

CROSSROAD

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An Open Letter To The Congressional Black Caucus

S.T.A.C.(Stop Targeting the Afrikan Community) is outraged but not surprised at the sudden laryngitis the majority of you came down with when it came to voting against giving George Dubya unbridled powers! The Afrikan Communities across this kountry wholeheartedly support and will protect our brave and principled Sista, Barbara Lee. The members of this organization [the CBC] have shown time and time again how unprincipled and entrenched the mentality of the house knee-grow is. When Governor Whitman of New Jersey increased the bounty on Assata Shakur and petitioned the Pope to convince President Castro to return Assata, once again the members of this organization stood on the sideline with laryngitis.

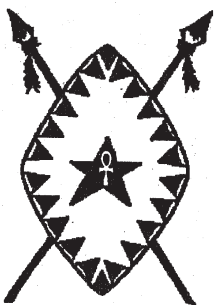
The members of this organization have participated in and voted for the Crack-Cocaine Law as well as the Effective Death Penalty Act and many more laws that are detrimental to the Afrikan communities and other communities of color. When the "Dark Alliance" [story] broke, Maxine Waters jumped out front selling wolf tickets saying "This Is It, I have no other issue, This Is It". Along with other opportunistic knee-grows Waters also introduced legislation to rescind the Crack-Cocaine law without any provision making it retroactive; this is no more than symbolism without substance. This is a contradiction, if she truly believed the "Dark Alliance" report.

We (S.T.A.C. & other organizations) have tried to no avail to get this organization to hold hearings on "COINTELPRO". There are hundreds of Sistas and Brothas that remain in prison today who survived the terrorist operation of "COINTELPRO", yet members of this organization vote in favor of bombing some unknown so-called terrorists? i'm sure many of you will go along with and vote for the Homeland Security Office that is in place, which We believe will be more vicious than COINTELPRO ever was or ever will be. While politicians position themselves in open forums and campaign trails to hear only what they want to hear, there is a grassroots movement across this kountry that is organizing, challenging and exposing you knee-grow politicians on every level.

We are not interested in your past records, that's all well and good, that is what you were supposed to do and continue to do. The problem begins when those of you elected by the people no longer operate in the best interests of the people who put [you] in there, then you must be removed from office. Many of you supported Bill "Bubba" Clinton unconditionally, when under his administration the Effective Death Penalty Act was implemented, which speeds up the process to murder prisoners on death-row. Under the Clinton administration the prison population [increased by more than] 600,000; of that number some 170,000 went into federal prisons. Our brotha Mumia Abu-Jamal is fighting for his life, and again members of this organization have laryngitis.

Mr. Jamal's prior attorneys refused to submit evidence of Mr. Jamal's innocence, which includes the confession of Arnold Beverly saying he was hired to murder Officer Faulkner, yet Mr. Jamal remains on death-row. Rachel Wolkenstein's declaration of August 7, 2001 reveals evidence of Mr. Jamal's innocence, if any of you care to read it. From your actions, none of you are outraged at the low-level terrorism that Afrikan people live through on a daily basis in our communities here in the US. We experience police brutality, continued 4th amendment rights violations(racial profiling) and prosecutorial misconduct by a criminal system sanctioned by each of you.

Again, our hats are off to Representative Barbara Lee for being that which her people needed her to be at such a critical time in history. i hate to think where We would be as a people if Fannie Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X, Dr. King, Marcus Garvey and many other righteous ancestors were as unprincipled as the members of this organization. i will leave you with an West Afrikan proverb pertaining to justice, **"The person who has been a slave from birth does not value rebellion"**.



In Struggle,
Shiriki Uganisha, Chairperson (S.T.A.C.)

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On Transitions: Dimensional Liberties

i was asked by a rad to develop a piece on ones re-entry into babylon after a stint in the kamps. i came straight out of the SHU's of Corcoran and Pelican Bay, so my perspective will flow only along the lines of things i know, have experienced and overstand. Hopefully these brief notes will be of some help.

The first thing to be vigilant about is ones "circle of reality". That is to say that while We anguish in the wicked throes of the kamp system, We often set our "circle of reality" to the present frequency We reside in. An environment totally dominated by male energy that is most often vibrating at an ill pace. A sort of collective sickness seems to descend on the captive population; one that is conducive only to an atmosphere of hostility. You in your studies ain't exempt from this. For whatever you are reading is corresponding to your circumstances and your vibration(energy), which is being manipulated by forces that are stronger than you. Not in any physical sense, but rather in a reactive sort of way. Which is to say that, if something goes down that is "racial" one tends to leap first and do an investigation later. With consciousness comes responsibility. One must never, ever lose sight of the objective. Nevertheless, We sometimes fail to adjust Our "circle of reality" when We are let loose. And the tragic consequences of this is that We find Ourselves stranded in disillusion, confusion and anger. And like a nuclear reactor, We go into "melt down", in some cases taking down innocents in the process.

To adjust ones "circle of reality" is as simple as overstanding that your filter(or belief window) thru which everything you attempt to comprehend passes, needs new and more practical applications, or definitions to the reality you are experiencing. By that i mean, simply, that your playing field/battle field has all of a sudden been expanded tremendously. And as such, you must equate other elements of your new existence into your daily socialization. Often this becomes a source of overload for the average prisoner after having been in a virtual crypt, in solitude, for years. One must make the necessary adjustments based on the new reality of being at liberty to do something as small as taking out the trash or retrieving a letter from the post man without it having passed thru the hands of ten pigs.

