

# CROSSROAD

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## Fade From Black

Notes on the "Resurgence" of Nationalism  
And the Struggle for National Identity and Purpose

...[W]hen -- the intellectual elements have carried out a prolonged analysis of the true nature of colonialism and of the international situation, they will begin to criticize their party's lack of ideology and the poverty of its tactics and strategy. They begin to question their leaders ceaselessly on crucial points: "What is nationalism? What sense do you give to this word? What is its meaning? Independence for what? And in the first place, how do you propose to achieve it?..."

*Frantz Fanon*

A comrad recently sent me several 1994 newspaper articles (from the New York Times, \*Washington Post, and Chicago Sun-Times), each of which deals with a report released in April of that year, written by Michael Dawson, of the University of Chicago, and Ronald Brown, of Wayne State University.

The report concerned the findings of a random survey of 1,206 Afrikans in the U.S., conducted by Dawson and Brown which, in Dawson's words, showed "a more radical black America than existed even five years ago." (Wall Street Journal)

As evidence of this greater radicalism, each of the news paper articles highlighted an alleged "turn toward nationalism" by Afrikans in the U.S.:

\* Black Americans are increasingly embracing Black nationalism and abandoning the hope of ever achieving racial equality in the United States...

\* Support for black nationalist goals is at an all-time high among African-Americans...

\* There's mounting evidence that blacks, especially young blacks, see less and less value in working within the current political and social structure and instead favor breaking out of that system. These

sentiments are finding their voice in the growing numbers of African-Americans who...identify with a rising tide of black nationalism...

\* Integrationism is out of sync with the nationalist mood pervading much of the African community...

Far from being "black nationalist" publications, these newspapers are tribunes of U.S. capitalism and empire — which tells me that their stories on the survey had nothing to do with so-called "objective" reporting, and even less to do with a desire to promote the interests of Afrikan nationalists. Their disguised purpose was to sound an alarm against the Afrikan nationalist movement, and to place obstacles in its path.

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These notes are directed toward an audience of genuine Afrikan nationalists. We, too, need to sound an alarm. As i try to show below, the articles in question indicate that there is a significant number of Afrikan people in the U.S. with a strong sense of being a distinct people, yet they lack a commitment to the creation of a separate nation. This lack of commitment results from the absence of a pervasive nationalist ideology and program capable of commanding the intellectual and political allegiance of left petty-bourgeois forces and, most importantly, the masses of Afrikan people in the U.S. The alarm that We sound calls us to engage intense ideological, theoretical, and practical battles to define who We are, what We struggle for, and how the struggle should be conducted.

For example, whenever We see the phrase "**Black** nationalism," it should be taken as a call to ideological battle — and We should understand that such a "war of words" has very important practical consequences for the progressive development of the nationalist movement. We should, by now, understand that the phrase "Black nationalism" perpetu-

ates a concept of nationalism — New Afrikan nationalism — that is narrow, fundamentally incorrect, and ultimately serves to maintain confusion among the masses with regard to a genuine NATIONALIST perspective, and diverts us from a truly revolutionary orientation for the independence movement.

The point of conducting an ideological battle — in part, against the phrase “black nationalism” — is really very simple: Nationalism is, in part, loyalty and devotion to a particular nation — which nation are “black” nationalists loyal and devoted to? If you are a nationalist, what is the name of your nation? If you are a nationalist, what term do you use to identify your nationality?

To refer to a nationalist — to refer to a citizen or national of a nation — is to recognize that person’s “nationality”. Every nation has a name, and this name is the root of the term used to identify the nationality of its citizens and nationals. Thus, persons identifying themselves as “nationalists” must have as point of reference the particular name of the nation toward which they are loyal, e.g., “American,” “African-American,” Mexican, Puerto Rican, Tanzanian, Chinese, French — New Afrikan!

