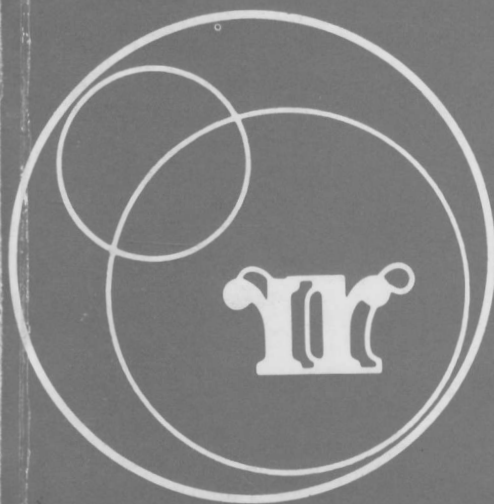


Volume 13 Number 4 November 1988

Includes a special bibliographic essay...

Black Marxism in the White Academy



SAGE race relations abstracts

Published on behalf of THE INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS



SAGE Publications Ltd
ISSN 0307-9201

Police and Prisons	
Race	
History and Ideologies 72	Politics 75
Law and Legislation 77	
Race Relations	
General 77	History and Ideologies 80
Politics 86	Law and Legislation 86
Racial Violence	86
Religion and Race	89
Research Techniques	89
Social Geography	89
Social and Welfare Services	91
Theoretical Articles	94
Women	94
Young People	98
Ephemera — Personal Narratives	100
Addresses of Elusive Organizations and Publications	103
Author Index, Volume 13	104
Cumulative Subject Index, Volumes 1–13	113
List of Journals Abstracted in Volume 13	140
List of Abstractors	142

Black Marxism in the White Academy: The Contours and Contradictions of an Emerging School of Black Thought

Abdul Alkalimat

The nationalist/Marxist dialogue has often been staged as a polemical slugfest in which adversarial combat took place with great bravado and energy. There has been an unfortunate assumption that each position was to be dealt with as an ideal configuration, and not as concrete historical and necessary developments. Nothing new would be possible, it will always be the same debate. This review simply holds that out of the black revolt has emerged a new black Marxism of the 1980s, and that it deserves careful review an serious criticism.

A mandate of considerable significance comes from the current positive relationship between black liberation theologians and black Marxists. James Cone, one of the early theologians who articulated the new radical Black Power consciousness as critical black Christian thought, has now declared that Marxism is necessary for a theory, indeed theology, of black liberation. He stresses the use of Marx to analyse class exploitation in *For My People: Black Theology and The Black Church*: "Marxism as a tool of social analysis can disclose the gap between appearance and reality, and thereby help Christians to see how things really are" (p. 187).

He goes on to make it clear that culture will impact the use of Marxism and Christianity: "Things are in a state of flux. Nothing is nailed down. Christianity and Marxism must be redefined in the light of their origins and of the history and culture of oppressed peoples in their current liberation struggles" (p. 187). The black church is an organized expression of the ideology that has been the most hostile to Marxism. However, a serious dialogue has begun. We are being taught in this regard by the relationship of great religious leaders in South Africa and Nicaragua. Intellectuals and policy makers in the black community can broaden their scope by joining this dialogue to enter a new stage of theoretical development.

The task of this review is to further clarify one aspect of the Marxist side of things. This Marxism reflects historical roots in the recent generation of black revolt. There is a new school of thought developing, a black Marxism. What is a school of thought? It is collective intellectual production, rational coherence forged through the collective practice of individuals who share a common approach, point of view and purpose. A school of thought is made possible by the structural tension in the material, cultural and ideological forces of the situation, i.e. a school of thought meets a historical necessity. But a school of thought must be consciously developed. This review is written as a call to action, a challenge to mobilize black intellectuals to follow the road of a new school of

black Marxism, at least the challenge to understand it as a legitimate intellectual activity existing in tension with the two distinct traditions, Marxism and the black nationalist revolt.

This paper focuses on some recent and initial books which are beginning to define the contours of the school and the contradictions within it. Recent work by six black scholars is surveyed.

Cedric Robinson. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983).

Cornel West. *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (1982).

Amiri Baraka. *Daggers and Javelins: Essays 1974-1979* (1984).

C.J. Munford. *Production Relations, Class and Black Liberation: A Marxist Perspective in Afro-American Studies* (1978).

Manning Marable. *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* (1983).

Lloyd Hogan, *Principles of Black Political Economy* (1984).

Elsewhere I have presented, with colleagues (Alkalimat and Associates, 1986), a paradigm of unity, an intellectual terrain of discourse. One explicit purpose of this framework was to facilitate the nationalist/Marxist dialogue in a self-affirming and mutually sharing way. This political purpose is possible because it is inclusive of the main content of black intellectual history, and the current state of scientific knowledge.