One must reach out to those who still support you and build among them a support network. For you'd be surprized who knows someone, who knows someone that could "hook you up" with some employment. All the while you have to maintain a regimented schedule of action and good deeds that strengthen character and build resolution. Things like walking thru your area meeting people. Especially workers, students, gays, and lesbians. People are everywhere. Get involved with some Movement activity. We in the NAIM have no shortage of issues to be tended to. Personally, i try to plug into the nearest Afrikan Student Union on the nearest campus and start building on ideas that they usually have or are struggling with. One must enter a conscious social pool; aside and beyond your support network of unconscious citizens, you must, or need to be plugged into direct Movement data. One can easily fall right out of the loop if one is not in some form of contact with someone. Thus you must network.

The biggest issue here, at hand, is ones adjustment of the "circle of reality" to fit the current reality one is dropped into. Alot of times cats be "uptight" because they feel no one on the streets is "pushing a hard line", or "defending the people". After every news broadcast, where a New Afrikan or a Puerto Rican has been shot by the pigs, the "avengers" come out talking 'bout what they'd do if they were out. And as soon as he(or she) gets out they become disillusioned, angry, distanced and finally out of a misconcieved notion, from a bad quote taken out of context, flies into a military tirade on two pigs. The pigs both live, but the rad is now captured because he failed to overstand the scope of changes that must be made in order to not lose sight of the objective. We can't win if We can't survive as an Org or Movement. There can be no conceptual continuity without Us to pass it on. Small units and individual fighters will become stranded without the support of the people. One will realize this if one is critical. Sometimes, as with myself, it took a few falls in the pit to gain the overstanding in the wit. But always, against all odds, get up. If youve fallen down, get up. Don't wallow in it (your sorrow, shame whatever), get up and begin again.

We are on the right path. It will manifest if We stay true to Our objectives. i can add nothing else to this piece so i'll end it. Stay up, stand firm and push forward.

Re-Build!
Sanyika Shakur

**THOUGHTS ON WHAT WE ARE BECOMING:
A DISCUSSION PAPER**

Part Two

“...black people in the North as early as the 1830s and 40s and perhaps as late as the 1850s, went through periods during which forces of integration and black nationalism (though these terms were not used until much later), grappled on a major scale for authority within black communities.... Not infrequently this **battle between contending world views** was played out under cover of arguments over what people of color should call themselves...the struggle over names being a surface manifestation **of fundamental ideological differences....**” (1) (my emphasis)

1. Part One [CROSSROAD, 9#2] opened this discussion by calling into question terms and concepts that We use to identify ourselves, and We should review three points made there:

1) Our present identity isn't static, but is “in motion and evolving, influencing and being influenced by all social phenomena.”

2) “As We struggle as a people for resolution of our problems, We need an identity that distinguishes us from the forces of evil, which symbolizes our need to move beyond the boundaries of U.S. political-economic structures and its bourgeois/capitalist values and morality. Our **evolving** identity must inform our new politics and the new socio-economic structure that We need in order to realize ourselves as a New People.”

3) “Identities based on so-called ‘race’ or skin pigmentation are increasingly inadequate and are fading away. Identities based upon nationality are better, but these, too, will lack and fade if the nations that We claim don't abandon and challenge patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism.” (2)

2. Here, in Part Two, i focus the discussion upon: 1) the context within which all issues confronting us occur, with particular emphasis upon the “name debates,” the development and change in the form of our collective identity. That context is the loss of our independence and the struggle of our people to regain our freedom. Ours is a struggle against the forces of capitalism, in all of its forms, i.e., colonialism and neocolonialism, and what i call post-neocolonialism (post-1968)-settler-imperialism, as uniquely developed and practiced inside what's called the U.S. of A.; 2) the occurrence of ‘name debates’ as instances of class struggle, through which ever-rising pseudo-bourgeois and pettybourgeois forces struggle to gain ideological and political leadership over our people, and to strengthen their role as intermediary between the people and “America” and its rulers -- each “name debate” also reflecting changes in the structural relation (forms of control and exploitation) between our people and the oppressive state; 3) factors underlying name debates and the development of identity are dynamic and primarily material (political, economic, socio-cultural), and manifest themselves through the interests of the class forces engaged in the debates (i.e., the “masses” versus the “elites” -- and their colonial masters); 4) the struggle over “names” and identity is, at bottom, a struggle for a new, anti-capitalist, people-centered (“humanist”) socioeconomic order.

3. The passage from Stuckey's **Ideological Origins** that i opened with, throws light on the context within which “name debates” occur, and implies the factors underlying changes in identity, or, the basis and role of identity with particular reference to the process of modern national and social revolution.

It's very important that We keep this context foremost in mind, and that We adopt a critical approach as We re-view it, and re-interpret it. For example, an approach toward the terms and concepts “integration” and “nationalism” must, first of all, understand them not as different tactical alternatives available within a single strategic vision. They are opposing concepts, fundamentally different ideologies, resting on antagonistic interpretations of our reality, and determination of objectives.

Even **Webster's** definition of "ideology" and "identity" will serve to help make the point. We'd find that "ideology" is a set of beliefs, assertions, theories, aims, characteristics of a group (people) or culture, that serve to define physical, social, mental and spiritual reality. We'd find that "identity" is a sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality -- a relation established by psychological identification.

It's generally understood that "integration" is a rejection of "nationalism," but it's only the rejection of one nationalism, and the acceptance of another. When We refer to people as "integrationists" We're saying that they embrace the ideology of the "dominant society," (i.e., "white nationalism" or "American nationalism" or capitalism and imperialism), while rejecting the ideology of, say, "black nationalism" (i.e., anti-capitalist, and socialist).

