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Black radicals and the American national consciousness: Ideology in the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Black radical movement was the culmination of sentiments left unexpressed century after century of wrong. The African-American had singed on the stake of callous discrimination, brutalization and exploitation without making any significant effort at succor. The slave men and women found themselves grounded still in a labyrinth of white supremacy where there was no room for self advocacy and ventilation. It is with no surprise that when black radical movements started cropping up they would engage in a marathon procession of pride and dignity. This procession found itself in cultural assertion, racial exclusivity, revolutionary prophecy and the flexing of arms. Only anger and constriction could yield such a bold and vibrant movement. The cause was civil rights, yet the vision went beyond what white America could provide ala with regard to legislation. Black men and women were demanding their humanity back.

Previously, as when slaves revolted in plantations or took control of slave ships, radical action and even mere assertiveness by Blacks in America had assumed sporadic manifestation and could be easily suppressed with the full might of the establishment. Slave revolts at times took insurrectionary forms yet they were small in scope and sparse in frequency. The laws had been enacted to strip the 'Negro' of any remnants of human spontaneity or autonomy. However history had not yet ended, there were still to be formative years of Black rebellion.

The three hundred years of bondage had not been silent years. There were intermediary occasions of great volatility which continued to shape the destiny of the African-American. There was the War of Independence and the American Civil War and finally the Emancipation. Each episode redefined the fate of the African American. But what dawned into the mind of the African-American was that America would always be the house of bondage, some form of migration had to take place. After the Emancipation, the lot of the African-American did not improve as was expected; instead there was a reversal of most of the important gains that had been made. Black people got

disenfranchised, lynching continued unabated, discrimination and segregation were intensified. White America was proving to be a nightmare to the Black race.

Most scholars agree that the advent of World War Two brought significant changes in the way African-Americans interacted with white America (Franklin,1956). There was a huge demand for Black labour to sustain the war effort to an extent that Blacks became more and more involved in most aspects of American life. It was here that they would feel the full throttle of white prejudice. However this was also a time when white America would be confronted with Black resistance. Thus, by the time the war had ended, the civil rights movement was crystallizing.

Those at the forefront of the movement demanded a fair share of the American dream. These were Black representatives, mainly church leaders, who felt it unjustifiable that in a prosperous land that boasted the most advanced of liberal democracies there could still be a large portion of citizens left out due to prejudice. America was enough for both Black and white in so far as socio-economic opportunities were concerned. Coexistence was not only possible, but vital for the long run survival of the Union. What needed to happen was the bringing of America to her senses. All that was demanded was already inscribed in the Constitution. Peaceful demonstration, it was thought, would steer the American conscience to the right path.

This was the movement of the likes of the Reverend Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Conference (1957), and the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People (NAACP). These movements strived for integration and the ending of discrimination. They saw America as a home for all races there. The organizations were well organized and most of their defiance campaigns yielded results, as in the epic bus boycott in Montgomery, which struck at the heart of segregation. They also received sympathy from progressive white circles. These organizations constituted the heart of the civil rights protest movement.

The first all black separatist mass movement to reach prominence was the Nation of Islam founded around 1930 (Draper,1970, 73). It differed from the other movements in that it sought salvation outside of the American ideal. To the Nation of Islam, the whole idea of Americanism was an abomination. The movement prophesied the perishing of America by the agency of God. It adopted Islam, although a somewhat adulterated Islam, as the original religion of the Black man and because it was antithetical to America's Christianity. The adherents of the religion were to be taken back to paradise and regain their prominence as Blacks. The movement was not merely tied up with metaphysical speculations and esotericism; it also provided a guideline of how its adherents were to relate to America. It is this aspect of the movement that is of interest to us. It was self-determination and dignity that this movement so eagerly sought.

The Nation of Islam has had tenets that are extremely anti-American. The movement has been taken to be an affront to the American national consciousness. What can be understood as a response to centuries of racial terrorization inspired this movement to adopt a withdrawal or separatist mode of social resistance. The movement, throughout its past and present has not only focused at resisting mainstream America but also uplifting the lifestyle of its members. Its proselytizing has targeted the underclass in America, discouraging the use of intoxicants and encouraging a disciplined way of living.

The founding tenets of the Black Muslims or the Nation of Islam puts it clear to the African-American that he or she is not to hold any affinity or allegiance to the state of America. America is the place of bondage and only its perishing will spell freedom and redemption for the African-American. Redemption will be brought about through God's vengeance. Meanwhile the Black Muslim is to desist from all moral entrapments that the evil society brings across her. This paradox of rejecting Americanism and aspiring to lead an austere life lends the Black Muslim a radical and yet conservative profile. Radicalism is expressed through the denouncement of all that America represents. Separatism is seen as the solution to the racism that has been the fixed legacy of America. However, the austerity and moral codes that the Black Muslims adhere to, including the patriarchal

perceptions about gender and matrimony, lend the movement a conservative and provincial outlook. This actually determines the extent to which the movement will grow.

The Nation of Islam, which has been cited as the oldest and most enduring of Black mass movements had a shoddy beginning peculiar to most politico-religious sects in working class America. Its founder had been a certain Wallace D. Fard who began spreading the gospel about the Lost Found Nation of Islam in the 1930s. The most pervasive theme of the movement was its claims to a great past that African-Americans had at their place of origin, the Holy City of Mecca. Thus, a somewhat escapist route was followed. Apart from being a religious organ, the movement was a vehicle of protest. The tenets held by the movement were extremely political. The political aspect of the movement did not extend to actual political agitation and confrontation, although there were some confrontations between the movement and the state apparatus. Separatism itself was a form of radical protest even though it entails withdrawal and alienation. The highlight of the movement is the nurturing of the political career of Malcolm X. He was the most vocal spokesman of the movement and helped consolidated the political edge of the movement. Thus statements by Malcolm X during his membership to the movement reflect its profoundest thinking. Conscientious stance met direct political agitation through him.

The general protest movement of the civil rights era declined by the late 1970s due to various causes ─ including the amelioration of the conditions of Blacks in America and the intensification of severe state suppression of some of the movements. The Nation of Islam, though, persistently continued to grow. This was not the case for the Black Panther Party. The decline of the Black Panther Party marked a new mood in America concerning radical politics. For the next decades radical politics faded from the public spotlight. Some argue that this is because the movement lost relevance as the social conditions of blacks had dramatically improved. State suppression, as with COINTELPRO, which was a state campaign to eradicate radical political formations that saw most of the leadership and membership being ‘neutralized’. This spelled an end of an era. It is what the Panthers stood for which persists indefinitely: Black radicalism has found audience in generations

of Black activists, be they hip-hop artists (e.g. Dead Prez) or community organizations such as Refuse & Resist which are the 21st Century protégés of the Panther movement. The politics of these groups are similar to those of the Panthers, the focus is on resisting police brutality, promote socialism in the Black communities and celebrate the fact of blackness.

The era of the Panthers was that of radical student politics. When the Black Panther Party was formed in 1966, the protest movement had garnered momentum and confidence was seething among Black activists. The chic and vibrancy which the Panthers adopted was itself an expression of protest. They however had a concrete political program. Racism in America and the legacy of slavery were seen as manifestations of social exploitation. The system needed to be overthrown. Integration and assimilation, which the mainstream civil rights movement was preaching was not an indictment of the crooked system and thus was not militant at all. A revolutionary 10-Point Platform and Program of the Black Panther Party listed the aims and aspirations of the movement which sum up to a program that seeks nothing less than the complete overhauling of the system. A social revolution would be the only guarantee of equality and justice. The American dream is rejected wholesale. There was a great leaning towards revolutionary socialist principles in the Black Panther Party. Thus there was no way that the movement could be accomodationist at most and integrationist at least.

The founding name of the movement, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense implies not only its radicalism but also the role that the movement adopted in the wider struggle for equity. There had already been gains in the struggle for civil rights, segregation was being outlawed in the public realm. There was a backlash from reactionary sections of the white society that tried to reverse these gains and it was the purpose of the Panthers to protect these. However, as Draper (1969) points out, the movement had a larger goal. The goal was the achievement of emancipation from racism and its bastion, capitalism. This placed the Panthers at the opposite end of the American national consciousness.

This dissertation is an attempt at understanding the rationale of black radical movements in America, especially during the civil rights protest movement era. It is also an observation into social group consciousness, its relevancy, justifications and practicality. The Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam have been selected for study because they have similarities in essence and yet have a striking differences in outlook. They have been the most vocal and explicit movements of their kind in America. The future need of these movements is also pondered.

The terminology, references and discourse used in this research report is the typical one used in studies of Black political formations in America. Thus terms such as Negro, Black and African-American have been used interchangeably and mean the same thing. The phrase 'radical', simply denotes to a political belief that is at the extreme opposite of the status quo in theory and practice. American national consciousness refers to the prevailing standards of the ruling white society in America, all the ideals, symbols and heritage. The Nation of Islam has also been referred to as Black Muslims and the Black Panther Party has also been referred to as Black Panthers or simply Panthers, wherever appropriate.

The arguments of this dissertation have a point of departure that begins with understanding the roots of racial conflict in America, hence the history about slavery and early black political resistance, they conclude with the appraisal of the nature of social group formations and the verdict on the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam. Each chapter deals with a different aspect of the study, but eventually all chapters lead up to one argument: that the two movements have been inevitable and indispensable.

Aims and Objectives

There are substantial misunderstandings about the worth of Black nationalist organizations in the United States, they are either considered impractical, irrelevant or both. Most of all they are considered to have lost not only appeal but necessity. The fact that these movements' goals and visions were not met is considered to be indicative of

the worthlessness and impracticality of these movements. This study seeks to posit that actually these movements have played an invaluable part in the entire struggle for equality, dignity and fair treatment of Blacks in America. The dynamics of seeking to assert social autonomy and respect involve the parting of ways with the ideals and icons of the dominating group. A new identity is sought, the political programs involve this. A new set of beliefs is charted. Some form of symbolism is also adopted. The glorious past may also be evoked, even at times fabricated. This is to facilitate the nurturing of an autonomous being. This is what the politics of Black nationalism also entail.

There is no other way African-Americans as a distinct race with a defined history could invoke group identity and accrue goals such as dignity, fairness, justice and respect other than to assert themselves. The Nation of Islam, the Black Panther Party and other similarly radical movements were informed by such needs. It is not enough to refer to sociological reasons to justify the adherence to the beliefs these movements endorsed, even though some of them have been considered bizarre. This study seeks to demonstrate the political relevance and necessity of these movements so as to render their past roles appreciated and to encourage the nurturing of their current and future role. This study is to some extent an advocacy attempt. For African-Americans to function as equals in America, their past needs to be acknowledged and there is a need to challenge the status quo and to contest the hegemony of white America if human dignity and fairness are to be realized by African-Americans.

Significance of Study

The lot of the African-American has changed a great deal since the first decade of the civil rights protest movement in 1950. A lot has happened in terms of legislature to harness equality and end segregation. Wanton acts of discrimination and segregation are no longer as common as they once were. Lynching, which was the pressing struggle for the NAACP, has been contained. There have been interventions by the government in the war against prejudice, affirmative action is one of them. The integration of Blacks into political office in America has been described as healthy. The scourge of four hundred

years of brutal racism has not however disappeared without trace. Poverty, illiteracy, low voter turn out, criminal violence, disproportionate prison populations, homelessness, drug abuse, police brutality, joblessness and other sociological ills continue to plague African-American communities. Hence Pinkney argued that inequality persists in America and the lot of Blacks is still burdensome (1984).

It is thus highly significant and relevant to conduct a study appraising the inner dynamics of the historic Black movements that arose simply to oppose the above mentioned social ills and injustices. This study thus is not merely scholastic, but has a normative interest in its subject of research. A better understanding of these movements may help in the revival and betterment of such movements. Their role deserves acknowledgement if the legacy and relevance of the movements is to be carried on. It is also wholesome to study the intricacies of resistance movements as the entire future of human autonomy relies in such endeavors. There has been a revival of radical Black movements, an academic appraisal of their dynamics sheds light into their nature and their future.

Methodology: An Interpretive Approach

This study does not seek to reach its conclusion through a quantitative approach. It is a study of academic texts and political theory. The source of study is academic work dealing with the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam as Black radical movements in America. The focus is on things that have been said about these two movements by scholars of American politics. This is therefore some form of debate with current scholarly positions on the subject of this study.

Literature on American history and on Black resistance politics provides the focus of this research report. Prevailing notions about the dynamics of these two movements will be appraised. There have been authors who have dominated the debates about the two movements. The likes of Thoedore Draper, Manning Marable, Harold Cruse, John Hope Franklin, Alphonso Pinkney, C. Eric Lincoln, Vibert L. White, Komozi Woodard, James A. Geschwender, James W. Vander Zanden, Malcolm X and others have made profound

contributions into the study of Black resistance in general and the Black Panther and the Nation of Islam in particular. It is these authors who have shaped the many arguments in this study, it is also these authors who provide as 'sparing partners' in the debates conducted in this study.

For collaborative and other purposes documents which spell out the programs and objectives the two movements are consulted. Websites have been consulted to extract some formative information about the two movements. But the main thrust of the research is textual and involves literature and policy documents.

Human subjects have also played a role in this research, not as subjects of the research but as advisors and guidance. This has been so in the part where an understanding of Islam was deemed essential. Ethical considerations have been upheld. No unfair portrayal of the interviewees has been conducted.

CHAPTER 2: NATIONHOOD, A SUBSTANTIVE PROBE

National versus Group Identity

The common ground between the Black Muslims and the Black Panthers is the awareness of the race question. There are innumerable social ills facing the Black person and all these are visited to her due to her race. A consciousness of her group identity guides her political program. The social ills are to be confronted by Blacks as a collective group.
Essien-Udom, a convert and scholar in the movement, in his study published in 1962, opens his work by explaining what it is that the Black person gets from acknowledging her legacy : "The tragedy of the Negro in America is that he has rejected his origins − the essentially human meaning implicit in the heritage of slavery, prolonged suffering, and social rejection. By rejecting this unique group experience and favouring assimilation, and even biological amalgamation, he thus denies himself the creative possibilities inherent in it and in his folk culture" (Essien-Udom, 1962, vii). He further provides the reason for the existence of Black nationalist sentiments:

> Nationalist groups, separatist religious movements, and fraternal associations among American negroes have had a long, related history. They have a common origin in the unresolved problem of the Negro's status as a second-class citizen in the United States each developing as a necessary ad hoc response to this experience (Essien-Udom, 1962, 17).

The reason for Blacks to assert themselves is not merely because there is racism and that they are excluded and rejected by other groups, but also that they are missing on the vital Black experience. For Essien-Udom, the white society does offer opportunities for assimilation and even amalgamation, but they are to be rejected by the Negro. Pinkney on the other hand believes that prejudice is inalienable to the white order and thus

ineradicable, thus assimilation and amalgamation are impossible. The white order will just not allow it. It is thus important for the Black person to develop self-consciousness as a social group. Pinkney's conclusion is informed by the concrete evidence, the social disparities and ills blacks have to contend with. On the other hand Essien-Udom's position is informed by politics of blood. Pinkney despairs at the fact that America will not reform while Essien-Udom believes this reality must be seized as an opportunity to assert separate racial identities. Separatism is to be welcomed and championed: "A century after the emancipation, nineteen million black Americas, robbed of their traditions and of a pride in their past, are still seeking acceptance by the white majority but are continuing to live in semi-bondage on the fringes of American society" (Essien-Udom, 1962, 1).

This is indeed a dilemma, as Essien-Udom puts it. The African-American finds herself confronted by two opposing options; one is to opt for assimilation so that inequality and subjugation can end, another reality is that she is faced with the duty of asserting herself and thus face further alienation and privation. The Nation of Islam has a solution to the consequential alienation that goes with self assertion; the solution is Black enterprise, 'forget integration.'

It is not clear if Black enterprise can solve all the problems faced by Blacks in America. The Black Panther Party opted for a wholesale revolution. The revolution would be expansive in impact and would involve the entire underclass. The grandeur of the plan sealed the fate of the Black Panther: repression and alienation. The Nation of Islam resorted to readily implemented solutions ─ separatism in socio-economic plateaus. The extent of such an endeavour is self-limiting and as a consequence the Nation of Islam remains a compact mass movement with limited potential for mass recruitment.

Essien-Udom states the importance of national pride, what it entails: "This book [*A Nation Within A nation*] attempts to record the striving of thousands, and perhaps unrecorded millions of American Negroes to reclaim for themselves and their group the normal self-pride and confidence which their history in America has denied them

(Essien-Udom, 1962, 4).” Denouncing these movements is denying Blacks common human impulses, “White society assumes that the Negro will almost always act in accordance with the stereotypes of Negro behavior which it has evolved. Thus, in his view, the Negro will always be the paragon of almost supine patience and reasonableness; he will not be subject to the human emotions of hatred, anger, and love, nor of personal and group pride (Essien-Udom, 1962, 10).” This is what Draper fails to understand.

