard, Emory Douglas, and Minister of Education Raymond “Masai” Williams. As
director of the AAC, Julia Wright (then Wright-Hervé), the daughter of the late Richard
Wright, gave the BPP full reign of the Center, which for a short time served as the
Party’s headquarters on the African continent.45

Kathleen Cleaver, who was eight months pregnant at the time of her arrival to
Algiers, had served as the BPP’s Communications Secretary and was the first female on
the Party’s Central Committee. However, her presence in the upper echelons of the
Black Panther Party did not mean that the organization maintained progressive gender
politics. Far to the contrary, they began as a formation that held many of the same
patriarchal and sexist ideals that permeated other Black nationalist organizations. In
addition to Eldridge Cleaver’s misogynistic assertion of rape as an “insurrectionary act,”
and his crude exhortation of “pussy power” in 1968, there were many other instances of
male chauvinism in the Party’s early history (1966-1968), which Tracye Matthews
document at length. Then again, all of these essays illustrate the progressive challenges
to male privilege and heterosexism that occurred within the ranks of the Party. Though it
would be impolitic to suggest that the BPP somehow transcended the systems of
patriarchy that not only affected the United States, but also most societies around the
globe, its vocal support of the women’s and gay liberation movements, as well as
internal attempts at eradicating sexist and homophobic rhetoric and policies, made the
Panthers unique among formations of the Black Power era.46

46 Tracye Matthews, “‘No One Ever Asks What a Man’s Place in the Revolution Is’: Gender and the Politics
Person to Handle the Job’: Black Panther Party Women, 1966-1982,” pp. 305-336; and Charles Jones and
Judson Jeffries, “Don’t Believe the Hype,” Debunking the Panther Mythology,” pp. 32-34, all essays in The
However, throughout the formation’s “early years,” the “role” of Black women in *The Black Panther* newspaper and elsewhere was often described in tropes of them being “supportive,” “inspirational,” and altogether “secondary” to the Black revolutionary male. Some brothers believed that Black liberation rested on the struggle over Black “manhood,” and consequently, “the black woman should take a supportive role in bringing about the awakening of the black consciousness in her man.”47 Another unsigned statement in the Party newspaper proclaimed, “Black women are for the most part selfish and subjective.” Since the piece was anonymous, it was most likely written by Cleaver and the other editors of the paper. Moreover, its authorial anonymity allows the writer to make some very sexist claims, reiterating a number of the spurious points published in the Moynihan Report of 1965, such as the illogical notion that Afro-North Americans lived in a “matriarchal society,” which produced “a feeling of superiority in Black women.” The article went on to suggest that the only way Black women could relate to “the revolution” was through superfluous things it associated with “Culture Nationalism,” like, naturals, dashikis, and Kiswahili lessons. The writer concludes with the bizarre supposition that when Black men finally begin to develop revolutionary consciousness and pick up the gun to off “some white pigs,” Black women became unstable and reactionary. This apparently “explains the high rate of divorce among Panthers and other revolutionaries.”48

It is also clear that female members of the Party articulated some of the narrow ideological pronouncements about gender roles. For example, Gloria Bartholomew’s essay “A Black Woman’s Thought,” published in the September 28, 1968 issue of *The Black Panther*, sounds eerily similar to the positions put forward by the Us Organization on female submissivity and acquiescence to Black men. She suggests “black women

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must drop the white ways of trying to be equal to black men. The black woman’s place is to stand behind the Black man, so in the event he should start to fall she is there to hold him up with her strength.” In the same issue of the newspaper, Linda Greene contributed “The Black Revolutionary Woman,” which gives a modicum of agency to Black women; however, she ultimately limits their “role” in the struggle for Black liberation. Though she does not go as far as Bartholomew to assert that sisters needed to be submissive, Greene nonetheless posits that Black women should maintain a prescribed and complementarian position to Black males. In her formulation, Black men are the “real” revolutionaries, who may ultimately die in the liberation struggle, and therefore, a Black woman “must be strong and know when this happens, she must put herself to the task and honor of inspiring, comforting, and loving another Black man.”

However, as was the case with Malcolm X, who as bell hook’s argues began to reassess his patriarchal and masculinist tendencies, the Black Panther Party was one of the first Black Power organizations to openly support women’s liberation. This was as a result of internal agitation by female Panthers, ideological struggle, and particularly the campaign to free the poet-revolutionary Ericka Huggins, whose husband John Huggins had been killed by members of Us in Los Angeles four months prior to her arrest. Next to the Free Huey campaign and the New York 21 trial, Ericka Huggins’ imprisonment, with Bobby Seale and the New Haven 9 (later the New Haven 14), garnered international support and mobilized women and men in the Party to fight for her freedom, while working to eliminate sexism and male supremacy. The week following the May 22, 1969 arrest of the New Haven Panthers, the editors of The Black Panther published a poem by Ericka Huggins, which called revolutionary men and women to arms:

This is the dawning of the age of aquarius
the rise of the Black man

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the liberation of the Black woman
the Year of the PANTHER
This is the beginning of the end of the beginning
of Revolutionary Struggle

Here, the speaker envisions Black women’s liberation as concomitant with any empowerment of Black men. Thus, instead of proclaiming a supportive or secondary “role” for women in the Black liberation struggle, Huggins’ poem summons both female and male comrades to “strike out against / Racism, Capitalism, Imperialism, oppression / and brutality.” As with the revolutionary poetry of inspiration discussed at the Pan-African Cultural Festival by FRELIMO, MPLA, and PAIGC militants, Huggins’ piece seeks to inspire and encourage Black radicals to confront the interlocking structures of domination.51

Though still underground as a result of his own legal troubles, Eldridge Cleaver issued a communiqué acknowledging Huggins’ importance to the BPP:

The incarceration and suffering of sister Erica (sic) should be a stinging rebuke to all manifestations of male chauvinism within our ranks. That we must purge our ranks and our hearts, and our minds, and our understanding of any chauvinism, chauvinistic behavior of disrespectful behavior toward women…

Because the liberation of women is one of the most important issues facing the world today. Great efforts have been made in various parts of the world to do something about this, but I know from my own experience that the smouldering (sic) and the burning of the flame demand for liberation of women in Babylon is the issue that is going to explode, and if we’re not careful it’s going to destroy our ranks, destroy our organization, because women want to be liberated just as all oppressed people want to be liberated.52

One must appreciate that this was the first message Cleaver transmitted while traveling clandestinely between Cuba and Algeria evading capture for parole violation. His ideological shift on gender from the misogynistic and masculinist rhetoric that was common of him in 1967 and 1968, to this declaration that women’s liberation was central

to the overall liberation struggle, marks the first serious attempt by male Panthers to challenge entrenched forms of patriarchy and gender oppression in the Party. Moreover, Cleaver’s communiqué went on to argue that in the eyes of the state “a revolutionary woman” is “just as much a threat as a revolutionary man,” and therefore, the Panthers and their allies should stop at nothing to liberate Huggins from the repressive prison system.53

Huggins’ incarceration inspired serious internal politico-cultural struggle about the relationship of the Black Panther Party to the women’s liberation movement. Since six of the fourteen defendants in the murder case of an alleged informant were females, it demonstrated the fact that revolutionary women received equally harsh treatment from the U.S. government, and thus, they should not be viewed as secondary in the liberation struggle. On September 16, 1969, the editors of The Black Panther published “Sisters,” a full-page interview of six Panther women and their experiences inside the Party accompanied by visual illustrations of revolutionary women from around the Third World. By and large, they identified Ericka Huggins as an exemplar of revolutionary working-class consciousness among Black women and an inspiration to their struggle for equality within the liberation movement. They specifically discussed the recent reorganization of the Party, eliminating the Panther/Pantherette designations and the position of National Headquarter Captain for Women, which had reified a gendered division of labor. This reorganization also went directly after the overt forms of male chauvinism that the sisters described as a product of the bourgeois patriarchal norms of the larger society. One sister argued, “I think it’s important that within the context of the struggle that black men understand that their manhood is not dependent on keeping their black women

53 Matthews suggests that although Cleaver did not qualify what caused his change in “perspective, his words reflect an intellectual or rational understanding of Huggins’ predicament based on her condition and, possibly, a more intuitive empathy based on his own experiences of incarceration,” from “No One Ever Asks What a Man’s Place in the Revolution Is,” p. 282.
subordinate to them because this is what bourgeoisie ideology has been trying to put into the black man and that’s part of the special oppression of black women.” In addition, the six Panthers discussed the idea of separate women’s liberation organizations, but felt that in order to create a truly revolutionary movement then the multiple subject positions—race, class, and gender—had to be simultaneously confronted. “It’s not a separate struggle and women’s liberation does not take priority, but in fact is part and parcel of the overall struggle” for socialist revolution.54

The comments of the six female comrades were accompanied by pictorial representations of Third World and African women revolutionaries and proclamations by national liberation movements about the centrality of women to these struggles. Revolutionary iconography of women wielding automatic weapons from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Chinese Communist Party, Viet Cong, and African National Congress (ANC) encircle an iconic image of Kathleen Cleaver with a large Afro hairstyle, dark sunglasses, a black leather jacket and dress with long black boots pointing a shotgun at the viewer and standing over the caption “Babylon,” which is what Eldridge Cleaver and other Panthers labeled the United States. These images in addition to the important issues raised by the six Black Panther women, Ericka Huggins’ arrest, and vocal opposition to male chauvinism within the Party definitely placed the Party at the forefront of Afro-North American liberation organizations in terms of gender relations. What is more, Huey P. Newton’s August 15, 1970 speech on “The Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements,” at least rhetorically, became an important example and “mechanism” for revolutionary activists and cultural workers in which to

confront the manifold sites of oppression besieging people of African descent in the Americas.  

“Africa is Like Me...And Not Yet Free”: Black Cultural Workers in Algiers

Besides members of the Black Panther Party, numerous progressive cultural workers and activists from the Americas attended the Algiers Festival. Some of the attendees were Ama Ata Aidoo (writer from Ghana then living in the U.S.), Maya Angelou (poet), Ed Bullins (playwright), Dave Burrell (pianist), Vinie Burrows (actor), Charlie Cobb (poet and SNCC activist), Courtland Cox (SNCC activist), Rene Depestre (writer from Haiti), Hoyt Fuller (writer/publisher), Odilio Urfe Gonzalez (pianist and ethnomusicologist from Cuba), Rosa Guy (novelist), Dr. Nathan Hare (scholar), Ted Joans (poet), Scott Kennedy (writer), Haki Madhubuti (poet and publisher of Third World Press), Grachan Moncur III (trombonist), Felix Morisseau-Leroy (writer from Haiti), Sunny Murray (drummer), Loretta Pauker (actor), Raymond Saunders (painter), Archie Shepp (saxophonist), Alan Silva (bassist) Nina Simone (vocalist), and Clifford Thornton (cornet and trombone). Though Amiri Baraka planned to attend, according to Hoyt Fuller, who was one of the few Afro-North American creative intellectuals to attend both the Festivals in Dakar and Algiers, the U.S. State Department denied him a passport for international travel. Notwithstanding, in distinction to the Festival in Dakar three years previous, where Black celebrities represented Afro-North America, the artists and intellectuals who traveled to the PACF originated from the milieu of the Black Arts/Power and free jazz movements.  

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Emblematic of the radical shift in political consciousness and ideological alignment of the cultural workers who performed in Algiers are trombonist Clifford Thornton and poet Ted Joans. To date, however, each of these artists has received marginal attention in studies of the Black Arts movement and New Black music scholarship; moreover, there is no examination of Thornton’s or Joans’ involvement at the Pan-African Cultural Festival and how the event influenced their politico-artistic ideologies.\(^{57}\) Nevertheless, each of their performances at the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival with Archie Shepp’s quintet and Algerian and Tuareg musicians—released that year as the *Live from the Panafriican Festival* LP (also featuring poet Haki Madhubuti)—embody the discursive musicality of “the new thing” (free jazz) and Black Arts poetry, which often mined jazz, blues and R&B musical contents and forms for its creative impulses. In addition, the session demonstrates free and collective improvisation (eschewing traditional jazz forms that had increasingly become controlled by Euro-American culture industries), as a manifestation of Pan-African cultural expression, represented in the polyrhythmic cross-fertilization of Afro-North American and African musical textures. As jazz critic Pat Griffith writes in the LP liner notes, “It is not surprising that the seriousness of the NEW music coincided with an awakening / awareness of East-West Pan Africanism.”\(^{58}\)

Clifford Thornton was one of a number of “New Black Music” artists who expressed the “revolutionary dynamism” of Afro-North American music that RAM cadre Muhammad Ahmad and Askia Muhammad Touré theorized and Amiri Baraka would

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\(^{57}\) As of 2008, there are no books or full-length scholarly articles on Clifford Thornton and the one article on Joans by Robert Elliot Fox, “Ted Joans and the (B)reach of African American Literature,” *MELUS*, 29.3/4, (Autumn/Winter 2004): 41-58, does not mention his involvement in the Black Arts movement nor Pan-African circles.

engage in his 1966 essay “The Changing Same.” Thornton’s political outspokenness, particularly with his compositions, was unique among the large group of Black avant-garde artists who incorporated revolutionary messages into their music throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Recording albums with several of the movement’s preeminent musicians: Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, Archie Shepp, Sunny Murray, and Jerry Gonzalez, his politico-aesthetic tendencies invoked Black nationalist and Pan-Africanist impulses found on a number of other important sessions, such as John Coltrane’s Dakar (1957), Africa/Brass sessions (1961), and “Alabama” from the Live at Birdland sessions (1963); Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln’s Freedom Now Suite (1960); Randy Weston’s Uhuru Afrika (1960) and High Life: Music from the New African Nations (1963); Abdul Ahmed-Malik’s Sounds of Africa (1962); and Archie Shepp’s “Malcolm, Malcolm—Semper Malcolm,” from Fire Music (1965), and Magic of JuJu (1966), to name a few. In contrast to some free jazz musicians who engaged esoteric or ethereal notions of Blackness and Africa, much of Thornton’s work expressed revolutionary nationalist sympathies that referenced concrete struggles; for instance, his compositions in solidarity with the Black Panther Party: “Free Huey” (1967), “Huey is Free” (1970), and a collectively improvised rendition of the Party’s ubiquitous slogan “Tout le pouvoir au peuple” (“All Power to the People,” 1970), as well as his musical homage to the Palestinian Liberation Organization, “El Fath” (1970). Though he recorded a number of sides in Paris in 1969 and 1970, as a result of his vocal political support for the BPP, French authorities denied Thornton reentry into the country in the early 1970s.

His first album as a leader of the New Art Ensemble was entitled Freedom & Unity (1967), recorded the day after John Coltrane’s funeral, which he released on his own label imprint Third World Records. The LP includes the aforementioned composition

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59 Amiri Baraka [LeRoi Jones], “The Changing Same: (R&B and New Black Music),” in The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader, p. 186-209
“Free Huey,” along with “Uhuru,” and a track dedicated to Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, and Coltrane, entitled “O.C.T.” It featured Thornton on valve trombone, the first recording of Joe McPhee on trumpet, who would later release the LP Nation Time (1970), Sonny King on saxophone, Karl Berger on vibes, Harold Avent on percussion, and Don Moore, Tyrone Crabb and (Coltrane’s former bassist) Jimmy Garrison sharing duty on bass. In addition, Coleman and Archie Shepp wrote the liner notes for the session, speaking to Thornton’s musical abilities and importance in the realm of New Black Music. Throughout 1967 and 68, he toured with the New Art Ensemble playing at clubs, festivals, and community centers. For example, in February 1968, Thornton performed at the Countee Cullen Public Library in Harlem in tribute of Langston Hughes’ 66 birthday, who had passed away the previous year, setting excerpts of Hughes’ 800 line, 12 part poem “Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz,” to music from Freedom & Unity.

Thornton’s next album Ketchaoua (1969) developed specifically as a result of his experiences at the Algiers Festival with Archie Shepp’s quintet. Moreover, it definitely illustrates his solidifying Pan-African consciousness and support of revolutionary nationalist politics. During his performance with Shepp at the PACF, three French radicals named Jacques Bisceglia, Jean-Luc Young, and Jean Georgakarakos, who founded the BYG/Actuel label, recorded the session, which they released as the Live from the Panafircan Festival date. Bisceglia, Young, and Georgakarakos (where the BYG name comes from), initiated the free jazz label following the French student

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uprisings of May 1968. Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, BYG/Actuel went on to produce some of the free jazz movement’s most accomplished musicians and groups, such as Sun Ra, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Grachan Moncur III, Don Cherry, Anthony Braxton, Andrew Cyrille, Sonny Sharrock, and Frank Wright, among others. Subsequent to the PACF recording, however, the label invited Shepp’s quintet to France to record additional albums. In addition to recording his own album Ketchaoua, Thornton also played cornet on Shepp’s Yasmina, a Black Woman; Dave Burrell’s Echo; and Sunny Murray’s Homage to Africa, each session produced between August 12th and 18th in 1969. Ketchaoua, the title of which originates from the mosque in Algiers that he and Shepp performed at during the PACF, contains four tracks that comment directly on the event: “Ketchaoua,” “Pan African Festival,” “Brotherhood,” and “Speak With Your Echo (And Call This Dialogue).” The musician line-up includes Thornton on the cornet and congas (track 1 & 2), Shepp on soprano sax (track 1 & 2), Arthur Jones on alto sax (track 1, 2 & 3), Grachan Moncur III on trombone (track 1 & 2), Sunny Murray on drums (track 1 & 2), Dave Burrell on piano (track 1 & 2), Earl Freeman on percussions (track 1) and bass (tracks 3 & 4), and Beb Guerin on bass. Although there are no vocals on these tracks, their titles nevertheless denote the realities of Pan-African solidarity that Thornton and other Black cultural workers experienced at the Festival.

Jazz poet and surrealist Ted Joans is also featured prominently on Shepp’s Live at the Panafriican Festival. Prior to this recording, though, he along with Amiri Baraka had probably been two of the best-known Afro-North American poets once active in Beat circles of the 1950s. However, by the mid-1960s they had each moved great political, rhetorical, and spatial distances from their Beat pasts: Baraka to Harlem, where he developed BARTS, and then to NewArk to establish The Spirit House, and Joans

64 Thornton, Ketchaoua, BYG/Actuel, Recorded on August 18, 1969 in Paris, France.
expatriating to West Africa. Joans politico-artistic distancing is best expressed in his book of poems *Black Pow Wow* (1969), published nearly a decade after his last volume of poetry associated with the Beats, *The Hipster* (1961). For example, his piece “The Non-John Browns,” clearly articulates his commitment to Bandung anti-colonial struggles, while condemning Caucasians unwilling to confront their white-skin privilege:

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LOVE OF FREEDOM IS WHY THE THIRD WORLD FIGHTS
NO PEACE NO REST NO-compromise FOR THE
THIRD WORLD’S ENEMY WHOM IS: the non-john brown
WHITES WHO WILL NOT TAKE UP GUNS AND FIGHT
AGAINST THEIR KITH & KIN
NO PEACE NO REST NO COMPROMISES
FROM MORNINGS TIL NOONS THRU NIGHTS OF BLACK
SURPRISES!
LOVE OF FREEDOM IS WHY THE THIRD WORLD UNITES
NO PEACE NO REST NO COMPROMISE FOR THE
THIRD WORLD’S ENEMY: THE NON-JOHN BROWN WHITES
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This poem directly references the radical white anti-slavery “hero” John Brown, who, with the support of Black abolitionists, sought to overthrow the entire regime of slavery in North America. In doing so, Joans’ speaker is vociferously condemning so-called white radicals, most likely those associated with the often apolitical Beats, “who will not take up guns / and fight / against their kith & kin.” This poem specifically endorses Fanon’s justification of using revolutionary violence in anti-racist/anti-colonial Bandung liberation movements.65

Joans reiterates his commitment to the Third World in “For the Viet Congo,” particularly connecting the revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia and Central Africa. Describing a litany of horrific actions committed by Europeans and Euro-Americans against people of color around the globe, the speaker exclaims, “AND YET / THE THIRD WORLD / FEARS THEM NOT / THE THIRD WORLD EVERY NON-WHITE
MAN / WOMAN / BOY & GIRL / THE MAJORITY OF HUMAN BEINGS ON THIS OUR

EARTH / WE STAND / READY TO DO / WHAT HAS TO BE DONE / WE SHALL NOT
STOP OUR REVOLUTION / UNTIL WE HAVE WON…”[66] Though many of Joans’ pieces
expressed solidarity with the broader Third World, thirteen of his poems in *Black Pow
Wow* contain subject matter directly exploring the contradictions of the African continent
and its political, cultural, social, and economic diversity, illustrating his growing support
for Pan-Africanism. His poem “Like Me,” explores the dialectics of Africa, “They ask:
what is Africa like? I tell them: Africa is like me! Black / Big / complex / creative / magic /
undeveloped wealth / and not yet free.”[67]

As with a number of other cultural workers during the 1960s, however, it had
been the assassination of Patrice Lumumba that served as a radicalizing event for
Joans’ work, captured in his poems “Lumumba Lives Lumumba Lives,” and “Black
February Blood Letting.” Years before members of the Black Liberation Army coined the
term Black August to commemorate the triumphant and atrocious events that occurred
throughout Afro-North American history during the month of August, Joans’ piece “Black
February Blood Letting,” signifies the month of February as a time “TO HONOR …
BLACK FEBRUARY DEAD.” His speaker begins with the statement, “LUMUMBA WAS
MURDERED AND MADE A MARTYR / IN THE MONTH / OF FEBRUARY / BUT no
dish broke in sink of the UN-UNITED / NATIONS…” From here he connects the murder
of Lumumba, under the watchful eye of the UN, to the assassination of Malcolm X, who
“WAS MURDERED AND MADE A HERO IN / FEBRUARY AND STILL / YET NO
ELECTRIC COUCH HAS GAVE BIRTH TO HIGH / VOLTAGE HUM…” Joans’ speaker
then comments on the overthrow and assassination of Nigerian Prime Minister Abubaka
Tafawa Balewa in January 1966, which was followed by the February 1966 military coup
against Kwame Nkrumah “IN HIS ABSENCE / IN THE / GHANA FEBRUARY…”

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Though Western governments supported each of these assassinations and coups and the speaker criticizes the lack of a response by “CHINESE RED RUSSIAN RED OR ANY OTHER / KINDA RED,” the poem actually illustrates the impediments to Pan-African unity, since it was other Africans (and Afro-North Americans in the case of Malcolm X), who committed the physical “blood letting.”68 It would be at the Pan-African Cultural Festival that Joans, Clifford Thornton, members of the Black Panther Party and the other Black cultural workers and activists who attended from the Americas had to negotiate these complexities in their attempts to build solidarity across boundaries of nation, race, class, language, and gender.