We tend to be unmindful of the fact that "nationalism" is about ideology and politics, not color. When We refer to people as "nationalists," We're saying that they have, or are shaping, an ideology and a particular set of social relations. We tend to use the term or phrase "**black** nationalism" the way We'd ordinarily refer to, say, Angolan or Russian, Chinese or Tanzanian nationalism...Vietnamese or Cuban, Zambian or Algerian nationalism. That is, We use the term "black" to designate a nationality, a people, a country or nation -- We need another term.

We continue to use "black" rather than, say, "New Afrikan" or "Maroonian", because We use the ideological framework of the oppressive society to evaluate ourselves -- even when the evaluation is done by "radical" or "leftist" scholars and activists. That framework becomes "assimilationist" or "integrationist," and ignores or downplays the existence of the opposing "nationalist" ideology and socialist strivings of Afrikans within U.S. borders, obscuring our attempt to preserve and develop a national identity, and to chart a political course that opposes capitalism and (post-)neocolonialism.

These were the concepts and processes that were in play in the 1830s, 40s and 50s -- that have been in play since We were 'taken out of our own history' -- but were unnamed or known by other names, until the use of the terms "integration" and "nationalism".

4. Keeping context in mind, as We move through the process, also means focusing on content over form -- the content of "nationalism," ideology, identity -- and the tools used. That is, ideology is a set of beliefs about our social reality, but We also use philosophy as a means of determining and interpreting reality. That is, for example, "integrationists" and "nationalists" -- if they truly have opposing ideologies - will consequently also have opposing philosophical frameworks, i.e., the former will probably be some form of idealism, and the latter some form of materialism.

Our collective identity, our sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality, and our relation established by psychological identification, has to rest on a shared understanding of how the world works, of how We determine what's real and what's not real, what's a necessary objective and means to use to reach that objective, and what ain't. In fact, merely raising the point that We must be more cognizant of our philosophical base makes it an element of the identity under development and pushes it to the forefront of the issues to be addressed by the people as a whole, while also making it concrete and immediate, not abstract or remote.

Above all, keeping context in mind means that We continue to debate our collective identity because We're still an oppressed people -- We lost our freedom, and We're engaged in struggle to regain our freedom.

"...in colonialism and in neo-colonialism the essential characteristic of imperialist domination remains the same: the negation of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violent usurpation of the freedom of development of the national productive forces....

“...the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected...”

“...the principal aspect of national liberation struggle is the struggle against neo-colonialism...” (3)

5. What We struggle **against** informs what We struggle **for**. It would seem a rather simple process, but a look back over the past several hundred years -- even a casual observation of our present situation -- tells us that it's not. What are We really struggling against? “Racism”? What are We really struggling for? “Equality”?

If We say We're struggling for “freedom,” then We have to know when, how, and why We lost our freedom. Most importantly, **We have to know exactly what it was that We lost!** If We're struggling for “equality,” then what was the form and the content of the “equality” that We lost?

Let's gain some understanding of phrases like “negation of the historical process,” “usurpation of the freedom of development of the national productive forces,” “historical personality” and “return to history.” We have to know, in essence, what “history” is, what it means to be “taken out” of it and have it “arrested” by colonialism -- no matter the form of that colonialism.

Let's learn about “productive forces “ but understand that their principal element is **people**. We were **peoples** with our own nations and states, our own social/class structures and conflicts. We had our own histories, and We made our history as We, say, gave life to our children and as We developed our economies and managed our commerce. Our historical process was the self-determined pursuit of our aims and our active participation in every component of our social process. OUR historical personality was our individual and collective identity, at any point of development. The conduct of “name debates” should involve discussion of the form and content of the “freedom” that We lost, and of the freedom that We seek.

6. The context and process of our “name debates” on these shores had their effective point of origin at the onset of the oppressive relation -- the moment that We were captured, sold, placed into pens and dungeons and aboard ships bound West. The context and process evolved as We set foot on these shores. All of this constituted an assault upon our freedom, our history and humanity, and upon our identity.

(Do you recall the scene in the movie Roots -- We're inside the ship and the brother says: Talk to the Sister or Brother next to you. Learn their language; teach them your language. We must become one people!)

We didn't land on these shores with a collective identity as “slaves,” “negroes,” “blacks,” -- not even as “Africans.” We arrived here as, say, Wolof, Ibo, or Fula. However, We had already begun to change, to develop an identity as a new people.

We initially called ourselves “Africans,” but underneath it all We knew (then, better than most of us know now), that We were “new” Africans -- a new people, forged through our collective oppression, by an emerging capitalism and a unique form of settler-colonialism.

We called ourselves “Africans” not solely nor even primarily to maintain a link with a “place”. Being “Africans” gave us a new status, a new dignity, a new identity as human beings with a way of life clearly separate and distinct from that of the oppressor. It reminded us of the type of freedom from which We'd been “usurped,” and which We sought to regain under a new set of conditions (e.g., “Maroons”).

We became “Africans,” but soon, some among us wanted to be other than what We were -- “negro,” “colored,” “American” -- anything but “African” or New Afrikan. These some no longer wanted to identify with the majority of the people and our interests; they no longer wanted to maintain a united opposition to the oppressive social order, while seeking to regain lost independence. Instead, these some opted for “inclusion” and “equality” **as defined by the oppressor!** These some were the embryonic “native elite” among us, and on these shores -- the emerging pseudo-bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, whose successors were among those who, in the late 1980s, called for a new term by which to identify us, by way of renegotiating the terms of rule previously agreed to by them and their colonial masters.

