
DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

The Institute of the Black World (IBW) was a group of Black intellectuals who believed that Black liberation was both a political and intellectual project. Founded in 1969, the Atlanta, Georgia based organization was initially a component of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center. After a tumultuous separation, IBW became an independent organization.

Although dozens of Black intellectuals passed through the institute, the core members of the organization were historian Vincent Harding, historian Robert Hill, and political scientist William Strickland. The intellectuals that supported the institute were world renown, including C.L.R. James, Walter Rodney, St. Clair Drake, Lerone Bennett, Jr., and Joyce Ladner. The dramatic call for Black Power and its subsequent manifestations of Black Studies, and Black Politics influenced this eclectic group. The Institute sought to provide rigorous conceptual, social, political, and economic analysis of the Black Freedom Struggle.

The goal of this project is twofold. First, I examine the history of the understudied Institute. Second, using the Institute as a prism, I examine the intellectual trajectory of the Black Freedom Struggle in the 1970s. IBW involved itself in many of the debates that defined the intellectual history of the 1970s, namely
developing a “Black University,” a Black agenda, and a conceptual framework beyond Liberalism, Nationalism, and Marxism.
Dedicated to my Mom and Dad and the rest of my family who taught me the importance and meaning of Black History
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Frantz Fanon, Martinican psychiatrist and Algerian anticolonial activist, concluded *The Wretched of the Earth* with a plea to Third World intellectuals and activists not to imitate European ideas. He stated, “Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe.” Rather than replicate Europe, Fanon urged Third World intellectuals to “create the whole man,” through a “new history of man.” Such a history would take into account Europe’s contributions to the world, while not forgetting the crimes of racial hatred, class warfare, slavery, and exploitation. Fanon believed, “For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.” Following Fanon’s directive, The Institute of the Black World attempted to create “new concepts” in order to move its organization and the Black Freedom Struggle forward during 1970s.¹

The Institute of the Black World (IBW) was a collection of Black intellectuals who, according to its “Statement of Purpose,” used their minds “in the service of the

using the Institute as a prism, I examine the intellectual trajectory of the Black Freedom Struggle in the 1970s, because IBW was directly involved itself in many of the debates that defined the intellectual history of the 1970s.

This project situates itself in what has been recently called New Black Power Studies as well as Black intellectual history. This research does not see Black Power solely in terms of causing the decline of the Civil Rights Movement. Practitioners of these new studies view Black Power as interrogating the limits of liberal reform and they have documented the struggles of Black Power organizations to navigate the race and class tensions from which they sprung. Historian Peniel Joseph, editor of the Black Scholar two issues on the subject, notes, “the contributors [to Black Power Studies] argue that the Black Power era represented a power political movement that redefined and deepened American democracy.” The Institute of the Black World sought to expand the conceptual framework of Black Power and began to push for an analytical framework beyond Liberalism, Nationalism, and Marxism.³

Earlier historical scholarship understood Black Power primarily through the lens of the Civil Rights Movement. Consequently, these social historians regard Black Power negatively, seeing it as a central cause the decline of the Civil Rights Movement. For example, Clayborne Carson’s In Struggle describes The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s (SNCC) shift to Black Nationalism as the

“falling apart” of the organization. While this may explain some SNCC’s decline, Carson never asked if SNCC had reached it logical conclusion under the intellectual framework of the “beloved community.” The social histories of organizations such as SNCC and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) represent a tendency to castigate Black Power for the destruction of the Beloved Community. Moreover, other scholars focus solely on the real and implied violence of Black Power, thus relegating the period’s complex political and social analysis to the periphery.

Sociologist Charles Payne has argued that scholars need to expand the research scope beyond civil rights. Considering much of the social history focuses on the courage of the activists, Payne states,

> Depending on how it is framed, even stressing the courage and idealism of the young people can be a dangerous game. The youngsters developed a series of powerful questions about how this society generates and sustains inequality. We [Scholars] praise their courage while ignoring their questions. In that context, “Our civil rights activists sure were brave” may serve the same ideological function for this generation that “Our nigras are happy” served for another, a way of denying the need for discussion of the underlying problems.

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Instead of studying the Black Power era as the conclusion to the Civil Rights Movement, recent scholarship has explored the period for the profound questions that activists raised.

Several historians have significantly contributed to Black Power Studies. William Van DeBurg’s *New Day in Babylon* represents one of the first attempts to study Black Power not as the decline of the Civil Rights Movement. Despite the importance of his historiographic contributions, there are several problems with Van DeBurg’s work. The major problem is that he seeks to document only Black Power in popular culture and how it was transmitted in sports, music, art, and theology. This stems from his goal of attempting to showing the lasting influence of Black Power not just in the 1960s but also in the subsequent decades. Although Van DeBurg should be commended for his focus on culture as the area of inquiry and importance, what severely limits his analysis is the lack of a theoretical framework upon which to analyze the Black Power period. By subjugating Black Power to the whims of popular culture, Van DeBurg does not demonstrate Black Power lasting impact on American culture.

Despite his shortcomings, however, Van DeBurg recognizes an important component of Black Power: that the positive attributes, such as the re-evaluation of Black identity and the historical examination of African culture, associated with

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Black culture during this era, was a point of agreement among the various strands of Black Power. Further, he identifies four assumptions of this developing Black consciousness. First, becoming consciousness of one’s blackness was a healthy development likened to a religious conversion experience. Second, Black consciousness led to a questioning of normative values. Third, Black consciousness led to a re-orientation of Black life, which focused on the creation of a new value system, one that centered on the positives of Black identity. The final assumption identified by Van DeBurg was that Black people and the newly developed consciousness refused to play by the old rules. Unfortunately, Van DeBurg did not develop these four assumptions further, perhaps because his focus was on popular culture, thus minimalizing an essential piece, which could have enhanced his understanding of Black Power.  

A younger generation of historians, such as Scot Brown and Komozi Woodard, have built on Van DeBurg’s initial work. Their scholarship now constitutes central components in “New Black Power Studies” as it illuminates marginalized organizations and individuals and examines the intellectual trajectory of the Black Power movement.  

Whereas, earlier scholarship emphasized social histories and the actions of the movements, these works marginalized the intellectual context in which much of the action took place. The new Black Power

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scholarship focuses on ideas such as cultural nationalism, revolutionary nationalism, and Marxism and fills this gap in the earlier scholarship.

My dissertation follows in the vein of Black Power research that examines the ideas associated with the era. In one of the few intellectual histories of the era, Richard King argues that the various meanings of “freedom” were the basis for understanding the political ideas of the movement. However, King comes up short in dealing with the Black Power era. He identifies “positive freedom” as the demand for self-determination and self-respect, whereby politics becomes an area for self-transformation, however he does not develop this idea. Furthermore, he is openly hostile to the claims of the Black Power era.12

Other Black Freedom Struggle historians have regulated the era’s intellectual debate to one between Nationalists, both political and cultural, Marxists, and Liberal pluralists. Manning Marable looks at the Black Freedom Struggle in Race, Reform and Rebellion from a Democratic Socialist perspective. Highly critical of cultural nationalism, he examines Black Power from a purely political praxis position. Therefore, he views the Black Panther Party as revolutionary, while cultural nationalists are seen as “inchoate and chauvinistic.” Marable concludes, “most cultural nationalists articulated a political praxis that was at best incoherent, profoundly ethnocentric and ideologically inert.” Marable’s focus on political praxis as the barometer upon which the movement needed to be judged reflected the

general theme of Black Power. However, this perspective obfuscates the similarities between both political and cultural nationalism.\textsuperscript{13}

In another case, John T. McCartney elucidates the various strains of Black Power ideology by creating three categories. McCartney argues that Pluralists, Counter-Communalists and Separatists represent the three major strains of Black Power. Despite the separate categories, he does see some commonalities in power, self-determination, realistic approach to politics, Black community leading and emphasizing Blackness. These commonalities are invoked, yet they are not thoroughly investigated by McCartney. Moreover, the 1970s are virtually invisible in his ideological examination. The author reduces the shifting ideological perspectives of activists such as Amiri Baraka to personality, not to a changing understanding of the social system. An examination of the Institute of the Black World reveals an organization who worked through Black Power’s various conceptual frameworks in an attempt to correctly evaluate the era.\textsuperscript{14}

This broad understanding of IBW’s project is missing from the few discussions of the organization, as historians’ explorations of The Institute of the Black World have only occurred within historical development of Black Studies. The


scholarship of William Van DeBurg, August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, James Turner, and Perry Hall represent this perspective.

William Van DeBurg places IBW in the context of Black Power on Campus stating that it was an “ambitious program” of research, training and development.\(^\text{15}\) Furthermore, August Meier and Elliott Rudwick’s *Black History and the Historical Profession* saw the IBW as the organization that allowed founder Vincent Harding and fellow Sterling Stuckey to communicate their vision for new Black history that represented the nationalist perspectives of the Black Power era. New Black history required a stinging critique of American society as well as a “history of the struggle of blacks for control over their lives.”\(^\text{16}\) James Turner and Perry Hall, too, locate the organization in the development of Black Studies. James Turner, the director of the Africana Studies Program at Cornell University attended the Black Studies Director’s Seminar in late 1969 and determined that “the significance of this meeting lies in the fact that it was … the founding convention for the field.”\(^\text{17}\) Turner’s attention to the beginnings of the movement differs from Perry Hall’s focus on the tensions within IBW. Hall identifies controversy near the end of the IBW existence, specifically the emergence of Black Women’s Studies as a major component of Black Studies. Hall notes that Black women scholars asserted their perspective at the 1982


IBW Black Studies Curriculum project. Hall uses the incident as a springboard to examine the development of the Black feminism in Black Studies. These scholars’ references to IBW, only provide a glimpse of the complexity and depth of the organization. My research moves the Institute beyond of the Black Studies debate and looks at the organization’s creation, policy initiatives, and decline.  

Furthermore, my dissertation differs from other projects in the field because it examines both the social history of the organization and the ideas that structured the Institute’s existence. Additionally, I situate IBW in America’s changing racial discourse that began after WWII. The Institute of the Black World associates’ intellectual production provide both a social history and a history of idea. As Peniel Joseph, points out,

The intellectual production during the Black Power era displayed at least three distinct tendencies. Black Power political activists produced numerous pamphlets, books, speeches, and essays for the social, political, and cultural transformation of American and world society. While much of this material was intellectually sophisticated and is useful for contemporary scholars, the purpose was less an academic exercise than a training, critical thinking, and methodological creativity to fashion a theoretical basis for the Black Power movement. This black intelligentsia merged activism and intellectual production, arguing that the movement for social and political transformation required a politically engaged community of Black scholars activists.

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The Institute played a pivotal role illuminating, according to Joseph, “the connection between black radicals, intellectuals, and public policy” during the era. This connection is methodologically examined using political languages.\(^{19}\)

This project is predicated on a model of analysis that understands the symbiotic relation between ideas, such as political languages, and social realities. My use of political languages is borrowed from J.G.A. Pocock’s essay “Languages and Their Implications,” where he argued that the historian could understand political situations by identifying “the ‘language’ or ‘vocabulary’ with and within the author operated and to show how it functioned paradigmatically to prescribe what he might say and how he might say it.”\(^{20}\) In addition, political languages “will present information selectively as relevant to the conduct and character of politics, and it will encourage the definition of political problems and values in certain ways and not in others.”\(^{21}\) The political languages such as “autonomy,” “relevancy,” “integration” or “damage” function within paradigms that prescribe and proscribe what may and may not be advocated. Thomas Kuhn’s work on scientific revolutions suggests paradigms “insulate the community from those socially important problems” that are outside the parameters of the paradigm because those conceivably unsolvable problems “cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual and

\(^{19}\) Peniel Joseph, “Black Liberation Without Apology,” 3.


instrumental tools the paradigm provides.”  

The political languages advocated for and by Black’s function within parameters that are part of our contemporary paradigms. The effectiveness of the methodology of political languages is that it can be applied to the politics of language and the language of politics by and about African Americans.  

Political language in this study is regarded as a historical phenomenon such that the language creates a context which defines the type and importance of an event. Moreover, Pocock suggests that “[m]en think by communicating language systems; these systems help constitute both their conceptual worlds and the authority-structures, or social worlds, related to these….” Consequently, an “individual’s thinking may now be viewed as a social event, and act of communication and of response within a paradigm-system, and as a historical event, a moment in a process of transformation of that system and of interacting worlds which both systems and act help to constitute and are constituted by.” Therefore, the belief system about the Blacks cannot be separated from the political behavior towards the population group. As Stedman Jones states, “political languages do become inapposite in new situations. How and why this occurs involves the discovery of the precise point at which shifts occur as well as an investigation of the

24 Pocock, Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, 11.
25 Ibid. 15.
specific political circumstances in which they shift.” This thesis attempts to locate the shifts in the organizational framework and investigate the larger “political circumstances in which they shift.”

The dissertation explores the Institute of the Black World’s development and its relation with the ideas of the era. Chapter 2 examines the racial discourse prior to Black Power and how Black Power reacted to the political language of Black damage by articulating an alternative discourse of Black Power. Politically, this Black Power will utilize the languages of autonomy and relevancy to challenge the hegemony of racial liberalism. Chapter 3 explores the development of the political languages of autonomy and relevancy in the demands for the creation of a “Black University.” These demands led to the founding of the Institute by Vincent Harding, Stephen Henderson, and William Strickland. Finally, this chapter demonstrates how these political languages conflicted with the Martin Luther King Center’s racial vision, leading to IBW’s independence for the Center. Chapter 4 examines the internal debates IBW on the correct conceptual framework. I also show how the Institute relied on Pan-African networks, through its 1971 Summer Research Symposium to develop the conceptual framework. The fifth chapter analyzes the IBW’s role in creating a The National Black Political Agenda that was the centerpiece for the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana. Chapter 6 looks at the Institute’s struggle to redefine a conceptual framework after the failure to build on

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the Gary Convention. It discusses Walter Rodney’s role at the 1974 Summer Research Symposium and the beginnings of a conceptual framework that was on the verge of breaking away from Liberalism, Nationalism, and Marxism. IBW did not develop this new perspective because of financial difficulties and external infiltration. The dissertation ends with an examination of the IBW’s return to Black education and Vincent Harding’s focus on historical resistance. I compare Harding’s analysis to Sylvia Wynter’s study where she attempts towards a new theoretical perspective. In order to understand the desire for new concepts, to set afoot a new man, we must turn to the post-WWII racial discourse.
CHAPTER 2
THE LIMITS OF RACIAL LIBERALISM, 1964 - 1968

“If the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America,” Fannie Lou Hamer declared at the 1964 Democratic National Convention. Her statement and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party’s (MFDP) courageous political challenge represented a key moment in the Civil Rights Movement. The Convention’s events shook the United States political system to its core, exposing the profound gap between the language of liberalism and political realities.¹

The denial of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party symbolized the limits of liberal integrationism in the mid-1960s and initiated a widespread search for conceptual alternatives among movement activists. The NAACP’s success in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) made integration the central goal of the movement. As Martin Luther King, Jr. stated “as America pursues the important task of respecting the ‘letter of the law,’ i.e., compliance with desegregation decisions, she must be equally concerned with the ‘spirit of the law,’ i.e., commitment to the democratic dream of integration.” MFDP’s failure at Atlantic City seemed to doom this “democratic dream.” The subsequent demands Black Power represented the

desire for different options to the racial liberalism. Activists applied Black Power in the form of organizations committed to achieving social, economic, and political control, rather than integration. The search for a substitute for racial liberalism, between MFDP's failure at the 1964 Democratic Convention and the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., led Vincent Harding, Stephen Henderson, and William Strickland to examine the roles of intellectuals in the search for new possibilities.

**Failure at the 1964 Democratic Convention**

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party grew out of the Freedom Summer Project organized by Council of Federated Organization (COFO), an umbrella organization of civil rights groups in Mississippi spearheaded by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). SNCC had been developing ties with older activists in Mississippi since the Freedom Rides of 1961. Over the next three years, SNCC would tackle the tremendous task of registering voters in Mississippi. The Voter Education Project put SNCC and local activists in direct confrontation with the state’s White power structure. Residents who attempted to vote were beaten and even killed. After two years of unsuccessfully registering substantial numbers of Black voters, long-time activist Bob Moses concluded that only outside intervention would lead to a breakthrough in state voter registration. Researchers from COFO found an obscure Mississippi law, which allowed illegally excluded voters to cast ballots until the state Supreme Court ruled on an appeal. In testing the applicability of the law, over 80,000 people cast “protest votes” in the fall of 1963.
under COFO's supervision. The excellent electoral turnout led to an agreement amongst Mississippi activists to import hundreds of Black and White volunteers. The activists believed the state's power structure would not be able to withstand such a massive force of organizers. Some organizers, however, felt the introduction of large numbers of White activists would undermine the development of local Black leadership. Finally, Fannie Lou Hamer's incisive remark, "If we trying to breakdown this barrier of segregation, we can't segregate ourselves" swung the tide in favor of using White volunteers. Under these circumstances, SNCC organized Freedom Summer. 2

Freedom Summer introduced hundreds of Northern Whites and Blacks into the powder keg that was Mississippi. The fear of racial violence quickly became a reality in June 1964 when three civil rights workers vanished. James Chaney, a Black Mississippian working with CORE; Michael Swerner, a White CORE worker from New York who had been in Mississippi since January 1964, and Andrew Goodman, a White student from New York who was part of the first group of volunteers, were missing after Philadelphia, Mississippi police arrested them on a spurious traffic violation. The workers' disappearance focused media attention on the Summer Project, although it was under tragic circumstances. In spite of public concern for the three young men, the federal government did not provide any additional protection for the organizers. This decision reiterated J. Edgar Hoover's claim that

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the FBI was not a protective agency. However, the tragedy strengthened the resolve of Black and White activists to opening up the closed society of Mississippi.3

The primary goal of Freedom summer was to register voters. During that summer, 17,000 disenfranchised Black Mississippians went to the courthouse to register, however only 1,600 were accepted. Despite the low success rate, going to the courthouse improved the hopes of many Black Mississippians and encouraged many to defy the social order. Acts of intimidation by local Whites, such as publishing the names of those who attempted to register, became a source of prestige in the Black community, signaling a change in attitude. The danger of violence - real and implied - involved in voter registration gave it higher status in the eyes of many Mississippians, especially when compared to the slow, methodical process of empowerment in the Freedom Schools.4

In addition to voter registration projects, COFO organized Freedom Schools. Mississippi schools were some of the most inequitable in the nation (in 1964 there was no compulsory education law in the state). The goals of the Freedom Schools were “to provide an educational experience for students which will make it possible for them to challenge the myths of our society, to perceive more clearly its realities and to find alternatives, and ultimately new directions for action.” These schools


consisted of academic work, recreational and cultural activities, and leadership
development.⁵

After a summer that saw four activists killed, 80 beaten, 1000 arrested and 37
Black churches bombed or burned, Freedom Summer culminated with the challenge
of the seating of the Mississippi Democratic regulars at the party's national
convention in Atlantic City. President Johnson, hoping to avoid tarnishing his
triumphant nomination, demanded that Vice Presidential candidate Hubert
Humphrey orchestrate a compromise. After putting pressure on Democratic
supporters on the Credentials Committee, Humphrey proposed a four-part
compromise. The convention proposed that the MFDP be given two non-voting "at-
large" seats, welcome the remainder of the MFDP delegates as "honored guests,"
require the Mississippi regular Democrats to sign a loyalty oath, and revise party
rules to eradicate racial discrimination. To the proposed compromise, Fannie Lou
Hamer retorted, "We didn't come all this way for no two seats." The Mississippi
Freedom Democratic Party's rejection of Humphrey and the convention's token offer
brought the contradictions inherent in American liberalism and race to the forefront.
The failure of the MFDP to gain recognition by the Democratic Party demonstrated
to activists across the nation that liberalism did not necessarily mean equal
opportunity for everybody.⁶

⁵ Doug McAdam, Freedom Summer, 83. Charles M. Payne, I've Got the Light of Freedom, 302-306.

⁶ Doug McAdam, Freedom Summer, 96. Chana Kai Lee, For Freedom's Sake, 99. Adam Fairclough,
The Democratic Party’s decision to support White segregationists over Black activists demonstrated how race organized the party. Moreover, the Party’s actions signified that race played a systemic role in the organization of society, well beyond legal segregation. How can we understand the Democratic led government’s desire for desegregation, and ostensibly integration, while, denying the MFDP’s claims for representation?

The Paradigm of Liberalism

Historians often explain the contradiction represented in the government’s claims for integration and their denial of the MFDP as political maneuvering. For example, historian Harvard Sitkoff explains the decision as President Johnson wanting “to head off a bolt of the South to the Republican Party.” Adam Fairclough concludes the events in Atlantic City were “an exercise in raw power.” While, the political implications of seating the MFDP were possibly large, from the perspective of political languages the denial is a logical outcome. The languages of liberalism structured the problems, such that integration and its conceptions of freedom made the events of Atlantic City understandable.  

The paradigm of American liberalism revolves around a notion of unrestrained interference, both personally and in the market place. This non-interference, or negative freedom, is coded in the language of individualism, and despite the different foci in policy, whether the minimalist conservative stance or the

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redistributionist moderate stance, the liberal state is theoretically based on not
privileging one group of citizens or another. This equality of opportunity provided
the conceptual framework for the civil rights movement’s challenge to the racial
order. However, the nation’s avoidance of the MFDP’s claims for representation
suggested, to many Black activists, that liberalism did not apply for Black
Americans.\(^8\)

Thomas Kuhn in his classic, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* points out
that anomalies force adjustments in paradigms “so that the anomalous has become
the expected.” By the end of 1964, the paradigm of liberalism could not account for
the systemic nature and effects of discrimination. Black activists not only
deconstructed the paradigm of liberalism but also began the tenuous process of
developing an alternative paradigm, one that maintained their cultural identity and
constructed a new power structure. The activists began to understand that rather
than a liberal state based on a social contract between equal citizens, the failure of
the government to protect them and to adhere to the rhetoric of equal opportunity
presented an opportunity for alternative interpretations of the role of race in
society.\(^9\)

Black Nationalism formed the basis of the opposition to liberalism, and
activists expressed this perspective in demands for Black Power. A central concept


for Black Power was institutionalized racism, defined by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton as:

Racism is both overt and covert. It takes two, closely related forms: individual whites acting against individual blacks, and the acts by the total white community against the black community. We call these individual racism and institutional racism. The first consists of overt acts by individuals.... This type can be recorded by television cameras; it can frequently be observed in the process of commission. The second type is less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts. But it is no less destructive of human life. The second type originates in the operation of established and respected forces in society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than the first type.\(^{10}\)

The recognition of the systemic nature of racism, at the level of culture and raw political power, is central to understanding the languages of Black Power.

Many scholars view the Black Power era as the "demoralization" or as "falling apart" of the movement.\(^{11}\) Scholars such as Cornel West blame the Black Power Movement, rather than the changing social, political, and economic climate, for the stagnation of the Black Freedom Struggle. According to West, "black nationalist rhetoric contributed greatly to the black freedom movement's loss of meaningful anchorage and organic ties to the black community, especially the black church. In short, besides the severe state repression and the pervasive drug invasion, the black petit bourgeois nationalist perspectives and practices were primarily responsible for the radically decentered state of the black freedom


movement in the seventies and eighties."\textsuperscript{12} This interpretation views the nonviolent
direct action stage of the movement as normative and a monolithic Black Power as a
negative mutation of the enlightened non-violent project.\textsuperscript{13} West and other
historians take "individual-state-market grid"\textsuperscript{14} of liberalism as normative, therefore
often minimalizing the fact that the political languages of Black Power attempted to
address a different set of problems – institutionalized racism rather than segregation.
Black Power activists approached the problem of race that grew from an
understanding of their experiences in the Civil Rights Movement. By focusing on
the development of Black Power in SNCC, one observes the increasing use of the
political languages of Black Power to describe and/or define its political organizing
goals. Much of the public’s negative reaction to advances in Black Power stemmed
from a belief that it opposed equality of opportunity, the central ideal of liberalism.

The development of the liberal paradigm on race revolved around four key
political languages: the end of biological determinism, idealism, damage imagery,
and anticommunism. Each component of liberalism supplied the subtext to the
policies on race developed from 1945 to 1965 and made the discourse on race

\textsuperscript{12} Cornel West, \textit{Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America}, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993),
286. Emphasis mine. For an excellent discussion of West and the Black Power Movement see
Peniel E. Joseph, "‘It’s Dark and Hell is Hot:’ Cornel West, the Crisis of African-American
intellectuals and the Cultural Politics of Race, \textit{Cornel West: A Critical Reader}, ed. George Yancy,
\textsuperscript{13} For a more complexed reading of Black nationalism and Black Power Radicalism see Rod Bush,
\textit{We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century}, (New

\textsuperscript{14} Cochran, \textit{The Color of Freedom}, 55.
palatable for the public. In order to understand the importance of liberalism, one must analyze the impact of these four themes.

Liberalism and Race Relations

The twentieth century racial hierarchy owes much of its tenacity to the social application of Darwin’s theory of evolution. Herbert Spencer applied Darwin’s theory to confirm the racial hierarchy. As intellectual historian Ivan Hannaford concludes, “the Darwinian era marked a profound departure from all that had gone before in the science of man. The principles of political philosophy that had once guided human affairs were now replaced by the principles of natural selection and the processes of social evolution set in an ideological frame of reference.”15 While Social Darwinism was not the first scientific discourse that legitimated the racial hierarchy, much of the American population viewed it as the most definitive.16 The political implications for natural selection eventually bore itself out in the early twentieth century field of eugenics.

Sir Francis Galton, the cousin of Charles Darwin, coined the term “eugenics” in 1883. He defined eugenics as “the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or


16 John S. Haller, Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859 - 1900, (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Press, 1971, 1995). Haller discusses that before the rise of Darwinism racial inferiority was promoted through other scientific means such as, facial angles, craniometry, and phrenology and after Darwin, these theories fell out of favor.
mentally."¹⁷ In his famous work, *Hereditary Genius*, Galton attempted to prove scientifically that prominent Victorians were the offspring of prominent parents. By thoroughly detailing biological and genealogical records of important political leaders, essayists, jurists and others, Galton "proved" that intellectual superiority was mainly hereditary.¹⁸ While Galton’s work served to preserve the status quo, in the hands of American and European progressives, eugenics became an attempt to create the ideal future, one where defects and inferiority could be contained, controlled, or eliminated.

In the United States, private research and public policy buttressed Galton’s eugenic theory. Charles Davenport established the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory with generous financial contributions the Carnegie Institute in 1904. This Long Island, New York laboratory specialized in eugenics research, including studies into the "feebleminded" and into the inferiority of the new immigrant stock. Davenport, like many scientists of this era, believed that racial identity, as well as national identity, determined behavior. Therefore, he concluded, “The programme of eugenics is to secure in our population as large a proportion as possible of persons belonging to the strains whose traits are of the greatest value to our social order.” This perceived link between race and behavior formed the basis of the demands to improve society, which motivated thousands of people to send in their family


histories and register with Davenport’s office. Registration with the Eugenics Records Office signaled a fear of declining American racial stock, a fear that led twenty-one states to institute sterilization laws to control ostensibly deviant individuals. Davenport argued, “the defectives and criminalistic are, so far as may be possible, to be segregated under the care of the State during the reproductive period or otherwise forcibly prevented from procreation.” The desire to shape the future created a coalition of scientists, philanthropists, and politicians united in determining the future of the nation.19

Black and White scholars in the early twentieth century organized to refute the dominant belief of biological determinism or eugenic model. These scholars undermined the earlier political language that provided “proof” of Black inferiority and legitimated the policies of Jim Crow by stressing the importance of culture and environment. W.E.B. Du Bois exemplified this perspective in *Souls of Black Folk* (1903). He used the motif of spirituals as a suggestion that Black culture, in addition to political empowerment, can be a pathway to civilization. Du Bois wrote, “This, then, is the end of his [Black people] striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius.” 20 In addition, White scholars such as Franz Boas argued that


environment and culture explained group behavior better than biological explanations. After World War I, Black and White scholars intensified their attack on biological determinism. Robert Park and the University of Chicago, School of Sociology shifted the discourse away from biological traits to cultural traits by focusing on race relations. Park’s biographer, Fred Matthews, states, “The essential approach of the ‘Chicago school’ in psychology and social psychology was also important in shifting scholarly attention away from biological roots to the cultural and environmental determinants of personality, and, on the level of psychological concepts, the replacement of ‘instincts’ by ‘attitudes’, which were products of experience and interaction and therefore changeable to a degree.”

On the eve of World War II, the discourse of race was contested ground. Biological determinism was still strong, yet Franz Boas in anthropology and Robert Park in sociology, along with Black scholars such as Du Bois had made in-roads with their environmentalist and cultural theory. The major blow to the dominance of biological determinism was the revelation of the Nazi’s “final solution.” The Nazi state classified Jews and others as “life unworthy of life” and subsequently murdered over six million people. The Final Solution was a logical conclusion to theory of eugenics, which from its initial conception was wedded to the sociopolitical construction of Western nations in the discursive form of “progress.”

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World War II, the Holocaust, and the subsequent Cold War created the environment for a paradigmatic shift away from biological determinism. These events provided racial liberalism, with its languages of, American idealism, psychological damage, and anticommunism dominance. Gunnar Myrdal’s, *An American Dilemma* (1944) symbolized racial liberalism’s ascendancy.

**An American Dilemma: The Model of Racial Liberalism**

Frederick Keppel of the Carnegie Foundation selected Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist, as the “exceptional man” to study the “Negro Problem” in America. Keppel, who envisioned a twentieth century Tocqueville, selected Myrdal over Black scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson because of his apparent objectivity to the racial problem, due to Myrdal’s foreign origins and minimal interaction with Blacks. Moreover, Myrdal was a strong believer in social engineering, a framework that supported liberalism. As one letter of support for him stated:

> I know of no country where there has been so close a relation between research and application as in Sweden. The men who have been engaged on the various economic studies have at the same time been influential in the development of government projects of actions based on many instances upon the results of the research .... The fact that Myrdal is the effective director of the research program of the [Social Science] Institute [at Stockholm University] and the extent to which his activity is devoted to practical economic and social programs is a sufficient indication of this aspect of the Stockholm situation.

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Myrdal applied his experience with social engineering in Sweden towards the
"Negro Problem." From the introduction of the book, Myrdal made it clear that
"interracial tension" was a "problem in the heart of the American." He makes it
clear that although economic, political, and social factors were important to the
status of Black Americans, "at bottom our problem is the moral dilemma of the American –
the conflict between his moral valuations on various levels of consciousness and
generality." 25

Two themes composed Myrdal's moral dilemma. First, he focused on the
White mind as object of change. For Myrdal, the "Negro problem" only affected
Whites, specifically the White mind. Myrdal argued that in the "magical sphere of
the white man's mind, the Negro is inferior in a deep and mystical sense." By
focusing on Whites as the subject of concern, Myrdal relegated Black activism, the
actors in the historical work of Du Bois and Woodson, to the periphery of the study.
Moreover, education becomes the panacea in combating White ignorance. "The
simple fact is that an educational offensive against racial intolerance," according to
Myrdal, "has never seriously been attempted in America." 26

Second, he held an optimistic belief in the American Creed, which was a
strong belief in democracy that he traced from the Enlightenment. He believed it

25 Gunnar Myrdal, with the assistance of Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose, An American Dilemma:
xliii. Emphasis in original.

26 Ibid. 100, 49. Emphasis in original.
was the "cement in the structure of this great and disparate nation."27 Myrdal reached these conclusions by evading founding Constitutional interpretations that legitimated pro-slavery and state's rights. Biographer, Walter A. Jackson exposes the limits of Myrdal's paradigm noting: "By ignoring the colonial period, scanting social history, and focusing on the writings of the Founding Fathers he erroneously associated the birth of the United States with racial egalitarianism and portrayed the ideology of white supremacy as a nineteenth-century aberration from a national tradition that was fundamentally democratic."28 Myrdal's optimism in the American Creed marginalized the empirical realities of slavery, exploitation, and colonization that were essential in creating the democratic notion of freedom and were central in the scholarship of passed over Black scholars.29

*American Dilemma* also applied a discourse of Black psychological damage caused by slavery and segregation on Blacks. From this vantage point, damaged Blacks also created a pathological Black culture. Changing or rather helping to change Black pathological culture represented a therapeutic ethos embedded in liberalism. The therapeutic ethos was the belief that racial liberals could heal

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27 Ibid. 3, 8, 22.


damaged Blacks through the promotion of equality. This belief assumed Blacks as broken and used this framework to produce White pity for them. In turn, pity would support public policy that promoted racial equality. Historian Daryl Scott identifies this “damage imagery” and liberal reformers need for therapeutic ethos, in addition to the American ideal, as major components of post-World War II liberalism. Scott states, “In the realm of social policy, the ideas of human equality and the American creed were perhaps the intellectual foundations of liberal behavior. Yet liberals found the therapeutic ethos a useful means of justifying social policies to middle-class Americans and others who were less enamored of the creed.”

In demonstrating Black pathology through cultural damage, racial liberals argued for racial equality by generating pity for Blacks. Myrdal’s chapter on Black institutions in An American Dilemma exemplifies this perspective, as he entitled the first subsection “The Negro Community as a Pathological Form of an American Community.” Myrdal states: “In practically all of its divergences, American Negro culture is not something independent of general American culture. It is a distorted

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30 Daryl Scott, Contempt and Pity: Social Policy of the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 121. Scott locates the origin of the damaged Black psyche in the post-Reconstruction period, it should be noted that the idea of damage was rooted in anti-slavery thought. Many abolitionists focused on the damage that slavery caused as a political weapon for ending the institution. As a result, some abolitionists did not comprehend how slavery structured the social order. This combined with the belief in “self-reliance” meant that many abolitionists could only see Blacks as damaged and ultimately dissuaded them from enacting redistributive policy during Reconstruction. See Demetrius L. Eudell, The Political Languages of Emancipation in the British Caribbean and the U.S. South, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
development or a pathological condition, of the general American culture." Myrdal assumed that assimilation was the primary goal of race relations and viewed autonomous Black culture as deviant. More importantly, by arguing that Black culture was pathological - i.e. damaged by segregation - Gunnar Myrdal and racial liberals in general, could amass White political support for Black equality.

This perception was present in the most significant legal case of the civil rights era, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which challenged the over half century-old institution of Jim Crow legalized by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). In order to sway the court to their side, the NAACP Legal Defense Team, chaired by Thurgood Marshall, employed social scientists to strengthen their challenge. From the beginning of the case, the need to demonstrate damage was paramount. Marshall remembered telling "the staff that we had to try this case like any other one in which you would try to prove damages to your client."33

Marshall seemingly verified Black students’ psychological damage by using Kenneth Clark’s doll test. Clark was a Columbia University trained psychologist, who, along with his wife, focused their research on the psychology of racism. The

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31 This chapter was written by Arnold Rose, however I use Myrdal’s name because he oversaw the writing of this chapter and was the lead researcher on the project. Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America’s Conscience*, 170. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 9. Emphasis in original.


doll test asked Black children to pick which doll was "the nice doll" and "the doll that looks bad." The Black children often selected the White dolls as the nice doll and the Black one as the ugly one. In addition, Clark's coloring test, one in which Black children colored how they envisioned themselves, and often drew themselves in light or abstract colors such as red or green. This test "proved" that Black children suffered psychological damage from segregated schools. The NAACP's Brown brief contained an appendix entitled, "The Effects of Segregation and the Consequences of Desegregation: A Social Science Statement," where social scientists argued "that as minority group children learn the inferior status to which they are assigned ... they often react with feelings of inferiority and a sense of personal humiliation." These social scientists defined segregation as the source of the children's internalized inferiority. Using the language of damage embedded in liberalism served as the paradigm for subsequent civil rights activity. Segregation was the source of racial strife and activists must attack separatism in order to achieve the equality exalted in the rhetoric of the American Creed.