The Reception of the Pan-African Cultural Festival by Afro-North American Attendees

It is from Kathleen Cleaver that we are able to understand the dialectical processes behind the Black Panther’s experience in Algiers. Her essay “Back to Africa,” details the complexities of the Black revolutionary nationalist formation becoming internationalist both as a result of its ideological embrace of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, as well as political necessity with so many members of the Black Panther Party being arrested, killed, and forced into exile by the intensifying repression of the North American state. These pressures, on top of the somewhat untenable notion that the lumpenproletariat would be the vanguard of a revolutionary movement, led to deep fractures within the Party that Eldridge Cleaver’s flight to Algiers only exacerbated. Nonetheless, Kathleen’s essay highlights the Panther’s brief realization of international solidarity: “The anti-imperialist stance the Black Panther Party took provided a direct connection to the Algerian hosts. And for Algerians, anti-imperialism was far more than rhetoric: more than a million of them had died fighting the French colonial rulers during

their war for liberation.” Her essay distinctively recalls the close proximity of the Afro-American Center to Al Fatah’s headquarters in Algiers, resulting in the two organizations in exile developing an affable relationship. This is also borne out by the several articles published in *The Black Panther* in camaraderie with the Palestinian liberation struggle following the PACF. Cleaver goes on to suggest that because of the location of the BPP headquarters and the revolutionary artwork that adorned the walls of the building, throngs of Algerians were attracted to the radical activism of the Panthers:

Emory Douglas, the artist whose bold drawings in *The Black Panther* illustrated the Party’s revolutionary ideology, had prepared a special exhibition of his art for the Festival. From the moment he taped the first drawing on the Center’s bare walls, crowds of Algerians clustered on the sidewalk outside and stared through the windows. Soon large framed posters of Black Panther martyrs and brightly colored drawings showing Afro-Americans holding guns or fighting the police decorated all the walls and windows. The militant spirit the artwork conveyed transcended the language barrier and evoked enthusiastic reactions among the Algerian onlookers.

Emory Douglas honed his graphic artistic skills working with Amiri Baraka’s Black Communications Project while a student at the City College of San Francisco. However, he joined the Black Panther Party in early 1967, after meeting Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and other Panthers at the Malcolm X Grassroots Memorial Conference in the Bay Area. Serving as Minister of Culture, Douglas contributed his layout design and graphic art to *The Black Panther* newspaper as well as in conceptualizing much of the BPP’s aesthetic ideologies. His first statement on the relationship of art to Black revolutionary nationalism was published as “Revolutionary Art/Black Liberation” on May 18, 1968 and

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71 Kathleen Cleaver, “Back to Africa,” p. 213.
73 Though the Panthers did not spend much time debating the particularities of a Black Aesthetic, their newspaper nevertheless featured important visual representations of Afro-North American and other Third World peoples engaged in militant struggle against forces that oppressed their communities.
he later revised it as “Position Paper #1 on Revolutionary Art,” in the October 20, 1968 issue of *The Black Panther*. Following his experiences in Algiers, he reworked the previous statements as “On Revolutionary Culture,” featured in the August 13, 1969 issue of the Party newspaper. It echoes many of the points raised by the ANC, CONCP, and SWAPO at the Algiers Festival Symposium. For example, he argues that it was during the revolutionary struggle that “a new way of life based on the politics of the people’s struggle” is born. “Just as the liberation struggle brings about new politics, it also brings about a new culture, a revolutionary culture.” Douglas continues, “The revolutionary artist begins to arm his talent with steel, as well as learning the art of self-defense, becoming one with the people by going into their midst, not standing aloof, and going into the very thick of practical struggle.” Building upon Ho Chi Minh’s poetic admonition that “we must arm the poetry of our days / with steel,” Fanon’s notion of the responsibility of creative intellectuals to the masses, and the Pan-African Cultural Manifesto itself, Douglas and the BPP identified the role of “revolutionary artists” as dialectical. First, they must situate themselves within the culture of the masses; then, they produce socially relevant visual art and revolutionary literature based on the popular culture to raise the political consciousness of the masses.75

Many of the substantive points made in “On Revolutionary Culture,” Douglas had expressed at the Black Panther Forum at the PACF on July 24, 1969, with Eldridge Cleaver, Ed Bullins, Nathan Hare, and Julia Wright. However, his comments in Algiers were much more critical of cultural nationalists, accusing them of advancing a “bourgeoisie culture” similar to the “decadent” U.S. imperialists, only in African garb. In contrast, Douglas asserted, “we are revolutionary nationalists, revolutionary nationalists with a revolutionary culture, which transcends our community, because then all the

74 This poem was translated in the *Black Panther’s* “Black Revolutionary Poetry” section in both September 28, 1968 and October 12, 1968 issues.
people, all working people, the proletariat of the world, begin to unite around certain problems, the problems which are all the cause of the U.S. imperialists” (*Black Theater* 23). His emphasis on building solidarity against U.S. imperialism by uniting working-class people of African descent with workers around the globe primarily differentiates the politico-culture and ideologies of the Black Panther Party in 1969 from cultural nationalists, such as Maulana Karenga and the Us Organization. Though some contemporary scholars have attempted to reduce the discord between the BPP and Us to little more than egotistical battles over territory, the Panthers’ concentration on class alliances and their relationship to African liberation movements was diametrically opposed to the tendencies of many cultural nationalists associated with Karenga to essentialize and romanticize African identity and history.\(^76\) What is more, despite the BPP’s criticisms of cultural nationalists, Douglas’s artwork and discussions of revolutionary culture, as well as the presentation of revolutionary poetry in the pages of *The Black Panther*, disprove the assumption that the Party was somehow disinterested in *cultural* issues. Rather, it was more closely aligned with the sentiments of the Third World Left represented at the PACF, which envisioned “culture as a weapon of national liberation.”

The Panther Forum at the AAC in Algiers was important for a number of additional reasons. First of all, it was one of the few occasions during the Pan-African Cultural Festival that creative intellectuals and activists discussed the Afro-North American struggle in any detail. Although playwright/Professor Scott Kennedy from Brooklyn College presented a paper at the Festival Symposium on Ghanaian theatre, and a number of Afro-North American artists, such as Archie Shepp, Nina Simone, Marion Anderson, Ted Joans, and Haki Madhubuti performed, there was no official Afro-

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North American delegation to the PACF Symposium, nor did any of the presentations focus on the specificities of their situation in the “belly of the beast.” However, at the Panther Forum, the Algerian masses got first-hand information on the realities of the Black liberation movement in North America. In addition, the Forum created a space where Eldridge Cleaver and Ed Bullins, who briefly worked as the Party’s Minister of Culture, were able to reestablish contact that had been severed following the Black House incident in 1967. To Cleaver, the significance of the PACF lie in the fact that it was one of the first occasions that “Black people from Babylon” were able to engage directly with African revolutionaries outside the “government-approved” channels of U.S. imperialism. However, he warned those in attendance about the attempts by the U.S. Information Agency and other entities “to divorce the question of culture from politics, to approach the whole thing metaphysically.” At the same time, there have always been “opportunists, Afro-Americans and Black Africans, who are obviously dogmatists and imperialists…and would only capitalize off this…what they feel is the ignorance of the masses” (BT 20).

The Algiers Festival, in Cleaver’s estimation, was the perfect example of approaching Black and African cultural production from political and working-class positions that placed emphasis on “the struggle for lifting imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, [and] fascism” (BT 20). During his comments, it was also clear that his sojourn in Algeria had begun to alter his understanding of Africa, and its relationship to the struggle for Afro-North American liberation. After being challenged by an Algerian student about the 10 Point Program of the Black Panther Party and its singular focus on Black Americans, Cleaver suggested “the only charge that I think we could be guilty of that has been raised here…is…we have taken too long to come back over here to Africa
to explain what we’re doing in Babylon” (BT 24). He went on to explain that due to the specificities of U.S. capitalism, which enforced draconian policies of racial oppression to maintain exploitation and unequal distribution of resources, the BPP had to confront the realities of race and class in its political theory and praxis (BT 25). However, this did not preclude them from working with other revolutionary organizations, as was the case of their associations with the Peace and Freedom Party, the Brown Berets, and Red Guard in the Bay Area and the “Rainbow Coalition” in Chicago, Illinois. Julia Wright added that after Malcolm X’s trips to Africa, he moved beyond a “‘very narrow terminology of Black Nationalism.’ And that is why we today from The Black Panther Party, who wish to be the spiritual heirs to Malcolm X no longer use the narrow term, Black Nationalism.” What the Party now defined itself as was a revolutionary internationalist formation (BT 26).

As editor of Black Theater magazine, Ed Bullins later published a transcript of the Forum under the title “Talking of Black Art, Theatre, Revolution and Nationhood,” in its issue #5 from 1971, “Waiting For the ‘70’s.” Black Theatre originated as a special issue of New York University’s The Drama Review in Summer 1968, which published foundational plays, drama criticism, and essays about the centrality of theatre to the Black Arts movement. By its second number, the little magazine began to describe itself as “A Periodical of the Black Theatre Movement.” Some of the more significant pieces featured in Black Theatre are Larry Neal’s seminal essay “The Black Arts Movement” (Issue #1), “Lafayette Theatre Reaction to Bombers, May 11, 1969,” (Issue #4) and the aforementioned transcription of interviews, “Talking of Black Art.” For Bullins, this latter piece most clearly illustrates the continuities between the Black Arts/Theatre movements and Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. He particularly engages these concepts during his comments at the Black Panther Forum at the Algiers Festival. Here Bullins

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77 “Even though the Algerian people are not black people as you think of black people South of the Sahara, nevertheless they are Africans and we related to them as such.” Edith Austin, “Pop Calling in Africa,” The Sun Reporter, 11 Oct 1969.
notes that traveling “to North Africa and meeting again with Eldridge Cleaver, coming with Black American artists, and talking and seeing the interest of the Algerian people and the other African people here, well that has raised my spirit” (BT 18). Recognizing the Pan-African Cultural Festival as a historic convergence of African, Afro-descendant, and Third World movements, he suggests:

Seeing all this and then knowing of the Black political struggle, the Black cultural and artistic struggle now being waged in America at this time...We have to revolutionize our culture, the Black culture in America, and hook up with the third world and our Black African brothers. And this is like one step, and Eldridge and the Black Panthers and the other Afro-American brothers here in Algiers at this time are helping in this, and I’m very happy to be a part of this historical moment and to see that it’s being done (BT 18).

Bullins, who at the Forum described himself a “Black revolutionary artist,” also acknowledged the importance of Pan-Africanism for people of African descent: “seeing many of the people from Pan Africa, and their participating together in Algeria, in this 1st Pan African Cultural Festival, in a revolutionary situation, will hearten other people in other countries, other people of African origin, in their revolutionary struggle. And so, Pan Africanism in this context right now has a very positive and a vital and a real type of meaning, because it’s being displayed in the streets of Algeria that we’re walking through, on this very evening” (BT 19). He then asserts that Black artists had a fundamental role to play in the movement for Pan-African liberation, from constructing new revolutionary “forms” and opening creative “stages,” such as the New Lafayette Theater in Harlem, where political revolutionaries can communicate directly with the people. During much of his talk, Bullins attempts to negotiate a fragile détente between the BPP and Black cultural workers, often accused by the Panthers of being bourgeois nationalists. “I see no conflict between the Black people who work in the cultural-artistic field and the Black people who work in revolutionary politics,” he expressed, “…and I’m willing, as a Black Artist, to aid them in any way I can” (BT 24).
Though labeling himself a Black revolutionary artist at the Forum and maintaining his tacit support for the Black Panther Party, Bullins produced a rather ambivalent revolutionary aesthetic, specifically in relationship to the Panthers. A few of his plays unmistakably depict content about armed struggle, such as *We Righteous Bombers* (1969), *A Street Play* (1970), his short piece, “State Office Building,” first published in the April 1970 issue of the *Black World* (formerly *Negro Digest*), and *Night of the Beast* (1972). However, they each tend to question the possibilities of successful revolutionary struggle. For example, although he had suggested that he was happy to reconnect with the Panthers and Eldridge Cleaver in Algiers, Bullins’ *A Street Play* published after the event, explicitly admonishes the BPP for rejecting the concept of a Black United Front that Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) called for in his resignation from the Party. Although Bullins does not mention Ture in the piece, he, along with Haki Madhubuti, and Nathan Hare actually recorded an interview with Ture while in Algiers for filmmaker William Greave’s *Black Journal*, which was also published in the *Journal of Black Poetry* in 1971. In this interview, filmed shortly after the Black Panther Forum at the PACF, Ture raised a number of the points of contention with the Party that Bullins subsequently addressed in his play. What is more, *A Street Play* directly criticizes Cleaver by asserting that he was “doin’ the writin’ ‘n talkin’” while other people did the real fighting in the streets. Thus the abrupt shift in tone from his embrace of the Black Panthers and willingness to do what ever it took to aid “revolutionary politics” at the PACF to his lampooning of Cleaver as a proverbial armchair militant in *A Street Play* underscores Bullins continued ambivalence about the politics of vanguardist revolutionary formations, particularly that embodied by the Black Panther Party.  

While at the Afro-American Center Forum, Ed Bullins and Professor Nathan Hare were the only panelists to directly address the concept of Pan-Africanism and its

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effectiveness for Afro-North Americans. For Hare, who had recently been dismissed from his chairmanship at San Francisco State College for supporting the Black Students Union-led strike, he principally viewed his role at the PACF and beyond as an advocate for reconciliation between factions of the Black liberation movement in North America. In his aspiration to produce “middle ground” between Eldridge Cleaver and Kwame Ture, he participated in the Panther Forum and also interviewed and spent time with Ture and Miriam Makeba in Algiers. This attempt to negotiate a broader form of ideological and strategic unity among members of the Black Power movement was further evidenced in the first issue of the *Black Scholar*, which he and Robert Chrisman published in November 1969. As publisher of the journal, Hare entitled the premier number “The Culture of Revolution,” in tribute to the recent PACF. It features essays by radical African and Afro-descendant intellectuals of discursive ideological tendencies, such as Cleaver’s “Education and Revolution,” Sekou Touré’s “A Dialectical Approach to Culture,” Stanislas Adotevi’s “The Strategy of Culture,” Amiri Baraka’s (then Imamu Ameer Baraka) “A Black Value System,” John O. Killens, “The Artist in the Black University,” Chrisman’s “The Crisis of Harold Cruse,” and himself. Indeed, Hare’s “Report on the Pan African Cultural Festival,” which begins the issue documents many of the internal debates and contradictions of the event. At the same time, his account brilliantly sums up the imperative of Pan-African solidarity predicated on developing ideological clarity:

For one thing, the African people, on the continent and in America, are still suffering from the influence and intervention of western liberals and thus have only feebly begun the clarification of the uses and misuses of culture in the struggle for liberation. Before there is clarity, before there is true and effective ideology, there has to be extensive and serious debate. But there also cannot be any fundamental discussion of culture – it was clear from the Festival – unless economic, social, political and other topics also have become clear.79

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The “clarification of the uses and misuses of culture in the struggle for liberation” became one of the institutional goals of the *Black Scholar*. In order to foment “extensive and serious debate,” Hare and Chrisman also established the Black World Foundation, a Bay Area think tank similar to Atlanta’s Institute of the Black World that defined its objective as providing “a forum for extensive research and dialogue for a revolutionary black ideology, the basic premise being that no fundamental change in our society is possible without an ideology that will inspire and lead to revolutionary change.” It was with this purpose in mind that Hare, Chrisman, and the other intellectual workers at the *Black Scholar* and the Black World Foundation sought to establish “dialogue” with the divergent tendencies within the Black liberation movement in the U.S., as well as with “African cultural groups” on the continent. Their support for ideological dialogism is also apparent by the numerous creative intellectuals and political activists who constituted the contributing and advisory editorial board for the journal: Abdul Alkalimat (then Gerald McWorter), Emory Douglas, Herman Ferguson, Charles Hamilton, Vincent Harding, Milton Henry (then Gaidi Obadele), Maulana Karenga, John O. Killens, Joyce Ladner, Haki Madhubuti (then Don L. Lee), Sonia Sanchez, and James Turner, among others. Although it never actually succeeded in reconciling the ideological contradictions of the Black Power/Arts movements, Hare, Chrisman, and the other editors at the *Black Scholar* produced one of the most important theoretical journals for the Black liberation movement following the PACF.

Being one of the few Afro-North American creative intellectuals to attend the Dakar and Algiers Festivals, Hoyt Fuller’s writing offers an important analysis of each event and their usefulness for Afro-North American cultural workers. In comparison to his recollections of the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in Dakar, he was much more impressed and influenced by the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers. For

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instance, Fuller’s earlier criticisms of Dakar and the U.S. State Department’s intervention exposed the contradictions of Senghor’s grand fête. Though he also recognized some contradictions in Algiers, he suggested it represented a positive step forward for Pan-African unity, an issue he had been politically and vocally supportive of since the 1950s. His “Algiers Journal,” published in the October 1969 issue of Negro Digest describes the Festival from the perspective of a sympathetic Afro-North American. While he was not all that impressed with the Festival Symposium, he found the overall PACF positive and uplifting. Moreover, despite the continued attempts of the French to intervene in Algeria, Fuller argued, “Algiers is moving forward, and with defiance, and she wants to take the rest of Africa with her. Godspeed.”

Although there are few other explicit references to the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Negro Digest than Fuller’s own “Algiers Journal,” it is nevertheless clear that the event greatly strengthened his commitment to the project of Pan-African solidarity. This is partially evidenced by the upsurge in published poetry shortly after the PACF evoking African subject matter. For example, in September 1969, he ran “O Great Black Masque” by Ted Joans; “To (2) Poets” by Alicia Johnson, which mourns the deaths of Nigerian poet Christopher Okigbo and Afro-North American poet Conrad K. Rivers; “For Sons of Sonless Fathers” by Keorapetse Kgositsile; and he reprinted Sarudzai’s “Pan Africa,” which had new meaning after the PACF. Fuller published a number of other poems contemplating Afro-descendant’s relationships to Africa, such as “African Things” by Victor Hernandez Cruz, acknowledging the African heritage of Puerto Ricans: “african spirits / dance & sing in my mother’s house” (November 1969); and three pieces that Ed Bullins wrote about his experiences in North Africa published in the December 1969 issue of Negro Digest: “M&M,” which compares “the smiles / and smells / and spells” of Morocco to Manhattan, “African Wine,” and “T.O.,” which describes “a Black wo / man

81 Fuller, “Algiers Journal,” p. 87.
from Compton” wandering “the Continent / lookin’ for Africa.” Moreover, not long after returning to the United States, Fuller changed the name of *Negro Digest* to *Black World* in May 1970 in order to signify the journal’s deepening alignment with the global African Diaspora. His “Editor’s Notes” for this issue articulates the rational for the name change: “It is the hope of the editors of BLACK WORLD magazine that Black people everywhere—in Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia and the islands of the Caribbean, as well as in Africa, Europe and North America—have reached a level of political maturity where they understand that the empowerment of the Black people of Harlem is not possible until Black men in the Congo are in full control of the vast mineral wealth of that country…”

Three months later, Fuller began publishing a periodic feature entitled, “Toward Pan-Africanism,” which not only presented news and critical essays about Africa and the Diaspora, but it also highlighted his personal commentaries on the prospects of developing linkages and networks between dispersed peoples of African descent. He explained that the section would “focus on a number of places, events, people, movements, ideas, philosophies and organizations, with the central purpose of illuminating the condition or status of Black people in particular places and situations relative to Pan-Africanism. The reports will cover the whole range of vital concerns from politics and economics to art and literature.” In spite of the appearance that Pan-Africanism was an idealistic or romantic philosophy, Fuller utilized the pages of *Black World*...
World to elucidate the practicality and necessity of Pan-African solidarity in order to disrupt global regimes of oppression.  

Fuller also contributed pieces about his African sojourns and advocacy of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle to other Black little magazines. His essay “Notes From an African in Exile,” was first published in the 1970/1971 “Pan-African Issue” of the Journal of Black Poetry, guest edited by his Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) comrade, Haki Madhubuti (then Don L. Lee). Fuller would republish this essay as part of his personal memoir and politico-biography of Sekou Touré and Leopold Senghor entitled, Journey to Africa (1971). In “Notes From an African in Exile” though, he specifically delineates some of the political, cultural, social, and economic reasons why Africa, and in particular Senegal, was still in oppressed despite the “independence” of much of the continent. Fuller asserts, “Pan-Africanism, like some of the great men who espoused and preached it – W.E.B. Du Bois, George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah – was an idea ahead of its time.” However, as a result of the recent Pan-African Cultural Festival, “Algiers was the Black World coming of age…

Africa, the Motherland, now opens her arms to her lost children from the slave lands across the seas. In Nigeria, with the cruel and debilitating civil struggle a thing of the past, General Gowon talks about Pan-Africanism. In Zambia, President Kaunda moves to nationalize more of the copper industry. President Nyerere quietly continues the grass-roots efforts toward mobilizing his people’s energies and developing the country. The Congo flexes its massive muscles, revealing the logic of Patrice Lumumba’s murder and the grand treachery of Moise Tsombe. Africa moves. It is a new beginning. The peril is greater, but there is also new strength and new hope (67-68).

For Fuller, the post-PACF moment illustrated that “Pan-Africanism is an idea whose time has come.” His understanding of Africa and the complex relationship that Afro-descendants had with the continent is very nuanced; there is little romanticism here. Moreover, Fuller recognizes that there were still many external and internal forces at

work against the manifestation of Pan-African unity. However, with the theoretical and practical maturing of the “Black World” represented by the Algiers Festival and the other examples of Pan-African consciousness that he documents above, Fuller believed that the disparate Black World was on the tenuous move, “Toward Pan-Africanism.”

Pan-African politics of cultural struggle are also palpable in back-to-back “Pan-African” issues of the Journal of Black Poetry (JBP) guest edited by Askia Muhammad Touré in 1970 and Madhubuti’s aforementioned issue. Established in 1966 by Joe Goncalves, the JBP developed as a result of his work as a poetry editor for Black Dialogue. In addition to publishing poetry from hundreds of cultural workers aligned with the Black Arts movement as well as African creative intellectuals, the Journal of Black Poetry also featured political essays, interviews, and a section entitled “News and History.” Beginning in 1967, Goncalves invited a series of guest editors, such as Amiri Baraka (Jones), Ahmed Legraham Alhamisi, Larry Neal, Marvin X (then Nazzam Al Sudan), Ed Spriggs, Clarence Major, Ed Bullins, and Dudley Randall, to be responsible for selecting a theme and material for their respective issues. As guest editor of issue #14, Madhubuti initially had discussed his ideas with Goncalves about presenting a work by an Afro-North American poet next to one by an African poet, “you know—African and African-American poets reflecting on that which was most common to them.” However, his experiences at the Festival in Algiers complicated his attitudes about African and Afro-North American harmony: “The conference changed all of that; what resulted was an altering of my concept of Africa and its people. Actually what the trip did for me was to clarify and widen my own perspective I, holding very few romantic illusions about Africa in the first place, left our former homeland with even fewer.”