Draper problematicizes the event of the re-emergence of Black nationalism. To downplay the necessity and authenticity of this movement, he traces reactionary origins of this movement: “Traditionally, black nationalism in the United States has taken two predominant forms. The first was ‘migrationism,’ or ’emigrationism,’ and is still with us today ─ if only in fantasy. Paradoxically, this idea was as much white as black in origin. That it was deeply embedded in the white consciousness, two of the greatest and loftiest Americans, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, may serve as witnesses. The ambivalence with which they treated the Negro problem of their day has its counterpart in our time” (Draper, 1969, 4). By showing that some of the claims made by Black nationalist movements have white origins, he discredits the movement. Initiative is denied these movements and they are denied any true essence. Separatism and emigrationism which Garveyism and Black Islamism endorsed are seen by Draper as erroneous and fruitless. For Essien-Udom, these aspirations are legitimate, natural and rational.

Essien-Udom’s Negro asserts her racial identity in order to break with the American national consciousness. Black assertion is thus rebellious and anti-status quo, “Faced with these stereotypes and rebelling against them because of their untruth and hostile intent, the Negro also unconsciously rejects the standards of the ruling white society which has foisted them upon him” (Essien-Udom, 1962, 10).

Thus, breaking with the American national consciousness or the standards of the ruling white society, the Negro denounces untruthfulness and hostility exerted on her. She also

seeks to challenge her social conditions. Virtually, the fight against the American national consciousness entails an opposition and attack on poverty, segregation, discrimination, social ills, prejudice and other such vices visited on Blacks in America. The fight against the prevailing white standards is more than symbolic, it is a battle against structural injustice. Black pride ceases to be a cultural expression but becomes a political program to resist injustice and privation.

Blacks cannot endorse American national consciousness and still be conscious of being Black; otherwise an aberration sets in. As Du Bois had observed, the African-American or Negro feels her two-ness, two unreconciled strivings, and Essien-Udom adds to this, "The Negro cannot choose both the dominant white culture and his own subculture" (Essien-Udom, 1962,11). This perpetual tussle, according to Essien-Udom, has led to there not being a Negro "ethos". In actual fact there needs not be a homogenous consciousness or ethos among Blacks in America (this would involve an insight into social psyche, a field of metaphysics). The variant Black national consciousnesses form an aggregate and thus an ethos can be identified – it is not a homogeneous one though. It rests as a collage in flux.

The are debates within the Black nationalist school of thought as to whether Blacks form a nation or a social group, "They are also careful about the word 'race' because they believe themselves to constitute a 'nation.' It is the Caucasians, they believe, 'racing with time', who form a race" (Essien-Udom, 1962, 12). Thus, for some Black radicals, self-assertion involves also breaking away with all terms and definitions used by the dominant white society. However Garvey is an exception to this rule, he tried to match European nationalism pound for pound, as Draper notes: "Garveyism came closest to expressing itself in terms of traditional nationalism. It made 'nationhood' the highest ideal of all people" (Draper, 1969, 51).

Whether African-Americans comprise a nation or are just a racial grouping depends on one's political orientation. However, what is clear and indisputable is that they do present a separate identity informed by historical incidents. A legacy exists and apart from it their

present condition keeps reminding them of who they are. James W. Vander Zanden dedicated a whole book, give title of the book here, to the understanding of minority social groups. He borrows the definitions of a minority from Wagley and Harris:

1. *A minority is a social group whose members experience at the hands of another social group various disabilities in the form of prejudice, discrimination, segregation, or persecution (or any combination of these).*
2. *The disabilities experienced by minorities are related to special characteristics that its members share, either physical or cultural or both, which the dominant group holds in low esteem.*
3. *Minorities are self-conscious social units; they are characterized by a consciousness of kind.*
4. *Generally a person does not become a member of a minority voluntarily; he or she is born into it.*
5. *Members of a minority group, by choice or necessity, tend to marry within their own group (endogamy).* (Vander Zanden, 1972, 10-12).

The first point applies to African-Americans in that they have been subjected to slavery and racism which have been persecutory. They have physical traits that define and confine them to a certain profile and this is ineradicable which is why racism, prompted by difference in physical traits is enduring and abominable. Point three actually agrees with DuBois and Essien-Udom's thesis that the African-American is forever conscious of her group identity. Thus Black consciousness is unavoidable and is inevitable. Point number five touches on the theme of biological amalgamation which Essien-Udom is wary of. Feelings about endogamy are intense among Black nationalists. If this is a precondition for being a minority then aspirations for biological separatism which Essien-Udom endorses are a political stance.

Vander Zanden cites Louis Wirth listing types of minorities. There are four types: (1) pluralistic, (2) assimilationist, (3) secessionist, and (4) militant (Vander Zanden, 1972, 17). The Black radical belongs to the fourth category, militant minorities. Militant minorities stand against assimilation at the same time they may tolerate pluralism. The

Panthers' program tolerates pluralism whilst Black Muslim believe in one race, the original race of Blacks. This is one strong contrast between the two movements. Both movements agree about one thing, the subjugated state of Blacks which is prompted by racism. They differ on how to deal with it. The consciousness of being Black informs the political programs one adopts. Only when the group is aware of its identity can it comprehend its situation and articulate it most vocally.

Slavery-Based Society: The Dynamics of Racial Hierarchies

Although the first encounters of Africans with the New World were rather sporadic and adventurous, this was to dramatically change with the advent of slavery. Slavery was to facilitate the way Europeans dealt with Africans for the next four hundred years. All the myths held by explorers about Africans were to justify the latter treatment of Africans by Europeans. This age, beginning with the discovery of America in 1497 and closing down with the Industrial Revolution saw the embryonic capitalism taking form, preceded and ushered by the most brutal subjugation of man by man in the pursuit of wealth and comfort. The role of slaves would be primary in this historic movement towards the mass accumulation of wealth through mass exploitation, as John Hope Franklin understands it, "If Negroes helped to raise the curtain on the drama of economic life in the New world, they were to play an even more important part in the exploitation of its resources, once here; and once fastened to a lifetime status of slavery, they became an integral part of the economic life of the old world and of the new" (Franklin, 1956, 47).

This was the entry of the African into the economic life of the New World. This would also earn her a status she would have to endure for centuries. It is debatable what really motivated the European to elect to use Africans as slave labourers. Franklin undertakes a laborious explanation of why it was favourable for Europeans to use African slave labour:

> When the countries of Europe undertook to develop the New World, they were interested primarily in the exploitation of America's natural resources. Labor was,

> obviously necessary, and the *cheaper the better*. It was only natural that Indians, readily available, would be the first to be used. The Europeans displayed excessive inhumanity in the employment of Indian slaves in the mines of Haiti, while the work in the fields of the Caribbean almost exterminated them. The great susceptibility of Indians to the diseases carried by Europeans and the *simple economic background* of the Indians which did not prepare them for the disciplined regime of the plantation system all but eliminated them as workers in the economic system which the Europeans established. Nowhere was Indian slavery profitable. Even if it had been, it would have been insufficient for the robust agricultural life that the European colonies were fostering in the seventeenth century. Other sources of labor supply would have to be tapped if the agricultural development in the New World was not to be retarded by the insufficiency of workers (Franklin, 1956, 47).[1]

Franklin seeks to demonstrate why eventually it was Black slave labour that was opted for. Sustainability and cost were the main considerations of the European colonists. The labour had to be cheap, otherwise the colonist would have proceeded with paid white labour. It would have cost the colonists dearly to use paid white labour. But why not enslave it then? This question brings about ethical considerations. There may be two answers to this conundrum. As slave labour is downgrading, the Europeans could not bear the large scale downgrading of their own society through intra-slavery. Second, European slave labour would not have been able to withstand the harsh conditions entailed by slave labour. Thus a more sustainable supply of labour would have to be procured elsewhere without European society suffering the brunt of mass displacement. Franklin seems to argue that as opposed to Indian labour, and perhaps to white labour, African labour was more predisposed to the demands of the robust economic system the colonists were embarking on. Thus the Negroes had a more rigid economic background which had prepared them for "the disciplined regime of the plantation system". To sustain this argument, Franklin would have to elaborate more on labour practices across continents.

[1] Italics mine.

The argument that seems to cause little perplexity is that of the abundance of Negro slave labour. A whole people was converted into a commodity. Irrespective of how much resilient or deficient the Negro labour was, it could be procured in large numbers indefinitely. This may explain the colonists' preference for Negro slave labour. The supply was in abundance. Casualties at the plantations were enormous - that did not matter. The European could harvest from an endless supply of human beings without incurring the social effects of it, "Negroes, from a pagan land and without exposure to the ethical ideals of Christianity, could be handled with more rigid methods of discipline and could be morally and spiritually degraded for the sake of stability on the plantation" (Franklin, 1956, 49). Actually, the urge for wealth and comfort had begun to eclipse any moral or religious considerations. This was a world dragging itself screaming and kicking, as it were, to mass productivity. Brutality was excusable. This was to be the case until the utility of slavery had diminished and the moral objection to it had become vocal enough to change the system.

African-American Status through the Ages: Change and Reversal

Given the manner into which the legacy of slavery in America has entrenched itself to the collective consciousness it seems impossible to imagine that Africans in America could have had any other status than that of slaves. However things did not begin this way:

> There can be little doubt that the earliest Negroes in Virginia occupied a position similar to that of white servants in the colony. They were listed as servants in the census enumerations of 1623 and 1624; and as late as 1651 some Negroes whose period of service had expired were being assigned land in much the same way that it was being done for white servants. The records of Virginia contain many indentures of Negro servants during the forty-year period following their introduction; and during the same period there are records of free Negroes in the colony (Franklin, 1956, 70).

The entry of Africans into America was not as tragic as it would subsequently be. However those were not the years of bonhomie in the rapidly commercializing world. It

had not yet become clear to the colonist how invaluable slave labour would prove. The fact that slavery was not instantaneous puts to doubt the opinion that racism prompted slavery. Commercial considerations help to explain why eventually slavery was adopted.

This does not mean racism would not have come to dominate social relations in America had slavery not occurred. Anti-Semitism in America is a proof of a racism independent of slave status. Slavery was a racist act although it was prompted by commercial considerations. The slave code had racism written over it, yet one may see it as a pre-emptive move to quell potential revolt. Racism and commercial concerns are here intertwined and complimentary. The status of African-Americans as slaves would also invite racial contempt on them and it was this racial contempt that outlived slavery. Given the manner in which slavery naturalized itself, it is ironic that there actually had been reluctance in adopting it. Not on moral grounds though. Its potential took some while to be appreciated, as Franklin explains below:

> It seemed that Virginia was willing to exhaust every possibility in her effort to solve her labor problem, before finally resorting to Negro slavery. As she experimented with various practices, she encountered the same difficulties that her insular colleagues had experienced. Indian servitude and slavery proved fruitless and wasteful. The white servants were found to be unsatisfactory on two counts. There was no possibility that the supply would satisfy the demand in a country where there was so much work to be done. There was moreover, the disturbing factor of having to replace indentured servants every few years as their period of service expired. This was a most unsatisfactory feature that applied to Indian and Negro servants as well as to white servants. The answer to this vexing problem appeared to be perpetual servitude of Negroes, whose supply seemed inexhaustible, and who apparently presented none of the problems that white servants presented. If they ran away they were easily detected because of their color. If they proved ungovernable they could be chastised with less qualms and with greater severity than in case of whites because Negroes represented heathen people who could not claim the immunities accorded to Christians (Franklin, 1956, 70).

Franklin's description of the early conditions in Virginia gives a picture of a practice that was reached serendipitously, after a process of elimination had ensued. The motivation for enslaving Africans was not per se instigated by racism but by utility. Some scholars disagree (Pinkney, 1984). Why then did slavery commence simultaneously with racism? After all, each has been substituted for the other. However, what is unquestionable is that the end of slavery precipitated the intensification of racism by whites against Negroes. Was slavery a direct cause of subsequent racism. There is the opinion that assumes a materialist understanding of slavery – as having merely been an economic movement that sought to yield huge returns at little cost. Racism then would have to have a disparate cause. It is not clear which. However the treatment of blacks during slavery had a profound influence in how they were treated after Emancipation.

The institution of slavery subjected Blacks to sordid episodes of brutalization and degradation. The actual practice of slavery summoned callous treatment of Blacks on the plantation. This extended to the social context. Negro slaves, whole families and communities were accorded the status of an underclass. Freedmen and other Negroes in non-slave owning states had their lot to contend with. This suggests something: that Blacks as a race were more or less fated with mistreatment wherever they existed in America.

The treatment of Blacks in non-slave owning states is regarded as having been by and large better than in the South. The barbarity of slavery in the northern states was limited by the quick abolishing of the practice. Racism in these parts was not as severe as in the South. It is quite plausible for one to argue that the institution of slavery had a profound influence in informing the way Blacks were to be treated in post-Civil War America. Practices which later became common after the abolition of slavery, such as lynching and police brutality have their precedents:

> The growth of the Negro population and the fears of uprisings which the white population entertained had the effect of bringing forth a body of laws that were designed to keep the Negroes under control. Before the end of the seventeenth

> century the slave code of Virginia was well established. No slave was allowed to leave the plantation presumably on an errand for his master without the written permission of his master. Slaves wandering about without such permission were to be taken up and returned to their masters. Slaves found guilty of murder or rape were to be hanged, and their masters were to be compensated by the colony. For robbing a house or a store a slave was given sixty lashes by the sheriff, placed in the pillory with his ears nailed to the posts for a half hour, and then his ears were severed from his head. For petty offences slaves were whipped, maimed, or branded (Franklin, 1956, 73).

Above all other motivations, it was sheer paternalism that informed the way Blacks were to be treated. There seemed to be a martial law only applying to Blacks. It has been argued that the state of slavery is that of continuous armed subjugation. Arms were virtually accessory to the situation, as Franklin points out: "Before the end of the colonial period Virginia, like her neighbors, had become an armed camp in which masters figuratively kept their guns cocked and trained on the slaves in order to keep them docile and tractable and in which the assembly, the courts, and the custodians of the law worked for the maintenance of peace and order among the black workers" (Franklin, 1956, 73). This took many manifestations but it reincarnated itself in the period long after Emancipation. What the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had to stand up against in the beginning of the 1900s and up to the post-World War 2, i.e., lynching, had come a long way and yet still had a long way to go. Franklin has argued that the brutality of slavery was visited on Blacks because they were pagans and not exposed to the tenets of Christianity. It is interesting to note that the underclass status of Blacks was not altered by their conversion to Christianity. Perpetual slavery was envisaged for Blacks:

> During the restoration period several acts were passed to encourage the importation of slaves into Maryland. One of these was the Act of 1671 which contended that conversion of slaves to Christianity did not affect their status. Masters who had been confused over the matter of purchasing heathens and subjecting them to

> continuous toil without the benefit of religious instruction could now import them and convert them without fear of their emancipation (Franklin, 1956, 74).

The American Civil War of 1861, mainly fought over the issue of slavery later brought about the emancipation of slaves in 1865. The erstwhile mute American Constitution could now be amended to accord citizenship rights to Blacks. However Citizenship did not mean equality. And over a century of racial discrimination terrorization and intimidation was to ensue. The status of African-American remained that of underclass. Alphonso Pinkney, has this to say about the post emancipation period for Blacks in America, the status they had to endure: "During the period of Reconstruction, following slavery, many promises were made to the newly freed slaves. These included commitments to racial equality and economic opportunity. But, within a short time these promises were either compromised, ignored, or abandoned. And in the years following Reconstruction, black people were essentially returned to slavery in every respect but name" (Pinkney, 1984, 167). Essentially this means that racism did not depend on slavery to persist, but could replay some of the conditions blacks suffered under slavery.

Due to many gains of the civil rights movement and the post-War economy, the lot of the African American had improved. There was still a long way to go before the status quo could tilt in favour of the African American. Thus there was an impetus for Black revolt. Black revolt surging in the 1950s and 1960s has been pondered upon by scholars on socio-psychological terms and conclusions have been made about is causes. Geschwender ponders many theoretical approaches towards understanding Black revolt which picked up in the 1960s in the urban areas at the same time that conditions were ameliorating:

> The current Negro revolt has been explained in terms of **relative deprivation**[2]. Many Negroes believe that negroes are improving their objective position in American society but they are not gaining relative to whites. They use the metaphor of a train starting from New York to California and say that while they have reached Chicago they are still riding in the caboose and maybe the train has grown longer. In other words, the Negro today is better off than his grandfather but

> so is the white, and possibly the gap between Negro and white has increased. Thus, dissatisfaction results and leads to protest activities (Geschwender, 1971, 8).

The relative deprivation theory does not fully surmise the situation. Another explanation which explains why there was the upsurge of revolt when civil rights concessions were being made is that the concessions were forced on the white establishment by objective conditions and that white society tried to reverse them and thus the Black citizen revolted to protect these gains and gain more. What was clear though is that the status quo was being effectively challenged. Below, it is considered how blacks responded to their plight, and how the response may be related to later forms of Black resistance.

CHAPTER 3: RACISM AND BLACK RESISTANCE IN AMERICA, A BLEMISH OR WATERMARK?