In the Supreme Court's unanimous decision, Chief Justice Earl Warren reiterated the importance of damage imagery. The court queried, "Does segregation of children in the public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical


facilities and other ‘tangible’ factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group equal educational opportunities.” In answering this question in the affirmative, the Court used damage imagery as the supporting evidence. This case legitimated damage imagery in the political language of racial liberalism. Daryl Scott concluded:

While manipulating damage imagery reflected a humanitarian impulse, resorting to the therapeutic was an unfortunate expediency. The therapeutic approach maintained a paternalistic relationship between whites and blacks. It made black rights contingent upon white sympathy and superiority rather than black equality and citizenship.... Similarly, invoking damage imagery to justify preferential programs played on white paternalism rather than the need to make amends for social injustices. Myrdal’s liberal analysis did not and could not account for the explosion in Black protest that occurred in the aftermath of World War II. Black activism gained space and momentum because of the resulting global tensions. The space opened up by anticomununism simultaneously closed a key component of Black activism, while at the same allowing Blacks and the government to respond to domestic questions of the civil rights.

Anticomununism and Race Relations

The impact of World War II occurred on a variety of levels in American society. The War officially brought the United States out of the decade-long depression such that by 1945 the federal budget had grown to over $100 billion. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor revived intense patriotism and nativism, which led to the internment of over one hundred thousand Japanese Americans.

37 Ibid. 184.
Consequently, Black Americans used the space created by the war to launch the Double “V” Campaign, victory at abroad and at home. A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters, called for a March on Washington to protest discrimination in the defense industry. The March on Washington Movement captured the imagination of many in the Black community and the potential of fifty thousand demonstrators in the capital proved to more than President Franklin Roosevelt desired. He met the demands of Randolph and issued Executive Order # 8802, which ended segregation in the defense industry.

Allied victory solidified the United States as a World Power because the damage to Western Europe created a power vacuum, which the United States attempted to fill. Accordingly, this heightened the importance of foreign policy and provided a need to move beyond the traditional isolationist policies. As Secretary of War Henry Stimson detected, America could “never be an island to itself. No private program and no public policy, in any sector of our national life, can now escape from the compelling fact that if it is not framed with reference to the world, it is framed with perfect futility.”38 Foreign policy took on an increased role in governmental policy, a role the American people wanted.39

The United States created public policy to fill the power void left by the destruction of Western Europe based on their post-World War I experiences and to


39 James T. Patterson, Grand Expectations, 83.
face, what they deemed the challenges of the post-World War II era. In the aftermath of World War I, the United States, led by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, retreated to its isolationist policies; in fact, the Senate did not even support President Wilson’s League of Nations. The collection of nations dedicated to world peace fell apart without America’s input and support. More importantly, the lack of economic support for recovery led to a major depression in Europe and was a significant factor in the Great Depression that struck the United States. Determined not to repeat history, President Truman and Congress passed the Marshall Plan (1948), which was an economic recovery plan that offered $13 billion in aid to restore the economies of Western Europe. Significantly, the Soviet Union, who held the Eastern front and lost hundreds of thousands of soldiers were not included in the economic plans for recovery. ⁴⁰

The relationship between United States (with Britain) and the Soviet Union was tenuous at best. President Franklin Roosevelt’s lobbying at the Yalta Conference resulted in a negotiated truce between the Western Allies and the Russians. However, with President Roosevelt’s sudden death tensions began to rise. George Kennan, under the pseudonym of Mr. X, portrayed the Soviet Union as the Red Menace rising in the East and ultimately challenging the American way of life. Kennan stated that there was an “Inner central core of Communist Parties in other countries. While many persons who compose this category may also appear and act in unrelated public capacities, they are in reality working closely together as an

underground operating directorate of world communism, a concealed Comintern tightly coordinated and directed by Moscow. It is important to remember that this inner core is actually working on underground lines, despite legality of parties with which it is associated. The fallout of the tensions of the Cold War was the revival of anticommunism in the United States and forced Blacks to modify their calls for justice.41

Blacks in the United States and across the diaspora had always held an international view on the problem of race. From the first Pan-African Congress in 1900, through C.L.R. James and George Padmore’s International African Service Bureau, to Paul Robeson and A. Alpheous Hunton’s Council of African Affairs, the question of race has been a global question.42 This continued in the aftermath of the World War II. In An Appeal to the World, the NAACP asked the newly formed United Nations to redress the treatment of Blacks in the United States according to its bylaws on protecting Human Rights. The NAACP’s document, edited by W.E.B. Du Bois, argued America solidified its political power based on disenfranchised voters, and the United States had “become through private investment a part of the imperialistic bloc which is controlling the colonies of the world.”43 It saw the


problem as an "international question" because of the increasing interaction among
the nations of the world. More importantly, segregation was a denial of human
rights and not separate from the terrorism used to enforce this segregation.\textsuperscript{44}

The NAACP petition provoked a series of responses from the presidential
administration. The petition went against U.S. foreign policy and undermined the
government's claims of promoting freedom. One response was to investigate the
organizations and individuals involved with the petition. The House of Un-
American Committees charged and vilified W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson,
among others, under the auspices of anticommunism. The second response was the
Truman administration's promotion of its own civil rights agenda. \textit{To Secure These
Rights} echoed the framework etched out by Myrdal in \textit{American Dilemma} that
reinforced prejudice as a defect in American ideals and that the individual is the
basis for liberal thought and ideas. The report concluded there were three important
factors in ending racial prejudice. The moral reason stated, "The pervasive gap
between our aims and what we actually do is creating a kind of moral dry rot which
eats away at the emotional and rational bases of democratic beliefs." The economic
reason was that it limited the continued prosperity of the nation. The final reason
was embarrassment caused by race relations in the international framework of the

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. 13, 51-52.
Cold War. To Secure These Rights thwarted the impact of the NAACP petition because it domesticated the NAACP's international and radical position.

The responses by the Truman administration created a shift in the acceptable discourse on civil rights. No longer was the diasporic framework that served as the basis for a critique of foreign policy acceptable. Anticommunism bounded Black organizations to domestic concerns. Historian Penny Von Eschen states, “the criticism of American foreign policy that had been an integral part of the politics of the African diaspora fell beyond the bounds of legitimate dissent, and the broad anticolonial alliances of the 1940s were among the earliest casualties of the Cold War.” More importantly, two contradictory results followed; one it closed the door to much of the diasporic network developed over the first half of the twentieth century. Second, it allowed Black organizations to wage full assault on the domestic racial order. These results reduced the critiques of foreign policy to a discussion of racial practices that embarrassed the American project, yet provided the subtext for the success of nonviolent direct action, and strengthened racial liberalism.

Racial liberalism in the post-World War became increasing mainstream after decades of legalized racial segregation. The social project of eugenics was ended by

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47 Penny Von Eschen, Race Against Empire, 107, 107 - 121.
the revelations of the atrocities of the Holocaust and strengthened the cultural perspective promoted by racial liberals. This perspective gained legitimacy with Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* and represented the apex of this perspective. Furthermore, the subtext for racial liberalism, its insistence on Black psychological damage and the politics of anticommunism, made it the dominant framework for the Civil Rights Movement. As the 1960s progressed, activists began to challenge the presuppositions of the paradigm of racial liberalism.

**The Political Language of Black Power**

The paradigm of liberalism relied on gaining White sympathy in order to promote their agenda on race relations. Liberals portrayed Blacks as victims of irrational White segregationists and as the harbingers of pathological culture. However, for some Black activists, such as Stokely Carmichael and Cleveland Sellers, their Southern experiences differed from the principles of liberalism. Activists did not see pathological Black culture, but a culture that had survived the horrors of slavery and Jim Crow. This alternative experience led to the calls for Black Power.

A key component of the paradigm of Black Power was its ability to understand how identity was constructed and maintained. Moreover, it sought to comprehend the construction of racial identity in the present order. For many activists racial identity, prior to Black Power, resulted from "cultural terrorism." Rather than seeking pity from Whites, in the mode of liberalism, advocates of Black Power sought self-definition. According to Stokely Carmichael, Blacks "must first
define” themselves, in order to “reclaim our history and our identity from ...
cultural terrorism, from the deprestation of self-justifying white guilt.”48 Cleveland
Sellers, a member of SNCC and organizer in Mississippi, identified Black
Consciousness as central to the development of the movement. He defined it as an
“attitude,” a “perpetual search for racial meanings…” and most importantly, it began “the construction of a new, black value system.” 49 Activists symbolized the
new attitudes in the use of “Black” over “Negro” in their racial descriptions. Negro, according to Carmichael, was “the invention of our oppressor.”50 The new sense of
self led one Black Mississippian to declare, “Black Power is my mental health.”51

SNCC activists realized that valuing Black cultural identity supplied only a
portion of their needs. Despite the decade long struggle against segregation, the
experiences of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party reinforced the
continuation of a power structure that placed Blacks at the bottom. The murder of
civil rights workers, James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman,
strained liberalism prior to the convention and signaled to activists the continued
lack of federal protection. The organizers in SNCC and MFD learned a harsh

48 Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America,

49 Cleveland Sellers, River of No Return: the Autobiography of a Black Militant and the Life and Death of

50 Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power, 37.

51 Emma Jones Lapsansky, “‘Black Power is My Mental Health’: Accomplishments of the Civil
lesson in politics in Atlantic City. While many did not expect to be seated at the
convention, they did expect some tangible results. What many gained was distaste
for liberalism. Michael Thelwell, a SNCC activist, recalls that the MFDP challenge
showed “very clearly that traditional liberal morality and political practice were not
dependable....” Some activists believed that after Atlantic City “things could never
be the same.” While, others believed the events of 1964 transformed activists from
“idealistic reformers to fulltime revolutionaries.” The 1964 Democratic National
Convention unmasked the limitations of racial liberalism for the entire Civil Rights
Movement to witness; as a result, activists began to search for alternative political
languages that represented their desire for Black cultural self-definition and justice.

After the disappointment in Atlantic City, SNCC activists continued to
organize and set their sights on Lowndes County, Alabama where, in March of 1965,
there were zero Black registered voters in the county. Moreover, Lowndes County
had a history of being one of the most violent counties in the South. SNCC field-
organizer Robert Mants remembered, “there was no question they would kill you.”

This fear was realized when the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March went directly

52 Interview with Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer in Emily Stoper, The Student Nonviolent
Coordinating Committee: The Growth of Radicalism in a Civil Rights Organization, (Brooklyn, NY:

53 Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, ed., A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC, (New Brunswick, NJ:

54 Cleveland Sellers, River of No Return: the Autobiography of a Black Militant and the Life and Death of

55 Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: 92 – 120.

56 Robert Mants, A Circle of Trust, 98.
through Lowndes County and Klansmen murdered Violet Liuzzo, a White housewife from Detroit, who was transporting marchers was murdered on Highway 80 in the county. SNCC activists promised county residents that they would return to the county to organize and challenge the local power structure. In the summer of 1965, Robert Mants and Jimmy Rodgers began cultivating ties with the local youth and activists in the county. They organized a picket of a local convenient store that had discriminatory hiring practices, discourteous treatment, and price gouging. The subsequent arrests of the activists, the murder of local activist Jonathan Daniels, and the acquittal of his shooter increased protest activity. Stokely Carmichael, not forgetting the treachery in Atlantic City, proposed independent politics for Lowndes County. The SNCC research staff found a Reconstruction era Alabama law that allowed for the creation of a third party on a county-wide basis. Rather than trying to displace or integrated the Democratic Party, the activists in Lowndes Country created their own party.57

Using the Black Panther as their political symbol, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization actualized their nascent Black nationalism. Alabama residents understood Black Power as local control of the courthouse. As Jack Minnis, head of the SNCC research team observed, “until the county courthouse can be taken over, bit by bit, there is no point in focusing on faraway and glamorous

offices which leave the local situation unchanged.” For the Black citizens of Lowndes County, the courthouse was a major control over their lives. The Black citizens of Lowndes County understood Black Power because of their lived experiences and Black activists developed the concept from their experiences in Southern organizing.

Former SNCC activist, Stokely Carmichael captured the two key political languages of Black Power. First, he identified the need for autonomy. Carmichael used the language of autonomy to describe the need for new intellectual definitions of Black life. He stated, “The time is long overdue for the black community to redefine itself, set forth new values and goals, and organize around them.” Intellectual autonomy, for Carmichael, meant struggling “for the right to create our own terms through which to define ourselves and our relationship to the society, and to have these terms recognized.” In addition, to intellectual autonomy, he suggested political autonomy through the creation of parallel political institutions. He concluded intellectual and political autonomy would increase the relevancy of the Black Freedom Struggle.59

Next, Carmichael applied the political language of relevancy. He wanted to broaden the base of support for the Black Freedom Struggle beyond the Black middle class. He stated,

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For the masses of black people, this language [integration, non-violence, progress, etc] resulted in virtually nothing. In fact, their objective day-to-day conditions worsened. The unemployment rate among black people increased while, that among whites declined. Housing conditions in the black communities deteriorated. Schools in the black ghettos continued to plod along on outmoded techniques, inadequate curricula, and with all too many tired and indifferent teachers.

For Carmichael, the solution was more than electing Black officials, “The power must be that of a community, and emanate from there.” Black Power must be relevant to the Black community. These political languages structured the demands for Black Studies, Black politics and ultimately the Institute of the Black World.60

The Impact of Black Power on Founders of the Institute of the Black World

The political languages of Black Power that motivated SNCC and others had a powerful affect on the founders of the Institute of the Black World. The founders’ ideas paralleled the shift towards Black Power that was in the movement. Vincent Harding, Stephen Henderson, and William Strickland all took on roles as scholar-activists, each trying to contribute to the Black freedom struggle. The three men each faced the languages of Black Power – the failure of liberalism, autonomy, and relevancy – their personal experience that led to the decision to create the Institute of the Black World.

Vincent Harding’s early activism mirrored the claims for a “Beloved Community” that dominated the early Civil Rights Movement, Harding connected with a Mennonite Church while in Chicago. In 1960, he drove through the South as

60 Ibid. 51, 45 – 56.
a contingent of an interracial Mennonite group. He and his wife Rosemarie went south again in 1961 as representatives of the Mennonite Central Committee. They established the Mennonite House in Atlanta, which was a freedom movement center. It was a project in interracial living, a respite for activists, and was actually around the corner from Martin Luther King, Jr.’s home. In fact, Fannie Lou Hamer spent time at the Mennonite house after a particularly brutal beating in Mississippi. Harding embodied the integrationist goal of liberalism with his work with the Mennonite House, however, his experience with liberalism’s limitation led him to Black Power.61

The experiences in the Black Freedom Struggle and its subsequent international scope led Harding and others to protest the Vietnam War. He wrote a letter to The Southern Christian Leadership Conference asking the organization to speak out on the war. Martin Luther King, Jr., a good friend and neighbor of Harding, read the letter and had him develop the basis for King’s anti-war position. King’s speech at New York’s Riverside Church criticized the Vietnam War, noting the war was taking funds away from poverty programs. King argued that to be on the right side of revolution there must be a “shift from a ‘thing-oriented’ society to a ‘person-oriented society.’”62 King’s stance against the war cost him many allies in the

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federal government and the White liberal community. However, he based his opposition to the war on the principled stance on human rights, a position similar to one Malcolm X had after his break with the Nation of Islam. Harding believed that the speech he drafted for King which contained his “unflinching role in expressing and organizing opposition to the war – and the foreign and domestic policy it represented – as well as his ineluctable movement toward the call for nonviolent revolution in the U.S., were among the major reasons for his assassination.” The assassination of King was difficult for Harding and led him to question some of the principles behind the project of liberalism.

By the time Harding had drafted a “think piece” on Vietnam in 1967, he had finished his dissertation at University of Chicago and returned to Atlanta as head of the History Department at Spelman College. Harding discussed the burgeoning Black Power movement with literary critic and head of the English Department of Morehouse College, Stephen Henderson. They envisioned making Atlanta University a center for developing a Black Studies initiative. Stephen Henderson was in Atlanta working on developing some of the ideas on Black cultural self-definition.

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Stephen Henderson operated on the periphery in the Black Freedom struggle. The Florida native had attended Morehouse College in the 1940s at the same time as Martin Luther King, Jr. While Henderson did not personally know King, he was a classmate and good friends of Lerone Bennett. Bennett, who became an editor of *Ebony* Magazine, was the editor of the campus newspaper *The Maroon Tiger*. After 1950, Henderson taught at Virginia Union University in Richmond. There he witnessed the students of Virginia Union protest against downtown Richmond stores in 1960. Henderson eventually returned to Morehouse in 1962 and by the mid-1960s he, with the aide of students, began to examine the need for relevant courses and studying the Black experience, specifically the Black Aesthetic.  

Henderson promoted Black intellectual autonomy in terms of creating a Black Aesthetic. He believed that "The real revolution which is occurring in America today is the Black Consciousness Movement, the transfiguration of blackness, a necessary first stage in the liberation of black people and conceivably of all Americans." "Survival Motion: A Study of the Black Writer and the Black Revolution in America," *The Militant Black Writer*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 65-129.


culture. Henderson emphasized Black Power's demand for autonomy in his work and eventually in the creation of the Institute of the Black World.\textsuperscript{68}

William Strickland activism consistently spoke to the need for the Black Freedom Struggle to be relevant to the Black community. He became involved in the movement as executive director of the Northern Student Movement (NSM). Founded in 1961 at Yale University, NSM initial purpose was to provide support to the Southern movement. Soon NSM realized that this support was limited at best and it began to work in Northern urban communities. The Northern Student Movement conducted a series of tutorial projects in urban areas across the North; eventually the organization encouraged the founding of neighborhood councils for health and welfare. Strickland's work with Northern Student Movement made him the ideal candidate for New York Chairman for the MFDP Challenge. In addition, his relationship with 1967 Black Power Conference organizer Nathan Wright, a Black Republican, (both were from Boston), led to him accepting a position as Deputy Director of the conference. The conference failed to address the challenges posed by Black Power, and settled for getting a "fair share" of American capitalism. Strickland did not agree with the conclusions of the conference and began exploring ways to transmit the discourse of Black Power through alternative and independent institutions. Strickland worked with Harding in developing the Black Heritage television series, which consisted of over 100 episodes devoted to Black History. The

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. 72, 86, 90.
working relationship led Strickland to commute to Atlanta and discuss the ideas surround the notion of a Black-centered education.69

Malcolm X’s influence on Strickland led to his desire to develop independent institutions that met the needs of the Black community. Strickland had met the infamous Malcolm Little through a cousin who “ran” with Little. While teaching a class on race relations at Harvard, Strickland invited now Minister Malcolm X to Harvard to give a lecture. The two stayed in touch until Malcolm’s assassination in 1965. Strickland maintains that Malcolm provided the foremost critique of American racism, parallel to Frantz Fanon’s analysis of colonialism, and Karl Marx’s analysis of capitalism. As Strickland states, “I’ll be a Malcolmite until I die.” Malcolm’s critique of American racism provided the seeds for the developing political languages of Black Power.70

The discourse of Black Power came from the experiences of the movement. The lived experience of Blackness, as Fanon called it, shaped how Black scholar-activists began to view the direction of the Black freedom struggle.71 The slowing of the nonviolent movement pushed Black students and scholars back to college


campuses across the country, where they demanded "relevant" courses, and an autonomous Black University.

MFDP’s failure at the 1964 Democratic Convention and Martin Luther King’s assassination challenged racial liberalism. Vincent Harding, Stephen Henderson, William Strickland, and other intellectuals analyzed the demands for Black Power – in terms of autonomy and relevancy – and the possibility of working within the confines of liberal institutions. All three worked on the developing an alternative institution that would push the Black Freedom Struggle beyond the liberal framework that had dominated the discourse since the conclusion of World War II. The subsequent conflicts that stemmed over both the development of an independent Black perspective beyond liberalism would shape the founding of the Institute of the Black World and ideas of the late 1960s and early 1970s.
CHAPTER 3
“LIBERATED GROUNDS:” THE BLACK UNIVERSITY AND THE FOUNDING
OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE BLACK WORLD

“An embattled, colonized people need liberated grounds on which to gather, to reflect, to
learn, to publish, to move towards self-definition and self-determination.” – Vincent
Harding

“America is the Black man’s battleground,” shouted approximately thirty-five Howard University students as they rushed the Crampton Auditorium stage. The students silenced the prepared speech of Lt. Gen. Lewis B. Hershey of the Selective Service. While their fellow students were initially shocked watching the bold protest, after several minutes most of the students applauded and cheered as the cohort of students, including reigning Homecoming Queen Robin Gregory, articulated their political positions on stage. In terms of location, tactics, and questions, the March 1967 disruption embodied the protests that led to the founding of Black Studies programs in both Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and their White counterparts across the nation. As calls for Black consciousness erupted on college campuses in the late 1960s, students questioned

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the role of the university in maintaining the social order. Students used the political languages of Black Power specifically autonomy and relevancy in the debate over the creation of a Black University. HBCU students' call for a Black University referred not to the racial demographics of the student population or the administration, but rather to the university’s ideological framework as represented in the curriculum. Students demanded the curriculum and the University philosophy explicitly promote a positive Black identity, which would lead to Black liberation. The students' demands for a Black University complimented Black students' demands at predominately White Universities for Black Studies. 

Howard University was the center for the debate on the creation of a Black University, as the events after the March 1967 protest led to a national conference on the subject on the campus in November 1968. The co-founders of the Institute of the Black World involvement in the Black University debates led them to implement the Black University framework at the Atlanta University Center (AUC). However, after several protests at AUC it became clear to the Institute that a collection of Black scholars outside the parameters of the university system would be the most successful forum for addressing questions raised by the political languages of Black Power and the concepts surrounding Black Studies. The Institute of the Black World’s subsequent relationship to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center provided a location outside of the university, however, it brought IBW in conflict with the

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Liberalism of the King Center and similar intellectual questions raised by student demands for a Black University.

"Howard University, The Black University"

The late nineteenth century establishment of Historically Black Colleges and Universities represented freed Blacks’ desire for literacy because education symbolized freedom for many former slaves. Frederick Douglass captured the value of literacy and education when he quoted his slave master Mr. Auld. "Learning will spoil the best nigger in the world. Now... if you teach that nigger ... how to read there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave," stated Auld. Newly freed slaves understood this premised and actively sought out educational opportunities, even having children teach adults at night.3

The desires for education merged with the belief in Black inferiority held by Northern missionaries. In addition, missionaries reinforced the economic structures by insisting that Blacks become free laborers and thwarting the demands for land. Northern missionaries believed Blacks were culturally inferior, yet hoped to achieve political and legal equality through education. Historian James Anderson states,

[M]issionary philanthropists were not proposing social change that were revolutionary by national standards, but they were radical within the southern social order. Equality was carefully defined as political and legal equality. They consented to inequality in the economic structure, generally shied away from questions of racial integrations, and were probably

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3 Frederick Douglass, The Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, (New York, NY: Signet Classics, 1845, 1997), 47.
convinced the blacks' cultural and religious values were inferior to those of middle-class whites.\textsuperscript{4}

Congress established Howard University in 1867 under these beliefs, named for Northern Civil War General Oliver O. Howard Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau. Howard's Charter stated "a university for the education of youth in the liberal arts and sciences, under the name, style, and title of 'The Howard University.'"\textsuperscript{5}

Howard University's significance not only came from its founding, but also in its rejection of Booker T. Washington and his financial allies' promotion of industrial education. W.E.B. Du Bois challenged the dominance of Washington and his industrial education model, believing that educated men should confront the racial status quo. In Souls of Black Folk, Du Bois argued, "Mr. Washington represents in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission...."\textsuperscript{6} Du Bois charged Washington with forgoing political power, civil rights, and higher education. The talented tenth, for DuBois, was essential in countering the massive White resistance that ended Reconstruction. Howard University, along with Fisk University, Morehouse University, Atlanta University and other HBCUs housed Black intellectuals. These universities were locations, from which the talented tenth


led political and cultural attacks to the social order, such as the Niagara Movement and the Harlem Renaissance. Rayford Logan noted in the history of Howard University, “When Booker T. Washington died in 1915, no one leader took his place. But the influence of Du Bois and others on Negro intellectuals laid the groundwork for renewed onslaughts against inequalities.” The goal of Black college was, according to DuBois, to “maintain the standards of popular education, it must seek the social regeneration of the Negro, and it must help in the solution of the problems of race contact and cooperation.” HBCU students and alumni during the Civil Rights Movement epitomized Du Bois’ goal.

The call for Black Power would expose the tenuous path that HBCUs faced between the Du Boisian goal of racial uplift and the lack of autonomy from White philanthropy. Howard University faced this uncertainty during its centennial year, 1966-1967, as the administration, under the leadership of civil rights lawyer and Professor James Madison Nabrit, Jr., reiterated the dominant theme of Black collegiate education. Nabrit, who had worked with Thurgood Marshall on several


civil rights cases, represented an integrationist ethos. As he stated in his inaugural speech in September 1960, “Since Howard University is bound by its traditional service to the Negro people, it must continue to direct large part of its efforts toward the training and development of those young men and women who have been handicapped by segregation.” Moreover, he described Howard’s role as becoming a “first-class educational institution, just as if segregation did not exist.”

The students’ actions at the 1967 Howard University protest represented the effect of Black Power in challenging the integrationist assumptions that had supported much of Black resistance and put the students on a collision course with the White philanthropy that directed university finances and policy. The students’ focused on the Black College itself, demanding it be transformed into a “Black University” that was autonomous from the White power structure and relevant to Black community needs. The changing climate surrounding civil rights after Stokely Carmichael’s (later Kwame Ture) proclamation of Black Power in the summer of 1966, placed Howard University and President Nabrit in a precarious position, one faced by all HBCUs at one level or another. Often Southern politicians, in the case of Howard University United States Congressmen, controlled university budgets, effectively keeping Black college administrations in a state of dependency. This control forced them to walk a fine line between promoting equality and “responsible

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behavior,” as the former jeopardized funding.\textsuperscript{12} In walking this fine line, the university created, according to Stokely Carmichael, a series of “attitudes, rules, and injunctions calculated to prevent any activity on the part of the students that was likely to offend ‘powerful white folk.’”\textsuperscript{13} Many students viewed these formal and informal conventions as dated relics especially when compared to the style of Black consciousness, and its demands for autonomy and relevancy.\textsuperscript{14}

The March 1967 protest was not the first for Howard University. The Nonviolent Action Group (NAG), of which Stokely Carmichael was a member, formed a component of SNCC’s shock troops in the Deep South, challenged campus norms and the city’s segregation in the early 1960s. NAG also organized a debate between Bayard Rustin and Malcolm X, highlighting the differences between Black Power and integration.\textsuperscript{15} Howard Students for Peace and other campus organizations pushed to end compulsory ROTC by disrupting freshman assemblies, interrupting ROTC drills, and staging sit-ins. President Nabrit eventually terminated ROTC in November of 1967 because of such activities. In addition, Students for Academic Freedom (SAF) pushed for more student input on admission standards and curriculum. SAF organized a protest against the administration’s refusal to

\textsuperscript{12} James D. Anderson, \textit{The Education of Blacks in the South}, 238-278.

\textsuperscript{13} Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, \textit{Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)}, 117.


allow CORE's Floyd McKissick, a leading advocate for Black Power at the time, to speak on campus, the dismissal of two popular teachers who had supported their cause, and the paternalistic relationship between the United States Congress and the University. Although a considerable portion of the student body failed to participate in supporting NAG, Howard Students for Peace and SAF, these protests laid the groundwork for the 1967 demonstration, by raising student awareness on the relationship between racial politics and administration's dependency on White benefactors, government or otherwise.16

Howard University's leadership used several political languages to neutralize the protest movements developing on its campus. First, the administration embraced the integrationist ethos by employing the language of a "first-rate university." University powers, with visions of becoming a "Black Harvard," utilized the discourse in two capacities. First, it justified mimicking the curriculum of elite White colleges. Many HBCU's curriculum focused on the "classics" and often excluded the works of Black authors, historians, and artists, ultimately, reinforcing the "Whiteness" of Western Culture.17 According to Carmichael, Howard University possessed a nineteenth-century model of education based on assimilation into the dominant White culture. "Academically and culturally" he


contended, "the imperative was to promulgate, uncritically, the curricula of American (read white) higher education and the attitudes and behavior of 'the better class of white people.'"\textsuperscript{18} Howard University was a leading proponent of classical education, as opposed to industrial education, but this model excluded Black people from the master narrative, as Howard only had a few courses on Black history, literature, and did not even teach jazz in its music department. Former Howard student activist, Adrienne Manns, recalled

I came [to Howard University] looking for black history courses, black literature, black music. It was a kind of void in my life I wanted filled. Black studies is what it was called. Sterling Brown was there, which was very exciting because he was a poet I had admired for a long time, and Arthur Davis. I was expecting to study black literature with Sterling Brown, and what I found was he told us that he could not teach black literature, that it did not fit into the curriculum and it was not offered. There was only one course and that was "Negro History" and you had to be a history major or an upperclassman to take that. And you couldn't fit it your schedule. After you got finished with all the humanities and the Western Civ. [sic] type courses, you couldn't fit that one course in. It was very hard to get in.

There was no music. You couldn't play jazz in the Fine Arts Building. All you heard when you passed the Fine Arts Building was opera - all day long, opera, opera, opera. And so-called classical music, National Symphony, and this kind of thing. So I was very disappointed and, well, I think they said they were making it the black Harvard or something like that. And it was just not what I wanted.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite a campus culture that promoted the marginalization of Black achievements and aspects of Black culture, Howard, as many HBCU's, had extraordinary faculty who challenged the explicit and implicit conceptions of Black

\textsuperscript{18} Stokely Carmichael, \textit{Ready for the Revolution}, 119.

inferiority. Howard’s faculty during the 1960s included E. Franklin Frazier, Rayford Logan, Eric Williams, Frank Snowden, Sterling Brown, and a young Toni Morrison all of whom individually promoted the importance of the Black experience in American (and Western) culture. Students, with faculty help, began to identify a contradiction between the university culture and the Sixties’ turbulent events, which saw Black culture as a source of inspiration for the Black Freedom Struggle.

A second use of the political language of a first-rate university was to portray the Historically Black Colleges as “non-racial,” and in effect color blind, in order to prevent the loss of many of the top Black students to white colleges. During the mid-1960s, many predominately-White Universities, most notably Cornell University’s, Committee on Special Education Projects (COSEP), heavily recruited Black students. The colorblind rhetoric also reflected the current academic discourse on Black colleges. Harvard University College of Education Professors


David Riesman and Christopher Jencks declared Black colleges “near the end of the academic procession in terms of student attitudes, faculty competence, and intellectual ferment.” The two authors suggested that Black colleges should become first-rate and integrate, implying according to education scholar Keith Lowe, “under the most delicate veil that the latter is the means to the former.” President Nabrit and the Howard University Board of Trustees appeared to accept this perspective, when they photocopied and distributed the Riesman and Jencks article to every faculty member in April 1967. Moreover, acclaimed sociologists and Howard University trustee Kenneth B. Clark maintained that Howard should become a “national urban university” and that a “predominately ‘Negro’ college is an anachronism that is no longer tolerable.” The university believed that introducing White students would automatically raise admission standards, making it virtually equivalent to the elite White universities. As Keith Lowe concluded, “becoming a first-class college and becoming integrated [was] seen by most Black college administrators as one and the same goal.”

The relationship between integration and the presumed inferiority of Black institutions was a logical outcome of the civil-rights movement. In challenging segregation, integration-oriented activists, attorneys, and scholars argued that

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separate Black institutions were inferior, moving such positive aspects of these
institutions as racial solidarity and the impact of Black faculty, to the periphery.25
Using a similar conception that separate institutions produce Black damage,
Howard University’s administration could not understand the students’ perspective
and their desire for a Black University (however, the university did see the burned
effigy of Nabrit with the sign “60% white, 40% other”). The students believed the
ideas generated in the university, rather than segregation, was the source of Black
marginalization in American culture.26

An additional rhetorical device employed by the administration to neutralize
campus protest focused on the presence of “hard-core radicals” who had led the
student body astray. The administration labeled these students as “professional”
radicals who had no concern for the university, but only wanted to advance their
agenda. The university leadership employed this political language to deny the
presence of a movement.27 In a speech, President Nabrit stated, “Let us not

25 Stephanie Shaw, What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During
institutions, both formal and informal, helped shape professional Black women uplift work. Some
these institutions used the segregated space to allow Black women to develop networks. So
rather than the debilitating effects of Jim Crow society, the isolated community allowed for the
creation of a Black professional network.

26 Michael W. Miles, The Radical Probe: The Logic of Student Rebellion, (New York: Atheneum, 1971),
Nathan Hare, “Behind the Black College Student Revolt,” Ebony (August 1969), 58 - 61. Daryl
apologize either for uninformed or ill-advised Negroes who do feel hatred or frustration or pursue black nationalistic myths - for if the white man who is richer, better educated, with more political power - who enjoys to the limits all of his constitutional rights can produce Ku Klux Klansmen, John Birchites, and Rockwell Nazis, why cannot we be permitted to have our share of the lunatic and of aberrant groups too?"  

28 The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest (1970) reiterated the belief that the widespread student rebellions were the result of a fringe group of "hard-core radicals" and did not stem from more systemic problems.  

Most student protestors are neither violent nor extremists. But a small minority of politically extreme students and faculty members and a small group of dedicated agitators are bent on the destruction of the university through violence in order to gain their own political ends. Perpetrators of violence must be identified, removed from the university as swiftly as possible, and prosecuted vigorously by the appropriate agencies of law enforcement.  

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27 The political language of "hard-core radicals" was one that used by university administrations across the country during the 1960s. However, this political language has a long history. Demetrius Eudell's discussion of the Morant Bay rebellion in 1865 has pointed to the government's use of this language to avoid the legitimate claims of made by the Black laborers. Jamaican governor Eyre called Paul Bogle and George Gordon "evil-disposed and designing men" who had misled the other Blacks. Demetrius Eudell, The Political Languages of Emancipation in the British Caribbean and the U.S. South, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 150. For uses at predominately White universities see Donald Downs, Cornell '69: Liberalism and the Crisis of the American University, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).


Many Howard students were not in full ideological support of the campus protests, because of the perception of violence often associated with Black Power. However, they did begin to provide broad support for the protests' cultural aspects.\footnote{Sophia F. McDowell, et.al “Howard University’s Student Protest Movement,” Public Opinion Quarterly, 34.3 (Autumn, 1970), 383-388. William Van DeBurg, A New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965 – 1975, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).}

Howard students’ demonstrated their nascent Black consciousness in popular manifestations. During the 1966 Homecoming celebration, Robin Gregory ran and won the prestigious title of queen by highlighting and capitalizing on the new Black consciousness mood on campus. She wore a natural Afro hairstyle, disassociated with Black Greek activities, and promoted political awareness on campus. Fellow student Paula Giddings remembered that when Gregory won the crowd began to chant “Umgawa, Black Power, Umgawa, Black Power,” and she believed this was the beginning of Howard University’s student movement. It was no coincidence that the March 1967 protest against Lt. Gen. Hershey included Gregory.\footnote{“Interview with Paula Giddings,” The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts From the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990, eds, Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, Darlene Clarke Hine, (New York, NY: Penguin Book, 1991), 460-462.}

Gregory, Professor Nathan Hare, a faculty member at Howard and former graduate student under E. Franklin Frazier, and other students formed the Black Power Committee after the Spring 1967 protest. The committee demanded “the overthrow of the Negro college with white innards and to raise in its place a militant black university which will counteract the whitewashing black students now receive
in Negro and white institutions.”\textsuperscript{32} Student demands for a Black University epitomized Black Power with its political languages of relevancy and autonomy. The University was to be relevant to the needs and desires of the Black community, students should be educated not to replicate the middle class dream of American culture, but to transform American culture into a more humane society, one in which Blackness was not a sign of inferiority. Moreover, this transformation required replacing the current university modeled on replicating Western culture, with an activist university, one that focused on liberating the Black community out of its marginalized socio-political condition. In an open letter to President Nabrit in 1968, Howard University students demanded, “that Howard be the center of Afro-American thought” and that the social sciences and humanities “place more emphasis on how these disciplines my be used to effect the liberation of black people in this country.” Most importantly, the students demanded, “Howard must be made relevant to the black community. The University campus must be made more available to all black people and programs must be instituted to aid the black community in the struggle against oppression.”\textsuperscript{33}

When President Nabrit ignored the student demands, students Adrienne Manns, Tony Gittens, and others staged a protest on Charter Day, March 1, the University’s annual founding celebration. After receiving letters for a judiciary

\textsuperscript{32} Robert A. Malson, “The Black Power Rebellion at Howard University,” 22.

hearing concerning their expulsion for participating in the Charter Day rally, the students led a take over of the administration building. Nearly twelve hundred students took part in the sit-in and they received support from some faculty, students, and the surrounding Black community. Tony Gittens remembered,

Cultural groups would come in and say, We want to do something. Can we perform? And there’d be plays and all kinds of things would go on. And people from around Washington would come and give all these supportive speeches and say, Whatever you want let us know. And then people who could not get into the building, there were all these students outside of the building who were just there. Just there, just willing to participate. And signs were made. “Howard University, The Black University.” Then teachers would come up. And they said, What can we do? And we had classes that were going on. Because some students would be afraid they were getting behind. And these faculty members saying, you, Don’t worry about it, we’ll take care of it. And people would come in and we’d have seminars. It was amazing….34

The students left the administration building after several days of negotiation.