Not only must We wage an ideological struggle to establish the national identity, but We must also struggle to clearly define “nationalism”: Ron Walters was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* (5-11-94) describing himself as a “black nationalist.” However, he made what could be considered a contradictory statement (if one doesn’t consider his petty-bourgeois stand and its inherent vacillation), by saying that he held a vision of “black nationalism” in which Afrikans in the U.S. would be “part of the mainstream at the same time.”

Now, it should go without saying that real nationalists don’t aim to be part of the U.S. mainstream — We want our own “stream.” But, We have a two-fold problem here: 1) Afrikan nationalists are still struggling to define and to promote a national identity, i.e., a nationality that is defined primarily by social development and ideology, rather than by mere biology or skin color; 2) the real nationalists among Afrikans in the U.S. have yet to wage an effective battle against the pseudo nationalists...the reactionary and reformist/neo-colonialist petty-bourgeois elements that have played the dominant role on the stage of struggle for at least the last twenty-five years.

Like Ron Walters, there are some among us who call themselves nationalists, but who don’t really want their own nation. In the words of Sterling Stuckey, such so-called nationalists merely use the nationalist movement of Afrikans in the U.S. as a modus operandi, rather than as an end in itself. They use nationalist sounding rhetoric and dress in nationalist garb, only to latch onto the momentum of the nationalist sentiments of the masses, to fool the masses while actually promoting ethnic-pluralist, assimilationist, neo-colonialist agendas.

We simply can’t continue to allow the people to be confused: The concept of nationalism is the belief, of an oppressed people, that they ought to possess their own nation. Nationalists believe that they should rule themselves and shape their own destinies through absolute control of the social, economic, and political resources and institutions of their own nation!

Now, maybe Ron Walters is simply confused, but it’s the responsibility of all genuine nationalists — the responsibility of all conscious New Afrikans — to help end such confusion among the masses of our people.

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Nationals/citizens of nations have a political status or relationship to the nation that’s generally defined by the allegiance that they pledge to the nation, and by the promise of protection that they receive from the nation. That is, nationals/ citizens give their allegiance for protection, and the nation gives protection to its citizens for their allegiance.

Within the context of struggles of oppressed nations for their independence, the allegiance/protection relation is that between, say, the organized body recognized as the “center” of the national independence movement, and those that support that leading body and the movement, e.g., the P.L.O. and those that recognize it as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people,” and those who give it their allegiance and support and who receive its protection. In effect, the P.L.O. or any leading/central organized body of a national independence movement, becomes the universally recognized symbol of the nation’s identity.

Now, “protection” comes from the nation — or from the independence movement and its organized leading body — in many forms. There is protection from physical attack by enemy police and military forces; there is protection against the attacks of enemy social, judicial, political and economic institutions. And, there is protection in the form of the nation’s development of its own police and military forces, and in the form of the development of the nation’s own social, judicial, political and

economic institutions. That is, the masses of oppressed nations begin to pledge their allegiance to the independence movement as they see it begin to serve their needs and provide both “reactive” and “proactive” protection. Now, on this note, let’s return to some discussion of the Dawson and Brown survey and some of its findings.

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Unfortunately, i’ve been unable to secure a copy of the full report, and i’m sure that the newspapers only touched few of the survey’s questions and findings. Among those were the following:

\* Eighty percent of those surveyed said that they believed that the U.S. political and economic system is "unfair" to Afrikans.

\* Fifty percent of those surveyed said that they supported the idea of an all-Afrikan ("all-black") political party.

\* Seventy percent of those surveyed said that they believed that Afrikans in the U.S. should control the governmental and the economic institutions in their communities.

\* Fifty percent of those surveyed are said to have characterized, or to have agreed to the characterization of the status of Afrikans in the U.S. as that of "a nation within a nation" -- yet, only 14 percent of those surveyed are said to have wanted Afrikans in the U.S. to have their own nation!

To be clear: We’re talking about a very necessary phase of ideological and theoretical struggle that will help to both broaden and consolidate the independence movement. We’re talking about a fundamentally necessary phase of activity characterized by dialogue, research, and “pilot projects” that initiate the process of creating programs, establishing the foundations for national(ist) institutions, and, primarily, beginning to link ourselves in whatever possible ways to all existing struggles of our people, and to the programs and institutions that they now support.