Point: We don't have to start in the 1830s to begin analyses of "name debates," class formation and class struggle among New Afrikan people inside U.S. borders.

The first thing to remember, here, is that We were not torn from classless societies, and therefore not unfamiliar with class struggle. So, it's easier than most imagine to go back to the 1630s, the 1730s, to uncover the extent to which We've debated what We should call ourselves, and the struggle to shape a new identity on these shores. All of this was a natural consequence of **being** human, **having** history **and** culture, resisting oppression, and fighting to regain our independence -- as a people -- on these shores.

7. The 1830s, 40s and 50s weren't the first, nor the last periods during which We waged class struggle under cover of debates over what to call ourselves. Most people over 30 years of age will recall the debate in the 1960s over "negro" and "black," while people under 30 may best recall the debate in the late 1980s over "black" and "African-American".

Few of us, however, understand these debates as forms of class struggle among the people, which also mark changes in the developmental and structural form of our collective oppression. For example: The move from, say, Ibo to "slave," represents a transition from independence to dependence; from "slave" to "African" represents the formation of a new people, our resistance to **colonial** domination, and our struggle to regain independence in a new setting; from "African" to "colored" or "negro" represents a transition from a predominantly horizontal internal social/class structure and "colonial model" of relations with the U.S., to the greater development of a vertical social/class structure, a "neocolonial model"; from "negro" to "black" represents a transition to an anti-colonial struggle -- the failure of that struggle led us to the transition from "black" to "African-American" -- the development of what i call "post-neocolonialism," wherein what was perceived as a "purely nationalist" objective is now perceived as a "revolutionary nationalist" one -- but it's a move "beyond nationalism" and toward a new type of humanist, socialist, society.

It won't hurt to re-state the point: "Name debates" occur periodically because they reflect our effort to resolve the fundamental contradiction between ourselves and the U.S. settler-imperialist state.

We lost our "original" identities, and their corresponding socioeconomic formations (i.e., states and nations) when We lost our freedom. We shaped a new identity in the process of collective oppression, and resistance. **We will continue to conduct "name debates" until We regain our freedom** and, consequently, shape yet another identity. The new identity that We're now shaping will be characterized not by color, nor by a place, but by a set of political, economic and socio-cultural behaviors and values, new philosophy and ideology.

8. The most recent "name debate" occurred in the late 1980s, and was marked by a 1988 "Call" issued by Ramona Edelin, of the National Urban Coalition, and Jesse Jackson. On the surface, they sought to have the term "African American" recognized as "official" (re: the U.S.) and as the "reference of choice" (re: the people). Under cover of that debate, pseudo-bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces were placing themselves in position to play new or modified roles as "compradors" and "partners" in the new world order of global capitalism, under U.S. leadership.

A **Chicago Defender** editorial on the debate pointed out that on the surface, the concern over what We should be called may have seemed meaningless, and draw attention away from more pressing concerns such as drug abuse, family disintegration, and economic under-development. The editorial noted, however, that such concerns have a common root, "lost, misplaced, or confused identity."

(The late 1980s was, looking back, a transitional period in the development of U.S. imperialism abroad, and its "structural adjustment" (Thanks, Marilyn) inside the borders, and with particular attention to New Afrikan people. To the New Afrikan bourgeois forces, the name debate symbolized an "arrival". The structural adjustment in issue, between the U.S. and New Afrikan people, began in the late 1960s, marked especially by the events of 1968 and the final recommendations-of the Kerner Commission.

(The Kerner Commission was, for us, like the commission the British sent into Kenya after the Kenyan people and their Land and Freedom Army struck for their independence, and Kenyatta was set up as President, and not Odinga. Inside the U.S., the 1960s had seen the rise of a violent mass-based resistance that was not only “nationalist” (“It’s Nation Time!”), but “revolutionary” (the people were calling the capitalist system into question, and beginning to discuss socialist options). The Kerner Commission was charged with determining ‘What happened? Why did it happen? How to prevent it from happening again?’ In essence, they recommended that New Afrikans must be made to think that they were, or could become, “Americans.” At the top of the list of measures proposed to help bring this about was the “expansion of the negro/black middle class.”

(Of course, in order to make New Afrikans feel “American,” all of America’s major institutions had to extend themselves toward New Afrikans, “include” them and treat them more “fairly.” As a consequence, however, of these adjustments by American institutions as they promoted **their** nationalism, the national consciousness of New Afrikans had to be undermined, and the institutions of New Afrikan people -- colleges, hospitals, banks and insurance companies, community-based small business etc., -- had to be “integrated,” or destroyed.)

(Check: Brothers stood at the 1968 Olympics with raised fists. At the 1972 Olympics, George Foreman ran around the ring waving an American flag! No wonder he was scorned in Zaire and is still loved by America.)

9. We’ve seen some of the background for the 1988 “Call,” but it was also prepared by the conduct of ideo-theoretical struggle among the people. Therefore, before We discuss the 1980s debate, We have to first touch upon a speech delivered by Ron Karenga, which will necessarily take us through Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, and a bit of their contributions to the discourse on the basis, role, and objective of identity in the struggles of oppressed peoples. (4)

We must start with Karenga’s speech because it contains ideotheoretical propositions which were at the center of the 1980s debate, e.g., premises and phrases used by those urging the use of “African-American” during the debate seemed to have come straight from the mouth of Karenga (altho they could have come from the mouths or pens of any number of petty-bourgeois intellectuals). However, the premises used by Karenga were “borrowed” from Frantz Fanon, and Amilcar Cabral.