A major distinction between this issue of the Journal of Black Poetry and earlier issues was Madhubuti’s inclusion of seven essays in addition to the usual focus on

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poetry. He writes, “I decided that I should seek to inform in a broader and more precise sense the current feeling toward Africa and being a poet, I know that it would take more than poetry. You’ll find that there is a near balance between poetry and prose.” Engaging Pan-Africanism from multiple ideological and experiential perspectives, the issue includes: Charlie Cobb’s “We Are an African People” (8-11); Walter Bradford’s “East African Journal” (19-20); Abdul Alkalimat’s “Common Problems, Common Solutions: Toward a Pan African Ideology” (23-30); Amiri Baraka’s “The Practice of the New Nationalism” (38-41); Ann Cook’s “Black Pride? Some Contradictions” (44-52); Hoyt Fuller’s “Notes from an African in Exile” (56-68); and Oba Chaka’s, “Marcus Garvey: Father of Revolutionary Black Nationalism” (82-96).

One thing that becomes readily apparent when examining these pieces, however, is the near universal usage of the term “African” to describe Black people on the continent and in the Diaspora. This assertion is first made in Madhubuti’s opening poetic statement, “WE’RE an Africanpeople / hard-softness burning black” (2); then in Cobb’s extended declaration that Afro-North Americans “are an African people and must define the history, politics, and culture of this reality within the framework of our interest as a people” (10), which was influenced by his SNCC comrade Kwame Ture’s usage of the term African that is further discussed in the published interview with Madhubuti, Bullins, and Hare at the Pan-African Cultural Festival in this number. Also, Alkalimat suggests that by developing a proper Pan-African ideological framework “we can move to create a new history of a United African People” (23), and Cook insists that “African” apply “to all people of Africa whether in Africa or the Western Hemisphere” (44).86

Though the essays were important texts that contemplated the meanings of Pan-Africanism and the burgeoning embrace of “African” identities by Black creative intellectuals in North America, the real concentration of the *JBP* nevertheless remained on poetry. For this issue, Madhubuti featured poems from a wide variety of Afro-North American cultural workers, such as Gwendolyn Brooks’ “Young Africans,” written specifically for this issue (4); Margaret Danner’s “And Through the Caribbean Sea” (7) and “This is an African Worm” (18); and Charlie Cobb’s “Nation #3,” which describes his “return” to Africa, but “finding no specific place to claim, / find, and claim, it all: / From Sahara to Bantu lands” (13). Also featured in this issue are Ted Joans’s “Behind the Black Jazz Smile” (15); Sterling Plumpp’s “Soul Home,” which he wrote in dedication to Kwame Ture (33); Ahmed Alhamisi’s “Look For Me Dear Mother” (34); and Gayla Cook’s “Goin’ Home” (53). In addition, Madhubuti included poets from the African continent: two pieces by David Diop from Senegal, “The Infidel” (43) and “The Agony of Chains” (81); an elegy to Patrice Lumumba called “Lumumba Section” by South African-exile Keorapetse Kgositsile, which decry how “murderers butchered your flesh / As they butchered the flesh of our land” (21); Nigerian poet Ifeanyi Menkiti’s “Heart of the Matter” (42) and “Dinner Party” (43); and FRELIMO cultural worker Noemia de Sousa’s “If You Want to Know Who I Am,” where she describes herself as “no more than a shell of flesh / in which the revolt of Africa has merged / its cry swollen with hope” (42).

Then again, what further distinguishes this issue of the *Journal of Black Poetry* from previous numbers is Madhubuti’s inclusion of translations of four Palestinian poet-revolutionaries, whose “poetry of necessity” he had encountered while in Algiers. In “The Promise of Al-Asifah,” Mahmoud Darwish praises the militant wing of Al Fatah and how it “Has promised wine, new toasts / And a rainbow / It is because Al-Asifah / Has swept away all timid birds / And shed the dead wood off trees” (69). Tawfeeq Zeyad’s “The Impossible,” reinterprets the Biblical analogy about a camel passing through the eye of a
needle from Matthew 19:24, to describe the self-determination of the Palestinian liberation struggle:

It is much easier for you
To pass an elephant through a needle’s eye
Or catch fried fish in galaxy,
Plough the sea,
Or humanize a crocodile,
Than to destroy by persecution
The shimmering glow of a belief
or check our march
One single step (31)

Salem Jubran’s “The Exile” and Sameeh Al-Qassem’s “Letter from Prison” both comment directly on the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the displacement that Palestinians have experienced. For “the ousted son” Jubran, the peacefulness of birds singing and “A lonely donkey” strolling in his “native land,” is disrupted by “A stretch of border-walls,” which “Blackens the view” (32). Al-Qassem’s poem is a letter to his mother, telling her not to be sad about his imprisonment. “But I believe, mother, / That the splendour of life / Is born in my prison. / And I believe that / My final visitor / Will not be / An eyeless bat. / It must be the day. / It must be the day” (22). These sentiments resonated with Afro-North American radicals who also viewed themselves in exile from Africa or imprisoned in the Black internal colonies of North America. Moreover, while the Palestinian poets did not refer to themselves as “African,” Al Fatah’s attendance at the recent Pan-African Cultural Festival and its call for solidarity between revolutionary Africans and Arabs in their common struggles against colonialism and imperialism, engendered support for the plight of Palestinians by Afro-North Americans who were also at the Festival.87

87 In addition to the inclusion of Palestinian poets in the Pan African Issue of the JBP, the Black Panther Party established cordial relations with Al Fatah, publishing a number of communiqués and articles about the organization. Moreover, in 1972, Ed Bullins wrote the play Death List, about a Black radical intent on killing a list of bourgeois Black leaders who signed a letter in support of Israel. Bullins dedicated the play to Al Fatah and its militant wing, Al-Asifah.
While Madhubuti gathered pieces for the *Journal of Black Poetry* issue, he was also writing poems for his next book entitled *We Walk the Way of the New World* (1970). As his fourth volume of poetry published on Dudley Randall’s Detroit-based Broadside Press—the preceding three being: *Think Black* (1967), *Black Pride* (1968), and *Don’t Cry, Scream* (1969)—*We Walk the Way of the New World* was Madhubuti’s clearest expression of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. The bulk of his previously published material focused mainly on subject matter and themes about Afro-North American identity, the meaning of blackness, and Black male/female relationships, but rarely extended beyond the parameters of the U.S. There are a few exceptions, however, such as his poem “The Long Reality,” from *Think Black*, which called for Viet Cong and Black solidarity in the struggle against U.S. oppression, “Viet-brothers come give us a hand / we fight for freedom, / we fight for land” (22). The same year that he released *Think Black*, Madhubuti, Johari Amani (then Jewel Latimore) and Carolyn Rodgers of the Chicago-based OBAC, established the publishing house Third World Press, which illustrated the international consciousness of the Black Arts movement. TWP soon rivaled Randall’s Broadside Press with the number of BAM poets, novelists, and essayists it published, many of which Madhubuti featured in his issue of the *Journal of Black Poetry*, such as Keorapetse Kgositsile, Charlie Cobb, Sterling Plumpp, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Hoyt Fuller. However, for Madhubuti, his next two volumes of poetry had relatively few references to international struggles, other than a poem he dedicated to Christopher Okigbo and Wole Soyinka about the crisis of the Nigerian civil war, “Nigerian Unity/or little niggers killing little niggers,” from his third volume *Don’t Cry, Scream.*

In *We Walk the Way of the New World*, however, there is little doubt as to Madhubuti’s commitment to Pan-African solidarity, which grew after his experiences in

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Algiers. For starters, he dedicates the volume to W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, J.A. Rodgers, Paul Robeson, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Sekou Touré, Julius Nyerere, Miriam Makeba, and Nina Simone among others, and he writes, “Africa made us realize that we’re an African people.” In addition, a number of his poems address the triple burden faced by women of African descent, contemplating the struggles of older Black women (“Big Mama”) and Black female workers (“Mixed Sketches”). Madhubuti divides the text into three sections: “Black Woman Poems,” “African Poems,” and “New World Poems,” explaining, “Each part is a part of the other: Black woman is African and Africa is Black woman and they both represent the New World” (20). One of his “African Poems” “Change is Not Always Progress,” warns Africans not to allow European colonialism to “steal / your face / or / take your circles / and make them squares” (45). In these lines, Madhubuti’s speaker is cautioning against the propensity of colonialism and white supremacy to coerce the oppressed to alter their appearance and aesthetic practices in the images of Europeans.

This volume also includes “A Poem for a Poet,” which is dedicated to the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and it relates the struggle of Al Fatah to the Black liberation movement. Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, Al Fatah was an extremely popular organization at the Algiers Festival, where it had sought to develop connections with African and Afro-North American revolutionaries. As one of Al Fatah’s leading creative intellectuals, Darwish received the Lotus Prize for literature from the Union of Afro-Asian Writers in 1969, an affiliate organization of the Bandung movement, which had also been given to other progressive African writers, such as Alex La Guma (South Africa), Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Ousmane Sembene (Senegal), Ngugi wa Thiong’o (Kenya), Amilcar Cabral (Cape Verde/Guinea Bissau), Agostinho Neto (Angola), Marcelino Dos Santos (Mozambique) and Malek Haddad (Algeria). For Madhubuti, these factors established a clear link between Pan-Africanists and Palestinian liberationists,
made more concrete because “our common enemies eat the same bread / and their waste / (there is always waste) / is given to the pigs, / and then they consume the pigs” (43). His third “African Poem,” “Knocking Donkey Fleas off a Poet from the Southside of Chi,” is a tribute to Ted Joans, whom he hung out with during their performance with the Archie Shepp quintet at the PACF. As a result, the two men developed a close friendship that is represented in mutual poems they dedicated to each other. Madhubuti’s piece describes Joans as “a continent jumper, / a show-upper, a neo-be-bopper, / he’s the first u see the last to flee, / the homeboy in African land” (46).

Joans’ poetic dedication to Madhubuti, “As Don Took Off at Dawn,” from his book of poetry *Afrodisia* (1970), is not as specific in depicting the latter poet’s positionality. However, Joans does highlight an excursion the two wordsmiths took to Morocco and how it, along with their experiences at the PACF, influenced his belief that African and Afro-descendant liberation would soon manifest. By also referencing Archie Shepp and Miriam Makeba, who, in another piece Joans asserts, “When she sings Africa / all blacks become one / making us strong / and even healing some white sick / by just making the trigger sound / a click” (29), he envisions Black music as a potential weapon in this liberation struggle. What is more, Joans’ piece details the complexity and diversity of Africa by mentioning a number of the Moroccan cities he and Madhubuti visited. Here, he seeks to physically and mentally reintegrate the northern and southern parts of the African continent, which he further explicates, “Pan-African memories Mon Reve / a Casablanca streamline ride / Ibn Battuta too visited Timbuctoo” (52-53). Besides his clear utilization of assonance with the repetition of the “oo” sound, these lines translate the travels of Iba Battuta, the Islamic scholar from Morocco, into a metaphor of border crossing and potential continental African unity and liberation. He extends this idea of Pan-African unity to the Diaspora when his speaker states, “black men and black women too / shoved their canon muzzles for freedom / domesticated two leg and four leg
animals / emancipated and desegregated at last / Jungles of the U.S.A…” (54). In an interesting poetic twist, however, Joans concludes the piece by personifying Pan-African liberation as a female who ultimately inspired him to write this poem:

She is coming and she’s near
She promised me that she’d be here
She made me pregnant with poem    Yes
She caused me to create her coming
She – my victory – is coming (55).

Indeed, Joans was “pregnant with poem” following the Pan-African Cultural Festival. Having completed Black Pow Wow, a rather large volume of 120 previously released and new poems in spring 1969; he then produced Afrodisia, which included 112 new pieces in early 1970. Joans divided this volume into two sections: “Africa” and “Erotica.” In addition to being one of the early explorations of Black erotic poetry, Afrodisia contains fifty-four poems that portray Africa subject matter that goes beyond simple romantic or mythic renderings of the continent. Two of his more revolutionary literary compositions are “To Free Every African” and “Notice.” The former piece is inscribed to “Dr. Kwame Nkrumah” and engages directly in the Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. His speaker exhorts, “While all Africa is here in the sun / Those African creative workers / and Africans of the gun / Let’s unite our efforts as one” (34). Setting his poem at the PACF, Joans acknowledges the importance of artists and militants in the struggles to liberate Africans and Afro-descendants. Returning to this theme in “Notice,” dedicated to Baby Joachim Daman-M’Bembe, a revolutionary sculptor from the People’s Republic of Congo-Brazzaville, Joans writes, “Arm yourself Africa! / with unity first of all.” Here, he observes the imperative of building solidarity among the various countries on the continent. However, once solidarity has been realized, his speaker repeats the refrain “Arm yourself Africa!” though this time with “bows and poison arrows / sharp
knives and automatic / weapons—toss a snake / into a carload of tourists,” to liberate itself from the clutches of European and North American imperialism (41).89

Without a doubt, the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers had a marked influence on Afro-descendant revolutionaries and cultural workers in the Americas. From members and affiliates of the Black Panther Party and Kwame Ture, who found an international location in which to connect with African and Third World liberation struggles, to the various radical Black creative intellectuals, such as Ed Bullins, Nathan Hare, Hoyt Fuller, Haki Madhubuti, Ted Joans, Rene Depestre, Ama Ata Aidoo, Clifford Thornton, Archie Shepp, Charlie Cobb, Nina Simone and others, who envisioned their cultural production as central to raising Pan-African consciousness, the PACF “was the Black World coming of age.” At the same time, those Afro-descendants that traveled to Algiers were disabused of the notion that “African” or “Pan-African” only signified a person who was phenotypically “Black.” The revolutionary anti-imperialism of the Algerians and other “Arab” Africans, as well as the relationships established between Afro-North American creative intellectuals and artists/militants aligned with Al Fatah, demonstrated that solidarity could not be based solely on “racial” heritage and physical appearance. However, this notion of Pan-Africanism as extending beyond the countries and peoples who defined themselves as “Black” would remain a contentious issue into the 1970s as Afro-descendants took part in the Congress of Afrikan People in 1970, the African Liberation Day in 1972 and 1973, the Sixth Pan-African Congress in 1974, and FESTAC in 1977.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARD IDEOLOGICAL CLARITY? RETHINKING THE TURN FROM PAN-AFRICAN NATIONALISM TO MARXISM LENINISM

Roses red as my eyes
red red red?

Red as the blackman’s blood consumed by vultures
red red red?

Red like the open head of a panther
red red red red red
.....

Who killed Lumumba
What killed Malcolm

There are no tears
we have no friends
that is the word

festivals & funerals
festivals & funerals
festivals & funerals & festivals & funerals


The advent of the 1970s represented the maturation of the Black Arts movement and Pan-African Cultural Revolution strengthened at the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers in 1969. However, it also signaled the intensification of ideological struggle between various factions of the North American Pan-Africanist movement. With the anti-apartheid struggle escalating in South Africa; and, wars for national liberation being waged in Vietnam against the United States, in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) against white rule, and Angola, Mozambique Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde (against the Portuguese, with the financial support of the U.S. and other European countries), Afro-North Americans observed the interconnections between how the Nixon Administration supported the oppression and killing of people of African descent and other people of color abroad while intensifying the oppression of Black people at home. These realities became even more glaring as the U.S. military escalated the war in Southeast Asia by
bombing Cambodia in 1970. In response to the bombings anti-war protests grew around the country, which resulted in the National Guard murdering student activists at Kent State University in Ohio and the historically Black Jackson State College (now University) in Mississippi.¹

Therefore, this chapter examines how those global events galvanized popular support for Pan-African politico-cultural struggles in the U.S. Specifically I demonstrate that with the founding of the Congress of Afrikan People (CAP) in 1970, the African Liberation Day mobilizations in 1972 and 1973, and the Afro-North American planning and involvement in the Sixth Pan-African Congress and Second World Festival of Black and African Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1974 and 1977, large numbers of Black Power/Arts movement formations envisioned the liberation struggle in North America as a direct extension of those taking place in Africa. Throughout this chapter, I also explore the manner in which the heightened national and international Pan-African consciousness manifested in the proliferation of revolutionary cultural production, from poetry, plays, and essays to documentary films.

At the same time, the political realities of the liberation struggles in Africa and the sharpening class contradictions in Afro-North America resulted in deepening ideological struggle between formations of the Black liberation movement. This hostility—referred to by many activists and scholars as the “two-line struggle”—came to a head with the conflict between Black cultural nationalists and Marxists intellectuals over CAP and the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) beginning in 1973, and over which tendency should represent Afro-North Americans at the Sixth PAC. In this chapter, I include an in-depth discussion of these two events, examining the contradictions between Pan-African “nationalists” who viewed the main form of oppression as racially

¹ For a well-researched study on the student protests against the Vietnam War, see, Marc J. Gilbert, The Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publisher, 2001).
determined and Black Marxists who interpreted the liberation movements in Africa and North America as a part of a global working-class struggle against economic imperialism.

This struggle is particularly evidenced by the public ideological clash that ensued after the publication of Haki Madhubuti’s polemical essays “The Latest Purge” printed in *The Black Scholar* (September 1974) and “Enemy: From the White Left, White Right and In-Between” printed in the *Black World* (October 1974). His essays and the turmoil that followed are important in understanding the politico-culture of North American Pan-Africanism, because they exemplify the notion of contested Black solidarities. What is more, they represent the ideological and literary break between Black Arts movement icons Madhubuti and Amiri Baraka—who although a founder of the Pan-Afrikan “nationalist” organization, the Congress of Afrikan People in 1970—moved from this position to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought following the Sixth Pan African Congress. Unfortunately, this moment also marks a serious downturn in the Pan-African politics of cultural struggle with Afro-North American attendance at FESTAC being underwritten by the U.S. State Department and corporations. I begin, however, with a discussion of the founding of CAP in 1970, which represented an institutional manifestation of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle in North America.

**The Congress of Afrikan People (CAP)**

The Congress of Afrikan People grew directly out of the annual national and international Black Power Conferences of the late 1960s (Washington DC-1966; Newark-1967; Philadelphia-1968; and Bermuda-1969). It sought to manifest the notion of a global Black United Front against white supremacy and racist oppression. While the founder of the Us Organization, Maulana Karenga, did not officially endorse or attend CAP, one of his primary advocates on the East Coast, poet “Imanu” Amiri Baraka and
the Committee for Unified New Ark (CFUN), convened the Congress under his philosophy of Kawaida. As the main theorist of Kawaida, a Kiswahili-derived politico-cultural ideology based upon the Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles) of Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Collective Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith), Karenga described it as “the only Black ideology in the country today tied to tradition and constantly being renewed by reason.” However, because of the ongoing violent feud with the Black Panther Party in California, Karenga decided to steer clear of CAP, preferring instead to criticize the Congress for supposedly not correctly implementing Kawaida. Nonetheless, with Baraka’s poem “It’s Nation Time” (1970) suggesting that it was indeed “Time to get / together / time to be one strong fast black energy space / one pulsating positive magnetism, rising,” serving as CAP’s anthem, as well as the central role he played in Newark politics helping elect the city’s first Black mayor, Kenneth Gibson, the poet held major sway at the Congress, ultimately supplanting Karenga as Afro-North America’s foremost cultural nationalist.

According to Ron Walters (1993) and other scholars, the formation of the Congress of Afrikan People was a definite indication of the reemergence of Pan-Africanism as a popular movement in the United States. While William Sales correctly states that the re-popularization of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle grew directly out of networks established by Malcolm X’s Organization of Afro-American Unity in 1964,

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they would not coalesce institutionally until almost five years after his assassination.\(^5\)

Much of the immediate impetus for the expansion in Pan-African consciousness emerged with the intensification of armed struggles in Southern Africa and the anti-Apartheid movement, the recently concluded Pan-African Cultural Festival (PACF) in Algiers, Kwame Ture’s (then Stokely Carmichael) relocation to Guinea, and members of SNCC, such as Courtland Cox, Charlie Cobb, and its Pan-African Skills Project, which established direct connections with progressive African leaders and governments. By mid-1970, besides Amiri Baraka’s leadership of CAP, a number of new Pan-Africanist and internationalist organizations and intellectuals were active: Afro-American Studies professor at Harvard and CAP chairman Hayward Henry, the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), Roosevelt Douglas of the Organization of Black People’s Union (OBPU) in Canada and the West Indies, Owusu Sadaukai (then Howard Fuller) of the Malcolm X Liberation University (MXLU) in Durham, North Carolina, the Third World Women’s Alliance (TWWA), the Nairobi School experiment in Palo Alto, California, Haki Madhubuti’s Institute for Positive Education (IPE), the Patrice Lumumba Coalition, led by Irving Davis and Elombe Brath in New York City, the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) in Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Pan-African Students Organization of the Americas (PASOA) in Michigan, among others.\(^6\)

In addition to the increase of Pan-African organizations and activism in the early 1970s, Pan-African consciousness was also a prevalent theme in cultural production associated with the Black Arts movement. As I discussed in the previous chapter, a number of the Afro-North American cultural workers who attended the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers, such as Ted Joans, Madhubuti, Charlie Cobb, Ed Bullins, Hoyt Fuller, and others, were directly influenced by the event, which they demonstrated

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in their post-Festival publications. For example, following the Algiers Festival, Joans published *Afrodisia* (1970) and *A Black Manifesto* (1971) and Madhubuti released *We Walk the Way of the New World* (1970) and *Directionscore* (1971) on top of publishing a host of other books of prose and poetry that included Pan-African themes on his Third World Press. One poet that Madhubuti published who attended the PACF was SNCC activist and comrade of Kwame Ture, Charlie Cobb, who released *Everywhere Is Yours* in 1971, which featured the Pan-African poems “Nation No. 3” and “Koyekwisa Ya Libala.” For playwright Ed Bullins, though much of his work after the Festival continued to concentrate primarily on Afro-North American subject matter, he did produce the piece *Death List* in 1972, which he dedicated to Al Fatah (the Palestinian Liberation Organization), who he encountered in Algiers. By far, however, the PACF had the strongest impact on *Negro Digest/Black World* editor Hoyt Fuller. While he had spent a number of years on the African continent before assuming editorship of the *Negro Digest* in 1961, to him “Algiers was the Black World coming of age...” This notion would lead him to change the title of *Negro Digest* to *Black World* in 1970, and also to begin a feature entitled “Toward Pan-Africanism.”