The administration refused to dismiss President Nabrit and articulated major concerns with the students’ use of the “Black.” Students wanted “Howard to make a statement about its commitment to the black community, to the welfare of that black community. And the trustees said no, they couldn’t do that.” Trustee and scholar Kenneth B. Clark explained to the students that because the University received government money, “they couldn’t afford to make an overt commitment to any one group, because that would put them in violation of civil rights laws or fairness or whatever.” Howard agreed to host a conference in the fall, “Toward the Black University.” The events at Howard University mirrored developments at other

Historically Black Colleges and Universities and the demands for Black Studies Programs at White Universities. Black and White intellectuals debated of how these plans were to be implemented at the numerous conferences that followed the Howard University protest.35

Vincent Harding and Stephen Henderson, professors in the Atlanta University Center, monitored the events at Howard and thoroughly discussed how “the work of Du Bois could find a renaissance in the context of the steadily growing demand that the Negro colleges and university become black-oriented institutions.”36 The debates surrounding the Black University provided the intellectual origins for the Institute of the Black World. Moreover, Harding, Strickland, and Henderson faced similar problems in developing IBW as the students who demanded a Black University.

Debating the Black University

In the years following the 1967-68 Howard University protests, scholars debated the attributes, feasibility, and purpose of the Black University and Black Studies. These discussions revolved around the role of Black intellectuals to the movement. Black Power generally defined the intellectual’s task as providing the rationale and techniques for transforming the consciousness of Black people into an


enhanced sense of Black identity and racial responsibility. For many Black Power adherents, the university was a prime location for this transformation to occur. Advocates for a Black University employed two main political languages – relevancy and autonomy. These two discourses formed the parameters of the Black Power paradigm in the proposed Black University and of Black Studies programs across the country and challenged the university system.

Scholars echoed student claims that in order for the "Negro" University to become relevant, they had to transform it into a Black University. In a series of 1968 Negro Digest articles, Black intellectuals analyzed the proposed Black University. In the lead essay, sociologist Gerald McWorter (later Abdul Alkalim) declared that the concept of Blackness itself forces the university to make the Afro-American community the focus of its endeavors. The goal of the Black University according to McWorter "must be one of service to the community." Vincent Harding and Stephen Henderson repeated this idea in subsequent essays. Harding added that any proposed Black University must address the Black diaspora. It would invite "representatives of the anticolonial forces, members of Liberation Fronts, religious and educational leaders from the re-borning nations of the world....in order to give deeper meaning to the searching. Such a university might well become a sanctuary of sorts for some of the world's revolutionaries." Henderson suggested that the Black University could be accomplished through the establishment of regional centers in highly Black populated areas, such as Atlanta, Washington D.C./Baltimore and Durham/Raleigh, which could address the concerns of the local
Black communities. Central to all the conceptions of the Black University (and Black Studies programs) was the demand for it to work in conjunction with and for the Black community’s best interest. These mandates exposed the ostensibly neutral university as working on behalf of a select White community.

The mainstream university system privileged what was represented as high culture over low culture. As a result, the university worked on behalf of the dominant population at the expense of marginalized populations, while ostensibly being non-political. The university has long posed as the bastion of elite discourse, a place where ideas and the search for “truth” reigned over politics. Academic freedom and a system of peer-review theoretically shielded professors from the whims of political life. The ideas debated in ivory towers were the apogee of high culture. The concepts of high culture also reinforced the racial hierarchy, privileging affluent White Anglo-Saxon Protestants over, petit Whites, Native Americans, and Blacks. As noted by historian Lawrence Levine high culture, as defined in the early twentieth century university “became one of the mechanisms that made it possible to identify, distinguish, and order this new universe of strangers.” In addition, the

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38 In the case of Black Studies, this will be born out in several manners. First, schools such as The Ohio State University will build a “community extension center” other programs will offer course to be give in the community and work with community leaders. See James Upton, “Stop-outs: African-American Participation in Adult Education,” Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies eds. Delores P. Aldridge and Carlene Young, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 491-506.
university, especially the elite universities, formed one of the private spaces in which elites could retreat in the face of the early twentieth century waves of freed slaves and immigrants. It also served as a vehicle to "transform public spaces by rules, systems of taste, and canons of behavior "of elites choosing. And by admitting some of the most talented members of the marginalized groups the university was able to "convert the strangers so that their modes of behavior and cultural predilection emulated those of the elites..." 39 The university functioned as a mechanism for assimilation into American culture. 40

After World War II, the G.I. Bill challenged this elite dominance of the university, as the federal government spent $14.6 billion on education between 1944 and 1956. This massive allocation led to a dramatic increase in the number of students enrolled at universities, with two hundred thousand more students receiving degrees in 1949-50 than in 1940. Scholar Michael Miles identifies this massive growth as a part of the university's "industrializing complex" with its increasing focus on the research. The university was increasingly becoming a "service station" to the industrial economy, as the government funded many of the university based research initiatives in science and technology. In the eyes of some


students, this made the university subservient to the needs of the government. After 1945, universities increasingly tailored their research programs to government needs and the industrializing world’s technical demands.41

The students who demanded a Black University and/or Black Studies understood the university’s focus on White elites and governmental needs as often coming at the Black community’s expense. As the invitation for the 1968 Black University conference announced:

The concept of a Black University is revolutionary. It emerges out of the frustrations of black students, educators, activists, and community leaders who recognize that the present institutions of higher learning have no relevance to the total black community and who realize the contradictions of allowing themselves to be acculturated into a society which debilitates black people ....

Our responsibility as conference participants is to define the structure and mechanics of that university.42

At a more basic level, because the fiscal resources for Historically Black Colleges and Universities were White controlled, this led to Black Colleges serving the needs of Western (or predominately White) culture. Thus, the question of autonomy was essential.

In addition, students used the political language of autonomy in their conception of the Black University. American historians and scholars’ have


interpreted autonomy as individualism, meaning one's actions are unrestricted by fellow citizens and the government - theoretically privileging the individual over the group. Moreover, the paradigm of liberalism allowed historical interpretations of American individual ingenuity to supersede the systemic removal of American Indians and the enslavement and segregation of Blacks.

Black students reinterpreted autonomy, conceiving of it in terms of community, rather than individual mobility. Gerald McWorter argued that the Black University had to overcome individualism with communalism meaning "instead of hoping for social progress through the individual merits of its students or faculty qua individuals, progress is to be viewed as a social process through which the community is uplifted with the aid of its contributing people." The push for group autonomy, rather than individual autonomy exposed how the political language of individualism obscured the role racial categories played in American culture. Furthermore, Black Power moved away from the liberal notion of civil rights because it demanded group results and concerns. Artist Larry Neal expressed this concept when he wrote, "The only salvation for us, therefore, is to translate our individual problems into group problems; and then as a group proceed to eliminate them." While political scientist David Cochrane suggests that American liberalism

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“misses cultural and communal forces to both an individual’s identity and to his or her prospects in life.” Black activists understood that the “American-individual-state-market grid” served a systemic function, and that was to maintain a racial hierarchy. Therefore, the racial hierarchy was not an intellectual oversight, but essential to the reproduction of the order.45

Black University supporters wanted to enhance the importance of Black group autonomy through the creation of a Black centered curriculum or a field of Black Studies that provided a different interpretive framework on American and global society. The Black University and Black Studies sought to put the category of race at the center of research, as the catalysts for policy, and as the central mechanism in identity formation. Those demanding Black Studies proposed a separate or alternative academic interpretation, claiming the dominant mode of analyses reflected institutionalized racism. As sociologist St. Clair Drake observed,

The very use of the term Black Studies is by implication an indictment of American and Western European scholarship. It makes the bold assertion that what we have heretofore called ‘objective’ intellectual activities were actually white studies in perspective and content; and that a corrective bias, a shift in emphasis, is needed, even if something called ‘truth’ is set as the goal. To use a technical sociological term, the present body of knowledge has an ideological element in it, and a counterideology is needed. Black Studies supply that counter ideology.46

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The Black University/Black Studies dialogue occurred on college campuses across the country. The Black Student Alliance at Yale University initiated the 1968 conference on Black Studies where scholars, students, and activists discussed the demands for intellectual autonomy as well as liberal resistance to Black Studies’ potential implications. Black social critic and political scientist Harold Cruse, in the opening speech, argued that the integrationist ethic undermined “America’s underlying tendency toward... democratic ethnic pluralism in our society.” Gerald McWorter echoed this sentiment by charging the university as operating as a covert agent of racism, by ostensibly being an apolitical institution. “The real question is,” according to McWorter, “how can the university go on defining itself as being apolitical or nonpolitical when indeed it functions in relationship to these institutions which have in mind maintaining the status quo over and against various communities which exist in this country that are committed to radical change.”

The autonomy of Black Studies challenged this unspoken status quo in the university’s privileging high culture, or White Studies.

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Critics of Black Studies, such as Harvard University political scientist Martin Kilson, Jr. suggested that he “smelled a rat,” arguing that the oppression Black Americans faced provided neither moral nor intellectual superiority as implied by many advocates of Black Studies. In addition, Black Studies’ critics often minimized or refused to admit the political relationships between the university and society. Historian David Brion Davis, for example, critiqued the Yale Conference for undermining “the distinction between political ideology and education.” Davis wanted to maintain the space between the university and the community, declaring it “essential that we retain a certain quality of ivory-towerism in the sense that the university provides a place where man may transcend the immediate and the present.” The critics maintained a cultural hierarchy in opposing the central themes of relevancy and autonomy in the Black University and Black Studies.49

The conference spurred the founding of Black Studies at Yale University in 1969. Despite the conference’s call for intellectual autonomy and contemporary relevancy, the department dissuaded students and faculty from activism and centered on “serious academic study.” Liberal advisors, such as David Brion Davis, smothered the question of relevancy to the Black community in an attempt “to conform to the academic standards of Yale College.” Historically Black Colleges, in contrast, could not avoid this relationship to the community and the attempts to develop Black Studies at these institutions reflected that demand and oftentimes

their administrations’ reluctance to tackle the task. At the Atlanta University Center Vincent Harding and Stephen Henderson discussed methods to bring Black Studies to various colleges. Simultaneously, Corretta Scott King began plans for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, which had the potential, according to Harding and Henderson, to be a location outside of the university to implement the ideals of Black Studies. 50

**Founding the Institute of the Black World**

The creation of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center allowed Vincent Harding and others to begin the process of implementing the Black Studies framework both inside and outside the university. In January 1969, on what would have been Martin Luther King, Jr.’s fortieth birthday, Coretta Scott King announced plans for a Martin Luther King, Jr. memorial in Atlanta, Georgia. The memorial consisted of a public gravesite, the Library Documentation Project (LDP), and restoration of King’s birthplace. Coretta Scott King named Vincent Harding to head the Library Documentation Project that sought to collect archival material on the post-1954 Civil Rights Movement and “the world-wide struggle for human rights.” Collecting and processing King’s personal and organizational papers was the main job of the LDP. Vincent Harding used his position in The King Center to incorporate the Institute of

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the Black World in memorial plans. However, events at the Atlanta University Center and the Library Documentation Project strained the relationship.51

Despite students' demands for Black Studies programs across the country, the administrators of Historically Black Colleges and Universities were often unresponsive because many administrations believed that being a Black college adequately addressed the needs for a positive Black identity. Many HBCUs offered courses such as Black History, which covered the Black experience, and administrators believed the presence of Black faculty and staff represented alternatives to the negative images of Black inferiority.52 These factors slowed the development of Black Studies at HBCUs, despite student activism across the country. Vincent Harding, Stephen Henderson, and William Strickland along with other scholars of Atlanta University Center (AUC) faculty including Gerald McWorter, Councill Taylor and A.B. Spellman addressed these concerns in their proposal to create The W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Advanced Afro-American Studies which was to be connected to the newly developed Martin Luther King


52 Nick Aaron Ford, Black Studies: Threat or Challenge, (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1973). Ford found that many Black colleges such as Fisk University in Nashville, TN had provided some courses on Black life as early as 1921, yet after the demands for Black Studies many colleges drastically increased their classes. See also Amiri YaSin Al-Hadid, “Africana Studies at Tennessee State University: Traditions and Diversity” Out of the Revolution, 93-114. Al-Hadid points out that because of these incorporation of Black Studies type classes into the general curriculum, a department was not established until the late 1980s after the merger with the predominately White University of Tennessee - Nashville threatened identity of the Black college. However, Howard University formed in 1969 after continuing protests. See, Gregory U. Rigsby, “Afro-American Studies at Howard University: One Year Later,” Journal of Negro Education, 39.3, 209-213.
Center. The Atlanta University Center (AUC) was composed of Spelman College, Morehouse College, Atlanta University, Clark College, Morris Brown College and the Interdenominational Theological Center. Students enrolled at any of the universities could take classes from any of the other six universities and the proposal recognized that the AUC had “[e]xpanded and increased course offerings.” However, the authors believed that this alone would not suffice. They argued that the AUC was an excellent location “to institutionalize the present surge of interest in the Black world....” In order to establish Black Studies at AUC, Harding, Henderson, and others wanted to assemble “the most creative scholars, writers, and artists” in the fields of Black Studies. They saw the proposed DuBois Institute as “a base where black people could become the primary interpreters of the Black Studies experience.” However, their ideas were radical in the context of the student protest across the country. The Du Bois Institute’s planning committee became embroiled in AUC student protest over Black Studies.

In November 1968, several Black students removed a White instructor from a Spelman class after she called a student a jackass. The students admonished the instructor, stating, “Your statement was indicative of your racist attitude and we do

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53 Atlanta University and Clark College merged in 1988 to form Clark Atlanta University.

not intend for you teach here anymore.\textsuperscript{55} This event sent off a storm of protests across AUC. The students believed the instructor’s removal was “an important act of liberation.” While some of the students’ demands were overly optimistic, for example all University committees to have a student majority, the demand for a Blacks Studies was central. For the students, Black Studies articulated a new function for the university, which was “to struggle for the liberation of oppressed people, specifically the liberation of African people everywhere.”\textsuperscript{56}

The administrations of the various universities in the AUC responded by insisting on academic freedom and they reminded students that violence and physical coercion would not be tolerated.

The Atlanta University Center institutions affirm that there is no place in our schools – dedicated, as they are, to support the basic principle that free inquiry and free expression are fundamental and indispensable rights which should be enjoyed by all members of the academic community – for dissent which expresses itself through the use of physical force and/or physical obstruction. Therefore, students who use physical force and/or obstruction in an attempt to force their wills upon others will be held fully responsible; and discipline for such action will be prompt and sufficient to the cause.\textsuperscript{57}

The administrations used the political language of academic freedom to counter student unrest before it got out of hand. Scholar Michael Miles has noted “academic freedom is placed in service of not only faculty activities in general, but of the status quo arrangements of the institutions ....” Atlanta University Center’s claims of


\textsuperscript{56} “Student Statement” TD Jarrett Papers, Box 573, folder 5.

\textsuperscript{57} “Statement on Students Rights and Freedoms” TD Jarrett Papers, Box 573, folder 5.
academic freedom functioned to maintain the status quo and avoid the issues raised about the nature and significance of the curriculum.  

Students asked for a meeting with the Atlanta University Board of Trustees on 17 April 1969, but the board ignored the request. The following day a group of students found a Morehouse Board of Trustee meeting in progress. Taking advantage of the situation, students demanded an immediate hearing by chaining the doors shut. The coercive meeting led Morehouse President Hugh M. Gloster to tender his resignation. For thirty hours students and administrators negotiated on consolidating the separate universities, Black majority representation of the Trustee Boards, and a Black Studies curriculum. In the end, the students achieved Black representation on Morehouse College Board and student membership on the Board Trustees. In addition, the Board agreed to establish Black Studies at Atlanta University Center in Fall semester of 1969.

Although Vincent Harding, Stephen Henderson and others, proposed the original plan for Black Studies at AUC, their involvement in establishing Black Studies at Atlanta University was minimal. Gerald McWorter’s, who helped compose the DuBois Institute proposal and was a sociologist at Spelman College, along with Vincent Harding and Stephen Henderson’s active support of the student lock-in of the Morehouse Board of Trustees brought a severe attack on the proposal.

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for the DuBois Institute from both the universities and the Martin Luther King Center. (Incidentally, two of the board members locked-in were also on the King Center Board of Directors.) Atlanta University Center administrators feared that the protest would cause them to lose their predominately-White funding. McWorter eventually resigned from the DuBois Institute planning committee because he felt the King family halted the radicalism of the organization.  

By the summer of 1969, Harding moved the plans for the Du Bois Institute outside of AUC, as King Center Board of Directors accepted the proposal. The semi-autonomous Institute had a multilayered structure. The Senior Research Associates coordinated the day-to-day operations and the programmatic elements of the organization. The senior associates were initially Vincent Harding, Stephen Henderson, and William Strickland. In addition, Lerone Bennett, Jr., the Senior Editor of *Ebony* and author of *Before the Mayflower*, Joyce Ladner, sociologist and former SNCC member; Chester Davis, education specialist; and Sterling Stuckey, historian, composed the seven IBW senior associates. An administrative staff that managed the Institute’s office supported the senior associates. The organization was supported by a network of colleagues who actively supported the Institute as collaborators, participants in fund-raising – including personal financial support,

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61 The administrative staff in 1969-1970 included: Judy Barton, Jill Douglass, Brenda Gregory, Tina Harriford, Mamie Jackson, Barbara Knight, Colia LaFayette, Daulton Lewis, Laura Luster, Mayme Mitcham, Ojeda Penn, and LaSayde Potter.
and as “sounding boards and critics.” Finally, a Governing Council served as a liaison between the group and the King Center. It was the Governing Council along with the senior associates for The W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Advanced Afro-American Studies that renamed the organization the Institute of the Black World, because it was “more descriptive of [the] purpose.” IBW declared it was “experimenting with the degree to which the varieties of opinions within the Black experience could be brought together in a real unity of work and commitment.”

The Institute began work that summer on creating a theoretical approach to Black Studies. In addition, they wanted to understand the “context” in which these programs were developing. To do this they had to evaluate Black Studies programs’ “relationship to the surrounding Black community, their sense of self-definition and direction, and the political struggles – of every kind – surrounding them.” A major

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objective of the Institute's was to become "an international center for Black Studies, with strong emphasis on research, broadly conceived." IBW approached Black Studies with five assumptions. First, Black Studies was not fully established and, therefore, there was no clear understanding of the "ways in which a profound mining of the black experience challenges and transforms the basic educational structure of the nation." Secondly, the process of defining the field of Black Studies was "logically ... a task and a challenge for black people in America and elsewhere." Thirdly, the Institute and the King Center could play an important role defining the field and creating models that linked the variety of perspectives on the field. Fourthly, IBW believed that Black Studies should be interdisciplinary. Finally, this field will take years, not months to build.  

The immediate task for the Institute of the Black World was to collect data on Black Studies Departments. During the summer, the research associates surveyed all the Black Studies programs asking questions about curriculum, philosophy, faculty statistics, and pedagogy. In November of 1969, the Institute of the Black World hosted "The Black Studies Directors Seminar" at which the over thirty-five directors of Black Studies programs analyzed the research results.  

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66 Some attendees were: Vincent Harding (IBW), Lerone Bennett (IBW and Ebony), Joyce Ladner (IBW and University of Southern Illinois), Chester Davis (IBW), William Strickland (IBW), Stephen Henderson (IBW), Sterling Stuecky (IBW), Robert Johnson (University of Indiana), Michael Thelwell (University of Massachusetts - Amherst), Robert S. Browne (IBW and Black Economics Research Center), Kwame McDonald (Livingstone College), and Boniface Obichere
scholars “attempted to identify that very small segment [of Black Studies programs] which seemed to hold some clear promise as possible models on which the thousands of Black students in northern schools could build in their movements toward an education appropriate to our [Black] struggle.” ⁶⁷ IBW associate, sociologist Joyce Ladner acknowledged the seminar’s significance in her opening statements.

I think it is very important that you understand why we are here. Each of us could be any place else in these United States, but we are here because we intend to build an Institution that does not exist any place today. We are committed to building that Institution almost at all costs. I think the thing that distinguishes us from groups of black people who are scattered about elsewhere ... is that as a group of black scholars, ... we are building that Institution together even if we have to take care of ourselves, even if we have to experiment with various forms of communal living.... ⁶⁸

Moreover, IBW believed the seminar would begin to shape the field of Black Studies. The intellectuals at IBW agreed that an ostensibly color-blind universal curriculum was discriminatory toward the contributions of Blacks. The scholars concluded they needed a theoretical perspective to analyze understand the calls for Black Studies and Black Power in general.

In the keynote address, Ebony’s Lerone Bennett captured the tone and gravity of the Directors Seminar. In his speech, “The Challenge of Blackness,” Bennett

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⁶⁷ Vincent Harding, “Introduction,” IBW and Education for Liberation, iiii

envisioned IBW as “a center for defining, defending, and illustrating blackness.” To
Bennett the Black experience was at the center of the human experience.

We of the Institute of the Black World believe that the black man is the truth
or close to the truth, that blackness constitutes the truth of the truth, and that
Black Studies is the revelation of that truth and the search for true meaning of
blackness.69

Bennett reiterates IBW’s belief that Blacks must “define and control blackness,” and
outlined how the Institute would meet the challenge of Blackness through at least six
different activities. First, IBW would begin the process of creating and collecting the
data that formed the foundation of Black Studies; collecting items such as
bibliographies, card indexes, books, and documents. Secondly, IBW would generate
new concepts because Black researchers’ eyes have been “clouded by the concepts of
white supremacy.” Bennett recognized that the concept of Blackness specifically
questioned the values of American society. Out of these new concepts developed by
the Institute would emerge a new philosophy of education, which was the third
level of the Institute’s challenge. Fourthly, IBW would facilitate the creations of new
“organic” intellectuals, “who would live and think within a perspective of blood and
pain and want.” These intellectuals would help institutionalize the Black
experience, not only in the university but also in society in general. Ultimately, the
challenge of Blackness would lead the Institute of the Black World to redefining the
American experience “in order to remake American society.”70

70 Ibid. 2 – 8.
Bennett's speech set the stage for IBW to move beyond establishing Black Studies programs, towards a general understanding of education as something more than a vehicle for economic advancement. He suggested that "blackness confronts the cruel exigency by raising dangerous questions about the meaning of education in America." It confronted the meaning and orientation of what was heretofore known as universal education and exposes it as "white-oriented education." 71

IBW's efforts to establish Black-centered education confronted what philosopher Charles Mills has entitled, the racial contract. This contract, according to Mills, is an alternative philosophical ground apart from the tradition of social contract as developed by Kant, Locke, Hobbes, and Rousseau. The racial contract has moral, political, and epistemological dimensions, which explain "how society was created or crucially transformed...." This contract represents the cultural system that W.E.B. DuBois termed the "color line" and that Black Studies explicitly challenged. The Institute of the Black World began the project of deconstructing the foundations of Western culture and developing an alternative paradigm for understanding human societies. 72

The Black Studies Directors Seminar served as the springboard for the official opening of the Institute of the Black World in January 1970. The opening, "A Celebration of Blackness," sought to announce IBW to the world with flair. The five-

71 Ibid. 8.

hour program included performances by the Katherine Dunham dance troupe, poetry from Don L. Lee (later Haki Matibuhiti), and songs from the Morehouse Glee Club. Approximately five-hundred people toured the IBW offices and the celebration.73

Shortly after the opening, IBW introduced its program to the public. "The Institute of the Black World is a community of Black scholars, artists, teachers and organizers...who are convinced that the gifts of their minds are meant to be fully used in the service of the Black community. It is, therefore, an experiment with scholarship in the context of struggle." These were the opening lines of the Institute’s “Statement of Purpose.” It announced its assumptions toward the field of Black Studies and its programmatic elements. The IBW sought to produce serious research on both the contemporary and historical Black experience, support creative artists developing a Black aesthetic, develop materials for teaching the Black experience, train Black scholars, collect and publish materials that would lead to developing the field of Black-centered education.74

The Institute spent its first year trying to accomplish this wide range of goals. Lerone Bennett’s speech became the first “Black Paper” published by IBW, which was a real accomplishment because of the lack of financial support. Several published articles, pamphlets and books by Institute associates followed, which

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demonstrated a key objectives of the organization – to research areas in the Black experience that have been ignored or shallowly treated, and research on how "contemporary political, economic, and social policies shape the life of the black community."75

The second Black Paper was Vincent Harding’s Beyond Chaos, which explored how the new interpretation of Black history compared with earlier interpretations. Beyond Chaos exemplifies the framework for IBW publishing. Harding used the shift from "Negro History to Black History" as a metaphor for the political change from integration to Black Power. According to Harding Negro history represented an attempt "to reveal the ‘contributions’ of blacks to the American saga; its emphasis on black heroism in the wars; its call for racial pride and for continued struggle to enter the mainstream of American life; its claim to be primarily interested in objective truth, while writing history through tears." From this perspective, "Negro History" did not challenge the basic values and assumptions of White America. In contrast, "Black History" did not want to be apart of the American stage, rather it emphasized "exposure, disclosure, on reinterpretation of the entire American past." According to Harding, such a reinterpretation was also political because "it recognizes that all histories of peoples participate in politics and are shaped by political and ideological

views.” Harding’s perspective became the guiding principle for the Institute in its programming and political work.76

The Institute’s associates transmitted their message in hopes of transforming ideas, Black people, and hence America. The associates were extremely active, during the first year. Joyce Ladner published her monograph on Black womanhood and her analysis of the relationship between social science and the Black experience. Vincent Harding began his reinterpretation of American history from a Black perspective. Stephen Henderson began to explicate his theory on understanding Black poetry.77 Each of these contributions would become essential contributions to the fields of History, Sociology, and Literature. These published papers wanted to “affect black power aspirations and programs.”78 Scholarship by the associates of IBW influenced the ideas on the importance of Black Studies and its ability to begin the process of transformation, both personally and politically.


In addition, the Institute began to make connections with the larger Black diaspora. In spring of 1970, IBW met with Robert Hill, who was researching the life and political activities Marcus Garvey. Hill, a Jamaican citizen, was involved with the Jamaica-based newspaper *Abeng*. He and other Caribbean intellectuals formulated *Abeng* and began to examine the social problems in Jamaica. When they pointed to the state as the root of most of the social problems, they became the targets of harassment by the Jamaican government. Because of these activities, the United States Immigration Naturalization Service flagged Hill as “permanently ineligible” to enter the United States. By this time, IBW invited Hill to join as an associate. Upon a return trip from Jamaica, Hill was detained and deported. Black intellectuals ranging from St. Clair Drake, to John Henrik Clarke along with IBW rallied in support of Hill and eventually the United States granted him a visa and he joined the Institute in 1971 as a senior associate. This early diasporic connection and the subsequent controversy was a harbinger of conflicts to come.79

**Separation from the King Center**

IBW’s activities disturbed some on the Board of Directors at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center. Another point of contention was the multiple posts that Vincent Harding held at the King Center and AUC. He supervised the Library

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Documentation Project (LDP), consulted the Board on the general direction of the memorial, headed the Institute of the Black World, and was a faculty member at Spelman College. The challenges by students at AUC put Harding in a bind, however, his support for the students kept with his tradition of activism. Harding's and IBW's problems escalated in July 1970, when the King Center’s Board of Directors dismantled the LDP Governing Council and dismissed twelve staff members.

On 27 July 1970, The King Center Board of Directors dissolved the Library-Documentation Project (LDP) Governing Council, a committee that included of Georgia State Representative Julian Bond, Attorney C.B. King, educator Horace Mann Bond, president of Spelman College Albert Manley, and author L.D. Reddick. To their dismissal Governing Council members responded, "If the governing council is merely an advisory body only rarely convened and powerless to shape and direct the library program, it does not deserve our time and energy." Members in believed in their autonomy from the King Center and each component’s council should have the power “to determine the basic policy of each institute [The Library Documentation Project and The Institute of the Black World] in personnel matters, procedures, and work program.” The King Center Board disagreed, believing that they alone should shape and control the direction of the entire Center's components. Four days later the Board of Directors dismissed half of LDP’s staff. Ostensibly the
staff's removal was due to a "tenuous financial situation,"\textsuperscript{80} but as an internal memo pointed out "the Library [had] been functioning from pay check to pay check for a considerable period, the staff assumed there was not money and volunteered to work full-time for half-pay."\textsuperscript{81} The firings were hard on the staffers because as non-profit workers they were ineligible for unemployment compensation. The LDP staff's offer to work for less pay was soundly reject by the King Center Board.\textsuperscript{82}

The fired workers did not take their dismissal lying down. At an August 1970, press conference to introduce Dr. Julius Scott as the new King Center director, several of the former staffers protested their release with picket signs. The workers maintained their removal was "inconsistent with the work of Dr. King, who was killed in the struggle for fair labor practices."\textsuperscript{83} Several members of the King family, including Mrs. King, held Vincent Harding responsible for the discharged workers actions and placing the King family in a "totally hostile situation."\textsuperscript{84} Harding's multiple roles and his increasing radical analysis set the stage for a confrontation between IBW and the Center.

\textsuperscript{80} Boyd Lewis, "MLK Memorial in Money Trouble?" \textit{Atlanta Voice}, 9 August 1970, 1.

\textsuperscript{81} "Untitled Memo" Vincent Harding Papers, Box 1, Folder "Institute of the Black World Crisis, 1970 July - August" Woodruff Library, Emory University.

\textsuperscript{82} "Untitled Memo" Vincent Harding Papers, Box 1, Folder "Institute of the Black World Crisis, 1970 July - August" Woodruff Library, Emory University.

\textsuperscript{83} Boyd Lewis, "MLK Memorial in Money Trouble?" \textit{Atlanta Voice}, 9 August 1970, 1.

\textsuperscript{84} "Notes on a phone conversation with Stanley Levison, 11 August 1970" Vincent Harding Papers, Box 1, Folder "Institute of the Black World Crisis, 1970 July - August," Woodruff Library, Emory University.
A key issue raised by the picketing labors was interpreting Dr. King's life and accomplishments. The workers focused on King's activism immediately before his assassination, particularly his marching with striking garbage workers. However, the meaning of King's life, as well as the Civil Rights Movement in general, was a debate amongst scholars, activists, and everyday people. In wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. the nation, his family and SCLC focused on his philosophy of non-violence, rather than his biting criticism of the American social system and the Vietnam War. As biographer Michael Eric Dyson has pointed out "when King began to say that racism was deeply rooted in our society and that only a structural change would remove it, he alienated key segments of the liberal establishment." Therefore, the "I Have a Dream" speech became in his death the lasting image, while some historians and the King family relegated the King's work with striking garbage workers in Memphis and organizing the Poor People's Campaign to the margins of his legacy. The singular focus on the philosophy of nonviolence contrasted sharply with the Institute of the Black World. Although IBW never advocated violence, it did house a variety of radical scholars whose commitment to nonviolence was at best seen as strategic. Vincent Harding recalled years later "there was a tension because so much of the public image of King and the family's image of King, and some of his support's image, was King as

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86 Ibid. 32.
the major integrationist and we were sounding non-integrationists by our Black World kind of thing.”

Almost from the very beginning, Institute associates worried about its connection with the King Center. William Strickland remarked on rumors that IBW was “a front for the man” because of the King Center’s ties to “the establishment.” Less than a year after the Institute’s official opening, it articulated their major concerns with the King Center. The foremost concern was the Center’s financial crisis that caused inadequate funds for IBW. The financial crisis cut across the entire King Center because its leaders overestimated the degree to which sympathetic support would reflect financially.

However, the measure of distrust was on both sides. The King Center Board of Trustees organized a committee to examine the Institute. When it reported back, the committee attacked IBW on three basic issues. First, IBW had not made the work and life of Martin Luther King, Jr. a priority.

As we research the Black experience priority should be given first to researching the life, work and contributions of Dr. King. In the home of the Institute of the Black World it should be obvious as one enters, that this is a memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr. and not to the other leaders of the Black

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World. It is the opinion of the members of the panel that in the Institute other black leaders have been given a higher place than Martin Luther [King]. 91

Second, the Institute made no public or overt commitment to nonviolence. Finally, the Institute of the Black World excluded White scholars. These three issues led the Board to conclude that "the Institute's purpose was not in harmony with the one adopted by the Center's Board." 92

The Institute of the Black World analyzed and responded to the critiques leveled by the King Center's committee. To the charge of not giving the work and life of Martin Luther King, Jr. primacy, IBW stated its "primary commitment and first priority must be to record, analyse, and forward the larger struggles of African peoples." 93 The Pan-African perspective of IBW was beyond the narrow conception of hero worship of the King Center. The Institute's purpose was premised on the relationship between scholarship and politics, whereas the King Center wanted scholarship that honored the greatness of King and announced the Civil Rights Movement's conclusion. This Pan-African and critical perspective was one that moved beyond validating a fallen hero to attempting to liberate Black people across the globe. "The role of the revolutionary Black intellectual," as William Strickland

91 "Report of the Committee Appointed to Evaluate the Institute of the Black World," 4. IBW Papers, Box (Separation from Martin Luther King Center)/ Folder (Report of the Committee Appointed to Evaluate IBW).

92 Ibid. 1.

93 Letter "To Our Friends, Associates and Companions in the Struggle: A Letter on Behalf of the Institute of the Black World Regarding the Current Crisis in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center," 2. IBW Papers, Box (Separation from King Center)/ Folder (Correspondence)
later stated, “is to link up the power of intellectuals...with the power of the masses.... In order to form a truly national liberation movement.”

The second accusation levied by the King Center committee was IBW’s lack of commitment to King’s philosophy of nonviolence. The committee, also, found it “difficult to understand” how in the King Memorial, “there should be hesitating and even deliberate avoidance of affirming commitments” to nonviolence. IBW responded to the accusation by pointing out its commitment to the liberation of Blacks globally and “cannot base its work on and demand loyalty to any one exclusive philosophy or strategy....” The interactions with scholars across the diaspora reiterated to the Institute that no one philosophy or strategy.

The final accusation by the King Center committee against IBW was its exclusion of White scholars. The Institute of the Black World was founded on the conception that Black people must control and define the Black experience. This challenged the liberal-integrationists image of King, and the position of the

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95 “Report of Committee Appointed to Evaluate the Institute of the Black World,” 3.


traditional civil rights organizations, which shied away from the burgeoning Black Power Movement and its call for autonomy.