> As a movement black nationalism has evolved through several stages, including colonization, emigration, internal statism, and cultural pluralism. These are the means blacks in the United States have advocated to achieve self-determination and ultimate liberation ─ Alphonso Pinkney.[3]

Black Political Formations

Collective action by Negroes to attain freedom in the New World first occurred further south of the Americas, in Brazil: "Perhaps the most desperate bid of the Negro for freedom in the New World occurred in Brazil in the seventeenth century. It was the establishment of the Republic of Palmares, a Negro state in Alagoas in northeastern Brazil between 1630 and 1697" (Franklin, 1956, 122). Negroes had escaped from towns and plantations and settled in the Rio Mundahu Valley. The first settlement, which at most had about seven thousand inhabitants was destroyed by the Dutch in 1644 who intended occupying that section of Brazil. The towns were rebuilt by Negroes, only to be leveled down by the Portuguese in 1676. A third republic lasted until 1696. There were to be various other insurrections by Negroes in Brazil and they lasted as long as slavery persisted there.

These were the first direct actions against the institution of slavery and the practice of subjugating humans. Negroes were prepared to use arms. The manner in which they

reacted to their situation and the manner in which their insurrections and revolts were suppressed confirm the saying that the subjugating of humans through slavery is a state of war. It is why the Negroes also acted militarily as well. Black rebellion has its roots here.

Apart from sporadic acts of discontent, the real and deliberate stance by Negroes against slavery in America occurred at the same time the American settlers were also demanding their independence from England. The demands for independence by colonists actually stimulated a more vocal opposition to slavery using the same arguments the settlers were using against England:

> It was almost natural for the colonists to link the problem of Negro slavery to their fight against England. The struggle of Negroes to secure their freedom was growing. When James Otis was penning his eloquent protest on the *Rights of British Colonies* in which he affirmed the Negro's inalienable right to freedom, Negroes themselves were petitioning the General Court of Massachusetts for their freedom on the grounds that it was their natural right (Franklin, 1956, 126).

A connection between independence and emancipation was made, "In the years that followed the Boston Massacre, the colonists, as though pricked by conscience, almost always spoke against slavery and England at the same time. In 1773 the Reverend Isaac Skillman went so far as to assert that in conformity with the laws of nature, slaves should rebel against their masters" (Franklin, 1956, 127). Commonplaces that justified independence from England were also applicable to slaves' quest for emancipation. A few years later the War of Independence would ensue and the philosophical commitments of the colonists would be tested. Reluctance to do away with slavery set in once the Independence was declared in 1776. However the momentum of the anti-slavery sentiment had sustained:

> By the end of the War for Independence the ideology of the struggle that had been so clearly defined and so loudly proclaimed at the outset had been dimmed and muffled by the grim and practical realities of war. Only the perspective of a brief period was needed to realize that aims of the leaders were political than social. And

> yet, some forces had been set in motion that operated to effect a change in the status of persons that reached down even to the Negro. It is no mere coincidence that when the Battle of Lexington was fought the first anti-slavery society was beginning to formulate its plans for action (Franklin, 1956, 138).

America was fated to have a deliberated solution to slavery due to the manner in which rebellion was policed and punished. None of the daring acts by slaves in the Caribbean and South America would be allowed. The Slave Code was a protean institution which molded itself each time to repress rebellion or even spontaneity by Negroes. Petitioning would have to do; persuasion would have to be the tool. Rebellion had no chance, as the situation below indicates:

> Whenever there was an insurrection, or even rumors of one, it was usually the occasion for the enactment of more stringent laws to control the activities and movements of Negro slaves. For example, after the Vesey uprising in 1822 South Carolina enacted a law requiring the imprisonment of all Negro seamen during the stay of their vessel in port. The Nat Turner insurrection of 1831 and the simultaneous drive of the abolitionists against slavery brought forth enactment of many new repressive measures in other parts of the South as well as in Virginia and neighboring states (Franklin, 1956, 187).

Under these conditions only supine patience would prevail. However, as Franklin notes "Resistance has been found wherever the institution of slavery existed, and Negro slavery in the United States was no exception" (Franklin, 1956, 204). Certainly resistance did take on the plantation. Human response to terror does not always assume a romanticized manifestation. Some responses are revolutionary while some seem self-destructive; however they are all signs and expressions of resistance. Franklin cites some of the ways Negro slaves channeled their frustrations with the plantation system of domination:

> Self-mutilation and suicide and were popular forms of resistance to slavery. Slaves cut off their toes, hands, and mutilated themselves in other ways so as to render themselves ineffective as workers. One Kentucky slave carpenter, for example, cut

> off one of his hands and the fingers of the other when he learned that he was to be sold down the river. There are several instances of slaves having shot themselves in the hand or foot, especially upon being recovered after running away. The number of suicides seems relatively large and certainly they were widespread. Slaves fresh from Africa committed suicide in great numbers. In 1807 two boatloads of newly arrived Negroes in Charleston starved themselves to death (Franklin, 1956, 206).

Despair and fatalism result from the overwhelmingly brutal and static conditions of slavery. The gross acts above were acts of anger, desolation and the strong desire for autonomy from the abyss of terror and exploitation. Self-destructive acts were a last desperate act of self-assertion and claim to human autonomy.

Insurrectional impulses were there, however the Negro slave knew that she was outgunned and permanently overpowered, she could not move or shake. Conspiratorial acts require a situation conducive to mass organization and non-detection. Such conditions were impossible under the vigilant and rigid control slave masters had over the Negro. Acts which came closer to revolt were sporadic and sparse and more often fueled by frustration and anguish than by careful plotting. This was resistance regardless. Some other acts were less obscure and were straight to the point, they were directed at the source of their anguish, the master:

> Much more disturbing to the South were the numerous instances of slaves doing violence to the master class. Poisoning was always feared, and perhaps some planters felt a real need for an official tester…. Arsenic and other similar compounds were used. Where they were not available slaves were known to have resorted to mixing pounded glass in the gravy for their masters' table. Numerous slaves were convicted for murdering their masters and overseers, but some escaped. In 1797 a Screven County, Georgia, planter was killed by his newly imported African slaves. Another Georgia master was killed by his slave who stabbed him sixteen times. The slave was later burnt alive. The slave of William Pearce of Florida killed his master with an axe when Pearce sought to punish him. One Mrs. Carolina Turner of Kentucky was choked to death by a slave she was flogging. Though the citizenry had long complained of Mrs. Carolina Turner's merciless

> brutality in dealing with her slaves, her killer was summarily hanged for his deed. The times that overseers and masters were killed by slaves in the woods or fields were exceedingly numerous…(Franklin,1956,207).

These acts of contempt for subjugation were the most militant a Negro could engage in considering that repression could not allow for organized action. It is the undying human impulse for spontaneity and reprieve that was the last bastion of resistance to the Negro slave.

Draper traces the roots of Black separatism and nationalism to the early emigrationist efforts by both Black and white elements which tried to encourage African American slaves to seek nationality in Africa. This movement goes back to the eighteenth century when the Union had just been proclaimed, "As early as January 4, 1787, eighty Boston Negroes petitioned the state legislature to provide sufficient funds to pay for their passage to and to buy land in Africa. They wanted to leave, they explained, because their circumstances were "very disagreeable and disadvantageous." In return, they hoped to spread the Christian religion, improve international relations, and promote U.S.-West African commerce. The Massachusetts legislature was apparently unmoved by the plea (Draper,1969,14)." Poverty and prejudice stimulated the first Black awareness impulses and the feeling that Blacks were not part of the American ideal. In that very year, the Free African society, which was the first all-African organization was founded in Philadelphia by Absalom Jones and Richard Allen. However the movement did not endorse proposals of some of its members to return to Africa. However the movement was well aware of the black collective heritage and their status in America and , through the African Methodist Episcopal Church helped in the development of civil organizations representing African American interests (*ibid*.)..

reacted to their situation and the manner in which their insurrections and revolts were suppressed confirm the saying that the subjugating of humans through slavery is a state of war. It is why the Negroes also acted militarily as well. Black rebellion has its roots here.

Trends and Inspirations: Ideological Orientation of the Black Resistance Movement

Any collective action by African Americans would have to draw inspiration from existing institutions. As a displaced people, they could not rely on heritage to point the way forward, new symbolisms would have to be invented. The demeanor of the African American had been reduced to zero and so she would struggle to formulate an identity and a form of representation. Throughout slavery she could not participate politically; there were laws that prohibited crowd formations of slaves. The repression and containment of slaves was so intense and well institutionalized in North America to such an extent that explicit forms of resistance could not take place. All those spectacular revolts that were taking place in the Caribbean and South America had no chance of cropping up in the US. For the African American to acquire some semblance of political representation, she had to use whatever resources were presented to her. It is thus that the church became the rallying point for Black political expression. The Christian church was tolerable to the white establishment and so it could exhort its ideas without being severely repressed. Its formation would not raise serious alarm from the white establishment, there was segregation in church anyhow and so a Black Christian formation would not trouble white America. Essien-Udom makes note of the importance of the Christian church as a political vehicle for Blacks during slavery:

> Religious bodies and fraternal-co-operative associations were the major forms of deliberately organized Negro activities during the nineteenth century. The Negro church was the parent of both fraternal societies and schools. Until the founding of the separate Negro church, free Negroes worshiped in white churches in both the North and South. In the South, when Negroes were allowed to worship at all, segregation was enforced; they worshiped either at a different hour from the whites or were seated in a different section of the church. In the North, segregation was usually not so rigid. Consequently, the religious estrangement of the Negroes and the embarrassments they endured in white churches led to the founding in 1786 of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia by Richard Allen and his associates (Essien-Udom, 1962, 24).

The centrality of the *Negro church* in the social life of the African American is historical. Its thriving was encouraged by a paradoxical reality, the slave master wanted his slaves converted yet he could not worship with them and thus he allowed for the Negro church to evolve. Essien-Udom attributes the growth of Black nationalism to the Negro church. There are, according to him, four factors that made the church an ideal vehicle of mobilization and conscientization:

> The relationship of the Negro church to black nationalism is fourfold. First, it is the best and most successfully organized Negro institution in the United States, and the Negro, like most Americans, values success… Second, the Negro church provides the widest community for the Negro's participation; it certifies his need to belong… Third, the Negro church embodies the race's desire for independence from white leadership and control and until the present century, it was an important vehicle for the evolution of Negro leadership and authority in the Negro community… Lastly, the Negro church was once the most center of social life for its members (Essien-Udom, 1962, 24-5).

One major aspect of the Negro church which Essien-Udom forgets to mention is the place occupied by it in the moral outlook of African Americans. This has to do with the authority the church has in the community. This links us to the awe the Nation of Islam commanded in its followers. The way the Nation of Islam was structured had more resemblance to the Christian church than to an Islamic establishment. Of cause the temples were often located in churches. The manner of teaching and oratory in these temples resembled Christian preaching. Malcolm X himself and his oratory placed him more as a preacher than as an Islamic teacher.

Everything else that Blacks identified with the church, the Nation of Islam came to embody. The Nation of Islam owes a lot to the Negro church. Thus it was easier for the movement to appeal to the minds and hearts of the Black community even though Islam had been an exotic philosophy in most Black circles. The Nation of Islam then had to bolster the reverence it earned from the Black community by introducing symbols and rhetoric that was antithetical to the American national consciousness.

Symbols of Abomination: Anti-Americanism Among Black Activists

Seymour Martin Lipset identifies two views that underpin any scholarly discussion of American society:

> According to the first view, America suffers from elaborate corruption in business and labor, and in law enforcement practices; from a growing concentration of business power; from the influences of mass media run by entertainment tycoons who satisfy the lowest common denominator in popular taste; and from a wasteful expenditure of resources directed to the enhancement of social status. According to the other view , America is an affluent, highly democratic society in which the distribution of income, of status symbols, and of opportunities for social mobility is becoming even-handed all the time; in which demand for the best in art, literature, and music is increasing. (Lipset, 1963, 1).

For the Black radical, the American society is an uneven embodiment of both views. The corruption and affluence go hand in hand. It is only a certain group that is exposed to the corruptions and another to the affluence. Whatever is good or bad about America is influenced by the racial state of affairs. America is affluent, however the minority groups do not receive a fair deal. The corruption in business, labour and law enforcement is even more pronounced whenever the African American comes into the picture. America is thus a doyen of double standards. It is this arbitrary and ambivalent national consciousness that the Black radical is challenging. The obviously pessimistic outlook of the Black radical shows her a society that will not change, a society that deliberately and purposely upholds the doctrine of racial inequality. There is something inherently unwholesome about America. The Nation of Islam points this at racial heritage, the white American is irredeemably evil and the only solution to this permanent crisis is separatism both in its widest and narrowest sense. To the Black Panther, American society can never be a just society as long as the domineering system of capitalism prevails.

Alphonso Pinkney also acknowledges that a capitalist America will always be racist and exploitative. The solution, according to the Panthers, is class revolution.

The American national consciousness is concretized by values, the "American values". There are certain ideological or normative idylls that America asserts to uphold. Lipset lists them as follows: "America's key values ─ **equality and achievement** ─ stem from our revolutionary origins. The United States was the first major colony successfully to revolt against colonial rule" (Lipset, 1963, 2). Lipset cites Talcott Parsons when showing the importance of value systems in the composition of a society:

> That a system of value-orientations held in common by the members of a social system can serve as the main point of reference for analyzing structure and process in the system itself may be regarded as a major tenet of modern sociological theory. Values in this sense are the commitments of individual persons to pursue and support certain *directions* or types of action for the collectivity (Parsons, 1963, 172).

The collection of values which are deemed American is what constitute the American national consciousness. Lipset had identified two key values, i.e., equality and achievement. Parsons cites what he terms "instrumental activism", which involves an attitude of active mastery toward the empirical situation external to the society─ an attitude which favors increasing the level of adaptive flexibility primarily through increase of knowledge and economic production (Parsons, 1963, 172). Different commentators cite different values but in sum all boil down to an Aristotelian understanding of *social good*. The maxim HOUSE OF THE BRAVE AND HOME OF THE FREE encapsulates what American scholars deem as the overarching American national consciousness.

The Black radicals do not reject this value scheme from a normative stance, they actually refute the existence of such values, or as far as blacks are concerned. Prejudice, slavery, segregation, terror and discrimination challenge the prevailing notions about what is the sum of national consciousness. Blacks' experience with the American national

consciousness is counter to that of the mainstream American. Parsons is well aware that "national consciousness" does not permeate all social groups:

No value system is ever perfectly internalized and institutionalized, but its status is uneven in different personalities and subcollectives (Parsons, 1963). The Panthers and the Nation of Islam constitute these digressing personalities and subcollectives. Thus one can speak of a **sub-national consciousness**. However, the digression is not informed by innate group attributes but by concrete experience, in this case slavery and racism. The journey towards the complete rejection of the overarching national consciousness is a long one. With all the desirable commitments to the rule of law, peace, justice, prosperity, and equality, America still remained a nation tarnished by her racism. Alexis de Tocqueville, a great admirer of the American system of governance, was also unnerved by America's uneven policy and attitude towards African Americans. The great nation of America could allow itself to subject an entire race to dehumanizing circumstances and utter repulsion:

> The Negro makes a thousand useless efforts to introduce himself into a society that repels him; he bows to the tastes of his oppressors, adopts their opinions, and in imitating them aspires to intermingle with them. He has been told since birth that his race is naturally inferior to that of the whites, and he is not far from believing it, so he is ashamed of himself. In each of his features he discovers a trace of slavery, and if he could, he would joyfully consent to repudiate himself as a whole (Tocqueville, 2000, 304).

Thus when the Black radical rejects all that she has been uselessly trying to imitate, she does so because of the repulsion she receives. She thus embarks on a psychological migration, she dispatches away all that she identifies with her oppressors. She finds new meanings in various symbolisms. A new identity is carved and thus a new person emerges. The migration takes elaborate forms, both political and symbolic:

> "The symbol X has a double meaning: implying 'ex,' it signifies that Muslims are no longer what they were; and as 'X,' it signifies an unknown quality or quantity. It

> at once repudiates the white's name and announces the rebirth of Black Man and Woman, endowed with a set of qualities the whites do not have and do not know. 'In short,' Malcolm X explained, '"X" is for mystery. The mystery confronting the Negro as to who he was before the white man made him a slave and put a European label on him. That mystery is now resolved. But "X" is also for the mystery confronting the white man as to what the Negro has become.' That mystery will be resolved only when the teachings of Elijah Muhammad have been received by enough of the 'Lost Nation' to counter 'three hundred years of systemic brainwashing by the white man.' When the Lost Nation of Islam in the West has learned its true identity, has gained a realistic appreciation of its past accomplishments, and has seen the 'truth about the white man,' then the white man will see the black man in a new light ─ 'and he will have no reason to rejoice.'" (Lincoln, 1994, 105)

America equaled slavery and thus the rejection of America was the rejection of subjugation and exploitation. Slave names were among many symbols of abomination which the Black radicals, especially the Nation of Islam had to relinquish. We can identify three ideological tendencies that engaged in the practice of name changing; Black Muslims, the Black Panthers and the Black Power movement. We have Malcolm Little changing into a Malcolm X and then later to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, Jeral Wayne Williams to Mutulu Shakur and Stockely Carmichael becoming Kwame Toure. These key figures represented the three tendencies respectively. The act of changing one's name is a detoxifying activity and a denouncement of the status quo.