Other Black little magazines and newspapers that engaged Pan-African politics of cultural struggle more directly after the Pan-African Cultural Festival were *The Black Scholar*, the *Journal of Black Poetry*, and *SOBU Newsletter/The African World*. While the premier issue of *The Black Scholar* focused specifically on the PACF and the ideas emanating from the colloquium, it would remain one of the leading theoretical and ideological discursive journals in the North American-based Pan-African movement throughout the 1970s. For the *JBP*, it featured consecutive numbers on Pan-Africanism immediately following the Algiers Festival: issue No. 13 (Winter-Spring 1970) guest edited by Askia Muhammad Touré and issue No. 14 (Fall-Winter 1970/71) by Madhubuti.

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Joining these cultural workers in promoting Pan-African consciousness in the early 1970s were South African-exile and poet Keorapetse Kgotsitile, whose Spirits Unchained (1969), For Melba (1970) and My Name is Afrika (1971) each concretely deal with the struggles “from Sharpeville to Watts / and all points white of the memory.” Also, Pulitzer Prize winner and elder-stateswoman of the Black Arts movement, Gwendolyn Brooks, whose poem “Young Africans” (1968, 1970) was dedicated to “the furious / Who take Today and jerk it out of joint,” in addition to being one of the early pieces to depict Afro-North Americans as “Africans.”

What is more, poet Jayne Cortez’s Festivals and Funerals (1971) features a number of poems articulating Pan-African subject matter, such as the title piece “Festivals and Funerals.” This poem contemplates the dialectical nature of the 1960s for Afro-North Americans and Africans as a time of creativity and growth (festivals), as well as a time of murders and assassinations (funerals) of countless Black revolutionary leaders, from Patrice Lumumba and Malcolm X to numerous members of the Black Panther Party. Cortez, who had earlier founded the Watts Repertory Theater in 1964 and moved to New York City in 1967, recorded a live version of her poem with free jazz cornetist Clifford Thornton and his Ensemble at the Festival of African-American Music in NYC.

Despite the continuation of the paradox expressed in her poem, the expansion of Pan-African consciousness and solidarity with Africa that was consolidated at CAP and expressed in the aforementioned cultural texts would be further manifested on May 27, 1972 when over 50,000 people converged on Washington DC and San Francisco for African Liberation Day. This led to the organization of the African Liberation Support

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Committee (ALSC). It was in the context of the Pan-Africanization of the Black Power/Arts movements in the late 1960s-early 1970s that CAP emerged as a hegemonic bloc of the Pan-African nationalist tendency within the Afro-North American liberation movement.

Nearly 3,000 delegates representing some 200 local, national, and international organizations of diverse political perspectives heeded CAP’s call of Pan-African “Nation Time.” Clearly, Black nationalists dominated the proceedings since CFUN was the event’s primary convener, with Amiri and his wife Amina Baraka leading the political and social organization workshops, respectively. Those in attendance also heard speeches from Hayward Henry, Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam (NOI), Sadaukai read a communiqué from Kwame Ture in Guinea, Imari Abubakari Obadele of RNA, Madhubuti, Larry Neal formerly of RAM, the Black nationalist historians John Henrik Clarke and Yosef Ben-Jochannan, Roosevelt Douglas, and the ambassadors from Tanzania and Guinea, as well as two representatives from African liberation movements in Angola and Zimbabwe. There were also representatives of other important Black radical organizations at the Congress: the Student Organization of Black Unity (SOBU), the Institute of the Black World (IBW), The East Group of Brooklyn, NY, and the Pan-African Congress USA. At the same time, a wide array of liberal and progressive Black politicos and civil rights spokespeople attended CAP, such as mayors Kenneth Gibson of Newark and Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, Julian Bond formerly of SNCC but in 1970 he was in the Georgia Legislature and head of the Atlanta host committee, Whitney Young of the Urban League, Rev. Jesse Jackson of Operation PUSH, Rev. Ralph Abernathy of SCLC, and John Cashin of the National Democratic Party of Alabama.11

From the outset, the main thrust of CAP was to establish a permanent organizational structure and ideological framework to unify as many Afro-descendant

peoples/groups as possible into a permanent united front. From there, organizers sought to create an independent Pan-African political party that could serve as a “preliminary organizing vehicle” for “an African World State.” By 1973, CAP consisted of cadres in Brooklyn, Chicago, San Diego, Pittsburgh, South Bend, Indiana, Wilmington, Delaware, Baltimore, Houston, St. Louis, Detroit, with its national headquarters in NewArk led by Baraka. In addition to the speeches from across the ideological spectrum, delegates at CAP’s founding also participated in any number of eleven work councils in the areas of political liberation, social organization, creativity, black technology, religion, education, history community organization, law and justice, economics, and communications where position papers were read and delegates formulated resolutions that were presented to the full Congress on its final day. According to the event’s published proceedings, *African Congress: A Documentary of the First Modern Pan-African Congress* (1972), the “Work Councils are institution building mechanisms through which brothers and sisters gain insight and information on how to solve the problems of our people, i.e. the necessities of Nation Building.”

Organizers at the Congress built upon Kwame Ture’s popularization of Nkrumah’s phrase “we are an African people” to describe Black people globally. Thus, the *African Congress* describes the basic ideological stance of Pan-African Nationalism as “the knowledge that we are an African people, despite our slavery or colonization by Europeans or dispersal throughout the countries of the world. Pan-Africanism is thus the global expression of Black Nationalism” (109). With this definition, the participants of CAP were directly alluding to two of Ture’s previously published essays in the *Black Scholar*: “Pan-Africanism—Land Power” (November 1969) and “We Are All Africans”


May 1970). However, while Ture’s model of Pan-Africanism was mainly concerned with establishing a land-base on the African continent in which to build a United States of Africa, those who assembled at CAP sought to link the movement for Black Power in North America with the anti-colonial movements on the continent. Hoping to link the movements, organizers asserted,

“We recognize the central importance of the African Continent to Black struggles for National Liberation, however, we likewise recognize the necessity to build collective political and economic power in order to be a functional ally to African and Third World peoples” (AC 109).

Many of CAP’s resolutions on domestic Black political liberation directly articulated this “necessity” of constructing viable institutions and mechanisms for establishing “collective political and economic power” in North America. For example, they called for Afro-North American control of ten cities with large Black populations, similar to an earlier proposal made by Marxist intellectuals James and Grace Lee Boggs in “The City is the Black Man’s Land.”15 Resolutions also sought to engage Black workers and students in building the Pan-African party, with the specific goal of registering the entire Black voting-age population. Others demanded the release of all political prisoners; the “consolidation” of discursive Black movements into a “Black National Liberation Front,” that would include the Black Panther Party, Republic of New Africa, and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers; the development of a Black press service for national and international communications; the recognition of the Republic of New Africa as an autonomous African nation; and support for the Cairo United Front in Illinois, which was facing repression by authorities in the state (AC 115-170).

CAP attendees also passed a series of progressive resolutions regarding its relationship to Pan-African movements abroad: they urged all Afro-North American

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service people to “cease fire” in the U.S. war against the Vietnamese National Liberation Front and for the NLF to reciprocate; they sent telegrams of solidarity to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) meeting in Ethiopia and the Non-Alignment Conference in Zambia; they called for the creation of an “International Development Union of African People” to supplant inter-governmental and “imperialist” organizations that exploited people of African descent, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO); the establishment of Black Economic Autonomy under the concept of Ujamma (cooperative economics); and finally, to raise money in support of the Tanzania-Zambia railroad project and to purchase combat boots for the liberation armies in Africa (AC 170-172).

As coordinator of the Political Liberation work council, Baraka helped draft the organizational language, which became much of the formal structure of CAP. As a result, NewArk CAP emerged as the focal point of the organization and the poet-activist wielded much decision-making power in the ideological direction of the Congress post-Atlanta. In his coordinator’s statement at the Congress, he suggests that CAP establish local, regional, state, national, and international structures that will form the basis of a Nationalist-Pan-Africanist political party to lead a movement for National Liberation. For Baraka, “A Political party is an organ of consciousness. It must bring consciousness to Black people in whatever context it is necessary. All the different ways men express their lives must be understood and shaped by the party, which is the nation becoming” (AC 118). Then again, in order for the party structure to materialize, he argues that CAP would also need an ideology, organization, resources, and networks of communication to educate and motivate the masses of Black people (AC 117). Baraka would later build upon the concept of a Pan-African political party in the essay, “The Pan-African Party and The Black Nation,” published in the March 1971 issue of the Black Scholar. While he saw the importance of formulating an ideology in the long run “that provides the mass of
Black people with alternatives to the Identity, Purpose and Direction of the white boy” and to drive party functions, Baraka employed Karenga’s notion of “Operational Unity” as the way to establish programs and projects that could unify the largest grouping of Afro-descendants in a liberation struggle. He argues, “the political party must build alternative systems, values, institutions that will move us and raise us” (AC 120).

Part of the responsibility for developing “alternative systems, values, institutions” rested with the delegates of the Creativity and Culture work council led by poet-playwright Larry Neal. As one of the leading theorists of the Black Arts movement, Neal consistently described BAM as an integral aspect of the Black Power movement. In his coordinator statement, he argues that “Creativity is the soul of the Nation,” and as such, cultural workers were central to imagining and building Pan-African Nationalism (AC 191). Neal continues, “We are speaking of ways of thinking, ways of styling the struggle, and ways of insuring that the victories gained in the area of politics and economics, will not be lost in the battle for the Soul” (AC 191). Despite the metaphysical ambiguity and transhistoricity that permeates his usage of the term “Soul,” he nevertheless describes Afro-North American cultural expression in concrete terms that were integral to national consciousness development. For instance, although Neal envisions Afro-American (broadly defined) cultures as interrelated to African cultures, he acknowledges that enslavement, colonialism, and imperialism have rendered Afro-descendant cultural production as “hybrid.” Neal also suggests that in order for Black Americans to engage Pan-African politics of cultural struggle as an “instrument for National self-determination,” then Afro-North American creative intellectuals must revolutionize the “exploited” and “hybrid” “culture of Black Americans” (AC 192).

To be specific, we must begin to discuss and organize the arts around those aspects of our group culture that most readily reveal themselves to us. It is only after we have taken this first step, this most immediate step that we can begin to extend our world view, as dispersed Africans, into the larger Third World of Africa, Asia and Latin America. In the language of the
In other words, he opposed the simple appropriation of cultural practices from outside the lived realities of the masses of Black people in the U.S. and called upon cultural workers to mine the “new” African expressions “indigenous” to North America. Here, Neal specifically differed from Karenga and other cultural nationalists who saw little salvageable in Afro-North American cultural heritage and instead crafted much of their cultural ideology from discursive traditions from the African continent.¹⁶

During the creativity workshop, position papers were also put forward by Cheo Katibu, the New Orleans-based Free Southern Theater, and poet Haki Madhubuti (then Don L. Lee) of OBAC/IPE, who presented chapter one of his soon to be published book of poetry criticism, *Dynamite Voices: Black Poets of the 1960s* (1971). Their presentations touched upon the ideas of the “commitment” and alignment of Black writers, critics, and publishers in defining the nation (Madhubuti); the necessity of deconstructing the lines between popular Black musicians, performers and the cultural workers aligned with the Black Arts movement (Katibu); and the production of “an instrument for the documentation of and communication about the efforts of Black people to define and operate cultural arts programs and institutions” (FST). The delegates at the workshop resolved that the essential areas of struggle for “committed” cultural workers were in building and stabilizing institutions that could serve as microcosms of Black nation-building; establishing the New Lafayette Theater Workshop in Harlem as a permanent space for CAP produced performances and fundraising events (the Negro Ensemble Company also offered its space from June 13-September 1, 1971 for CAP events); creating an arts/cultural oriented journal and support existing

¹⁶ Larry Neal criticized Maulana Karenga’s repudiation of “the blues” as “teaching resignation.” “Doesn’t he know that the blues are the fundamental source of all relevant Black music? Ask Leon Thomas or Pharoah Sanders. A cultural revolution that does not include and absorb blues feelings and modes of sound will surely fail,” in “Toward a Relevant Black Theatre” *Black Theatre,* (April 1970): 14. Also see Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement* (2005), p. 84.
journals such as *Cricket* and the *Journal of Black Poetry*; and influencing Black publishers to place “conscious” Black editors on their editorial boards. In fact, as a result of CAP, Madhubuti and Neal began the *Black Books Bulletin*, which was the first little magazine to focus solely on African and Afro-descendant literary criticism.\(^\text{17}\)

Similar proposals were passed regarding strengthening links between Black musicians and the Black Arts movement, as well as a series of resolutions calling for close collaboration between CAP and the Pan-African Artists’ Alliance at Howard University led by painter Jeff Donaldson in the area of visual arts. A special resolution proposed by visual artist Dana Chandler unanimously supported by the work council called for the idea of establishing an “apparatus for the purpose of having a Pan-African Festival of World African Arts, during the year 1971; preferably it would be held in Africa” (AC 217). Though this idea did not immediately materialize, many of those present at the Creativity work council would go on to support the North American Zone committee for FESTAC held in Nigeria in 1977.

In concluding his remarks before the Creativity work council, Madhubuti identified one of the underlying premises of the Congress and Black cultural nationalism in general: “the family is the foundation of the nation….” (AC 211). It was from this assumption that most Black cultural nationalists formulated their ideas about gender roles, developing a sexist division of labor, particularly in terms of what responsibilities men and women held in the “national” liberation struggle. Though Karenga’s ideological imprint was rather ubiquitous in many of the presentations and in the overall structure of CAP, his positions on gender were most apparent at the Social Organization work council led by Sister Amina Baraka (Sylvia Robinson). Moreover, this was one of the few spaces at the entire Congress where Black women were able to assert any form of “leadership.” While Amiri Baraka later claimed that it was because of Amina’s refusal to

\(^{17}\) See the editorial for *Black Books Bulletin*, 1.1, (Chicago: The Institute of Positive Education, Fall 1971).
blindly follow Karenga that he began to rethink his own sexism and male chauvinism, during her coordinator’s statement at the Congress’s founding, it is clear that CAP would simply incorporate most of the conservative and patriarchal sentiments on gender promoted by the Us Organization and CFUN, initially published in The Quotable Karenga in 1967. She begins by suggesting that the “natural role” of Black women is to be “complementary” to Black men. For Amina Baraka, this complementarity was spelled out in Karenga’s sexist assertion that “What makes a woman appealing is femininity and she can’t be feminine without being submissive” (AC 177). She goes on to explicate:

Defining submissiveness in the role of the Black woman we are talking about submitting to your natural roles, that is understand[ing] that it will take work and study in areas that deal specifically in things that women are responsible for. Such as Maulana teaches inspiration, education and social development of the nation” (AC 177).

Not only were Black women expected to submit to the so-called “natural” leadership and authority of Black men, but in each of the areas that women had responsibility for: “inspiration, education and social development,” the notion of Black patriarchy was reinforced.18

Delivering a position paper on “The Black Family,” Sister Akiba ya Elima went further in articulating the “natural” subordination of Black women. Her paper employs some of the most reactionary reasoning for why Black men should be the unquestioned rulers of Black households and by extension a Black nation, suggesting this was understood as part of their “African personality.” Elima asserts, “We understand that it is and has been traditional that the man is the head of the house. He is the leader of the house/nation because his knowledge of the world is broader, his awareness is greater, his understanding is fuller and his application of this information is wiser.”19 By

supporting the presumption of male intellectual superiority based upon African personality (although Elima, Karenga, Amina and Amiri Baraka and others would claim these differences were not a matter of superiority or inferiority, but rather complementarity), she reifies one of the major shortcomings of Black cultural nationalism, which was its penchant for unapologetic male chauvinism and sexism. While there was no open discussion of sexuality at the Social Organization work council or any other workshop at CAP, there is nevertheless an unquestioned heterosexism in the discourse of “family as the foundation of the nation.” One is left to ponder, if heterosexual Black women were encouraged to be submissive, where did Afro-descendant lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people “fit” in this vision of nationalism? Though Amiri and Amina Baraka and other nationalists at the Congress of Afrikan People attempted to radicalize Kawaida by incorporating the theories of Pan-African socialists, such as Amilcar Cabral, Julius Nyerere, Sekou Touré, Kwame Nkrumah, and others, which later led CAP to reconsider its relationship to women’s liberation as it moved politically to the left, in 1970, its articulation of Pan-African Nationalism was woefully problematic and narrow in terms of gender and sexuality politics.

From the SOBU Newsletter to the African World: Revolutionizing the Pan-African Student Intelligentsia

Many of the Pan-African nationalists who attended CAP recognized the importance of creating alliances with the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and other Black left organizations. Unfortunately, few of the resolutions or actions at the 1970 Congress, the Gary Convention or African Liberation Day in 1972 identified Black workers as a social force capable of leading the Black liberation movement. Instead, Black nationalist intellectuals, politicians, community activists and students formed the bulk of the leadership at the aforementioned gatherings. However, not long after its
founding in May 1969, SOBU, which in April 1972 became Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOBU), led by Nelson Johnson, Mark Smith, Sandi Smith (then Neely), Tim Thomas and Owusu Sadakai of the Malcolm X Liberation University (MXLU) in Greensboro, North Carolina, along with their publications SOBU Newsletter (1970-1971) and The African World (1971-1975), emerged as one of the first Pan-African nationalist organizations to feature consistent coverage of Black workers movements in North America, Africa, and eventually the broader Third World. This coincided, and in many ways precipitated, the organization’s ideological move toward Marxism-Leninism. What is more, SOBU/YOBU’s shift leftward had a definite effect on the entire Black liberation movement, most specifically activists on the Black cultural nationalist pole, such as Amiri Baraka and Newark CAP.

SOBU evolved out of the radical student movement networks established by SNCC and the struggles for Black Student Unions and Black Studies programs throughout the United States. Its primary base was in Greensboro at North Carolina A & T, and it sought to mobilize and lead an effective international student movement, whose ideological orientations were Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and Socialism. With these perspectives, SOBU leadership saw no contradictions with simultaneously supporting African liberation struggles on the continent and in the Americas, and it actually held that Black liberation in North America was predicated on the liberation of Africa from European colonialism. Just as SNCC activists had developed the Pan-African Skills Project and Drum and Spear Bookstore, which built direct links with progressive African governments, SOBU established a Pan-African Medical Program providing Southern African liberation movements, as well as community health centers in the U.S., with vitally needed medical supplies, tools, and money.  

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In addition to these programs that connected SOBU’s Pan-Africanist and nationalist tendencies, it also developed a Speakers’ Bureau featuring stalwarts of the Black Arts movement. Cultural workers such as Jayne Cortez, Sam Anderson, Johari Amini, Haki Madhubuti, Etheridge Knight, Keorapetse Kgositsile, John O. Killens, Carolyn Rodgers and Carol Freeman all agreed to lecture and perform for the student radicals.\(^{21}\) Though SOBU emphasized political and economic forms of struggle, as opposed to cultural activism, its Speakers’ Bureau illustrated the importance of progressive creative intellectuals in consciousness-raising and community outreach. In fact, one of the main workshop sessions at its first national conference in April 1970 was “The Role of Art in the Black Revolution,” featuring poet and jazz critic A.B. Spellman and singer Bernice Reagon Johnson, then of the Harambee Singers. Sonia Sanchez, Ebon Dooley of OBAC, and Sarah Webster Fabio also treated conference participants to poetry performances.\(^{22}\) Moreover, Kgositsile would maintain a close relationship with the organization by conducting poetry workshops and book readings at the SOBU-affiliated Uhuru Bookstore, while he taught at North Carolina A & T.\(^{23}\)

One vehicle in which SOBU/YOBU directly expressed a proactive form of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle was through its publication of *SOBU Newsletter/The African World*. While these were not formal “literary/cultural” productions in the same manner as *Black World, Black Dialogue*, or the *Journal of Black Poetry*, they did include essays, occasional pieces of poetry, and reviews of books and films. This was in addition to thorough reporting on individuals, organizations, and events of relevance to Pan-Africanism and the African world. The initial release of *SOBU Newsletter* as a bi-weekly publication began on October 17, 1970, and although it clearly did not have the

\(^{22}\) “Integrity of Black Colleges Urged,” *San Francisco Sun Reporter*, 2 May 1970, p. 4.
\(^{23}\) “South African Born Poet Keorapetse Kgositsile Read works by himself and other Black poets at a regular Saturday afternoon session at the Uhuru Bookstore in Greensboro, NC.” *The African World*, 1 April 1972, 5.
same distribution networks as *The Black Scholar, Black World, or The Black Panther*, its regional orientation on the South and radical commitment to Pan-Africanism, the Black student and youth movements, and burgeoning Black workers struggles make it an essential source for politico-cultural and historical study of the Afro-North American liberation movement of the early 1970s. In addition to the wealth of information and news stories on these struggles, *SOBU Newsletter/The African World* initiated a series of features that concentrated on ideological/theoretical issues and political education that resonated with intellectuals and activists beyond its organizational sphere.

For example, starting with its first issue, each printing featured a bi-weekly editorial; a political essay/polemic by Nelson Johnson, SOBU/YOBU’s national chairman (1969-1973) entitled “The Struggle in Perspective;” and another section called “Land: The Basis for the Struggle,” exploring a different African “nation” to educate the organization’s readership about the country’s resources, political struggles, and importance to Afro-North Americans. Building on the theories posited by Kwame Nkrumah, Malcolm X, Kwame Ture and other Pan-Africanists about the necessities of establishing a liberated “land-base” in Africa from which to launch a broader African revolution, SOBU/YOBU argued that “Land is the basis of all life. It is the basis of freedom and independence.”

For a brief time, the newspaper featured a section called “The Pan-African Dictionary,” which explained commonly utilized political terms, such as “colonialism,” “neocolonialism,” “revolution,” and others. However, in 1972, the section “The Political Cookbook,” would replace “The Pan-African Dictionary” as SOBU/YOBU initiated more Marxist-Leninist ideological education exploring terms such as

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24 “Land: The Basis for the Struggle,” *SOBU Newsletter*, 17 October 1970. As the organization moved leftward, it instituted a section called “Worldview,” which supplanted the “Land” feature. “Worldview” focused on other Third World struggles outside Africa, beginning with a brief discussion of the “Democratic Republic of Vietnam,” in the August 19, 1972 issue of *The African World*. SOBU/YOBU now contended that “a study in political economy points to the fact that land is the basis of revolution where it exists as the essential means of production... But where land or feudal relations have [been] replaced by capital labor relations then this theory no longer applies” (19).
“materialist,” “wage slave,” “petit bourgeois,” and “the proletariat.” By far, the feature that best demonstrates the organization’s left turn and support for Black workers struggles was the August 19, 1972 introduction of “The Point of Production” column. Posing the questions, “Who will produce and who will control? Who will provide and who will benefit? Who will work and who will profit?” the bi-weekly segment focused on African People...Black Workers, the laborers of this world. What is the point of production, of capitalism, of imperialism, of all this slavery? And WHO is at the point? ... in the mill, in the plant, in the field? That’s what this column’s about. Check it out. You be readin’ ‘bout yourself.”