In the end, the Institute of the Black World’s response had little impact. As the King Center Board concluded that “the members of the panel have no doubt in their minds that the final authority to determine” the affairs of the Institute including staff “must reside in the hands of the Board of Directors of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center.” Thus, the Institute of the Black World had lost its independence, a victim of the paradigm of liberalism used by the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center. The only choice for the Institute was separation from the King Center, which officially occurred on 1 September 1970.

Official separation from the King Center allowed the Institute of the Black World to become the “obstetrician” to the Black Studies and the ideas of the Black Consciousness Movement. Vincent Harding understood the importance of higher education to the entire social structure. He stated

Because the walls of the academy are, on the whole, merely more tastefully, delicately wrought extensions of the walls of the government, industry, and the military... it is not surprising that they too should now encompass part of the national army of cynical, despairing, increasingly frightened men and women. Indeed... these places reveal more vividly than ever the band of intellectual seekers who have forgotten their vocation, whose spate and captions questions decorate their shields of detached, ironic defeatism.

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100 Report of the Committee Appointed to Evaluate The Institute of the Black World, "4 - 5.

Building on this theme, the Institute organized in conjunction with Howard and Fisk Universities a Research Consortium on the Black Experience in late 1971. In addition, associates of IBW continued to make their presence felt at various conferences on Black Studies and various Black Studies Departments continued to send students to Atlanta to study at the Institute. More importantly, the Institute questioned the makeshift Black Studies programs that began across the country.

While Black Studies remained a major focus of IBW, the organization began to move beyond the university concerns, and situate itself in the broader concerns of the “masses.” In short, separation from the King Center allowed IBW to expand its focus. William Strickland made this point clear in the internal reorganization document arguing, IBW “has erred in restricting itself to academic education.” He believed that revolutionary intellectuals must use their abilities in conjunction with the masses; they must become in Walter Rodney’s terms “guerilla intellectuals.”

The Institute of the Black World’s independence from the King Center allowed it to become a collective of dynamic intellectuals who sought to develop their theoretical perspective by building on an elder cadre of intellectuals and a group of young intellectuals from across the diaspora.

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Black Students applied the discourse of Black Power in their demands for a Black University or Black Studies. The students' insistence highlighted the need for independent intellectual, social, and political space. The petitions for a Black University captured the imagination of the founders of the Institute of the Black World as they attempted to implement the framework at the Atlanta University Center. The subsequent conflicts between students and university administrators demonstrated a need for IBW to move outside of the university system. In joining with the King Center, IBW believed that it had located this space. However, the conflicts with the King Center Board of Directors led the Institute to separate in September 1970. In conclusion, Black students' clash with university administrators over a Black University and IBW separation from the King Center reflected Black Power's opposition to Liberalism. On the other hand, illuminating the Black point of view, in and of itself, required "liberated grounds" and an internal critique. IBW's independence allowed it to begin a search for a Black perspective beginning by restructuring the organization's purpose.
CHAPTER 4

"WE ARE INTELLECTUALS:" RE-ORGANIZING THE INSTITUTE OF THE BLACK WORLD

"Black Power, then, was raised when social reality forced so-called revolutionaries to put action aside and start thinking." - Harold Cruse¹

In December 1970, The Institute of the Black World could look back at a difficult, but successful first year for the expanding network of associates. A revised statement of purpose stressed its independence from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, and emphasized the need for Blacks "to control the definition of our past and our present if we are to become masters of our future." The Institute's separated from the King Center over the latter's narrow understanding of the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. Now independent, the Institute believed that it could recruit the necessary scholars who would "use [their] skills of research and analysis to forward the struggles of the black community towards self-understanding and ultimate liberation."²

During the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s, Black intellectuals had taken a back seat to grassroots activists. The dramatic events of the early movement

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² IBW: The First Year, 1969 – 1970, Hoyt Fuller Collection, Box 21, Folder 17.
did not allow for much theoretical reflection. For the most part, activists accepted the integration framework through nonviolent direct action provided by Martin Luther King, Jr. Relying on Christian imagery and the Old Testament narrative of the Jewish exodus from Egypt, King forged a political language of freedom. While Malcolm X and others questioned these goals and techniques, their voices were on the periphery of most early protests. However as the limits of civil rights and integration became clear through the 1960s, the theoretical perspective, and direction of the movement once again fell open for debate.³

The stagnation of the Black Freedom struggle after 1965 led to calls of Black Power and debates on the ideological and theoretical direction of the movement. Social critic Harold Cruse argued in the Crisis of the Negro Intellectual that the Black Freedom struggle’s arrested development was due in large part to Black intellectuals’ inability to create new ideas. His statement, cited in the epigraph, that activists had to “start thinking” was borne out in Stokely Carmichael’s (Kwame Ture) Black Power: The Politics of Liberation (1968). When Carmichael introduced the slogan “Black Power,” the idea became a source of controversy. The media interpreted the idea as Black violence and separation; many activists viewed it as the next stage in the movement; and the civil rights establishment believed it was disruption. Regardless of the interpretation, Black Power was a shift in the movement, which all parties agreed needed to be studied.

Carmichael’s *Black Power*, co-authored with political scientist Charles V. Hamilton, attempted to clarify the concept, yet the authors did so by primarily explaining what it was not. It was not a call for violence. Rather, Carmichael insisted that Blacks needed to “close ranks” before they entered open society. Exactly how this was to function was ambiguous and reflected the stage of uncertainty after Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party’s failure in Atlantic City; the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Act (1965); and King’s 1968 assassination.⁴

The Institute of the Black World took on the challenge presented by Harold Cruse in his two classics *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967) and *Rebellion or Revolution?* (1968). Cruse demanded that Black intellectuals take a more pronounced role in leading the Black Freedom Struggle. “The Negro intellectual,” stated Cruse, “must deal intimately with the white power structure and cultural apparatus, and the inner realities of the black world at one and the same time.” To complete this task, Black intellectuals needed to “develop and begin to use a new set of ideas.” While Cruse conceded that the Civil Rights Movement was disturbing the racial status quo of the nation, he felt the movement was not revolutionary because of its failure to develop “any unique ideas of its own.” He believed the movement’s

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integrationist aims incorporated the Black middle classes into the prevailing system and did not transform the economic, political, and cultural structures of America.⁵

Cruse criticized Black intellectuals for their uncritical acceptance of the philosophies of Liberalism, Marxism, and forms of Black Nationalism. He saw these theories as unable to account for "the realities of race in America." For Cruse, Black intellectuals reliance on White intellectuals and the acceptance of their "myths" of either capitalist or socialist integration accounted for some of their shortcomings. Black intellectuals relied on White intellectual models and resources because of the Black community failed to support for Black intellectuals financially or socially. Consequently, Black intellectuals became primarily interpreters of Black life for Whites, a role that stymied the intellectual leadership in the movement and their relationship to the Black community. According to Cruse, Black intellectuals were "a rootless class of displaced persons who are refugees from the social poverty of the black world." In order to become revolutionary, Black intellectuals, must, first define their role in the struggle and their relationship towards the Black community.⁶

Black intellectuals, Cruse concluded, had to work on the political, economic, and most importantly cultural front. "The special function of the Negro intellectual


is a cultural one," Cruse declared. America’s perception of itself as only a White nation made the various non-white populations invisible from the "inner eyes" of the hegemonic White perspective.

America has grown planlessly and chaotically, leaving her racial and ethnic minorities to sift for themselves while she cultivates the idea that America is an all-white Anglo-Saxon nation. This is a totally false image. A psychology, whether individual or national, that tries to deny the essential facts about its social origins is lying to itself and to the world... America in its national psychology lies to itself that Anglo-Saxon and North European racial ingenuity plus the resources of a virgin continent built American capitalist democracy.

Cruse’s answer to the problem of American “national psychology” was a cultural revolution that would assume control of the definitions and interpretations of Black life and its relationship to America.

The Institute of the Black World did not agree with all of Cruse’s assessments, but its founders attempted to answer his intellectual challenge. IBW Senior Associates, Vincent Harding, William Strickland, and Robert Hill, sought to define the purpose and role of the Black scholar, and to identify the scholar’s relationship to the Black community in order to develop a coherent "Black perspective" from which to analyze the problems facing the community. A Black perspective generated by the Institute was to be the basis of revolutionary scholarship that would move both the organization and the Black Freedom Struggle forward. In attempting to

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7 Harold Cruse, The Crisis, 455.


9 Cruse, Rebellion, 106.
ascertain the viewpoint, the organization held a series of internal meetings and organized a symposium on the role of the Black Scholar in the Summer of 1971. At the symposium, the Institute enlisted support of distinguished Black intellectuals such as C.L.R. James, St. Clair Drake, and Lerone Bennett to develop further the newly independent organization’s role and direction.

“What is the Institute of the Black World?” Defining the Purpose

From its independence from the King Center through the 1972 National Black Political Convention, IBW strove to clarify its organizational structure and purpose in the context of the slowing Black struggle of the 1970s. The Institute used the year after its separation to redefine its identity, understand the Black intellectual’s role and to clarify its ideological and analytical orientation. These activities, in the organization’s opinion, would allow it to become influential and move the struggle for Black liberation forward.

The rhetoric of Black Power and its political languages of autonomy and relevancy provided a framework for IBW to oppose the racial liberalism imposed by the King Center. However, the same political language obfuscated the diversity of analysis within Black Power and produced, according to Adolph Reed, Jr. “a muddled intellectual world of vague ideas and conceptual confusion.”10 The demand for political unity often understated the diversity of analytical perspectives.

The Institute differed from other Black organizations due to its goal of controlling the definitions of Blackness, and its organizational structure as a Black intellectual collective. However, the political language of Blackness in opposing Liberalism, allowed for two modes of analysis, Pan-Africanism and Marxism, to function within IBW leading to internal and external confusion about the organization’s purpose and direction. These two viewpoints were by no means inherently contradictory, but, in those ideologically tense times these positions found little common ground. IBW’s internal disagreement over the ideological perspective mirrored the Black Power movement’s early years (although on a much smaller scale).

Many Black protest organizations, regardless of ideological perspective and goals, faced, both internal and external crises all of which contributed in slowing the dynamic civil rights movement to a crawl. For example, SNCC’s ineffectiveness began as early as 1965 as a variety of issues - Vietnam, Black Power, and Women’s Rights - fragmented the organization, making it virtually defunct by 1970. As the organization questioned the integration’s superiority, its White financial support

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11 A contemporary Black think-tank was the Joint Center for Political Studies. The Joint Center existence to date points to its ability to etch out a centrist position on Black issues that continue its White funding sources. See Robert C. Smith, We Have No Leaders: African Americans in the Post-Civil Rights Era, (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1996), 115-122. Also see Charles P. Henry, “Big Philanthropy and the Funding of Black Organizations,” Review of Black Political Economy, 9, no. 2 (Winter 1979): 174-190.
diminished. Moreover, issues of ideology came to displace grassroots organizing effectively bringing the organization to its unfortunate, but logical conclusion.12

By the early-1970s, many Black Power organizations faced crises over the correct path to Black liberation and as a result, many of these organizations became increasingly narrow ideologically. The central debates were over the correct role of culture in the process of revolution. Both cultural nationalists, such as Maulana Karenga and Amiri Baraka and political nationalists, such as the Black Panther Party, realized the importance of culture.13 However, political nationalists maintained that transformation could not wait on the cultural conversion insisted by the cultural nationalists.

In addition, to the split between the political and cultural nationalists, there was an ideological split between nationalist and Marxist oriented organizations. As the Panthers and eventually Baraka turned to a Marxist analysis, they vilified cultural nationalists making them the outsider group, regulating their insights to the margins. Stokely Carmichael spoke to the effects of the Panthers labeling, remembering, “The Panthers made the position so extreme...automatically if you


were what they called a ‘cultural nationalist,’ you’re a reactionary … so in order for you to get away from the stigma, you had to denounce cultural nationalism.”

The FBI exacerbated these ideological divisions with its Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO). The FBI’s crusade against the Black Panther Party exemplified its ability to undermine and destabilize an organization. In the mid-1960s FBI director J. Edgar Hoover labeled the Black Panthers “the most dangerous organization in America.” Hoover used COINTELPRO to create divisions within the Panther leadership and between them and other organizations through the use of informants and false information. The false communication heightened organizational paranoia and reduced the leadership’s effectiveness. Furthermore, COINTELPRO legitimated an all-out attack on the organization by federal, state, and local police. In 1969 alone, 27 Panthers were killed and 749 were arrested or jailed.

In addition to the FBI, television media exacerbated the identity crises within Black organizations. The media reduced complex political analysis to sound bites, creating an atmosphere in which organizations often competed to gain national attention and the associated spoils – including financial support, membership, and ideological dominance. Organizations moved away from grassroots organizing

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towards media spectacles that focused solely on charismatic leadership and
grandiose spectacles.16

The ideological splits, FBI subterfuge, and media distortion increasingly
diluted the Black Freedom Struggle’s effectiveness in the early 1970s. These
organizations wanted to make changes through a multiplicity of means. Electoral
politics, non-violent direct action, community control, and even guerrilla warfare all
became viable options depending on the ideological stance. The diversity in
ideologies did not yield any consensus on the Black freedom struggle’s trajectory.
Associates at IBW observed:

...black America is in ferment and turmoil. It initiates rebellions in the street
and on the campus; it mounts an increasingly deadly war with the national
police force and abandons traditional politics to form independent political
parties in Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina; black professionals at all
levels of civil and social service accelerate the black caucus movement, and
there are conferences and congresses for every stratum of black America as
each seek some answer to the particular form of white oppression that afflicts
it. Yet while the unorganized black movement widens daily, the formal black
movement is beset with political, ethical, and ideological conflicts of all kinds.
So-called revolutionaries advocate everything from black capitalism, to
reparations, to repatriation. Some have abandoned economic, political, and
racial oppression altogether to embrace sexual perversion as a new
revolutionary force. This while white America is in a state of profound crisis,
black America is in a state of profound confusion....17

16 Brain Ward, ed. Media, Culture, and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle, (Gainesville,

17 William Strickland “Notes from Jamaica” IBW Papers, Administrative-staff meetings/ minutes
   Box, staff meeting 1973 folder, 1-2. William Strickland wrote the essay in Spring 1971 per
The Institute of the Black World faced internal confusion that paralleled the crises in Black and White America. In October 1970, IBW began the process of reorganizing in hopes of clarifying IBW's unique role in the struggle.\(^\text{18}\)

**Reorganization**

In the spring 1971 IBW Senior Associates, Vincent Harding, William Strickland, and Robert Hill, led a series of reorganization meetings to assess the organization's direction. IBW's Executive Committee organized the meetings around several essays written primarily by William Strickland and Robert Hill over the previous six months. The meetings addressed concerns surrounding the Institute's programs, principles, administration, and finances. Each of these areas produced honest debate and proposed resolutions. IBW viewed these meetings as a "process not salvation." The debates on programs and principles provide a look at how Harding, Strickland, and Hill, understood their role, as intellectuals, in the movement.\(^\text{19}\)

Recognizing the turmoil facing IBW mirrored that facing other Black organizations, the associates and staff sought to identify the sources. As Vincent Harding and William Strickland observed, IBW's problem was "the problem of identity." While, IBW developed a rationale for existence - controlling the definitions of Blackness - according to some associates this was not an identity. The

\(^{18}\) Ibid. 3 - 4.

\(^{19}\) Discussion of administration and finances will occur in Chapter 5.
rationale failed to provide the ideological or theoretical perspective for redefining representations and how this would impact the Black Freedom Struggle. Ultimately, IBW’s developing theoretical perspective was to “solve the problem of finding the correct relationship between its educational, political and organizational work.”

The reorganization documents identify several basic causes of organizational imprecise direction. First, the name The Institute of the Black World allowed associates to examine everything under the purview of Blackness. This issue erupted in discussions over a new IBW sign. “I came back from a trip one day,” Strickland recalled,

walked up the steps and there was the sign: “... dedicated to the struggles of African peoples.” A fait accompli. IBW thus became formally and publicly identified with a particular ideology in a very informal and casual way. The ramifications of the ideology, its enduring relevance for black people, its historical sufficiency and analytical clarity, none of these questions was thoroughly gone into before the fact.

The political language of Blackness, illustrated by the sign’s phrase, “dedicated to the struggles of African people,” represented the discourse’s amorphous use. The political language of Pan-Africanism promoted unity, while at the same time it cloaked cleavages in the movement, providing an avenue for cooption. The Institute of the Black World’s casual use of language permitted the

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organization to be loosely identified with any ideological perspective, regardless of the Institute’s position. Furthermore, this uncritical use of Blackness cast too wide of an analytical lens, stretched the meager resources, and provided no focused direction for the organization. The numerous projects attempted during the early years exemplify the organization’s diversity. For example, The Institute organized the Black Studies Directors workshop, began the Black Policy Studies Center, published articles, and held a Summer Research Symposium. These projects demonstrated how the political language of Blackness, while providing an oppositional stance to the liberal framework, often weakened Black organizations because the quest for unity led IBW and other organizations in too many directions under the “gospel of blackness.” The discourse provided an alternative to that of liberalism, however, its oppositional stance was continually vague allowing it to be shaped by adherents and opponents alike, making the discourse at times vacuous, and often providing a veil for Black middle class advancement.23

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Another source of confusion identified by the reorganization documents was a common belief that IBW was a school because of its origins in the Black Studies movement. The Institute facilitated this perception on several fronts. In their initial concentration on the Black University and Black Studies, IBW attempted to become a clearinghouse for Black Studies programs. This activity inextricably linked IBW to Black Studies - even founding member Stephen Henderson remembered IBW primarily for providing direction to Black Studies, omitting the numerous other IBW projects. In addition, the Institute housed several university students. These students provided much needed labor for the numerous IBW projects and they often negotiated with their home universities for funds for IBW. For example, students from Dartmouth and Wesleyan University worked at the Institute with the latter university providing $90,000 of support. Another reason for the perception of IBW being a school was its close relationship to Atlanta University Center (AUC). While, Harding was not continually employed by AUC, IBW often used campus facilities and cosponsored events at the universities. Furthermore, the Institute’s association with the AUC made associates hesitant in challenging university policies.

manifestations of Afrocentric thought were already used as perfunctory symbols by black elected officials to convey a sense of belonging to the masses they were ostensibly elected to represent. ... In preparing for receiving Steve and Wardell, Lincoln literally labors to transform his identity - he replaces a picture of Richard Nixon with one of Malcolm X and dons a dashiki - to one he sees more in line with his core constituency, whom he describes as the ‘real salt of the earth.’” Mark Anthony Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*, (New York, NY: Routledge Press, 2002), 34 - 35.
Ultimately, as William Strickland pointed out, IBW’s job “is not to be a school but, to promote change in schools and scholars.”

Lastly, institutional confusion stemmed from the failure to take “a position for or against the system.” While, highlighting liberalism’s limitations, IBW, like many other Black Power organizations, failed to articulate clearly an alternative theoretical framework for understanding American society. Vincent Harding confirmed this stating in a 1971 interview in response to the question of IBW’s methodology. “I don’t know at this stage,” he noted, “if we could speak about a basic methodology except for this. We assume that the style of individualistic scholarship is not a black style....”

The reorganization meetings sought to rectify these sources of confusions by examining the Black intellectual’s role and developing an ideological perspective. IBW leadership proclaimed, “We are intellectuals and we do intellectual work,” although the role and responsibilities of intellectuals in the Black freedom struggle was at best ambiguous. The Institute’s goal was to clarify their role, for themselves

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and for the public. Beginning from the premise that education was political, William Strickland outlined the Black intellectual’s responsibilities. He believed that there were three responsibilities of intellectuals. First, they had “to describe the social, economic, cultural, and political problems of black people from a black perspective.” Secondly, they had “to analyze the nature of those problems from a black perspective.” Finally, Black intellectuals had the responsibility “to prescribe remedies from them that contribute to the liberation of black people.” By accomplishing these three tasks, - describing, analyzing, and prescribing - IBW would be producing revolutionary scholarship that would allow “an oppressed people to take power.”

IBW contested the notions of scholarly objectivity, contending it could not “engage in open-ended research” believing “research and analysis are means not ends.” Revolutionary scholarship, according to the Institute, consisted of analysis and advocacy. IBW demanded scientific analysis that examined specific contemporary conditions and contradictions, projected solutions, and promoted programs to achieve solutions. Therefore, IBW, wanted move its focus beyond

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27 Carter G. Woodson made a similar point in The Mis-Education of the Negro, (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1933, 1972). Woodson stated, “No systematic effort toward change has been possible, for, taught the same economics, history, philosophy, literature and religion which have established the present code of morals, the Negro’s mind has been brought under the control of his oppressor. The problem of holding the Negro down, therefore, is easily solved. When you control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his actions” (xiii).


academic education and create an “all-class” system of analysis, which would allow for linkages to the community and other organizations.30

Strickland described this process as propaganda, “not in its hypocritical western sense, but propaganda based on the truth of the black condition.” “The function of black propaganda,” according to Strickland, was
to make black people understand that to oppose white America, to concretely and consciously struggle against it with all one’s mind and all one’s heart and all one’s soul is the only way to protect oneself and one’s family and one’s people; that the concrete task of black individuals is to do a ‘good job in their field’ from a black perspective; that the black struggle will definitely be victorious, and the devils defeated.

IBW did not want to focus on the Black experience in as a purely theoretical or academic process, but used historical analysis to focus on contemporary problems and potential solutions.31

Reorganization, for IBW, was also a process of educating themselves on the various analytical perspectives in the movement and 1970s America. Identifying an systematic viewpoint was critical because it was the basis from which the organization would “educate Black America.” Soon after the split with the King Center, Strickland explored various ideological views prevalent at the time. He predicted, as was common at the time, the fall of Western/American culture. IBW wanted an intellectual position, a Black perspective, which would recreate a more humane society. In order to come to this outlook, Strickland wanted IBW to


relinquish "the illusions that integration is the solution, that spontaneous urban eruption are the solution, that militant rhetoric is the solution, that mystical notions of connections with Africa are the solution...."\(^{32}\) IBW situated itself almost solely in negation to the contemporary ideological stances and it was unable to analyze critically how other social issues, such as feminism, the Vietnam War, and drug use, related to the politics of the Black community. While, IBW associates discussed their apprehensions with other social movements and other ideological standpoints, these concerns were rarely made public because of "false notions of [Black] unity."\(^{33}\)

IBW associates agreed that the Black intellectual’s role was to describe, analyze, and prescribe from a Black perspective. Robert Hill in discussing his meaning of a Black viewpoint, stated,

First of all, it is necessary to be clear on the nature of that struggle and what the process of the definition entails. On the first question [What does it mean to define the black experience from a black perspective?], it should by now have become obvious that the black struggle in American encompasses more than the contestation for control of the streets, control of office, or even the control of resources. No major historic struggle has ever encompassed these things alone.... [Antonio] Gramsci postulates two kinds of struggle, which he describes as the ‘war of positions’ and the ‘war of maneuver.’ The first is the one responsible for seizing hegemony of social values, of validating new paths of culture for the society, of establishing the broad principles of new social relationships. The second mode of struggle involves literally hand-to-hand combat for control of the social and political organs. Both are modes of contestation and at times occur even simultaneously.

...[W]e must be clear about what point in the struggle that [defining the black experience] represents ("position") and what that means for the task of definition. In other words, we don’t define the black experience merely to


\(^{33}\) Ibid. 5 -6.
return it to the hands of Black people (impossible), to get back what is our experience (unworthile [sic]), but to shape it for the contestation of hegemony with the white racists values of the broader society.  

Despite Hill’s observations, the question remained - what made an analytical perspective “Black?” IBW claimed that its analysis must come from a Black standpoint, but it failed to fully explicate what such an analysis was and what made it Black, other than the negation of attributes deemed critical to Western culture. However imprecise the notion of a Black perspective, it was a powerful conception, one that was capable of mobilizing organizational support.

In May 1971, the Institute of the Black World held a staff meeting to re-examine the reorganization project it had begun the previous fall. The Executive Committee, which included Harding, Strickland, and Hill produced a document entitled “Toward a Higher Stage,” which outlined the future direction of the organization. IBW held the May meeting because despite the “positive good” that came from reorganization “there [had] been many areas in which it has not worked to our benefit.” The earlier reorganization failed because, according to the senior

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associates some IBW staff and associates had not internalized key aspects of reorganization, thus stagnating the development of the organization.

Harding, Strickland, Hill and several key staff members formed an Executive Committee, which took full responsibility for these failures, and looked at its “own faults and wrongness.” It also believed that the organization’s principles that were “lightly accepted” by the membership and that self-criticism was necessary if the organization was going to grow. A key point in “Towards a Higher Stage” addressed the persistent individualism in the Institute, specifically in the administrative staff.

“We are committed to the life of this organization, and we are convinced that the entire organization must look at itself in the same critical way as has the Executive Committee in the light of what Reorganization was supposed to be and do. Indeed, not only must we look at ourselves, but we must move firmly and persistently to deal with the tendencies within the organization and within ourselves as individuals which hold us back from the kind of total commitment to the struggles of our people which must be the hallmark of IBW.”

IBW looked at three areas - principles, policies, and programs - in an “attempt to assess the positive and negative aspects of our development since last November, with the intention of moving on to the next stage; a higher stage [unencumbered] by certain weaknesses of the past.”

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36 “IBW Reconsidered: Moving to a Higher Stage/ Towards a Higher Stage,” IBW Papers, Box (Reorganization – August 1969 – November 1971), Folder (May 1971), 2

37 Ibid. 1- 2.
The organization defined principles as “what the organization believes to be the truth about itself, about the struggle and about the world.”

Twenty principles provided a conceptual frame for the organization. The Executive Committee organized the principles according to organizational discipline and philosophy. In terms of discipline, the committee stated that IBW associates and staff needed to be slaves to a cause, specifically, “the cause of the struggle of our people towards self-determination/liberation.” This struggle must “take precedent” over all things, thus, loyalty to IBW reflected a loyalty to the struggle, rather than individual and careerist goals.

Philosophically, the organization assumed that the 1970s was “an age of collapse in the West,” and that IBW “shall die with them, or we shall enter into the struggle to overcome them and build anew for our children.” More importantly, the Executive Committee reiterated, “all education is political and that black education must participate in the politics of struggle for self-determination/liberation.” IBW decided to become a political organization rather than a “narrowly professional one.” It insisted on principles of self-reliance, self-sacrifice, and self-criticism in the organization. IBW’s goals of organizational discipline and philosophy necessitated collective scholarship.

“We must make this Institute stronger than any single individual in it, and more than the sum of its total parts.” We believe in collective leadership and

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38 Ibid. 2.

39 Ibid. 4 – 5.
collective work. We see collective leadership as the best guarantee against personalism, and collective work as the way our traditions point for the highest form of creativity and the necessary strength for struggle.

These principles structured the policies of the organization.\(^{40}\)

IBW's procedures reflected its values and structured the organization. Policies were staff rules and goals, such as "the needs of the organization will consistently be placed before individual wants or needs." The Committee outlined the rules for dismissal, and time of staff meetings. The goal of the guidelines was "to change habits, life-styles and commitments which are contrary to the principles, policies and programs of IBW." The Committee believed once the staff internalized the ethics, and plans, the organization's agenda would be more effective.\(^{41}\)

The Committee argued that its program "must become more sharply committed to create a black analysis of the condition of the black community, past and present." This analysis must "clarify both the situation of our community and the nature of its oppressors." The programs would be aimed at Black local leadership who would use radical analysis as a "weapon of advocacy" in moving towards Black self-determination. The committee concluded,

This is what we mean by our program as one of revolutionary scholarship, what we mean by the *politicizing of all black education* and the *proper educating of all black politics*. We are engaged in political education in the fullest sense of that term. We are explaining, clarifying, defining the black situation, placing it in the context of the past and future struggle for liberation. Thereby we are

\(^{40}\) Ibid. 5 – 6.

\(^{41}\) Ibid. 7-10.
moving to free the minds of our people with truth, recreating and recasting the educational function into a struggle vehicle, a revolutionary weapon.\textsuperscript{42}

The Institute of the Black World looked to the Summer Research Symposium (SRS) to clarify and expand this goal, by meeting Black intellectuals “who did signal works of research on the past.”\textsuperscript{43}

\textbf{Summer Research Symposium 1971}

In the summer of 1971, IBW invited C.L.R. James, Edward Kamau Braithwaite, St. Clair Drake, and George Beckford to Atlanta for the Summer Research Symposium (SRS) whose theme was “The World of Black Scholarship - Past, Present and Future.” The six-week symposium was composed of seminars, a Black research agenda, and public lectures. The symposium participants spent between nine and fifteen hours a week in seminars led by IBW Senior Associates and the invited guests. In addition, the participants had a Black social analysis research project. The public lectures were the community-oriented portion of the program, and formed the basis of IBW’s audiotape lecture series. The conference served as “an integral part of the development of IBW” and was a “part of the clarifying process by which we [IBW] grasp the essential meaning of our history and flesh out the concept of ‘education for liberation.’”\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid. 11. Emphasis in original.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid. 13.

IBW reorganization meetings stressed the importance of its intellectual work to the Black struggle of the 1970s and the invited scholars confirmed the importance and further clarified the role of Black intellectuals. Sociologist St. Clair Drake emphasized institutions such as IBW were apart of “intellectual tasks” as opposed to


Full Time
1. Mary L. Allen, Atlanta
2. E. J. Brisker, Seattle, WA (Staff volunteer)
3. Patricia Daly, Livingston College, New Brunswick, NJ (faculty)
4. Richard Dill, Hofstra University, Garden City, NY
5. Janet Douglass, Livingston College, New Brunswick (faculty)
6. Eddy Gouraige, Hofstra
7. Sybil R. Griffin, Michigan State University
8. Leslie I. Hill, Barnard College, NY, NY
9. Catherine Jackson, University of Chicago
10. Evans Jacobs, Wesleyan University
11. Archie D. Sanders, Howard University (faculty)
12. Hazel L. Symonette, University of Wisconsin
13. George B. Thomas, Interdenominational Theological Center (faculty)
14. Vincent G. Yancey, Northeastern University, Boston

Part-time
1. Dwight L. Greene, Wesleyan University (faculty)
2. Billy Jackson, Seattle, WA (staff volunteer)
3. Jackie Raab, Seattle, (staff volunteer)
4. Gwendolyn Robinson, Dartmouth College (faculty)
5. George Stewart, Seattle, (staff volunteer)
6. William H. Wilkinson, Dartmouth College (faculty)

Symposium Staff
1. Howard Dodson, Symposium coordinator
2. Cheryll Greene, Administrative Assistant
3. Derek Wheeler, Administrative Assistant

IBW Research Staff
1. Vincent Harding
2. William Strickland
3. Robert Hill
4. Howard Dodson
“street tasks,” exemplified by the urban rebellions. Drake outlined several fundamental roles for Black intellectuals: raising Black consciousness, supplying information for the movement, and creating special institutions, such as IBW. Based on his own intellectual experiences, Drake stressed a three-pronged approach. First, intellectuals needed “to make some contribution to general theoretical work in his discipline....” Secondly, they needed, “to decide upon some aspect of the social structure in which to become expert at the empirical level - i.e. one tried to make a contribution at the widest level of generality and then select some specific aspect to concentrate upon....” Thirdly, Black intellectuals should “select a problem that contributed to racial advancement, as we used to call it. Today we call it Black Liberation....”*45 The importance of intellectual work, according to Drake was in its challenge to what heretofore was known as objective scholarship and to supply a counter ideology.*46

In a similar vein, Marxist theorist and veteran Black activist C.L.R. James identified the Black scholar’s role as being "to learn and understand and let people know what is happening," and its historical background. He concluded, mirroring Drake’s call for intellectual task, the Black scholar’s function was "to illustrate,

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understand it [the struggle] and he must be able to explain it in historical and social terms, otherwise the education that he has and the money he may be getting are of no use to the Black people as a whole. He has a function to perform. He does not have to teach people to go and fight as they fought in Watts... but you [have to] have mass support for any work ... that you may do."  

James, along with economist George Beckford, emphasized linking intellectual production with the masses. The scholars emphasized the need to "disenchant" the prevailing representations of Blacks; representations that created the paradigms of "value and authority" and shaped the dominant political languages. Producing a counter narrative was a necessary task, according to the Drake, James, and the other invited scholars.  

The invited scholars identified countering the dominant representation of Blackness as an essential task in the struggle for Black liberation and the focal point of any Black perspective.  

Drake, in his lecture on Allison Davis's Deep South, identified the significance of Davis's work in its economic analysis and his emphasis on the "learned behavior to race relations." Drake concluded, "Davis took the

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47 C.L.R. James, "The Role of the Black Scholar" IBW Papers, (Box: SRS C.L.R. James/public lecture folder), 23.


emphasis away from genetics and the widespread historical belief that race
prejudice was somehow inherited. He clarified the point that it was the system, not
the genes, that had to be studied if one wanted to effect meaningful social change.”

Similarly, James stressed the need to write histories that represented a strong
viewpoint, "The writers, particularly, in England,” he noted, “usually tried to be
what is called fair to both sides, well balanced, but you can't write a well-balanced
history of revolution because a revolution is something that creates disorder and
unbalances everything. And if you are going to write on both sides, you write
nothing!” He explored the importance as models of his classic Black Jacobins and
W.E.B. Du Bois’s Black Reconstruction with his classic. James concluded that his work
“tried to show that black people were able to make historical progress, they were
able to show how a revolution was made, they were able to produce the men who
could lead a revolution and write new pages in the book of history.”

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50 Drake, “In the Mirror of Black Scholarship,” 53.

51 C.L.R. James, “Lectures on the Black Jacobins,” Small Axe, (September 2000): 76. For another
analysis of both Black Jacobins and Black Reconstruction, see Cedric J. Robinson, Black Marxism: The
2000), 185 – 286.

52 Ibid, 85. St. Clair Drake compared Horace Cayton and his Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life
in a Northern City, (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945) and Allison Davis, Deep
South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press,
creolization in West Indian society from the manuscript of his Development of Creole Society in
of Lerone Bennett, Confrontation: Black and White, (Chicago, IL: Johnson Publishing Company,
1965) and Black Power, USA: The Human Side of Reconstruction, 1867 - 1877, (Chicago, IL: Johnson
Publishing Company, 1967. William Strickland analyzed American politics through the
framework developed by James Boggs, Racism and Class Struggle: Further Pages of a Black Worker's
Institute’s examination of such books, confirmed its goal of controlling the definitions of Blackness.

Although, the spring reorganization meetings and summer symposium strengthened organizational resolve, there was still internal confusion over the correct perspective among the staff. This source of this confusion reflected the race versus class dispute that had preoccupied the Black intellectual community since the beginning of the twentieth century. Rather than seeing the two positions as complementary, Black intellectuals held the other position as being reactionary. The Institute of the Black World’s attempt to merge the analysis of Marxism and Nationalism represented an attempt to move beyond the debate and toward the Black Radical Tradition. In political scientist Cedric Robinson’s classic, Black Marxism, he identifies a Black Radical Tradition in which many twentieth-century Black intellectuals used Marxism as a “staging area” or a conduit into the tradition. IBW’s association and study of Black intellectuals such as DuBois, James, and Drake recognized the limitations of Marxism. As Robinson stated, “Marxism, the dominant form that the critique of capitalism has assumed in Western thought, incorporated theoretical and ideological weaknesses that stemmed from the same social forces that provided the bases of capitalist formation.”\textsuperscript{53} The Black Radical Tradition, although starting with the critique of capitalism, recognized that

\textsuperscript{53} Cedric J. Robinson, \textit{Black Marxism}, 10.
production was not the organizing principle of society, rather race and racial
ideology was the mode of inclusion and exclusion. As Robinson stated:

The social cauldron of Black radicalism is Western society. Western society,
however, has been its location and its objective condition but not – except in a
most perverse fashion – its specific inspiration. Black radicalism is a negation
of Western civilization, but not in the sense of a simple dialectical negation. It
is certain that the evolving tradition of Black radicalism owes its peculiar
moment to the historical interdiction of African life by European agents. In
this sense, the African experience of the past five centuries is simply one
element in the mesh of European history: some of the objective requirements
for Europe’s industrial development were met by the physical and mental
exploitation of Asian, African, and native American peoples. This experience
though, was merely the condition for Black radicalism – its immediate reason
for and object of being – but not the foundation for its nature or character.
Black radicalism, consequently, cannot be understood within the particular
context of its genesis. It is not a variant of Western radicalism whose
proponents happen to be Black. Rather, it is a specifically African response to
an oppression emergent from the immediate determinants of European
development in the modern era and framed by orders of human exploitation
woven into the interstices of European social life from the inception of
Western civilization....