Involvement in US war effort was prohibited in the Nation of Islam. There were many conscientious objectors to the American Wars in Korea and in Vietnam. The most famous objector must be the boxing legend Muhammad Ali who opted for imprisonment rather than be part of an imperialist war effort. Malcolm X cunningly evaded the draft to the Korean War only because he could not bear allegiance to a country that persecuted his people, "They asked if I knew what 'conscientious objector' meant. I told them that when the white man asked me to preserve the way the white man treated the black man in

America, then my conscience made me object" (X, Malcolm, 1964, 221). Draper cites some of the anti-American proscriptions the Nation of Islam made to its members:

> Politically, Fard's doctrine was clearly nationalistic. His message was addressed to a nation ─ 'the Nation of Islam.' Those who belonged to this nation were not Americans and were to have as little as possible to do with American institutions. They were citizens of the Holy City of Mecca, not American citizens. Their flag was the Moslem flag, not the American flag. Their children belonged in the University of Islam, not in American schools. They were not obliged to obey the American Constitution or serve in American armed forces. (Draper, 1969, 75)

The Black Panthers, in their 10-point platform and program, expressed their hostility to the American ideal, imperialism and capitalism by demanding on point 6, **We want all black men to be exempt from military service**. The rationale behind these strong anti-American sentiments was based on the fact of slavery, an institution that denied Blacks citizenship for over three hundred years, and the continued persecution of Black people by the government and the general white population. The Panthers also added the fact that America was an imperialist and capitalist bastion. A new society and order would have to come, meanwhile they would continue to oppose anything denoting America's heritage. It was not a happy heritage, immersed in terror, theft, brutality and contempt for human integrity.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CIVIL RIGHTS PROTEST MOVEMENT

The Nation of Islam as a Protest Movement

Those men in dark suits, bow ties and fez had been redeemed not only from alcoholism and drugs but also from timidity and inferiority. The Nation of Islam specifically went for the down trodden and the underclass. The lyricism with which Malcolm X retells his exploits as a zealous Black Muslim seeking converts in the ghetto crevices speaks much of the grassroots leanings of the Nation of Islam. The proselytizing was a mass hustling for God. For the first time Black pride had taken a social-welfare mold:

> Brothers and sisters, the white man has brainwashed us black people to fasten our gaze upon a blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus! We're worshiping a Jesus that doesn't even *look* like us! Oh, yes! Now just bear with me, listen to the teachings of the Messenger of Allah, The Honorable Elijah Muhammad. Now, just think of this. The blond-haired, blue-eyed white man has taught you and me to worship a *white* Jesus, and to shout and sing and pray to this God that's *his* God, the white man's God. The white man has taught us to shout and sing and pray until we *die*, to wait until *death*, for some dreamy heaven-in-the-hereafter, when we're *dead*, while this white man has his milk and honey in the streets paved with golden dollars right here on *this* earth!
>
> You don't want to believe what I am telling you, brothers and sisters? Well, I'll tell you what you do. You go out of here, you just take a good look around where you live. Look at not only how *you* live, but look at how anybody you *know* lives — that way, you'll be sure that you are not just a bad-luck accident. And when you get through looking at where you live, then you take you a walk down across Central

> Park, and start to look at what this white God had brought to the white man. I mean, take yourself a look down there at how the white man is living!
> And don't stop there. In fact, you won't be able to stop for long ─ his doormen are going to tell you 'Move on!' But catch a subway and keep on downtown. Anywhere you may want to get off, *look* at the white man's apartments, businesses! Go right on down to the tip of Manhattan Island that this devilish white man stole from the trusting Indians for twenty-four dollars! Look at his City hall, down there; look at his Wall Street! Look at yourself! Look at *his* God!" (X, 1964, 240)

Malcolm X became the spokesperson the Nation of Islam needed to reach into the hearts and souls of black folks in the ghetto. His oratory earned him respect and adoration among many Blacks whom the Nation of Islam sought to redeem. He made the connection between the poverty and squalour endured by Blacks and the white America's racism, racial supremacy, imperialism and exploitation. By reaching out to the masses they were bringing the teachings of Wallace D. Fard and Elijah Muhammad to those who needed to hear it most. The movement sought to redeem the Black person from all the activities associated with privation and persecution and thus it adopted a strict code of discipline and demanded ascetic behaviour from its members. Moral upliftment went hand in hand with political awakening. Recruitment was hampered by this discipline, as Malcolm X concedes, "I knew that our strict moral code and discipline was what repelled them most. I fired at this point, at the reason for our code. The white man wants black men to stay immoral, unclean and ignorant. As long as we stay in these conditions we will keep on begging him and he will control us. We never can win freedom and justice and equality until we are doing something for ourselves!" (X, 1964, 240). The codes were partly Islamic and partly the ascetics of Wallace D. Fard's teachings, yet they fitted into the ghetto situation, "Any fornication was absolutely forbidden in the Nation of Islam. Any eating of the filthy pork, or other injurious or unhealthful foods; any use of tobacco, alcohol, or narcotics. No Muslim who followed Elijah Muhammad could dance, gamble, date, attend movies or sports, or take long vacations from work. Muslims slept no more than health required. Any domestic quarrelling, any discourtesy, especially to women, was not allowed. No lying or stealing, and no insubordination to civil authority, except on the grounds of religious obligation" (X, 1964, 241).

The same reason that barred many from joining the movement prompted others to join it. The respect associated with the Black Muslim lifestyle appealed to the underclass. The radical indictment of the white order also appealed to the angry Black intelligentsia, Essien-Udom was part of it. Contrary to the fallacy that Black separatists opted for Islam merely because it is antithetical to prevailing white standards, there are practical reasons why it is "suitable" for the Negro, "It should be stressed, however, that Islam is not offered to Negroes merely as a divisive symbol. To the believers it is a living faith and a positive way of life, enabling them, in unacknowledged ways, to follow with devotion moral values reminiscent of the New England Puritans and to aspire to a style of life usually associated with the middle class" (Essien-Udom, 1962, 16).

Essien-Udom echoes Malcolm X's sentiments regarding the strict moral code the Black Muslim has to adhere to. Much of the concerns about cleanliness and sobriety are mainstream Islam tenets. The Nation of Islam goes further and prohibits any form of activity that resembles indulgence. Tobacco, as Malcolm X notes, is an indulgence mainstream followers of Islam regrettably partake in. Elijah Muhammad's movement takes a sociological route to determining what should be proscribed. There is that free license to shape the rules to meet the inclinations of the leadership, a crime Salman Rushdie accuses the Prophet of having engaged in. Malcolm X, fresh from the influences of the Nation of Islam, experienced a cultural shock when he saw Muslims indulge in tobacco, "I'll bet that in the parts of the Holy Land that I visited a million bottles of soft drinks were consumed ─ and ten million cigarettes must have been smoked. Particularly the Arab Muslims smoked constantly, even on the Hajj pilgrimage itself. The smoking evil wasn't invented in Prophet Muhammad's days ─ if it had been, I believe he would have banned it" (X, 1964, 375).

The Puritanism served a redeeming role; the Black Muslims were not dealing with ordinary converts but the bottom lot of the ravaged and wretched of the earth. The condition of the urban African-American called for drastic measures, as it were. Essien-Udom proudly justifies the Puritanism and its utility, "Muhammad's effort to inculcate a

sense of self-esteem in the Muslims by encouraging them to practice and assimilate habits that we associate with the middle class is obvious in his teachings. The quest for respectability within and without the Negro community is a primary goal" (Essien-Udom, 1962, 15).

The strict code, although it had emotionally moving benefits also hampers the exponential growth of the movement. The codes can only be upheld by a handful in a secular society. The Nation of Islam will thus never have a far reaching incursion into the African-American community. The Black Panther Party's program is more geared at being applied across a wider range of the society. The revolutionary ethos made the Black Panther Party distance itself from any "bourgeois moralism". Their aim was to change the system, not the individual. This is one major digression between the two movements. Ironically it has been the Nation of Islam that has had a larger following in Black communities. The Panthers saw themselves as a vanguard party and thus whatever party discipline code they would enact would only affect the vanguard. The masses would be taken care of by the secularism they live in. It is of great use to cite fully the discipline codes the Panthers expected its members to observe:

Rules of the Black Panther Party [4]

> Every member of the **Black Panther Party** throughout this country of racist America must abide by these rules as functional members of this party. **Central Committee** members, **Central Staffs**, and **Local Staffs**, including all captains subordinated to either national, state, and local leadership of the **Black Panther Party** will enforce these rules. Length of suspension or other disciplinary action necessary for violation of these rules will depend on national decisions by national, state or state area, and local committees and staffs where said rule or rules of the **Black Panther Party were violated**. Every member of the party must know these

[4] http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/

verbatim by heart. And apply them daily. Each member must report any violation of these rules to their leadership or they are counter-revolutionary and are also subjected to suspension by the **Black Panther Party**. The rules are:

1. No party member can have narcotics or weed in his possession while doing party work.

2. Any part member found shooting narcotics will be expelled from this party.

3. No party member can be **drunk** while doing daily party work.

4. No party member will violate rules relating to office work, general meetings of the **Black Panther Party**, and meetings of the **Black Panther Party anywhere**.

5. No party member will **use**, **point**, or **fire** a weapon of any kind unnecessarily or accidentally at anyone.

6. No party member can join any other army force, other than the **Black Liberation Army**.

7. No party member can have a weapon in his possession while **drunk** or loaded off narcotics or weed.

8. No party member will commit any crimes against other party members or **black** people at all, and cannot steal or take from the people, not even a needle or a piece of thread.

9. When arrested **Black Panther members** will give only name, address, and will sign nothing. Legal first aid must be understood by all Party members.

10. The Ten-Point Program and platform of the **Black Panther Party** must be known and understood by each Party member.

11. Party Communications must be National and Local.

12. The 10-10-10-program should be known by all members and also understood by all members.

13. All Finance officers will operate under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance.

14. Each person will submit a report of daily work.

15. Each Sub-Section Leaders, Section Leaders, and Lieutenants, Captains must submit Daily reports of work.

16. All Panthers must learn to operate and service weapons correctly.

17. All Leaders who expel a member must submit this information to the Editor of the Newspaper, so that it will be published in the paper and will be known by all chapters and branches.

18. Political Education Classes are mandatory for general membership.

19. Only office personnel assigned to respective offices each day should be there. All others are to sell papers and do Political work out in the community, including Captain, Section Leaders, etc.

20. **Communications**--all chapters must submit weekly reports in writing to the National Headquarters.

21. All Branches must implement First Aid and/or Medical Cadres.

22. All Chapters, Branches, and components of the **Black Panther Party** must submit a monthly Financial Report to the Ministry of Finance, and also the Central Committee.

23. Everyone in a leadership position must read no less than two hours per day to keep abreast of the changing political situation.

24. No chapter or branch shall accept grants, poverty funds, money or any other aid from any government agency without contacting the National Headquarters.

25. All chapters must adhere to the policy and the ideology laid down by the **Central Committee** of the **Black Panther Party**.

26. All Branches must submit weekly reports in writing to their respective Chapters.

8 Points of Attention

1. Speak politely.

2. Pay fairly for what you buy.

3. Return everything you borrow.

4. Pay for anything you damage.

5. Do not hit or swear at people.

6. Do not damage property or crops of the poor, oppressed masses.

7. Do not take liberties with women.

8. If we ever have to take captives do not ill-treat them.

3 Main Rules of Discipline

1. Obey orders in all your actions.

2. Do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the poor and oppressed masses.

3. Turn in everything captured from the attacking enemy.

Instead of assuming a moral approach to discipline, the Panthers uphold practicality. Even in the proscriptions the Panthers make which are closer to moral sentiments, such as the use of narcotics and alcohol, practicality still reigns. The use of stimulants and other substances may hinder proper conduct. Thus they are prohibited during the call of duty; beyond that the members are free to lead their lives. This is an enlightened approach to morality and discipline. These are endevours to maintain a good relationship with the public and to upholding the dignity and integrity of the movement. The Panthers do not approach discipline from an ontological perspective but rather from a pragmatic one.

Restraint is practiced not for the abstract good of it but rather because it helps advance the struggle.

This is not the case with the Nation of Islam. If one takes one of the Black Muslims' tenets, that civic order should be obeyed, one sees an essentialist understanding of civic order. The concept civic order is made to look abstract and the relativist aspect of it is denied. These are the right leaning attributes of the Nation of Islam.

Despite all its stringent regimes of discipline, the Nation of Islam can be considered a mass movement. It is a mass movement because it draws its membership from the grassroots and its mission is to redeem the black race from the filth of poverty and the yoke of persecution. The actual numbers it commands officially make it a mass movement, *Encyclopædia Britannica* estimates the membership of the Nation of Islam to be between 10 000 and 50 000, while other sources point at a figure of around 100 000.The movement does not officially release membership statistics, how ever the massiveness of its membership do not elude the world. The religious nature of the movement does not hinder its role as a protest movement. Religious ideals have their place and so do political programs. Draper cites a lucid protest stance by the Nation of Islam, it is a fourth point from the 10-Point Program and Position:

> As long as we are not allowed to establish a state or territory of our own, we demand not only equal justice under the laws of the United States but equal employment opportunities─NOW! (Draper, 1969 , 83).

The Nation of Islam commands a devoted membership estimated at around tens of thousands, such influence gives the leadership a leverage to sway the political situation in America and thus the movement cannot confine itself to spiritual matters alone but must meet the aspirations of its "constituency." Often controversial and at times contradictory, the movement has granted numerous African-Americans a new lease in life and restored their human dignity. It has had a quintessential platter of possibilities, as Draper acridly notes: "The Black Muslims show how many different elements and influences can go

into a single case-history of black nationalism ─ ethnological fantasy, theological credulity, internal statism, psychological emigrationism, economic separatism, political isolationism, and individual self-improvement" (Draper, 1969, 84).

The Esoteric Doctrines of Black Muslims

Because the Nation of Islam is a protest movement that is also a religious entity, its ideological orientations are profoundly influenced by the religious tenets of the movement. Islam serves as a guide to the members of the movement. It is a modified Islam. It informs how the members are to relate to fellow humans and also how they are to view the American establishment. The religious doctrines not only have influence on how members live but also direct their political consciousness, attitudes and beliefs.

The Nation of Islam holds an interestingly peculiar cosmology with regards to the genealogy of racial conflict. The genealogy does not correspond with any factual knowledge nor is it credible. The question will be, again, how come its members are prepared to endorse it. The arguments presented in the founding tenets of the movements do not observe rules of syllogism, common sense or abstract explanations. The revolutionary socialism that the Black Panthers were drawn to can be refuted not empirically or logically but through the exercise of opinions. Those of the Nation of Islam on the other hand are easily dismissible as they claim to be based on a concrete historical unfolding of events. Our knowledge of recordable human history and our understanding of common sense allow us to easily and rightfully dismiss the founding tenets of Black Muslims. However the movement's top brass does not seem bothered by the shaky foundation they base their beliefs on.

Below, is a documented report on the main substantive cornerstones of the Nation of Islam, they were observed by a University of Michigan sociologist who had seen the founding texts of the Nation of Islam in the 1930s, some titled *Teaching for the Lost*

found Nation of Islam in a Mathematical Way, and *Secret Ritual of the Nation of Islam.* The sociologist summed the message in the texts thus:

Digression and Divergence Between the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam

The obvious distinction between the Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Party is that the former is a religious formation and the latter is a political one. The Panthers saw themselves as a vanguard party responsible for steering the mood of the masses in the right direction. The aim was to liberate the Black underclass from the socio-economic system of America, which is capitalism. This capitalism bred and nurtured racism and imperialism. The anguish and sorry of the Black person owed to the political system that was at play.

The Nation of Islam never developed a political program for they lacked ideological clarity when it comes to models of political rule. The Panthers flirted with Marxist-Leninism and other revolutionary theories. They justified their claim to secession and even social revolution on the basis that Black people constituted a nation or colony and that they were under subjugation. Muhammad's group pleaded for a territory, there was no formulated program on how to attain statehood. They either relied on Capitol Hill to grant them their wish or on the agency of God who was going to destroy the white man in America any way. The Black Panther staged pride parades, spread propaganda, launched campaigns, mobilized resources and armaments. The Nation of Islam stood idle, anger festering beneath its members' pious faces. A 10-Point Political program existed. The Panther boasted one as well. Below are the documents detailing the two movements' political goals. First is the political program of the Nation of Islam, note that it has social welfarism allusions:

The Muslim Program
What the Muslims Want

This is the question asked most frequently by both the whites and the blacks. The answers to this question I shall state as simply as possible.

1. We want freedom. We want a full and complete freedom.

2. We want justice. Equal justice under the law. We want justice under the law. We want justice applied equally to all, regardless of creed or class or color.