A word of review: this paradigm deals with two central questions. The first is, what is the basic content of the black experience? This is answered by considering the four basic categories of human experience in general: biology, political economy, society and consciousness. The principal aspects of the black experience are contained in the sub-categories of race, class, nationality and ideology. The course of human history has been a development of causal linkages in just that order, from the biological to the ideological, and now for the first time in human history this is the epoch for a decisive turn, the era of conscious revolutionary change, the era in which we consciously overcome fundamental material problems of the human experience that have plagued us: oppression and exploitation based on nationality, class, age, sex and race.

The second question is, how does this experience change? The logic of this change is captured by two categories, social cohesion and social disruption. The central focus is on the reproduction of social life with continuity, the transmission of useful knowledge (habits, custom, tradition, etc) from one generation to the next because of the continuing relevance of that knowledge. The historical materialist approach to this is based on political economy, but materialism in general has to take into consideration all concrete and specific aspects of the human experience. The Afro-American experience has gone through three main stages of social cohesion: slavery, rural tenancy and proletarianization and three critical transitional social disruptions: enslavement, emancipation and urbanization. Africa must always be acknowledged as the historical origins out of which we came, but we always remember (1) that all human beings developed in Africa

first, and (2) that human civilization for the entire world begins there as well. In the end, humanity is one.

This paradigm provides a clear picture of analytic relationships, a prism through which we can see logical order in the complex historical improvisation of the black experience, both freedom and necessity. Our plan now is (1) to analyse six recent major work of the black Marxism School: and (2) to use the paradigm for summing up unities and controversies.

Cedric Robinson

In *Black Marxism*, Robinson sets out to articulate "an ideologically based or epistemologically coherent historical tradition of Black radicalism" (p. 95). This is no academic exercise, for he states that given the fundamental flaws in western civilization, black unity in revolt is necessary:

...a civilization maddened by its own perverse assumptions and contradictions is loose in the world. A Black radical tradition formed in opposition to that civilization and conscious of itself is one part of the solution. Whether the other oppositions generated from within Western society and without will mature remains problematical. But for now we must be as one (p. 452).

Robinson sets his goal as "primarily a theoretical discourse". Further, he argues that this has a specific, historically constituted character:

...the practice of theory is informed by struggle. Here the points of combat were threefold: an opposition to the ideas purporting to situate African peoples which have dominated European literature; a critique of a socialist intellectual tradition which, too infrequently or casually, has interrogated its own bases for being; and a consideration of the import of the ambivalences with which Westernized Black radical intelligentsia first began the formulation of Black radical theory. The terrain was not made by choice but dictated by historical inheritance (p. 441).

Robinson's analysis initially develops a historical periodization of oppression and exploitation, the material basis for changing forms of European racism:

1. The racial ordering of European society from its formative period which extends into the medieval and feudal ages as "blood" and racial beliefs and legends.
2. The Islamic, i.e. Arab, Persian, Turkish and African, domination of Mediterranean civilization and the consequent retarding of European social and cultural life: the Dark Ages.
3. The incorporation of African, Asian and peoples of the New World into the world system emerging from late feudalism and merchant capitalism.
4. The dialectic of colonialism, plantocratic slavery and resistance from the sixteenth century forwards and the formations of industrial labour and labour reserves (p. 83).

This periodization scheme is a necessary objective of analysis but is frequently misused. Robinson makes this clear:

...the construction of periods of time is only a sort of catchment for events. Their limited utility, though, is often abused when we turn from the *ordering* of things, that is chronological sequencings, to the *order* of things, that is the arrangement of their significances, meanings and relations. Increments of time contoured to abstract measure rarely match the rhythms of human action. It is important to bear this in mind as we seek to come to terms with the Black theorists whose writings and thoughts have appeared primarily in the twentieth century. Their era began with the endings of slavery. They were, it might be said, the children of the slaves (p. 253).

The main thesis is that the materialist forces of class struggle set the stage on which actors – real, live and multidimensional human beings – act out the drama of history. He argues for a historically derived, ideological, cultural basis for black Marxism.

For those African men and women whose lives were interrupted by enslavement and transportation, it was reasonable to expect that they would attempt, and in some ways realize, the recreation of their lives. It was not, however, an understanding of the Europeans which preserved those Africans in the grasp of slavers, planters, merchants and colonizers. Rather, it was the ability to conserve their native consciousness of the world from alien intrusion, the ability to imaginatively recreate a precedent metaphysic while being subjected to enslavement, racial domination and repression. This was *the raw material of the Black radical tradition*, the values, ideas, conceptions and constructions of reality from which resistance was manufactured. And in each instance of resistance, the social and psychological dynamics which are shared by human communities in long-term crises resolved for the rebels the particular moment, the collective and personal chemistries which congealed into social movement. But it was the materials constructed from a shared philosophy developed in the African past and transmitted as culture, from which revolutionary consciousness was realized and the ideology of struggle formed (p. 443; emphasis added).