The SRS exemplified this tradition, however, some staff members within the
Institute, reflecting the ideologically rigid times of the 1970s, saw a conflict between
Marxist and Pan-Africanist analysis.

**Internal Institutional Problems**

While the 1971 Summer Research Symposium succeeded in generating ideas
and debate on the role of Black intellectuals in the struggle for Black liberation, the
development of a Black perspective, one that could orientate the staff and provide
analysis of the Black struggle, remained nebulous. In fall 1971, much of the
administrative staff still believed IBW was not attaining its goals. They issued a

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series of grievances to the Executive Committee. They located the problems engulfing IBW in three areas – an ideological division, poor leadership, and weak finances. While the last two concerns will be addressed later, the perceived ideological division signified the failure of the central intellectual tasks of the Institute.

The inability to define precisely "the Black perspective" began to divide the Institute. Rather than a Black Radical Tradition, the staff saw a split between Pan-African and Marxist tendencies in the Institute that was "fundamental and irreconcilable." A group of staff members, which included long time administrative assistant Sharon Burke, identified the Pan-African line, generally associated with Vincent Harding, as "preoccupied with the reclaiming of the history of African peoples." According to several staff members, this tendency looked at pre-industrial African civilizations as a better social system and the goal must be to "restore or preserve that existence in new African ways in this century." The assumed moral superiority of African society placed it in direct moral opposition to the devastating effects of Western culture. The political language of Blackness that formed the basis of the Pan-African tendency motivated Harding to assert that the "Black man is truth or close to the truth, Blackness is the truth of truth...." Harding used the discourse to challenge the values of America. He insisted that the reinterpretation of the Black experience must begin with a reinterpretation of Africa,

and had to address Africans in the New World. Because of Harding’s leadership of
IBW, much of the original staff were inclined towards this broad framework,
including A.B. Spellman, Lerone Bennett, Joyce Ladner, and Sterling Stuckey. This
discourse of Blackness allowed some organizations such as Karenga’s US to promote
a new African value system to replace “degenerating” Western cultural values. This
focus implicitly linked IBW with the cultural nationalism of Karenga.56

The other tendency in IBW, according to the staff, was a Marxist orientation.
The Institute’s personnel believed that Marxism shaped the mission “to educating
and organizing an oppressed people to take power.” Moreover, it did not view
capitalism and scientific principles as being oppositional to Black history, but as
components to be addressed and transformed. From the staff’s perspective, William
Strickland represented and developed this strain of thought through his analysis of
James Boggs and his opposition to Pan-Africanism evidenced in the debate he
precipitated over the “African struggles” sign.57

56 Staff Caucus, “Reorganization Begun, But Incomplete” IBW Papers. 18 July 1971 Letter from
Sharon Burke to Vincent Harding, Mayme Mitcham, William Strickland, and Robert Hill, “IBW
Papers, Box (Reorganization Aug. 1969 - Nov. 1971), Folder (July 1971). Lerone Bennett, *IBW and
William Strickland, “Reflections on the Staff Reorganization Documents,” IBW Papers, Box
Reorganization (3 of 5)/ Folder, Reflections on the Staff Reorganization. Alphonso Pinkney, *Red,
Black and Green: Black Nationalism in the United States*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University
Press, 1976), 13-14. Pickney links IBW to educational nationalism a derivative of cultural
nationalism.

57 Staff Caucus, “Reorganization Begun, But Incomplete.” 18 July 1971 Letter from Sharon Burke
William Strickland, “Reflections on the Staff Reorganization Documents,” IBW Papers Box
The inability to create a cohesive perspective, from the staff's perspective, fostered an aura of conservatism in IBW. Staff members accused IBW of being a "bourgeois organization," rather than a revolutionary one. In addition, the staff thought IBW reflected this conservatism on issues of class, sex, religion, and lifestyle.

As Sharon Burke stated,

It's as if the ferment in the White world were defined as merely White and degenerate, and therefore of no concern to those waging a serious Black struggle, whereas I suspect that they (Women's Lib, Gay Lib, consumer movements, music movements, etc.) are serious movements too. Not silly, diversionary, divide-and-conquer fades, but consequences of a new stage of historical development. Not signs of decay, but of something being born.58

The staff viewed the ideological split in the organization as pointing to the two directions the organization could develop - a "bourgeois, class-oriented, educational institution" or an "organization dedicated to educating and politicizing the masses to take power."59

Both Vincent Harding and William Strickland responded to the staff's criticisms. Both believed that the staff had made their analysis on faulty information and encouraged them to revisit the reorganization documents. Strickland believed the staff documents portrayed a false dichotomy between Pan-Africanist and

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From Vincent Harding, "Response to: 'Reorganization Begun, But Incomplete,'" IBW Papers Box (Reorganization 3 of 5)/ Folder (Reorganization).

58 Ibid. 6.

Marxist interpretations. Moreover, he viewed the dichotomy as one based on differing understandings of the role of intellectuals to the social order, as one "between the politics of idealism and the politics of social change." Strickland insisted that the intellectual's role was to provide analysis, and characterized Harding's position as one who viewed "the artist/intellectual as being important in its own right." Furthermore, Strickland distrusted Pan-Africanism because of its manipulation by the "black petty bourgeoisie," but he was not opposed to Pan-African links.60

Harding added, in a separate response, that the two views were "complementary and non-antagonistic in their differences." he admitted struggling with how to reach the Black masses, believing that in order to reach this potential revolutionary group, IBW must go through other institutions such as schools and churches. Harding concluded that the type of education needed "must include a sense of one's history and identity, a clarification of the nature of the earlier oppressions and struggles against them and the successes and failures of the past. It must include an accurate analysis of the structures and mechanism of oppression, past and present and contemplated; it must include many-sided analysis of the present situation and what is necessary for successful organization and struggle."61

Harding and Strickland point to the reconciliation of the perceived opposition


61 Memo From Vincent Harding, "Response to: 'Reorganization Begun, But Incomplete,'" IBW Papers, 3, 11.
between Pan-Africanism or Romantic Black Nationalism and Marxism, one that formed an essential component of the Black Radical Tradition.

The staff's view that Marxism and Nationalism were antagonistic represented an a-historical understanding of the ideologies. Marxism and Nationalism were both reactions to the Liberal-Positivist framework ushered in by the Enlightenment. Liberalism sought to displace the supremacy of Christian thought by providing alternative rationalizations for society. The Enlightenment established reason as the source of authority displacing the divine, such that humans (mankind) and not God or nature was dominant. Man demonstrated his dominance through progress, in which he conquers nature using the scientific method.\textsuperscript{62} Nationalism countered the scientific principles and "discovered the truth not in the observation or consciousness of objects but in the self-consciousness or introspection of the subject not in the motions of the stars but in the motions of the human heart."\textsuperscript{63} It opposed reason with feeling and individuality with community developed from customs and traditions. Moreover, the lack of normative values found in positivist history, which searched for absolute knowledge through the process of greater perfection, led to Marx's historical reinterpretation of dialectical materialism, which saw change occurring only through the struggle of opposites in the economic realm. Although Nationalism and Marxism challenged the framework set forth by Liberal-Positivism,


\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, 15.
both reconstituted the framework with their reliance on a similar premise - the human as a natural organism.\textsuperscript{64}

While both Nationalism and Marxism grew from the ground cultivated by Liberal Positivism, IBW's call for a Black perspective was an attempt to find a more foundational theoretical framework. A Black perspective placed race as the organizing principle, rather than mode of production (Marxism) or the imagined community of ethnicity (Nationalism). Race supplied the ontological and epistemological locus for society. Race, not in the genetic sense, but in the sense of being and non-being, was implied in IBW's Black perspective, one that connected them to the Black Radical Tradition. IBW sought to fashion an intellectual perspective that bridged these two perspectives and provide a "new synthesis," which could analysis the systemic exclusion of Blacks.\textsuperscript{65}

The question of - what do representations do and how do representations function in the cultural system - were central to IBW's understanding and aspirations in developing a Black perspective. IBW struggled in fully articulating this new synthesis or Black viewpoint and the staff's belief in a split reflected the limitations of each stance to explicate independently Black exclusion in the 1970s. Because Liberalism racialized and proletariatized Blacks, the masses became the "truth," revealing Black exclusion on the bases of race and class. This "created"

\textsuperscript{64} Michel Foucault, \textit{The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences}, 310.

authenticity of the Black masses often flattened the class conflicts within the Black community. While this position provided an excellent critique of the American social system, from the systemically dispossessed, it also reinscribed the very framework it was opposing. In creating this oppositional force, Black Power intellectuals created a biologized, working-class family as nation. Scholar Wahneema Lubiano points to this contradiction as "an example of the limitation of a political imagery that tries to do the work of 'creating' the potential black revolutionary subject, but which cannot account for any possible middle-class black agency - including its own." The inability to assess the middle-class agency, especially as revolutionary intellectuals contributed to the struggles the Institute had in developing a Black perspective. The reorganization meetings, Summer Research Symposium, and staff conflict pointed to the need for a new synthesis, beyond Liberalism, Black Nationalism and Marxism, an analytic frame that IBW attempted to articulate. The Institute of the Black World viewed a Black Agenda as the clearest expression of a potential new synthesis. During reorganization, the Institute concluded, "the Black agenda will become the highest organization expression of the basic program of the Institute...." The agenda will "identify and define the most crucial issues, problems and areas of need now facing the national black community, to properly explain the historical and political sources of the present oppressive

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situation, to identify the real nature of the colonial predicament, and to propose and advocate approaches to fundamental change to as large and influential a black constituency as possible.”

The desire for a Black perspective drove the Institute’s development of a Black Agenda, one that merged with the plans at 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana.

67 “IBW Reconsidered: Moving to a Higher Stage/ Towards a Higher Stage,” 12.
CHAPTER 5

"TOWARDS A BLACK AGENDA:" IBW AND BLACK INDEPENDENT POLITICS

Developing a Black Agenda was always at the center of IBW’s programming. In the original Statement of Purpose drafted in 1969, “a Black Policy Studies Center” was a principle goal. The proposed Policy Center was “an attempt ... to develop solid tools of social analysis focussed [sic] on the contemporary situation of the Black community in America and committed totally to the struggle of that community for self determination.”¹ During the tumultuous separation with the King Center, Vincent Harding suggested the Black Agenda “might well become the central corporate task of the Institute Staff for the next 2-3 years.”² A Black Agenda became increasingly important because Harding believed the Black think-tank model “came closest to the task we saw for ourselves” despite it inherent problems. The institute would apply its Black perspective and form an agenda “that sought to move the Black Community towards that control of our lives, our institutions, and our environment which may help to make possible the revolutionary change necessary to create a humane society in America.” IBW concluded that a Black Agenda must


address issues surrounding education, economic development, political organizing, police control, health and welfare, approaches to the Third World, research on the Black historical experience, and cultural development.  

The conservative White backlash to Black protest and advancement was in full bloom by the early 1970s and President Richard Nixon fanned the flames with his use of the code words to signify racial rhetoric. It was in this hostile climate that the Institute of the Black World began developing a Black Agenda. The Institute organized its network of associates to formulate an agenda for the 1972 presidential election. This network eventually formed a key component of the 1972 National Black Political Convention. The Institute's associates transferred their agenda building experiences to the national convention in Gary, Indiana.

IBW's belief in a distinct Black Agenda stemmed from what historian Komozi Woodard calls, the Modern Black Convention Movement. The 1966, 1967, 1968 Black Power Conferences, 1970 and 1972 Congress of African Peoples Conventions (CAP), and the 1972 Gary Convention composed the major gatherings of this movement. These conventions, led by Black Cultural Nationalists, pushed the Black freedom struggle from questions of equal access to Black liberation. Along with exposing the failures of the United States government to rectify problems facing the Black community such as poverty, police brutality, and institutionalized racism, the nationalists sought to create alternative institutions. For the Institute of the Black

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3 Ibid. 2 - 4.
World, 1970 CAP Convention and the 1972 Gary Convention most influenced its
desire to use intellectual talent to forge a Black Agenda.4

The Congress of African Peoples

The 1970 Congress of African Peoples grew out of the idea of developing a
Black United Front, which was the belief that Blacks from a variety of ideological
perspective could unite in common good. The initial efforts occurred during the
Black Power Conferences held from 1967 to 1969, which attempted to provide
conceptual clarity to the Black Power concept. Dr. Nathan Wright organized the
first of three Black Power Conferences. Wright, a Black Republican, held the 1967
conference at an upscale, White-owned hotel in Newark, New Jersey, which Black
professionals primarily attended. Reflecting the dominant constituency, the
conference concluded that Black Power meant getting a “fair share” of American
capitalism. The Second Black Power conference held the next year in Philadelphia,
had corporate sponsorship from Clairol. It, too, associated Black Power with Black
Capitalism, a theme seized upon by the mercurial 1968 presidential candidate
Richard Nixon. Bermuda hosted the final Black Power Conference, which was a
debacle, as the Bermudian government barred many grassroots activists from
attending, believing they threatened domestic stability. Despite these setbacks, the
concept of a Black United Front remained a goal for many activists, who viewed the

convention model as the most democratic method for creating a systematic and

The 1970 Congress of African Peoples marked the beginning of
unprecedented amount of unity between grassroots activists, Black politicians, and
the Black civil rights establishment that lasted through the 1972 Gary Convention.
Amiri Baraka conceived of CAP as a vehicle for Black unity across the ideological
spectrum. The opening session demonstrated that Baraka and organizers made a
conscious effort to actualize a Black United Front, as the program incorporated a
broad spectrum of Black organizations. Haywood Henry, a twenty-seven year old
faculty member of Harvard University's Department of Black Studies and
chairperson of the National Black Caucus in the Unitarian-Universalist Church,
served as chairman of CAP. The opening speakers included Black politicians,
Kenneth Gibson, mayor of Newark, NJ; Richard Hatcher, mayor of Gary, Indiana;
John Cashin, chairman of the Alabama Democratic Party, and Julian Bond, the
Georgia legislature. Whitney Young, Jr., The National Urban League; Jesse Jackson,
Operation PUSH; and Ralph Abernathy, Southern Christian Leadership Conference
(SCLC) represented the civil rights establishment. Members of Black nationalist
organizations present including Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam; Howard
Fuller of Malcolm X Liberation University and Student Organization for Black Unity
(SOBU); Imari Obadele of the Republic of New Africa (RNA); and Amiri Baraka of
the Committee for a United Newark (CFUN). These individuals and organized met under the theme, "unity without uniformity." This was dramatically symbolized at the conclusion of the opening session by Haywood Henry clasping hands with Whitney Young and Louis Farrakhan, raising them, while the audience shouted, "It’s Nation Time."  

Pan-Africanism was the analytical perspective used by Baraka to achieve a semblance of unity from across the Black political spectrum. According to Baraka, "The Pan African movement encourages African peoples ... to understand that they are brothers and sisters, families, communities, nations, a race together, breed in common struggle, brought forth from, and a result of common history ... we all strive for a common future; a people united, independent, basing our claim to national and international sovereignty upon a unified, independent mother Africa, whose freedom, then would automatically raise the level of Africans' lives all over the planet."  

Opening speeches echoed the goal of unity. SCLC’s Ralph Abernathy stated a desire to build a "movement that encompasses black Baptists as well as Black Panthers." Pan-Africanism provided the necessary glue to allow such diverse Black constituencies to meet in Atlanta.

If Pan-Africanism allowed for wide participation, it also obscured ideological cleavages. Whitney Young, for example used the language of Pan-Africanism but

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promoted integrated Black Capitalism. "The Black community" he declared, "must aspire for power through investments and policy positions in management of the economic institutions which dominate America and greatly affect the social and economic development of African people the world over, as well as seek control over its own local institutions." On the other hand, Howard Fuller expressed the need for Black ownership of land, which was the organizing principle for separatist Black Nationalism. These dichotomous perspectives were neither reconciled nor debated during the CAP convention because of the fragile unity provided by Pan-Africanism.

The Conference formed eleven working committees covering political liberation, social organization, creativity, Black technology, religion, education, community organization, law and justice, history, communication and economics. An impressive array of Black intellectuals chaired the committees including Baraka in political liberation, Larry Neal in creativity, James Cone in religion, John Henrik Clarke and Yosef Ben-Jochanan in history, Tony Brown in Communications, and Robert S. Browne on Black economics.

The resolutions that emerged out of these working groups formed the beginning of a national Black Agenda. An important resolution was the political liberation committee’s dramatic call for an independent Black political party. The party was to address four areas of political power – public office, community organizations, alliance and coalitions, and disruption. CAP conceived of the party as

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significant beyond elections, it was to be the “organ of consciousness.” Baraka concluded that creating alternative representation was equally important. “We are largely controlled by the ideas of our oppressors.” He stated, “The political party must build alternative systems, values, institutions that will move us and raise us.”

The question of whether the Congress of African People could accomplish the vast goals within the confines of a political party was largely unanswered. However, the call for a Black political party ran counter to the popular conception that the Civil Rights Movement was over.

Shortly after the Congress of African Peoples meeting in December 1970, IBW released its most direct statement on a Black agenda prior to the 1972 Gary Convention. In a New York Times article, Harding and Strickland situated IBW in the realm of independent politics:

During the recent elections both parties abandoned black people and our issues: the insane, wasteful, imperialistic war; the arrogant national support of antiliberation forces across the Third World; the persecution and assassination of our young people; the deterioration and poisoning of the urban centers; economic depression in black America; educational genocide practiced against inner city children; the uses of token ‘desegregation’ in the South to destroy real black control of black public education – none of these was seriously addressed by white politicians.

The authors expressed hope of an “eventual development of humane alternatives to all the basic political, economic, and cultural systems of America.” This goal, the article proclaimed, could only be attained through “independent, insistent, black

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political power,” because a Black agenda was the only “humane agenda” remaining.10

The call for independent Black politics occurred during the apogee of the counterreformation or White backlash. The backlash exposed the hostility, regardless of political party, towards Black issues. Its point of departure was located at the apex of the civil rights struggle – 1964. As Martin Luther King, Jr. observed, the White backlash was not new, nor caused by Black Power, nor the urban rebellions, it was a continued “expression of the same vacillation, the same search for rationalizations, the same lack of commitment that have always characterized white America on the question of race.”11

“Hunting Where the Ducks Are:” The Counterreformation of Color Blind Liberalism

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many conservatives, and some liberals began to suggest that the Civil Rights Movement had gone too far, with its advocacy of Black community control, affirmative action, and other demands that sought to achieve equality not only in opportunity, but in fact. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, for example, suggested to President Nixon in 1970 that he adopt a policy of “benign neglect” in response to the perceived excesses of the movement. “The issue of race has been too much talked about … has been too much taken over by hysterics,


11 Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community? (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1968), 68.
paranoids, and boodlers on all sides,” Moynihan opined, “We may need a period in which Negro progress continues but racial rhetoric fades.”

Republicans articulated racial politics in code words, which avoided controversial direct racial references. These code words invoked a narrow individualism through its suggestion that after decades of segregation, all Americans now had equal opportunity. This point of view opposed the notion of racial collective identity that under girded Black Power, and it provided a basis for a re-emerging White Nationalism. This conservative framework materialized during Richard Nixon’s successful 1968 presidential campaign, when he utilized the languages of states’ rights and individualism to mobilize a new majority electorate. Combining these two discourses allowed the Republican Party to shed its moderate image and incorporate former conservative Southern Democrats and working class ethnics in the North. In essence, these political languages were the weapons that allowed the GOP to, in the words Barry Goldwater, “go hunting where the ducks are.”

Understanding Nixon’s presidential success in 1968, after years of disappointments, necessitates a return to his narrow defeat in 1960. John F. Kennedy’s victory in the 1960 election forced many within the Republican Party to reassess their positions and strategies. Attempting to slow the dominance of the

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Democratic Party in the South, the Republican National Committee began

"Operation Dixie."

Operation Dixie, which began in 1957 under Virginia’s I. Lee Potter, became a key component of the expansion of the Republican Party after 1960. Many conservatives, especially Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, believed that the South was the region in which the GOP could gain an electoral advantage. “Only in the South does the presidential election tell the really significant story,” stated Goldwater. Operation Dixie attempted to put the Republican Party back in the South for the first time since Reconstruction. The program encouraged conservative Republicans to travel across the South, demonstrating to White Southerners that the GOP shared their ideological and racial perspective. Republican Conservatives shrouded their racial policies in the codes words of states’ rights and law and order.

The language of states’ rights is closely tied to the debate over Black civil rights in post-emancipation America. Southern White politicians employed this political language during Reconstruction to justify local control over the Black population. In the 1960s, the Republican Party turned to the discourse of states’ rights as a coded-phrase for allowing Southern states to maintain segregation, in order to present the GOP as literally a “White Man’s Party.” When Goldwater captured the Republican nomination for president in 1964, he employed this language in his campaigns throughout the South. Consequently, he won Alabama,

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14 Quoted in Philip Klinkner, The Losing Parties, 49.

Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, despite his defeat to Southerner Lyndon Johnson.\textsuperscript{16}

In addition to states' rights, Goldwater promoted the political language of individualism. The language of individualism served two functions. First, it supported the notion of states' rights, which reduced federal interference. Secondly, the language appealed to affluent Americans, a group that had increased in the aftermath of World War II. Goldwater statements on welfare typify these functions.

The currently favored instrument of collectivization is the Welfare State. The collectivists have not abandoned their ultimate goal - to subordinate the individual to the State - but their strategy has changed. They have learned that Socialism can be achieved through Welfarism quite as well as through Nationalization. They understand that private property can be confiscated as effectively through taxation as by expropriating it. They understand that the \textit{individual} can be put at the mercy of the State - not only by make the State his employer - but by divesting him of the means to provide for his personal needs and by giving the State the responsibility for caring for those needs from the cradle to the grave.\textsuperscript{17}

A young cadre of intellectuals advanced these ideas throughout the Republican Party. Groups such as the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) used this framework to take leadership roles in the GOP, ultimately nominating Goldwater for president in 1964. The two political languages of states' rights and individualism served as strong foundation for the Republican Party's reclamation of the South.\textsuperscript{18}


The political languages of states' rights and individualism failed to produce an electoral victory for Barry Goldwater in 1964; in fact, he suffered one of the most lopsided defeats in American history. The defeat proved that there still was a missing element in the GOP. The missing element was its ability to relate to the "common man." Both conservatives and moderates in the party represented an elite perspective that failed to entice many potential voters.

The missing element came via George Wallace. By 1968, Wallace was most famous for his segregationist stand as Alabama governor. His gubernatorial cry of "segregation then, segregation now, and segregation forever" made him a major symbol of the "Old South." When he decided to run for president in 1968, he combined the political languages of states' rights and individualism, with a populism that appealed to many in the White working class. Wallace's natural constituency was White Southerners; however, what made his populist approach so effective was its appeal to White ethnic communities in Northern cities. One supporter captured Wallace's appeal stating, Wallace "was the only politician who stood up for the working man." Therefore, when the White working-class, which served as a key constituency of the Democratic Party, became disillusioned with the Great Society and its support for Blacks, the conservative discourse of Wallace and eventually the Republican Party appealed to them. While Wallace was too


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combustible for many, Richard Nixon incorporated Wallace’s concern for the White working class and connected it the political languages of states’ rights and individualism.  

Richard Nixon, forever the pragmatic politician, invoked non-racial code words to reach the “silent majority” who was fed up with direction of racial progress. Two policy issues provided the code words: law-and-order and busing. These two issues permitted Nixon to fuse conservative Southerners and Northern ethnic minorities into an electoral majority. Nixon applied the framework forecasted in Kevin Phillips book *The Emerging Republican Majority*. Nixon commanded his aides to “use Phillips as an analyst - study his strategy - don’t think in terms of old-time ethnics, go for Poles, Italians, Irish, must learn to understand silent majority.”

During the 1968 campaign, Richard Nixon recognized that Wallace’s third party bid would injure his chances at the presidency. While Nixon could not take Wallace’s aggressive stances on segregation and foreign policy, he could incorporate some of his political languages. Nixon identified Wallace’s campaign against crime as being politically valuable. According to Nixon, America had become “the most lawless and violent [nation] in the history of free peoples.” In addition, he linked

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civil rights organizations to lawlessness, under the guise of civil disobedience.\textsuperscript{22} The political language of law and order served two functions. First, it secured some Wallace’s sympathizers who were leery of “wasting” their vote on a third party candidate, a move that ultimately could have kept the Democrats in power.\textsuperscript{23} Secondly, it signaled to mainstream White America that Nixon would stand up to protesters especially Black protesters. Nixon’s analysis of the report of President’s National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, or Kerner Report, exemplified his defiant stance against Black protest. He stated, “One of the major weaknesses of the President’s commission is that it, in effect, blames everybody for the riots except the perpetrators of the riots.”\textsuperscript{24} The political language of law-and-order established Nixon as a candidate who would stand up to protesters, and it allowed him to undermine Wallace’s platform yet stay opposed to the Democrats.\textsuperscript{25}

Busing also mobilized the “silent majority” into the ranks of the Republican Party. Nixon’s opposition to busing catered to many Whites who opposed forced integration in housing and education. He stated while campaigning in the South,

“When you ... say that it is the responsibility of the federal government and the

\textsuperscript{22} Quoted in Stephen E. Ambrose, 	extit{Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician, 1962-1972}, Vol. 2, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 125. When Nixon named, Maryland Governor, Spiro Agnew his Vice Presidential candidate it strengthened the belief he was against lawlessness. Agnew had little national political experience, but in 1968 he made national news when he confronted the Black leadership in Maryland. Agnew accused Black leaders of cowardice because they did not contest Black Power advocates, such as Stokely Carmichael, after a rebellion erupted in Baltimore in wake of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination.

\textsuperscript{23} Ambrose, 	extit{Nixon}, 165-166. Edsall and Edsall, 	extit{Chain Reaction}, 77-78.

\textsuperscript{24} Ambrose, 	extit{Nixon}, 144.

\textsuperscript{25} Melvin Small, 	extit{The Presidency of Richard Nixon}, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 153-184.
federal courts... to in effect act as local school districts in determining how we carry out [the Brown decision] and then to use the power of the federal treasury to withhold funds or give funds in order to carry it out, then I think we are going too far.... In my view, that kind of activity should be very scrupulously examined and in many cases, I think it should be rescinded.”

Nixon embedded his opposition to busing in the language of state’s rights. He maintained that the federal government had “gone too far” infringing on local rights, ultimately trampling the Constitution. The appeal to states’ rights dodged the role both the state and federal government played in maintaining segregation. Nixon used this intellectual sleight of hand to avoid the damaging historical interpretation of both federal and state government presented by Black Power advocates in their discussion of institutionalized racism.

Nixon argued that "forced integration in housing and education" was wrong. In one speech he proclaimed, “while there may be some doubt as to whether segregated education is inferior there is no doubt whatever segregated education is inferior there is no doubt whatever on another point - that education requiring excessive transportation for students is definitely inferior.”

The notion of busing leading to inferior education avoids the history of busing. Busing by the 1970s had

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27 Once elected Richard Nixon appointed new Supreme Court judges who were strict constitutionalist in order to balance the court, or in his words to “interpret law not make it.” The battles with Congress over the nominations of conservative judges further cemented his position as an opponent to civil rights and champion of the people. See Edsall and Edsall, Chain Reaction, 79-84.

become a normalized part of the educational landscape. School districts bussed rural students to city schools, bussed students to alleviate overcrowding and bussed Black students to maintain segregation (a key complaint of the Brown case), however few politicians or school districts voiced such stringent opposition to these usages of busing. These facts highlight the racial undertones in the political language of busing. Distance, while ostensibly seen as a central problem, really was a nonexistent or minimal concern. Rather for many Whites, the symbolic function of maintaining Blacks at the bottom of the social hierarchy was more important. As one White parent later pointed out, the distance was not the concern, for her “it [was] the niggers.”

Nixon knew this and sustained his opposition to busing, because in his words, it resembled “social engineering” and was “a symbol of helplessness,” but the political pragmatist understood the electoral capital gained from the position. Nixon was able to use the issue of busing as a call for states’ rights and its inherent individualism, but recognized that these mattered little, rather “it’s the niggers” and keeping them at bottom of the well. It was in this conservative climate that the Institute of the Black World began to refine its mission and build the Black Agenda Network.

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The Black Agenda Network

In the face of the conservative White backlash and on the back of the Congress of African People, IBW established a network of associates who focused on individual issues facing the Black community. The Institute organized a meeting of national associates in October 1970 in Idlewild, Michigan. IBW created eight groups composed of ten to fifteen people each. These groups formed the Black Agenda Network (BAN). BAN was an “unprecedented attempt to create a sustained, precise, collective analysis of some of the major problems facing the community in America....” The Network planned to put forth “specific programmatic proposals” towards critical areas in education, economic development, political organization, health and welfare, communications, cultural definition and survival, organized religious resources, Pan-African history and relationships.32

For the Institute, the Black Agenda Network justified its existence as a think-tank. According to IBW,

32 “Proposal for Funding Black Agenda Network,” 18 December 1970, 1. IBW Papers, Box: (Black Agenda Network 1 of 3)/ Folder: (Proposal for funding Black Agenda Network 12/18/1970). The chairpersons of each committee are as follows:
- Communication: Lerone Bennett, Jr.
- Cultural definitions and Survival: Stephen Henderson
- Economic Development: Robert S. Browne and Robert Vowels (Dean, School of Business Administration, Atlanta University)
- Education: Chester Davis
- Health and Welfare: Andrew Billingsley (Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Howard University)
- Pan-African History and Relationships: Canute Parris (Director of Black Studies, Hofstra University) and Robert Hill
- Political Organization: William Strickland
- Organized Religious Resources: Leon Watts (Associate Director National Committee of Black Churchmen)
A large part of the strengthening of the black community, and of the nation's pilgrimage towards new health depends upon the development among black Americans of their own analysis of their problems and their programs towards solution. This must be done at the both the local and national levels, for the scope of the problems certainly transcends the local manifestations in which they are found, and the ultimate solutions must be national in concept. Moreover, the problems of black men in America are often dark mirrors of the problems of America itself.\textsuperscript{33}

IBW constructed the objectives of the Black Agenda Network around a series of questions aimed at identifying precisely the "long-range plan of analysis" and programs in the eight task force areas. The questions were:

a. What is the present condition of the national black community (recognizing significant local variants) in relation to the particular problem area under examination?
b. What are the historical and system forces inside and outside the black community which contributed to the creation of the present situation?
c. What have been the kinds of earlier attempts to deal w/ the problems? What were the results? How are these results accounted for in light of our perspective?
d. What must be done in very specific, programmatic ways, by the black community and by others to move from the present condition to one of basic health and self-determination?

After analyzing their respective issues, IBW planned for each committee to "disseminate the results of the work of the BAN task forces in as wide and as deep a milieu as possible, placing special focus on the black community." The eventual goal of BAN was to produce the kind of perspective and systemic analysis that would make it possible for the black community "to move towards authentic self-

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. 3.
determination.” The Black Agenda was, for IBW’s leadership, the embodiment of their role as intellectuals.  

IBW created committees to prepare reports on their initial assessments and to develop structures for ongoing work. The political organizing committee’s initial report, for example, identified powerlessness as the basic political condition of Black people. The report located the source of this powerlessness in three areas, “the machinations of white power, the absence of a political methodology for organizing blacks in behalf of their own self-interest, and the absence of a political ideology which expressed self-interest.” The committee examined the need for developing Black methodology and ideology as a “precondition to any victorious struggle with white political power.” It scrutinized the Black United Front as a methodology for organizing and linked the lack of a coherent Black ideology to a lack of independent Black political analysis. The committee concluded, “electoral politics can be viable tactic for liberation if it is converted from transient political campaigns into permanent political movement. All agreed that politics must be transformed from an end in itself (political participation) to a concrete means of liberation.”

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34 Ibid. 4 – 6.

35 “Report of Political Organizing Task Force,” 1 – 6. Emphasis in Original. IBW Papers. Box: (Black Agenda Network 1 of 3)/ Folder: (Political analysis task force: mailings from chairman). This committee included: William Strickland, Chairman; Ella Baker; Robert Chapman, Department of Social Justice, National Council of Churches; Mack Jones, Political Scientist; Mayme Mitcham, IBW Staff; Alex Poinsett, Ebony Magazine; Bryant Rollins, H. Carl McCall Associates; Nehaz Rogers, Black Consultants, representing offices of the Mayor, Gary, IN; Stanley Smith, Dean, Fisk University; Charles Turner, Black United Front, Boston; James Turner, Chair of Africana Studies, Cornell University; Leon Watts, Associate Director, National Committee of Black Churchmen
Although insufficient funding and the logistical difficulty of organizing the vast array of committees weakened IBW’s Black Agenda Network, many of those involved found their experiences useful during the organizing and operation of the 1972 Gary Convention.  

The Gary Convention and the Black Agenda

In addition to the CAP convention and IBW’s Black Agenda Network meetings, Black leadership conferences began to meet in 1971 to develop an effective strategy to maximize the Black vote in the 1972 presidential election. At a key September 1971 meeting in the Chicago suburb of Northlake, IL, Black elected officials, along with grassroots leaders such as CORE’s Roy Innis and CAP’s Amiri Baraka, debated the appropriate strategy for the election. Georgia State Representative Julian Bond proposed that each state or city with a large Black population run a “favorite son or daughter” candidate, which would help increase the Black voter turnout. Others such as Dr. John Cashin, chairman of the Alabama National Democratic Party, wanted no Black Presidential candidate. Percy Sutton, Manhattan Borough President, opposed Cashin, arguing, “Running a black

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36 “4 February 1971 Memo: To Executive Committee; From Black Agenda Network Committee, Aljosie Yabura; Re. Proposed revisions in BAN Structure,” 1-4. IBW Papers, Box: (General Correspondence 1971)/ Folder: (February).

37 Other meetings were held in Washington, DC and Greensboro, NC. The central figures at the meetings were Jesse Jackson, Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes, Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher, Detroit Congressman John Conyers, Percy Sutton, Julian Bond, Michigan Congressman Charles Diggs, Coretta King, California State legislators Willie Brown and Mervyn Dymally, Texas State Senator Barbara Jordan, the Urban Leagues Vernon Jordan, California Congressman Augustus Hawkins, District of Columbia Congressman Walter Fauntroy, Clarence Mitchell of the Washington, DC NAACP, New York politician Basil Patterson, Roy Innis of CORE, and Amiri Baraka. Robert Smith, We Have No Leaders, 39 – 40. Komozi Woodard, A Nation Within a Nation, 184 – 203.
Presidential candidate creates a strategy and a sense of internal unity which carries far beyond the convention floor and the election of 1972. It carries with it a political awareness that will flow into the local election of every city, town, and village in America were black people live."\textsuperscript{38} Baraka proposed a national convention, but both nationalists and Black elected officials had misgivings over the suggestion. Nationalists believing that no work could be accomplished given the diverse ideologies, and elected officials were wary of being accountable to their respective constituencies.\textsuperscript{39}

The Black Elected Officials conference held two months later, November 1971, continued the move towards the Gary Convention. Over three hundred officials attended the Washington, DC meeting. There were fourteen workshops ranging from "Black political power in the Seventies" to "Money Resources," to the "Problems of Aging." Despite the theme of unity, controversy erupted surrounding the issues of Shirley Chisholm’s presidential campaign. Florida State Representative Gwendolyn Cherry and supporters of Chisholm accused the male members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) of undermining her campaign. The conference fell into chaos, with Chisholm taking the microphone and verbally attacking those who, she believed, were "always plotting and planning" against her. The debate on the merits of Chisholm’s campaign pushed the question of a national convention in


the background. However, historian, *Ebony* senior editor, and the Institute of the Black World Senior Associate Lerone Bennett, Jr. returned to the need for a Black agenda during his keynote speech.40

Bennett echoed themes from IBW's earlier Black Agenda Network meetings. He believed it was imperative for the leadership community "to develop a series of comprehensive plans identifying the black interest and the black position in every field." Bennett saw this as important for five reasons. Initially, he believed it was important to develop a plan of survival in terms of employment, welfare, education, prison reform, and health. Secondly, a Black Agenda must provide empowerment, at all cultural, political, and economical levels. This was a call for Black control of resources and bureaucracies that affect Black lives. Thirdly, Bennett believed that an agenda must renew the "structures, energies, and values of the black community." Fourthly, there must be a massive mobilization of the resources in the community, including labor, capital, intellect, and the ballot. In addition, this mobilization must "transform political structures so that people will not have to be aliens and adversaries for resources and services that governments should provide routinely."