3. We want equality of opportunity. We want equal membership in society with the best in civilized society.

4. We want our people in America whose parents or grandparents were descendants from slaves, to be allowed to establish a separate state or territory of their own--either on this continent or elsewhere. We believe that our former slave masters are obligated to provide such land and that the area must be fertile and minerally rich. We believe that our former slave masters are obligated to maintain and supply our needs in this separate territory for the next 20 to 25 years--until we are able to produce and supply our own needs.

Since we cannot get along with them in peace and equality, after giving them 400 years of our sweat and blood and receiving in return some of the worst treatment human beings have ever experienced, we believe our contributions to this land and the suffering forced upon us by white America, justifies our demand for complete separation in a state or territory of our own

5. We want freedom for all Believers of Islam now held in federal prisons. We want freedom for all black men and women now under death sentence in innumerable prisons in the North as well as the South.

We want every black man and woman to have the freedom to accept or reject being separated from the slave master's children and establish a land of their own.

We know that the above plan for the solution of the black and white conflict is the best and only answer to the problem between two people.

6. We want an immediate end to the police brutality and mob attacks against the so-called Negro throughout the United States.

We believe that the Federal government should intercede to see that black men and women tried in white courts receive justice in accordance with the laws of the land--or allow us to build a new nation for ourselves, dedicated to justice, freedom and liberty.

7. As long as we are not allowed to establish a state or territory of our own, we demand not only equal justice under the laws of the United States, but equal employment opportunities- NOW!

We do not believe that after 400 years of free or nearly free labor, sweat and blood, which has helped America become rich and powerful, so many thousands of black people should have to subsist on relief or charity or live in poor houses.

8. We want the government of the United States to exempt our people from ALL taxation as long as we are deprived of equal justice under the laws of the land.

9. We want equal education--but separate schools up to 16 for boys and 18 for girls on the condition that the girls be sent to women's colleges and universities. We want all black children educated, taught and trained by their own teachers.

Under such schooling system we believe we will make a better nation of people. The United States government should provide, free, all necessary text books and equipment, schools and college buildings. The Muslim teachers shall be left free to teach and train their people in the way of righteousness, decency and self respect.

10. We believe that intermarriage or race mixing should be prohibited. We want the religion of Islam taught without hinderance or suppression.

These are some of the things that we, the Muslims, want for our people in North America

.....

What The Muslims Believe

.....

1. WE BELIEVE In the One God whose proper Name is Allah.

2. WE BELIEVE in the Holy Qur'an and in the Scriptures of all the Prophets of God.

3. WE BELIEVE in the truth of the Bible, but we believe that it has been tampered with and must be reinterpreted so that mankind will not be snared by the falsehoods that have been added to it.

4. WE BELIEVE in Allah's Prophets and the Scriptures they brought to the people.

5. WE BELIEVE in the resurrection of the dead--not in physical resurrection--but in mental resurrection. We believe that the so-called Negroes are most in need of mental resurrection; therefore they will be resurrected first.

Furthermore, we believe we are the people of God's choice, as it has been written, that God would choose the rejected and the despised. We can find no other persons fitting this description in these last days more that the so-called Negroes in America. We believe in the resurrection of the righteous.

6. WE BELIEVE in the judgment; we believe this first judgment will take place as God revealed, in America.

7. WE BELIEVE this is the time in history for the separation of the so-called Negroes and the so-called white Americans. We believe the black man should be freed in name as well as in fact. By this we mean that he should be freed from the names imposed upon him by his former slave masters. Names which identified him as being the slave master's slave. We believe that if we are free indeed, we should go in our own people's names--the black people of the Earth.

8. WE BELIEVE in justice for all, whether in God or not; we believe as others, that we are due equal justice as human beings. We believe in equality--as a nation--of equals. We do not believe that we are equal with our slave masters in the status of "freed slaves."

We recognize and respect American citizens as independent peoples and we respect their laws which govern this nation.

9. WE BELIEVE that the offer of integration is hypocritical and is made by those who are trying to deceive the black peoples into believing that their 400-year-old open enemies of freedom, justice and equality are, all of a sudden, their "friends." Furthermore, we believe that such deception is intended to prevent black people from realizing that the time in history has arrived for the separation

from the whites of this nation.

If the white people are truthful about their professed friendship toward the so-called Negro, they can prove it by dividing up America with their slaves.

We do not believe that America will ever be able to furnish enough jobs for her own millions of unemployed, in addition to jobs for the 20,000,000 black people as well.

10. WE BELIEVE that we who declare ourselves to be righteous Muslims, should not participate in wars which take the lives of humans. We do not believe this nation should force us to take part in such wars, for we have nothing to gain from it unless America agrees to give us the necessary territory wherein we may have something to fight for.

11. WE BELIEVE our women should be respected and protected as the women of other nationalities are respected and protected.

12. WE BELIEVE that Allah (God) appeared in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad, July, 1930; the long-awaited "Messiah" of the Christians and the "Mahdi" of the Muslims.

We believe further and lastly that Allah is God and besides HIM there is no god and He will bring about a universal government of peace wherein we all can live in peace together.

There is a panoply of influences in the cosmology of the Nation of Islam. Some truisms have mainstream Islam origins while others are classical nationalist rhetoric. There is, surprisingly some civil rights demands as well. There is yet still the eccentric construction of Wallace D. Fard, especially on point twelve. Point 12 of what Muslims believe is considered blasphemous and heretic by mainstream Muslims. But here we see that mystical self-assertion common with African American socio-religious cults. The aggrandizements do not seem to bother Muslims that much.

The militant rhetoric is apparent where a reference is made to statehood, “We want every black man and woman to have the freedom to accept or reject being separated from the slave master's children and establish a land of their own”. However there is a quick realization that this may not happen and so a compromise is opted for, “7. As long as we are not allowed to establish a state or territory of our own, we demand not only equal justice under the laws of the United States, but equal employment opportunities- NOW!” Resoluteness is scant here. This implies that deep in the psyche of Elijah Muhammad there is an awareness and complicity to the fact that the white establishment in America will never grant statehood to the Nation of Islam and thus its nationalism is in gesture and coexistence is inevitable. Of course there would be cultural separatism. The aspirations of the many adherents of the faith are merely manipulated to bolster the empire of Elijah Muhammad and his heirs. This is an unpalatable facet of the Nation of Islam.

CHAPTER FIVE: BLACK RADICALISM: REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS OF A GENERATION

Visions for Uncle Sam: The Overhauling of a Society

A political movement is brought into being by a need perceived by its founders to be imminent. There is likely to be a concrete situation that is perceivable, however in order to enunciate it an ideology has to be carved to express this need. Change is the goal and the ideology offers direction towards achieving it. Since politics occur in a social setting and gains legitimacy and wide appeal when they affect a sizeable number of people, mobilization is always necessary. There is however an exception with sects that practice individual terror to effect social change, however most groups appeal to numbers in order to effect greater change. The more people are affected by the crisis that brings about the political movement, the more will be the need to mobilize these people. The situation of the people is comprehended from concrete examples, from "the real existing situation". An ideology only helps in offering a logical explanation of the situation and a possible remedy to it, hence logos. Ideology is not a reserve of sages and pundits, but whatever is jumbled into it achieves purity and inspires zeal among its adherence. Changing a society needs ideology.

The Black Panthers adopted revolutionary socialism as the remedy to what they perceived as the causes of Black strife in America: white supremacy, capitalism and imperialism. The Black condition could only be remedied by the destruction of the prevailing order. Revolution is the complete overhauling of a society and the instigation of a new order. The Black Panther Party sought this new order. Thus their position was a complete denunciation of the American national consciousness or Americanism. Societies are overhauled because they are found to be morally bankrupt and decaying. Feudalism, serfdom, and aristocracy are among other forms of social relations that were liquidated to usher in new forms of social relations. Americanism is an exception from

these societies because it commanded moral approval from many circles. Tocqueville was among its first admirers. Americans themselves have always been self-admirers. The Black Radicals who wished to overhaul it thus faced a heavy tide. This is what has made the battle for change in America by left groupings, Black and white a monumental if not Sisyphus task. Overhauling Uncle Sam at his prime will never be an easy task irrespective of the injustices he might be perpetuating. It can be said that the reformist civil rights movement was not only having faith in the American way of life but was also cowered by her might. The fate of the Black Panthers reflects the enormous task of effecting meaningful change in America. America changes at her own pace. However movements that seek radical change still have plateaus they can exploit. It is however a daring task. It was the manner in which the Black Panther movement confronted the system head on that precipitated repression. The blandishing of arms hit at the core of Americanism. The zeal and courage among the Panthers martyred some, canonized other, yet more importantly it gave a long lasting pride amongst Blacks in America.

Black, Armed and Red Handed: Scaring the Pigs

One striking image of the Panthers that continues to resonate in the collective consciousness of white America is that of armed Blacks in berets, marching in military formations and hailing racial pride. The carrying of guns was so central to the Panthers to such an extent that members kept high calibre weapons for personal safety and had a penchant for displaying them to the terror of police. Showdowns with police occurred so often and were actually the roots of the repression that befell the Panthers. No amount of gun display could topple capitalism, white supremacy and imperialism in America, however they did stir fear and contempt from racist cops and officials in America. The use of guns, mainly for display, carried an inspiration that can be found in Fanon when he stressed the use of arms to topple colonial rulers in Africa. The use of guns did give manhood to the Panthers. Gun display is more of an American national consciousness than a revolutionary act. The Panthers were well aware of this and were exploiting the constitutional amendment that justified the bearing of arms by citizens. The Panthers,

were thus ironically being more American than third world! However, the actual belief in the use of violence to overthrow capitalism was revolutionary in nature and aggrandized the fear among white Americans. The Panthers were talking tough about overthrowing capitalism and acting tough by carrying guns and this created an unnecessary notion that as a threat they were an imminent danger. State response to these two unconnected Panther ethos led to a brutal spate of repression ever witnessed by any civil protest movement in the history of America.

The merging of the two ethos originates from two separate needs, the one for immediate self defense from police brutality and the other for the long term overthrow of capitalism. In the Panthers' Executive Mandate Number One, Huey P. Newton emphasized the need for arming the Black community:

> The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense believes that the time has come for Black people to arm themselves against this terror before it is too late. The pending Mulford Act brings the hour of doom one step nearer. A people who have suffered so much for so long at the hands of a racist society must draw the line somewhere. We believe that the Black communities of America must rise up as one man to halt the oppression of a trend that leads inevitably to their total destruction. (Pinkney, 1976, 101)

From the above statement, one sees no suggestion of insurrectionary plotting or preparation but a vision for social defense from mundane harassment by the police. J. Edgar Hoover' s truism that the Black Panther Party constituted the "greatest threat to the internal security of the United States," is a remark blurred by bigotry and overkill. It actually went to put an end to Panther assertion and hurled the movement into crisis. This proved that one could not prophesy un-Americanism and go unscathed.

Anarchism, Marxism and Maoism: The Tower of Rebel

The influence of Mao is explicit and so is the support for Maoism in China and the rest of the underdeveloped world. Elsewhere it was asserted that "[W]e remain firm in our conviction that it is only the people of South West Africa alone who must liberate themselves; it is *only* the strategy and tactics of *People War* formulated by *Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* and creatively applied to the concrete practice of the South West African Revolution that would lead *our people* along the road to *genuine national liberation*".[5]

What can be teased out from such remarks are certain truisms that the Black Panther adhered to, which made it sympathetic to Maoism. *People War* made itself into the vocabulary of American politics of black liberation and internationally it was Maoism that had championed such a political line. Class struggle had been concocted into People War and thus two novel concepts had entered into Marxism. Marx did not believe in people but in classes and only the proletarian possesses the vector to bring about the final class revolution. With *People*, the bohemia, the lumpen proletariat and the intelligentsia become part of the revolutionary effort. Marx had discounted these social layers. The issue of war also replaced that of struggle. War had not been a Marxian feature of class struggle. Mao, Castro, Ernesto Guevara and Regis Debray grafted this aspect of class conflict into the liberation discourse. The Panthers inherited this legacy. However Maoism alone could not help guide the Panthers nor could it help in understanding the whole ideological being of the Black Panther Party.

Anarchism, although a reserve of the idealist left fringes, found itself in the Panthers, most likely serendipitously and by default. Anarchism has not had a strong following among Blacks in America nor elsewhere. However, wherever it has made its way into black discourse it has had a profound influence. This was also the case in the Black Panther. The phenomenon of Black Anarchism is summed as follows, "Black anarchism opposes the existence of a state and subjugation and domination of people of color, and favors a non-hierarchical organization of society. Black anarchists seek to abolish white supremacy,

[5] http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/bpp/bpp19690316_12-13southwest_africa.html

capitalism, and the state. Theorists include Ashanti Alston, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, Martin Sostre, and Kuwasi Balagoon."[6]

Chief among many anarchist thinkers is Bakunin, his Revolutionary Catechism spells out the cosmology of anarchism:

> VIII. The political and organization of social life must not, as at present, be directed from the summit to the base--the center to the circumference--imposing unity through forced centralization. On the contrary, it must be reorganized to issue from the base to the summit--from the circumference to the center – according to the principles of free association and federation.[7]

This catechism does not touch exactly on the stronger aspects of the Panthers. The Panthers have been derided for their authority cult, "Black anarchists, believing that anarchism has traditionally been European and/or white-based, seek to forge their own movement that represents their own identity and tailored to their own unique situation. In contrast to black activism that was, in the past, based in leadership from hierarchical organizations such as the Black Panther Party, black anarchism rejects such methodology in favor of developing organically through communication and cooperation to bring about an economic and cultural revolution that does away with racist domination, capitalism, and the state."[8] This discrepancy places the Panthers closer to Maoism than to Anarchism. However there are features of anarchism in the Black Panther that were also proffered by Bakunin in 1886:

> IV. It is not true that the freedom of one man is limited by that of other men. Man is really free to the extent that his freedom, fully acknowledged and mirrored by the consent of his fellowmen, finds confirmation and expansion in their liberty. Man is

[6] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_anarchism

[7] http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives?bakunin/catechism

[8] *Ibid*.

> truly free only among equally free men; the slavery of one human being violates humanity and negates the freedom of all.[9]

The Black Panthers are celebrated in other sections of the progressive white population for having reached out to progressive white circles to forge a common struggle against oppression and exploitation. The sentiments expressed by Bakunin above were thus fully endorsed by the Black Panthers. Race and class are not considered to be divisive signifiers; freedom for some is not freedom for all, as it were.

Violence defined the strategy of nihilists in Russia in the 1800s. Marxists later denounced personal terror and endorsed mass action. Anarchists seem to have pivoted around the two paradigms. Earlier on Marxist influences in the Black Panther were discussed. The working class bias of the Black Panther and their antagonism to capitalism cannot be questioned. In Pinkney, the National Office of the Black Panther Party sums up what it considers as the *geist* of the Black Panthers, and in it we find traces of revolutionary socialism:

> The Black Panther party stands for revolutionary solidarity with all people fighting against the forces of imperialism, capitalism, and fascism. Our solidarity is extended to those people who are fighting these evils at home and abroad. Because we understand that our struggle for our liberation is part of a worldwide struggle being waged by the poor and oppressed against imperialism and the world's chief imperialist, the United States of America, -we- the Black Panther party- understand that the most effective way that we can aid our Vietnamese brothers and sisters is to destroy imperialism from inside, attack it where it breeds. (Pinkney, 1976, 105)

The internationalism in the statement above is a deliberate convergence with certain Marxist streams of left wing politics, especially Trotskyism. The Black Panthers cannot be accused of merely having assembled a cacophony of left radicalism merely to look mean. There is a suggestion of intense political awareness and deliberated ideological alignment. The colourful retrieval of all that is radical in the left came about not from an infantile disorder as

[9] http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives?bakunin/catechism

such, but from careful considerations. Other critics point to some causes of pluralism in the Black Panther Party and this evolution in the ideological alignment helps us understand the kaleidoscopic elements of Black Panther ideology. The modalities which shaped the ideological orientation of the Panthers are acknowledged even in popular sources like the wikipedia. The commentary below is one of many explanations on the diversity in Black Panther ideological commitments:

> Founded by Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, and Richard Aoki in October 1966, the organization initially espoused a doctrine of armed resistance to societal oppression in the interest of African American justice, though its aims and philosophy changed radically throughout the party's existence. While the organization's leaders passionately espoused socialist doctrine, the party's black nationalist reputation attracted ideologically diverse membership base, such that ideological consensus within the party was difficult to derive, and differing perspectives within the party base often clashed conspicuously with those of its leadership.[10]

[10] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Panther_Party

CHAPTER SIX: WHAT IT ALL MEANT

Relevance of the Movements Today

It is mostly Black commentators who concede that the racial situation in America has ameliorated; what needs to happen now is that Capitol Hill needs a Black president. Lynching has become a relic of the past and thus the raison d'être of the NAACP which was formed to lobby against the practice has also been undermined. Segregation at schools is no longer a national policy and terror is no longer used to disenfranchise Blacks. Discrimination has indeed ceased to be enforced by the state and other national institutions. One would then assume that the need for Black issue organizations has ceased; especially the radical and separatist ones. This assumption overlooks the issue of perpetual self assertion which every group needs to have in any plural society. However there are also certain realities festering - racist attitudes by some elements of the white society, and the continued segregation of Blacks in residential areas It is sometimes uncomfortable to attribute the many social ills that the African American face to racism. Blaming legacies of slavery is even easier, however, confronting white America, imperialism and capitalism as perpetuating the situation is even more discomfiting. Alphonso Pinkney in his book *The Myth of Black Progress* argues how the situation of the African American will continue unchanged due to inherent racism in white America and continuing capitalist exploitation. The sociological modalities of Blacks in America are unquestionably marked by dire straits and strife. Pinkney identifies the cause of this, "As a consequence of being powerless minority, black people continue to experience exceptionally high rates of unemployment. Many explanations have been offered for this phenomenon, but in most cases it boils down to a question of discrimination" (Pinkney, 1984, 74).

