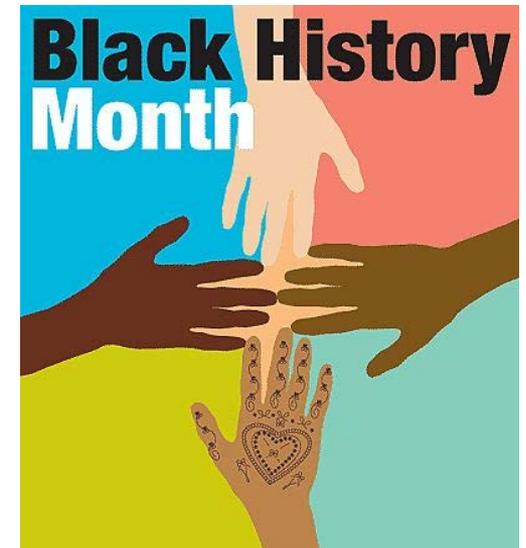


# Rethinking Theory in Black Studies:

## #3 HISTORY

Abdul Alkalimat  
University  
of Illinois



Black History Month stamps

# Lecture 1: IDEOLOGY

*The ideological framework*

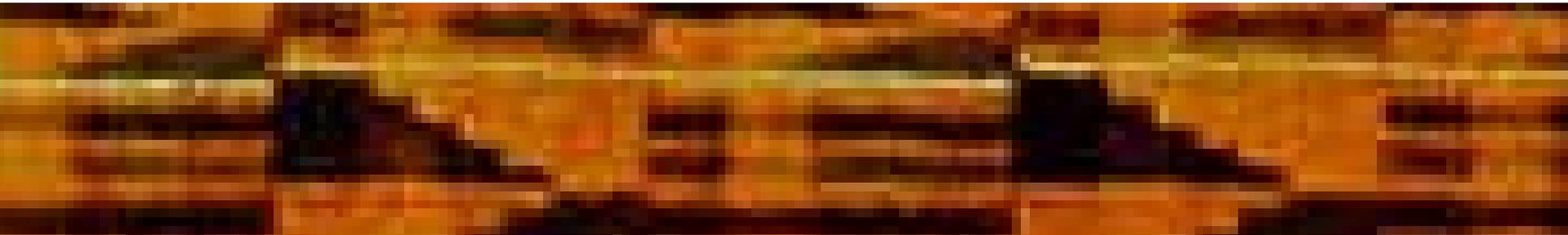
**Identity**

**Analysis**

**Commitment**

**Program**

**Action**





# Lecture 2: Methodology

## *The D-7 Method*

**D1: Definition**

**D2: Data**

**D3: Digitization**

**D4: Discovery**

**D5: Design**

**D6: Dissemination**

**D7: Difference**

# Lecture 3



**What is history? What has been the history of the African American experience?**

**Can we create a theory of Black history? Yes, and here's how.**





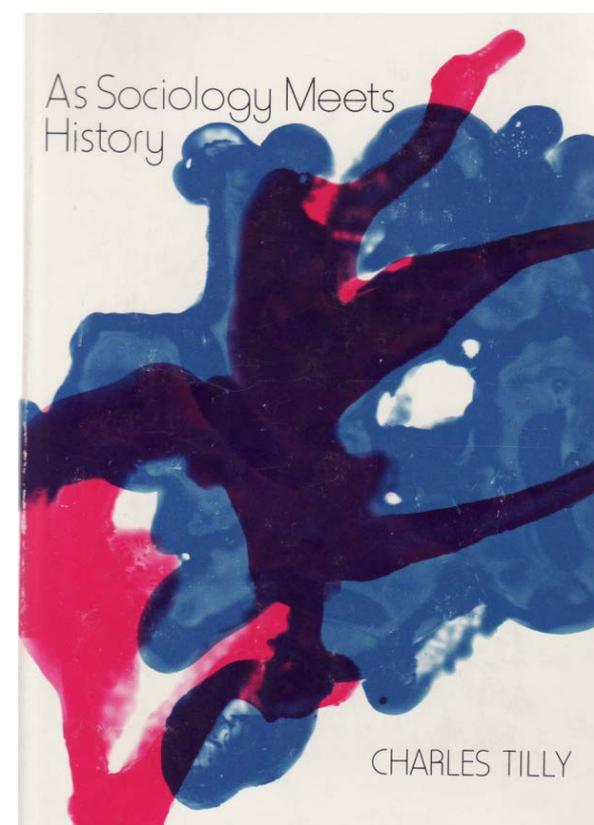
**What is history:  
Who writes it?  
Who publishes it?  
Who reads it?  
So what?**

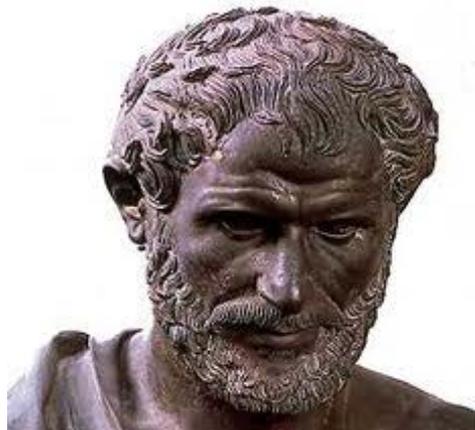
*History is written in the **present** about the **past** to help create a **future**.*

# Charles Tilly

(1929 – 2008)

“The word history refers to a **phenomenon**, to a body of **material**, and to a set of **activities**. As a phenomenon, history is the **cumulative effect** of past events on events of the present—any present you care to name. To the extent that *when something happens* matters, history is important....As a body of material, history consists of the **durable residues** of past Behavior....What of history as a set of activities? The central activity is **reconstructing the past.**” (1981)





# Aristotle (384 – 322 BC)

The races that live in cold regions and those of Europe are full of courage and passion but somewhat lacking in skill and brain power; for this reason, while remaining generally independent they lack political cohesion and the ability to rule others. On the other hand the Asiatic races have both brains and skill but are lacking in courage and will power; so they have remained both enslaved and subject. The Hellenic race, occupying a mid position geographically, has a measure of both. Hence it has continued to be free, to have the best political institution and to be capable of ruling others given a single constitution. (*Politics 7.7*)

# Grand world history and Africa?

Eurocentric ignorance masquerading as knowledge in distorting world history

Oswald Spengler (1880-1936)

*Decline of the West*, 2 volumes

H.G. Wells (1866-1946)

*The Outline of History*, 3 volumes

Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975)

*A Study of History*, 12 volumes

Will Durant (1885-1981)

*The Story of Civilization*, 11 volumes



# **Basic tenets of “Eurocentrism”**

- 1. Reason has its origin in Ancient Greece.**
- 2. Capitalism could only have developed in Europe.**
- 3. Christianity is superior to all world religions.**
- 4. European cultural values are the best.**
- 5. “White” people are destined to rule the world.**

# Critique of Eurocentrism



**Karl Marx (1818-1883)**

***Capital*, 3 volumes**

**Fernand Braudel (1902-1985)**

***Capitalism and Material Life*, 3 volumes**

**James Blaut (1927-2000)**

***Trilogy on Eurocentrism*, 3 volumes**

**Edward Said (1935-2003)**

***Orientalism*, 1 volume**

# Basic CRITIQUE of “Eurocentrism”

1. Reason has its origin in Ancient Greece.  
...Ancient Greece learned from Egypt (Africa)!
2. Capitalism could only have developed in Europe.  
...Capitalism is not unique to Europe!
3. Christianity is superior to all world religions.  
...All gods work the same way!
4. European cultural values are the best.  
...Black is beautiful!
5. “White” people are destined to rule the world.  
...The sun sets on all empires!