Finally, Bennett stated a Black Agenda should transform "the institutions of America

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40 William L. Clay, *Just Permanent Interests: Black Americans in Congress, 1870 – 1992*, (New York, NY: Amistad Press, 1993), 192 – 199. Shirley Chisholm suggested that her lack of support from the Black Congressional Caucus was due to her gender. She claimed in her biography *The Good Fight*, regarding the Black leadership conferences, "I was not asked to take much part, and I did not intrude" (25). While not suggesting male members of the CBC were not sexist, I agree with Robert Smith who concluded, other prominent Black female leaders did participate in the meetings, and her campaign was not supported because "it emerged outside of the ongoing consensus-building process involving candidates and strategies that she did not take part in" (41). Chisholm, during a moment of attempted Black unity, began a Presidential campaign that ostracized itself from the Black political movement. Robert Smith, *We Have No Leader*, 41-42. Shirley Chisholm, *The Good Fight*, 25, 30 – 42.
which threaten or prevent the fulfillment of items one, two, three, and four.”

Bennett concluded, echoing IBW’s mantra, “It is necessary for us to disengage ourselves from white people’s arguments and redefine all concepts and associations in terms of the fundamental interest of black people.” It is clear Bennett’s associations with IBW and the leadership conference influenced his demands for the development of a Black agenda.41

After the Black elected officials gave Bennett a roaring applause, Michigan Congressman Charles Diggs suggested the convening of a national convention in spring 1972. Diggs stated:

For 300 years black people have been the victims and the pawns of the American political process. The political representatives of the black community ... have concluded that we still wear the shackles of political bondage.... [T]he Congressional Black Caucus issues a call to the black people of the United States for a national political convention ... for the purpose of developing a national black agenda and the crystallization of a national black strategy for the 1972 elections and beyond....42

This in effect was the official call for the Gary Convention and a mass based political convention.

The call for a national convention did not resolve the concerns of both grassroots nationalists and Black elected officials. In fact, the naming of three co-chairs, Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher, Charles Diggs, and Amiri Baraka, exemplified the underlying cleavages. However, under the banner of unity, the co-chairs announced the convention for March 10 - 12, 1972 in Gary, Indiana, which provided


42 Quoted in William L. Clay, Just Permanent Interests, 201 - 202
only three months to organize. Consequently, the time limitations forced the co-chairs to rely on established activist networks, such as Baraka's Congress of African People, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Institute of the Black World. These networks coordinated aspects of the massive undertaking.

By February 1972, Vincent Harding, William Strickland, and Lerone Bennett, Jr., on behalf of the Institute of the Black World, along with other political analysts drafted the preamble to the Gary Convention. The preamble placed a Black agenda as central to "true self-determination." Moreover, the document stressed the inadequacy of the two-party political system and the betrayal by both parties to the interests of Black Americans. "The American system does not work for the masses of our people and it cannot be made to work without radical fundamental change."
The implied solution was the creation for an independent Black movement, a "determined national Black power, which is necessary to insist upon such change, to create such change, to seize change." The preamble solidified the transformative outlook, beyond traditional politics, of the Convention, a perspective that had worried many Black elected officials and Black civil rights organizations.

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The NAACP was the first to oppose the transformative perspective promoted in the preamble. John A. Morsell, assistant executive director for the NAACP, called the introduction unacceptable because the rhetoric of separatism. Morsell stated, "it calls for withdrawal from the American political process on the thesis that this is "white politics" and it "proclaims a doctrine a doctrine of black racial superiority in that it holds that only persons of African descent are capable of spearheading movement toward desirable change in the society."\textsuperscript{45} The NAACP believed the document pursued revolution, rather than reform. The NAACP's press release stated, "We are committed to a practical politics of accomplishment, utilizing the system as we find in the conviction that its own processes provide the mechanism for needed changes in it."\textsuperscript{46} This relegated the NAACP as an organization to the margins of the convention as it refusal to explore even the proposition of new political ideas, frameworks, and organizations.\textsuperscript{47} The Institute’s associates response to the NAACP’s position stated,

\begin{quote}
[T]he "system as we find it" is already in an advanced state of collapse, not even working for the oppressor, much less for the oppressed, which may explain why many members of the N.A.A.C.P. were enthusiastic participants at the Gary Convention, despite the organization's official position. Commitment to the system can only lead to more collapse, with high unemployment, large welfare rolls, overcrowded prisons, and a soaring
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. 20.

\textsuperscript{47} Harold Cruse will link the NAACP's position to its long-standing ideology of non-economic liberalism. According, to Cruse, this perspective led to impressive victories during the civil rights phase of the Black Freedom Struggle, by the 1970s, their program became "obsolete" with the advancement of Black elected officials. Harold Cruse, \textit{Plural But Equal: A Critical Study of Blacks and Minorities and America's Plural Society}, (New York, NY: William Morrow, 1987), 341-370.
crime rates; inflationary prices, inadequate housing, increasing pollution, and a drug problem of crisis proportions; plus a cynical foreign policy which coordinates warfare in Asia, with big-business protectionism in Europe, and C.I.A. - initiated coups in Latin America.

The NAACP controversy signaled of the fracturing of the fragile unity at Gary.

The convention opened on Friday, March 10 under the leadership of the three co-chairs Amiri Baraka, Charles Diggs, and Richard Hatcher. Over 3,500 delegates from 44 states poured into Gary that evening. There was unbridled enthusiasm and excitement by the participants. As Ben Chavis remembered,

There was a lot of electricity in the air. I mean, it was truly a time in Gary, Indiana, when African Americans were self-determined. When there was no intimidation. In fact, there was affirmation all over the place. And I would say there was a sense of pride, just to be there. To know that we'd made it out of those local struggles around the country to come into this convention to express the aspirations of the people we left back home.48

As the state delegates caucused at their respective hotels Friday evening, their interactions with other state delegates transformed local issues of employment, health care, education, and social welfare into national issues.49

On Saturday, cleavages between grassroots activists and Black elected officials appeared. Congressman Charles Diggs, founder of the Congressional Black Caucus, and central organizer of the Gary Convention, was the chair of the general session. The convention teetered on the edge of chaos as the population soared from the three thousand 3,500 delegates to nearly 10,000 people who came to Gary to be apart of the monumental event. Diggs' heavy-handed application of the Robert's


49 Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 204-207.
Rules of Order, irritated many participants, who believed his use of the parliamentary procedures thwarted their popular participation. When Diggs closed nominations for convention chairpersons too quickly, “pandemonium broke out.” By the end of the evening, several states threatened to leave the convention. Historian Komazi Woodard has argued that Diggs was “acquainted with neither the grassroots language of [the] new political culture nor its insurgent sense of order.” Moreover, the deeper problem was that “Diggs could sense only anarchy looking at that huge assembly and that he failed to give community, municipal, county, and state leadership due respect.” This cleavage set the stage for Amiri Baraka to rise to forefront of the convention.50

Saturday evening, the crowd reached a crescendo with each increasingly nationalist speech. Richard Hatcher’s speech was symbolic of the tone. He urged the assembly to leave with “an independent national Black political agenda, a dynamic program for Black liberation....” More importantly, he stressed the need to develop the necessary mechanism to turn the proposed program into action. Stretching the limits of traditional Black politics, Hatcher argued that support of any political party must come at a high cost.

This convention signals the end of hip pocket politics. We ain’t in nobody’s hip pocket no more! We are through with any political party, and many of us, with any political system which is not irrevocably committed to our first principles, pursued in tenacious action: the liberation of Black people at home and the end of exploitation abroad.

Hatcher, invoked the fear of violence which continued to lace the discourse of Black Power.

We say to the two American political parties: this is their last chance. They have had too many already. These are not idle threats. ... To ignore our demands is to will the consequences. Those of already disenchanted with the political system could conceivably turn to fearsome tactics, shattering the quiet routine of daily life.51

Hatcher stopped short of calling for a separate Black Party.

In contrast, Jesse Jackson, speaking after Hatcher, seized the moment and called for a Black political party. He exclaimed, “Gary is the birth of a new black political party. We can no longer afford to be boys in any major party. We must start believing in ourselves.... Damn both white parties.... I am a black man. I want a black party. I don’t trust white Republicans or white Democrats.”52 Jackson recalled,

The idea of a third political party emerged because there was a sense of alienation from the Democratic [P]arty. Democrats taking us for granted, Republicans writing us off. And the agenda items for jobs and peace and justice would no longer be an afterthought for some other party or some other person. There was a sense that we had to assert this new dynamic. It’s not the first time the idea had come forth, but somehow Gary gave it special meaning.

I sensed that I was speaking to the alienation but giving it some sense of direction. I had drawn much of the strength of Nationtime from a poem written by LeRoi Jones, Amiri Baraka at that time.... It’s Nationtime, it’s time to come together. It’s time to organize politically. It’s time for partnership. It’s time for blacks to enter into the equation, it is indeed, whether you’re in California or Mississippi, it is Nationtime.53


52 Quoted in Robert C. Smith, We Have No Leaders, 48.

53 Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, Voices of Freedom, 576.
The effect Jackson’s call clearly shifted the momentum of the convention towards the grassroots activists as they consistently had called for third-party politics.

The media continued to focus on the divergent viewpoints held by Hatcher and Jackson, viewing them as a threat to the proclaimed unity. Unbeknownst to reporters, Saturday evening Baraka and CAP leaders worked with state caucuses to assuage their fears on whether their agenda items would make it off the assembly floor, because the delegates felt disrespected by Congressman Diggs authoritative moderating. The delegates and Baraka realized that a Black Agenda was the centerpiece of the convention.\(^{34}\) After a long night of negotiating with state delegates and Black leaders, Baraka moderated the tumultuous Sunday session. Convention leadership allocated this session to finalize the Black agenda, which was to serve as a fulcrum of debates with each political party. Baraka masterfully managed the session where state delegates demanded their particular issue make into the final draft of the agenda.

Two contentious issues, busing and the Israeli - Palestine conflict, put Baraka’s skill as a grassroots organizer and moderator to the test. Each item created rancorous debate from the assembly floor. In the case of busing, there was a strong split between civil rights moderates and Black elected officials on the one hand and grassroots activists on the other. Following deliberations, however, the anti-busing resolution overwhelming passed. This signaled a different direction for the Black Freedom Struggle, as desegregation formed the core of the much of the civil rights

legislation and a key catalytic element in the subsequent struggle. However, by 1972 grassroots activists, questioned the intellectual assumptions of the tactics of busing to achieve desegregated schools. Grassroots activists' anti-busing position ostensibly aligned them with President Nixon's anti-busing platform. Many moderates argued the convention's anti-busing resolution helped Nixon begin the process of rescinding civil rights advances. As the NAACP's Roy Wilkins stated, "black separatists such as Roy Innis [who introduced the resolution at the convention] and his little ban of bitter man had in effect supported Richard Nixon's position that blacks did not want busing."

The convention also passed a pro-Palestine resolution concerning the Israeli-Arab conflict in the Middle East. This position developed out the growth of the Pan-Africanism as the dominate ideology in the Freedom Struggle. The pro-Palestine resolution caused a similar backlash on the part of the Black moderate establishment. In this case, the Michigan delegation, led by Coleman Young, walked out of the convention. Young opposed "the dogmatic approach" of the Black Agenda, believing that Baraka was forcing the document through the assembly, because as Young recalled, "it was a blatantly separatist document...." A minority of the Michigan delegation remained, denouncing Young as a pawn of the United

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55 Quoted in Robert C. Smith, *We Have No Leaders*, 50- 51.

Auto Workers union, and accusing him of not allowing non-UAW Blacks to speak during the convention.57

The two controversial resolutions received more media attention than The National Black Political Agenda, when released on May 19th - Malcolm X's birthday. It was a monumental, but flawed document. Composed of eight sections, The Agenda addressed the key issues of political empowerment, economic empowerment, human development, international policy, communication, rural development, environment protection, and District of Columbia politics.

The Agenda began by calling for the National Black Assembly, believing, "the bondage of Black people in America has been sanctioned and perpetuated by the American political system - for the American political system is one of politics dedicated to the preservation of white power." The Assembly was to function as research organization, provider of political education, and a mechanism for political mobilization. The Assembly was a multipurpose political organization, although it clearly falls short of developing a third party. In addition, the Assembly was contradictory. It supported both the Republic of New Africa, who wanted the United States to give Black America five southern states as reparations for slaver and registering voters in the United States. The discourse of unity permitted contradictions such as these to continue unabated. Rather than debate these resolutions and identify the specific areas of focus, all were included.58

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57 Robert C. Smith, We Have No Leaders, 49-52, 302 n72.

58 National Black Political Agenda, 6-8.
The Agenda located the source of Black economic disadvantage in the institutionalized racism developed from slavery and Jim Crow. It also insisted that there was a debt to Black America and that the Assembly must “not rest until American society has recognized our valid, historic right to reparations, to a massive claim of the financial assets of the American economy.” Moreover, any Black economic improvement demanded a radical transformation of the economic system. Resolutions reflected this radical perspective establishing a committee to calculate reparations, pressure organizations, and corporations for reparations and the creation of a alternative economic structures.\textsuperscript{59}

In terms of human development, The Black Agenda asserted the need to break the “bonds of our colonization.” Resolutions calling for Black community control of schools, including the anti-busing measure, supported this goal. The document clearly separated itself from President Nixon’s anti-busing position, by, echoing the calls for Black Studies, insisting quality education.

Busing is not the real issue in American education today and we condemn the dishonesty of the Nixon Administration and other forces in making busing an issue, when, in fact busing has officially been used to maintain segregation for many years in many sections of the country. The real educational issue for the Black community is how do we get supreme quality education for all our youngsters.

In addition, this section on human development signaled a break with the logic of the civil rights establishment concerning desegregation and focused on autonomy through community control.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid. 9-10.
We condemn as false the notion that Black children are unable to learn unless they are in the same setting with white children.... Our politics is that we must have control of our own education, with the options of transportation and any other tools which guarantee superior quality education and also protects, all rights guaranteed under the Fourteenth Amendment.

Finally, the section on human development addressed the need to examine and focus on the growing drug epidemic in Black America.\textsuperscript{60}

*The Black Agenda*'s fourth section on international policy situated Black Americans within the African diaspora and the struggle against "global white oppression." The resolutions supported the Organization of African Unity, a pro-Palestine state, and organizing "Black action groups to demand economic sanctions against ... specific companies... which are involved in the exploitation of Black people here and abroad." While, these goals were put forth, *The Agenda* was silent on the necessary mechanisms needed to implement these resolutions.\textsuperscript{61}

Communications, the next section of *The Black Agenda*, declared the White-controlled mass media unresponsive to Black community needs. The section continued the motif of Black control demanding Black-owned television and radio stations.

Although the urban environment, with the rebellions, came to represent the new center for Black struggle, *The Black Agenda* did not forget the plight of the majority of Blacks who labored in the rural South. It insisted on stopping the "erosion" of Black land ownership, and encouraged linkages between urban and

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. 11 - 13.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid. 14 - 16.
rural Black populations because both were subject to the same source of
disempowerment – White oppression. ⁶²

One of the key linkages between urban and rural Black communities was *The Agenda*’s opposition to environmental pollution. “The major consequence of the present policies and practices of industrial plants, slumlords, and government agencies is the powerful pollute, while the powerless suffer the atrocities of pollution.” This portion of the document focused on educating Blacks on the effects and dangers of pollution, setting community standards for pollution, and assisting in lawsuits against corporations. ⁶³

Finally, *The Black Agenda* took up the cause of the District of Columbia. The District’s Black majority was the last colony. *The Agenda* stated, “The nearly 800,000 residents of our Nation’s Capital have that dual distinction of being the only citizens of our nation who are by law denied the right to self-government (the last colony) and the only major city in this country with a 72 per cent Black population. These two facts are not unrelated.” Consequently, the document called for Blacks to support the Washington, DC bid for Home Rule. ⁶⁴

In the months following the Gary Convention, IBW’s William Strickland began to formulate his thoughts on the conference. He recognized that *The Black Agenda* was essential to understanding the meaning of convention, regardless of the media’s interpretation of the events. He wrote,

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⁶² Ibid. 19 – 20.

⁶³ Ibid. 21-22.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 23.
We came to Gary to adopt a National Black Agenda and to attempt to unite Black people around our common interests by adopting a program that could come before the election of candidates. We created a program that would break with the traditional history of American politics of personality; we came to Garry to break with this tradition of ignorance that sees the liberation of Black people being invested in the election of some white or Black Messiah. That is what Gary stood for at its best, and that was the essential spirit of the Black Agenda which was adopted at Gary.65

For Strickland, The Convention repudiated existing American politics and represent the “People’s Great Democratic Cultural Revolution.”66

Strickland stressed that in order to implement effectively the potential of Gary, The Black Agenda must be taken to the masses and ratified by Black people in some populist fashion.67 IBW offered to be a vehicle for mass political education through the production of broadsides that would promote the meaning of the Gary Convention – the new Black politics of transformation. Strickland argued that political theorists, grassroots activists, and Black elected officials must develop the independent Black political thrust of Gary, which is truly democratic, going beyond Black elected officials and “some of the sectarian nationalists.” According to Strickland, new Black politics must “come to transform the society not ... nestle

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within it.” Moreover, the politics of transformation must move from “elitism to mass movement.”

Strickland’s idea of taking the Black Agenda to the masses never occurred because it much of its dynamism was immediately undercut by, what Vincent Harding termed “politics as usual.” Rather than a crucial beginning, the fragile unity began to fall apart soon after the summit. Black elected officials immediately began to rescind their support of the Black Agenda fearing alignment with the more controversial aspects of the document. In June 1972, the Congressional Black Caucus issued a “Black Declaration of Independence” and a “Black Bill of Rights.” The CBC planned to use its two-part document as leverage with the Presidential nominees. This undermined the Gary Agenda which was to be taken to both party conventions, and based on the strongest support the National Black Assembly would support the particular candidate. The CBC’s program was a watered-down version of the Gary Agenda, which was not developed out a mass political process, but was a return to old political forms. As political scientist Ron Walters concluded, “the politics of Gary and the strategy of Black elected officials was at unredeemable odds.”

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"The Edge of History"

Scholars who examined have the Gary Convention have declared that it was a missed opportunity. At the crux of these analyses was the failure to establish a viable third political party. Harold Cruse, for example wrote,

The basic reason for this convention’s failure was that the black political convention movement promised to produced an independent Black political party (something that no single nonwhite minority in the United States could even contemplate doing!), which was the only logical reason for calling a black political convention. Such a bold, independent step meant breaking with the Democratic party, however, which black elected officials had no intentions of doing. For this reason, the black political convention of 1972, 1974, and 1976 were poorly attended by the new black elected officials.\(^70\)

Scholars have presented a number of arguments on why a Black party failed to develop. First, the potential party could not accommodate the variety of ideological positions held in the Black community. As Robert Smith argues, “The black community is too ideological diverse to operate for long in a single, all-inclusive organization capable of representing the interests of the race in its relationships to whites or the larger external political order.”\(^71\) Smith suggested that rather than one organization, two organizations needed to be developed; one to facilitate internal “communal discussion, decision making and action” and another “devoted to external relationships” in terms of political mobilization. A singular political party could not engage in the necessary political education, as proposed by Strickland or complete political mobilization, thus the National Black Assembly was in effect stillborn.


\(^71\) Robert Smith, *We Have No Leaders*, 74. Emphasis in original.
In addition, scholars attributed Gary leadership, both Black elected officials and nationalists, for the missed opportunity. Smith lamented the nationalists' tendency towards "utopianism" and the Black elected officials' desire to secure their place in the Democratic Party, at the expense of the Black Agenda and the National Black Assembly. Furthermore, Jerry Gafio Watts blames Amiri Baraka's "rhetorical excesses" for the failure of the Black Agenda, as it limited the mainstream Black and White populations from discussing the document.  

The empirical evidence supports the claims by Smith, Watts, and others; however, The National Black Political Agenda should be viewed as not only an empirical document but also a utopian vision. Paul Ricoeur in his essay "Ideology and Utopia as Cultural Imagination," reconceptualized utopia from its association with escapism, and returned the idea to its original meaning of "no-place." More importantly, he emphasized the "extra-territoriality for the social function of utopia," from which "a field for alternative ways of living" is created. 

Utopia is the way in which we radically rethink what is family, consumption, government, religion, etc. The fantasy of an alternative society and its topographical figuration 'nowhere' works as the most formidable contestation of what is. What some... call ... cultural revolution, proceeds from the possible to the real, from fantasy to reality.  

Whereas, ideology is the representations of society versus actuality, embodied in the political languages of authority, utopia functions to subvert these ideologies.


Historian Robin D. G. Kelley correctly identifies that “Black intellectuals associated with ... these movements [the Black Freedom Struggle] not only imagined a different future, but in many instances their emancipatory vision proved more radical and inclusive than what their compatriots proposed.”74 As a utopian vision, a Black Agenda challenge the epistemological ground of American society.75

The utopian vision of the Black Agenda was generated by the “cognitive advantage” unique to Black Americans, as liminal to the American social structure. Asmarom Legesse identified this position as “an individual whose attribute violate the common categories of social classification.” In addition, the liminal position is the “conceptual antithesis” to the cultural system and necessary for its continued existence. As Lesgesse concluded,

Our final conclusion deals with culture and process. It has little to do with the inconsistencies between norm and practice. Nor does it have much to do with conflicting models in the same culture. It refers, rather, to the perennial conflict between culture and the numerous noncultural factors acting upon it. That is the universal problem that human societies must face and that cannot be resolved adequately by any society – regardless of the level of its technological development. What we observe on the ground, the day-to-day crises of human groups, are the crude compromise solutions designed to reconcile momentarily the two domains. Out of this field of interaction emerges the liminal person to remind us that we need not forever remain prisoners of our prescriptions. He generates conscious change by exposing all the injustices inherent in structure, by creating a real contradiction between structure and anti-structure, social order and man-made anarchy. This is the


type of dialectic that is very different from the nonconscious phenomena which we are after.\textsuperscript{76}

*The Black Agenda* attempted to emancipate America from its “prescriptions.” Rather than the Black population’s marginalization due to the categories—genetic, moral, or cultural inferiority—*The Agenda* points to the social system as functioning correctly, dependent on Black exclusion. Harold Cruse implied this stating, “What was transpiring during the Seventies indicated that the only force capable of dismantling the structure of the two-party system was the black political constituency.”\textsuperscript{77} This was not a moral position, but a function of cultural system.

The Gary Preamble declared the convention at “the edge of history.” Rather, *The National Black Political Agenda* was the objective limits of incorporation of Blacks into society. The question of Black consciousness revolved not around one’s acceptance of Black Nationalism (although this perspective provided tremendous insights), but whether activists were willing to accept their liminal position in society. The retreat from the “edge” or liminal position by both Black elected officials and Black nationalists signaled the incomplete victory of the Black freedom struggle. The Institute of the Black World struggled against the retreat, but as the Black struggle stagnated, it was difficult for them to maintain the collective and the Institute began its precipitous decline.\textsuperscript{78}


\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{77} Harold Cruse, *Plural But Equal*, 352. Emphasis in original.

\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{78} *National Black Political Agenda*, 4.
In conclusion, the years preceding the 1972 presidential election embody The Institute of the Black's identity as a think-tank. IBW used its experiences with the Congress of African Peoples, the Black Agenda Network, and the National Black Political Convention to help develop a Black Agenda. However, Black elected officials subsequent retreat from the implications of such a document further pointed to the need for a more complete analysis of the social structure, one that could account for the conservative White backlash led by President Nixon, and the success of Black elected officials and the Black middle class. However, as the 1970s progressed it became increasingly difficult for IBW to maintain its relevancy and its organization in the economically difficult 1970s.
CHAPTER 6
“BY ITS VERY DESIGN AND WORKING,” IBW AND THE INCOMPLETE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The defection of many Black elected officials from the *The National Black Political Agenda*’s radical thrust sent intellectuals and organizations scrambling to understand the fading movement of the mid-1970s. Their attempts to comprehend the movement revived the race-versus-class debates that had periodically fractured the Black intellectual community since the first decade of the century. Amiri Baraka’s ideological transformation during this period from a cultural nationalist to a Marxist-Leninist was a particularly hard blow to the future of the *Black Agenda*

Baraka’s leadership at the Gary Convention signified the apex of Black Nationalism in the years following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in particular Baraka’s style and charisma moderated the dynamic convention. His ability to produce apparent unity between the grassroots activists and elected officials was a high moment for him and legitimated Black Nationalism in many people’s minds. However, the Black elected officials’ retreat from the *Black Agenda* left Baraka and many grassroots activists despondent. For Baraka, disappointment continued when Newark, New Jersey’s first Black mayor, Kenneth Gibson created dubious political alliances to undermine Baraka’s plan for Afrocentric public
housing, Kawaida Towers. This slight was especially painful because Baraka’s grassroots organizing was the catalyst for Gibson’s election. Finally, the Black Congressional Caucus’ failure support of the Black Agenda, led Baraka by 1974 to adopt a Marxist-Leninist analysis.

In a 1975 Black World article, Baraka explained why he changed his ideology. He came to believe his strain of Black Nationalism focused on a static African culture and reflected a “petit bourgeois nationalist commitment.” Baraka argued that Black liberation required a revolutionary nationalism that attacked both racism and capitalism because there could be no liberation “until capitalism is destroyed.”

Baraka proceeded in the article to articulate Marxist-Leninism focus on dialectical materialism and the Black proletariat’s revolutionary potential. Baraka’s experiences with Black elected officials and Black middle class’s incorporation into the American social structure clearly affected the ideological transformation.

There are brothers and sisters who struggled against racism in the Sixties, but who see no need to struggle against capitalism. This is because they merely wanted to get into the system, not to destroy it.... The bourgeois nationalists... [wanted] to show the white boy that Black people could exploit as good as white folks.... Nationalism that contents itself with creating positions for the expanding Black middle class while the masses of Black people still get whipped down is reactionary, and must be opposed. Black nationalism which says it’s okay to be oppressed by a Sesu Mobuto or Léopold Senghor or Kenneth Gibson or Coleman Young, because they’re Black, is reactionary and must be opposed....

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Baraka’s changing ideology reflected a general exploration for a conceptual framework, which could analyze the changing American social system and mobilize continued Black activism.²

The disintegration of a unified Black Agenda created new sets of questions on the nature of American hegemony. The Agenda opposed the biologized racial hierarchy, or eugenic model, which was revived in the conservative backlash of the early 1970s. Although Nixon’s use of the Southern strategy and code words obfuscated the eugenic racial model under the rhetoric of colorblindness, Black activists still mobilized around racial issues in Gary. As the Institute of the Black World observed, the Nixon campaign revealed “the same old racism” and the electoral issues of crime, welfare, and busing “were all code words for us.”³ Organizing around racial issues was effective until the Gary Convention enhanced internal cleavages in the Black community. The convention’s collapse demonstrated a transformed racial paradigm that was able to reward the Black middle class. The cultural (yet still racial) hierarchy, or ethnic pluralism model that was coming to dominate the American social system in the 1970s developed because of the Civil Rights Movement. The transformed racial social system ostensibly allowed middle class Blacks at some level to assimilate into the developing category of “Whites”


based on their cultural attributes. IBW's analysis grappled to explain the changes - Black exploitation, Black incorporation, and changing racial system.

The Institute of the Black World associates sought help from, Caribbean historian and activist, Walter Rodney's frequent presence from 1973 - 1975 in formulating a conceptual framework to explain the realities of the 1970s. However, before the associates could forge a desired new analytical framework, beyond Nationalism and Marxism, the collective intellectual project disintegrated due to internal and external forces, namely finances and sabotage.

**The Political Language of Minority: Affirmative Action and The Incorporation of the Black Middle Class**

The subtle shift from the binary (Black/White) racial structure, or the eugenic model, to the ethnic-pluralism racial model resulted from the Civil Rights Movement's demand for equality and the federal government's attempt to control and shape the movement's direction. Black activists continued organizing under the rhetoric of racial unity, especially in opposition to use of code words, obscured the change in racial models. The conservative White backlash appealed to race, while at the same time shifting racial discourse. The central mechanism of government control was the symbolic incorporation of the Black middle class. The language of incorporation merged began the symbolic (and empirical) separation of the Black middle class from the Black lower classes. This incorporation nullified the difficult class unity that marked the civil rights struggle. As Martin Luther King stated
during Montgomery Bus Boycott mass meeting, “Ph.D’s and No D’s were bound together in a common venture.”

The State’s incorporation of the Black middle class required a change in the racial discourse. Race in America functioned since the one-drop rule in the 18th century in a binary fashion. Consequently, the United States functioned on a Black/White schema. Until the 19th century’s mass immigration, America envisioned itself as a Anglo-Saxon Republic. The Black/White schema allowed for a shift in racial discourse, one that minimized Anglo-Saxonism and promoted Whiteness as the means of incorporation. This slowly transformed ethnic Whites into a general White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP). American history made the WASP identity normative and relegated ethnic identities to the margins making Jamestown and the Plymouth the founding narrative. The Civil Rights Movement challenged this narrative and the state’s discursive response was to shift the founding narrative. The state moved away from Jamestown and the signature event, moving to Ellis Island and immigration as the central organizing narrative. This shift reduced the emphasis on the eugenic racial model that drove the Black Freedom Struggle and pointed to the fact that all Americans – Black, White, Indian, and Other – were all immigrants, while maintaining the dominance of Western Civilization. The state accomplished this by using the political language of minority, which allowed for incorporation of certain non-Whites who displayed the desired cultural traits that previously could have only belonged to White Anglo-Saxons.

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Middle class cultural attributes, such as thrift, piety, and nuclear family, became new markers of inclusion, while Black popular culture and the effects of systemic poverty became the markers of exclusion. This shift to the culture of poverty, rather than genetic inferiority, allowed the middle classes of all races to be hierarchically incorporated, such that the Black middle class remained below other middle classes but above other Blacks who faced deindustrialization, inflation, incarceration, and unemployment. Thus, the Republican mobilization of the silent majority and the political language of minority were two sides of the same coin. Both were required to destabilize the Black Freedom Struggle.

The Congressional debate on the 1964 Civil Rights Act demonstrated the shift away from the purely eugenic to the ethnic-pluralism racial model. The Act ostensibly answered Black activists’ demands for equality and dismantled Jim Crow legislation that had structured the South since the end of Reconstruction. Although it was Black Americans, along with their supporters, who faced hostile police, the Ku Klux Klan, fire hoses, dogs, and irate White citizens to demonstrate dramatically the second-class citizenship of Black Americans, the act used the language of minority. Legislators believed that although Blacks received the brunt of segregationist policies, the remedy had to use the universal language of minority to deal with other types of discrimination and to broaden the law outside of the South. The language did not reflect an empirical analysis, but signified a symbolic category one that described those who were non-normative in American society along the lines of
race, class, and gender. This was clearly demonstrated in the debate to add “sex” to the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Congressman Howard Smith of Virginia attempted to stop the Civil Rights Act’s ratification by attaching sex discrimination to the bill. Smith’s attempt to trivialize the bill fostered tremendous debate amongst the Congressmen and Congresswomen on the appropriateness of his amendment. Although Smith claimed to be “very serious about this amendment,” he believed that his amendment would ultimately kill the bill. However, his ploy aided the transition to a political language of minority that undermined the binary racial model that he sought to preserve. Several members of Congress argued that the Act without sex discrimination reduced the status of White women, an argument that was similar to the one held on the Fourteenth Amendment in the late nineteenth century. Congressman Andrews of Alabama stated, “Unless this amendment is adopted, the white women of this country would be drastically discriminated against in favor of a Negro woman.” Congresswoman Rivers of South Carolina added, “It is incredible to me that the authors of this monstrosity… would deprive the white woman of mostly Anglo-Saxon or Christian heritage equal opportunity before the employer.” While the statements of these Southern Congressmen were duplicitous, the statements by some Congresswomen utilized the same theme. Congresswoman Griffiths of Michigan supported the amendment because she felt White women would be “last at the hiring gate” and she added, “If you do not add sex to this bill … you are going to have white men in one bracket, you are going to try to take colored men and
colored women and give them equal employment rights, and down at the bottom of the list is going to be a white woman with no rights at all…” Both Southern Congressmen and some Congresswomen used the implied threat of Black advantage to support adding sex discrimination to the Civil Rights Act.5

In addition to employing the threat of Black advantage, members of Congress used the language of minority. Congresswoman Kelly from New York supported the amendment in order “to have all persons … posses the same opportunities.” In addition, she identified the individualism embedded in the concept of minority.

I do not want any person to secure more rights than any other, all I want is the same opportunities and rights…. I do not want anyone to be denied that which is his or here inherent right as an individual…. Let us recognize that there are many minorities in this country in all groups and organizations. There are minorities with in groups…. For their opportunity, we seek to secure these rights under this bill.6

Minority was theoretically an empirical category however, as Congresswoman Bolton of Ohio observed, “it is always perfectly delightful when some enchanting gentleman, from the South particularly, calls us the minority group. We used to be but not any more …. So I regret to state that we can no longer be in the minority; indeed we have not been in a long time.” Furthermore, Congresswomen Green of Oregon noted that Blacks suffered more discrimination than women suffer and reminded Congress “the main purpose of this legislation today is to try to help end the discrimination practiced against Negroes.” Congresswomen Bolton and Green’s statements exposed how the political language of minority did not necessary reflect

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5 Congressional Record, 110, Pt. 1 (8 February 1964): 2583, 2577, 2578.

6 Ibid. 2581. Emphasis mine.
a numerical calculation, but was a signifier for populations who were not normative. More importantly, the political language of minority allowed, in Congresswoman Green’s estimation, for a continued marginalization of Black issues.7

Academic scholarship strengthened the minority model. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s *Beyond the Melting Pot* examined the various immigrant groups – Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish – in New York City. The authors compared how each group was assimilated into the American culture. All groups, except for Blacks, displayed cultural traits, which led, or will lead, the ethnic group into mainstream American society. For Blacks the lack of middle class cultural traits such as civic virtue, thrift, and moral principles slowed their entry into mainstream American society. For Glazer and Moynihan, Blacks were deviant from the European immigrant model.

Perhaps another way in which Negroes differed from European immigrant groups was that they did not develop the same kind of clannishness, they did not have the same close family ties, that in other groups created little pools of for ethnic businessmen and professionals to tap.8

In addition, Blacks responded poorly to discrimination when opposed to other model minorities.