On February 15, 1985, Karenga addressed an audience in St. Louis, Missouri, and his presentation included a discussion of identity. As his point of departure, he claimed that Frantz Fanon had urged oppressed peoples to ask themselves “three fundamental questions: 1) Who am I?; 2) Am I really who I am?; 3) Am I all I ought to be?”

According to Karenga (and Fanon?), oppressed peoples must ask these questions of themselves in order to determine their relation to (world) history, which, he said, manifests itself through Values (because they inform what We’re committed to, and they dictate our possibilities), and National Culture (because it’s self-conscious, and collective: “We are what We do; our practice identifies us and makes us.”).

To emphasize the importance of our need to understand our relation to it, Karenga made the following four points on the role of history:

1) It’s the basis of identity. However, in light of the three questions cited above, and the following three points, it seemed strange to me that Karenga then, very matter-of-factly, stated that “We **are** African-Americans,” and that this was so **because** (and here he borrowed from Cabral, but without attribution) “identity is based on **historical origin** and **social location**...where you came from and where you are now -- Africans in America, or African-Americans.” (my emphasis)

2) It “tells you who you are in relation to your possibilities...by what you’ve done, and can do again.”

3) It helps us to pinpoint and to understand “where things are tending.”

4) It helps us to discern “a development pattern, and it says **We’re not what We are**, but what We’re **becoming**...If all you are is what you are now, you’re actually dead.” (my emphasis)

10. Can you see my problem with this? Well, let’s go to the first point made about the role of history.

Karenga says history establishes the basis for identity -- and, as if to illustrate the point, he says, We “are” African-Americans. That’s right, you say? Well, what about the three questions that We started with: Who am i? Am i really who i am? Am i all i ought to be?

After you deal with those questions for a while, consider the other three points made on the role of history, i.e., in relation to our possibilities; in relation to where things are tending; in relation to his statement that “We’re **not** what We **are** -- but what We’re **becoming** -- If all you are is what you are **now**, you’re actually dead.” Because everything changes.

Well, maybe everything changes except Karenga’s perception that We “are” Americans. “History” is dynamic; dynamism runs through each of the three questions and each of the four points on the role of history. It’s only that line “We **are** African-Americans” that’s static.... Karenga could have qualified that statement, but i contend that it was deliberately made, and served as the linch-pin in a strategy by bourgeois forces to pose as “leadership” of “Africans in America,” as they helped the U.S. to, for example, spearhead a new phase of economic exploitation of the African continent. But i stray....

11. Karenga says “We **are** African-Americans” -- **Why** are We? He says it’s because our identity is based on “historical origin” and “social location” -- again, concepts borrowed from Amilcar Cabral, and too loosely adapted and inappropriately applied (misinterpreted and misused).

Is it really that simple -- that We must be “African-Americans” because of where We came from and where We are now? Does being in this place actually, or alone, make us “Americans”?

No, it’s not that simple, and only in part because “America” is not just a “place”. “America,” as We now know it, is a culture, an ideology, a specific way of organizing production, of distribution and exchange of goods and services. “Americans” pledge allegiance to the political and other social demands and expectations of “American” nationality, and bourgeois/capitalist, anti-humanist values.

However, assuming that We are, now, “African-Americans” -- will this or must this always be the case? What about those “possibilities” -- are We to pursue them **as** “African-Americans”? Can this pursuit be done within the boundaries of what We now know to be “American” values and culture, “American” nationality and identity? What about “where things are tending.” inside these borders and throughout the world? What about the “development pattern” which tells us, among other things, that We aren’t what We are, but what We’re becoming? “If all you are is what you are now, you’re actually dead.”

12. We can’t stop at “African-American,” just as We couldn’t stop at “slave,” “colored,” “negro,” or “black”. We haven’t completed the process -- from independence, to independence. Who We **ought** to be is determined in the process of struggle to end our oppression and exploitation, and to build a new type of society -- where We are now, and throughout the world, for ourselves and for all peoples. It has to be a society unlike the “America” that We now know, free of capitalism, racism, sexism and homophobia.

Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: “In reality, who am I?” (5)

13. Karenga remained a bit more faithful to Fanon than he did to Cabral. Fanon says that the question is asked because **colonialism** negates the other “person” and denies oppressed peoples all attributes of humanity. (It would be necessary to treat “humanity” as I suggested treating “history,” above, i.e., what is it? What are its “attributes”? What’s the relation to “identity”? Both relate to the capacity for self-realization, social behaviors, sets of characteristics which, while “universal,” distinguish one people from another when their concrete, particular social processes are examined.)

Essentially, Fanon means by “humanity” and its “attributes” the same as Cabral when he refers to the “historical process” and the “historical personality.” What Fanon **doesn’t** mean is that peoples dominated by colonialism must ask themselves “Who am I?” because of some meta-physical “where you are now”....

The people have been “dehumanized” by colonialism, and in order to regain their humanity they must combat and destroy colonialism, and re-establish their identity as a sovereign people.

In this sense, “regaining humanity” doesn’t mean that We must “be like” those who oppress us (because they’ve told us and made some of us believe that they’re human, and We’re not). We don’t want an “equal opportunity” to plunder the world and ravage its peoples. “Regaining humanity” also doesn’t mean that We somehow return to the past and adopt an identity for which conditions no longer exist -- there’s no going back, only forward and upward development.

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history’s floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men [people], and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men [people]. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the “thing” which has been colonized becomes man [new people] during the same process by which it frees itself. (6)

14. Here is Fanon, and he’s talking about the fundamental character and objective of decolonization or, as We call it, the “freedom movement.” Decolonization/the freedom movement is the process through which the people answer the question “Who am I?” and shape a **new** identity.