He argues that the slave trade was the historical result of how European slave political economies developed, paying attention to how this led to two seemingly opposite aspects of essentially the same historical process:

1. The increase in racism against blacks: "...the more that Africans and their descendants assimilated cultural materials from colonial society, the less human they became in the minds of the colonialists" (p. 164).
2. The increase in class exploitation of whites: "The greed of the English and European merchants easily overran their racial and national sympathies. Thus it was that the crews of their slaving ships died at rates perhaps even higher than their human cargoes" (p. 162).

Based on this process of massive resettlement of Africans under brutal forms of European domination, there was a worldwide struggle of Africans in

revolt. Robinson advances what he calls a "Historical Archaeology of the Black Radical Tradition" (p. 173). This was a struggle for group survival based on non-European peoples' common bonds of identity against their adversary. He finds common behaviour in the black revolt of Palmares and maroonage, slave revolts in the USA, the Haitian revolution, resistance in Brazil, the British West Indies and nineteenth-century African revolts as well.

The actual substance of the black radical tradition in its twentieth-century formative stage is articulated through an analysis of the work of DuBois, C.L.R. James and Richard Wright. DuBois and James are the petty bourgeois intellectuals who find their way to Marxism by negating the bourgeois intellectual traditions of the USA and England, and Wright is the son of a sharecropper who articulates their interests on his journey through the ideological influences of western civilization.

DuBois and James made major contributions by dealing with the transition from slavery to freedom. DuBois in his work *Black Reconstruction* laid down a basically Marxist analysis that focused on how class struggle for democracy was the essence of that experience, an experience in which black people were not only the main issue, but certainly one of the main actors who made history as well. James took from Europe some insights about democratic revolutions, especially the writing of Marx on the fight for democracy as a class fight, and placed the black radical tradition in the heart of the world system of capitalist development. Wright drew on the black folk tradition to articulate a native consciousness that expressed the class realities in an inherently American form, a form shaped and motivated by the cultural complex of black history from tenant sharecropper through the migration north to the industrial city.

Robinson has made a great contribution to black Marxism as he has set out the major work so far on the issues of class and race in European ideological development, black radical tradition, and the emergence of a black Marxism as the greatest extension of the black radical tradition.

Cornel West

Robinson is focused on the spontaneous dynamic of black historical culture and its impact on the development of a self-conscious black radical tradition, especially as it has developed as a variant of Marxism, that is, black Marxism. West is concerned with a parallel project, the dialectical relationship of black Christian thought with Marxism, towards what he calls Afro-American critical thought, which constitutes his version of what I am calling the new school of black Marxism. In his major work, *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*, he states:

I shall define Afro-American critical thought as an interpretation of Afro-American history, especially its cultural heritage and political struggles, which provides norms

for responding to challenges presently confronting black Americans.... It attempts to make theoretically explicit what is implicit in history, to describe and demystify cultural and social practices and offer solutions to urgent problems besetting black Americans (p. 21-2).

West is concerned with bringing coherence to his analysis and therefore begins by articulating a historical periodization of what he calls an "overarching interpretive framework" for African Americans in conflict:

1. Modernity, Colonial Provinciality, Localism (1688-1789).
2. Heyday of Modernity, Postcolonial Provinciality, Christian Practices (1789-1871).
3. Decline of Modernity, Industrial Provinciality, Inclusionary Practices (1871-1950).
4. End of Modernity, Postindustrial Cosmopolitanism, Dispersive Practices (1951-now) (pp. 27-44).

This is an attempt to define the hostile environment from a materialist approach to culture and political economy. He does make a serious effort to avoid a simplistic reductionism. So, when he deals with racism it is not discussed by "...simply appealing to the objective demands of the prevailing mode of production, the political interests of the slaveholding class, or the psychological needs of the dominant white racial group"(p. 47). His discussion of racism is trenchant because it cuts into this cultural ideological orientation on its own terms, so that racism is not a deviation but a logical manifestation of the best of western civilization:

To put it crudely, my argument is that the authority of science, undergirded by a modern philosophical discourse guided by Greek ocular metaphors and Cartesian notions, promotes and encourages the activities of observing, comparing, measuring, and ordering the physical characteristics of human bodies. Given the renewed appreciation and appropriation of classical antiquity, these activities are regulated by classical aesthetic and cultural norms. The creative fusion of scientific investigation, Cartesian epistemology, and classical ideals produced forms of rationality, scientificity, and objectivity which, though efficacious in the quest for truth and knowledge, prohibited the intelligibility and legitimacy of the idea of black equality in beauty, culture, and intellectual capacity. In fact, to "think" such an idea was to be deemed irrational, barbaric, or mad (p. 48).

In sum, West develops a four-part typology of cultural relations of domination and resistance.

Cultural processes can be understood in the light of four categories: Hegemonic, Pre-hegemonic, Neo-hegemonic, and Counter-hegemonic.