Despite the charges by Black cultural nationalists, such as Haki Madhubuti and Kalamu y Salaam that the move leftward of some Pan-Africanists was as a result of them adopting “white ideology,” it is clear that SOBU/YOBU’s shift was a direct result of it engaging the material conditions of Afro-North Americans and African liberation movements. In fact, beginning with the premier issue of SOBU Newsletter, the organization covered the protracted struggle of blind Black workers in Greensboro and the exploitation they faced at Skilcraft Industries, an alleged “charity” that hired disabled workers to produce brooms, mops and other household items. This led to the self-organization and strike among the blind workers to improve their working conditions beginning in October 1970. Supported by SOBU activists and the Greensboro Association of Poor People (GAPP), the strike lasted into 1971 and included a Christmas secondary boycott of Greensboro businesses. By 1973, the blind Black workers at Skilcraft had succeeded in organizing Independent 920 Industries of the Blind Union, one of the few self-organized and independent unions representing disabled Afro-North American workers. Not only did SOBU’s strike support and its coverage of the struggles of these disabled workers in SOBU Newsletter highlight the organization’s recognition of the intersection of race and class in the lives of Black workers, but it also elevated the

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plight of disabled workers into a regional and national light that few other Black nationalist or Pan-Africanist formations matched.26

By closely examining SOBU Newsletter/The African World, it is evident that the organization’s involvement in workers’ struggles and its concentration on revolutionary African intellectuals and liberation movements precipitated its move toward Marxism-Leninism. Thus, in distinction to the explicitly Maoist trajectory that the Black Panther Party and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers took to Marxism, SOBU/YOBU followed the paths of African Marxists such as Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, Sekou Touré, and the revolutionary struggles of FRELIMO. This was mainly as an attempt to reconcile its initial ideological tendencies of nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and socialism, with an overt analysis of class struggle. While Owusu Sadaukai’s sojourn with FRELIMO guerrillas in 1971 and his six-part series reporting the trip published in The African World had a definite influence on SOBU/YOBU, Nelson Johnson argues that Mark Smith and Sandi Neely (later Smith), two of SOBU’s founding members were early proponents of incorporating a stronger working-class focus into the formation’s ideological and programmatic theory and praxis. Heightening the internal ideological contradictions was SOBU’s close relationship to the Pan-African Student Organization in the Americas (PASOA), a radical organization of continental African students studying at North American universities and colleges. On occasion, PASOA’s national secretariat Mainawa Kinyatti would be a guest columnist for Johnson’s “The Struggle in Perspective.”

Johnson recalls a specifically important moment involving

a Nigerian student named Jamie [from PASOA], who was a leader and was well studied in Marxism. With a certain tact and respect, he said that we in YOBU were somewhat infantile. A group of us called a special meeting with PASOA to debate in Marxism-Leninism. We had brilliant

people in YOBU, intellectuals from around the country who were well anchored in the nationalist idiom and politics. But Jamie and the good brothers from PASOA dismantled our theories...when the PASOA brothers left, we all looked at each other and said, “Damn, there is a lot of stuff we’ve got to look at.” We decided to study Marxism-Leninism.²⁷

It was though this experience of ideological struggle that many members of SOBU / YOBU leadership began to seriously interrogate the applicability of Marxism-Leninism to the Afro-North American liberation movement.

Equally vital influences on the formation’s move toward Marxism-Leninism were Kwame Nkrumah and his “student” Kwame Ture. In fact, Ture was one of the main conduits disseminating Nkrumahism to Pan-Africanists in North America during the 1970s. After his relocation to Guinea in 1969, he became a close confidant of Nkrumah, who remained in Conakry planning his hopeful return to power in Ghana prior to his death in 1972. Although Nkrumah’s vision of triumphantly reentering Accra and then establishing a United States of Africa never materialized, his contributions to the study of African revolutionary theory, anti-imperialism, neo-colonialism, and scientific socialism helped demonstrate the mutability of Marxism-Leninism to African liberation struggles.

Since many North American-based Pan-Africanists articulated variant forms of African Socialism (or Ujamaa) as an alternative economic project to Marxism and capitalism, Nkrumah’s critique of African Socialism (1967) demonstrates the inherent shortcomings of believing that reviving a “traditional African society” devoid of class and social stratification was possible. To the contrary, he argues, “there is no historical or even anthropological evidence for any such society.” Instead, Nkrumah asserts that “Socialism depends on dialectical and historical materialism,” or scientific socialism where the “means of production and distribution” are socialized.²⁸

Following his overthrow in 1966, Nkrumah remained extremely busy formulating and writing political tracts applying Marxism-Leninism to African social reality in such texts as *Handbook for Revolutionary Warfare* (1968), *Class Struggle in Africa* (1970) and *The Struggle Continues, I Speak of Freedom, and Revolutionary Path*, each published in 1973 after his death. It is from these various tracts that Ture (Carmichael) and others codified Marxism-Leninism-Nkrumahism. Though Nkrumahism never gained the ideological coherency or following that Mao Zedong Thought would garner amongst revolutionaries during the 1960s and 1970s, it nonetheless was a vital starting point for many Pan-Africanists turned Marxist-Leninists, and SOBU/YOBU was at the forefront of this trend. Nkrumahism specifically sought to explain the struggles against colonialism as a series of transitions from nationalism to Pan-Africanism to scientific world socialism. In opposition to many European Marxists who condemned nationalism and Pan-Africanism as national chauvinistic, Nkrumah described them as important stages in the development of a proletarian international movement led by workers and peasants from the Third World.29

Many Pan-Africanist formations in North American were introduced to Nkrumahism as a result of Kwame Ture. In a March 20, 1971 interview with Ture published in *SOBU Newsletter* he explicates “The Objectives of the African Revolution,” as articulated by Nkrumah. In fact, Nkrumah was the major reason that Ture even began to engage Marxism-Leninism in the first place, moving from the notion that “neither communism nor socialism speak to the problem of racism,” in 1968 to the position that race and class were “inextricably linked to one another” in 1971 (5). Two years later, Ture would take this reasoning a step further to suggest, “Any intelligent person knows

that in the modern world, the race struggle has become part of the class struggle.”  

Thus, the basic notion that Ture was attempting to impress upon the student revolutionaries in SOBU/YOBU was the importance of recognizing the dialectical relationship between Pan-Africanism and the class struggle.

At the same time, Ture warned African revolutionaries in the Americas against building coalitions with white workers—many of whom Nkrumah had described as succumbing to “embourgeoisment” (the appropriation of bourgeois worldviews)—“or a departure from the nationalistic struggle and the Pan-African perspective” (5). Moreover, he noted that Marx and Lenin did not invent communism or scientific socialism, but rather they observed “economic forces” at work in Europe and wrote about them. Similarly, Nkrumah made observations about economic phenomena in Africa, which had been exacerbated by the advent of European colonialism and imperialism. While capitalist expropriation was the primary reason for the expansion of European colonial powers into the African continent, they subsequently codified a series of racialized justifications for their plunder, exploitation and oppression. This fact made it essential for Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora to dislodge the colonial and imperialist forces from Africa by unifying the continent under scientific socialism, predicated on the construction of a land-base. These ideas definitely had a direct effect on radical activists in SOBU.

As chairman of SOBU/YOBU, Nelson Johnson had arguably the most immediate ideological impact on the organization. His bi-weekly column “The Struggle in Perspective,” is an important barometer on the theoretical development of its activists. This is especially true in terms of the formation’s reorientation toward Marxism-Leninism. In his April 17, 1971 essay, “Developing Effective Cadres,” written a month after Ture’s

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interview, Johnson discussed the Leninist notion of establishing SOBU as a series of regional cadres, with the ultimate objective of liberating and unifying “Mother Africa under scientific socialism.” Though the organization had described itself as “socialist” from the beginning, its main description of this was Ujamaa (African Socialism). However, following the interview with Ture, SOBU now began to consider scientific socialism as the only liberating tendency for Africans. Three months later, Johnson wrote the essay “Pan-Africanism and the Class Struggle,” which clearly builds upon Nkrumahism as interpreted by Ture:

Because of the nature of African subjugation in the world today, we are forced out of sheer necessity to deal with both class and race. We see, first of all, that we are oppressed as people; that is, African people are victims of the European developed system of racism. And secondly, we find that around the world Africans are ruthlessly exploited by the European developed system of capitalism. It is important, therefore, that Pan-Africanists do not become partisan to arguments which imply an either-or situation concerning these two issues.32

For Johnson and other cadre in SOBU/YOBU, this meant that applying Marxism to the Pan-African struggle was important, but it had to be “scientifically” applied to the specificities of the African revolution.33 There was even a class-based rationale behind changing the name of SOBU Newsletter to The African World with the August 7, 1971 issue as well as the organization’s name from SOBU to Youth Organization of Black Unity in 1972. Identifying the importance of moving from a student-oriented newsletter to a fully developed newspaper, SOBU editor Milton Coleman argued “there is no room for the old-bourgeoisie attitudes, among them student elitism. The revolutionary intelligentsia and other parts of the middle-class must in fact commit suicide as a class and join the making of a totally revolutionary society.”34

33 This notion was developed further in Johnson’s pieces “Consciousness and Revolution,” The African World, 18 September 1971, p. 4 and “The Necessity of Socialism,” The African World, 30 October 1971, p. 4.
SOBU/YOBU leaders Johnson, Tim Thomas and Mark Smith operationalized the organization’s ideological development at a series of regional conferences in late 1971. While still defining itself as a Pan-Africanist organization, the leadership spent considerable time articulating the centrality of class struggle to the overall Pan-African liberation movement. Thomas and Smith each discussed the class contradictions within African communities and the fact that the common links between Africans on the continent and Diaspora are “slavery, feudalism and capitalism,” which “feed on the robbery and exploitation of surplus value and capital accumulation.” It was therefore necessary to combat capitalism, and its international manifestation, imperialism in addition to fighting racism and white supremacy. Johnson reiterated his previous idea that SOBU should develop along the lines of regional “working cadres” that could later be constituted as an “independent Black political party.”35 In April 1972, SOBU held its first National Assembly where politically advanced “student activists gathered to begin cadre development.” It also established a Central Committee, political education, a SOBU book club and other programmatic components to initiate the process of becoming a political party.36

Ideological struggle and the scientific application of socialism became a recurring theme in Johnson’s bi-weekly political essays. A particularly Marxist tendency is evident in a series of four “The Struggle in Perspective” entries in April and May 1972. His “Colonialism and Nationalism,” (April 15, 1972); “The Nature of Capitalism,” (April 30, 1972); “Monopoly and Imperialism,” (May 9, 1972); and “Capitalism and Black Nationalism,” (May 27, 1972), each applied basic Marxist-Leninist principles to the Pan-African liberation struggle. One of the more important yet contentious (to cultural nationalists) points he raised in “The Nature of Capitalism” argues that racism was a

historical product of capitalist accumulation, and originated as a justification for enslavement. This did not mean that he now believed class struggle was the sole position that African anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist formations needed to take, even though Blacks made up a large proportion of industrial workers. To the contrary, Johnson described the vast majority of western white workers as suffering from Nkrumah’s notion of “embourgeoisment” and thus constituted Lenin’s “labor aristocracy.” Therefore, Black workers, students, and revolutionary intellectuals needed to simultaneously maintain a commitment to both national liberation and class struggle. It was these revolutionary nationalist concepts that constituted the foundation of SOBU/YOBU’s early organizing for an eventual political party.37

SOBU would also advocate the building of a Black political party at the historic National Black Political Convention (NBPC) in March 1972. The urgency of the Convention was spelled out in the Gary Declaration, drafted by Vincent Harding and Bill Strickland of the Institute for the Black World (IBW) in Atlanta, Georgia. A number of important projects came out of the Gary Convention such as the National Black Agenda and the National Black Political Assembly, which was supposed to serve as a pre-party formation. However, for many petit bourgeois elected officials, these endeavors were too radical. Manning Marable (1991) explains how shortly after the NBPC, the Congressional Black Caucus, which had been one of the main sponsors of the event, immediately repudiated the Black Agenda demonstrating the severe contradictions of all-class Black united fronts.38 Nevertheless, the NBPC was one of the most representative gatherings of the diverse political alignments within Afro-North America. Building upon a constellation of meetings that developed from the Congress of Afrikan People (CAP) two

years earlier, the NBPC attracted over 8,000 participants, with 4,000 of them voting
delegates from across North America.

As head of NewArk CAP and a rising figure in Black nationalist politics, Amiri
Baraka maintained considerable influence over the proceedings. What is more, his
leadership at the NBPC illustrated the hegemony of Black cultural nationalism as a
dominant ideology amongst large sectors of Afro-North American intellectuals,
politicians, students, and workers. While Baraka, Representative Charles Diggs from
Detroit and Mayor Richard Hatcher from Gary, Indiana, presided over the Convention,
other “notable” personalities who attended were Rev. Jesse Jackson, Betty Shabazz,
Julian Bond, Louis Farrakhan, Carl Stokes, Barbara Jordan, Walter Fauntroy, Vincent
Harding, Bill Strickland, Ronald Dellums, Coleman Young, Ron Daniels, Ron Walters,
Nelson Johnson, Owusu Sadaukai, Coretta Scott King, Richard Roundtree and Issac
Hayes. Moreover, the Gary Convention marked the first time that officials of the Black
Panther Party would participate in a nationalistic Black political event of this magnitude,
with Bobby Seale presenting at one of the workshops. Seale’s presence at the NBPC
occurred after Huey Newton had retrenched the BPP back to Oakland in order to focus
on its Survival Programs and electoral politics, renounced any talk of “picking up the
gun,” and reconsidered the possibilities of all-class Black united fronts.39

Since the ultimate focus of the NBPC was Afro-North American political
empowerment, this area is most thoroughly developed in the Black Agenda. As a result,
it is weak in terms of economic and cultural issues. Besides the poor people’s platform
formulated by the National Welfare Rights Organization (NRWO), and the realization that
“American capitalism has obviously been built upon this exploitation of Black people,”
there were few concrete plans for countering the exploitative U.S. economic system.

39 Huey Newton, “All Black People Got to Seize the Time for Unity! The Entire Community Will Decide the
Beyond demanding reparations, establishing a Black United Fund and Black consumer cooperatives, the most delegates would commit to were the “exploration of alternative forms of economic organization and development of an economic system that promotes self-reliance, cooperative economics, and people ownership and control of means of production and distribution of goods.”\(^{40}\) Not only does the *Black Agenda* remain vague about the realities of U.S. monopoly capitalism and the necessary strategies to overthrow it, but also the document made little consideration of the super-exploited position of Black workers within North American society. Rather, the leadership and orientation of the NBPC and the NBPA remained Black nationalist intellectuals, petit bourgeois politicians, and liberal/moderate civil rights figures.\(^{41}\) As a result, the lack of a working-class perspective would come to a head at the National Black Political Assembly in 1974, when the then left-leaning Baraka and Sadaukai pressed the issue of class struggle more forcefully than had been done in 1972.\(^{42}\)

**“Has International Black Consciousness Arrived?”**

Despite the glaring shortcomings of the NBPC, SOBU/YOBU and other left nationalists maintained tacit support for the *Black Agenda*. Though the overwhelming ideological and strategic control of the Convention was held by “reformists” elements, as opposed to revolutionaries, the most progressive tendency to emerge from the NBPC and Agenda was serious support for African liberation struggles and Pan-Africanism in general. An article in the April 15, 1972 issue of *The African World* asked “Has International Black Consciousness Arrived?” describing the series of resolutions in the

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\(^{41}\) Vince Edan of the African People’s Party criticized this social formation as a “new class” developed “from those who accumulated the most political resources and can command the direction of our struggle,” see, “Gary Convention-Another View,” *The African World*, 27 May 1972, p. 5.

The progressive resolutions and action agenda sought to influence U.S. foreign policy in African and the Third World; support liberation struggles in Southern Africa (and Guinea Bissau/Cape Verde) as well as Vietnam and the Middle East; establish "programs of cooperation and development designed to stress the interdependence of African freedom with Black liberation in the United States;" view Tanzania and the Peoples Republic of China as models for growth in the Third World; support self-determination for Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Washington DC, and other colonies of the U.S.; and demand an end to the economic blockade of Cuba and occupation of Guantanamo Bay. Delegates at the NBPC also supported the Organization of African Unity’s condemnation of Israeli expansionism and occupation of Palestinian territories, calling for self-determination for Palestine. In addition to an anti-busing resolution passed by the delegates, the criticism of Israel and support for Palestinian liberation led many moderate and liberal politicos to denounce the *Black Agenda*. Unfortunately, this controversy overshadowed most accounts of the progressive anti-imperialist and Pan-Africanist stance taken by members of the NBPC.

Finally, the *Black Agenda* gave unequivocal support to the planned African Liberation Day mobilization scheduled for May 27, 1972 in Washington DC and San Francisco. Even more than the NBPC with its 8,000 attendees, the ALD-72 and the following year’s ALD-73 would demonstrate the international consciousness and popular support that solidarity with African liberation had garnered since 1970. With nearly 50,000 people of African descent marching in 1972 and close to 100,000 the following year, African Liberation Day became two of the largest “independent” mobilizations of

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44 *Black Agenda*, p. 15-16.
Afro-North Americans in solidarity with Africa. Moreover, from the activist networks established in the planning of the first ALD, a new anti-imperialist formation soon came into existence known as the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), which would become the site of serious ideological struggle over tactics and strategies.⁴⁶

The immediate idea behind the ALD originated from Owusu Sadaukai of the Malcolm X Liberation University and SOBU/YOBU. In 1971, Sadaukai, along with Afro-North American filmmakers Bob Fletcher and Robert Van Lierop were extended the opportunity to visit FRELIMO liberated territory in Mozambique. As some of the first Afro-North Americans in the area, Sadaukai documented his experiences with a series of essays and photos for The African World, while Fletcher and Van Lierop produced the documentary film entitled A Luta Continua (The Struggle Continues) in 1972. Sadaukai’s six-part series of essays entitled “Inside Liberated Mozambique,” were vital in educating Africans in North America about the realities of revolution, national liberation and class struggle in Africa. In addition to the influence that Kwame Nkrumah, Kwame Ture and members of the PASOA had on SOBU’s move to the left, Sadaukai’s trip would have a marked effect on the formation’s and his own Pan-African politics of cultural struggle as he too began to shift leftward after experiencing actual African revolutionary struggle first hand.

Exactly one month before the ALD-72 mobilization took place Pan-Africanists lost one of their foremost theorists, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Despite the short time between his passing and the May 27 demonstrations, ALD organizers agreed to hold the protests in his honor. The high level of anti-imperialist consciousness that Nkrumah evoked in Afro-North American activists and creative intellectuals is captured in a poem performed by Haki Madhubuti (then Don L. Lee) called “Rise Vision Comin’: May 27, 1972,” at the ALD

⁴⁶ See, Wilkins’s chapter four of In the Belly of the Beast for an extended discussion of the African Liberation Support Committee, pp. 117-175.
observations in Washington DC. In it, he criticizes petit bourgeois Black leader Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, by asserting that he and his integrationist ilk were apologetic supporters of U.S. imperialist expansion in Africa:

- think him Gulf Oil, IBM or GM the way he talk about industrializing Afrika
- If they took the water faucet from him he’d die of water-freeze
- think him Dow Chemical or the Pentagon the way he talk about arming Afrika
- but we goin a need mo than wine bottles, promise & ray gun dreamin
- think him Harvard or MIT the way he talk about educating Afrika couldn’t even teach a day care center if it was already taught.

Rather than focus his criticisms on an abstract or nebulous “white” oppressor, Madhubuti identifies the corporate/monopoly capitalist forces at work in Africa. What is more, he observes how petit bourgeois Afro-North Americans supported these imperialist entities, such as Gulf Oil, IBM, GM, and Dow Chemical. However, Madhubuti views a new “world comin rise” in the form of African liberation movements like FRELIMO, SWAPO, PAIGC and CAP in North America.

- u dynamite Musi where did u arrive from Kikuyu where u been hidin Rastafarian which way SWAPO what universe did u crash thru NewArk call u speed speeda make yr own gas create yr own energy did an escape hatch into us rise redirectin our focus callin ourselves AFRIKANS callin ourselves AFRIKAN men & women callin ourselves builders of the FIRST callin ourselves stylers of tomorrow: the shape to come shaper … can’t stop new risin right talkin good doin it gettin it done Afrikans can’t stop organizing builders of righteousness pull the fight together Guinea-Bissau we with u southern Sudan fight on runnin wise Mozambique jump quick lightning FROLIZI teach Nyerere watch our backs Osagyefo guide our future Lumumba describe our enemies Garvey we’re coming Touré coming PAIGC goin to surprise the world
Here, Madhubuti engages a proactive form of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. Not only does he recognize the historical and cultural linkages between Africans on the continent and those in the Diaspora, but he also calls for solidarity and direct intervention by Afro-North Americans into the African liberation struggles. Though the first step of this “rise vision comin’” necessitates Afro-descendants in the Americas seeing their liberation movements as interrelated to those in Africa, for Black Americans to simply label themselves “Afrikans” does little to alleviate the suffering, oppression, and exploitation of Africans anywhere. Instead, it is imperative that backers of African liberation on both sides of the Atlantic “pull the fight together” by moving beyond “fast-talk” and “Harvard rhetoric” to materially supporting the armed struggles on the continent.47

While there was a general anti-imperialist sentiment evident at this first African Liberation Day mobilization, the concept “unity without uniformity” popularized at the Gary Convention remained intact throughout ALD-72. In fact, the diversity in ideological and organizational perspective on display in Washington DC and San Francisco was crystallized at the first official meeting of the ALD Coordinating Committee in early 1972 called by Sadaukai, Florence Tate and Cleveland Sellers. Supporting them were Amiri Baraka of CAP, Huey Newton and Ericka Huggins of the Black Panther Party, Nelson Johnson of SOBU/YOBU, Gina Thornton of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Lucius Walker of the Inter-religious Foundation for Community Development (IFCD), Doug Moore of the DC Black United Front, Kwadwo Olu Akpan of the Pan-African Congress USA, Ron Daniels of the Mid-West Regional Coalition, Inez Reid of the Black Women’s Foundation (BWF) and Rosie Douglas of the Organization of Black People’s Union (OBPU). Also endorsing ALD-72 were H. Rap Brown, who at the

time was in prison, Angela Davis, Penny Jackson (George and Jonathan Jackson’s sister), Kwame Ture, Betty Shabazz, Vincent Harding, Nathan Hare, James Turner, Gene Locke, and Ruwa Chiri. Even though the bulk of the ALDCC were Black nationalists or socialists, Black elected officials such as Charles Diggs, Louis Stokes, John Conyers, Walter Fauntroy, and Julian Bond also threw their support behind the mobilization.\(^{48}\)

Coordinated ALD marches and rallies held in DC and San Francisco were simultaneously organized in Toronto, Dominica, Grenada and Antigua, illustrating an intensity of Pan-African solidarity not seen since the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. By far, the largest mobilization occurred in DC, which also held the most symbolic action with demonstrators beginning at Malcolm X Park, marching past the Portuguese, Rhodesian and South African embassies, as well as the U.S. State Department, and convening at the Washington Monument which activists renamed Lumumba Square. Along the way, speakers condemned U.S. imperialist support for the racist/fascist colonial regimes in Southern Africa.\(^{49}\) While some scholars have conflated the ALD solely to anti-apartheid protests against South Africa, the actual mobilizations were clearly anti-imperialist and demonstrated Afro-descendent support for armed liberation movements in Southern Africa and Guinea-Bissau/Cape Verde.\(^{50}\) Anti-imperialist sentiments were even sharper at the SF ALD mobilization where Bobby Seale, Walter Rodney, Angela Davis, Nelson Johnson, and David Sibeko of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania spoke. They were joined by SF councilman Willie Brown, Richard

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\(^{50}\) An example of narrowing the focus of ALD-72 is Nesbitt’s *Race for Sanctions*, which describes the event primarily as a march against apartheid. However, most organizers of the ALD and speakers were not just calling for an end to the system of apartheid, but the overthrow of white supremacist rule and imperialist collaboration. Moreover, in 1969, the ANC had committed itself to a “Total Liberation” struggle, which called for the ultimate establishment of a socialist government and the PAC Azania had already begun preparations for armed struggle. See, “P.A.C. Representative Explains: ‘Armed Struggle Necessary’,” *The African World*, 23 December 1973, p. 3.
Following the success of the first African Liberation Day, members of the ALDCC disbanded to form the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) as a permanent formation. As with the ALDCC, “unity without uniformity” was the dominant tendency despite the ideological diversity of organizers. It was agreed upon by participants that a progressive anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist Pan-African movement was necessary in order to support African liberation movements. They also elected Sadaukai as its first chairperson due to his international contacts with African liberation movements; Madhubuti was elected vice-chair, and the other national officials were Nelson Johnson, Husani Mweusi, Ron Walters, James Turner and Florence Tate. Though ALSC would later experience intense ideological struggle over the issues of which social class should lead, the 1972 “Statement of Purpose” maintained general support for an all-class Black united front:

We recognize the need to continue struggling in the Western Hemisphere; we also realize the importance and interrelationship of our fight here with that of our brothers and sisters in Southern Africa. Therefore, our struggle must be a unified and coordinated one in order to rid ourselves of oppression and to effectively fight for the independence of Africa and African peoples all over the world.