If indeed white America does not seem to rise above its racism and discrimination, and the strife faced by Blacks in America is caused by racism, then there is a strong case for Black

nationalism in all its manifestations, including radicalism and separatism. If whatever prompted the Black Panthers to define the Black community in America as a colony still remains today, then Black politics are as relevant as ever. Pinkney, writing as recently as 1984, points to the fact that, "The black community in the United States closely resembles a developing nation than a highly industrialized one" (Pinkney, 1984, 73). He further asserts that Blacks simply do not have equal access to health. These conditions reinforce the adoption of an anti-American national consciousness among Black radicals.

It is the issue of militancy in the Black Panther that poses a challenge. The post-9/11 world is intolerant of any demonstration by the display or exercise of arms (except to white supremicist groups and white patriots). The repression on Blacks who opt for that way not only would be fierce but the moral support would be lacking to justify such an attitude. It is highly unlikely that the resurgence of the old Black Panthers[11] would be accompanied by all the war rhetoric and brandishing of arms, not because these have become irrelevant but because the country has gone ultra sensitive and the national consensus is against any groupings that question national coherence. The need for such movements as Black radicals and separatists is obvious. The endurance of the Nation of Islam, in spite of its ideological bankruptcy and leadership crisis testify to the continuing need for these movements that gained prominence in the middle of the last century.

Sociological Justifications: The Kernel And the Nutshell

In its long history the Nation of Islam has baffled, shocked and offended scholars who try to rationalize its raison d'être. Its tenets are generally regarded as grossly absurd and thus it becomes a mystery why some Americans would want to follow the movement. As the movement seeks to mobilize the underclass, the illiteracy of this group is considered to be the main cause of its susceptibility to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. Thus Gordon

[11] As opposed to the so-called New Black Panther Party which has shoddy politics and has been accused of charlatanry.

W. Allport wonders, “Will the fantastic legends on which it is based lose their appeal as the educational level of Negroes rise?” (cited in Lincoln, 1961, xii)

Often, the commentators try to step into the shoes of the devotees in order to begin understanding why they adhere to an “absurd” cosmology. The many symbolisms of the movement serve to construct an ideal or *phantasia* for underclass Blacks. Every tenet and ritual in the movement is geared at this undertaking:

> The Black Muslim believes that the day of the white man has passed ── or soon will. Peaceful integration is not the Negro’s goal, for ‘why integrate with a dying man?’ What the Negro requires is a new morale, economic self-sufficiency, a high code of social morals, and a return to the pristine glory of his race. He needs to free himself from all remnants of slave mentality and from Christianity which has too long kept him doped in subservience to the white man. These are the underlying propositions upon which the movement rests. It has a Nietschean flavor. But since abstractions require concrete symbolization in order to motivate, Elijah Muhammad, the leader, has evolved a heady array of myths, rituals and styles of greeting to provide the effective scaffolding of imagery needed by his less educated followers. (Lincoln, 1961, xi)

The code of the Nation of Islam draws influence from mainstream Islam, but even this is seen as a scheme to dupe the illiterate constituency of the movement. In actual fact these rituals and symbols appeal both to the illiterate and literate the same. Black pride alone can cause the most discerning and erudite of Blacks to embrace some of the beliefs of the Nation of Islam or any other religious sect.

Even the timing of the establishment of the movement is considered to have sociological underpinnings: “Their message was well calculated to disturb even further a nation already unnerved by the traumas of the Great Depression. It was a blatant message of black assertion at a time of unprecedented anxiety for every-one” (Lincoln, 1961, xx).

This argument implies that Wallace D. Fard, the founder, was well aware of the sociological conditions that prevailed at that stage and was going to manipulate these conditions to reach his goals. Any philanthropic intensions are denied him.

A sociological explanation makes the presumption that the social conditions of a social group determine its ideological orientation and susceptibility. This cannot be entirely true; the human subject's ideological stance or political consciousness is influenced by many variables, some of which are subjective and others objective. Thus the motivations for people to join the Nation of Islam are too numerous to be reduced to sociological causes which are by their nature objective. To believe otherwise is to over-generalize. Subjective causes for people to join the Nation of Islam have been neglected. There are well-off and highly literate devotees of the Nation of Islam and each of them has her unique set of motivations as to why she became a member.

Even Lincoln, a sociologist by practice, summarily discards the sociological thesis when he concedes that, "To most African Americans the teachings of the Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad are intellectually repugnant, but one is uncomfortably conscious of an emotional ambivalence toward the attraction and the power of a doctrine that promises an 'escape into freedom' after so many years and so many forms of bondage. The rational self rebels against racism in any form and from any quarter, but the emotional self resists the contemplation of a reversal of fortune only with great effort" (Lincoln, 1961, xvii). This applies to all people and cuts across social strata.

Personality Cults and Politics of Sects

There has been a great deal of contempt directed at Black Muslims from the left, centre, and right sides of the political spectrum (Draper, 1969; White, 2001). The contempt is prompted by some of the practices endemic to the movement. The authoritarian and idyllic manner in which the movement conducts its business baffles many critics. As noted above, sociological reasons are invoked to help explain the bizarre manner in which the movement manages to draw support and sustain membership whilst acting in

ways deemed crude and antithetical to modern politics. A psychological explanation into the workings of the movement points to the complexity of cult movements.

The Nation of Islam has been vilified as a cult from time immemorial. It is the leadership style the movement has that lends it a decried profile. The criticism then extends to attacking its political programs. It is felt that only the authoritarianism can help explain the outrageous beliefs of the movement. Draper sketches the chain of command in the movement and finds it to be a caricature of a despotic state:

> In its internal structure, the Nation of Islam is built on strictly authoritarian state-within-a-state lines. Elijah Muhammad, the messenger, is the latter-day equivalent of an all-powerful theocratic ruler. He heads, by divine right, with absolute authority, the counterpart of a church-state. Under him, subject to his supreme will, are the Ministers of each Temple, whom he alone appoints; the Supreme Captains in charge of various subsidiary organizations, also responsible only to him; and a hierarchy of lower officers: captains; first, second, and third lieutenants; investigators; secretaries. (Draper, 1969, 84).

Marcus Garvey's movement also faced the same ridiculing for its ragtag statehood pretences. A pattern starts to be drawn about separatist black movements. Their fantasies and their authoritarianism are thus linked. There is a collection of such separatist movements in the United States and all held bizarre views cosmologically and had what is regarded as absurd political visions. Drew Ali had his Moorish-American Science Temple. His movement traced the genealogy of Blacks to mighty Asians and this offered Blacks a legacy they could be proud of. Draper describes the vision of the Moorish temple as psychological emigrationism. The cult credentials of the Moorish Temple, which is considered as the Forerunner to the Nation of Islam, are obvious:

> With little formal education, Drew Ali hit on the idea that American Negroes could achieve salvation simply by making themselves into "Asiatics" or, more specifically, into Moors or Moorish-Americans whose ancestors had come from Morocco. He also taught that these Moorish-Americans were descendents of the

> ancient Moabites who had inhabited the northwestern and southwestern shores of Africa ─ not, as formerly believed, the region east of the Dead Sea. He gave membership cards to those who joined his cult, certifying that they were Moslems 'under the Divine Laws of the Holy Koran of Mecca.' He composed a 64-page *Holy Koran*─ only the title was the same as the sacred book of the Islamic religion─ which his devotees were to guard as a secret. It proclaimed that Noble Drew Ali was a prophet ordained by Allah, akin to Confucius, Jesus, Buddha, and Zoroaster. (Draper, 1969, 70)

The title of prophet and the reference to the past prophets is a tool that has been used repeatedly by those who launch new faiths (some of these faiths have become canonized and accepted as authentic). Essien-Udom, himself a devotee of the Nation of Islam gives a good account of these politico-religious formations. The above cited extract about Drew Ali fits into the description Essien-Udom gives of a typical Black separatist cult:

> The nationalists' emphasis on racial redemption and reclamation of the 'fallen' calls for a messianic style of leadership. The leader is a national messiah. He may deliberately create this image of himself, but apparently, he believes intuitively that he is the chosen 'vessel' for the redemption of his people. His followers share this image of the leader. The messianic leader legitimizes his mission – social protest and action ─ on the ground that he received his 'commission' directly from God. His mission is further confirmed by the historical and prevailing social conditions which afflict masses. His personal qualifications need not be conventional standards of competence and knowledge, but his ability to articulate and project the problems of the oppressed, to identify himself with them, and his sincerity and devotion to the 'cause' are indispensable. (Essien-Udom, 1962, 59)

Essien-Udom cites profiles of such groups thus, "The separatist religious movements do not adhere either to the doctrines or the practices of the established churches. Some are Christian in outlook, and others deviate. They appeal mainly to the lower-class Negroes; more than not, they are led by a self-styled 'Prophet,' 'God,' or 'Savior" (Essien-Udom, 1962, 31). The profile of both the founder of the Lost Found Nation of Islam, Wallace D. Fard and his Messenger the Honourable Elijah Muhammad fit the description above.

Wallace D. Fard, although professing Islam was prepared to adopt a blasphemous title and call himself "The Supreme Ruler of the Universe," or "God Allah." Wallace D. Fard's heir would have to contend with being his Prophet and Messenger.

The educational qualifications of Elijah Muhammad were meek and so were those of Marcus Garvey, Drew Ali and other messiahs, prophets and gods of the Black separatist movement. However this says nothing about their propensity for grandeur and susceptibility to "day dreaming". That these leaders conceive bizarre narratives and cosmologies should be seen as a mere case of the proverbial Noble Lie.

Essien-Udom wrestles with two elusive issues – that of the "cult" leader believing his own tales, and that of the people believing his grotesque gospel. In psychiatry the cult leader may be regarded as suffering from delusions of grandeur. However such an approach is a poor way of discrediting political opponents. Psychoanalysis cannot apply to the collective and thus sociology is opted for to explain why some other people are susceptible to believe all the gospel preached by leaders of "cults". Illiteracy, poverty, rural backgrounds and desperation of the devotees is cited as the cause for their gullibility. This however is not satisfactory as movements such as the Nation of Islam included members of the Black intelligentsia and bourgeoisie in their ranks.

It seems that whatever implausible testimonies are made by the "cult," leaders are overshadowed by some practical aspect of the belief. The discerning devotee is willing to overlook what ever falsehoods there are and focus on the *right message*. This occurs even with mainstream religions such as Christianity.

The *right message* is all that the devotee needs to stick to her group. Some affinity develops and a fanatical trust or confidence in the cult leader blinds the discerning devotee from rejecting the gospel. Malcolm X's devotion to and adoration for Elijah Muhammad is an example of faith blinding discretion, "I don't think I could say anything which better testifies to my depth of faith in Mr. Muhammad than that I totally and absolutely rejected my own intelligence. I simply refused to believe…. No one in the

world would have convinced me that Mr. Muhammad would betray the reverence bestowed upon him by all of the mosques full of poor, trusting Muslims nickeling and diming up to faithfully support the Nation of Islam─ when many of these faithful were scarcely able to pay their own rents" (X, Malcolm, 1964, 323).

Malcolm X is a testimony of a devotee who accrues utility from a faith and thus loses sight to obvious shortcomings. The Nation of Islam and Mr. Elijah Muhammad himself had given him a new lease in life and he could tolerate and ignore any semblance of chicanery or self-interest on the part of his saviour:

> When I discovered who else wanted me dead, I am telling you─ it nearly sent me to Bellevue.
>
> In my twelve years as a Muslim minister, I had always taught strongly on the moral issues that many Muslims accused me of being 'anti-woman.' The very keel of my teaching, and my most bone-deep personal belief, was that Elijah Muhammad in every aspect of his existence was a symbol of moral, mental, and spiritual reform among American black people. For twelve years, I had taught that within the entire Nation of Islam; my own transformation was the best example I knew of Mr. Muhammad's power to reform black men's lives. From the time I entered prison until I married, about twelve years later, because of Mr. Muhammad's influence upon me, I had never touched a woman. (X, Malcolm, 1964, 322).

The gullibility to the personality cult of Elijah Muhammad was informed not by Malcolm X's illiteracy or social background but by the fruits he had reaped from the Nation of Islam. Black separatism, be it in pseudo-Christian "cults," pro-Asiatics or emigrationists also provides an indispensable fill of succor. Pride, dignity and the chance to vent anger are sufficient draw cards to black separatist "cults." Vibert L. White Jr. in his book on his experience as a Black Muslim, *Inside the Nation of Islam*, describes the difficulty of resisting contradictions in the movement, "As a young Muslim I, like others, believed that we were connected to something special, spiritual, and revolutionary. Therefore, even though I felt misused, I rationalized that 'believers would suffer much for the word and work of Allah and his messenger.' I suffered from this delusion" (White, 2001, 75).

Such an experience reveals the inner workings of "cult" mentality. Vibert White Jr's experience led him to reach a conclusion about movements in the Black society, "The experience I gained in Chicago broadened my understanding of organized groups, institutions, and religious communities in black society. Regardless of the theology and theory, African American organizations are often led by insincere and self-promoting individuals" (White, 2001, 79). Minister Louis Farrakhan was such an individual.

C. Eric Lincoln, author of the first book on Black Muslims is quite aware of the utility the impoverished black person receives upon converting to the Nation of Islam. The lyricism is as profound as the feeling the new convert gets upon becoming a Black Muslim:

> To clinch the conversion of those true believers who approach the movement in simple curiosity, Muhammad offers the lure of personal rebirth. The true believers who become Muslims cast off at last their old selves and take on a new identity. They change their names, their religion, their homeland, their "natural" language, their moral and cultural values, their very purpose in living. They are no longer Negroes, so long despised by the whites that they have come almost to despise themselves. Now they are black men and women ─ divine, rulers of the universe, different only in degree from Allah himself. They are no longer discontent and baffled, harried by social obloquy and a gnawing sense of personal inadequacy. Now they are Muslims, bearing in themselves the power of the Black Nation and its glorious destiny. Their new life is not an easy one: it demands unquestioning faith, unrelenting self-mastery, unremitting loyalty, and a singularity of purpose. They have to sacrifice their family and friends, their trade or profession, if these things do not serve their newfound cause. But they are not alone, and they now know *why* their life matters. They have seen the truth, and the truth has set them free. (Lincoln, 1994, 104).

Such plenitude as described by Lincoln can humble even the most discerning of skeptics. A wholesome lifestyle was created, it did not matter then what the "cult" leader does manipulatively. The "cult" leaders, White describes their modus operandi as follows, "Unfortunately these bandits used corruption, intimidation, and hypocrisy to erode the spiritual strength of rank-and-file members" (White, 2001, 79). It would seem that the

weaker the followers the more manipulative the leaders get. This again, is not because the poor are illiterate, but merely because they are prepared to stomach any "minor" glitches due to the fact that they have been given a rare chance to regain dignity and a sense of purpose.

C. Eric Lincoln, a pioneer in the study of Black Muslims, has this to say about whether the Nation of Islam is a cult or a mass movement: "Under Fard, the Muslims never had more than eight thousand members, although the conditions for rapid growth were almost ideal. Muhammad claims 'a few hundred thousand,' and while no objective source is in position to verify that estimate, the evidence does seem to suggest that over the long span of Muhammad's leadership the number of blacks who have been attracted to the movement has been substantial. *The difference may well lie in the fact that Fard was the leader of a cult, and Muhammad made that cult a movement*" (Lincoln, 1994, 102).[12] One would assume that a movement, although it may be under rigid control of an authoritarian leader, is public property and its expansion may elude the leadership. To sum up this section, Lincoln's statement on the Nation of Islam will suffice to capture the essence of what the group is, "The Black Muslim, by contrast, are undeniably a mass movement. They are reaching for the support of the entire back lower class ─ and, ultimately, of all African Americans. This ambition is of crucial importance, for it controls every public statement and activity of the Muslims, every gesture by which their myths and doctrines are expressed in action" (C. Eric Lincoln, 1994, 94).

Decline and Endurance: The Test of Time

The explanation given to account for the decline of the Black Panther Party immediately after 1970 is that the civil rights situation in America had fundamentally ameliorated. It has thus become controversial to raise the race question lest one be considered a demagogue or a

[12] Emphasis mine.

charlatan. The whole civil rights movement is understood as a phenomenon that characterized racial tensions peculiar to the post-World War Two. The period saw various movements mushroom, from the radical to the tame.