We’re talking about testing the “three phase theory,” which means, in part, challenging those inside the nation and inside the movement who represent both “left” and “right” deviational tendencies. It’s primarily “right” deviationists that must be challenged within the nation, and primarily “left” deviationists that must be challenged within the movement. Both tendencies will be confronted, for example, on the issue of an “all-black” political party. The “right” tendency, inside the nation, will continue to push for such a party, but their aim is essentially to merely have another U.S. party, only now, one in black-face. The “left” forces, primarily inside the

movement, will continue to object to any form of involvement in the U.S. electoral arena — but in doing so, they substitute their consciousness for that of the masses, and will end up in continued isolation from the masses in this, as in other, forms of struggle.

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When the respondents to the survey characterized their relation to the U.S. political and economic systems as “unfair,” what, exactly, did they mean? What is the meaning of the word “unfair” within the context of a struggle between oppressed and oppressor nations?

Our people must be challenged to change their characterization of our relationship to the U.S. They must see the U.S. response to our struggle for self-determination not as “unfair” but as colonialism. The basis of the ideological battle, here, is to develop the characterization of Afrikans in the U.S. as an oppressed nation, and to develop the characterization of the U.S. as an oppressor nation — as a settler-imperialist state which denies the independence of the New Afrikan nation.

The term “unfair” hides, distorts the colonial reality of New Afrikan people. Our task, in this respect, involves taking each concrete manifestation of so-called “unfair treatment” and expose it as an element of **COLONIAL** oppression and exploitation. By denying independence to our nation, the U.S. denies us our ability to freely exercise and develop, for our own purposes, our productive capacities. (i’m pointing to the need for us to begin to talk about how capitalism and imperialism work, and about how We want to develop socialism in an independent New Afrika. We simply can’t talk about what’s “fair” or “unfair” and why or why not, without beginning to explain how capitalism works, why it works as it does. We can’t begin to talk about and to build a “fair” economic system of our own without educating the masses on the political economy of oppressed and oppressor nations.) In this way, We begin to see why it’s simply impossible for the U.S. to be “fair” in its relations with New Afrikan people, and in its relations with other peoples that it oppresses and exploits, both inside and outside its borders — capitalism, imperialism, makes it unwilling and unable to do otherwise.

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Fifty percent of the respondents to the Dawson and Brown survey said that they supported the idea of an “all-black” political party. The “idea” of an “all-black” political party — even the actual formation of such a party — doesn’t necessarily signal a “turn toward nationalism” — especially

not on the part of those who would call for and lead/benefit from such a party. Such a party could be built on the basis of the nationalist sentiments of the masses, but it would likely be a neo-colonialist black-face caricature of existing “mainstream” U.S. political parties. In order for an “all-black” political party to truly signal a turn toward nationalism, it would have to have, as the primary goal in its platform, the creation of an independent nation for Afrikans on these shores.

An “all-black” political party could signal a move toward national independence, if it demonstrated a revolutionary and a nationalist mass stand, and if it conducted political struggles that exposed and sharpened the contradictions between Afrikans and the U.S. Such a party could be used to help begin to build “dual/contending” bases of power that would serve the construction of revolutionary-national institutions.

Ideally, the only kind of party that nationalists should promote should be the “nationalist party,” not an “all-black” party. To begin with, the phrase “nationalist party” tells us more clearly what it’s about, which ain’t necessarily so with an “all-black” party.

i suggest that We don’t live in an ideal world, and in the world in which We do live, We must make the creation of a “nationalist party” our strategic goal — but We must also act upon the tactical need to engage ourselves in any and all discussion and activity regarding the idea and/or the formation of an “all-black” political party that would function inside the U.S. electoral arena and would, in essence, serve U.S. interests in the continued subjugation of our people.