Hegemonic culture is to be viewed as the effectively operative dominant world views, sensibilities, and habits that sanction the established order. *Pre-hegemonic culture*

consists of those residual elements of the past which continue to shape and mold thought and behavior in the present; it often criticizes hegemonic culture, harking back to a golden age in the pristine past. *Neo-hegemonic culture* constitutes a new phase of hegemonic culture; it postures as an oppositional force, but, in substance, is a new manifestation of people's allegiance and loyalty to the status quo. *Counter-hegemonic culture* represents genuine opposition to hegemonic culture; it fosters an alternative set of habits, sensibilities, and world views that cannot possibly be realized within the perimeters of the established order (p. 120; emphasis added).

On the side of resistance, West develops a model of four traditions of black response to the American scene and identifies the literary figure who best embodies the tradition: (1) the exceptionalist tradition (W.E.B. DuBois); (2) the assimilationist tradition (E. Franklin Frazier); (3) the marginalist tradition (Richard Wright); (4) the humanist tradition (Ralph Ellison). From West we get the argument that the most advanced position is the counter-hegemonic culture as expressed by the Afro-American humanist tradition.

As a theologian, West has a major focus on a black theology of liberation, placing the religious tradition of blacks within the more general humanist tradition. He develops a historical periodization of black liberation theology: (1) Critique of slavery (1650-1863); (2) Critique of institutional racism (1864-1969); (3) Critique of white North American theology (1969-77); (4) Critique of US capitalism (1977-now). Black Marxism, according to West, is crucial to the further truth of a black liberation theology in basic ways:

1. A methodology of exposure, oppositional search for truth which reveals a dialectic of negation, preservation, and transformation.
2. Linking liberation with a new socioeconomic order, though neither spells this out in any detail (the classless society and/or heaven on earth).
3. Critique of liberal capitalist America. He is clear that he feels Marxism has severe shortcomings, but he is equally clear that the strengths of Marxism are needed by black liberation theologians:

I am suggesting that the more black theologians discard or overlook Marxist social criticism, the farther they distance themselves from the fundamental determinant of black oppression and any effective strategy to alleviate it (p. 115).

According to West, black Marxism contributes to black liberation theology as follows:

Revolutionary Christian perspective and praxis must remain anchored in the prophetic Christian tradition in the Afro-American experience which provides the norms of individuality and democracy; guided by the cultural outlook of the Afro-American humanist tradition which promotes the vitality and vigor of black life; and informed by the social theory and political praxis of progressive Marxism which proposes to approximate as close as is humanly possible the precious values of individuality

and democracy as soon as God's will be done (that is, revolutionary change) (p. 146).

West has made an important leap towards revolutionary thought in the heart of the ideological cauldron in which that vast majority of black people find themselves. Up to this point, with some important exceptions (e.g. George Woodbury), black religious thinkers have not been open to Marxism. Now we have young theoreticians who are making the leap, daring to speak out against the taboo. This is a fundamental contribution to black Marxism.

Amiri Baraka

Baraka's recent work *Daggers and Javelins* contains six specific essays that constitute basic insights that if developed would be a major theoretical contribution of black Marxism to literature, a political cultural analysis. He begins with a materialist view of culture and literature:

The development of a *specifically* Afro-American culture must wait for the emergence of the Afro-American people, the particular nationality composed of Africans transformed by the fact and processes of slavery into an American people of African descent.

The most practical artifacts of the culture are the tools and environment of day-to-day living. In these practical pursuits are found the earliest Afro-American art – artifactual reflections of the life of that people. Music, because it is most abstract and could not therefore be so severely limited and checked by slave culture, must be the earliest of the “non-practical” arts to emerge (although a work song is to help one work): the work song, chants, hollers, the spiritual, eventually the blues.

Afro-American literature rises as a reflection of the self-conscious self-expression of the Afro-American people, but to be an Afro-American literature, truly, it must reflect, in the main, the ideological and socio-cultural portrait of that people! (p. 140).

Baraka is arguing for a modal definition rooting the parameters of an Afro-American literature in the material “socio-cultural portrait” of the Afro-American people. The main thrust of his analysis results in some critical insights on the historical periodization of Afro-American literature. The first main aspect of the literature is not Wheatley or Hammon but the slave narratives:

The slave narratives are an ideological and emotional reflection of the great majority of the Afro-American people as well as a stunningly incisive portrait of slave America. They are the voice of the *majority* of black people, as literally as that can be taken. They are also a *genre*, a distinctive *body* of work, that indicate a way of living and thinking in the society. They are antislavery, fierce indictments of American slave society, the exact opposite of Wheatley–Hammon. When the various teachers of Afro-American literature scramble the narratives and Wheatley–Hammon together, they scramble the history and ideology (i.e. perception of reality) contained in each. So that what is hidden is just where these writers are coming from *seen in the context of real life* – who and

what they really are and their *use*, finally, to the Afro-American people and to American society as a whole (and to the entire world!) (p. 311).