The era saw the Student Non-Violence Coordinating Committee, the Black Power Movement, the Black Panther Party and various other militant Black formations. Not all of them received the same repression as the Black Panther nor were all of them regarded as great a threat to internal security. The reason would perhaps have to do with the manner they organized and the image they created. All these declined though in the absence of any formidable repression from the state. It is thus not repression alone that can account for the decline and collapse of the Black Panther Party. This fact may lead one to conclude that Black nationalist politics ceased to have relevance as the Black cause ceased to exist due to progressive interventions by the state of America. The endurance of the Nation of Islam and other Black separatist and radical movements such as the Uhuru Movement, the Refuse and Resist group and many other autonomous Black formations disproves this conclusion.

Even the New Black Panther Party, which is deemed unauthentic by Black radicals and original Black Panthers, attests to the fact that there is a need for an exclusively Black politics of resistance. Perhaps, with sound justifications, the decline of the Black Panther partly lies on organizational matters that have little to do with structural processes in the society such as betterment of people's lives. The Nation of Islam underwent many organizational crises, ranging from succession issues to ideological bankruptcy and leadership incompetence. These predicaments even led the Federal Bureau of Investigations to find loopholes in the Black Muslims that may spark their downfall. Endurance has been complex and yet it attests to one profound truth: that the Black cause still warrants politics of race among the neglected. Un-Americanism or separatism finds its life blood in that fact.

CHAPTER SEVEN: HISTORICAL DETHRONING

Backlash: Taming the Panther

The eagerness with which the Black Panther Party mobilized the Black community could not go uncontained. For the first time in American history there was a movement which was prepared to confront racist America power for power. The assertion made the establishment quite uneasy. The NAACP had adopted a procedural way of challenging Black persecution and the establishment could live with that. The Black Panthers were not going to appeal to the conscience of America but rather they would confront it with zealous militancy. The police on the streets, the agents of persecution, would be the adversaries. The mere act of arming politically conscious Blacks was an act of effrontery to the white establishment. The law enforcement agencies were not going to tolerate this. Thus begun an epic battle between the movement and the police.

There were many scenes of encounter between the Black Panther and the Police. Others ended heroically, others were a farce. However the movement was to suffer at the hands of law enforcement in ways they could not perceive. There is ample evidence that the Federal Bureau of Investigation went all out to discredit, sabotage and neutralize the movement. The Panthers had to pay for their un-Americanism. Appendix 1 provides an article from the Panthers' publication which testifies to the plight the movement was undergoing under police vengeance.

A Prophylaxis for Un-Americanism: State Response

The late hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur, whose mother Afeni Shakur had been one of the Panthers tried for seditious offences remarked that Edgar J. Hoover, the first director of

the Federal Bureau of Investigations, had a prejudiced vendetta against Black dissent: "Remember this country did have a man named J. Edgar Hoover whose job was to destroy the credibility of any black man coming up, and that's what they did to the Panthers. Power to the People."[13] The government document reproduced in Appendix 2 is a state indictment against Black nationalist protest movement and dissent.

The compulsion with which the establishment has responded to Black dissent is baffling. An entire ethos of the state apparatus is revealed by the documents given in Appendix 2. This bares testimony to the social impact the Nation of Islam had. The whole establishment had a knee jerk response to the influence this movement had. The contempt with which the Federal Bureau of Investigations treated Black dissent is but a reflection of what the entire establishment regards Black assertion.

The negative publicity the movement has earned is partly encouraged by such endeavours. However this is a small price to pay for being assertive. The repression that the Black Panther experienced can be explained in two differing ways, one may assert that the callous treatment the Panthers received from the state was motivated by race and that apart from the minor digression of repressing the Black revolt America still remains a just and free society. On the other hand one may assume the conclusion that America as a regime is in effect hostile to dissent of any racial form – the repression directed at the Panthers was not racially informed but ideologically determined. Michael Parenti, in his work titled *Democracy for the Few*, sees repression as inherent to the capitalist establishment:

> Among those whom the law treats repressively are persons and organizations who oppose capitalism and advocate alternative economic orders. According to the view propagated by purveyors of the established ideology, capitalism is an essential component of Americanism and democracy. It follows that anticapitalists are antidemocratic, un-American, and a "subversive threat" to the national security, thus a fair game for repression. The repression is directed against communists and other anticapitalists and eventually against anyone else who shows an active interest in progressive causes. Under the guise of defending

[13] From the DVD documentary *Tupac: Resurrection*. Paramount Pictures.

> democracy, security agencies often impose severe limitations on democratic rights. (Parenti, 1983, 157)

The Black Panthers suffered the most when it comes to state repression as compared to the Nation of Islam. There are three things that distinguishes the Panthers and may have invited the manner in which the state dealt with it. Race was a factor. There were various radicals of different races, but it was black radicals who attracted the contempt and repulsion of the state. By radically asserting Black consciousness they were in a sense poking holes in the national consciousness and being dangerously divisive. Also, the civil rights demands they were making were too sensitive for white supremacists. Secondly they were militant. Arms in America are like enfranchisement, their possession is a sign of "manhood" and the racist establishment could not tolerate such careless and sensitive assertion. The Panthers had to be disarmed at least and vanquished in the long run. The third factor is that of ideology. The communistic leanings of the Panthers made them an enemy of all that America represented, free enterprise, imperialism and Christianity. The Black Panthers aligned themselves with the third world revolutionary formations in spite of the cold war position America was in. They thus presented, as J. Edgar Hoover's machinery felt, the most adverse internal threat to national stability. This justified and called for the callous and blunt manner in which the Black Panther suffered at the hands of the state. To restore the overarching national consciousness, the one subverted by the Black Panther, the state revealed another less polite national consciousness of surveillance, paranoia, brutality and bigotry, something most Americans wished to be concealed.

Michael Parenti concludes a chapter in his book by lamenting on how elaborate is the security apparatus that represses dissent: "Police, judges, FBI and CIA agents, drug-pushing school authorities, prison guards, behavior – modification experts, psychiatrists, and psychosurgeons – all have one thing in common: they work to make the world safe for those on top by exercising arbitrary power over those below. They help capitalist class protect itself from its own people, all in the name of peace and security, normality and well-being, law and order" (Parenti, 1983, 181). The Black Panthers eventually

disintegrated due to the many incursions by the state. The reasons given for the decline of black radicalism is that the civil rights demands have been met and thus there are no longer structural causes for militant dissent. This overlooks the extent, if not permanent extent, of state repression. The efficacy and clinical effectiveness of the repression cannot be overstated: "From 1968 to 1971 police wrecked Black Panther headquarters in more than ten cities, stealing thousands of dollars in funds and arresting, beating, and shooting the occupants in well-planned, unprovoked attacks. More than forty Panthers were killed by police in that period. More than three hundred were arrested and many were imprisoned for long periods without bail or trial" (Parenti, 1983, 160). Eventually this led to a stagnation that we have come to ponder.

Paper Panther: Heritage or Mission?

Whether white America considers the legacies of the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam as warranting scorn, contempt or patronizing, it remains true that America as a nation received its first kick on the teeth from a movement immersed in all that the American dream failed to envelop. It seems that time alone may be able to tame a memory. In the society obsessed with legends, from Indian-slaughtering cowboys, Chicago hoodlums to anti-war hipsters, America has shown a resolve to be abler to appropriate any historical movement and Americanize it. J. Edgar Hoover shares the same prestige as Martin Luther King in the minds of many Americans, irrespective of the two's antagonistic encounters. The most outspoken and anti-American doyen Malcolm X has been easily appropriated for patriotic consumption. Not only as a craze icon, but also as a statesman, he has since become mild enough to be swallowed by the American cultural hyper-consumerism. Joe Wood has profound words to say about the commodification and adulteration of significant political episodes in American social heritage, he says of the Malcolm X craze: "The growing tendency to celebrate Malcolm X's well-earned achievements without critically evaluating how his ideas address contemporary issues is problematic because it limits our ability to be politically effective in the context of our times" (Wood, 1992, 81). This cannot be closer to the truth. However the actual Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Party pose a bitter pill to swallow for the consuming public: there is no way of thinking about the Black Panthers

without also thinking about state response to it, the Cointelpro and other "showdowns" for instance. Thus a "closure" has not been forthcoming and the Panther legacy remains raw in the collective consciousness of white America hence the inability to appropriate the legacy to mainstream popular consumption. The Nation of Islam, with all its talk about "the devil white man" is also still hard to appropriate into the mainstream and thus the two movements still represent a milieu peripheral or even antagonistic to the mainstream national consensus or the American national consciousness.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

The predicament of the African American yielded various forms of resistance mainly determined by the nature of repression. Slavery as an economic enterprise and a political subjugation defined how an African American was to relate with the rest of America. It was during the civil rights protest movement in the aftermath of the Second World War that the African America would mobilize massively to challenge the status quo. The mainstream civil rights movement advocated integration. The main argument was that America could afford to accommodate all races under the ideals of equality and liberty. Many gains were made, segregation came to an end through defiant campaigns by the massive civil rights protest movement. The white establishment woke up to a realization that prejudice would not go on unchallenged. Concessions would have to be made.

In the midst of all these efforts to realize integration there was another segment of the civil rights protest movement that opted for a more radical set of demands. The Nation of Islam sought separate existence and self-determination. The make up of this movement was determined by its claims. An un-American disposition was adopted. Although this could not yield the required claims, it in itself was a form of protest, very rational and justifiable. The claims made by the movement were ostentatious and bordered on the unachievable. However, the essence of the movement was profound and it captured the deepest aspiration of a culturally displaced people. The *noble lies* that this movement is based on do not undermine the utility of the movement. The main point of the movement is self-assertion. It does not matter whether the leadership is manipulative and hypocritical, the movement furnishes a gap in the African American community.

The African American still finds herself at the margins of a society that she has been told to embrace. A propensity to rebel against the norms of this society is understandable. The Black Panther Party presents a canonical definition of Black radicalism. Their political program and vision sought the overhauling of society. America in its current incarnation would never accord Blacks justice. Only a revolution would square things up. The self assertiveness of this group invited gross repression from the white establishment and thus the movement was curtailed. The legacy remains as various forms of Black resistance persist. The Black Panther Party now serves as an inspiration for various progressive groups that are resisting the contemporary ills that the Black community find itself confronted with day by day. The relevance of these movements is unquestionable. And it seems that so long as the legacy of slavery and prejudice remains in the minds of people and the social ills persist, self-assertive black radicals will continue to exist, espousing un-Americanism. Self-assertion will always be part of the racial experience of America, irrespective of how grotesque it may seem to be.

Self-assertion may be the last vestige a deprived social group has – whether its prophecies are accurate, its calculations precise or its program feasible – the most important and redeeming thing is the awareness of one's pivotal role in the trajectory of an often brutal and compulsive post-industrial world.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

From Resistance to Liberation

The Black Panther: **Black Community News Service, 20 June 1970, pp. 17–18**

Nearly 30 Panthers have been killed since the Party was founded; in the first year of the Nixon administration, over 400 had been arrested on various charges; Panther offices in Los Angeles, Oakland, Chicago, Des Moines and 15 other cities have been attacked by police. Nearly all members of their original Central Committee have been suppressed: killed, jailed or forced into exile. The Justice Department has a special task force on the Panthers; the FBI considers them the greatest single threat to our national security; at least two congressional committees and several grand juries are investigating them.

The Panthers are the target not of repression but of an undeclared war. Under a state of repression, the heretic at least is accorded bail, trial and appeal. In a state of war, victims are killed or rounded up without serious regard for legal "niceties". The Panthers held in jails across America today are no different from prisoners held in Santo Domingo, Saigon or any other center of the American Empire.

The escalation of war against the Panthers has created vast differences between them and their less oppressed allies. The Panthers correctly criticize whites for not moving rapidly enough to deal with the special repression inflicted on blacks. And the whites, hesitant and confused about how to react to the brutal repression of Panthers, are correctly critical of the broadside nature of occasional Panther attacks on student movements, women's liberation and the cultural rebellion arising from conditions in the Mother Country.

These differences cannot be understood without a perspective on the history of black-white political relations. In 1966 black radicals, led by Stokely Carmichael, purged whites from the "integrated" civil rights movement and directed them to go into the white community. Young whites did just this, creating a rebellious consciousness inside the Mother Country. Eldridge Cleaver and the Panthers then saw the possibilities of this white radical impulse, and put forward a strategy of "liberation in the colony" coupled with "revolution in the Mother Country". The Panther argued that blacks should wage an

autonomous struggle for self-determination, but added that victory would not be secured until the Mother Country was also transformed from within. They began to experiment with coalitions for specific purposes with white organizations.

Few whites realized the risks which the Panthers took in pursuing this line. It left the Party exposed to constant baiting criticism by black "cultural nationalists" groups who preferred either no contact with whites or, if necessary, contact with white foundations and corporations rather than white radicals. Among black radicals, the Panthers were raising fears of a return to old-style coalitions which black people had been submerged and their interests made secondary to the class struggle. From great numbers of blacks, including those who joined the Party, the Panthers were demanding an incredible psychological adjustment: to conduct a racial struggle without anti-white feelings. White radicals, by comparison, had very little to lose from the coalitions except prestige or money.

Since 1967 one coalition after another between the Panthers and whites has been created, achieved something useful, then been more or less dissolved due to racial or political differences. Some have been mainly educational campaigns, like the relatively successful one waged around Huey's trial. Some have been abortively electoral, like that with the Peace and Freedom Party, which collapsed before the 1968 elections. The Panthers have searched back and forth for the most effective white allies and have come up with different answers from time to time. Sometimes the answer has been the broad liberal community and the students; sometimes poor whites in Chicago and Richmond; sometimes the Yippies and street people; sometimes the peace movement; sometimes a mixture of two or more of these. Always the coalitions have been affected by the fact that the Panthers are far more revolutionary and serious than their allies; always they have been plagued by the question of whether whites should be considered essentially as "supporters" or an independent radical force moving towards a front-line alliance with the blacks.

All these problems came to a boiling point in 1969 as Nixon's policy of repression escalated. In response to severe attacks, the Panthers proposed a broad United Front which would essentially serve as a support group. The Front would raise funds, educate white people to the dangers of fascism, and help circulate a petition for "community control of the police".

The difficulty was that the liberals who would be most likely to join such a Front were having jitters about the Panthers and repression, and the younger radicals were going through birth pains of new struggles. In the white community, it was the ineffectual and opportunist Old Left groups which were most interested in the United Front. The radicals, meanwhile, were moving in at least four different directions: towards white working-class organizing, women's liberation, the cultural revolution (as asserted in the People's Park struggle), and armed struggle (as embodied by the Weathermen). Few of the younger radicals wanted to join a United Front with the Old Left or circulate petitions in the white community, and none wanted to accept Panther leadership.

Perhaps the Panthers did not understand the devastating effect this United Front would have on the young whites. Since their inception the Panther had gradually inspired significant numbers of whites to the idea of armed struggle. Few whites had become John Browns, but the Panthers heroic image was accelerating white revolutionary consciousness as no American movement had done before. Then, with little preparation, the Panthers suddenly adopted a reformist tactic which the whites had been trying to go beyond. White radicals had no objection to a United Front of middle-class liberal support for the Panthers. But they wanted the Panthers to recognize as well the need for militant liberation struggles in the Mother Country.

To the Panthers, the response of white radicals seemed self-centered and "anarchist". The embattled Panthers had difficulty understanding the priority of women's issues, for instance, or the significance of drugs and rock and roll, or why the Berkely radicals fought in the streets for 17 days when black people had already demonstrated the futility of riots, or why Weathermen wanted to pick up guns instead of petitions. They could not see the legitimacy of the struggles that whites were engaged in and began to assert that the Party should be the "vanguard" of the Mother Country as well as the Colony. The result was much hostile and futile "commandism" from the Panthers and much alienation among the whites.

Before the cleavages could be overcome, the U.S. government moved to take advantage of the situation. Noting that the United Front conference had ended in disarray and division, they concluded that the Panthers were isolated and therefore easy targets.

From the United Front conference through the trial of Bobby Seale and the Chicago 7, these gaps between the Panthers and their white allies continued. On November 15 in San Francisco David Hillard was booed by the liberal peace movement for suggesting that peace could not be achieved without a liberation struggle, and that Nixon (or anyone standing in the way of black liberation) should be killed. Seeing the black-white division, the power structure moved again, this time indicting Hillard for "threatening the President".

During the trial the gulf was both narrowed and widened. We enjoyed a political closeness with Bobby Seale, yet he remained in jail every day, while we were free. We helped create a mass consciousness among whites about the repression of the Panthers, but Bobby was the one who experienced the gagging. We asserted our unity with the Panthers, but could do nothing to prevent Bobby's sentence and the murders of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. The inadequacy was not simply our own; it existed throughout the white movement. Until November 15 in Washington, not one major demonstration occurred to protest what had happened to Bobby.