Fanon’s ***The Wretched Of The Earth*** is, taken as a whole, about the struggles of oppressed peoples as they shape a **new** identity. Most readers of *Wretched* come away without making the connections, and say that the book is about narrow perceptions of anti-colonialism or antiracism, or the need for oppressed peoples to use “violence” (narrowly conceived) in their struggles against oppression. I say that all of these, and the process of shaping a new identity, are one and the same.

You’ve just read Fanon, who said that the struggle against colonialism “influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally.” The struggle against colonialism **is** the veritable creation of new people -- the creation of a new identity for peoples oppressed and exploited by **capitalism**.

We all become “new” during the same process by which We free ourselves from **capitalism** -- We are the “thing” that has been colonized and created by colonialism -- no matter whether We’re called “slaves” or “natives,” “coloreds” or “negroes,” “blacks” or “African-Americans”....

...[T]his struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between [people] cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people’s culture. After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism, but also the disappearance of the colonized [people].

This **new** humanity cannot do otherwise than define a **new** humanism **both for itself and for others**. It is prefigured in the objectives and the methods of conflict.... (7) (my emphasis)

15. It's no surprise, then, that reading Fanon, re: "Who am I?" is like reading DuBois: "Here, then, is the dilemma...What, after all, am I? Am I an American or a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American?" (8)

This is a classic expression of the "dilemma" of the petty-bourgeoisie. They need **an** identity, but they're torn between the identity held by their people, and the identity of the oppressor, which is denied to them. They serve the oppressor by helping to preserve the "dehumanized" identity of the people, and for this they are promoted as "leaders" of the people by colonialism.

"Negro" in the above context is clearly not a "race" or a "color" but an ideology, a politics, a consciousness of nationality. DuBois voiced the recognition of the negation of the historical personality of New Afrikan people, and he was confronted with a choice between identities and world views. Should he fight or acquiesce? Should he choose capitalism, or socialism -- **that's** the essence of the "dilemma"!

Looking at it from another angle: "...the settler is right when he speaks of knowing 'them' well. For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that is to say, his property, to the colonial system." (9)

The "negro" and the "American" are products of colonialism. "Natives," "slaves," "blacks," "African-Americans" -- all are products of colonialism. (Even "whiteness" and "blackness" are products, two sides of a single binary construction of colonialism.) Any alleged choice between "negro" and "American" is false, because both serve to reproduce the exploitative, dehumanizing situation.

16. We should study Fanon's *Wretched* to learn, among other things, that for Fanon (and contrary to Karenga and the petty-bourgeoisie), "history" doesn't serve as the basis for identity because of some simplistic "where you came from and where you are now". Throughout *Wretched*, Fanon painstakingly describes the stages through which the people **evolve**, as their struggle against colonialism advances from lower to higher stages. Fanon emphasizes the struggles between the classes of oppressed peoples, explains why internal class struggle is a prerequisite for real independence and social revolution, and **why the "masses" must lead the struggle**. Fanon repeatedly emphasizes the need for political and social consciousness -- "intellectual development" -- for the mass of the people, characterized by a revolutionary class stand.

For Fanon, (the new) identity isn't based on some shallow "historical origin" and "social location," because "the struggle no longer concerns the place where you are, but the place where you are going." (10) The (new) identity emerges through a dynamic process of struggle to create a new society, as the people fight to become ex-"slaves," ex-"negroes," ex-"coloreds," ex-"blacks," ex-"African-Americans," and to **"find their nationality in the implacable struggle which opposes socialism and capitalism."** (11) (my emphasis)

"...the need not to confuse the **original identity**, of which the biological element is the main determinant, and the **actual identity**, of which the main determinant is the sociological element." (12)

17. i'm not surprised that Karenga made no direct reference to Amilcar Cabral and his "Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle," from which Karenga unfaithfully adapted the terms "historical origin" and "social location." Had he done so, one would readily see the conceptual and political discrepancies between the two sets of terms.

Cabral held that, even under colonial oppression, the masses maintain their identity, and that it rests on the characteristics held in common by them -- characteristics which distinguish them from the oppressive system. These characteristics arise through historical factors which Cabral designates as "biological" and "sociological," each of which represents forms of identity, "original" and "actual," respectively. Karenga's "historical origin" is an adaptation of Cabral's biological element/**original identity**, and Karenga's "social location" is an adaptation of Cabral's sociological element/**actual identity**.

For Cabral, neither form of identity (original or actual) is fixed or immutable, because the biological and sociological elements that define them are in constant motion -- change.

The biological element (inherited genetics) is the physical basis of the existence and growth of identity, and the sociological element gives identity "objective substance by giving content and form, and allowing confrontation and comparison between individuals and between groups...."

"This shows on the one hand the supremacy of the social over the individual condition, for society...is a higher form of life. It shows on the other hand the need not to confuse, the **original identity**, of which the biological element is the main determinant, and the **actual identity**, of which the main determinant is the sociological element. Clearly, the identity of which one must take account at a given moment of the growth of a being (individual or collective) is the actual identity, and, awareness of that being, reached only on the basis of... Original identity, is incomplete, partial and false, for it leaves out or does not comprehend the decisive influence of social conditions on the content and form of identity." (13)

The "social conditions" that serve as the dynamic determinants in the evolution and role of identity, arise from economic, political, social and cultural aspects characteristic of the growth and "history" of the individual or collective in question.