This is the main literature of the slave experience, but not the only literary expression. Baraka points to the religious works, especially sermons, and the pre-civil war black nationalist protest writings as well.

DuBois is put forward as the main literary figure linking the reconstruction to the early twentieth-century movements:

DuBois is the great link between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His *Souls of Black Folk*, and indeed DuBois's constant *forward movement* ideologically, from isolated democrat to black capitalist and yeasayer for the “talented tenth” and the emerging black bourgeoisie (its militant national wing as opposed to the comprador wing of Booker T. Washington) to Pan-Africanist and socialist and finally to Marxist communist, is the underlying dynamic of all of our intellectual and political journey. But *SOB* is the connection to the Harlem Renaissance. Its multiple forms and omniscience, from music and cultural history and criticism to polemic (“Of Mr Booker T. Washington and Others”) to short fiction, prepares a whole artistic and ideological pallet for the young urban intelligentsia of the Harlem Renaissance (p. 313).

Baraka goes on to Langston Hughes and Richard Wright as the main literary figures of the paradigmatic migration by which the black masses were torn from the bosom of rural intimacy and down-home action, to the fast-paced metropolis whose heartbeat was the factory and in which the commodification of culture increased homogenization to make everyone the same. This migration led to the Harlem Renaissance, and it was this cultural explosion that announced black people as having an ideological expression of their new identity. What was the basis of this cultural movement?

...the Harlem Renaissance is the maturation of an urban, Afro-American intelligentsia, symbolizing the movement of large numbers of the black masses out of the Afro-American nation in the old black-belt South into the rest of the United States, as an oppressed national minority, transforming from a largely Southern, rural and agricultural, peasant people, to the present day: almost half of the black masses live in the North, Midwest, and West, in urban centers, as part of an industrial working class; ninety-six percent of the black masses are part of that multinational working class in the United States (pp. 313–14).

What was the role of Langston Hughes?

Hughes's early work is classic “Black is Beautiful – We Are an African People” writing, which is the revolutionary nationalism of the oppressed people whose first utterances are defense against the cultural aggression of imperialism, which says those it oppresses are stupid, ugly, and have no history! ... The 1930s and 1940s brought changes to Langston Hughes's work, and perhaps the strongest work is collected in the volume *Good Morning, Revolution*. There we see a distinctive move into a militant internationalism, embracing the struggle of the majority of the world's peoples for liberation with a stirring and conscious anti-imperialism (p. 314).

And what was the role of Richard Wright? He reveals this in a discussion of *Black Boy*.

Black Boy is about transition, the literal movement of the Afro-American people, and their ideas and whole spiritual life, from a peasant people grappling with the weight of the post-Reconstruction reaction to a people moving toward a new consciousness that would come from the cities, from nonfarm work, from travel, from growing involvement with industrial labor, from education. Wright represents the Afro-American consciousness broadening past mere reflex reaction to oppression – from reflex to reflects (p. 176).

Now writing in the midst of the urban context, and being one of the major literary figures of the Black Arts Movement, Baraka is clear that his black Marxism requires him to understand history in order to become actively engaged in making history. This leads to definite ideas about the role of art in making the future:

Art must fight for the progress of society; it must identify with the most advanced forces in society and reflect their struggle to perfect humanity consciously. To back away from this commitment is to commit oneself to the maintenance of the backward and the reactionary (p. 165).

He backs this up with a political analysis of more conservative approaches to black literature. For Baraka this is not an esoteric claim, but an assessment of the future being made by the progressive forces in the Black Movement including Afro-American Studies:

...Afro-American Studies will ... continue to develop as a summation of the lives of the Afro-American people on the one hand, and one catalyst for further struggle to transform those lives on the other. And in the best of these programs of Afro-American Studies will be seen the clear and irreducible motion of the black masses for self-determination and democratic rights (p. 284).

Baraka is an interesting barometer for black intellectual developments, as are all major figures who have been on the front lines, close enough to the dynamic of our history to be part of each new and important trend. Black Marxism will be enhanced by this development, especially if his insights are systematized by himself and others into a full theoretical and empirical historical periodization of Afro-American literature and art.

Clarence J. Munford

C.J. Munford is an important but little-known black political economist. He presents more of an orthodox approach rooted in an exegesis of Marx and the

application of this Marxism to the facts of the Afro-American experience. His approach is comparative, always contrasting his focus on the Afro-American with some other experience in world history. His analysis of Afro-Americans is rooted in a historical periodization of class relations.

1. Slavery: his main approach is to use formal political economy to demonstrate that antebellum slavery was part of the world capitalist system and therefore quite distinct from the slavery of antiquity. It is precisely its relationship to the capitalist system that makes this modern slavery more vicious and barbaric than the patriarchal slavery of ancient Greece, Egypt or Rome.