# When history meets sociology:

Historical specificity  
of a social narrative

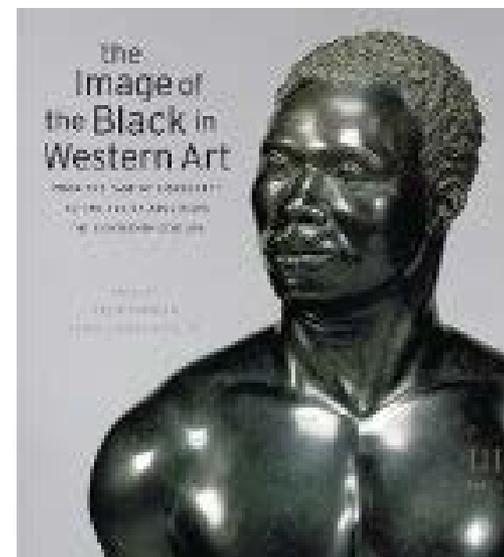
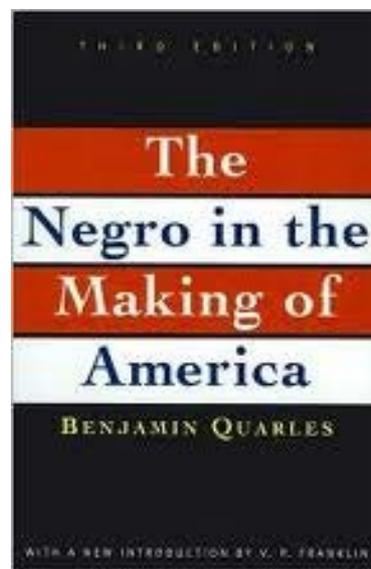
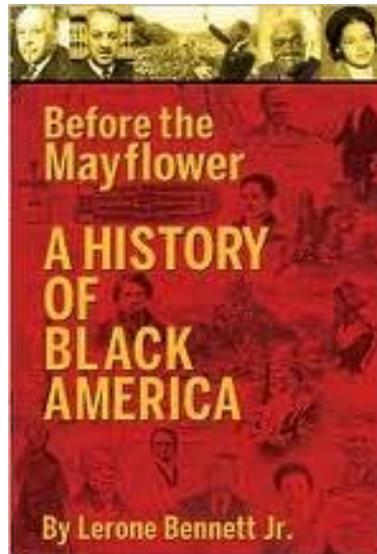
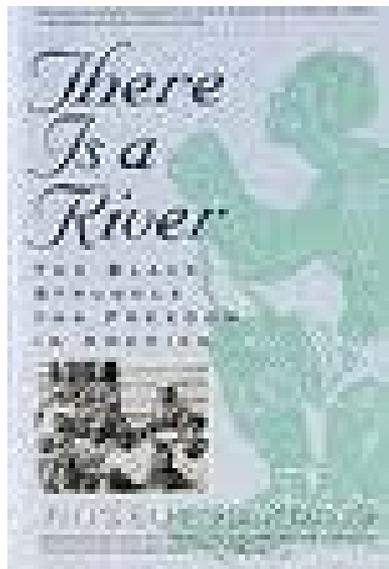
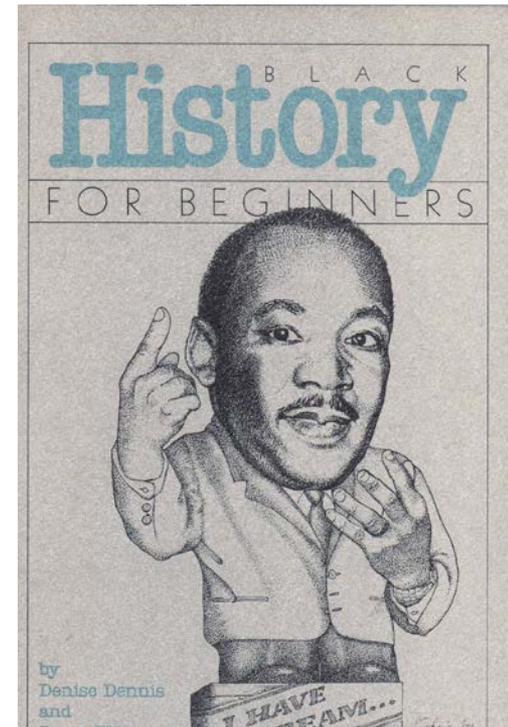
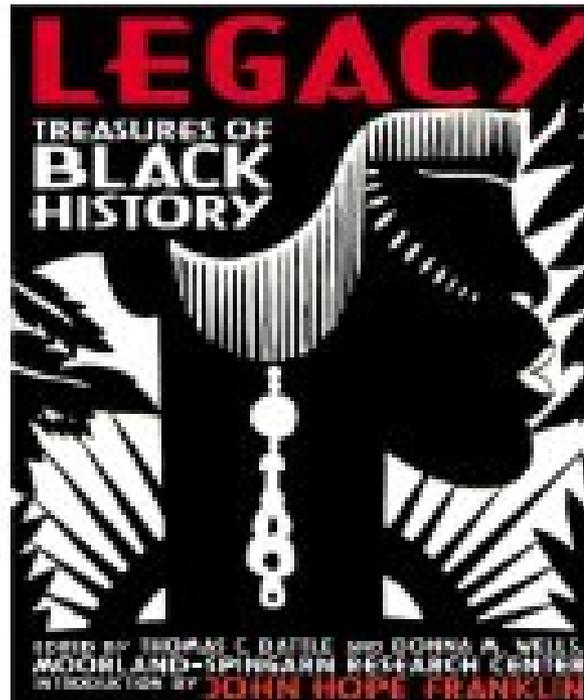
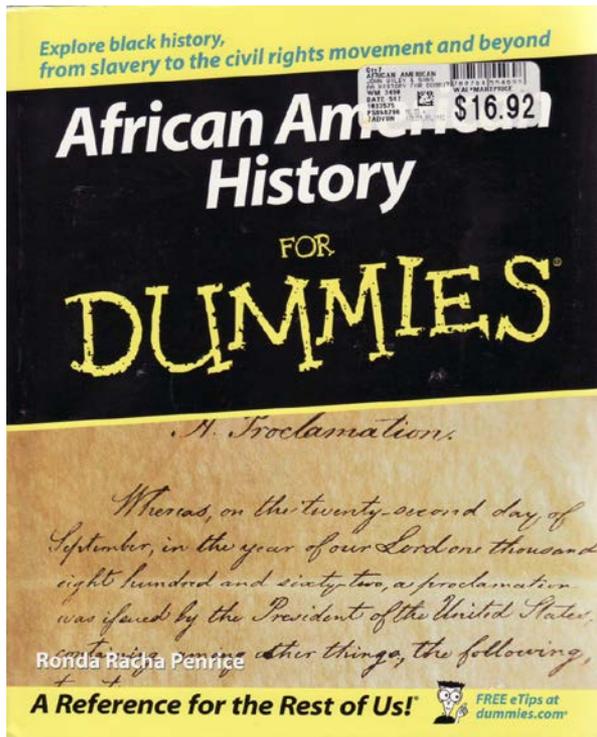
*Everybody learns  
from a good story*

Conceptual causality  
of social change

*Everybody wants  
to know why*



**X → Y**



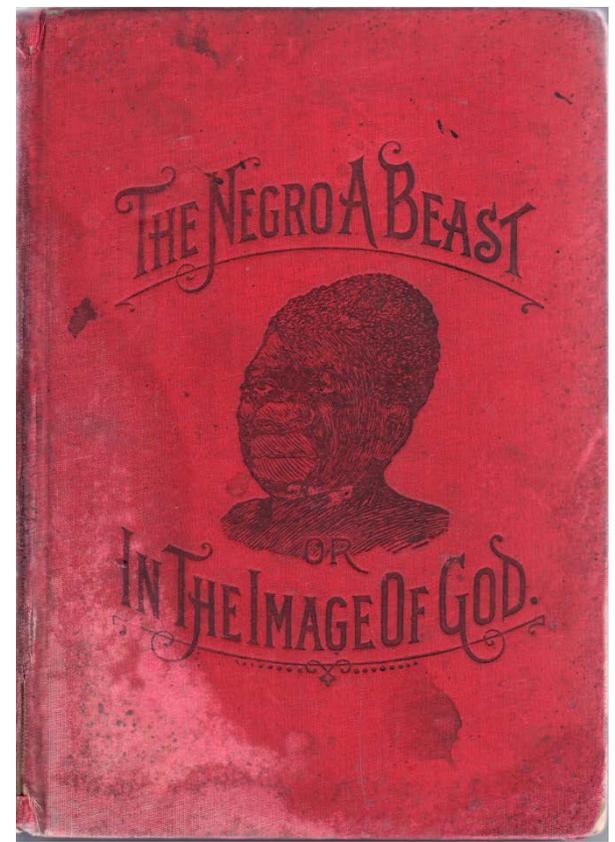
# Three kinds of History of Blacks

White history of Blacks

Black history of Blacks

Radical history of Blacks

This is a matter of  
consciousness not  
biology.



# **White history of Blacks: mainstream dominated by racist neglect and lies**

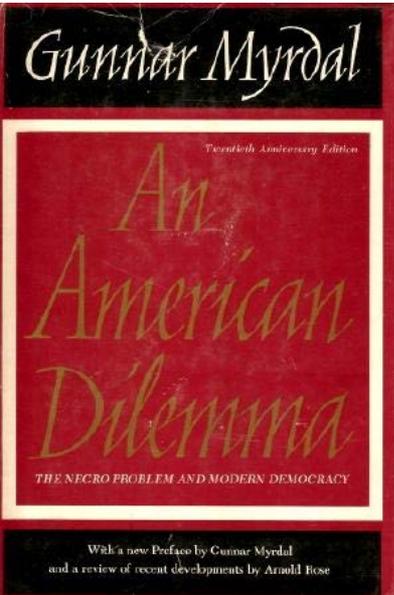
**Frederick Turner, Harvard (1861-1932)**

**U. B. Philips, Yale (1877-1934)**

**Charles Beard, Columbia (1874-1948)**

**“Turner...was himself a racist...the Beardian Perspective...lent itself to a pro southern Interpretation” Meier and Rudwick 1986**

