

**BLACK PEOPLE IN THE THIRD WAVE:  
COMPUTERS, BLACK LIBERATION, AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION**

Abdul Alkalimat

(Presented at the Harold Washington Public Library, Black History Month, February 4, 1995)

We are living in a time of great fundamental changes. While we recognize this every day of our lives, it is oft times hard to see how critical these developments are because to do so requires us to rethink our basic conception of society and develop a new vision of the future. This is actually the main challenge we face at this very early stage of the third wave revolution: exactly what do we think are the main changes in society, and on that basis what kind of future do we envision for the well being of ourselves, our children, and community.

In general, the term third wave is being used to describe a fundamental economic revolution being driven by the new technology. Led by the new micro-chip based computer technology, the reorganization (reengineering) of production and communication is having a great impact on the economy, both an increase in productivity and a decrease in the demand for labor. This is true in terms of replacing manual labor with machines, and replacing mental labor with smart machines. No industry is exempt, everyone is vulnerable. So, the spontaneous development of the third wave economy is a polarization of the society into sectors of wealth and poverty.

For the Black community, long abused by a de facto policy of being the "last hired, first fired," this is a new development. For the first time since the slave trade the demand for Black labor has been reduced to such an extent that increasing numbers of people will never hold permanent jobs at an income level above the poverty line. In a society that requires people to have jobs, and only respects those who do, this is a fundamental problem.

But more than this, permanent unemployment is faced by an increasing number of white people as well. Immigrant workers from Mexico and other countries in Central America and the Caribbean also survive under conditions of super exploitation. All of these workers increasingly live in the underground economy, either illegal or nearly so. People face "crime" as a necessary option to consider in order to survive: for example, if you are on a fixed income and living below the poverty line the choice is often rent or medicine or food, but not all three. So more and more people shop lift!

Now this is the kind of society we are living in, poor people being forced to be outlaws at a time when the new technology is creating the possibility of a heaven on earth. The programmatic task is to fight for poor people having access to the new technology, especially computers and the internet, but more than this is required. A definite plan has to be made for the empowerment of poor people so that the new technology will result in changes in the objective condition of people. They have to be able to put their hands on the technology and do something useful with it as well.

All of this has to be energized by the vision we have of a world free of want, free of suffering, free for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." This is a time that forces us to rethink our basic freedoms in terms of third wave society. When we think of free speech, a free press, and freedom of assembly, we have to reconceptualize what is going on. The new technology is a new ball game:

1. illiteracy now means the inability to utilize computers;
2. free speech and a press requires access to the internet;
3. freedom of assembly requires the capacity to form virtual communities.

We are not discussing options, but life sustaining necessities. The political leaders of the US government are busy selling out the democratic rights of the people by moving toward the privatization of the new technology, especially the internet. This has to be fought against just as we fought against taxation without representation, slavery, and other major obstacles to democracy.

The path of privatization is part of an outmoded capitalist vision of the future. Our vision is exactly the opposite, a vision that opens up the new technology making it free to the public in such a way that the bill of rights becomes the hallmark of third world society. We have the choice either barbarism with a few people living high-tech dreams while the masses live in nightmares of cyborg police and omnipotent omnipresent surveillance.

Check out the drama of our lives at this time. Most people are caught up in the OJ trial, the biggest soap in the history of the country. First, Black and poor people are being side tracked by this rather than following the elimination of social programs that help keep people alive. Second, poor whites are encouraged to fall for the false idea that their main enemy is the Blacks, like this guy OJ who viciously murdered this white woman! and Third, the public is being influenced to support the overall motion toward a police state.

Even though the blood of a celebrity murder trial is seductive we have to turn away from this kind of brainwashing and get some debate going around the more basic issues we face. Let me raise a couple of crucial questions that should guide our discussion.

1. What is technology? What is high technology? What is new about it?

2. Is this new technology creating jobs? Is it eliminating jobs? Whose life is getting better and who is getting worse off?

3. How is the new technology changing our communities and the quality of our lives overall?

4. Who has access to the new technology? Are we becoming more or less democratic?

5. Who is in control? When and how are the important decisions being made? How can the participation of ordinary people replace the dominance of big business in defining the future?

6. What is our vision of a new America? What does our common sense lead us to do for a future worth living.

We think these are important questions and therefore we have organized a conference to deal with them. We want to have a brief discussion here and then get all of you to help us organize for the conference. Here are some leaflets. Our planning meetings are every Monday evening at the Circle Center at the University of Illinois in room 509 at 7:00 pm. Everyone is invited to come and help out.

Thank you.

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