In addition to political education, organizing boycotts of Gulf Oil and other U.S. corporations that did business in Southern Africa, and raising funds for Africa liberation groups, the ALSC also produced a documentary film entitled Breaking the Chains of Oppression. The film depicts the interconnections between African and Afro-North American struggles, and highlights the ALD-72 mobilizations as an example of operational solidarity with the continent. When Sadaukai and Kwadwo Akpan traveled to

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51 “African Liberation Day,” The Black Panther, 3 June 1972, pp. 1-9; and Johnson, Revolutionaries to Race Leaders, pp. 143-144.

Tanzania and Nigeria in late 1972 they presented the film to African leaders, activists, workers and youth movements in both countries. It specifically became a form of political education for African youth on the continent about how the struggles of Black people in the Americas were related to those in Africa. For example, after showing a Swahili translation of the film to young people in Tanzania, Adisa Douglas, an Afro-North American teacher at the Tabora Girls’ Secondary School recognized that the “film has been affectively used as a tool not only to further the support of the liberation movements, but to further the understanding of the role African people outside of Africa can play in support of those movements.”

African Liberation Day 1973 illustrated the growing organizational and programmatic strength of ALSC. Looking to build upon the massive turn out of the previous year’s mobilization the formation’s national steering committee decided to “decentralize” the second demonstration. This helped enlarge the number of participants who could attend one of the coordinated events, while allowing local ALSC structures to make direct connections with issues in their communities to the broader African liberation struggles. As a result, close to 100,000 people of African descent gathered in locations from Atlanta to Oakland, Antigua to Montreal and many cities in between. ALSC organizers also reemphasized the anti-imperialist orientation of ALD with the theme: “THERE IS NO PEACE FOR AFRICAN PEOPLE, Africa is at War!” Despite the fact that President Richard Nixon had recently announced that a tentative peace settlement was reached in Southeast Asia, most African liberation activists witnessed the intensification of the wars on the continent. In order to move domestic support from the level of rhetorical solidarity and protests against U.S. government agencies and corporations, the ALSC also established the United African Appeal (UAA) to raise

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material support for the liberation movements. All told, the UAA collected $40,000 to
distribute between FRELIMO, PAIGC, ZAPU and UNITA.\textsuperscript{54} Writing in \textit{The African World},
YOBU chairman and ALSC national committee member Nelson Johnson, identified the
significance of ALD-73 as assisting in the “destruction of imperialism,” which in turn “will
have a significant effect on the struggle against domestic monopoly capitalism here in
North America.” However, illustrating his deepening anti-imperialist tendencies, Johnson
also suggests that this consciousness must grow to include opposition to imperialism in
Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.\textsuperscript{55}

A major example of the colonial-imperialist escalation of the wars in Africa was
the January 1973 assassination of the poet-revolutionary Amilcar Cabral of the PAIGC
by African agents of the Portuguese government. As the previous year’s mobilization
was dedicated to the memory of Nkrumah, ALSC activists paid homage to Cabral at
ALD-73. Next to Nkrumah and perhaps Nyerere, Cabral had been one of the most
popular revolutionary figures in the anti-imperialist struggles on the African continent. His
practical applications of Marxist-Leninist ideology to the material realities of Africans in
Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde became required tracts for Afro-North American
revolutionary nationalists and Third World Marxists. For instance, his 1970 speech
“National Liberation and Culture” at Syracuse University in memory of Eduardo
Mondlane, the assassinated leader of FRELIMO, was widely circulated throughout Black
activist-intellectual circles in the U.S. That same year, the radical Monthly Review Press
published \textit{Revolution in Guinea: Selected Texts} (1970), the first book length English
translation of his speeches and ideological formulations. These tracts focus theoretically

\textsuperscript{54} The largest gatherings were in Oakland, CA (10,000-12,000) and Antigua (8000). There were 4-5000
demonstrators in Detroit, Indianapolis, Newark, Washington DC, and Portland OR; 2,500-3,500 in Chicago,
NYC, Columbus, OH, Columbia, SC, and Raleigh, NC. In Houston, Boston, New Orleans, Nashville,
Rochester, NY, Los Angeles, and Toronto 1,000-1,500 people attended; and 700-800 marches gathered in
Montreal, Winnipeg, Wilmington, DE, Denver, St. Paul, New Haven, Buffalo, Atlanta, and Philadelphia. See,
on the dynamics of the national liberation struggle in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, as well as the complex relationship of cultural resistance, cultural development, and class struggle. In “National Liberation and Culture,” Cabral asserts,

The objective of national liberation, is therefore, to reclaim the right, usurped by imperialist domination, namely the liberation of the process of development of national productive forces. Therefore, national liberation takes place when, and only when, national productive forces are completely free of all kinds of foreign domination. The liberation of productive forces and consequently the ability to determine the mode of production most appropriate to the evolution of the liberated people, necessarily opens up new prospects for the cultural development of the society in question, by returning to that society all its capacity to create progress.”

For Cabral, cultural development was dialectically related to the “liberation of productive forces,” which was the ultimate objective of the PAIGC’s revolutionary struggle. Viewing national liberation as the fight against “colonial-imperialist domination,” Cabral and the Party did not blindly assume that all colonized Africans could be united. Rather, due to colonial domination, a small percentage of petit bourgeois Africans had been “assimilated/schooled” by the Portuguese and embraced much of the political, cultural and economic outlook of their European oppressors. What is more, colonialism also exacerbated social hierarchies by codifying traditional elite groups (chiefs, nobility, religious figures) as a native “ruling class.” Cabral argues that some in the ruling class may support the national liberation struggle. However, since they often maintained “deep down the cultural prejudices of their class, individuals in this category generally see in the liberation movement the only valid means, using the sacrifice of the masses, to eliminate colonial oppression of their own class and to re-establish in this way their complete political and cultural domination of the people.” In order to avoid this, he contends, liberation movements needed to be organized around the popular cultures of

the “rural and urban working masses, including the nationalist (revolutionary) ‘petit bourgeoisie’ who have been re-Africanized or who are ready for cultural re-conversion.”

Cabral further influenced radical Pan-Africanists when he visited Lincoln University in October 1972 to receive an honorary degree. A number of ALSC national and regional coordinators attended his lecture, such as Sadaukai, Baraka, Tanya Russell from the Bay Area ALSC, Mark Smith of YOBU, Ron Daniels, Charles Diggs, and Ruwa Chiri. Cabral’s speech “Identity and Dignity in Struggle,” which later became part of his Return to the Source publication in 1973, built upon his earlier assertion of the potential revolutionary trend in African cultures being that among the rural and urban working class. Critiquing the notion that liberation movements were predicated on a “cultural renaissance,” Cabral suggested that the African masses “are the repository of the culture and at the same time the only group who can preserve and build it up and make history.” Thus, the only way that assimilated intellectuals and professionals could truly escape cultural alienation was through re-conversion or “returning to the source” of their African culture located among the working masses of the people. Cabral’s argument that the basis of any national liberation movement culture must be that of the rural and urban working class resonated with Afro-North American revolutionary nationalists and Marxists. What is more, his identification of the contradictions inherent in the African ruling and administrative/bureaucratic classes, as well as among many assimilated petit bourgeoisie professionals and intellectuals began to manifest themselves more concretely within Black communities as some Black elected officials and business people gained more administrative authority, while the material conditions of the masses of African descendants remained relatively unchanged.

57 Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture,” Ibid.
These contradictions would play themselves out in broad Pan-Africanist formations such as CAP and ALSC not long after ALD-73, leading to serious ideological struggles. As left tendencies within the ALSC represented by YOBU, Abdul Alkalimat’s Peoples’ College in Nashville, and the Black Workers Congress began to push a firmer anti-imperialist line, which included a call to focus their political struggles on the Black working-class, some cultural nationalists saw this as an attempt to “divide” the Pan-African liberation movement. At the same time, a number of outspoken Black nationalists began to rethink their opposition to scientific socialism, such as Baraka and Maulana Karenga. This resulted in a growing split within the cultural nationalist pole, which soon became extremely sharp between Baraka and Madhubuti, two of the most well known cultural workers from the 1960s, who turned political activists. While this contestation erupted publicly in 1974, after Madhubuti’s Institute for Positive Education (IPE) and Jitu Weusi’s (Les Campbell) The East Group pulled out of CAP, there were a number of earlier signs that ideological differences were hardening within the cultural nationalist tendency.59 One sign of Madhubuti and Baraka’s burgeoning divergence can be located in poems they each wrote in tribute to Cabral after his assassination. Madhubuti, who in 1973 had changed his name from Don L. Lee, wrote the poem “Spirit Flight Into the Coming” (1973), published in both the Black World and in his Book of Life released that year. Though his earlier poem in tribute to Nkrumah illustrated an overt criticism of imperialism, this piece focuses a more narrow critique upon the “shortcomings” of Afro-North Americans. It asserts that Black people “are a powerless, defenseless people lookin very good / and don’t even make the make-up we whiten our faces with.” His speaker goes on to add:

We sick because we don’t know who we are.
We sick because we don’t have a purpose in life.

59 Baraka admits that the growing ideological struggle between he, Madhubuti and Weusi had been brewing since he had become CAP chairperson in 1972. See, The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones, p.436.
We sick because we don’t have direction for ourselves.

Here, although Madhubuti’s speaker utilizes the collective “we” apparently including himself, he makes no distinction between the cultures of middle-class Afro-North Americans and that of the “rural or urban working masses” as Cabral described them. In the poet’s estimation, there was no Afro-North American “source” to return to. Thus, all Black people were “sick” because they supposedly lacked an identity, purpose, or direction. The potential “healers” of these maladies, he asserts, were the activists in the “Congress of Afrikan People,” whom he asks to “step in / refix the world…make the negro Black and Afrikan again—even if we don’t wanta be.” For Madhubuti, therefore, the primary form of struggle was subjective and oppression continued mainly because Blacks had assimilated “European/white American” values, whether it was attaining Ph.D.’s from white universities or “arguing the necessity of / Marx and Engels to empty bellied children.” Taking this problematic line of reasoning further, his speaker declares, “we slaves because we wanta be.” However, it was impolitic for Madhubuti to assume that any subjective redirection of consciousness would possibly lead to the liberation of people of African descent, without also confronting the objective systems of oppression and exploitation that limited the material conditions of the masses.

Then again, Madhubuti does assert the imperative of “work and study,” which he attributes to Baraka and CAP’s cultural nationalist project:

all that is good and accomplished in the world takes work
work is what we need an abundance of
work for a better value system work
work for ourselves like we work for general motors
like we work for integration, like we work for the son of mary work

teach one reach one work and study
study the math, the physics, the chemistry that is revolutionary
study the science of building that is revolutionary
study the inner workings of yr self that is revolutionary
think about building a liveable world that’s revolutionary
meditate on a new way of life that’s revolutionary
Though Madhubuti’s poem is addressed to an abstracted Afro-North American listener/reader, its critical and condescending tone ultimately obscures the larger socio-economic forces (capitalism and imperialism) at work. This elides the fact that in order for most Black working-class people to alter their internal/subjective perspectives there must also be changes in the external economic and political structures that oppress and exploit them. Moreover, this poem marks a turning away from the internationalist and anti-imperialist form of cultural struggle Madhubuti had engaged after the Pan-African Cultural Festival in 1969.\textsuperscript{60}

For Baraka, who in 1972 became national chairperson of CAP, he began to advocate the Nkrumahist formulation of nationalism, Pan-Africanism and scientific socialism as the formal ideology of the organization.\textsuperscript{61} In addition, Cabral had been an important radicalizing figure on the poet-activist’s ideological development, specifically causing him to recognize the contradictory nature of the Afro-North American petit bourgeoisie and its elected officials. Of particular concern to Baraka was the realization that Mayor Kenneth Gibson of Newark, whom he helped elect, was little better for the Black community than the city’s previous Italian American mayor. Not long after his election, Gibson demonstrated that his ultimate political allegiance was to the European-American capitalist class.\textsuperscript{62} Each of these issue are illustrated in a poem he composed following Cabral’s assassination entitled “Afrikan Revolution.” Initially published in the May 1973 issue of the \textit{Black World}, Baraka also released the poem as a small chapbook on his Jihad Press later that year. “Afrikan Revolution” demonstrates Baraka’s growing anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist position that he briefly attempted to reconcile with his waning support for Kawaida. While he did not publish many literary pieces in the early

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid}, p. 427.
1970s, as compared to the plethora of cultural production from 1964-1969, this poem documents his gradual shift leftward as he began to move from heavily metaphysical and mystical pieces about abstract “Blackness” in the late 1960s to concrete and material pieces about Black political struggle.

Baraka’s speaker begins “Afrikan Revolution” with a series of repetitions and an a-b-a-b-a-c-a-c rhyme pattern that evokes a melodic cadence:

Afrikan People all over the world
Suffering from white domination
Afrikan People all over the world
Trying to liberate their Afrikan nation(s)
Afrikan People all over the world
Under the yoke, the gun, the hammer, the lash
Afrikan People all over the world
Being killed & stifled melted down for the white boys cash.

In these first few lines, the speaker informs the reader of his Pan-Africanist sympathies as he describes the oppressed state of “Afrikan People all over the world." However, he then goes on to articulate a dialectical series of standpoints that “Afrikan People all over the world" exhibit/inhabit: “conscious, unconscious, struggling, sleeping / resisting, tomming, killing the enemy killing each other / Being hurt, surviving, understanding, held in ignorance. / Bursting out of chains, lying for Nixon, drowning colonialists / Being shot down in the street…” Where Madhubuti’s poem paints a rather one-dimensional image of “sick” African people, Baraka’s illustrates a nuanced and complex reality where some Black people were “sleeping” while others were “struggling.” He further differentiates his stance from Madhubuti’s by identifying external forces and systems of domination that impede the process of Black liberation:

All poverty sickness ignorance racism must be eradicated
Who ever pushes these plagues, them also must be eradicated
All capitalist, racists, liars, Imperialists. All who can not change they also must be eradicated, their lifestyle, philosophies habits, flunkies, pleasures, wiped out – eliminated
The world must be changed, split open and changed
Transformed, turned upside down.
No more Poverty!
No more dirty ragged black people, except from hard work

Focusing his criticism on both subjective and objective conditions, Baraka enunciates a revolutionary nationalist tendency that seeks to eradicate the interconnected forces of capitalism, racism, and imperialism. “Afrikan Revolution” does not solely comment on international liberation, but it also condemns the domestic policies and actors who oppress and exploit Afro-North Americans. Baraka’s speaker calls for “Death to the creators of unemployment,” and then ponders why someone like Richard Nixon was still alive after all the murders in Southeast Asia and the urban ghettos he was responsible for. The speaker then demands: “We need food. We need homes…We need work. We need education so / we can build houses and create work for ourselves…”

Though Baraka criticizes capitalism, racism and imperialism, he also asks why Afrikan people had not done more to stop and avenge the assassinations of their leaders: “Why is it Cabral, Lumumba, Nkrumah, Moumie, Malcolm, Dr. King, Mondlane, Mark Essex, all can be killed by criminals & the criminals are not hung from bridges?”

Here, he is making an explicit criticism of the racist-colonialist forces that carried out and benefited from these assassinations. However, by utilizing the term "criminal" instead of “white” he makes an implicit critique of the “ignorant / people of our own race” who actually committed the murders of Lumumba, Malcolm X, and Cabral. Thus, Baraka does not only condemn European and white American oppressors, but also the

Niggers, NeoColonized Amos & Andies
Everywhere in the African World…
Assassins masquerading as heroes
Butlers masquerading as presidents of
Afrikan & Asian & South Amerikan
Nations. They have made them Dough-Nations
So the white boy can make his bread…

These lines are important because they identify the neo-colonial and Third World collaborators with capitalism and imperialism, a grouping in which he would include the likes of Kenneth Gibson and other Black elected officials unwilling to sever their ties
with U.S. monopoly capitalism. The speaker does not try to hide the fact that a number of African and Third World leaders supported imperialist designs in order to enrich themselves. At the same time, Baraka does envision the “Afrikan Revolution” as an integral part of the “world revolution” of “yellow folks brown folks [and] red / folks.” While he believes it is vital to establish coalitions with other Third World peoples, the speaker suggests that Black revolutionaries should “first deal with us / Afrikan…” As with Madhubuti’s piece, this poem asserts that the important steps toward liberation are “Work & Study.” However, in addition to situating his examples of “work & study” in an anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist critique of Afrikan oppression and exploitation, Baraka concludes his poem with the proactive phrase of “Struggle & Victory!”

It is evident that Baraka’s involvement in the ideological struggles within the ALSC caused him to move to the left. And, while many scholars discuss his “oscillation” between Black cultural nationalism and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought (M-L-M) as being a product of his disenchantment with Black elected officials, such as Mayor Gibson, and his increasing study of African revolutionaries such as Nkrumah, Cabral, Nyerere, and Touré, an influence that also needs to be analyzed is that of Maulana Karenga, whom himself had come to reconsider the utility of Black cultural nationalism in the early 1970s. Although by 1971 Baraka had severed most personal ties with Karenga, the poet-activist nevertheless remained an “advocate” of Kawaida. In fact, Karenga would later insist that it was he who introduced a race/class analysis into Kawaida; and he also derided Baraka claiming that the poet’s conversion to M-L-M was

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64 In his “Report on the ALSC National Conference,” Phil Hutchings, formerly of SNCC, identifies Baraka’s dislike of Gibson, his study of Third World Marxists, especially Cabral, and he then briefly mentions Karenga’s embrace of certain Marxist tendencies as influencing the poet’s move toward Marxism-Leninism. However, since Hutchings had written his article in June 1974, he was unaware of the full transformation that Baraka would go through by 1975. See, The Black Scholar, (July-August 1974): 49-50.
due more to his lack of theoretical and political acumen than any actual studying.\textsuperscript{65} Nonetheless, for Karenga, his ideological transformation occurred following his arrest and imprisonment for kidnapping and torturing two Black women affiliated with the Us Organization.\textsuperscript{66} He remained in the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo from 1971 to 1975 where he too conducted serious study of Third World Marxists, such as Nkumah, Cabral, Touré and Mao, among others. From this study, he wrote a series of political essays sketching his “conversion” from cultural atavism to revolutionary socialism for \textit{The Black Scholar} and \textit{The African World} beginning in 1972. Indeed, the most well known (and usually the only sited) piece in this series is Karenga’s “Which Road: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Socialism?” from the October 1974 issue of \textit{The Black Scholar}, where he proclaims Socialism as the correct road to liberate the African masses.\textsuperscript{67}

However, Karenga wrote a number of other pieces that clearly illustrate the theoretical inspiration he received from Amilcar Cabral. His first essay, “Overturning Ourselves: From Mystification to Meaningful Struggle,” (October 1972) attempts to apply Cabral's theory of “re-conversion” to the Afro-North American context. His failure to observe class distinctions among Black Americans weakens his application since Cabral noted that “re-conversion” entailed petit bourgeois intellectuals and professionals “returning to the source” of their cultures, which existed among the popular culture of the “rural and urban working masses.” As had been Karenga’s contention since his founding of the Us Organization in 1965, he saw little positive in the mass culture of Afro-North Americans, believing instead that “re-conversion” meant grafting together an “African”

\textsuperscript{66} Imanu Clyde Halisi, “Maulana Ron Karenga: Black Leader in Captivity,” \textit{The Black Scholar}, (May 1972): 27-31. In his article, he questioned why there was no national/international defense committee or rallies in support of Karenga as there had been for other Black political prisoners. However, the violent abusive circumstances behind Karenga's arrest and imprisonment and the fact that his first wife testified against him made organizing a support committee rather difficult.
cultural identity from diverse cultural elements on the continent under the label of Kawaida.  

His next attempt at utilizing “re-conversion” theory was more successful, however. This came in the essay “A Strategy for Struggle,” which The Black Scholar published in November 1973. Furthermore, it was only after he accepted the reality of class stratification in Afro-North America that Karenga was able to credibly apply Cabral’s theory. In this essay, no longer did he assert that Black petit bourgeois “nationalist” intellectuals and activists were the primary harbingers of revolutionary culture, specifically those forms of grafted “African” cultural practices that had constituted most of Us’s organizational ideology and program. While he did find the space to reposition Kawaida as a distinctly “Afroamerican” ideology, he reinterpreted much of the Nguzo Saba to include support for socialist revolution and as a methodology to combat the “two evils—rational oppression and economic exploitation” (19).