# The liberal approach often relied on a European view



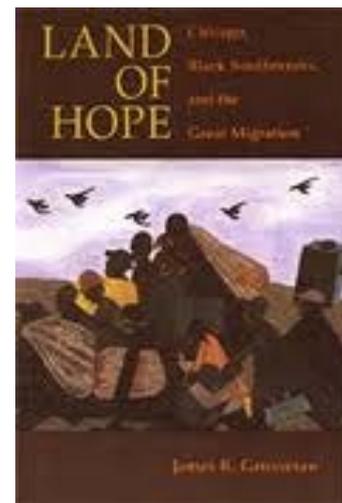
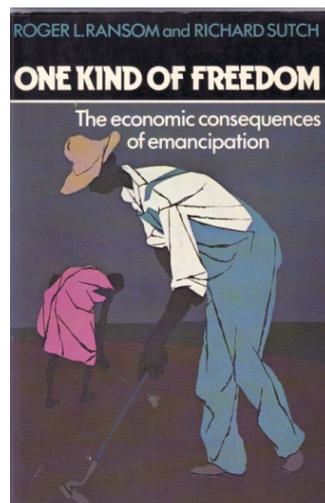
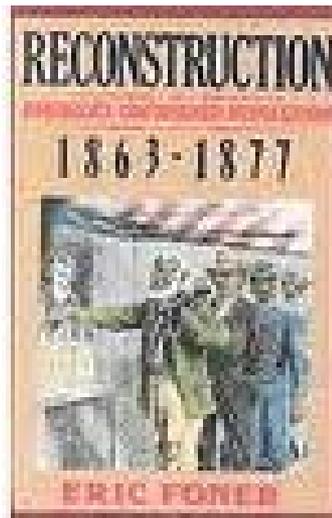
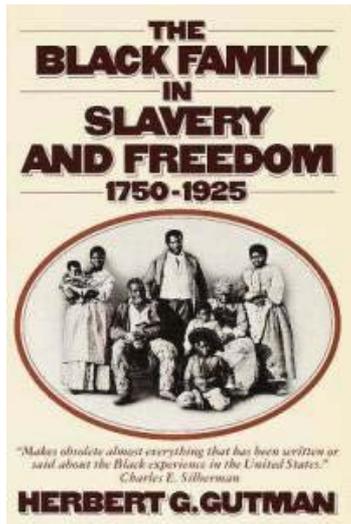
**Gunnar Myrdal**  
1898-1997



**Alexis de Tocqueville**  
1805-1859



# Progressive mainstream historians influenced by the 1960s began mapping the historical periodization of the Black experience



This was a new beginning

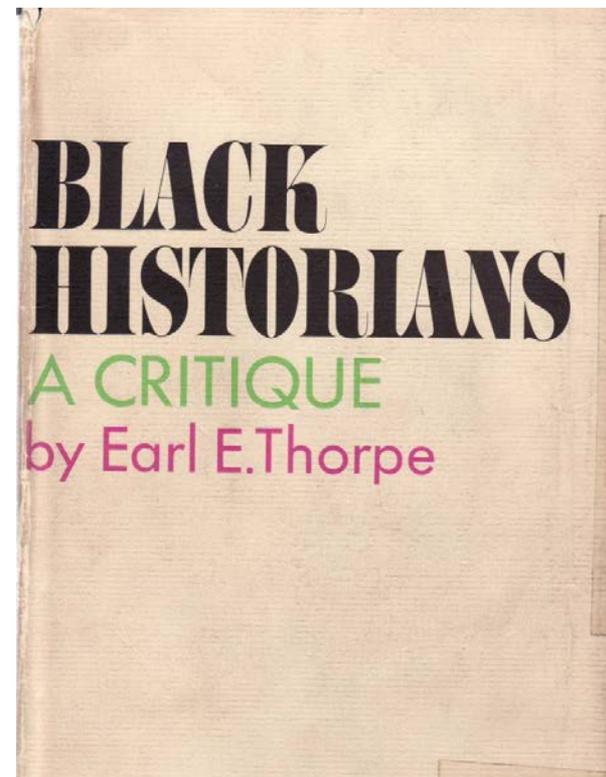
# Earl Thorpe (1924 – 1990): Why do we have a Negro History Movement?

“historical writing has been slow  
to shed its aristocratic tradition  
and bias”

“to combat the prominence of  
racial prejudice and stereotypes”

“to inspire Blacks to high  
achievement.”

**(1958)**



# **Father of Black History**

**Black History Month**

**Association for the Study of  
Afro American Life and History**

**Journal of African American History**

**Associated Publishers**

**Leader of a school of Black historians**

**Published many books and articles**



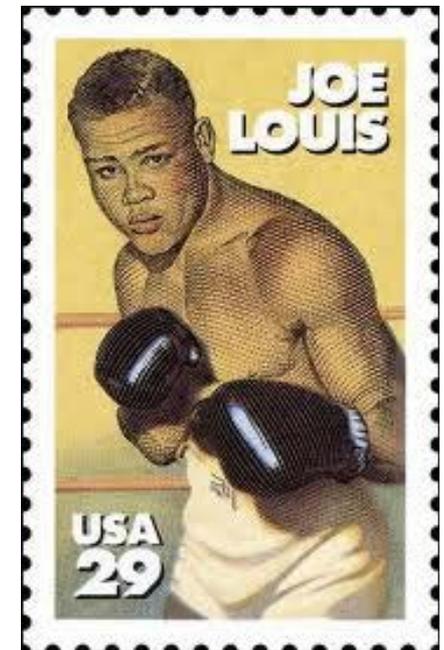
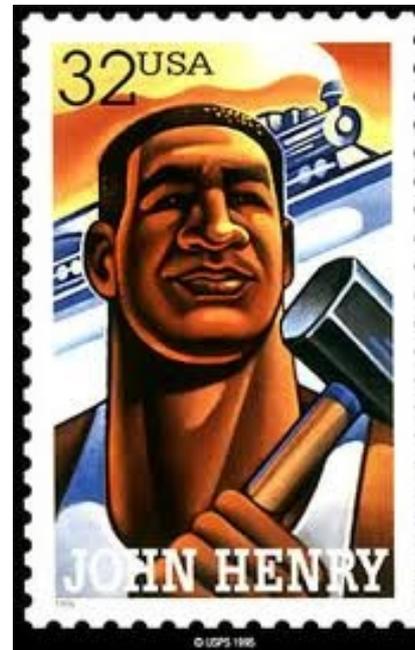
**Carter G Woodson  
1875 - 1950**

# Five periods of Black Historiography

## BLACK HISTORY AND THE HISTORICAL PROFESSION 1915-1980

August Meier and  
Elliott Rudwick

1. From ASALH to 1930s
2. New Deal and WW II
3. War's end to late 1950s
4. 1960s
5. New scholarship 1967-80



# Robert Harris: Five schools of Black historiography



- 1. Revisionism**
- 2. Hidden hand**
- 3. Contributionism**
- 4. Cyclical**
- 5. Liberalism**

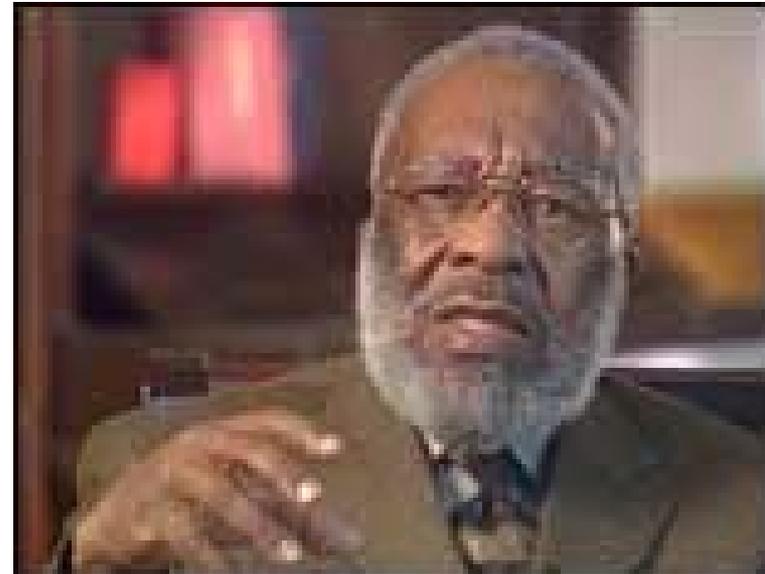
**MALCOLM**

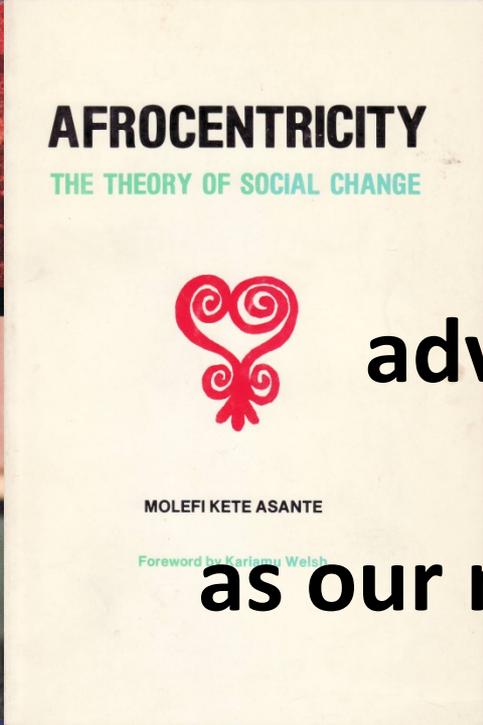
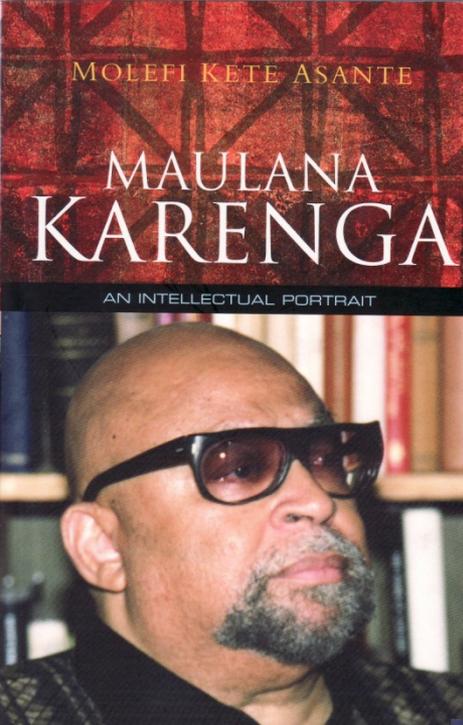


**Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research. And when you see that you've got problems, all you have to do is examine the historic method used all over the world by others who have problems similar to yours. Once you see how their got theirs straight, then you know how you can get yours straight.**

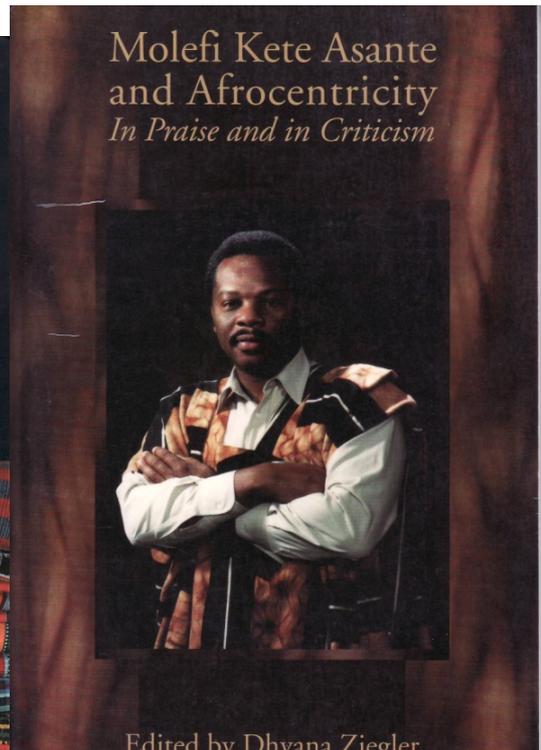
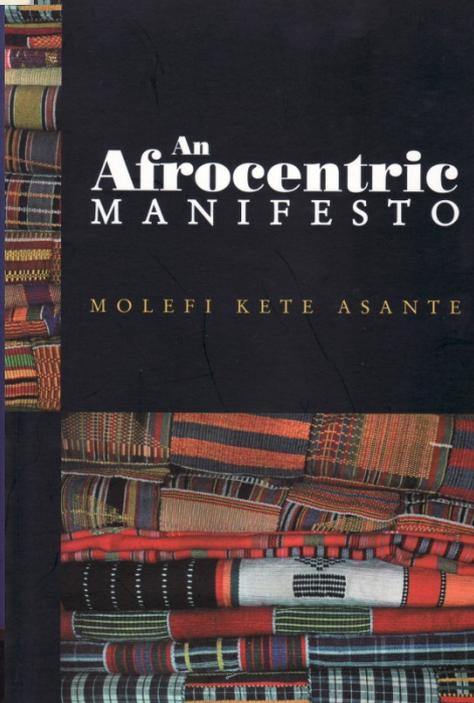
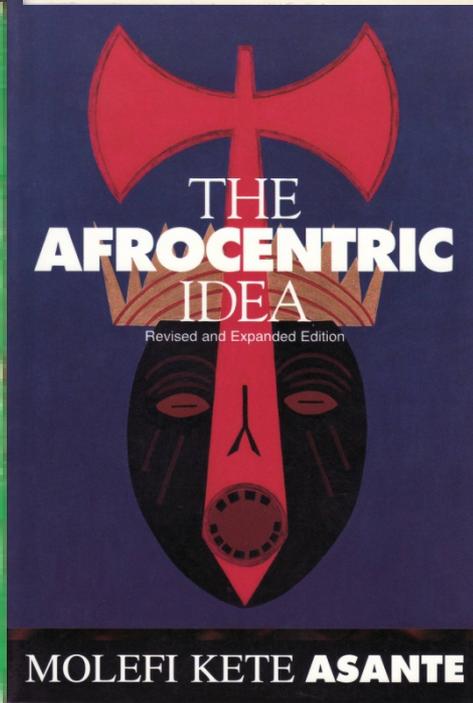
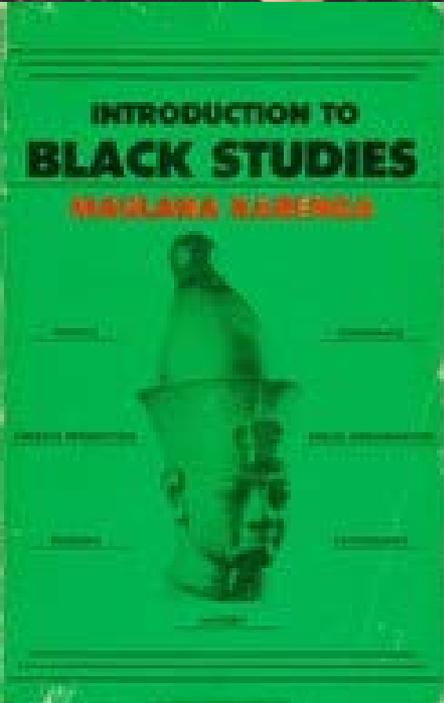
**“...the main focus of Negro historiography presented only an indirect challenge to the essential concepts of mainstream American historiography. It sought acceptance. Whereas, it seemed to me, those of us who were trying to create what we consciously chose to call Black history came out of the Black conscious movement, out of the Black struggles of the fifties, sixties, and early seventies. In our work, we were seeking... to present a fundamental challenge to the accepted truth of white American society.”**

**Vincent Harding**

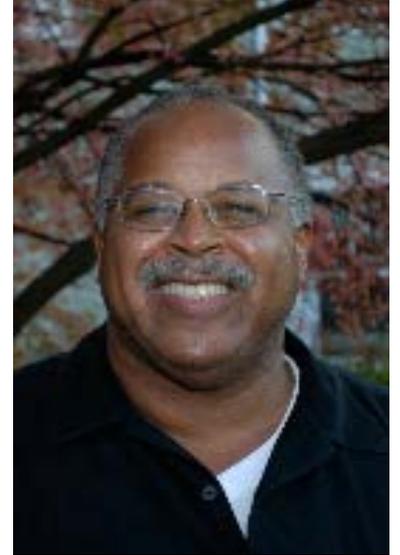




The refutation of Eurocentrism was advanced as Afrocentrism, placing ancient Africa as our main point of beginning.



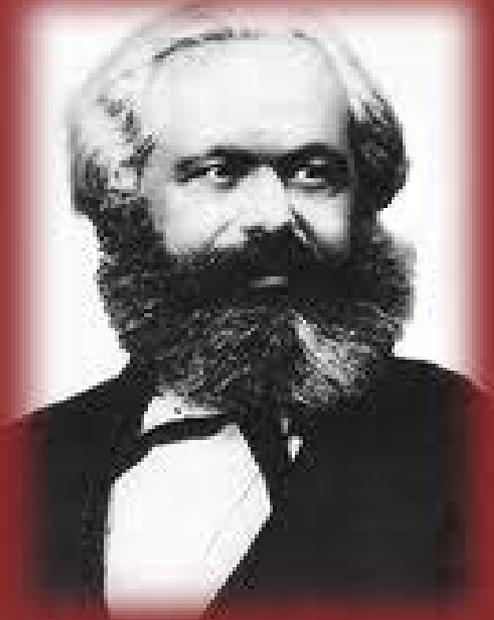
# **Ideological mission of Black Studies: Academic excellence and social responsibility**



**UIUC Black historians are among the best representatives of the Black Studies tradition of criticizing mainstream views and finding a way to give priority to the Black voice. Here James Anderson, Sundiata Cha Jua and Lou Turner are among leaders of the sixth stage of Black historians. In our class we are preparing anthologies of their theory work.**