2. Social structure: the underlying class dynamic of the twentieth-century black community is the complex transformation from relatively homogeneous community to one more complex, in this case the majority was transformed from agrarian peons to an urban proletariat:

In 1890, at the height of the era of agrarian peonage, ninety per cent of toiling Blacks worked in agriculture and in the tertiary sector of the US economy as agricultural producers and domestic and personal service laborers. Fifty years later, migration, urbanization and proletarianization had dramatically reduced the percentage of Blacks in farming and domestic and personal service by forty-five per cent. As early as 1917 – the year of the October Revolution which ushered in a new era in human history – the Great Migration in America had progressed to the point where W.E.B. DuBois could talk of “teeming thousands, if not millions, of Black proletarians” concentrated in urban centers. Thirty years before, the only large class in the Black community were the comparatively dispersed and often isolated peons of the rural towns, villages, hamlets and back-country farmsteads of the old South and Southwest. Thus the class composition of Black America was completely transformed in the generations from 1890 to 1940. The urban proletariat became the *decisive class* in the Black community ousting agrarian peons, most of whom, either personally or in the persons of their children, donned a new social guise by deserting the farms and plantations for the factories, slums and ghettos of the cities. That is, when they were lucky enough to find factory jobs replacing former European immigrants (p. 61–2).

3. Lumpen theory: Munford is critical of the popular use of the category lumpenproletariat to describe the mass of blacks dislocated from productive work. This leads to a clarification that most of these people are not the classical vipers who have degenerated into a dangerous scum. Most of them are what Munford calls a “ghetto subproletariat”.

Out of this analysis of economic forces, Munford attacks racism as false – incorrect and essentially political – thinking. His approach uses the scientific evidence of human evolution – biological and sociological – to refute racism. He sums up this position:

Marxism–Leninism has proven conclusively that there is no basis in natural science for racist fabrications about the biological inequality of the races. At certain stages in their historical development all peoples share certain basic features regardless of their racial specifics. Marxism shows that *labor* was the determining factor in the origin of man and society. Its discoveries about the role of production in social development

refute racist lies. Regardless of race, man develops in accordance with universal social laws (p. 222).

Munford relies heavily on Soviet scholarship; however, his orientation and central concerns, connected with his willingness to make a new and if necessary novel analysis, place him in the black Marxist school.

Manning Marable

In *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* Marable presents an economic analysis that is explicitly a descriptive critique of classes and the field of battle for the class struggle:

All social transformations begin with a criticism of existing social forces, the material and ideological components which comprise social reality. The liberation of historically oppressed and underdeveloped peoples takes as its point of departure a revolutionary critique of the integral social classes which constitute that national minority or nation (p. 19).

Marable takes his ideological and methodological questions from DuBois and Walter Rodney. He argues that DuBois put forward five basic propositions:

1. "The first and fundamental and inescapable problem of American democracy is Justice to the American Negro" (p. 11).
2. "...no real democracy has ever existed in the USA" (pp. 12-13).
3. The fight for democracy must be based on a broad front of diverse interests (pp. 14-16).
4. "...socialism had to become that central vision for the Black liberation movement" (p. 16).
5. The USA will go forward toward democracy and socialism or degenerate into "authoritarianism, racial barbarism and militarization of the work force" (p. 18).

He then quotes DuBois from a speech in 1951:

Either in some way or to some degree, we must socialize our economy, restore the New Deal and inaugurate the welfare state, or we descend into military fascism which will kill all dreams of democracy, or the abolition of poverty and ignorance, or of peace instead of war (p. 18).

Marable unites with Rodney's thesis on Africa as applied to the USA: "With Rodney I have argued the thesis that Black economic, political, and social development is possible 'only on the basis of a radical break with ... the capitalist system, which has been the principal agency of underdevelopment'" (p. 256). He makes his strongest theoretical point to establish the specific historicity of the Afro-American:

Black people in the US are the direct product of massive economic and social forces ... In the proverbial bowels of the capitalist leviathan, the slaves forged a new world culture that was in its origin African, but in its creative forms, something entirely new. The Afro-American agricultural worker was one of the world's first proletarians, in the construction of his/her culture, social structures, labor and world view (p. 24).

And, while blacks are a common people in the USA, Marable sees "a clear division", a fundamental difference within the Afro-American people:

But from the first generation of this new national minority group in America, there was a clear division in that world view. The *Black majority* were those Afro-Americans who experienced and hated the lash; who labored in the cane fields of the Carolina coast; who detested the daily exploitation of their parents, spouses and children; who dreamed or plotted their flight to freedom, their passage across "the River Jordan;" who understood that their masters' political system of bourgeois democracy was a lie; who endeavored to struggle for land and education, once the chains of chattel slavery were smashed; who took pride in their African heritage, their Black skin, their uniquely rhythmic language and culture, their special love of God. There was, simultaneously, a *Black elite*, that was also a product of that disruptive social and material process. The elite was a privileged social stratum, who were often distinguished by color and caste; who praised the master publicly if not privately; who fashioned its religious rituals, educational norms, and social structures on those of the West; who sought to accumulate petty amounts of capital at the expense of their Black sisters and brothers; whose dream of freedom was one of acceptance into the inner sanctum of white economic and political power (p. 24).