Aside from all the problems we have discussed, the facts still show that Negroes, at the same levels of education as whites, do not get as good jobs, as high incomes. These are still the crude, brute facts of discrimination. And yet the same facts can be responded to in different ways. The Japanese in California before the war found it impossible to get good jobs outside of the Japanese community; Jews until the Second World War took it for granted

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7 Ibid. 2578, 2581.

that they would find few jobs in engineering or with large corporations. But at the same time, Japanese attended college in phenomenal numbers; they became the best educated racial group in California. Jews did the same.... But this overtraining meant that when the barriers came down these groups were ready and waiting. The Negro today is not.9

The reason Blacks, generally, could not take advantage of the opportunities was not because of an education system that devalued Black intellect, schools, and teachers, but, according to Glazer and Moynihan, because of values of the “home and family.”10 Glazer and Moynihan even viewed the Black middle class as a contrived version of their European counterparts arguing that the class, “contributes very little, in money, organization, or involvement, to the solution of Negro social problems.”11 This effective negates the entire history of social uplift by the Black middle class.12 The authors ultimately concluded,

[I]t is not possible for Negroes to view themselves as other ethnic groups view themselves because – and this is the key to much in the Negro world – the Negro is only American, and nothing else. He has no values and culture to guard and protect. He insists that the white world deal with his problems because, since he is so much the product of America, they are not his problems, but everyone’s…. For the Negro,… acceptance must mean, in the end, a higher degree of responsibility by the middle class and the well-to-do and educated for the others.13

9 Ibid. 43 – 44.

10 Ibid. 49.

11 Ibid. 53.


13 Glazer and Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot, 53. Emphasis in original. This section was revised in the second edition of the book to read: “It is not possible for the Negores to view themselves as other ethnic groups did because the Negro is so much an American, the distinctive product of America. He bears no foreign values and culture that he feels the need to guard from the surrounding environment. He insists that the white world deal with his problems because, since he is so much the product of America, they are his
The academic discourse supported the shift towards an ethnic pluralist racial model, one that still marginalized Blacks, this time in terms of cultural deviance from the middle class immigrant groups than phenotypical racial characteristics of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant community. The subsequent culture of poverty thesis led to blaming the Black “underclass” for its own social situation. While at the same time, this model effectively made space for other minorities at the expense of Blacks. The use of Affirmative Action, couched in terms of the political language of minority, would function to incorporate symbolically the minority middle classes, including the Black middle class (although still lower than other middle class minorities.)

When Richard Nixon took office in 1968, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, author of *Beyond the Melting Pot* and the controversial *Moynihan Report on Black Families*, encouraged the President to calm the racial rhetoric through benign neglect. In order to accomplish “benign neglect,” he believed controlling the Black middle class was the most effective way of controlling all Blacks.


15 Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” in *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*, eds. Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967). Moynihan stated that because of slavery and Jim Crow the Black family was dysfunctional. The Black family, echoing *Beyond the Melting Pot*, was problematic because it was matriarchal. Moynihan’s argument also symbolically incorporated the Black middle class because its family structure paralleled the nuclear family structure of model immigrants and the White population. The impact of this report was widespread because it directed governmental policy away from the social structures of institutionalized racism and blamed supposed Black cultural deviance for its own problem. In essence, Moynihan blamed Black culture and its respective family structure for its social problems.
Social alienation among the black lower classes is matched, and probably enhanced, by a virulent form of anti-white feeling among portions of the large and prospering black middle class. It would be difficult to overestimate the degree to which young, well-educated blacks detest white America.\textsuperscript{16}

By strengthening the Black middle class, Moynihan, and subsequently Nixon, believed that aligning this class to the American social structure would slow the Black Freedom Struggle and stop the outrage represented by the urban rebellions. The central mechanism in accomplishing this task was affirmative action.

Executive Order 11246, or Affirmative Action, came into being without much fanfare in 1965. Perhaps overshadowed by the Moynihan report controversy, President Johnson enacted affirmative action to force government contractors into non-discriminatory hiring. However, there was tension within the government over the newly enacted executive order. Both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations did not believe in preferential treatment for Blacks. In fact, North Dakota Senator Everett Dirksen authored a provision to the Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which made employment discrimination unlawful, to prevent mandatory quotas. Provision “j” stated,

\footnotesize{Nothing contained in this title shall be interpreted to require any employer, employment agency, labor organization or joint labor management committee subject to this title to grant preferential treatment to any individual or to any group because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin of such individual or group on account of an imbalance which may exist with respect to the total number or percentage of persons of any race, color, religion, sex or national origin...in any community, State, section, or}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. 334.
other area, or in the available work force in any community, State, section, or other area.\textsuperscript{17}

Despite these concerns for preferential treatment, Affirmative Action was passed for companies who received federal funds. The Executive Order languished without much fanfare until Richard Nixon’s election in 1968.\textsuperscript{18}

Under the Republican Nixon administration, the popular conception of affirmative action as quotas took effect. During his administration, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Department of Labor issued regulations that refined the meaning of affirmative action. These empirical “hiring goals and timetables” were used by contractors to “improve performance in the areas in which their utilization of minority personnel was deficient.” After this transformation, many equated affirmative action with quotas and timetables.\textsuperscript{19}

Although the mainstream public equated affirmative action with quotas and timetables, its effectiveness, by the mid-to-late 1970s, was skewed toward the Black middle class. Theoretically, such should not have been the case because of the universal claims of improvement for all Blacks and minorities, however, affirmative action and its attempts to rectify employment discrimination was out-of-step with the changing economy in the United States. The increasing automation of technology separated capital from its dependence on labor and created the new


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. 13, 12 – 16.
Black poor. This systemic shift moved many poor outside of the mainstream labor market to the margins in the Post-Industrial economic system. Thus, affirmative action’s attempt to rectify employment discrimination at the blue collar level ran counter to the economic transformation that was taking place in America’s cities. Moreover, the disappearance of low-skilled jobs in the transformation to automation in the post-Industrial society increased the middle class bias within affirmative action, with its reliance on education and the private sector. With this systemic transformation, the Black middle class was positioned to take greater advantage of affirmative action. Additionally, the Black middle class possessed the necessary cultural traits to warrant partial inclusion under the developing ethnic pluralism racial model. Many Blacks took advantage of the opportunities, as a result, many also believed the need mass mobilization was over and electoral politics represented the vehicle for political participation. This shift troubled many activists, including the associates of the Institute of the Black World, and they attempted articulate why continued struggle was needed and why the movement had stalled.20

The Institute of the Black World recognized that affirmative action and its concomitant political language of minority functioned to exclude many Blacks from gaining any the policy’s benefit. William Strickland observed that the Black movement “set the stage and showed the way for nearly all the white protest movements of the mid-Sixties.” He added, “What was curious about these

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developments in our creatively racist land was that the black movement which had
fathered these white offshoots somehow got equated with them. We, who had been
black so long became a ‘minority’ again, placed on the shelf with all the others, just
one of the boys.”

This insightful analysis, while useful, had no overall framework
to explain why this shift occurred. After the Gary Convention, the Institute of the
Black tried to develop the necessary conceptual framework.

Formulating a New Framework

The Institute of the Black World wanted to capitalize on the momentum
generated from the Gary Convention and its role in shaping the Black Agenda by
disseminating its analysis to the public. The Institute decided the best method for
expanding their constituency was through developing the publishing component of
the organization. Harding proposed “a program of work which has its central focus
in publication, and which in turn grows largely out of the SRS materials.”

The focus on publishing served two functions. First, it continued the Institute’s focus on
political education and awareness. The publications demonstrated the Institute
coming to terms with the decline of the eugenic model and its implications for the
movement. Secondly, it was an avenue to generate much needed organizational
income, through either grant proposals or sales.

(November 1973), 3, 4.

22 “20 May 1972 Memo: To William Strickland from Vincent Harding,” IBW Papers Box
(Reorganization 3 of 5), Folder (1972 Reorganization Harding to Strickland), 1.
The first publication after 1972 was a collection of the editorial columns, titled *Black Analysis for the Seventies*. The articles reflected the organization’s focus on political education, as the introduction to the collection stated, “our goal is to keep before black people the nature of our struggle and the problems that impede its progress.” The essays represented the organization’s evolving thought after separating from the King Center. Operating in opposition to the eugenic model, IBW argued the American system failed Black America; the editorials examined personal and social transformation, in order to explicate a Black perspective. “By identifying the American system’s failure meet the needs of black people in particular and American society in general, and by specifically clarifying the differences between white and black visions of the world, the articles seek to contribute in some consistent way to black people’s understanding of themselves and the world around them.” The challenge to the eugenic model, represented by the Black Agenda, was a powerful critique, but one based on an assumption that the American cultural system was fundamentally correct, only skewed in this case by White Power. Although the phenotypic racial state served as the catalyst for the essays, the Institute also urged Blacks to move beyond incorporation into a system that now created for them. As “The Collapse of the American Republic (I)” stated,

[T]he vision of black people must be enormously expanded: beyond the narrow pursuits of black capitalism and black careerism, beyond protesting and petitioning white power to do the right thing and beyond “civil rights,” for white power is now exposed as bankrupt, incapable of saving itself or its children – much less it black semi-citizens. Now, for the time and this place, the seeking after black freedom cannot be separated from the task of redirecting and reshaping American society.
William Strickland’s subsequent writings sought to explain the changing racial state and how Blacks should struggle against it. 23

In January 1973, IBW published some of the papers presented at the 1971 Summer Research Symposium. The Harvard Educational Review, an educational research journal, agreed to produce a monograph titled, Education and Black Struggle. The volume featured essays from IBW Senior Associates Vincent Harding, Bill Strickland, and Robert Hill, as well as C.L.R. James, Grace Lee Boggs, and Walter Rodney among others. Thematically the collection primarily covered the role of Black education and Black intellectuals, which reiterated the focus of the 1971 Conference. 24

Strickland’s epilogue to the volume represented an attempt to move beyond the contradictions of Black existence, the need for Black struggle and Black incorporation, and search for a new conceptual framework. Using an autobiographical intellectual trajectory, he identifies his awakening to Black consciousness through the Civil Rights Movement and the analysis of Malcolm X. However, he recognized “pride is the first identification but it is not the decisive factor leading to one’s break with America.” He believed Black intellectuals could break with the American cultural system by analyzing the contradictions of Black existence. Thus, “Concepts once believed in – freedom, justice, the rule of law – now


24 See Chapter 3 for a summary of the 1971 Summer Research Symposium.
strike him [the Black intellectual] merely as words with pink skin. He awakens from the American Dream with compelling desire to purge himself of the alien consciousness of his past.” He was struggling to explain and understand the depths of relationship between Blacks and America. Strickland remembered, “[W]hen you read the piece you see this groping for new forms, new ways of conceptualizing.”

Strickland’s search at this point led him to the ideas of Amilcar Cabral, who was the leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) and a brilliant theoretician/revolutionary and was assassinated in Conakry, Guinea in January 1973. Cabral, along with Frantz Fanon, stressed avoiding the pitfalls of nationalism, namely simply replacing a reified white culture with a reified Black culture. Strickland wrote,

> Disillusionment with America leads naturally to the passionate embrace of one’s own people, to nationalism which can be either a true step forward or a disguised step backward, depending on whether the nationalism incites action against the objective conditions which make the people’s reality or merely substitutes the unthinking celebration of white culture with the mechanical celebration of black.

Strickland realized, through Cabral’s analysis, that new perspectives stem from the relation of culture, politics, and history. As the lead writer on political analysis,

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27 Strickland, “Identity and Black Struggle,” 140.
Strickland demonstrated his grappling for a better explanatory model in his IBW *Monthly Report* essays.

Strickland focused his political analysis on the contemporary political situation in several of the *Monthly Reports* following the Gary Conventions. Prior to the November 1972 election, he outlined the problems facing the Black Freedom Struggle in wake of Richard Nixon’s assured re-election. In “Black Struggle and the Nixon State,” Strickland divided the Black population into three categories. The first group believed that Blacks were oppressed and understood the necessity of a Black liberation struggle. In the second camp Blacks had no complaints about their circumstances, thus saw no need for continued struggle. Blacks with no definitive opinion on the direction of the need for a movement formed the final group. He admitted that the latter two groups had taken a great deal of “internal criticism,” however pointed to an intellectual flaw that undermined all three groups and “the struggle as a whole.” He stated,

> I am referring to the sometimes concealed feeling among us that the struggle cannot succeed, that we cannot “beat the system,” that we cannot *win*. This political inferiority complex unites us in ironic alliance with our white and black opponents who also see Black struggle as futile…. [W]e still have an almost religious belief in the invincibility of the system, taking its superiority for granted.28

The central reason for failure, according to the author, was the inability to define what winning means and a lack of proper analysis of the Black struggle and the American social system. Vincent Harding reiterated this point in a later essay,  

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identifying despair over the “impossible” demand for justice and encouraging Blacks to “move against the odds,” with an “unswerving commitment to struggle.”

Strickland insisted on Blacks overcoming these beliefs because the Nixon regime could be unrelenting to large portions of Black America.

The belief in the invincibility of the system strengthened the tenuous Black middle class incorporation and exposed the failure of available political analysis. The Institute insisted on ending the tokenism that came to represent Black advancement in the 1970s. IBW argued in a November 1972 article, “Individualism is undermining the race. Instead of trying to be free, we have been too busy trying ‘to get over.’” Too many Blacks had pursued the American Dream at the expense of the struggle, and hastily “retreat[ed] into white institutions, white campuses, white embraces, surrendering … our developing black independence.” The incorporation of the Black middle class and the increasing economic and political hardships faced by non-middle class, non-incorporated Blacks forced IBW to search for conceptual tools to explain the phenomena and how liberate Blacks from its devastating effects.

Moreover, Strickland observed that Nixon’s re-election and the Watergate cover-up exemplified the future trajectory of White politics and the “nearly total inadequacy of existing black politics to cope with it.” The Black political response of

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maneuvering within the Democratic Party, did not speak “to the grievous situation of the masses of black people who were continually finding themselves forced up against the wall….” The high-level negotiations between Black politicians and the Democratic paled in comparison to the realities of increasing unemployment, deindustrialization, inflation, and police brutality that many Blacks faced during the 1970s.\(^3^2\)

Strickland suggested, rather than opposing degenerate White politics with Black politics that a system, a systemic transformation was necessary.

Watergate shows us the profound criminal and corrupt nature of white politics in America. It shows us that we may have erred in our denunciations of the system as corrupt. It is probably more accurate to say that corruption is the system. Thus the challenge of Black politics is not merely posed by the manifest degeneracy of white politics, but by its very design and workings.

The earlier “answers” of Black Power – more Black elected officials or Black control - did not “counteract the massive governmental” or cultural “rejection of black people.” The replacing of White faces with Black ones did not change the “colonial institutions.” Strickland argued, “[T]he myth we must lay to rest is that American structures under white or black ‘control’ can produce the changes in internal and moral life that black people (and the whole society) now need.” Strickland’s writings demonstrated a searching for a conceptual framework that could accurately explain the nature of the American social system and identify a path for continued Black...

Strickland’s analysis, although insightful, lacked a new conceptual framework. Instead, he returned to the creation of a Black political party and the politics of “self-reliance.” He failed to explain how this version of politics differs from Black control he warned against. Despite these shortcomings, he believed that building a new society must be the goal. The Institute of the Black World organized the 1974 Summer Research Symposium to discuss the correct analytical frame to examine the current society and to construct a new one.34

The 1974 Summer Research Symposium

The 1974 Summer Research Program (SRS-74) was three distinct, but interrelated, programs. First, there was a public lecture series on the theme of “Black Struggle and the International Crisis: Towards the Next Stage,” which featured lectures by Walter Rodney, Vincent Harding, William Strickland, and Robert Hill. The second component of the summer program was a six-week research project on “Social Structure and the Black Struggle.” Walter Rodney and William Strickland served as co-directors for the research project, which sought to investigate the political economy of Black and White America, the social structure and Black Struggle, and the history of race relations between Black and White America. In

33 Ibid. 1. Emphasis in original.
34 Ibid. 3.
addition, the Rodney and Strickland would lead attendees to test the frame of reference developed by Rodney in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* and Amilcar Cabral in *Return to the Source*. Finally, the summer ended with a three-day symposium on “Where do we go from here?” The panel discussions hoped to develop a future course for Black struggle.\(^{35}\)

The Institute organized the 1974 Summer Research Symposium differently from the 1971 version. First, they believed the times had dramatically changed in the three years separating the two conferences. The 1971 symposium rode “the crest of the black studies movement” thus “tried to alert a class of black educators to the relationship between scholarship and struggle.” The issues facing SRS-74 differed because the Institute believed, “the struggle for black education, along with the larger black movement itself, [had] dissipated.” As a result, IBW assumed, “A new perspective must be poised against this vacuum and we want to try, with the help of some our friends, to develop it.” The Institute conceived of SRS-74 as an “in-house seminar,” in which they wanted to answer five key questions: “What are the requirements of the present and future struggle and how is our understanding of these requirements to be best communicated to black people? What has been the historical development of Black America? What is the relationship between the social structure and black struggle? What has been the developing political and

economic relation between black and white America?” The Institute invited Walter Rodney to lead many of discussions surrounding these questions.36

Rodney’s experiences prior to 1974 paralleled much of IBW’s history as he was involved with questions of the role of the university in the social order, Pan-African projects, and the role of the Black middle class. He arrived on the world stage during the 1968 Black Writers Conference in Montreal. In the mid to late 1960s, a group of young West Indians in Montreal, which included Robert Hill, organized the Conference Committee on West Indian Affairs (CCWIA) or the Caribbean Conference Committee. In 1968, the Conference Committee organized the Congress of Black Writers in Montreal. Panelists included notable West Indian intellectuals, such as poet and novelist George Lamming, C.L.R. James, sociologist Orlando Patterson, and economist Norman Girvan, activist Richard Moore, and Walter Rodney. He also shared the stage with African American Black Power activists such as Harry Edwards, James Forman, and Stokely Carmichael. Prior to the conference, Rodney was known in progressive Caribbean circles. While a student at London University’s School of Oriental and African Studies he studied under the tutelage of C.L.R. James and as a professor at the University of the West Indies – Mona he “grounded,” or held conversations, with Rastafarians in Kingston, Jamaica.37


Two contributions grew out of the Montreal conference. First, Rodney co-authored with Robert Hill “Statement of the Jamaican Situation.” The essay attacked the Black neo-colonial regime in Jamaica, according to the authors, “this power-group is merely acting as representatives of metropolitan-imperialist interests.” The neo-colonial interest marginalized the Black masses, whose existence they made invisible with the ethnic plural national motto – “out of Many, One People.” The authors suggested this motto served as a “psychological prop to their system of domination the myth of a harmonious, multi-racial national society.”

Secondly, his speech, “African History in the Service of the Black Liberation,” firmly established as Rodney as an intellectual extraordinary depth and skill. In the speech, he clearly situated himself in the Black Power Movement of the late 1960s that swept through America and the Caribbean. Addressing his speech to fellow Blacks, Rodney asserted Blacks “must define the world from our own position.” For him, African history was not separate from “the contemporary struggle of black people” and intellectuals “must not set up false distinctions between reflection and action.” This conference, ultimately, signaled the passing of the torch from an older generation of

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Caribbean intellectuals, such as James and Moore to Rodney; a shift IBW mirrored in their Summer Research Symposiums.  

Following the conference, Jamaican Prime Minister denied Rodney re-entry into the country. Consequently, students at the University of the West Indies rebelled against the administration and the government for denying Walter Rodney entry into the country. Prime Minister Shearer was fearful that Black Power as advocated by Rodney and others would lead to violence; moreover, he viewed the ideology as useless in the predominately Black Caribbean context. Shearer believed that “Black Power radicals are irrelevant. They are pushing causes and voicing slogans that they have adopted from elsewhere. We have a black government, we have votes for everyone, we have got rid of color discrimination.” A group of students and residents, including Rastafarians took to the streets to protest the exclusion of the acclaimed scholar and as a general protest against the poverty and police brutality faced by the Black lower class on the island. The Black Writers Conference and the ensuing controversy increased Walter Rodney’s image on the Black diasporic stage.  


While Robert Hill knew Rodney from Jamaica and Montreal, Vincent Harding and William Strickland met him at the 1970 African Heritage Studies Association annual meeting at Howard University. IBW had wanted to invite Rodney to the Summer Research Symposium in 1971 but scheduling conflicts prevented Rodney from attending as he was teaching in Tanzania.

It was appropriate that Rodney served as the invited speaker for the 1974 symposium because his work focused on the impact of neo-colonialism on the Caribbean. His analysis illuminated a similar situation in the incorporation of the Black middle class in the United States. As biographer Rupert Lewis stated,

> What emerges from Rodney’s work is not only a critique of empire and capitalism in general but a dissection of the domestic political elite that assumed political authority from the colonizers in Africa and the Caribbean as well as an analysis of the process of recolonization. Rodney tried to understand why the movement of independence was also the moment of recolonization.\(^4\)

Neo-colonialism in the Caribbean and Africa allowed for the ostensible transfer of power to the “natives,” while maintaining the imperial power relations. This analysis appealed to IBW as it sought to understand the social structure in the United States during the second Summer Research Symposium.

In addition, Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* was recently published and IBW sought to apply development theory to the American situation with the aid of Rodney’s expertise. Rodney’s use of Marxism was appealing because

\(^4\) Rupert Lewis, *Walter Rodney’s Intellectual and Political Thought*, xvii.
of its non-dogmatic quality and his reliance on the factual evidence to produce theory. The book used development theory, primarily in terms of economics and social facts of American life. Rodney believed a society develops economically “as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment” in terms of “understanding the laws of nature (science)” and “devising tools (technology)” to organize society. Development theory located exploitation by European capitalists as central in understanding the underdevelopment of Africa, Latin America, and Asia. This mode of analysis appealed to the Institute as a methodology for comprehending the state of American ghettos.42

Rodney continued his critical focus on Black neo-colonialists. It was clear that the imperialist system bore a major responsibility for the underdevelopment of Africa, but Rodney also identified “those who manipulate the system and those who are either agents or unwitting accomplices of the said system.” He was clear that he did not want to remove responsibility from Africans in their own underdevelopment, as he stated, “Not only are there African accomplices inside the imperialist system, but every African has a responsibility to understand the system and work for its overthrow.”43 This perspective aligned with the Institute’s and it saw Rodney’s presence at the 1974 Summer Research Symposium a necessary first step in developing a new conceptual framework.


Rodney’s focus on neo-colonialism, specifically in Africa and the Caribbean, strengthened his reliance class analysis and encouraged the Institute’s associates to considering apply class analysis to the United States. In “‘Labour’ as a Conceptual Framework for Pan-African Studies,” a speech Rodney gave at IBW, he argued that the category of labor could “provide an entrée to the study of all history…” and “man’s work is the basis for other global approaches to human history which present their analysis in terms of class and other social formations.” This approach was not an attempt to establish class as the only universal radical category of societal organization, but a method that grew out from his analysis of the empirical evidence. Rodney stated,

It is with the present stage of world development that one finds the initial justification for supposing that the labour concept can be of major utility in Pan-African history, because no overview of the world today can fail to deal with the contrasts between the rich and the poor nations – between what are fundamentally the white and non-white peoples of our planet – and underpinning those contrasts are differences in the type of labor performed and the technology of work. What appears in popular jargon as “the difference between the “haves” and the “have-nots” is virtually identical with what economists term “the international division of labour.”

However, he did not want these divisions to be seen as static categories, but ones understood in “broad historical dimensions.”

Rodney’s analysis understood class as one of the historically generated categories of inclusion and exclusion, a division premised on definitions. He declared, “In effect, Europe came to define what was developed and what was not,
with their own technology and way of life as the standard of excellence, for ‘those who can define are the masters’ and _vice versa_.” He insisted later that scholars could mess up their analysis if they fail to “understand that all these categories are historically interchangeable. What is a white man today may not be a white man tomorrow.” Rodney’s flexible use of class analysis recognized that values of a given society might require examination of other categories. However, it was the dominance of capitalism led to his use of class. He stated, “So that society creates certain values. And I mean, those of us who have had experience as black people shaped by this same society, black men given power in a capitalist society are not less bestial and brutal than white men given power in capitalist society.” A given society’s values functioned to structure the organization of the society and these values were historical rather than racial. Rodney concluded,

> I’m saying each [race and class categories] having a validity of its own. In other words, one is not just purely derivative of the other. There may be at one particular point in history the racial contradiction may have derived from the basic class contradiction. At another point the class contradictions reinforce or react upon the race contradictions and so that what I’m getting away from is a sort of simplistic analysis which takes one of these factors, either one, and ascribes to them the sole or preponderating determining historical influence in a society like this [America]….

Rodney’s insights began to move Institute of the Black World associates beyond the eugenic model of analysis and provided conceptual keys to approach the developing ethnic pluralism racial model and its exaltation of the model minority.45

Impact of IBW’s Analysis: Decline of the Organization

The Institute’s attention to neo-colonialism and its search for new meaning of what it means to “win” in the Black Freedom Struggle put IBW in the cross hairs for external cooptation and strained the limited finances of the organization. The organization’s developing focus on the rules of the American/Western cultural system combined with its continued focus on the representation of Blacks positioned the Institute for a major conceptual breakthrough. This potential epistemological breakthrough and its Pan-African connections brought additional attention to the organization and made it a target for reactionary forces.

The Break-ins

IBW’s more detailed and critical analysis drew attention from external oppositional forces. IBW became entangled in FBI’s Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), following the Symbionese Liberation Army’s (SLA) kidnapping of Patricia Hearst, granddaughter to newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst, on 3 February 1974.46

In May 1974, the Atlanta Constitution broke a story about the FBI placing a spy at the Black newspaper, the Atlanta Voice. The FBI placed ads in the Voice and the New Orleans Picayune reading: PAT IS OKAY. The ploy was to draw suspected Southern members of SLA out of hiding. After no initial response, an article analyzing the SLA appeared in 23 February 1974 edition of the Voice attracted the

FBI’s attention. Melanie Finney and Adolph Reed wrote the article, which suggested based on the response of the media and Randolph Hearst there was “credibility to terrorism as a tactic.” The FBI subsequently conducted background searches on Finney and Reed. According to their research, they discovered Finney was the wife of Michael Robert Finney, a well-known member of the Republic of New Africa, a Black separatist organization, who the police suspected of murder and Reed was a member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and “the main force behind a little known but devout terrorist organization.” The *Constitution* article indicated the FBI believed Atlanta was ripe for terrorist activity, evidenced by earlier articles in the *Voice*, namely Vincent Harding’s “Watergate and the Restoration of Black Struggle,” in which Harding argued rooftop sniper Mark Essex was an example of Black pride.\(^47\)

The essay under question addressed several issues including the rising police state, the decline of the Black social movement, and a prescription for continuing the movement. Although, the *Constitution* attributed “Watergate and the Restoration of Black Struggle” to Vincent Harding, the author was actually William Strickland. Ironically, the first half of the essay focused on how political surveillance, in the case of Watergate, turned on the White population after “watergating” Black people for years. The most notorious example was, as Strickland observed, J. Edgar Hoover’s espionage on the private life of Martin Luther King, Jr. Strickland stated,

\(^{47}\)Jim Stewart, “Terrorist Fear Put Spy at Voice,” *Atlanta Constitution*, (18 May 1974). Adolph Reed, Jr. is currently a Professor in the Department of Political Science at New School University in New York City.
Political surveillance was not restricted to black leaders like Dr. King. It was aimed at the whole black movement because the American government felt that the black movement was a potential threat to the “American way of life.” Fearful of the capacity of our struggle to turn America around, America’s white ruling class responded to our peaceful picketing, our non-violent protest, and our legal petitions for our civil rights by establishing a national system of political intelligence to monitor the movement and contain it.

This surveillance shifted from monitoring to sabotaging to the movement.

Strickland believed that Watergate and similar tactics functioned to “preserve the façade of democracy.”

In response to the rise of the American police state, Strickland urged Blacks to continue to struggle. He saw Black America in the early 1970s as “accepting America as it is” with “the attitude of cynicism replac[ing] the habit of struggle....” He believed Black America lost its desire to struggle and delved into sex and drugs as a remedy for continued marginalization. These problems stem from the failure of the civil rights movement too develop a theory of analysis. According to Strickland,

[The movement could not sustain itself on tactics alone, on confrontations and protest marches. The lack of theory and analysis, the evidence of the question of how in the world black people were ever to win their freedom within the existing American political and economic system, the failure to move as a national force with nationally defined goals and objective to which all black people had been educated, all caused the movement to collapse from within.

It was in the context of a faltering movement that the essay invoked the urgency of Mark Essex, because Essex “took us back to what it was all about, grappling with our oppressor.” “In doing so he breathed a little manhood, a little identity, a little

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purpose back into our souls, even if for a little while.” More importantly, Strickland reiterated IBW’s focus on developing new ideas, stating, “we must develop a new and conscious politics armed with the knowledge that white America will not reform itself and that all its systems dim, flicker and threaten to go out.”

IBW’s staff sent a letter to supporters in defense of the accusations of the Constitution article. The letter referred to “flimsy, unattributed proofs” that Atlanta was a hotbed of terrorist activities. In defense of the specific indictment of Harding (actually Strickland), the staff responded, “Apparently the police were not troubled by the main thrust of the 2500 word essay, but a brief 70 word reference to Mark Essex....” Furthermore, the staff linked the attack to the general conflict between newly elected Mayor Maynard Jackson and incumbent White Police Chief John Inman, who Jackson would try to fire in May 1974.

[W]e are convinced that this spying incident is part of a larger pattern. We see Inman and his supporters (on and off the police force) as representative of those forces who are every ready to use the shield of “national security” - in this case “municipal security” - to hide or justify blatantly political acts of repression, revenge, and self-defense. Like Nixon, Inman went on the offensive and used tax-supported mechanism of governmental law enforcement to attack a courageous, truth-speaking Black newspaper [Atlanta Voice] which had given his corrupt regime not peace.

The Constitution article used IBW as a vehicle to discredit Mayor Jackson. Moreover, the FBI mentioned the support of Mark Essex as justification for a spy, but Strickland’s analysis of the American cultural system and the need for transformative analysis put IBW in the crosshairs for further infiltration.

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49 Ibid. 2, 3, 5.

On the night of March 11th/12th, 1975 IBW’s discussions about infiltration became reality as assailants broke into their office. The burglars stole $7000 in office equipment. However, it was other items stolen that captured the attention of IBW associates. The intruders also took a series of audio tapes, on which Vincent Harding, William Strickland, Robert Hill, and Howard Dodson held round table discussions with leading Black intellectuals, including Walter Rodney, over the state of Black movement during the 1970s. Vincent Harding believed, “The tapes were the heart of the matter.” The tapes covered “a broad-ranging, exploratory series of discussions of the present condition of Black people in America, their relationship to the white population, the current, continuing crisis of the entire nation’s social, political and economic systems, and the relationship of all these interpenetrating elements to the larger world systems of capitalism and socialism.” The disappearance of these tapes signaled to many within IBW that financial gain was not the sole purpose of the break-in and that political motives were involved. “We were simply carrying out the work which we believe to be our responsibility… but we are well aware of the ways in which government and other forces could try to use the materials against us,” stated Harding.\footnote{“Watergate-Type Break-In At IBW: Challenge and Response,” IBW Press Release. Michigan State University, Urban Affairs Vertical File. Howard Dodson, “Introduction,” Walter Rodney Speaks: The Making of an African Intellectual, ix-xi.}

In the weeks prior to the burglary unknown forces began to harass IBW volunteer Don Edwards for his involvement in the Venceremos Brigade, an organization that supported the Cuban Revolution. Edwards’s car was covered with
red paint, he had his gas tank filled with sugar, and he received threatening notes, including one that stated, “your wife, children or friends could be the targets” for the next attack. Edwards’ harassment strengthened IBW’s belief that the break-in was politically motivated. A second break-in confirmed the Institute’s assumptions.52

The second break-in occurred the weekend of 14 March 1975. The burglars did not take anything, but did search through organizational files. A letter received on 24 March by the Institute after the second break-in confirmed their suspicions of a politically motivated burglary. The stated,

Institute of niggers

Don and his friends must go   You know now what we can do
Our friends will use information if necessary

We will blow mother fucking buildings up   we mean business
You have until mid April

Niggers will not rule America

G.

The next day IBW received over twenty harassing phone calls. Another letter, signed by the same G, threatened sexual assault on Edwards’s wife and continued, “House will go very soon / Office too as long as you are there / Institute of Niggers knows now what we and our friends can do.” Following the second break-in Vincent Harding encouraged friends of the organization to send letters to the Congressional Black Caucus, to the Atlanta Public Safety commissioner, Reginald

52 Ibid.
Eaves, and contributions to help replace the $7000 in office equipment stolen in the first burglary.  

Despite increased security measures, which included heavy duty burglary bars, new dead bolts, and flood lights, a third theft occurred a month later, just as the letter threatened. In mid-April, burglars stole five electric typewriters and “rummaged through file cabinets and desk drawers.” Another letter appeared weeks later taking responsibility for the break-in.

Institute of Niggers
Howard [Dodson]

Don still there! You have had one week past warning deadline No more grace No more Bullshit
Your buildings are still targets Don his cohorts and family are still key targets too We know that people who went with VB group will be back soon
Look out Light stuff has been cut down Will soon stop period. Will begin to fire heavy guns soon!
Police work, lights will not stop us
Last letter to you now Only actions that’s all you Niggers understand.

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This was the last letter and break-ins IBW faced. However, the break-ins crippled an already crumbling infrastructure wrecked by financial difficulties.

Who was behind the break-ins remains a mystery. Anti-Castro forces in the United States were at times strong. IBW Associates believed the FBI was behind the burglaries. William Strickland believed, “It was COINTELPRO.” The FBI’s purpose was to damage the increasingly radical, yet fragile organization. In addition, Strickland believed that the “word went out not to fund us.” The break-ins in combination with increasing financial difficulty made IBW’s future bleak.56

**Finances**

The question of finances plagued the Institute of the Black World from its inception. The inability to secure a consistent stream of income continually changed the shape and direction of the Institute. In addition, the increasing radical analysis reduced already meager resources. In order to secure funding IBW returned to Black education and Black Studies in the late 1970s. From its beginning, the Institute debated whether to accept money from White financial sources and the implications of accepting this money. All the while, the Institute worked with other organizations to generate institutional funding from Black community sources.

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55 “21 May 1975, Letter to Vigilance Committee Members, from Vincent Harding – Copy of threatening note,” Black Economic Research Center, Box 29, Folder 1.

56 Interview with William Strickland. 7 February 2003.
During the Institute’s association with the King Center, the Institute debated whether to accept money from White funding sources. Senior Associate Lerone Bennett, Jr. circulated a memo that outlined his position on funding sources. He believed, based on five reasons, that IBW should accept money from White “liberal sources and the government.” First, Bennett clearly realized that IBW needed money for survival and completion of its mission. Secondly, he argued White money was a form of reparations, stating, “‘White’ money sources owe black people a debt they can never repay…. The point is that white people owe the money, and we are entitled to it.” Thirdly, Bennett believed that all White money was “stolen recently or at an early date from black, brown, and red people.” Fourthly, he argued IBW should accept money and be critical of the entire process of grants. Bennett claimed,

We should not only seek “white” money but we should demand as much money (more, in fact) as white institutions and intellectuals receive. It would be strategically unwise (if want to “take control”) to permit white liberals and the government to fund our opposition freely and in good conscience. I believe our goal should be black hegemony, and black hegemony should start with a demand for parity (and more) in funding.

Bennett believed IBW should accept funding from liberal and government sources because “a large proportion of the money labelled [sic] ‘white money is in fact black.”

Although Bennett argued for IBW to accept White funding, he recognized this was not “an ideal solution.” Rather, it was a solution to an immediate problem.