# Radical Black history is found within Marx

**Karl Marx**



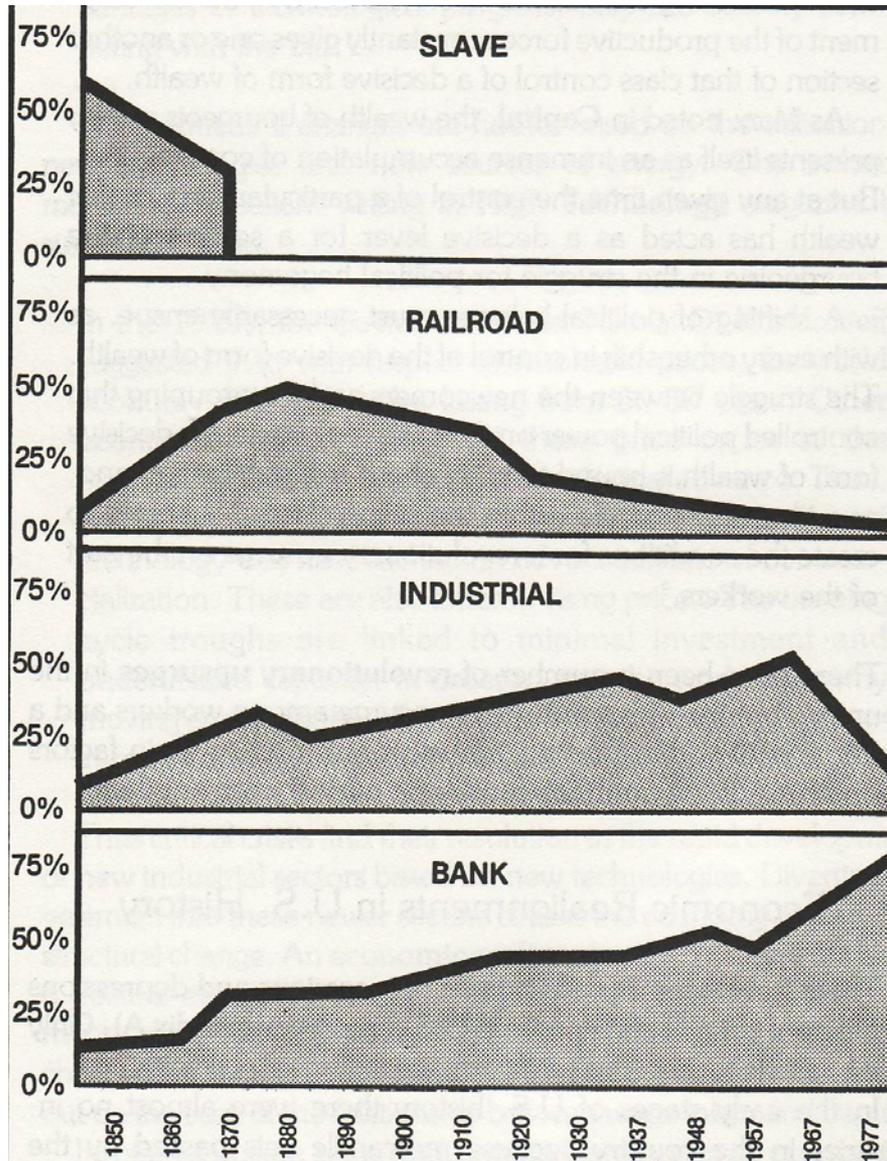
**Das Kapital**

**1818-1883**

“...the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of Black skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.”

“In the United States of America, any sort of independent labor movement was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the republic. Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded.”

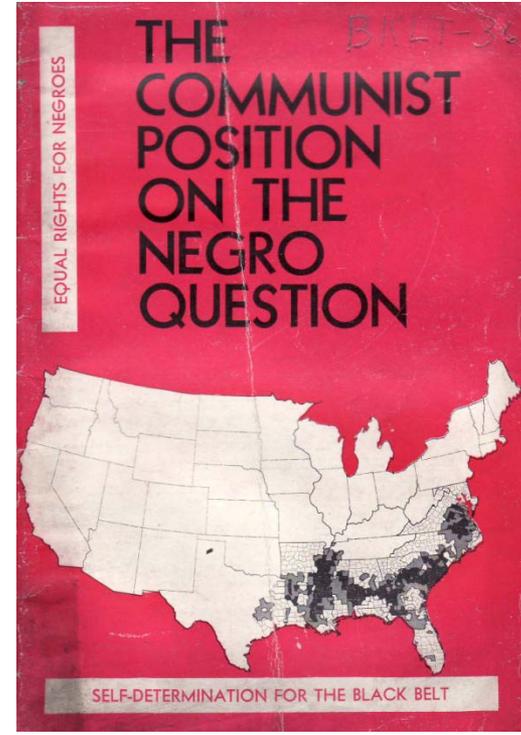
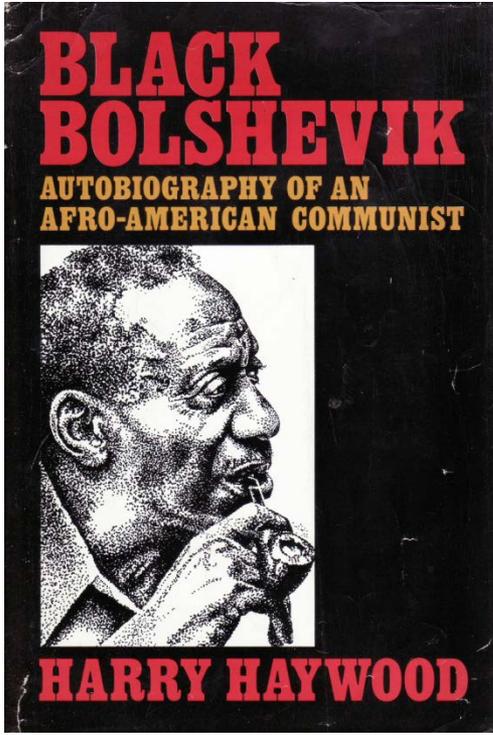
# Capital concentration in the US economy



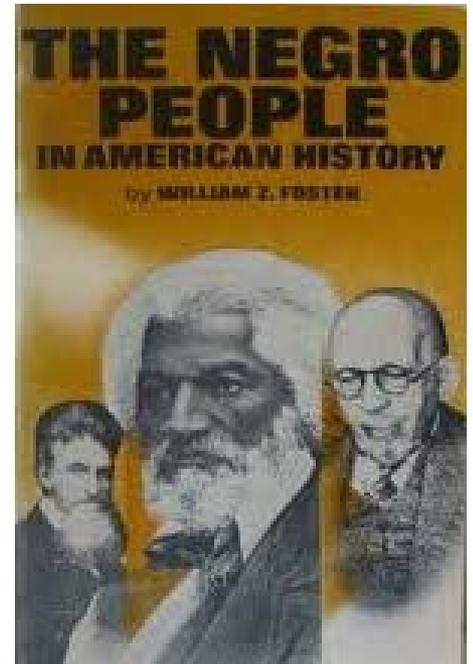
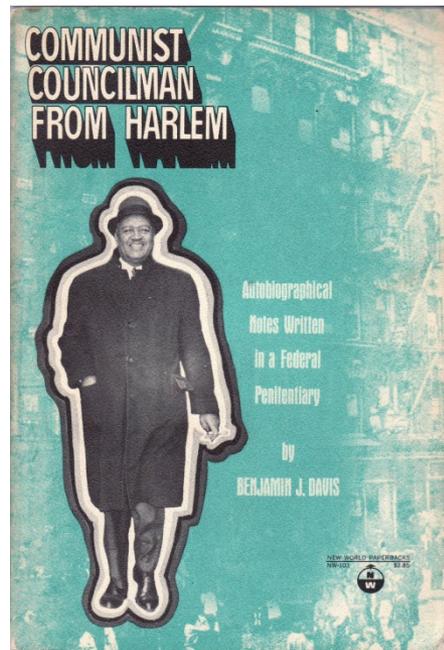
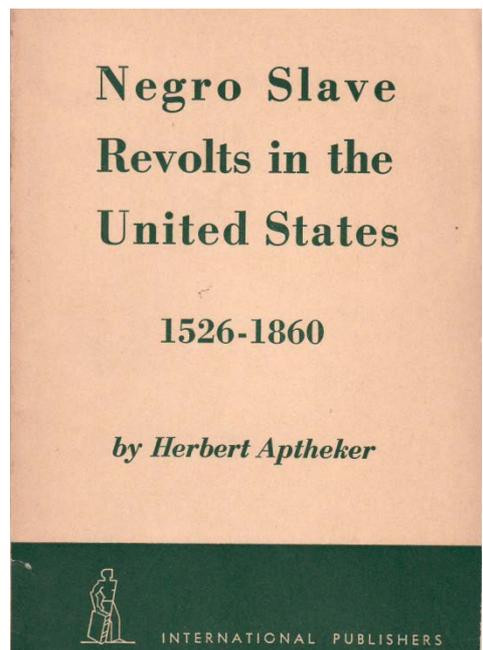
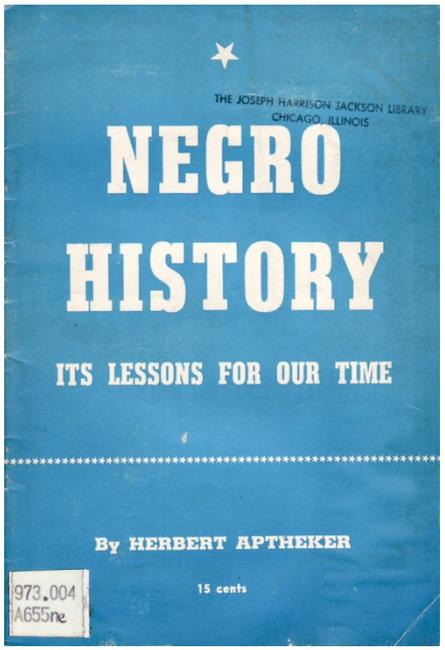
The main issue focuses on the economic structure of the country and how different interests contest for power.