This is the basic structure created by Marable for the chapters of this book: (a) for the majority, he deals with the working class, poverty, women, and the police/penal forms of social control; and (b) for the elites, he deals with business, politics, church, and education.

Each chapter is grounded in the paradigm of historical periodization. To this extent there is theoretical clarity, and a force on the pages of a people marching through history. But Marable's forte, the careful attention to journalistic detail, the codification of criticisms emanating from diverse and conflicting sectors of the movement, and relentless criticisms of the black elite, is suggestive – like a painter using dots to create an image. His materialism is non-dogmatic, eclectic and empiricist, but broadly useful. Marable is the town crier – a muckraking journalist of the black Marxist school.

Lloyd Hogan

The last book we consider is the text by Lloyd Hogan, *Principles of Black Political Economy*. This is a major work, being the first theoretical text in Black Studies to deal with political economy. It is a straightforward attempt to posit an analytical/historical model as a framework for the codification of the existing literature, and as a guide to new empirical research. This is a barometer of how

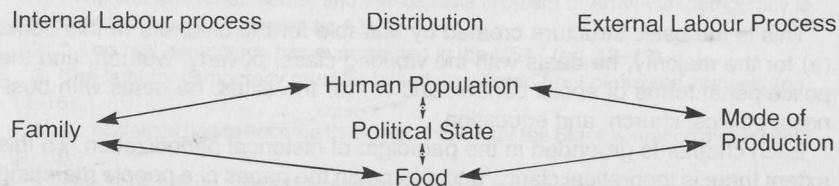
well Black Studies is doing, a good start that has to be picked up and carried to its logical conclusion by others. This book should be the basis for conference panels, faculty seminars, and several masters' theses.

He begins his work by reinterpreting the definition of political economy put forward by Adam Smith:

We define the science of political economy as the study of "a human population undergoing the act of social reproduction, over a protracted period of time, under a set of rules promulgated and enforced by a political state, within a bounded geographical domain".

This definition suggests that there are at least six parameters, taken together as a unity, which form the basis for a complete description of a political economy in the real world. These parameters are (a) the *geographical space* within which the political economy functions, (b) the *human population* whose social reproduction is the underlying motive force of the political economy, (c) the *institutional mechanisms* which are the instrumentalities of social reproduction, (d) the *historical period* during which the people are being reproduced, (e) the *political state* which oversees the political economy, and (f) the *geographical domains outside* of the political economy in question (pp. 12-13; emphasis added).

Hogan goes further to specify the nature of the institutional mechanism. The production of goods and services takes place in the external labour process, and the reproduction of people in the society is the internal labour process as carried out through family structures. Between these two there is an exchange, all regulated by the political state.



His analytical tools are devised to carry out an analysis of the concrete historical experiences of the Afro-American people. His historical periodization focuses on the three historical stages of social cohesion identified in the paradigm of unity.

It will first study the origins of blacks in the many and varied societies in Africa prior to the Atlantic slaving operations and the centuries preceding the formal colonization of Africa by the Europeans.

The succeeding phase of the study will concern itself with black slavery in the so-called "new world." The Atlantic slaving operations will be viewed as an essential external labor sector of British capitalism which played a most fundamental role in the process of primitive capital accumulation. The exploitation of black slave labor in the British North American tobacco colonies will be analyzed for its role in fueling the rapid and sustained growth of British capitalism. Finally, the exploitation of black slave labor in the cotton growing states of the south will be analyzed for its critical contribution to the primitive capital accumulation in New England and the Middle Atlantic states.

The study continues with an analysis of the system of black sharecropping in the black belt counties of the south from the end of the Civil War to the end of the 1960s. The conditions under which the system was put into place, the mechanics of black sharecropping labor exploitation, the specific channels of expropriation of black labor for ultimate accumulation in the northern capitalist coffers, the great migration as social revolution against the system, and the ultimate destruction of sharecropping as an economic reality – all of these topics will come in for detailed analysis. The stage will then be set for a look at the present system under which black laborers now toil.

The direct exploitation of black wage laborers under the capitalist system will form an important area of study. Black unpaid labor as a significant basis for the extent of capital wealth formation will be the key issue (pp. 76-7).

The daring and fresh character of this "heady" theoretical work is the bold refusal to hide behind reformism. Hogan is clear about this for black people:

In short, the future programme for black Americans requires the demise of the capitalist form of exploitation of their labor. It also entails the construction of a new social order based on personal freedom, equal opportunity and the inalienable right to participate in the creation of the material means of survival, and the effective right to acquire quantities and types of the material means of survival based purely on individual need (p. 166).