We already have, in essence, a “nationalist party,” because We have a nationalist movement and the nationalist organizations and individuals that comprise that movement. But, We gotta get out among the people and do more work with them — and in the process, build and demonstrate for them an alternative not only to the “traditional” U.S. mainstream parties and politics, but also an alternative to any “all-black” party that would dare claim to be “turning toward nationalism” while “trying to be part of the U.S. mainstream at the same time.”

At a minimum, nationalists wanna be involved in all dialogue about the participation

of Afrikan people in the U.S. electoral arena. We wanna be loudly critical of U.S. national and local governments and their policies and practice.

Rather than avoid all involvement in electoral politics, We need to begin forging our ideas on, and methods for, conducting our involvement — starting with the understanding that “involvement” doesn’t mean that We are abandoning our politics, principles, or that We embrace any illusions about the ability of U.S. electoral politics to solve our problems. Our “involvement” is a matter of need: Whether We like it or not, the masses of our people still participate in that arena, and they’re likely to continue to do so unless and until We change their minds, and provide them with what they can regard as a desirable and effective alternative.

Moreover, We realize that tactically and strategically, there will be instances when “involvement” in electoral activity will serve our purposes, e.g., in the National Territory, and in areas outside of it when victories can turn into bases of contending power, the critique of the U.S., and the sharpening of contradictions, or otherwise serve the interests of the independence movement.

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The need to push the idea of a “nationalist” (and not some simplistically defined neo-colonialist) political party, and the need for nationalist involvement in the electoral arena of the U.S. on local and national levels, manifests themselves when We discuss the general theme of “community control,” with particular reference to governmental and economic institutions on local levels.

Seventy percent of Dawson’s respondents said that they believed that Afrikans ‘should control the politics and the economics’ of their communities. For us, this is another way of saying that such objectives are merely elements of a “nationalist revolutionary-democratic program.”

On one hand, We need to assist the masses in their attempts to satisfy their basic needs, while on the other hand, there’s the need to expose the inability and the unwillingness of the U.S. to satisfy even our most basic needs — short of national revolution and socialist development.

The nationalist revolutionary-democratic program serves these ends: The masses will see that “control” over politics and economics within the U.S. system will not satisfy their needs, so We push the system to its limits, and beyond. We raise contradictions and expose the nature of the beast as it fails to fulfill the expectations of those who continue to believe in it and who drag their feet on choosing independence and socialism. Put pressure on the U.S. to house the homeless, to heal the sick, to feed the hungry, and to give jobs to all of the jobless, etc., and it’ll come up short. Consciousness will rise and consolidate; interests will be distinguished and fought for; people will organize and begin to assume responsibility for the construction of a new society; seeds of the institutions of the new society will be planted in the process of such struggles.

The best way to challenge the U.S. for the allegiance of the New Afrikan masses is to struggle with them, every day, around the issues that are of immediate concern to them.

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Of major concern to the theorists and organizers of the nationalist movement should be those findings of Dawson’s survey regarding the divergence between those who believe Afrikans in the U.S. are a “nation within a nation” (revealing their sense of being a distinct people), and those comparatively few who want their nation to be independent of the U.S. (Can We win with 14 percent?) Why do so many of us fear being independent of the U.S.? Why is the sense of being a distinct people not developed enough to allow a greater number of us to want our own nation at the present time?

The problems point to our tasks, i.e., We must push the idea of the nation; We must further develop national(ist) consciousness. Most importantly, We must develop the programs and institutions, in all areas of social, political, and economic life, that will gradually acquire the support of the people by increasing their confidence in the ability of the independence movement to serve and to protect them, and by increasing the people’s confidence in themselves and in their ability to survive and develop as a nation independent of the U.S.

### **Re-Build!**

(Re-Orientate and Re-Organize)

August 6, 1996

*Owusu Yaki Yakubu (aka Atiba Shanna)*

*Spear and Shield Collective*

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The struggle of Afrikans in the U.S. to regain their independence has always been characterized by two major trends. One trend has struggled against racial discrimination and for equal participation in U.S. society, accepting capitalist hegemony. The other trend has struggled against their national oppression by the U.S., and to establish an independent, socialist state.