The US experience of the workers versus the capitalists has been impacted by the unique experience of the middle classes.

It is clear who rules!



There is a Marxist analysis of African American history. These texts are from the “old” communists.





**CLASS STRUGGLE**  
Journal of Communist Thought



SPRING, 1975 #1 \$1.00

- Harry Haywood and the POC
- James Boggs Criticized
- National Self-Determination
- Women and the Party
- The Rise of the Third World
- Social-Imperialism in Europe

OCTOBER LEAGUE MARXIST-LENINIST

**THEORETICAL REVIEW 13**  
A Journal of Marxist-Leninist Theory and Discussion

**Anti-Revisionist Communism in North America**

A Critical History of the New Communist Movement, 1969-1979  
by Paul Costello

Anti-Revisionist Lessons for Party Building Today  
by Scott Robinson

On the History of the Revolutionary Union  
By Steve Hamilton

Two Chapters from Progressive Labor Party History  
by ex-PL Cadre

Anti-Revisionist Movements in Canada, 1965-1972  
By In Struggle



November-December 1979 \$1.50

**Black worker insurgency gave rise to a rebirth of a communist movement in the US and a renaissance in Marxist analysis of Black history.**

**THE RED PAPERS**  
5



**NATIONAL LIBERATION AND PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IN THE U.S.**

\$1



**MONTHLY REVIEW**

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

**THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

PAGES FROM A NEGRO WORKER'S NOTEBOOK

LARRY BOONE

Special Winter Issue

**Black Workers in Revolt**

How Detroit's New Black Revolutionary Workers are changing the Face of American Trade Unionism

A GUARDIAN PAMPHLET

by **Robert Dudnick**

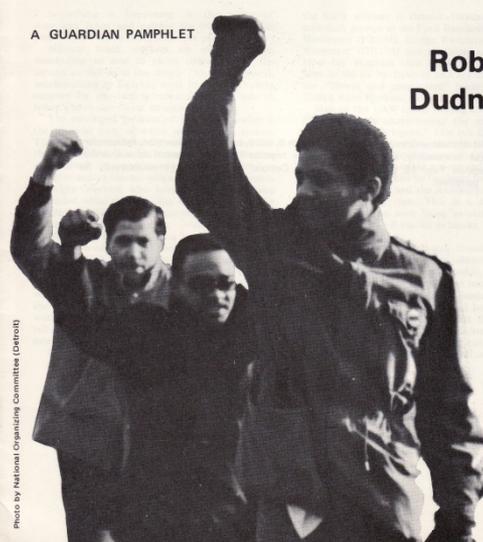


Photo by National Organizing Committee (Detroit)

404

**KNOWLEDGE**



**ETHNIC STUDIES**

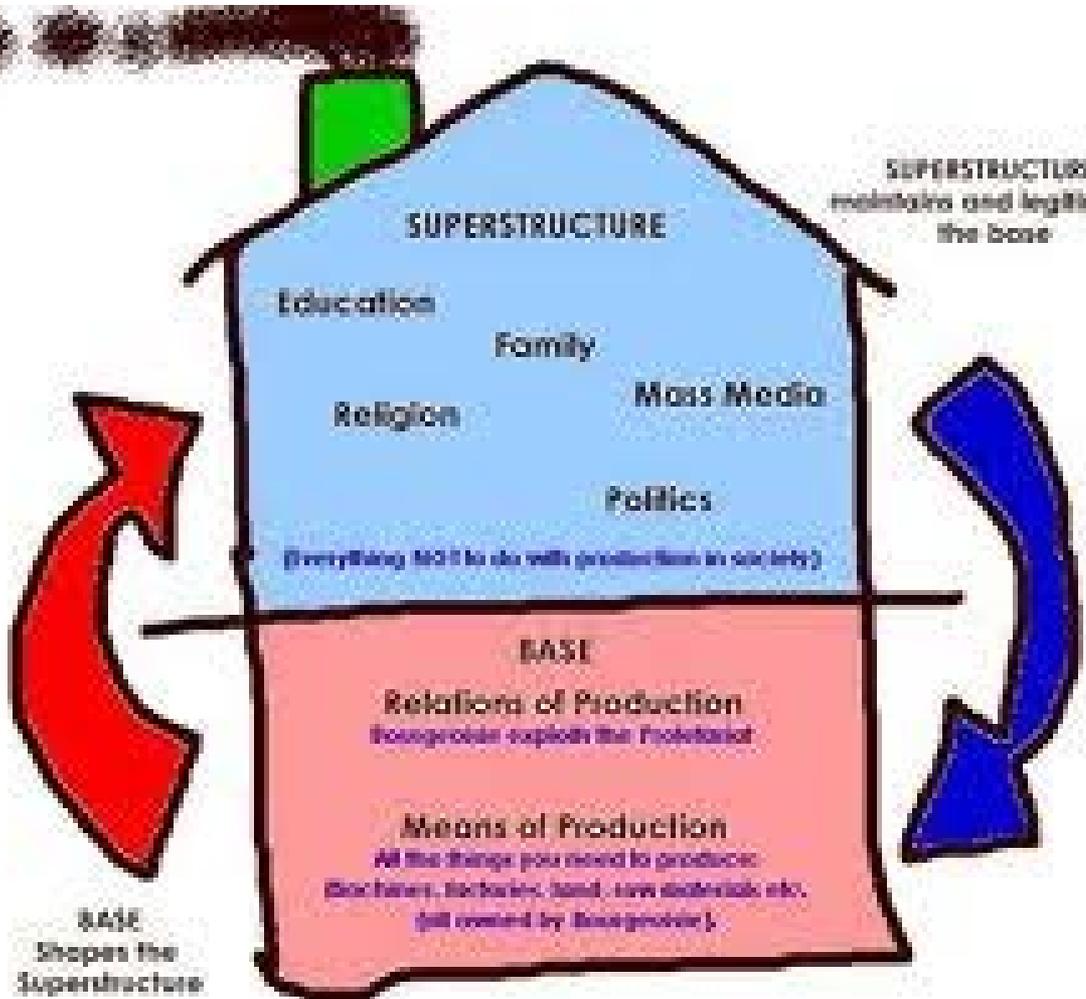
**IS POWER**

# **Toward a theory of Black History**

# **The basic questions:**

- 1. What are the basic categories of the Black (human) experience?**
- 2. What is the role of technology (productive forces)?**
- 3. What is the role of class struggle?**
- 4. What is the logic of social change (stages of development)?**
- 5. Does this add up to a new paradigm for Black history?**

# The basic categories of society



## Superstructure:

Consciousness  
Cultural relations  
Social relations  
Demography

## Base:

Production relations  
Production forces

# Describing the Black subject

## Superstructure:

Consciousness

Cultural relations

Social relations

Demography

## Base:

Production relations

Production forces

*The Black experience is usually described in terms of how many and where Black people are, what kind of social and cultural life they have and what they think.*



*Black people have survived based on what work they do – this is fundamental and defines ones quality of life possibility.*

# Critical technology in the Black experience



The cotton gin (1793) increased demand for labor, but the mechanical cotton picker (1936) ended it.