And he doesn't fail to put this in a global framework:

In sum, black Americans stand at the threshold of a worldwide social revolution. Their unique history of suffering and struggle for survival places them in an unparalleled position to be exemplars to the rest of exploited peoples of how a new social order can be consciously fashioned to reflect the perfectibility of the human condition on earth (p. 171).

This is a scholar daring to uphold the twin values of "academic excellence and social responsibility".

Conclusion

In summary, the most profound and yet simple point to make is that this school represents blacks who come out of the black revolt, have worked towards a universally valid philosophical position, and continue to fight for a revolutionary analysis, meaning a creative analysis that builds out of the popular black revolt that produced them. This is not "white" politics, but a universal position rooted in the black experience, being validated in the fight for an American revolution.

The main elements of unity are ideological, though it seems fairly clear that there are some political points of unity as well.

1. The black experience is historical. Each of these writers focuses on black people as a people definable by their concrete experiences, the cumulation of their past as objectivized in their cultural heritage, the objective forces that they

confront in their workplaces and communities, and their behaviour as they adapt to and revolt from their environment. This is the what of the black experience, and it is a material basis for Black Studies.

2. This history passes through stages. There are periods of social development, each with different characteristics, and each requiring a new analysis and a new set of politics for social change. The slave trade redefined the world and set entirely new forces in motion, not only in one region of the world but the entire world. Further, the emancipation of the slaves (DuBois and James) followed by their migration into the metropole has been worldwide in significance as well. The point is that these scholars are arguing that each of these stages must be analysed on its own terms.

Now together these two unities can be the basis for the greatest unity and development of black intellectual history. In fact, these are the two parameters that constitute the Paradigm of Unity in Black Studies (see Alkalimat et al., 1986).

3. The third unity involves a commitment to some form of social practice. The theory of stages brings one to confront the future with knowledge that the world can change, and a desire to make it better leads one to both a theoretical understanding that a new form of socioeconomic order is necessary, and some form of commitment to make it come about.

In general, what we have here is the beginning of ideological unity, tentative as it may be at this time. It is not a conservative homogeneous stifling type of unity, but a free dynamic process whereby very different forces have converged on the same theoretical foundation. This is going to provide the basis for greater stimulation and sharing.

But let me quickly add that this unity is by no means the entire story, for in fact there are great ideological and political differences. The main ideological problem is that no matter how close Marxism and Christianity get they will never be the same thing. God to a Marxist is an illusion, but believers in God are not an illusion but real live people who need a solid analysis of the world in order to change it.

On a material level there is a great difference between those who identify with Gramsci, the Italian theorist, who holds that culture is the most important aspect of a people for it is through that "stuff" that class consciousness is forged and rebellions made, and those who identify with Lenin, holding that the superstructure and culture are a reflection of an economic base but not simply reducible to it. This sets the difference between West and Marable on the one hand and Munford and Baraka on the other. This is a difference over the primacy of culture in relation to the economic base. Lastly, there is a difference over strategy and tactics for making a revolution.

But even with these differences it is important to point out that if we think of the past black nationalist/Marxist debates and slugfests, then these six people are in fact representative of something new, a new school of thought that is in its infancy at this historical moment. These six thinkers are representative of work being done by black intellectuals who are emerging out of black revolt, who are clinging to their black humanity while fashioning a weapon for understanding

and change. These are some of the fruits of a nationalist oriented revolt, a polemical black nationalist/Marxist debate, and now some serious intellectual productivity and revolutionary practice.

These books should be read by Marxists and black nationalists alike, because this black Marxism is new, it's fresh, it's diverse and, for black social thought, it's the best we've got.

References

- Alkalimat, Abdul et al. (1986) *Introduction to Afro-American Studies: A People's College Primer*. Available from Twenty-first Century Books and Publications, PO Box 803351, Chicago, Illinois 60680.
- Baraka, Amiri (1984) *Daggers and Javelins: Essays 1974-1979*. New York: Quill.
- Hogan, Lloyd (1984) *Principles of Black Political Economy*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Marable, Manning (1983) *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society*. Boston: South End Press.
- Munford, Clarence J. (1978) *Production Relations, Class and Black Liberation: A Marxist Perspective in Afro-American Studies*. Amsterdam: B.R. Gruner.
- Robinson, Cedric J. (1983) *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. London: Zed Press.
- West, Cornel (1982) *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abdul Alkalimat is an activist intellectual in the black liberation movement and in black studies. Currently he is publisher and manager of 21st Century Books and Publications (PCB, PO Box 803351, Chicago, IL 60680, USA). His next two books are released this autumn: *Paradigms in Black Studies* and *Harold Washington and the Crisis of Black Power in Chicago*.