The existence of these trends is a matter of historical record. Despite the efforts of the U.S. to suppress the struggle for Afrikan independence, the movement has a strong contemporary expression among all sectors of the Afrikan population, especially among Afrikan youth. A recent study conducted among Afrikan college students by Professor Luke Tripp showed that 34 percent of the students favored an independent Afrikan state.

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## The Grassroots Program of the Nationalist Movement

*... patriotism means the safeguard of the existence of the nation and also of their own existence and welfare.*

*Le Duan*

Amilcar Cabral once said that oppressed people don't fight for ideas, but to see their lives and the lives of their children go forward. Did he mean by this that ideas aren't important? No! He meant that the struggle for the independence of the nation must be grounded by the daily struggles to satisfy the immediate needs of the masses.

As Cabral and the PAIGC fought against Portuguese colonialism, and for their national liberation, they focused upon the real lives and the concrete needs of their people for, say, better roads, for education, for health care, for better working conditions and better pay — they had to pay attention to what We sometimes refer to as the “democratic” content — as well as to the nationalist content — of the struggle for national independence and socialist development.

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We're calling for the development of a comprehensive, nationalist, revolutionary-democratic program. You can call it a “grassroots” program, or a “reformist” program, or a “struggle for democratic/human rights” — the terms are essentially interchangeable, so long as there is a mass stand, and a revolutionary orientation.

We believe that in order to further the development of a nationalist movement, and to eventually gain the support of the masses of Afrikans in the U.S. and win national independence, We must carry out a nationalist revolutionary-democratic program — a program arising from the needs and aspirations of the masses for improvement of their immediate livelihood, and for eventual control of our society's social and productive relations.

A nationalist revolutionary-democratic program is the means by which We raise the fundamental contradictions between our people and the U.S. Such a program attacks all pillars of the oppressive state (i.e., its economy, its judicial, political and socio-cultural systems), and thus undermines the influence of the U.S. and that of its neo-colonial

puppets inside our nation. As We apply the pressure, the covers are pulled off of the puppets and off of the puppeteer, as they fail to fulfill the expectations of those who continue to believe in “the American Way,” and who straddle the fence rather than choose independence and socialism.

“...’Going among the people, learning from the people, and serving the people’ is really stating that We must find out exactly what the people need and organize them around these needs.” - **George Jackson**

The key words there are “We must find out exactly what the people need” — because We have a tendency to substitute our needs for those of the people, i.e., We try to impose upon the people programs that arise out of our heads rather than from the conditions of their lives — and then We usually become frustrated when the programs don't realize their anticipated results. And then, usually, We curse the people and claim that they are backward, rather than our trying to understand that “the people aren't fighting for ideas, but to make their lives and the lives of their children go forward.” The task then, for us, is to develop the means by which We join the people, wherever they are, in their efforts to improve and to safeguard their lives and the lives of their children!

*... For a very long time the native devotes [his/her] energies to ending certain definite abuses: forced labor, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights, etc. This fight for democracy against the oppression...will slowly leave the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge, sometimes laboriously, as a claim to nationhood...*

**Frantz Fanon**

All confrontations with those who rule are battles in the war against neo-colonialism, settler-imperialism, and for national independence. Struggles for democratic rights aren't ends in themselves, but they are necessary battles in the protracted struggle for national liberation and socialist development — **if** they are waged by the masses, and from a revolutionary nationalist standpoint.

Long before the masses take up the slogan “Free The Land!” the war for the land has begun — waged through struggles for “Afrocentric curriculums” in the schools. As the masses fight for adequate health care...as AIDS continues to eat its way into our lives and as We struggle against it, the war is on to

“Free the Land!” As We engage the battles to stop the physical and mental abuse of the women and children, and of the gay and lesbian men and women of the nation — all this and more is part of the war to “Free the Land!” However, it won’t be a successful war unless and until the nationalist movement begins to assume responsibility for these issues—responsibility for all of the problems confronting all of the people of the nation, on a daily basis.