18. It has to be understood that no correspondence exists, or can exist between Karenga's "historical origin" and "social location," and Cabral's "original identity" and "actual identity," unless, first, the dynamic character is present in the former set of terms. Second, emphasis must be properly given to the role of sociological factors, and actual identity. For us (this applies to the biological element in ways that it doesn't necessarily apply to peoples not subject to our unique form of oppression), again: The Ibo or Fulani taken from their homes -their societies -- in the early 16th or 17th centuries did not remain Ibo or Fulani, as they resisted oppression in the late 16th or 17th centuries; nor were they, in the 17th, 18th, 19th or 20th centuries, Ibo or Fulani -- and nor were they "Americans". On one hand, their biological elements had changed. However, We especially can't ignore the decisive dynamic character of the "actual identity," the importance of the sociological element and social conditions on the content, form, and role of identity in the context of our struggle to regain independence and new social development. "Actual identity" ain't about some static, metaphysical conception of mere "location" -- it's about the characteristics that you share with your people and which give you an identity "separate and distinct" from that of your oppressor! And, these social conditions inform the context and goals of the struggle. In fact, identity is the position that you take with regard to the struggle!

19. Karenga's adaptations of Cabral's terms omit their full meaning and they don't contain their dynamic character. Karenga's terms denote fixed status. This immutable character, absent the full range of political relationships to questions of struggle, was the foundation upon which petty-bourgeois forces in the late 1980s rested their rationale for adoption of the term "African-American." In doing so, they demonstrated a general abandon of the need for the identity of the people to be distinct from that of the oppressor, and they failed to connect the question of identity to the concrete reality of the ongoing struggle for national and social revolution. As Fanon would put it, "their objective is not the radical overthrow of the system." (14)

The question of identity doesn't arise independent of struggle against oppression and for a new type of social order; it doesn't arise independent of struggle between the classes of the people, because some class forces are in league with the people's enemy. If Karenga had referred us to Cabral and "Identity and Dignity" (which should be read and studied together with "National Liberation and Culture" and "The Weapon of Theory") (15), We'd have seen that the question of identity (and "name debates") is set within the context of struggle of a people against colonialist/capitalist oppression -- a people whose identity is shaped by that oppression.

20. Cabral's "Identity and Dignity" was set within the context of struggle -- one in which the mass of the people had maintained an identity distinct from that of their oppressor, because the people had never stopped resisting oppression, in all forms, and the basic elements of their culture and social structure had remained intact.

It was within this context that the question of identity arose, with particular reference to the problems of a "return to the source" of that identity, by individuals from the petty-bourgeois class, "culturally uprooted, alienated or more or less assimilated."

These petty-bourgeois individuals have allied themselves with the oppressor and sought to serve the interests of the oppressive state, as well as their own class interests: "...they live both materially and spiritually according to the foreign colonial structure. They seek to identify themselves with this culture both in their social behaviors and even in their appreciation of its values." (16)

The petty-bourgeoisie "assimilates the colonizer's mentality, considers itself culturally superior to its own people and ignores or looks down upon their cultural values. This situation, characteristic of the majority of colonized intellectuals, is consolidated by increases in the social privileges of...the group, with direct implications for the behavior of individuals in this group in relation to the liberation movement." (17)

However, they can't get past the barriers -- the "racial discrimination" -- thrown up by the system, or escape their role as a marginalized class. They begin to suffer a "frustration complex" which causes them to question their status, and to begin to struggle to regain identification with the mass of the people -- to regain an identity distinct from that of the oppressor:

The "return to the source" is therefore not a voluntary step, but the only possible reply to the demand of concrete need, historically determined, and enforced by the inescapable contradiction between the colonized society and the colonial power, the mass of the people exploited and the foreign exploitative class, a contradiction in the light of which each social stratum or indigenous class must define its position. (18)

Whether, and to what extent the "reconversion of minds" is genuine and effective is determined through practice and the choices made by individuals re: the goals and methods of daily struggle, i.e., the degree to which they oppose capitalism and pursue socialism in union with the masses, because the masses don't merely oppose the oppressive "culture," they oppose colonial domination as a whole.

Cabral's terms are thus seen as the necessary basis to define the characteristics of identity: the political, economic, social and cultural aspects which qualitatively distinguish the oppressed people from the colonial state. They illuminate the role of material forces and social practice in the shape and function of identity.

It is the struggle which "reflects the awareness or grasp of a complete identity," a grasp which is strengthened by the development of political awareness. (20)

The options before the petty-bourgeois individuals are more or less universal, and the masses have a need to maintain a vigilance over the class, because the petty-bourgeoisie has a tendency to assert the identity of the masses while pursuing their own class interests. (21)

21. As We move to "define our positions," We move beyond the frame of reference established by liberal and most so-called "left" interpretations of colonialist hegemony. That is, "assimilation" is in the interests of the colonizer; having the people believe that they are some sort of unequally treated "Americans" is in the interests of the colonizer; having the people define the nature of the problem as a struggle against mere "racism" is in the interests of the colonizer. "Assimilation" inside these borders really means acceptance of capitalist hegemony. To define the nature of the fundamental contradiction between our people and the U.S. as one against mere "racism" obscures the role of "racism" as a creation and tool of capitalism, and We end up struggling against "racism" but not against capitalism, and therefore, not struggling for real freedom.

A reconversion of minds -- of mental set-- is thus indispensable to the true integration of people into the liberation movement [which is] completed only during the course of the struggle, through daily contact with the popular masses in the communion of sacrifice required by the struggle. (22)

The greater the effectiveness of colonialism's policy of assimilation (in our case more effective since 1968 and the post-neocolonialist phase), and the more effective colonialism is in suppressing all forms of revolutionary resistance, the greater the need for **the whole people** to re-define their position, re-assert an identity, pursue the development of a revolutionary culture, and generally undergo a "reconversion of minds."