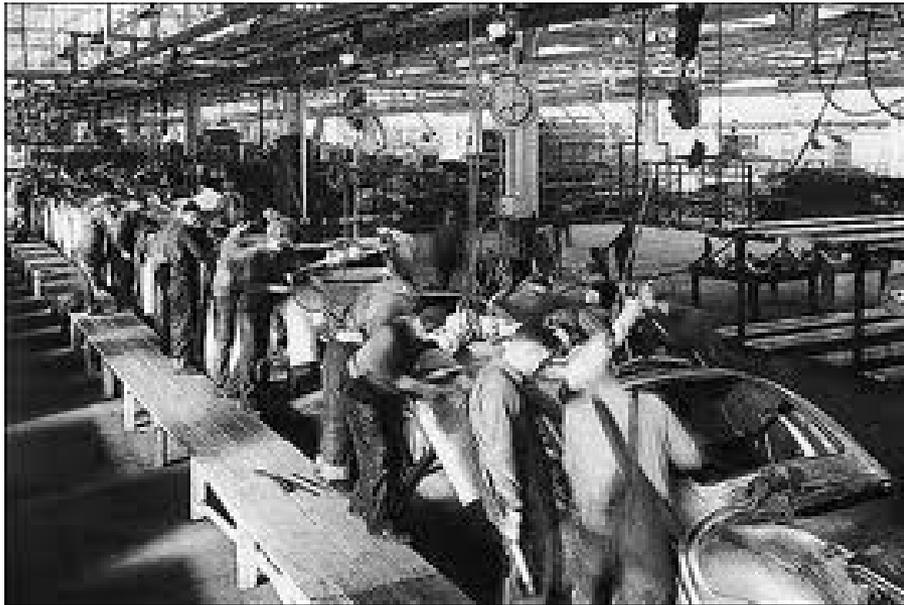


*Mechanical Cotton Picker*

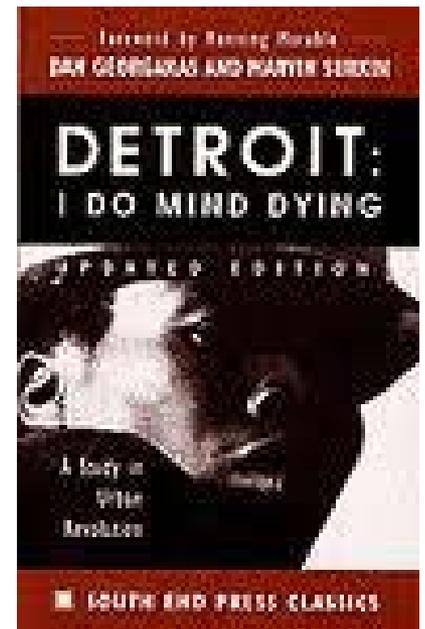
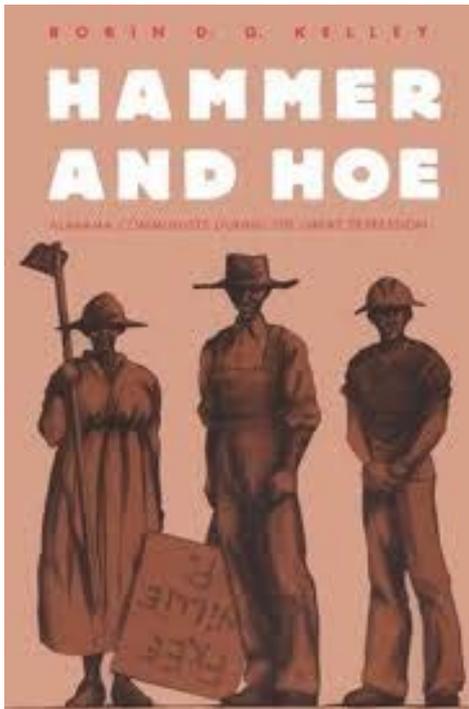
# Critical technology in the Black experience



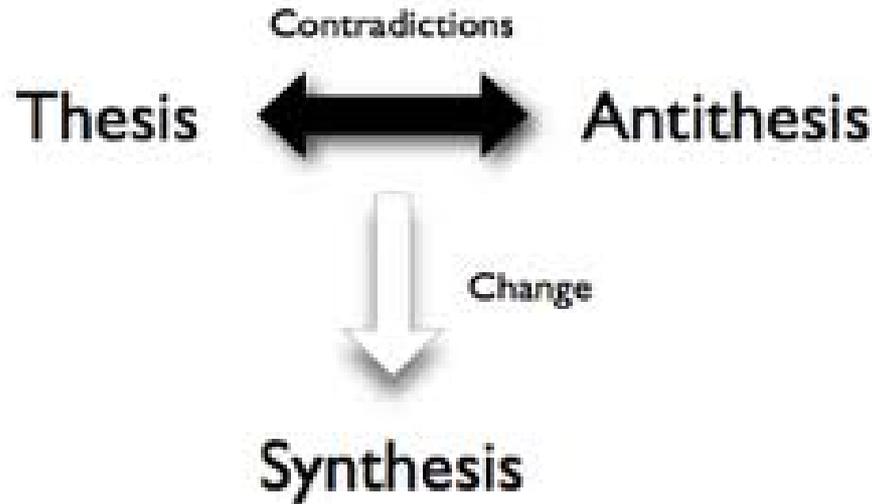
**Assembly line production:  
From people to robots**



# Change comes from the politics of class struggle



# The logic is dialectical



**The Black experience goes from  
Modes of social cohesion  
to  
Modes of social disruption**

# Modes of Social cohesion

# Modes of Social disruption

Africa



Slave trade

Slavery



Emancipation

Rural



Great migrations

Urban



Crisis

Information

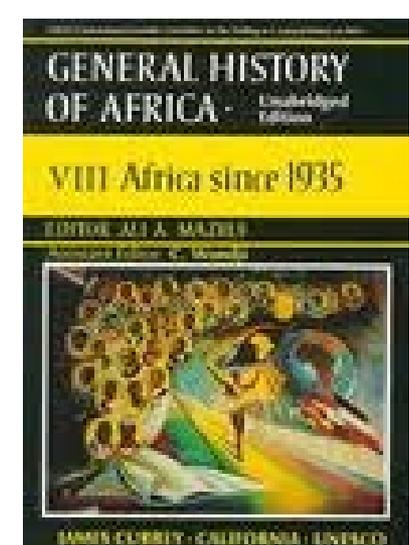
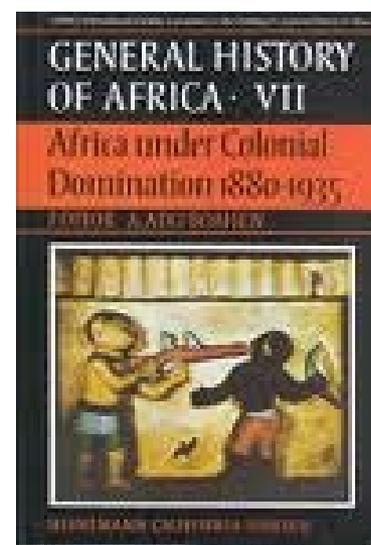
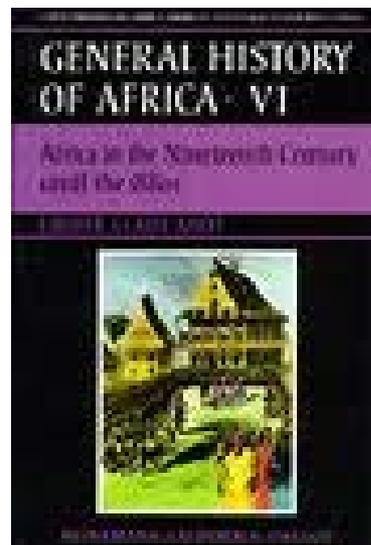
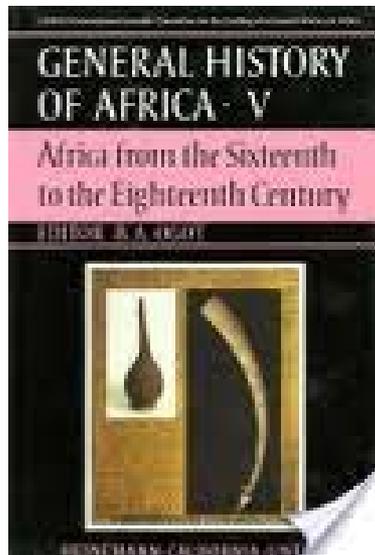
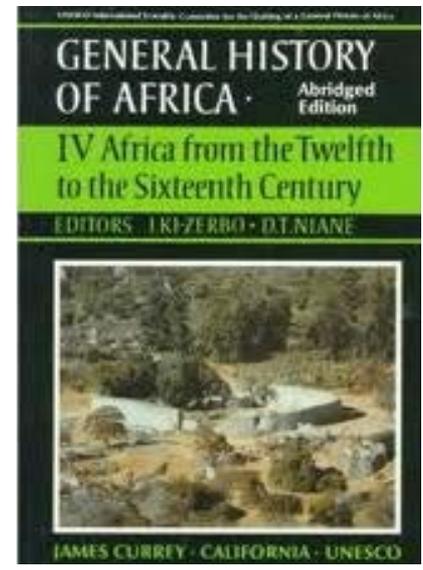
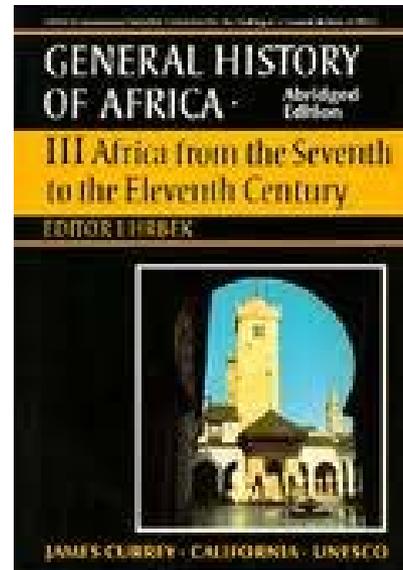
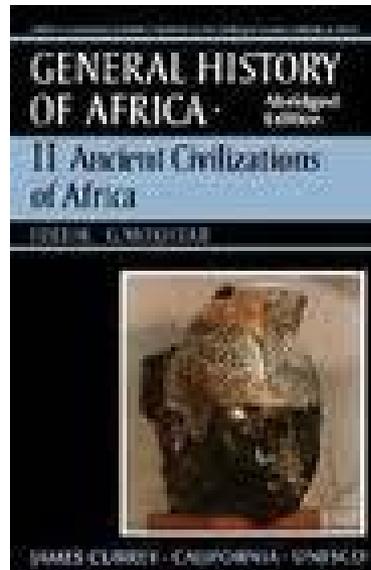
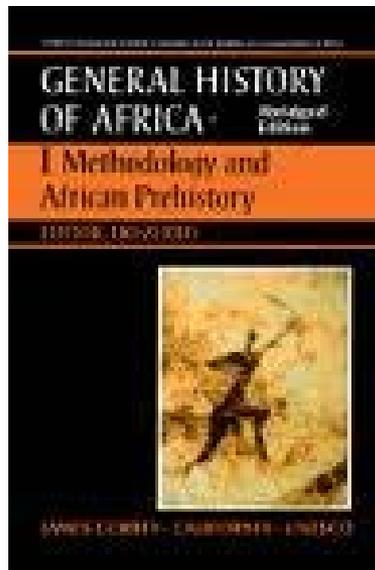