Early this year, the Panther were beginning to reconsider their basic strategy of coalition. Eldridge drafted a manifesto declaring that if class struggle were not possible, then blacks should go it alone in a race war. The manifesto vowed that no more Panthers would be sacrificed on the "altar of interracial harmony".

Then, suddenly, a hopeful new coalition was being created in New Haven. It had taken a long time (the Panthers had been held in Connecticut dungeons since before the United Front Conference) but whites were beginning to move again on the issue of racism. A strike began in April. The president of Yale granted the validity of the question the Panthers had been raising all along: that a fair trial for black revolutionaries in America was hard to imagine. When 25,000 people, called by the Panthers and the Conspiracy, came to New Haven on May Day despite the warnings of Spiro Agnew and the threat of the National Guard, a militant United Front involving both moderate and revolutionary whites at last began to appear.

To understand the unevenness of black-white coalitions is to understand the structure of racism. All whites are part of a racist system: they live better materially, never experience the daily crises that the Panthers do, and are never repressed as severely as blacks. Even becoming "more militant" than blacks cannot erase the color line: whites who try to act like John Brown are usually seen as manipulators who will not have to bear the consequences for whatever repression they bring down. The racial barrier which holds whites above blacks does not mean that all whites are individually racist in their attitudes or that white support is unimportant. But the attitudes, including alienation and protest, which develop in the Mother Country are remote from and often contradictory to black feelings. Women's liberation will tend to seem secondary to Panthers fighting for physical survival; hippie life styles will seem indulgent to blacks looking for work.

Huey Newton pointed out these differences in an essay from prison on white "anarchists". Huey wrote that the black community, experiencing collective oppression and collective material needs, will grasp the idea of organization and discipline much more quickly than will the young alienated white person whose goal is self-expression. Breaking out of slavery requires a personal change in black people far different from the new life style of young whites. The black is moving from dependence and powerlessness to an aggressive pride in collective power. The young white is breaking out of the straitjacket of conformity toward a sense of personal experiment and discovery. The young white will view organization and discipline as an infringement on free consciousness. By implication, even if whites sense a common oppression their needs will still drive them toward a strong emphasis on personal transformation.

The white radical plays a difficult part in this ambiguous world. The radical professes solidarity with the Panthers and the ghetto. At the same time, as a white, he receives special privileges and as a Mother Country radical he experiences specials needs for liberation which are quite different from those which move the black community. The white radical is thus likely to exemplify both the nearness of, and the difficulty of achieving real solidarity. In political terms this means that although whites can help the black struggle, they are inherently undependable. While blacks will never have to "go it alone" completely, the principle of self-reliance is more basic than that of coalition.

A comparison with the coalition strategies of other national liberation movements shows parallels as well as vast differences with the American situation. Both the Vietnamese and the Algerians - and especially the Vietnamese - patiently educated and organized the

French people because they knew that French public opinion would be needed to support an end to the war. In the current war also the Vietnamese have taken a patient attitude towards American public opinion, believing that the war would encourage dissent and a new political atmosphere in the U.S. Their strategy is to conduct a long guerrilla war, waiting for the cost in blood, taxes and honor to awaken some Americans while tiring others. While a "revolution in the Mother Country" would be desirable, they believe mere divisions are enough to bog down the U.S. Beneath this strategy lies a remarkable faith in the ability of human beings to overcome ignorance and prejudice. The Vietnamese believe that even the American soldiers they are fighting are pawns who would change sides if they knew the truth. The moral of an idea is their greatest weapon. They are not a "vanguard" giving commands to the American anti-war movement but more of an armed conscience trying to move and persuade.

But in the American case the black and Third World colonies are dispersed inside the Mother Country. There is no national territory on which blacks can develop schools, industry and agriculture, or establish an identity as a people and fight for their freedom. A war of independence here would not end in the political separation of two distinct geographic territories, as it did for France and Algeria, but would rearrange America itself.

One result is that black people have become more interdependent with white people than in any other colonial society. Feelings of both familiarity and hatred are bred at the same time. Although they are culturally separate, blacks can think like white Americans easily and naturally. The hypocrisy of even the white radicals is felt day to day.

Painful relations can often be broken off, but this one has a way of continuing. Even while blacks despair of whites, black motion itself constantly pushes some whites towards a better, more radical understanding. Blacks have been the trigger of the early white student movement, the radicalizers of the anti-war movement, the legitimizers of revolutionary violence and the soul of the underground culture. The black assault on white racism has its effect: young white people become less racist than their elders even though they remain part of a racist system.

The black-white relationship becomes hard to break for another reason. Because they lack a unified national territory of their own, blacks are almost forced to depend on a "base" in the consciousness of the white left, or on the bank accounts of white liberals - more so than in other liberation struggles. In Vietnam the revolutionaries can leave political relationships with the Americans to skilled and patient diplomats. They are confident that their image of the American people will be fulfilled but they do not go through the psychological torment of dealing with whites every day. They shoot those who invade; they welcome those who protest. They do not need immediate evidence to confirm their ultimate faith that whites can be human beings; they gain strength enough from their schools, their factories, their army, the land they till, and their national tradition. In America none of this seems possible, at least not in the form taken by other peoples. As long as there are no "Panther zones" as fully self- sustaining as the "Vietcong

zones", the black liberation struggle will be tormented by its dependency on the support of the white left.

So the white radicals are in a coalition with the black struggle - even if the coalition is not recognized formally - simply because we are part of a common dialectic. In the case of the Panthers, we will either vindicate their gamble on white support or become evidence of white failure and therefore bolster "cultural nationalists" arguments for years to come.

It is sufficient to understand and act on the fact that the black colony is a time bomb inside the fragile center of the colonial Mother Country. The eventual detonation of that bomb will wreck a system which dehumanizes all its people, and it will not leave our lives or social structure intact.

If we consider the issue in the framework of colonialism, we can see most clearly what must be done. We can see that the demand for black self-determination cannot be accommodated by a welfare state which is colonial in its power relations. We can see that the Vietcong started without white support, alienated most Americans, yet are winning their own struggle and contributing immeasurably to ours. We can see that the differences between white and black radicalism are not antagonistic, because our destinies are totally bound together.

If we consider the Panthers as an embryonic Viet-Cong in the U.S., if we assume that a Vietnamese situation is developing here, it becomes logical to adopt and improve the strategy of the anti-Vietnam war movement and direct it against the aggression at home.

First, this would mean recognizing that Bobby Seale and other Panthers should not even be tried in the courts of the present U.S. government. They go to trial only under protest. As prisoners of war the Panthers should be freed, not by higher courts, but through negotiations coming about because of public pressure. The slogan "Free Huey" must be enlarged to: "Free All Political Prisoners". Many whites cling to the concept of a "fair trial" for the Panthers because they do not want to accept fully the idea of self-determination for blacks. This leads them to believe they should examine the "facts" of Panther court cases before deciding to support the Panthers. But even such a paternalistic approach would still vindicate the Panthers. In New Haven, for instance, it would reveal that the High Sheriff selected his personal barber and several other "friends and neighbors" for the grand jury which indicted the Panthers. It might even reveal a high-level government plot to frame Bobby and the others.

But the most enlightened approach that a white could adopt toward the "facts" would be to dismiss them as irrelevant, as an internal matter of the black colony. This is no different from the issue of "terror" by revolutionaries in Vietnam. All we need to know is that the Panthers, like the NLF, rely on popular support, not on coercion, for their success, and that the colonial invaders rely on massive terror to frighten away that popular support. If white Americans are concerned about the "terror" of the Panthers, they should stop police aggression in the ghetto instead of condemning black extremists at cocktail parties. Bobby was indicted, not for his supposed role in a killing, but as an

effective way to remove him from the streets and scare away support because of the gravity of the charges.

Second, we need a nationwide "political education class" or "teach-in" as a tactic to create consciousness of this emerging domestic war. It is curious that whites have spoken thousands of times in the Vietnam teach-ins but have done so little to take the issue of the Panthers to the same audiences. The amount of continuing political education needed cannot be underestimated.

Third taking to the streets against racism and repression can be as important now as it was in the earlier phases of the anti-war movement. The recent strike and massive demonstration in New Haven was the first time that whites have come out in large numbers for the Panthers in a nationally visible way. The national student strike triggered by the Cambodian invasion would not have included the demand to free the Panthers were it not for the initiative of the New Haven strikers. The trial in Connecticut will continue to create an urgent climate in which effective demonstrations are possible. Plans should be made for demonstrations from now through the end of that infernal trial, with the definite objective of freeing the Panthers "by any means necessary". Where trials are not an immediate focus, the new Justice Department might well be. As a symbol of centralized evil, it can serve as a target institution the same way the Pentagon has for the anti-war movement.

Fourth, forcing a conflict within the national establishment over this question is crucial in order that repression against the Panthers be slowed down. Repression can be foiled in the short run only by creating sharp divisions among America's powerful elites. The anti-war campaign of Senate doves were crucial to slowing and sometimes preventing military escalation, and they gave respectability to dissent in general. There is of course the danger that such dissent will cool the militant edge of protest, but only in the unlikely event that the Panthers come to rely on the Establishment for their survival. If Ramsey Clark or Kingman Brewster wants to become the William Fulbright of our domestic Vietnam crisis, it will be to the benefit of the Panthers and of everyone but the all-out racist aggressors.

Fifth, we must initiate international campaigns to brand the U.S. as a criminal and outlaw government. Probably the chief problem facing the American ruling elite is not Vietnam but the survival of the U.S. as a racist nation in the new international scene. American racism is the number one foreign policy problem for this country. Each step of racist aggression further isolates the U.S. in the world; each concession to the blacks for the sake of "national image" only raises the domestic confrontation to a higher level. Using all of its international contacts, the American left should expose the repression of the Panthers in every conference and journal in the world.

Finally, we must create a Resistance structure. There will have to be active, extra-legal cooperation between white and black revolutionaries on every front of the struggle. A new underground railroad to protect the fugitives and resources of the black colony may become a necessity. This need is likely to become especially real in America, where the

black communities are geographically surrounded by whites and where communication and transportation are almost exclusively controlled by whites.

The trial of Bobby Seale and the Connecticut Panthers is the best possible point of departure for a new upsurge of white support for black liberation. The government is hoping that one bolt of electricity will kill the spirit in all of us. The gag and chains of Chicago were not enough; they are now being replaced by the electric chair. Every sane person has a stake in preventing this maneuver - and it can be prevented. Just as our case was turned into a trial of our generaton, so can Bobby's be turned into a symbolic trial of black and white people in this country.

Pan-African News Wire articles may be freely distributed for non-profit educational and research purposes. We request that the original source be cited when the dispatches are circulated. Distribution for profit is strictly prohibited without the expressed consent of the Pan-African News Wire. [14]

[14] http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panther/

APPENDIX 2

The Nation of Islam & U.S. Government
Counterintelligence Program (FBI File Date: 08-25-1967)

SAC, Albany August 25, 1967

PERSONAL ATTENTION TO ALL OFFICES
Director, FBI

	1 - Mr. C. D. Brennan
COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM	1 - Mr. Bland
BLACK NATIONALIST-HATE GROUPS	1 - Mr. Trainor
INTERNAL SECURITY	1 - Mr. B. A. Wells
	1 - Mr. C. W. Thompson
	1 - Mr. Ryan

Offices receiving copies of this letter are instructed to immediately establish a control file captioned as above, and to assign responsibility for following and coordinating this new counterintelligence program to an experienced and imaginative Special Agent well versed in investigations relating to black nationalist, hate-type organizations. The field office control file used under this program may be maintained in a pending inactive status until such time as a specific operation or technique is placed under consideration for implementation.

The purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters, and to counter their propensity for violence and civil disorder. The activities of all such groups of intelligence interest to this Bureau must be followed on a continuous basis so we will be in a position to promptly take advantage of all opportunities for counterintelligence and to inspire action in instances where circumstances warrant. The pernicious background of such groups, their duplicity, and devious maneuvers must be exposed to public scrutiny where such publicity will have a neutralizing effect. Efforts of various groups

2 - Atlanta 2 - Philadelphia

2 - Baltimore
2 - Boston
2 - Buffalo
2 - Charlotte
2 - Chicago
2 - Cincinnati
2 - Cleveland
2 - Detroit
2 - Jackson
2 - Los Angeles
2 - Memphis
2 - Newark
2 - New Orleans
2 - New York
2 - Phoenix
2 - Pittsburgh
2 - Richmond
2 - St. Louis
2 - San Francisco
2 - Washington Field Office

- END PAGE 1 of 3 -

Letter to SAC, Albany
RE: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS

to consolidate their forces or to recruit new or youthful adherents must be frustrated. No opportunity should be missed to exploit through counterintelligence techniques the organizational and personal conflicts of the leaderships of the groups and where possible an effort should be made to capitalize upon existing conflicts between competing black nationalist organizations. When an opportunity is apparent to disrupt or neutralize black nationalist, hate type organizations through the cooperation of established local news media contacts or through such contact with sources available to the Seat of Government, in every instance careful attention must be given to the proposal to insure the targeted group is disrupted and not merely publicized. Consideration should be given to techniques to preclude violence-prone or rabble-rouser leaders of hate groups from spreading their philosophy publicly or through various mass communication media.

Many individuals currently active in black nationalist organizations have backgrounds of immorality, subversive activity, and criminal records. Through your investigation of key agitators, you should endeavor to establish their unsavory backgrounds. Be alert to determine evidence of misappropriation of funds or other types of personal misconduct on the part of militant nationalist leaders so any practical or warranted counter-intelligence may be

instituted.

Intensified attention under this program should be afforded to the activities of such groups as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Revolutionary Action Movement, the Deacons for Defense and Justice, Congress of Racial Equality, and the Nation of Islam. Particular emphasis should be given to extremists who direct the activities and policies of revolutionary or militant groups such as Stokely Carmichael, H. "Rap" Brown, Elijah Muhammad, and Maxwell Stanford.

At this time the Bureau is setting up no requirement for status letters to be periodically submitted under this program. It will be incumbent upon you to insure the program is being afforded necessary and continuing attention and that no opportunities will be overlooked for counterintelligence action.

This program should not be confused with the program entitled "Communist Party, USA, Counterintelligence Program, Internal Security - C," (Bufile 100-3-104), which is directed

- END PAGE 2 of 3 -

Letter to SAC, Albany
RE: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS

against the Communist Party and related organizations, or the program entitled "Counterintelligence Program, Internal Security, Disruption of Hate Groups," (Bufile 157-9), which is directed against Klan and hate-type groups primarily consisting of white memberships.

All Special Agent personnel responsible for the investigation of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and their memberships should be altered to our counterintelligence interest and each investigative Agent has a responsibility to call to the attention of the counterintelligence coordinator suggestions and possibilities for implementing the program. You

The Nation of Islam & U.S. Government Counterintelligence Program (FBI File Date: 01-07-1969)

SAC, Chicago (157-2209) January 7, 1969

Director, FBI (100-448006)

COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
RACIAL INTELLIGENCE
(NATION OF ISLAM)

Although the Nation of Islam (NOI) does not presently advocate violence by its members, the group does preach hatred of the white race and racial separatism. The membership of the NOI is organized and poses a real racial threat. The NOI is responsible for the largest black nationalist

newspaper, which has been used by other black extremists.

The NOI appears to be the personal fiefdom of Elijah Muhammad. When he dies a power struggle can be expected and the NOI could change direction. We should be prepared for this eventuality. We should plan how to change the philosophy of the NOI to one of the strictly religious and self-improvement orientation, deleting the race hatred and separate nationhood aspects.

In this connection Chicago should consider what counterintelligence action might be needed now or at the time of Elijah Muhammad's death to bring about such a change in NOI philosophy. Important considerations should include the identity, strengths, and weaknesses, of any contenders for NOI leadership. What are the positions of our [BUREAU DELETION] informants in regard to leadership? How could potential leaders be turned or neutralized?

The alternative to changing the philosophy of the NOI is the destruction of the organization. This might be accomplished through generating factionalism among the contenders for Elijah Muhammad's leadership or through legal action in probate court on his death. Chicago should consider the question of how to generate the factionalism necessary to destroy the NOI by splitting into several groups. [BUREAU DELETION]

IJD: ekw

- END PAGE 1 of 2 -

Letter to SAC, Chicago
RE: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM; (NATION OF ISLAM)
100-448006

Legal action against the NOI on the death of its leader depends on the answers to several questions:

1. Does Elijah Muhammad have a will?
2. Is the NOI incorporated?
3. In whose name and where are NOI bank accounts?
4. In whose name are other NOI assets, such as mosque buildings, school buildings, the newspaper, Elijah Muhammad's homes, and NOI businesses?

Depending on the answers to these questions, probate law in Illinois, and whether Chicago might have a confidential source in probate administration, tying up the NOI in probate administration might be possible.

Chicago should examine the NOI from the above counterintelligence angle and advise the Bureau. Consider the possibility of drawing up specific counterintelligence recommendations, to be acted upon when necessary, with various contingencies covered.

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SAC, Chicago (157-2209) January 7, 1969

Director, FBI (100-448006)

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BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
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[15] http//www.noi.org/cointelpro/fbi1.html

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