22. The late 1980s thrust by the bourgeois forces for the term "African-American" was consolidated at a press conference held in Chicago in December of 1988. Called by Ramona Edelin and Jesse Jackson, it was attended by a number of academics, writers, activists, and business people.

Jesse Jackson, acting as spokesperson, articulated the explicit rationale for the Call -- a rationale that echoed Karenga:

We are fundamentally an African people, with the blood of two continents flowing through our bodies, thus giving us a sense of obligation and participation in the world community. (23)

It was somewhat revealing, and not coincidental, that Jackson made the above statement while in Zambia in February of 1989--manifesting the implicit rationale of the Call, and effectively serving as ambassador for the petty-bourgeoisie and U.S. interests in the penetration of African markets.

Also echoing Karenga, the rationale and interests were articulated somewhat differently by John Jacobs, of the Urban League: "All other ethnic groups in America connect their heritage to their mother country and where they are now." Jacobs further asserted that the proposed term "reflects the duality of all Americans -- their ethnic or religious identity, and their status as Americans. Only Blacks are identified by a term that is purely descriptive of a physical characteristic -- color. Our priorities have to reflect the drive for parity in all aspects of life...."

23. Here is that one-sided "biological element," now framed as an "ethnic pluralist" rationale for an assimilationist objective, which guarantees that thought and practice remain within the so-called "mainstream" of American ideology and politics, masking the real nature of the colonial phenomenon. It's a narrow "culturalist," bourgeois nationalist line, placing their class interests above and opposite to the line of the masses, which is based on the historic necessity to ground a distinct nationality through a social revolutionary process. The line of the masses **refutes** American ideology and politics, with all underlying assumptions and values; it seeks to establish a new politics and a new culture.

24. We should also note that when "black" is argued as 'purely descriptive of a physical characteristic,' as Jacob does, this, too, is incomplete, partial and false. It contains a bit of truth, and no doubt helps some imagine a sound basis for adoption of the new term (e.g., in February of 1989, it was claimed that the people supported adoption of the new term by "consensus.") Yet, a 1991 poll taken by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, indicated that 72 percent of the people preferred to be called "Black," while 15 percent preferred the term "African-American."

For a majority of the people, "black" is not a term that's "purely descriptive of a color" -- it's a term that they use to signify a politics, an ideology, **a consciousness** of distinct nationality -- a nationality that the assimilationist framework suppresses and obscures. However, when Prof. Michael Dawson and others

conducted the National Black Political Study (1993-1994), they found that half of the people surveyed characterized our status as “a nation within a nation,” and that 14 percent (app. 4,200,000) wanted an independent “black” state.

25. The last “name debate,” under the leadership of New Afrikan petty-bourgeois forces, placed form over content by concentrating the effort upon **what** We should be called -- and resting this on a narrow, one-sided premise -- rather than upon **why We have a continuing need to assert and re-assert an identity that satisfies our material and psychological needs -- as a people.**

Identity designates one’s position with regard to the fundamental problems confronting the whole people, i.e., colonialism and capitalism. Our search for a collective identity is part of the process of our struggle to regain our freedom, and to build a socio-economic order that places people over profits.

— End of Part Two —

(o.y.y. -- 2-15-01)

NOTES

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5. The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon, Grove Press, First Evergreen Edition, 1966 [1963] p. 203.
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- 15.“Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle,” and “National Liberation and Culture,” in Return To The Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral, African Information Service, Monthly Review Press, 1973.
16. Identity and Dignity, p.61
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21. National Liberation and Culture, p.46-47; Identity and Dignity, p.68
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The
New Afrikan Creed

1. i believe in the spirituality, humanity and genius of Black people, and in our new pursuit of these values.
2. i believe in the family and the community, and in the community as a family, and i will work to make this concept live.
3. i believe in the community as more important than the individual.
4. i believe in constant struggle for freedom, to end oppression and build a better world. i believe in collective struggle; in fashioning victory in concert with my brothers and sisters.
5. i believe that the fundamental reason our oppression continues is that We, as a people, lack the power to control our lives.
6. i believe that fundamental way to gain that power, and end oppression, is to build a sovereign Black nation.
7. i believe that all the land in America, upon which We have lived for a long time, which We have worked and built upon, and which We have fought to stay on, is land that belongs to us as a people.
8. i believe in the Malcolm X Doctrine: that We must organize upon this land, and hold a plebiscite, to tell the world by a vote that We are free and our land independent, and that, after the vote, We must stand ready to defend ourselves, establishing the nation beyond contradiction.
9. Therefore, i pledge to struggle without cease, until We have won sovereignty. i pledge to struggle without fail until We have built a better condition than the world has yet known.
10. i will give my life, if that is necessary; i will give my time, my mind, my strength, and my wealth because this **IS** necessary.
11. i will follow my chosen leaders and help them.
12. i will love my brothers and sisters as myself.
13. i will steal nothing from a brother or sister, cheat no brother or sister, misuse no brother or sister, inform on no brother or sister, and spread no gossip.
14. i will keep myself clean in body, dress and speech, knowing that i am a light set on a hill, a true representative of what We are building.
15. i will be patient and uplifting with the deaf, dumb and blind, and i will seek by word and deed to heal the Black family, to bring into the Movement and into the Community mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters left by the wayside.

Now, freely and of my own will, i pledge this **Creed**, for the sake of freedom for my people and a better world, on pain of disgrace and banishment if i prove false. For, i am no longer deaf, dumb or blind. i am, by inspiration of the ancestors and grace of the Creator — a **New Afrikan**.

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