In addition to his advocacy of a race/class analysis, two positions that Karenga took in this essay that were 180 degree turns from his earlier positions were on the role of Black women and Black workers in the liberation struggle. He now defined his earlier contention that women needed to be “submissive” and complementary (but not equal) to Black men as reactionary. Karenga also criticized the fallacies of there being a Black matriarchy and that Black women emasculated Black men: “Black women have always been equal to black men in oppression and resistance, in production as well as progressive thought and struggle and we are greatly unjust to ourselves to claim otherwise” (17). Situating his essay in a clear Third World Marxist context, he argues that Pan-Africanist social revolution necessitated an internationalist and left nationalist outlook. This movement needed to be an “anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and by extension

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anti-imperialist black united front made up of different class formations and social groupings and led by black workers” (20). Taking this line a bit further, Karenga emphasizes, “the essential and decisive role in struggle and history is that of black workers” (italics in original, 20). Here, he was directly supporting the ALSC’s “Statement of Principles” describing the formation as an anti-racist and anti-imperialist Black united front with Black workers as vanguard during its June-July 1973 meeting. However, the solid left ideological alignment would also result in heated internal debate within the organization that came to a head at the May 1974 ALSC national conference at Howard University entitled “Which Road Against Racism and Imperialism for the Black Liberation Movement.”

Much of the two-line ideological struggle that ensued within CAP, ALSC, and subsequently in the planning for the North American delegation to the Sixth Pan-African Congress (Six-PAC) in Tanzania was directly over the issue of whether class was a viable heuristic in which to analyze Black oppression and exploitation. Many Pan-African nationalists shared Karenga’s original resistance to the notion of social class as a prevalent factor in Afro-North American subjugation. Some also falsely associated calls for Black workers to take the lead of the liberation struggle with the old CPUSA dictum “Black and white workers unite and fight,” which was what Muhammad Ahmad, Saladin Muhammad, and Brother Safu (Winston Berry) of the All-African People’s Party asserted at the ALSC conference in 1974.

However, as one-time Pan-African nationalist formations like YOBU, Malcolm X Liberation University, and CAP, as well as spokespeople such as Nelson Johnson,

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70 For a good overview of the ideological struggle that took place at the ALSC Howard Conference in 1974, see the July 1974 special edition of The African World.
71 Though as a co-founder of the Revolutionary Action Movement, Ahmad had been one of the first Afro-North American radicals of the 1960s to articulate a revolutionary nationalist position incorporating a race and class analysis. However, by 1974, with the ascendance of a hard-line Black Marxist-Leninists tendency, it appeared that Ahmad had begun to deemphasize class struggle as relevant to Black liberation. See, “Position Statement of All-African People’s Party,” The African World, July 1974, p. 7.
Sadaukai, Baraka, Karenga, and the newly elected chairperson of ALSC Dawolu Gene Locke from Houston came to embrace Marxist-Leninist political tendencies predicated on the “leadership” of the Black working class, it threw much of the Black nationalist camp into disarray. As a result, many individual nationalists and chapters of the ALSC quit the organization and focused their attention on organizing the Sixth-PAC and other activities. A number of the Black nationalists who abandoned ALSC expressed their disaffection with the intensification of Marxist-Leninist ideological struggle by issuing their own rebukes in the form of essays published in journals such as *Black World, The Black Scholar, and Black Books Review*, among others. Three of the most polemical were Madhubuti’s “The Latest Purge” published in *The Black Scholar* (September 1974) and “Enemy: From the White Left, White Right and In-Between” published in the *Black World* (October 1974); and Kalamu y Salaam’s “Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories,” published in the *Black World* (October 1974). However, since these essays did not appear until after the Sixth Pan-African Congress, it is first important to discuss how that event heightened the contradictions between the two ideological poles.

While many scholars describe Sixth-PAC as the first Pan-African Congress on the African continent, this overlooks the inherent politico-cultural nature of the First Pan-African Cultural Festival held in Algiers five years earlier. But in terms of it being an “official” extension of the previous five PAC’s held intermittently between 1919 and 1945, then it is accurate to label this the first PAC on African soil. Held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from June 19-27, this Congress assembled over 600 delegates from most countries on the continent, representatives from the African liberation movements, and Afro-descendant participants from the Caribbean, Europe, the South Pacific, and the largest delegation at the event being Afro-North Americans. The Secretary General of the event was former SNCC activist Courtland Cox, and the North American Secretariat was composed of Sylvia Hill, James Turner, and Julian Ellison, though Hill asserts that

Three of the major points of struggle occurred during the planning of Six PAC. They involved the exclusion of left opposition forces from the Caribbean and elsewhere, such as historian Walter Rodney and writer Eusi Kwayana from Guyana, which also lead to the resignation of C.L.R. James as an international sponsor; the importance of establishing a permanent science and technology center; and the seating of delegates from Cuba and the Arab world. According to Modibo Kadalie each of these issues were directly related to class struggle. For example, he argues that left opposition formations in the Caribbean had been challenging what they viewed as rampant neo-colonialism and collaboration with imperialism among their national government officials.

A number of anti-imperialist groups, such as ASCRIA of Guyana, the National Union of Freedom Fighters and the National Joint Action Committee of Trinidad and Tobago, the New Jewel Movement of Grenada, and the United Front Against Imperialism of Jamaica established the Organizations of the Caribbean Revolutions and issued a “Joint Declaration” in December 1972. It argues that most “Caribbean regimes within the Community are all regimes of a bourgeoisie of a special type,” that had been utilizing their police and military forces in the suppression of “all those who stand for true independence, for an overthrow of the colonial society and for a socialization of the
economy and an end to imperialist penetration.”\textsuperscript{73} Its specific assertion that Guyana was “nursing and fattening” a “feudal capitalism” angered President Forbes Burnham, who despite his harassment and imprisonment of left opposition forces, had attempted to present his government as leading a revolutionary Pan-Africanist state. Though the initial call for Six-PAC described it as a “People’s Congress,” Burnham’s complaint to Nyerere and his TANU government led to the formal exclusion of “non-governmental” representatives from Black nation-states.\textsuperscript{74}

Regarding the ideological struggle over the establishment of a permanent science and technology center revolutionary Pan-African socialists believed it would only empower rightwing technocrats who would use the technology to oppress workers and the masses. Therefore, at the North American Region Planning Conference at Kent State University in May 1973, Black leftist intellectuals presented an amended resolution demanding that any development of a science or technology institute be utilized to (1) “unleash the revolutionary and creative instincts of workers and peasants”; (2) “to provide whatever training which might be deemed necessary to expedite and insure complete control of both the industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy by the workers and peasants”; and (3) “to facilitate socialist development in all respects of the economy so that all scientific and technological endeavors will serve the mass of the African people.”\textsuperscript{75} Finally, Kadalie describes the attempts by many Black cultural nationalists, led by Afro-Cuban Carlos Moore, to exclude representation of Cuban and

\textsuperscript{73} This Joint Declaration was composed at the Caribbean Unity Conference that occurred in April 1972 at Howard University, see, “The Joint Declaration of the Organization of the Caribbean Revolution,” December 1972, published in Kadalie, Internationalism, Pan-Africanism and the Struggle of Social Classes, pp. 613-615.


\textsuperscript{75} “Resolutions: Establishment of Science and Technological Institute,” in Internationalism, Pan-Africanism, and The Struggle of Social Classes, p. 616-620. Though the actual Resolutions on Science and Technology passed at the Sixth-PAC did not establish a permanent center, they did suggest that people of African descent take science and technology more important, and utilize them in “eliminating the capitalist mode of production and the capitalist production relations and values, and thereby building a socialist society based on equality, justice and the principles of socialist development,” in Resolutions and Selected Speeches from the Sixth Pan African Congress, (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1976): 211-212.
Arab delegates because they were “non-Black.” However, the intellectual forces on the political left challenged the narrow race-based definition of Pan-Africanism, asserting that if the concept was observed through a class-lens, then the material support the Cubans and Arabs in Algeria and elsewhere gave to African liberation movements was a better example of progressive Pan-African solidarity than anything Idi Amin in Uganda or Mobuto Sese Seko in Zaire had done for anti-imperialist struggles on the continent.76

Despite the fact that the majority of Afro-North Americans who attended Six-PAC were Black nationalists, the left progressive pole held the upper hand. This occurred because of the hegemonic dialectical materialist tendency that dominated the Congress, as speakers such as President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, President Sekou Touré (who did not attend but had a message read to the attendees), Amiri Baraka, Owusu Sadaukai, Marcelino dos Santos of FRELIMO, as well as a revolutionary communiqué from Walter Rodney all asserted that class was a determinant factor in African people’s exploitation and oppression.77 The “General Declaration” issued at Six-PAC suggests that the new stage of Pan-Africanism must essentially be a dynamic force for liberation of the colonized peoples as well as for the liberation of the oppressed peoples and classes. It articulates the “strategy of Revolutionary Pan Africanism” as being “defined in terms of the anti-imperialists, anti-colonialist, anti-neo-colonialist, anti-capitalist and anti-racist struggle that it considers to be a means of promoting democracy and developing a new society:

- a) The people must form the basis of this generalized struggle and the aspirations of the masses and the working classes must constitute the moving force behind it.
- b) It must be defined in terms of the class struggle at the national and international levels.

77 See, Resolutions and Selected Speeches from the Sixth Pan African Congress for the full speeches of each of these spokespeople: Nyerere, p. 3; Touré, p. 11; Rodney, p. 21; Santos/FRELIMO, p. 100; Sadaukai, p. 138; and Baraka, p. 171. Also see, Horace Campbell, Pan-Africanism: The Struggle against Imperialism and Neocolonialism, Documents of the Sixth Pan-African Congress. Toronto: Afro Carib Publications, 1975.
international level, as the rational basis for explaining and finding solution to social injustices, exploitation, oppression and racism.”

Although many supporters of cultural nationalism, Negritude and African communalism were alienated by this Marxian articulation of Pan-Africanism, Baraka (and the Congress of Afrikan People) would shift his ideological stance to align with the dominant international tendency. Upon returning from Tanzania, Baraka further distanced himself from his cultural nationalist past with a brief polemical essay of his own describing the Sixth Pan African Congress. He posits that the main ideological struggle at the event was between anti-imperialists and reactionary nationalists, which had begun at the May 1974 ALSC conference:

Basically it is the struggle between reactionary Nationalism, which pulls finally for Black Skin privilege as opposed to White and objectively seeks to cover the oppression of the Black NeoColonialists under the banner of Race, and supports capitalism and imperialism by dividing the anti-imperialist forces with useless nationalism and negative idealism against the anti-imperialist thrust of revolutionary socialism, which seeks to unite all who can be united in the ultimate struggle against imperialism and its by products, one of which is racism!  

In December 1974, Baraka issued “The Position of the Congress of Afrikan People,” which defined CAP’s new Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought orientation. Baraka now argued that the only way to successful liberate Africans and Afro-descendants was to embrace the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist theory and praxis of M-L-M. He identifies the two most important tendencies to emerge from the 1960s Black liberation movement as “the attention to Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tse-Tung Thought, first popularized by the Black Panther Party, though with an incorrect and romantic analysis that made the lumpen proletariat…the leading force of revolutionary action…We believe the leading force of revolutionary development and action is the whole working class in the United

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78 “General Declaration of the Sixth Pan African Congress,” in Resolutions and Selected Speeches from the Sixth Pan African Congress, p. 86-91.
States.” The second trend was “concerning Afrika and specifically the Afrikan Revolution.”

Then, in late 1974, what was necessary, in Baraka’s estimation, was the development of an anti-revisionist “new communist party,” that would be the vanguard of the impending working-class socialist revolution. In fact, Baraka had already begun to move past a Revolutionary Pan-Africanist tendency evident immediate after the Sixth-PAC towards a hard-line Third World Marxist position, in an attempt to find “ideological clarity.” However, by 1976, CAP had renamed itself the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), an M-L-M multi-national formation and though it maintained support for the Afro-North American national question, it no longer identified itself within the context of the Afrikan Revolution. At the same time, a clearly positive outcome of Baraka and CAP’s ideological struggle and transformation, specifically the struggle he had with his wife Amina over the issue of women’s roles in the movement, led to the formation of the Black Women’s United Front (BWUF), after the Afrikan Women’s Conference organized by Amina Baraka in July 1974. As other revolutionary Black feminist formations had been demanding, the BWUF argued that Black radicals insert the category of gender into their analyses of race/class as forms of oppression and exploitation.

The shift in Amiri Baraka’s gender politics was still uneven in comparison to his race/class politics, however. For example, his book of poems entitled, Hard Facts published in 1975, is replete with a number of revolutionary poems about Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, class struggle, and anti-imperialism, but most of his work is weak on the questions of gender and sexuality. While Baraka does dedicate the text to his “Comrade Amina,” and he adds a piece for her called “Revolutionary Love,” he also

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81 Ibid, pp. 15-16.
begins his “New York is Everywhere Big,” with the problematic and repetitive refrain “FRANKIE CROCKER IS A FAG / FRANKIE CROCKER IS A FAG, IS A FAG, IS A FAG…” (4). In another poem entitled, “Niggy The Ho,” which is a sexist critique of Nikki Giovanni’s politics, Baraka suggests that although her earlier poetry “copped some heat from the rage / of the age,” by the mid-1970s, her political allegiances had become somewhat questionable after she toured Africa on a U.S. State Department sponsored trip. But in expressing his distaste for her lack of solidarity with anti-imperialism, he employs misogynistic language that undermines any actually criticism he may have of Giovanni. Continually referring to her as “Hi Ho,” Baraka suggests that

her butt for sale everywhere, Hi Ho, ugly American, sell out bitch scribbler, athletic supporter of imperialism, all the perfume in the world cant cover the farts of the maggots in your soul.84

In general, after 1974 Baraka demonstrated support for women’s liberation, even though his personal gender politics remained contradictory. This point notwithstanding, many other individuals and formations on the progressive left of the Pan-Africanist/Black liberation movement began to engage a more complex understanding of oppression and exploitation that expanded the intersection of race and class. Much of this was as a result of revolutionary Black women highlighting the contradictions of those so-called Black male radicals who refused to see male chauvinism as constituting a counter-revolutionary position. The Third World Women’s Alliance, founded in 1970 by Frances Beal, Gayle Linch, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Maxine Williams, and Linda La Rue was an early formation that called for the creation of a “united front around their oppression as workers, as third world people, and as women.”85 This recognition of the “triple burden” of class, race, and gender facing Black and Third World women soon became an

integral theory within the Black feminist movement. Other important foundational Black feminist formations were the National Black Feminist Organization (1973) in New York and the radical Black lesbian feminist organization the Cohambee River Collective (1974) in Boston. One of the first Afro-North American “male-controlled” journals to address the importance of intersectional analysis was The Black Scholar, which dedicated its entire March-April 1973 issue to “The Black Movement and Women’s Liberation.” Two years later, The Black Scholar published Fran Beal’s critical essay “Slave of a Slave No More: Black Women in Struggle,” which challenged the persistent chauvinism of many nationalists and suggested that revolutionaries look to countries such as China, Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba, and Guinea-Bissau for examples of women struggling along side men for liberation.86


Black Movement,” *Black World* (January 1976) among others. Most of these pieces challenged the assertion of social class as an important locus of struggle, which left progressives had affirmed at both the recent ALSC meeting and Sixth-PAC.

In the essay “The Latest Purge,” Madhubuti’s main point of contention is that all the talk of “workers,” “masses,” “imperialism,” “bourgeoisie,” and other terms he associated with Marxism-Leninism was nothing more than white radicals infiltrating the Black community with their ideology and politics. He claims, “The Black Nationalist-Pan Afrikanist movement is now under attack from the white left, to the extent that they even come into our community pushing their program, and have infiltrated two of the most influential black organizations: Afrikan Liberation Support Committee and the Congress of Afrikan People.”

Here, Madhubuti sees no history or possibility of independent Marxist thought within Afro-North America, nor does he give much credence to African Marxists, such as Nkrumah and Cabral, whom he once had written poems in tribute to. Moreover, he cites studies by Harold Cruse, John Henrik Clarke, and George Padmore, three ex-Communists turned ardent Black/African nationalists to “demonstrate” that Marxism is allegedly inapplicable to people of African descent. Between October 1974 and March 1975, a number of Black intellectuals and activists would respond to Madhubuti’s polemics in *The Black Scholar*. The self-described Black nationalist intellectuals generally supported his essay, such as Ron Walters, Kalamu Ya Salaam, and Preston Wilcox, while opposition to his essay came from Black Marxists like Sam E. Anderson, Alonzo 4X (Cannady), and Mark Smith.

In both the “The Latest Purge” and “Enemy,” Madhubuti goes to great lengths to disprove the notion that capitalism produced the ideological systems of racism, by suggesting that the Greeks and other early European civilizations developed racist

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88 See, “A Black Scholar Debate,” in the October 1974 (pp. 47-53) January-February 1975 (pp. 40-53) and March 1975 (pp. 49-51) issues of *The Black Scholar*. 
categorizations. Responding to this point, Mark Smith of YOBU and ALSC denied that Black Marxists believed that racism only emerged with capitalism. Moreover, he concurred that white racist ideas and the oppression of black people (including sexual oppression) existed before the slave trade. However,

it was this event and the subsequent development of capitalism, which gave racism its world-wide and deep-seated character. These developments provided the capitalist class with a material reason for the perpetuation and expansion of racism. We therefore believe that racial and national oppression cannot be eliminated without the destruction of the capitalist system.

Hence, Smith does not suggest that racism would somehow magically disappear with the abolition of capitalist exploitation, but instead it necessitated the total reorganization of society along socialist lines, a process that would take some time. As would be the case for a number of Black advocates of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, here he went on to label Pan-Africanism as reactionary. In its place Smith asserts, “As communists, we believe that the working class must take the lead in overthrowing capitalist society. Since the main obstacle to unity within the working class is white racism, we feel that it is crucial for all communists, especially whites, to fight racist ideas among white workers and help build the subjective unity of the working class whose objective basis for unity already exists.”

This move away from Pan-Africanism toward a broader multi-national, anti-imperialist and anti-revisionist form of communism that led Baraka and CAP to become RCL, would also result in activists from YOBU, Abdul Alkalimat’s Nashville-based People’s College, and Sadaukai’s then defunct MXLU to form the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) in late 1974. Unfortunately, for the Pan-Africanist movement, much of the ideological struggle that left progressives had initiated within formations such as CAP, ALSC, and even the Black Workers Congress, would lead to bitter...
sectarianism and in most cases Afro-North American advocates of Marxism-Leninism abandoned all forms of Revolutionary Pan-Africanism.

What occurred after was the retrenchment of Pan-Africanism into the hands of very narrow “race-first” nationalists, including reactionary governments in Africa and the Caribbean. This was also true of support that Afro-North Americans gave to African liberation movements. While in 1974, the fascist Portuguese government of Marcelo Caetano was overthrown in the Carnation Revolution, leading to the cessation of its oppressive colonial wars in Guinea-Bissau/Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Angola, matters in Angola soon became more complicated as UNITA and FNLA competed with MPLA for hegemony of the national liberation struggle. Ironically, MPLA had earlier received positive coverage in many progressive Pan-African journals and newspapers, such as *The African World* and *The Black Scholar*, and both the PAIGC and FRELIMO saw MPLA as its main ally in Angola. However, by 1972, many Black American activists in ALSC described UNITA as the more legitimate force, even going as far to raise material support for the organization at the ALD-72 and ALD-73 mobilizations rather than MPLA.92

Hoyt Fuller in the *Black World* further expresses this misguided support in an extended interview with UNITA leaders Antonio Fernandes and Jorge Sangumba who attended Six-PAC. Their main assertion in the interview was that the MPLA was not “African” enough because it was allegedly modeling its liberation struggle and liberated areas along the lines of the Soviet Union and many of its leaders were “mulattoes,” while UNITA claimed to be an all-Black organization.93 Sylvia Hill recalls that both Robert Van Lierop and Walter Rodney had warned the ALSC against supporting UNITA. Lierop had

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traveled with Sadaukai to Mozambique and spent considerable time there making the
documentary *A Luta Continua (The Struggle Continues)*, thus he had first hand
knowledge of the differences between MPLA and UNITA. Hill claims that she retained
much of this information. Then after returning from Six-PAC, she helped organize the
Southern Africa News Collective, with a number of other Black women, such as Kathy
Flewellen, Sandra Hill, Cecelie Counts, Rose Brown, Cheryl Gardner and they put out a
newsletter entitled *Struggle*. Hill also claims the collective was strongly “pro-MPLA,” and
found many of the anti-MPLA arguments put forth by UNITA to have little validity.94

Geri Augusto an Afro-North American female worker with the Drum and Spear
Bookstore in Washington DC during the late 1960s also describes the contradictions that
she saw with Black Americans supporting UNITA. Her work with the bookstore led her to
Tanzania, where she eventually married the MPLA representative there. But even before
she met her husband, as she was organizing Six-PAC, Augusto first encountered
members of UNITA and noticed they had a very simplistic conception of being
“revolutionary.”

Yes, almost all of them were just tied up, but it was based on color, [and]
by then I just didn’t see only color. I’m not color-blind or anything, it’s just
that having read all this imperialism literature, I knew that race and class
were crissing and crossing in many of these—race, class, color, and caste.
And so I just saw things in a more complex way, so that an argument of
“l’m married to a black woman from the country” doesn’t tell me anything
about your politics or what economics you hope to have. And they based it
pure and simple on China backs UNITA, Soviet Union backs MPLA, a very
simplistic reading.95

However, with many Pan-African nationalists in the U.S. basing their support of UNITA
on its assumed “blackness” this would become a point of contention and embarrassment

94 “Interview with Sylvia Hill,” in *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists*, (Trenton:
African World Press, 2007):
June 3, 2008.

95 “Interview with Geri Augusto,” in *No Easy Victories*,
as the organization initiated a counter-revolutionary insurgency against the MPLA beginning in 1975. The Angolan Civil War lasted for over a quarter of a century, in which nearly 500,000 Angolans lost their lives. At the same time, this issue also affected many Black Marxist-Leninist-Maoists who aligned themselves with the Communist Party of China (CPC). Since the MPLA received military support from the Soviet Union and ground troops from Cuba, and because the CPC viewed the Soviet Union as revisionist and social imperialist, it therefore backed UNITA, which also received funding from the United States and South Africa. Unfortunately, few of these contradictions would be resolved prior to FESTAC in 1977.