The road to an independent and socialist National Territory goes by way of the control of apartment buildings, housing complexes, schools, hospitals, city blocks, and southern counties. It’s in the course of such struggles that nationalist and revolutionary consciousness develops: The masses begin to see that they have a set of interests that are separate and opposed to those of the U.S. and to those neo-colonial puppets who now claim positions of leadership within the nation. In the course of grassroots struggles to satisfy basic needs, the masses no longer stand in awe of the oppressive regime and its puppets, and come to see the need and the possibility for self-rule.

In the course of struggles for democratic rights, the masses acquire experience in combat against the enemy and in their own leadership abilities. As the masses unite, organize, struggle and develop their strengths, there arise contending ideological and material bases of power, i.e., new ideas, institutions, and other mechanisms for harnessing and directing the people’s resources — for self-development, and self-government. That is, as the people engage, say, the economic institutions of the oppressive state, the dialectic between theory and practice will call for the creation of new theories for economic development, for new methods for producing and distributing the wealth produced by the nation-becoming.

### ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Owusu Yaki Yakubu  
(aka Atiba Shanna)

August 11, 1996

*Spear and Shield Collective*



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**News, Announcements & Updates** • **Marion Stamps**, ex-Panther and long-time leader in Chicago's *Cabrini Green* community, died recently of a heart attack. Stamps will be remembered as a fighter for human rights in one of the poorest New Afrikan communities in the empire. She led struggles against settler developers because the housing project sits on a valuable tract of land next to Chicago's 'gold coast'. Stamps was also an architect of truces amongst street organizations. • **Watketa Valenzuela**, son of *Jeff Fort*, was arrested recently on charges of drug conspiracy. Interestingly enough, he had just helped organize a large rally in a southside park with **H. Rap Brown**. • **Albert 'Nuh' Washington** is a U.S. political prisoner, one of the New York Three, and a former member of the Black Panther Party. He was swept up in the FBI's cointelpro net designed to eliminate the leaders of the Black Liberation Movement. Nuh has now been wrongfully imprisoned for 25 years, and he needs your help to gain his release. Nuh is the only one of the NY3 who represented himself at trial. He has some very good issues on appeal because of serious errors made by the court and the prosecution regarding his right to representation. But he now has to raise the money to hire a lawyer to file his writ. Nuh feels that he could be out of prison within a year's time with the legal help he needs on his writ. Nuh has made tremendous sacrifices for all of us. Together, We can put the money together that he needs to obtain his freedom. Please send your contribution, IN THE FORM OF A U.S. POSTAL MONEY ORDER, to: Albert Nuh Washington, 77A-1528, Clinton C.F., P.O. Box 2001, Dannemora, NY 12929-2001. Nuh will send you a reply, gratefully acknowledging your contribution. • Support the **National Day of Protest To Stop Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization Of A Generation** on October 22, 1996. Write to the Organizing Committee; P.O. Box 400381; Brooklyn, NY 11240; (212-713-5084) for more information. • The **International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal** are planning to march on Wall Street on Monday, December 9th 1996. "*We will not allow Mumia Abu-Jamal to be killed by the state. Join us in demanding that Mumia be granted a new trial so that he may prove his innocence.*" Contact 215-476-8812 for more information. • **Demand Justice for the Indiana Six!** They were charged with "conspiracy to riot and threatening staff" after they protested the impending execution of **Ziyon Yisrayah** (see CR, vol. 6#2). Contact *BCAC; P.O. Box 93312; Milwaukee, WI 53203* for more information. • As We went to press, news of the death of **Tupac Shakur** hit us; We send condolences to **Afeni** (mother/former member of the **BPP**) & **Mutulu** (stepfather/**New Afrikan Political Prisoner**). -- Rest In Peace -- **Re-Build!**



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