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Bennett alleged that there is “no such thing as pure autonomy or pure black money…” meaning the question was one of “relative autonomy.” He suggested to the Institute that their control, rather than the source of the money was essential. He suggested to the Institute that their control, rather than the source of the money was essential.58 Additionally, Bennett’s memo dissected the opposition to his position. He rebutted four main counterarguments: money corrupts, White control comes with White money, accepting White money confuses Black constituencies, and White money will not fund serious black revolutionaries. Bennett countered the claim of corruption, stating rather than being corrupted, organizations become self-domesticated, “a process of internal control by the recipient who draws in his wings and restricts himself to certain things for fear of alienating his source.” He responded to the assertion of White control, stating, “Black people with a high level of consciousness can exploit the contradictions, ambivalences, and incoherencies in the white community.”59

More importantly, Bennett believed that IBW could maintain control by avoiding dependency from a single source. He answered the third assumption, white funding confuses the public, believing how IBW used the money was more important than its source. Bennett refuted the final point that serious Black revolutionaries will not receive funding with examples of Stokely Carmichael Eldridge Cleaver, and James Forman, who had received funds from a variety of “White” sources. Moreover, some White sources, according to Bennett, would

58 Ibid. 2.
59 Ibid. 3.
supply funds to “revolutionaries” for a variety of reasons, including fear, diversity, and stupidity. Bennett’s memo served as IBW’s guiding principle in securing funds, while still associated with the King Center and after the separation.  

Not all of the IBW associates agreed with Bennett’s perspective. Historian Sterling Stuckey issued his resignation, in part, due to the Institute’s stance on finances. Stuckey’s disappointment began with Vincent Harding’s attempt to add another associate, Marion Brown to the staff. However, there was only approximately $160.00 in the treasury and the Institute could not meet the present senior staff salaries. After a vote amongst the senior staff, which Stuckey claims as “the first vote in the history of the Institute,” Marion Brown was not hired. According to Stuckey, “it was the consensus that any money received by IBW would be used to cover existing needs and debts, not to finance Marion Brown.” Despite this vote, Harding unilaterally decided to add Brown to the staff, nullifying the vote of the senior staff. This disrespect for the staff and securing additional debt did not please Stuckey.

In addition, Stuckey did not agree with IBW’s philosophy of securing White funding sources. He stated,

My position of funding has been clear, at least to you, all along. In fact, I assumed, considering the nature of your response to my piece on black power [in Negro Digest, November 1966], that we were in essential agreement. You will recall that we “met” as a result of that piece. Moreover, you know that I expected and was quite prepared to receive a salary of a few thousand

60 Ibid. 3-5.

dollars. This was so because I had been led to believe that a group of revolutionary black intellectuals was being put together. Though I knew that some foundation money was being relied on, from the start I viewed this as a very temporary, though very serious, contradiction, never dreaming that an attempt would be made to provide a philosophical justification for its continuance, to say nothing of deepening dependence on white people for financial support. Unfortunately, there seemed to be no recognition that there should be fundamental differences in the methods by which reformist and revolutionary organizations are funded.

In late February 1970, IBW secured a $100,000 Ford Foundation grant that ensured their survival and increased their reliance on White foundation money. This was also a source of acrimony between IBW and the Martin Luther King Center during their split, as the King Center managed part of the money from the grant and denied IBW a portion of the money.\footnote{Ibid. 1-2. “Two Black Programs Receive Grants,” \textit{Atlanta Voice}, 22 February 1970, 3. See Chapter 3 on the IBW and King Center separation.}

After separating from the King Center, IBW projected between $200,000 and $300,000 a year budget to remain a viable organization.\footnote{Vincent Harding, “17 September 1970 Letter to Stanley Wise,” IBW Papers, Box (General Correspondence – Alpha – N-Z, 1971 – 1973)/ Folder (“W” 1971 – 1973). \textit{Inside the Black World}, Vol. 1, no. 1, (April 1971).} In order to secure this amount of money, IBW used a variety of income generating methods. First, they accepted students and money from White universities interested in Black Studies. In May 1971, Dartmouth College contributed $10,000 contingent upon support of four students under the supervision of Robert Hill, providing a list of IBW associates in the New England area willing to lecture at Dartmouth, distribute IBW literature to Dartmouth, advise the students’ research proposals, and supply bibliographical material to faculty and staff. In addition, Vincent Harding received a grant to
support a book on Black Radicalism, and the Institute sought funding for the
Summer Research Symposium. The fundraising was crucial enough for IBW to set
up a permanent office in New York. The Institute received $30,000 from the
Cummins Engine Foundation to establish this office, which eventually closed
because of a lack of continual funding.\textsuperscript{64}

During the 1971 Reorganization, the Staff identified the financial situation as
a problem, which inhibited the organization from developing. While overstating
some of the details, they were correct in identifying “the ill-conceived financial
practices which keep up in dire circumstances.”\textsuperscript{65} The main problem documented
by the staff was the carelessness in reporting the to the grant foundations and slow
in providing services. For example, the IRS charged the Institute $8000 in tax
penalties for late filing or failure to file. In addition, in the agreement with
Dartmouth College, the Institute was slow in supplying the information stipulated
by the grant. Vincent Harding agreed with the staff “On the general laxity and
carelessness of our dealings with funding sources….” The staff also chastised the
leadership in its inability to develop alternative streams of income. Harding agreed
stating,

\begin{quote}
Generally, on the issue of fund-raising, the organization has clearly commited
[sic] itself to move from a dependency upon funds coming from white
controlled sources to those coming from black controlled sources. At the time
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{64}Vincent Harding, “11 September 1971 Memo,” IBW Papers, Box (General Correspondence
Engine Foundation,” IBW Papers, Box (General Correspondence 1971)/ Folder (July – December
1971), 1. “Reorganization Begun, But Incomplete,” IBW Papers, Box (Reorganization Aug. 1969 -
Nov. 1971), Folder (Nov. 1971 1 of 2).

\textsuperscript{65}“Reorganization Begun, But Incomplete,” 5.
that we had our longest most recent discussion of how we can do that, several persons with significant experience in fund-raising in both black and white communities told us that we must not romantise [sic] while moving towards that necessary goal. In their opinion it was necessary to continue seeking funds from traditional sources in order to survive through the 3-5 year period it would take to build a black funding constituency.

However, as 1970s economic recession intensified, IBW was never able to secure a funding base in the Black community. 66

The economy of Seventies declined due to raising gas prices and inflation. The effect of the Arab nations forming the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was increased gas prices as the organization cut oil production for world market. This dramatically effected the United States because with only 6 percent of the world population, while consuming 30 percent of the world’s energy. As America imported more oil, nearly 40 percent by 1974, OPEC’s 1973 embargo on shipments of oil to the US, as a result of America’s support of Israel during the Yom Kippur War, increased gas prices by 387 percent. The economic crisis made it difficult for IBW to generate funds through either Black or White funding sources.67

IBW implemented several different methods to survive the recession. First, they continued the income generating methods they had used from the inception. They applied and received grants from White foundations, for example, they

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obtained a $40,000 grant from the DJB Foundation in 1974. As IBW became more uncompromising in their analysis of the American social structure, their funding dried up and it heavily marketed Black Studies materials, such as the collection of audio lectures entitled, *New Concepts for the New Man.*

Secondly, they directly appealed to readers of IBW’s newsletter, *Monthly Report.* IBW mailed the newsletter at no cost to those who requested it; however, as the numbers increased from 1500 in September 1971 to 3500 in May 1972 to over 6000 May 1974, the cost grew exponentially. After initially shifting the mailed newsletter from first class to third class, IBW in May 1972 sent out contribution envelopes. Despite the contributions, the Institute began to reevaluate its policy of mailing the *Monthly Report* free; ultimately, IBW switched to the subscription based *Black World View* in 1976. After another major fund appeal in 1974, which included selling 13” x 18” lithographs of Elizabeth Catlett’s artwork, IBW became a membership organization by 1976.

In a *Monthly Report* article, IBW linked their financial difficulties to the general depression of the 1970s. They acknowledged, “Our plight reflects, we think,
the general economic downturn which black people are experiencing throughout the
country.” The dreams of Blackness, embodied by the Gary Convention, had
withered to a “collective hustle” for survival. Furthermore, much of Black America
retreated to individualism, rather than “trying to be free, we have been too busy
trying ‘to get over.’”

This individualism, the pursuit of the American Dream, and
Black middle class incorporation led the abandonment of developing Black
institutions. This dramatically effected IBW’s ability to create a Black funding base.

As the article, stated,

Here at IBW we have seen the economic crunch coming and have tried as
best we could to prepare for it. Our financial situation has been shaped by
our efforts to develop a primarily black funding base during this period of
eroding black economic strength. We have attempted to attract that base by
expanding our services to black groups and individuals. But the economic
pinch also affects our friends. So while the number of our supporters has
increased, the average donation from old friends and new has been smaller
than in previous years of our history. Thus our income has decreased while
our work and supporters have increased. This is a paradox, but we are
convinced that in the final analysis the unification of IBW with its supporters
is the only true road to building a self-sustaining organization. We are

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73 “Racism and the Black Depression,” *Monthly Report*, (November 1972), 1, 2. A version of this

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therefore contemplating the development of IBW into a membership organization.\textsuperscript{74}

The third and most important method of coping with the shrinking finances was allowing senior associates to take jobs at universities. William Strickland recalled this as an option from the beginning of the organization, “We had developed this theory, which allow those of us with degrees, to got out and teach.” By mid-1971, Joyce Ladner and Stephen Henderson had taken jobs at Howard University, while improving the Institute’s financial situation these moves were also for professional advancement. As the economic crisis took its toll on IBW, senior associates moved to universities lighten the payroll. As of January 1974, Vincent Harding went to University of Pennsylvania, William Strickland to University of Massachusetts - Amherst, and Robert Hill to Northwestern University. Howard Dodson ran the Institute’s day-to-day operations, while the senior associates were teaching their respective universities.\textsuperscript{75}

The break up of the collective signaled the beginning of the demise of the Institute of the Black World. The discussions that made IBW a vibrant intellectual space could not be maintained with associates sprawled across the country. Furthermore, this interaction which distinguished the Institute from other organization during the 1970s and eventually, impeded the further development of the new conceptual framework desired. As many in the Black middle class, whether as elected officials or as jobholders, became incorporated into the American

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. 3.

\textsuperscript{75} Interview with William Strickland. 7 February 2003.
structure, their support for an intellectual framework which challenged the ethnic pluralism racial model became virtually non existent. The Institute’s move towards understanding the symbolic understanding of the racial structure and the debates on how to attack this new social system made the organization a threat to the order.\textsuperscript{76}

Just when new ideas were needed most, IBW, because of financial constraints, according to Vincent Harding, “became less and less a center for people, who were in residence there and working and struggling with concepts, and became more of a resource center.”\textsuperscript{77}

As IBW’s analysis began to move beyond the eugenic racial structure and explore the systemic nature of the cultural system, which called into question the rising Black Middle class, its funding sources took notice and often did not renew grants to the Institute. In addition, the economic crisis of the 1970s halted the development Black funding sources, as the Black community and its organizations were dramatically effected by the recession. This transformed IBW from a collective of Black intellectuals to a Black resource center struggling for survival, leaving the transformative ideas that needed to be developed after the Gary Convention incomplete. The scaled down Institute moved back towards Black education and Black Studies, without a transformative analysis, as a means to maintain survival.


By 1980, the Institute of the Black World’s had a nuanced conceptual framework in its possession, which had the organization been viable, it could have fostered a discussion on the new ideas they sought. Sylvia Wynter agreed to write a short piece for the Institute after sharing a radio program with Vincent Harding in Jamaica a decade earlier. The short essay became a long monograph that provided a cultural systemic analysis one that could have provided the Institute of the Black World the insightful Black perspective that moved beyond Liberalism, Nationalism, and Marxism. However, the inability of IBW to discuss the piece as a collective slowed its analysis and made Vincent Harding’s focus on Black resistance the lasting impression of IBW. The organization closed off a potential epistemological breakthrough in understanding the Western cultural system, which could have redefined Black liberation.
CHAPTER 7

EPILOGUE: THE INCOMPLETE VICTORY

“This generally accepted belief system is carried by the hegemony Symbolic Order of the society; and the acceptance of this Symbolic Order is determined by the extent to which the dominant groups control the means of socialization.” Sylvia Wynter

The founders of the Institute of the Black World wanted to provide intellectual direction to the Black Power/Black Studies initiatives in the late Sixties. They founded the intellectual collective on the political languages of Black Power - autonomy and relevancy. The demand for autonomy initially did not mean separation, but independence from the dominant conceptions of Liberalism, which marginalized Black culture in the name of minority discourse. The political language of relevancy demanded a functional relationship to the needs of the Black community.

The Institute fulfilled these two requirements. They achieved autonomy from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center that tried to impose their racial liberalism on IBW. In addition, the organization was relevant to the needs of the Black community through its programs, alliances, and conceptual development. The high points of the Institute’s relevancy were its development of Black Studies programs, the Black Agenda at the 1972 Gary Convention, and the Summer Research Symposiums in 1971 and 1974. As the Seventies progressed, autonomy became increasing difficult
to maintain in the context of the economically turbulent Seventies, as well as because of the external infiltration of the organization.

In February 1977, the Institute of the Black World mailed a bi-annual fiscal report to the Board of Directors. The report showed IBW still had life, but in essence had become what Vincent Harding had described later as a “resource center.” The report echoed the organization’s major themes focusing on organizational development, finances, personnel, and programs. The report’s section on organizational development suggested IBW resources be used for public consumption, rather than for developing an intellectual framework to understand the direction of the Black Freedom struggle that had waned during the Seventies. The report stated, “Steps should be taken to shift the emphasis in IBW’s public image and program operations from its focus on ‘research’ to a broader educational framework in which ‘research’ would be just one component of its larger program.” In deemphasizing research, IBW reorganized “to open more of the agency’s resources to the general public.”

IBW also shifted its goals away from controlling the definitions of Blackness and providing a conceptual framework for Black liberation to focusing on “elevating Black people’s knowledge of the history and prospects of the Black freedom struggle in America.” The report’s organizational development section concluded, “Using existing IBW publications, audio-tapes, transcriptions, and other publications in IBW’s possession as a core, an attempt should be made to establish an Educational Resource Center (ERC) based on the history and prospects of the Black freedom
struggle in America.” The Institute of the Black World made the conscious decision to become an educational research center, as opposed to a Black intellectual collective devoted to creating a Black Agenda or liberated intellectual space. Insufficient financial support facilitated this decision.¹

The report reiterated the Institute’s financial difficulties. The Institute of the Black World reported only $85,000 dollars in 1975. This miniscule budget paled in comparison to the $250,000 to $300,000 estimated in 1970 to run the organization. Moreover, 70%, or $60,000, of the total budget was received in the first six months of 1975. The second half of the year IBW managed to raise only $24,000. According to the report, “This limited operating budget severely hampered program operations during the second half of 1975. The first two months of 1976 have not shown any significant changes in the Institute’s financial outlook.” The Institute was unable to establish an independent funding base. It received a $40,000 grant from the Lily Endowment that amounted to nearly 50% of IBW’s budget. The acute financial difficulties devastated the Institute’s personnel.²

In 1972, the Institute of the Black World’s Senior Associates Vincent Harding, William Strickland, and Robert Hill accepted teaching positions at various universities to alleviate the financial strain of their salaries. While, the associates


² Ibid. 4-5.
were away from Atlanta, Howard Dodson “minded the shop.”

Despite these measures, the report stated,

The most dramatic change in personnel status occurred on May 14, 1976. On that date, all full-time staff persons – IBW paid --- except the finance officer, were asked to continue to working a minimum of 20 hrs per week, but without remuneration. With exception of one, all agreed to do so for as long as they were able to find other means of financial support. By December, 1976, however, deepening personal and organizational financial crisis had begun to take their toll. Several key staff persons had been forced to take full-time jobs elsewhere in order to make ends meet. Others were working part-time jobs that prevented them from maintaining regular work schedules at the Institute.

The staff reductions practically ended many of the programs. The Black intellectual collective wanted to develop new concepts, but because of financial difficulties and external infiltration could not.

The shift towards an Educational Resource Center moved away from analyzing the historical, political, and economic terrain to merely demonstrating that a Black tradition of resistance existed. Vincent Harding’s *The Other American Revolution* reflected this perspective. While the information provided was important, it did not have the analytical edge that spawned the Institute of the Black World. In effect, it was a continuation to what Vincent Harding described earlier as “Black History” and not indicative a progression in thought.

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3 Interview with William Strickland. 7 March 2003.

The Other American Revolution

Vincent Harding’s 1970 essay *Beyond Chaos* differentiated between Negro and Black History. He described Negro history as an “attempt to reveal the ‘contributions’ of blacks to the American saga; its emphasis on black heroism in the wars; its call for racial pride and for continued struggle to enter the mainstream of American life; its claim to be primarily interested in objective truth, while writing history through tears.” Black history differed because it did not seek to “highlight the outstanding contributions of special black people” to America, rather it emphasized “exposure, disclosure, on reinterpretation of the entire American past.” Black history suggested the mythical American history never existed, and asked the about the “meaning of America itself.” Harding’s *The Other American Revolution* was his reinterpretation of the American experience. However, after social, political, and intellectual setbacks of the 1970s, the work continues the theme of “Black history” that he articulated in the early years of IBW.\(^5\)

The Institute initially published *The Other American Revolution* in *Black World View* a subscription version of its *Monthly Report*. In the eight issues from 1976, Harding reinterpreted American history from its “black side.”\(^6\) Harding introduced the project as a commitment to revolutionary commitment.


\[^{6}\text{The citations for The Other American Revolution will refer to the 1980 published version.}\]
was a time when men, women, and children believed in the imminent coming of radical, compassionate change in this country, and gave their lives, their fortunes, and their honor for it.... There was a time, not very long ago, when the talk of revolution and justice was as common as discussions of apathy, corruption, and fear are now. In those days dreamers rose up from the heart of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, pursued visions of a new society, and at the same time fought for fulfillment of the best, great hopes of the first American revolution.

Harding’s work was a reinterpretation of American history through the perspective of Black history. The other American Revolution for Harding consisted of Black resistance. He stated, “This struggle for black freedom, this insistent black movement towards justice, this centuries-long black search for a new America - all this is The Other American Revolution.” This other revolution attempted to “fashion an independent black vision.” Harding explores this revolution through the “longest, unbroken, active struggle for freedom ever carried on in the annals of American history,” specifically the history of Black resistance to White domination.

What limited Harding’s narrative was his inability to define, as Strickland suggested in an earlier essay, a new conceptual framework. The evidence of resistance was important, however Harding and the Institute of the Black World had failed to develop a conceptual that moved beyond Black resistance and begin to interrogate the structures of the American social system beyond the paradigms of Liberalism, Nationalism, and Marxism. IBW’s inability to construct this conceptual framework was isomorphic to the Black Freedom Struggle in general. This failure

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was at the heart of the incomplete victory of the Second Black Reconstruction.

Although, IBW and the movement failed to articulate a theoretical framework, Sylvia Wynter, by working through all three ideological perspectives developed a new perspective for an IBW Black Paper. This perspective defined what it means to “win,” yet the organization was not in a position to debate her theoretical perspective or its implementation.

**New Natives in a New World**

Vincent Harding’s focus on Black resistance revealed marginalized Black History in *The Other American Revolution*. His work presented a continuing revolutionary tradition through a historical overview of Black resistance in America from the Middle Passage through the 1960s. He sought to reinvigorate Black struggle despite the apathy of the late 1970s and early 1980s. In addition, by documenting Black resistance, he believed the Black experience would inspire other nonwhites and make Whites “face this alternative revolutionary tradition and its implications.”

Harding’s valuable documentation of Black resistance was important in challenging the historical representations of Blacks as passive victims. Resistance and agency became Black scholarship’s main features since the 1970s. However, a question asked during the height of the Institute of the Black World remained submerged beneath the empirical documentation of resistance. The question - what

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9 Vincent Harding, *The Other American Revolution*, xv, xvi.
does it mean to achieve Black liberation? – was unanswered by Harding and other Black scholarship of the late 1970s and 1980s. This question functioned initially to direct the Institute’s search for “new concepts for a new man.” New concepts, beyond Liberalism, Nationalism, and Marxism, were needed to continue the Black Freedom Struggle against reactionary conservatism and the twin realities of the White backlash and the political language of minority that rose to power under Nixon. Harding’s documentation of the tradition of resistance was important, but he did not address the foundational characteristics of Black marginalization, just resistance to it. Caribbean scholar Sylvia Wynter attacked the foundational premises of Black marginalization, while moving beyond Liberalism, Nationalism, and Marxism.

Caribbean Scholar Sylvia Wynter was tangentially associated with the Institute of the Black World. In 1971, Wynter and Vincent Harding met in Jamaica at a conference on Commonwealth Literature. They taped a series of radio broadcasts that discussed issues in the Black diaspora. Moreover, Wynter and Robert Hill probably knew each other while both were teaching at the University of the West Indies in the late 1960s, early 1970s. By 1979, she was on the Board of Directors for the Institute. For Wynter her relationship with IBW continued her activism, while maintaining a position on the periphery of the organization.10

Sylvia Wynter spent most of her intellectual life on the margins. Like many Caribbean intellectuals of her generation, she was educated in Europe, specifically at the University of London. Just as Frantz Fanon pointed out in *Black Skin/White Mask*, the West Indian intellectual in Europe goes from embodying the Caribbean ideal, i.e. educated and middle class, to the marginal existence of Blacks in a predominately-White world. Fanon poignantly captured this transition with the Caribbean intellectual arriving in Europe and the White European child stating, “Look mommy a nigger.” Wynter’s love of dancing also further marginalized her. Her participation with the Boscoe Holder dance troupe marginalized her in an academic world that privileged the high culture of poetry and writing, as opposed to dance. In London, she became a playwright and novelist, authoring *The Hills of Hebron.*

In 1961, Wynter went to British Guyana to help Cheddi Jagan, a leading anti-colonial leader, communist, and founder of the People’s Political Party (PPP), write radio scripts that explained the economic budget to the people. The tension in Guyana between Blacks and Indians exploded into a chaotic mass demonstration in which Blacks believed Indians were displacing them in the economic order. The masses called for change and Forbes Burnham’s People’s National Congress (PNC) manipulated this demand with their articulation of Black Nationalism. While Wynter was in a small house on the outskirts of Georgetown, Black masses, who had already burned Georgetown, marched towards the house. Timely intervention by

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British troops thwarted a disastrous situation; however, for Wynter, the profound contradictions of the moment forced her to reassess her intellectual perspective. She recalled that until that moment, “like most of my generation, I was a Marxist because Marxism gave you a key which said look, you can understand the reality of which you’re a part. A lot of my rethinking came out of that experience. It was not a matter of negating the Marxian paradigm but of realizing that it was one aspect of something that was larger.” She attempted to explain to Jagan that the division between Blacks and Indians in Guyana was profound. She recalled,

I tried to speak to Cheddi [Jagan]. I said that whilst I’d love to continue working there [in Guyana] it seemed to me that he greatest emphasis was to see if could build a common history, place the emphasis on creating a sense of a shared community, of solidarity, because it did not exist. But Cheddi at that time was a very orthodox Marxist, and to even suggest that the superstructure was not automatically determined by the mode of production but was constructed, so that you can reconstruct it, that would have been heresy for him, genuinely.

Her subsequent intellectual shift away from orthodox Marxism marginalized her to large segments of the Caribbean intellectual community. The relationship with the Institute of the Black World provided an outlet for her developing intellectual position.12

After Wynter’s initial meeting with Harding in 1971, she agreed to write a Black Paper entitled Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World. This essay, would explore the Minstrel Show as the first Native North American theatre – and why Amerika [sic] distorted it; why a process of genuine creativity became a process of imitation and degenerated into a power stereotype, a

cultural weapon against its creators. I shall relate the Minstrel Show to the nineteenth century folk theater patterns of the Caribbean and Latin America trying to link it to certain archetypal patterns of theater that we find for example among the Yoruba, the Aztecs and the folk English; and the way in which the blacks created a matrix to fuse disparate and yet archetypically related patterns.\textsuperscript{13}

This longer essay transformed into a nine-hundred plus page monograph that was not completed until the early 1980s. In this monograph, Wynter provided a novel conceptual framework that built indirectly on many of the insights and debates held in the Institute of the Black World. More importantly, Wynter’s project provided a new conceptual framework beyond the theme of resistance.\textsuperscript{14}

The monograph reflects Wynter’s evolving analytical perspective. The volume could be divided into two separate sections. In the first part, she re-interprets Marxism’s premise that the infrastructure, economic production, determines the superstructure, the level of culture, ideas, and laws. What concerned her initially was not the division between the infrastructure and superstructure but how the superstructure was created by ideology, rather than determined by economics. Her focus on this type of question developed from her experiences in Guyana, her relationship with Caribbean dance, and her interest in Black folklore culture in Jamaica and the United States.

\textsuperscript{13} “15 February 1971 Letter from Sylvia Wynter,” IBW Papers, Box (Correspondence 1971), Folder (February).

For Wynter, Black resistance was rooted in their cultural production. The first point of departure of the monograph was on the dominant cultural production and its relation to the economic structure. Wynter argued Europeans created Africans and American Indians as culturally inferior to, while European countries simultaneously economically exploited through the encomienda and the plantation. She stated, “the systemic devaluation of the black as human went hand and hand with the systemic exploitation of his labor power.”

Using Sepulveda who argued in his famous sixteenth-century debate with Las Casas that Indians were culturally inferior and thus able to be enslaved and Edward Long the Jamaican planter/historian who argued in the eighteenth-century that Blacks, too, were culturally inferior and justifiably enslaved, Wynter examined the impact of the European discourse that created binary opposition between Native (Black and Indian) and White. She stated, “[T]he perception of the Indian, black, native as inherently inferior plays a central role in the concrete determination of the value of ‘inferior’ men, and of their ‘inferior’ labor power.” For Wynter, Europe’s economic domination was premised on their cultural domination. Therefore, the fact that

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Black resistance came in the form of cultural resistance should not have been surprising. However, from the perspective of orthodox Marxism this was invisible.

Wynter subsequently analyzed the aspects of Black cultural resistance, such as Jonkunnu, the ring shout, and syncretic Black Christianity.\(^\text{18}\) She argued Blacks’ “cultural response to the dehumanizing alienation of the capitalist plantation system ... was to reroot himself, making use of the old cultural patterns which had undergone a true sea-change [i.e. the Middle Passage], in order to *create* the new vocabulary of the new existence.”\(^\text{19}\) Wynter was arguing against two central premises embedded in both Liberalism and Marxism. The first was the almost-universal belief that Blacks had no culture and African traditions were lost during the Middle Passage. She was building on the research that she had found on African traditions in Jamaica and the scholarship of African retentions led by Meville Herskovits in the United States, and Jean Price-Mars in the case of Haiti.\(^\text{20}\) Secondly,


she was arguing against the orthodox Marxist premise that religion was the “opium of the people,” which led to false consciousness, or a consciousness that was not rooted the economic structures of society, i.e. proletarian consciousness. Rather than false consciousness, Wynter viewed the cultural resistance in the Caribbean, empirically located on the slave plot, as an alternative consciousness that resisted against the “economic orthodoxy” of the plantation.21

She argued that the effect of European discourse of Black inferiority in conjunction with Blacks’ retention of African traditions and culture still reinforced notions of Black inferiority and ultimately devalued Black labor. Wynter, still operating partially within the horizons of Marxist thought, concluded,

Thus, the Jonkunno [sic] masquerade in plantation society, took place in an hierarchical system in which the colonial state helped the planter capitalists to exploit their slave-laborers, by defining labor power as outright merchandise and denying it the right to change employment. New World slavery was therefore a form of extraction of labor power from the first mass labor force, the first large-scale intensive attempt at the mechanization of human existence. It was this mechanization of existence that the Jonkunno masquerade resisted.

Wynter continued to take orthodox Marxism to task, arguing because Marxism saw only economic production as determining ideology it could not conceptualize Black resistance historically, or contemporarily. In her re-interpretation, she believed that the dominant notions of cultural value, such as stereotypes instituted by the superstructure, shaped the economic value. This, in essence, turned Marxism on its head asserting that the alienation and Black humanity’s devaluation “take place on

21Wynter, Black Metamorphosis, 9, 53, 63, 78.
the superstructural level and it is also this superstructural level that maintains in being the relations of production which, defining him [Blacks] as lesser man, ideologically justify his super exploitation both as labor power and consumer.”

The first half of the manuscript reflected Wynter’s attempts to challenge the presumptions of orthodox Marxism and provide a method of analysis of Black resistance. However, as Cedric Robinson’s *Black Marxism* pointed out, Marxism served as a “staging area” for many Black intellectuals’ development toward the Black radical tradition. In this case, Wynter demonstrates the transformation to this tradition in a single monograph. In the second half of the manuscript, she revises her early positions and arrives at an intellectual position beyond Liberalism, Marxism, and Nationalism.

In the second half of the manuscript, Sylvia Wynter makes an epistemological breakthrough that could have served as the conceptual framework the Institute of the Black World and possibly the movement. In a moment of rare intellectual honesty, Wynter realized that her argument at the beginning of the monograph, despite its attempts, still reinforced a Marxist framework that marginalized Blacks. She stated,

I would like at this point to contradict an earlier formulation. At the beginning of the monograph, I defined the Sambo stereotype as the mechanism by which more surplus value could be extracted from the relatively devalued labor…. I would tend now, however, to see [the] Sambo stereotype as a mechanism which is far more central to capitalism’s

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22 Ibid. 107, 220.

functioning as a mode of domination. That is, I would see its function in extracting surplus value as secondary to its function of permitting a mode of domination to be generalized at all levels of the system.... I had accepted the Marxian division between the infrastructure - the economic posited as base, and the super structure defined as a separate level of culture.... I had therefore accepted the theory that the economic tended to determine the ‘superstructure.’ This theoretical position carried on the marginalization of the cultural by the economic which is perhaps capitalism’s central strategy of domination. Marxism too continues this marginalization of the cultural by the economic because of the implication of what I shall call the factory model of exploitation.24

In moving beyond the economic prescriptions of both Liberalism and Marxism, Wynter posits the cultural realm, and its creation of a structural law of value, as the location for analysis.

Wynter used Marx’s premise, that ruling groups provided the ruling ideas, to argue the power to define reality in the cultural realm that marked the ruler from the ruled.25 Western culture was able, according to Wynter, to implement a Single Cultural Norm that structured society. She maintained, “The imposition of the great Single Norm of being and of Culture has been the Central strategy of the bourgeois ruling consciousness.” Moreover, the Single Norm’s precepts socialize the entire society according to identities of Self (norm) and Other (non-norm). Wynter also argued that it was the Black/White identities, rather than class, that were the “central inscriptions and division” that generated all other hierarchies. Black skin, in

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24 Wynter, Black Metamorphosis, 429 - 430.

her analysis, served as the zero reference point in the Western social system, because the cultural representation of Blacks served as the ultimate non-norm.  

Wynter recognized that Black America needed a revolutionary theory developed from the Black experience. This theory would “incorporate some liberal and Marxist insights, negate others and go beyond them both.” Wynter’s focus on cultural representation also provided a means to understand the protest and resistance of other marginalized group, and the inability for many of these groups to unify in a common cause. “The central insight of all these [workers, farmers, Black, women, etc] movements is that capitalism functions as a mode of domination in which the experience both of dominator and dominated is generalized; in which the large majority of people are both exploiter and the victims.” This experience as both exploiter and victim describes the labor movement in America, but also the problems race posed to feminism and the Black intra-racial class conflict. Wynter concluded the Black Freedom Struggle was a movement against laws; it was “total insubordination against the new culture of inscription…. ” Furthermore, the subsequent movements by women, Chicanos, farmers, labor and others mirrored the contestation of their representation as a form of symbolic other, or non-norm.

Although, Wynter’s arguments were primarily aimed at Marxist theory, she also examined the intellectual contributions and limitations of nationalism. The leading oppositional movements occurred through the ideology of nationalism.

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27 Ibid. 583 – 584, 625, 667 – 670.
Black Cultural Nationalism’s ability to organize people pointed to its direct attack on the dominant discourse of Black inferiority. However, she explained that the weakness of cultural nationalism was that it simply inversed the symbolic order. She witnessed that the exploitation of the Black masses, for example in Haiti, was just as effective under Black cultural nationalism as under colonialism or in America, stating, “By inverting the norm - rather than deconstructing the category of the Norm they [Marxists and cultural nationalists] translated the bourgeois law of value, only changing the social grouping who was to occupy the place of Norm.”

The second half of the manuscript expressed Wynter’s theory, which sought to move beyond the limitations of Liberalism, Marxism, and Nationalism. Her conceptual framework stated:

For the [hierarchical] mode of relations to continue by and through the interrelationship that constitute the social reality, there must be a generally accepted ideology which persuade the differing subjects too be constituted slave, serf, wage-worker. [Or] for that matter, as white and Negro. This generally accepted belief system is carried by the hegemony Symbolic Order of the society; and the acceptance of this Symbolic Order is determined by the extent to which the dominant groups control the means of socialization.... For it is not the expropriation of labor-power that is the primary act, but the expropriation of the power to define the self that marks the difference between the ruler and ruled. Its is the hegemony of a group’s ruling consciousness that constitutes it central strategy of power.

Black cultural resistance pointed Wynter toward the role of social inscription on society’s social structure and its associated effects. Her conceptual framework moved beyond the class versus race debate that hampered the Black Freedom

28 Ibid. 723.

29 Ibid. 771.
Struggle in the 1970s and before. Moreover, the conceptual framework explained the changing racial structure of the 1970s towards ethnicity.

Whereas Marxism articulated a proletariat norm, Black Nationalism a Afro norm, the immigrant racial structure and its minority counterpart functioned to create an immigrant/minority norm. As discussed in the previous chapter, this racial framework allowed for Black middle class incorporation, while maintaining the supposed Black underclass with its either genetic or cultural inferiority. In this case, Wynter asserted “the ‘ethnicity’ code … deliberately oversees the privileged relation of white to black, reducing the dual identity of blacks – as an ethnic group and as a social group – the most socially exploited – to an apparently ‘equal’ ethnic other. The immigrant paradigm of ‘ethnic’ success is then used as the norm against which the inherent failure of the deviant black is measured.”  

This framework provided an understanding of the incorporation of the Black middle class and the development of the ethnic-pluralism racial code.

Wynter’s conceptual framework suggested the transformation occurred was the changing of the social inscriptions of Self and Other. In addition, she argues not for a mere inversion of Self (Black replacing White), but a deconstruction of the framework and the creation of reciprocal identities as opposed to the binary Self/Other conceptualization that structured Western culture. She pointed to elements in Black culture, specifically jazz, as examples of how to create reciprocal relationships that were non-hierarchical. How this was to be accomplished

\[30\] Ibid. 829.
organizationally was to be determined, however she insisted, “there can be no revolutionary praxis without revolutionary counter representation.”

Wynter’s monograph was to be published by the Institute of the Black World and the Center for Afro-American Studies at University of California, Los Angeles. Robert Hill was to provide editorial supervision; however, the project was never completed. Her project would have generated serious debate within the Institute, but with its financial difficulties and the break-ins the organization was a shell of its former self. Despite IBW’s brilliant analytical breakthroughs, they left the project of developing new concepts incomplete. This incomplete victory was symbolic of the post-Sixties. From the 1980s to the 21st century, Blacks have continued to resist marginalization, but still they have fully or clearly articulated what it means to “win.” Thus, the Black Freedom Struggle that began with the Middle Passage and reached dazzling heights during the 1960s remains incomplete. The Institute of the Black World’s project of “intellectual tasks,” from Black Studies to a Black Agenda, point to the necessary need for a new conceptual framework and there is no better place to start than with the insights of Sylvia Wynter, which may move us beyond the limitations of Liberalism, Marxism, and Nationalism. As she stated, “The task of Black scholarship of the Eighties [and beyond] will be to continue the theoretical delegitimation of the cultural universe of the bourgeoisie, of its, representation of reality, of its control of the way we view reality.” More than controlling the

31 Ibid. 917, 819 – 861.
definitions of Blackness, it would imply a redefinition of what it means to be Human.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. 917.
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