Due to the ideological split in the US-based Pan-African movement following Six-PAC, the Second World Festival of Black Art and Culture or FESTAC in 1977 had little resemblance to earlier manifestations of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. With many left progressive cultural workers and Black Marxist-Leninists from North America focusing their activism on building a new communist party, the ideological struggle that had occurred previously at the 1974 ALSC conference, Six-PAC or even the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers was largely averted. In fact, on this occasion, the 482-member Afro-North American delegation headed by visual artist Jeff Donaldson remained under the hegemonic sway of Black cultural nationalists from start to finish. From January 15 to February 12, over 17,000 artists, writers, performers and intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora gathered at FESTAC in Lagos, Nigeria. However, during this “cultural festival,” political struggles against imperialism and capitalism were deemphasized. What is particularly telling is the fact that this event was

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97 Max Elbum argues that the fact the CPC gave military support to UNITA eventually split the new communist movement down the middle, with those remaining aligned to the CPC and those viewing Beijing’s increasing desire to establish a partnership with the U.S. versus the Soviet Union as counter-revolutionary. See, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao, and Che*, (New York: Verso, 2002): 217-219.
called the Second World Festival, meaning that it was directly related to the First World Festival of Negro Art and Culture held in Dakar, Senegal in 1966. Although Hoyt Fuller expressed considerable dissatisfaction with what transpired in Dakar (see chapter 1), he nonetheless became an early and consistent supporter of FESTAC.\textsuperscript{98}

Numerous efforts at convening FESTAC were attempted between 1971 and 1975. These were each thwarted due to geo-political turmoil in Nigeria. First due to the Biafran Civil War (1967-1970) and then because General Yakubu Gowon’s regime was overthrown by General Murtala Mohammed in 1975. However, after Mohammed’s assassination in 1976 the military dictatorship of General Olusegun Obasanjo (1976-1979) replaced him, promising to transition toward a civilian government. He also revived the planning of FESTAC, which finally took place between January and February 1977. Though Gowon’s regime began construction of the Festival Complex, it would be completed under the auspices of Obasanjo, costing the “oil rich” nation of Nigeria $36,000,000.\textsuperscript{99} In reconvening FESTAC, Obasanjo attempted to present himself as a firm supporter of Pan-Africanism. In actuality, his neo-colonial military regime was a particular point of contention for the Afro-beat musical rebel Fela Anikulapo Kuti, whose 1976 album \textit{Zombie} was a major critique of the Nigerian military. This public expression of criticism soon brought the full weight of the military down on Fela, when in 1977 they destroyed his Kalakuta compound in Lagos.\textsuperscript{100}

Similar to the Dakar Festival, UNESCO had a firm hand in organizing FESTAC, which again resulted in the narrowing of the event’s focus to matters primarily concerning cultural expression and performance. Equally troublesome was the logistical control that the U.S. State Department had in Afro-North American participation and the


\textsuperscript{100} Alex Hannaford, “He was in a God-like State,” \textit{The Guardian}, 25 July 2007.
fact that the North American Zone accepted $50,000 in financial support from U.S. corporations, such as Gulf Oil, which had been one of the primary objects of the ALSC’s anti-imperialist boycotts. Explaining the reasons why the NAZ accepted the support of the State Department and corporations, Alma Robinson notes that during the early 70’s, when filmmaker Ossie Davis chaired the North American zone, the Committee had decided to bypass offers of aid by U.S. corporations and the U.S. State Department, relying instead on Gen. Gowon’s promise to “send planes.” This promise did not survive the 1975 coup which ousted Gowon and also resulted in shrinking the magnitude of the Festival.\footnote{Alma Robinson, “Afro-American Odyssey to FESTAC ‘77,” Nigeria Magazine, (1980): 12.}

As a “cultural festival” FESTAC was a success; however, it marks a clear diminution in the Pan-African politics of cultural struggle. Indeed, there were number of progressive Afro-North American cultural workers from the Black Arts movement who attended FESTAC, such as Jayne Cortez, Audre Lorde, and Angela Jackson, among others. While 1977 marked the end of revolutionary internationalist tendency in the Pan-African movement by most Blacks from North America, a number of Afro-descendant advocacy organizations, such as Trans-Africa Forum (which was founded that year after the Congressional Black Caucus’s African American Leadership Conference in 1976), escalated their support for the anti-Apartheid movement. However, much of the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist energy that formations like the African Liberation Support Committee, the Congress of Afrikan Peoples, and the Youth Organization of Black Unity brought to Pan-Africanism was supplanted by organizations that were willing to accept funding from a government and corporations that still did business with racist South Africa and “Rhodesia.” In many ways, Cortez’s 1971 poem “Festivals and Funerals,” which begins this chapter, is apropos in signifying the paradox of Black cultural workers attending FESTAC directly with the profits that Gulf Oil and U.S. imperialism made from the colonial-fascist regimes in Southern Africa.
CONCLUSION

I entitled my dissertation “Liberation at the End of a Pen” in order to signify the important role of Afro-descendant cultural workers in movements for Black, Pan-African, and Third World liberation. This does not mean that the production of poems, essays, musical compositions, films or pieces of visual art in and of themselves constituted revolutionary struggle. However, in some instances, these cultural productions did help raise the political consciousness of the Afro-descendants who watched a radical documentary, heard the performances of poetry or music at a community action, rally, or conference, or read them in one of the many little magazines and newspapers developed during the era. In the case of most creative intellectuals aligned with the Black Arts movement, though, their particular method of commitment remained producing politically inspired literature, music, visual art, films and cultural/literary journals. At the same time, a radical sector of Black writers and artists went a step further to directly engage in political struggles for self-determination, national liberation, Pan-Africanism, and a few, in revolutionary socialist movements.

Beginning with the archetypal “Pan-African” cultural production *Blake* (1859-1862) by Martin Delany, Pan-African politics of cultural struggle became a dialectical form of Black liberation politico-culture. It would gain coherency as Black activist-intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Jessie Fauset, Marcus Garvey, Alain Locke, Langston Hughes and others during the early part of the twentieth century sought to confront racism and marginality with literary and theoretical works that posited the humanity and exceptionality of Afro-North Americans in a global context. This “político-cultural renaissance” coincided and overlapped with the Pan-African Congress movement organized by Du Bois and others between 1919-1927. Moreover, it was also during the interwar years that many of these concepts were engaged by Afro-descendant creative intellectuals abroad, such as the Nardal sisters, Aimé Césaire, Leon
Damas, Nicolas Guillén, and Abdias do Nascimento, in the Caribbean, Europe, and South America, through the movements of Négritude in the Franco-phone Caribbean, poesia negra in Cuba, and Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN) in Brazil.

However, shortly after World War II the most progressive tendencies of the Pan-African movement, anti-colonial struggles, cultural radicals, and trade unionists joined forces to convene the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, England. This world-historic event would serve as a model for the Bandung Conference held a decade later in 1955, two Black writers’ conferences in Paris (1956) and Rome (1959) and the Congress of Afro-Asian Writers in Central Asia (1958). Soon, leftwing Pan-Africanists, such as Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Touré, along with Bandung radicals coalesced into a revolutionary anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movement that defined itself as the “non-aligned” Third World, in distinction to the so-called capitalist “first” and Soviet-controlled “second worlds.” By 1966, the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAALA), also known as the Tri-Continental Solidarity Conference, established a global network of revolutionary anti-imperialist forces encompassing the entire Third World. At this conference participants also passed a resolution in solidarity with progressive struggles among Afro-North Americans.

Though a number of Afro-North American artists, writers, and intellectuals were influenced by this global revolutionary trend, El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, or Brother Malcolm X, would become the primary spokesperson for the radicalization of the U.S.-based civil rights movement during the early 1960s. As my dissertation illustrates, Malcolm X not only sought to internationalize the liberation struggle of Afro-North Americans with his (and Robert F. Williams’) support of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) and his founding of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), but also, following his assassination in 1965 he became a symbolic yet contested figure for Black Arts and Black Power activists, inspiring local, regional, national and
international cultural and political formations to compete for control of his legacy. While this led to the development of organizations such as BARTS, the Us Organization, Black Arts/West, the Black House, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, *Black Dialogue*, and Malcolm X Liberation University, to name a few, there also became considerable ideological struggle over the interpretations and meanings of Brother Malcolm’s philosophies, resulting in strife and occasionally violent confrontations between Black liberation formations and activists.

Despite the differences between various formations and creative intellectuals within the Black Arts/Power movements, the mid-1960s witnessed the rapid increase of cultural production linking Afro-North American political aspirations with those of Africa and the Third World. This was specifically evident in the proliferation of Black little magazines, newspapers, and publishing houses, such as the *Negro Digest/Black World*, the *Liberator*, RAM’s *Black America*, *Soulbook*, *Black Dialogue*, the *Journal of Black Poetry*, *The Black Panther*, *Umbra*, the *Black Scholar*, *Inner City Voice*, *SOBU Newsletter/The African World*, Dudley Randall’s Broadside Press, Haki Madhubuti’s Third World Press, the LRBW’s Black Star Publications, Amiri Baraka’s Jihad Press, and a number of smaller Black presses that printed the poetry chapbooks, essays, visual art, and political tracts of the era’s cultural workers. Though Pan-Africanism is not a central ideological focus of each and every writer or political activist published in these and other cultural texts of the Black Arts/Power movements, taken together, these sources begin to construct an *archive* of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle.

Equally important in this archive are the published proceedings of the numerous Pan-African cultural festivals and congresses that occurred between 1966 and 1977. By analyzing and historicizing them, I have demonstrated the discursive conceptualizations of Afro-descendant and African cultures and their relationships to political struggle and national liberation movements. Though in the mid-1960s the motivation of much Pan-
African politics of cultural struggle was in opposition to white supremacy and colonialism, as more nation-states in Africa and the Caribbean gained independence, neo-colonial regimes often replaced European colonial authorities causing revolutionary cultural workers to reorient their oppositional creative expression to include concepts such as anti-imperialism and class struggle. Thus, while organizers of the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in Dakar, Senegal in 1966 attempted to separate culture from political considerations, most of the leftist governments, African liberation movements, the OAU, and radical Afro-North Americans that attended the First Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers three years later viewed culture, politics, and socialist economic development as dialectically interrelated.

These connections were again reaffirmed at the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Tanzania in 1974, with participants articulating even stronger support for situating class struggle as a central aspect of Revolutionary Pan-Africanism. By incorporating a class analysis into the discussion of race/national oppression, this tendency of Pan-Africanism was far more sophisticated than most of the previous models that viewed the concept as a simple Black or African “united front,” without any consideration of the class allegiances or worldviews of those in the leadership of the movements. What this race/class intersectional analysis omitted, though, was contemplation of the ways in which gender and sexuality complicate the oppression and exploitation of Afro-descendant women and LGBT communities. Beginning in the mid-1960s, a number of Afro-North American women radicals initiated criticisms of the rampant male chauvinism, sexism, and homophobia within the Black liberation movement, which later evolved into revolutionary Black women’s formations, such as the Third World Women’s Alliance and other radical feminist and lesbian organizations.

However, by the time FESTAC took place in 1977, most of the anti-imperialist and revolutionary advocates of Pan-Africanism had turned toward building Marxist-
Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought formations, such as YOBU, CAP, ALSC, and BWC.

Though this decreased the intensity of ideological struggle within the African liberation support movement, it ultimately left the planning of North American Zone participation in FESTAC in the hands of intellectuals and cultural performers who did not mind accepting support from the U.S. State Department and corporations that had been doing business in Southern Africa, such as Gulf Oil. Even more paradoxical, FESTAC represented a complete 360-degree (re)turn to the questionable cultural politics of the Dakar Festival, since UNESCO and the U.S. State Department were once again able to dictate many of the terms of the event and participation. While 1977 marks the attenuation of revolutionary solidarity between Afro-North American and African movements, a number of reformist U.S.-based anti-apartheid organizations, such as Trans-Africa Forum, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Free South Africa Movement were ultimately successful in altering U.S. foreign policy and corporate responsibility.

One possible explanation for the recent lack of currency given to radical Pan-African politico-cultural discourse and praxis may be the problematic post-colonial history of Africa. With the numerous military dictatorships, genocide, political instability, and social turmoil that has disrupted countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Congo, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, the Sudan and elsewhere on the continent, Africa no longer holds the symbolism it once did for Afro-descendants. Moreover, the political, economic, and social disruptions have no doubt led to and perpetuated the epidemic spread of poverty, HIV/AIDS, and dislocation throughout large sections of Africa. These issues have certainly caused many Afro-descendants to distance themselves from Pan-African philosophy. However, by taking a closer examination of the multifarious problems besieging parts of the African continent, it is evident that there are both internal and external causalities. For example, although the dictatorships, turmoil, and instability have been supported by elements indigenous to Africa, externalities, in
the form of colonialism, imperialism and hyper-capitalism can be directly linked to the internal strife and worsening of poverty. Furthermore, global economic institutions, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and western corporations have a direct hand in the extraction of wealth and resources from dependent African nations.¹

In “African Studies and the State of the Art,” Mozambican historian, novelist, and Africana Studies professor Mario Azevedo discusses numerous political and economic theories to understand the “crises” in Africa. The two that he sees as most useful for explaining the present state of the continent are the Statist School, which views the state as the primary “motor force behind social and economic occurrences,” and the Political Choice Theory, which extends the statist model by suggesting the state is a relatively autonomous, and political elites manipulate the economy for their political and personal gains. Ironically, Azevedo does not ascribe to the dependency theory, popularized by Walter Rodney, which views Africa (the periphery) as victim of international capitalism (the core) and that the African masses are exploited by a small African bourgeoisie who maintains international links with the core. “As one can clearly detect, this theory is pessimistic and sees African societies and states as inexorably trapped by a worldwide capitalist conspiracy which controls information and knowledge, technology, wealth and the market,” Azevado asserts.² However, to deny the external causalities of African impoverishment and place it solely on the shoulders of African governments is problematic.

This is even more regrettable when one recognizes how neoconservative Afro-North Americans—in service of the military-imperialist Bush Administration—have been able to hijack the discourse on potential African, Afro-North American, and Afro-descendant solidarity. Take, for example, the July 2003 Leon H. Sullivan African-African

American Summit that occurred in Abuja, Nigeria. While the gathering was purportedly organized to “build bridges” between people of African descent, Afro-North Americans were “represented” by the likes of Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, J.C. Watts (former Republican Congressman), and numerous executives of major corporations. It is hard to fathom that these neoconservatives who champion the most oppressive elements of U.S. imperialism and global capitalism have the best interest of Africa or Afro-descendants in mind. In the post-September 11 (2001) era, U.S. neoconservatives see Africa in even more strategic and exploitable terms with its large deposits of crude oil in Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea and elsewhere, as well as the somewhat spurious claim that the formation of the militaristic United States Africa Command or AFRICOM is in response to the “Al-Qaeda” threat, which it claims has cells in the northern and eastern parts of the continent.

Unfortunately, since progressive Afro-North Americans presently constitute little organized opposition to the United States’ imperialist adventurism in Africa or elsewhere, reactionaries are unfettered to dominate Africa and the Afro-Americas. As the Sullivan Summit illustrates, this domination is further supported by large segments of the African and Afro-descendant bourgeoisie who have formed unrequited allegiances to global capitalism (neo-colonialism in Africa, neo-liberalism in Latin America, and neo-conservatism in the U.S.). While many of the socio-historic and economic factors that had previously fomented anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist perspectives among Black students, workers, and intellectuals in the U.S. have waned with the advent of corporate globalization, deindustrialization, and uneven social integration, numerous contradictions

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3 In addition to Powell, Rice, and Watts taking a leading role in the Summit, George W. Bush was in attendance proclaiming that a prosperous Africa was possible only if it establishes “new relationships and partnerships” with major US corporations such as Chevron Texaco. See, “Summit opens in Abuja with tributes to founder’s legacy,” New York Beacon, 23 July 2003.


5 Again, the most consistent organizational voice that has opposed U.S. interventions in Africa and the Americas remains Trans-Africa.
remain in the U.S./global economic and political systems that necessitate international solidarity through counter-hegemonic politico-cultural activism. Therefore, I believe that re-conceptualizing a revolutionary Pan-Africanist politics of cultural struggle that raises the international political consciousness of Afro-descendants becomes all the more imperative.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

I would like to extend my study spatially by examining the First Congress of Black Culture in the Americas, convened in Cali, Colombia in 1977. At *el Congreso*, UNESCO was again a primary source of funding for the event. Moreover, since *el Congreso* was held under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Cuban government did not send a delegation to the gathering. Nevertheless, in distinction to the Dakar Festival and FESTAC, the published proceedings of *el Congreso* demonstrate that those in attendance formulated resolutions to confront the intersection of race, class, and gender as forms of oppression and exploitation. *El Congreso* organizers also went further in embracing the linguistic particularities of the African World, by conducting the proceedings in Spanish, English, French and Portuguese, with translations in other languages.

It is clear that many of the creative intellectuals at the Cali Congress were primarily concerned with integrating Afro-descendants more thoroughly into the national body politic of their respective countries. However, some of the ideas propagated and networks developed during *el Congreso* called for Black cultural autonomy and even the necessity of abolishing capitalism in order to realize Afro-descendant liberation. These concepts were subsequently strengthened at the Second and Third Congresses, held in Panama (1980) and Sao Paulo (1983). Furthermore, the ideas and networks that emerged out of this series of conferences were vital to burgeoning Afro-Latin American
social and cultural movements, such as *Cimarrón* and the *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* (PCN) in Colombia along with *Quilombhoje* and the *Movimento Negro Unificado* in Brazil, reaching their zenith during the planning for regional participation at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Xenophobia held in Durban, South Africa in 2001.

Convened seven years after the formal end of racial apartheid and the election of Nelson Mandela as the country’s first African president, the Durban Conference was an international success and it formalized many activists’ networks between Afro-descendants in the global South and Africans on the continent. However, it appears to have done little to reignite popular participation in Pan-African politics of cultural struggle amongst sectors of Afro-North Americans that had once engaged this form of struggle, from student activists, radical workers, and the leftwing of the Black petit-bourgeoisie. Today, with the possible exception of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Trans-Africa Forum, Manning Marable, Ron Daniels, Jamaican-born Horace G. Campbell, and a handful of other academics, few Afro-North American intellectuals, activists, or organizations publicly advocate Pan-Africanism as a viable political and cultural alternative to domestic “civil rights” and full integration into the global capitalist system.

Moreover, much of the contemporary scholarly work analyzing the contacts and linkages between Afro-descendants and Africans articulates these relationships under the guise of Diaspora Studies, which I argue de-centers the actual politico-cultural expressions of Pan-African solidarity. While *diaspora* describes the historical fragmentation, dispersal,

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and geographic (dis)location of Africans from the continent, Pan-Africanism has been the dominant ideological weapon in which to envision and strategize the potential reconnection and liberation of discursive African and Afro-descendants communities.

As Agustin Lao-Montes (2007) demonstrates there exists a growing radical Afro-descendant movement in Latin America that has a tenuous relationship with the resurgent Left governments in the region.⁹ Though some of these movements model their political and cultural activities on elements of the U.S.-based Black Power/Arts movements, they have also built upon local/regional forms of politico-culture from the networks and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) developed after three el Congresos (1977, 1980, 1983), the regional planning for the World Conference Against Racism (1999-2001), and with the emergence of the anti-capitalist World Social Forums (circa 2001). In many ways, much of the oppositional fervor that was once central to U.S.-based Black political and cultural movements has taken root in Afro-descendant activist communities in the global South. However, it is less apparent whether there exists an equally coherent social movement of Afro-North Americans committed to anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-sexist, anti-imperialist politics that can establish links with their Afro-Latin American counterparts.

Then again, I do believe that there is a nascent form of radical Pan-African politics of cultural struggle that has begun to develop around the annual Black August Hip-Hop concerts, first convened in 1998, by the New York City-based Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM). The youth and student-led MXGM is a formation founded by Afro-North Americans and Afro-Latinas/os in Brooklyn, NY in 1993, directly connecting itself to the legacies of Malcolm X and the Black Liberation Army. It advocates community self-determination, freedom for political prisoners, and solidarity

between Afro-descendants and Africans. The formation took the name “Black August,” from the radical prisoners’ movement organized in memory of George and Jonathan Jackson and the Soledad Brothers murdered by the state in California prison camps during the early 1970s. Since the first Black August Hip-Hop concert, the organizers have brought together some of the most politically committed Hip-Hop cultural workers, such as Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Common, Immortal Technique, The Roots, Erykah Badu, dead prez, Jean Grae, La Bruja, and the Coup, among others, to raise consciousness and resources for political prisoners, namely Mumia Abu Jamal and Assata Shakur, exiled in Cuba.

A primary person responsible for internationalizing the Black August Hip-Hop Collective is political exile and former member of the Black Liberation Army, Nehanda Abiodun. She helped organize the first Black August exchange concert in Cuba in 1998. Abiodun also serves as a direct link between the revolutionary Afro-North American social movements of the 1960s and 70s, and the burgeoning radical Afro-Cuban youth culture centered around Hip-Hop on the island. In 2002, Abiodun argued, “Hip Hop in Cuba is an art-form devoid of commercial influences. Because Cuba is such a political (place) our young people who are involved in the hip hop community are extremely political and use their art to express political ideas, to bring about positive revolutionary changes.” Referring directly to the Black August Hip-Hop Collective, she asserts, “Black August was started in '98 with two objectives, to use hip hop to teach and organize young people about political prisoners in the US as well as to talk about, educate and organize around the ending of the embargo against Cuba.” Since its first incarnation, one of the strongest aspects of the Black August Hip-Hop project has been its


Unfortunately, as with other progressive politico-cultural movements of the past, there have been attempts by government officials in Cuba, Venezuela, and elsewhere to mollify the more radical and oppositional aspects of the Black August Hip-Hop project by co-opting and nationalizing the events.\textsuperscript{12} It is also true that much of what passes for contemporary “rap music” in North America is more useful in propagating the most reactionary elements of U.S. capitalism, violence, sexism, and homophobia. Despite the current hegemony of commercially acceptable but politically questionable rap narratives dominating the airwaves of the United States, these international exchanges have helped raise the consciousness of Afro-North American Hip-Hop cultural workers who directly witness the possibilities of how the written/spoken word accompanied by remixed and trans-mutated sounds from old school soul, R&B, jazz, salsa, and rock music can inspire and influence the young (and not so young) to challenge systems of oppression and exploitation. Therefore, I would like to study whether “progressive” Hip-Hop—in the form of the Black August Hip-Hop project—represents a potentially fertile network of activists and young intellectuals who are re-producing a \textit{liberatory} form of Pan-African politics of cultural struggle for the twenty-first century.

\textsuperscript{12} Sujatha Fernandes argues “Through the Cuban rap movement, young black Cubans began to address growing problems of racial discrimination and inequality in contemporary Cuban society. Rappers are strongly critical of the silencing of race issues within Cuban society, police harassment of black youth, and the marginalizing of black youth within a new tourist economy. But they are invested in the idea and legacy of the Cuban Revolution as the basis for their acts of resistance.” See, “With or Without Fidel: The Future of the Cuban Revolution,” \textit{ZNet Magazine}, October 29, 2006.
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