**The basic difference is trans-generation continuity**

# Toward a macro-theoretical model of the African American (USA) historical experience

Logic of change	<i>Social cohesion</i>	Africa	--	Slavery	--	Rural Life	--	Urban Life	--	Information
	<i>Social disruption</i>	--	Slave Trade	--	Emancipation	--	Migrations	--	Crisis	--
Superstructure	Consciousness	A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	F1	G1	H1	I1
	Cultural relations	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2	F2	G2	H2	I2
	Social relations	A3	B3	C3	D3	E3	F3	G3	H3	I3
	Demography	A4	B4	C4	D4	E4	F4	G4	H4	I4
Base	<i>Productive relations</i>	A5	B5	C5	D5	E5	F5	G5	H5	I5
	<i>Productive forces</i>	A6	B6	C6	D6	E6	F6	G6	H6	I6

# UNESCO General History of Africa

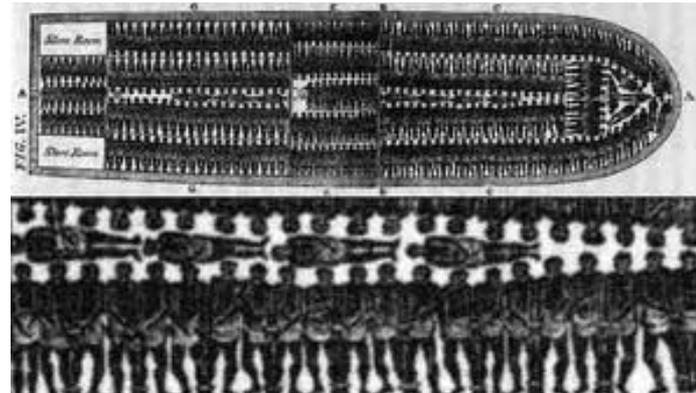
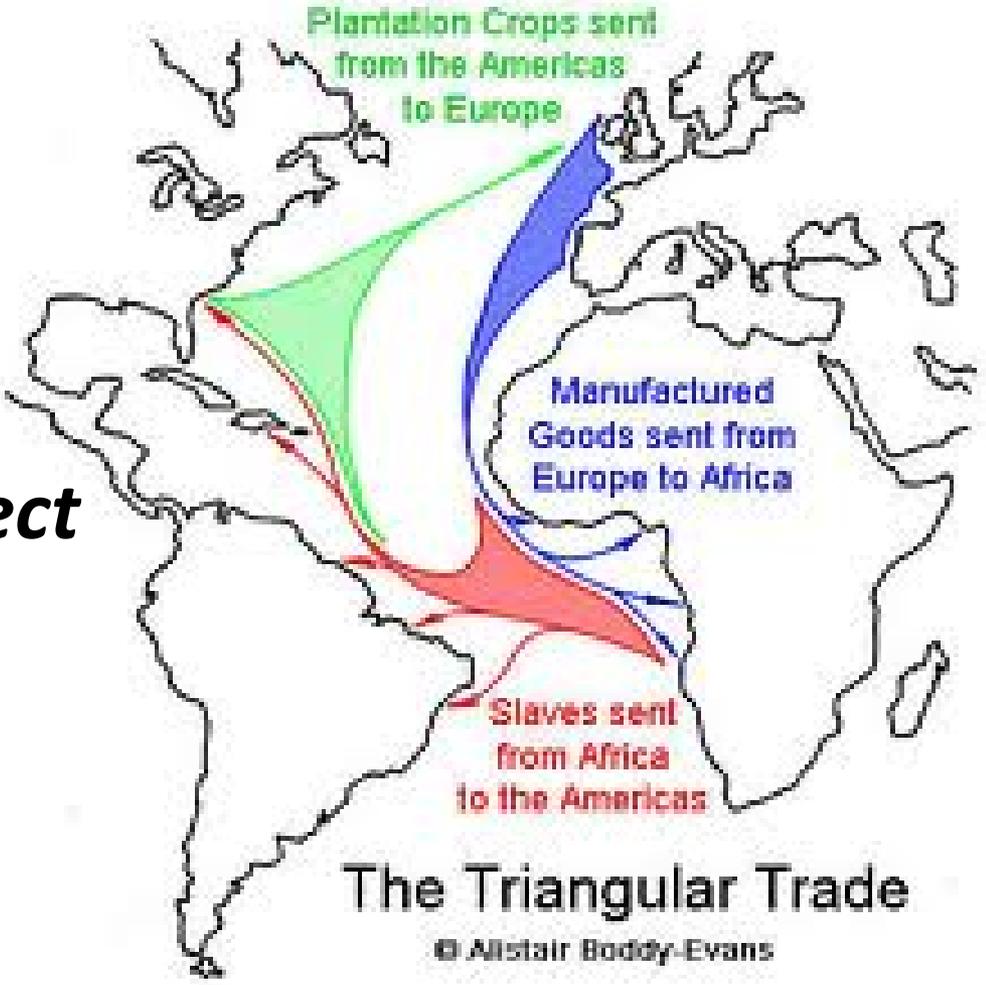
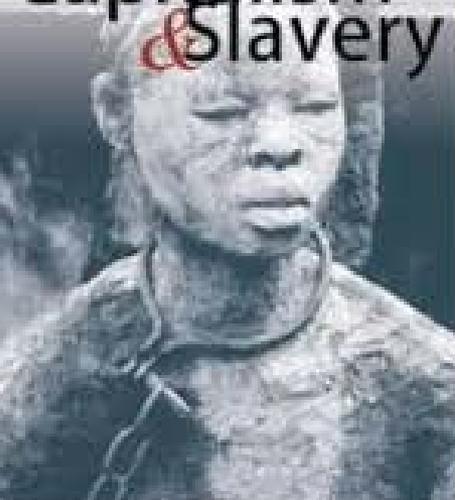




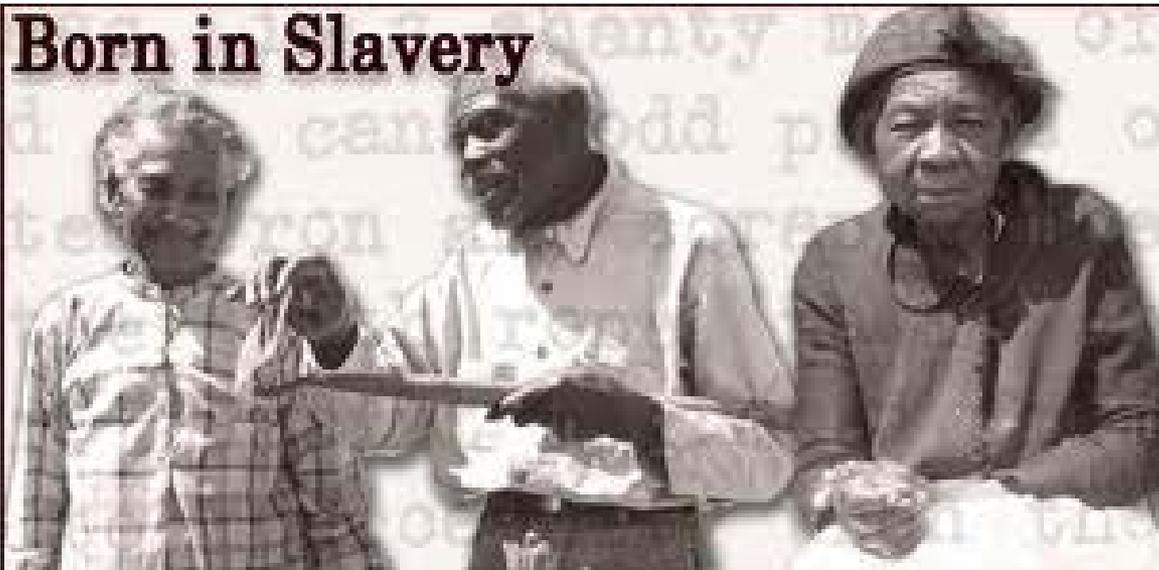
*The slave trade disrupted every aspect of Black life*

**Eric Williams**  
1911 - 1981

ERIC WILLIAMS with illustrations by Colin & Pamela  
**Capitalism & Slavery**



# Born in Slavery



Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938

# 246 years

## THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW

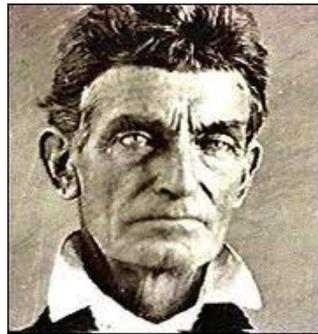
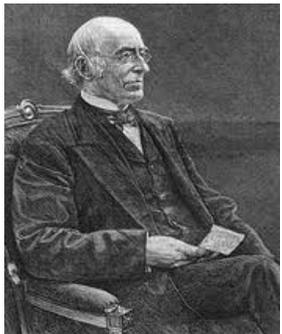
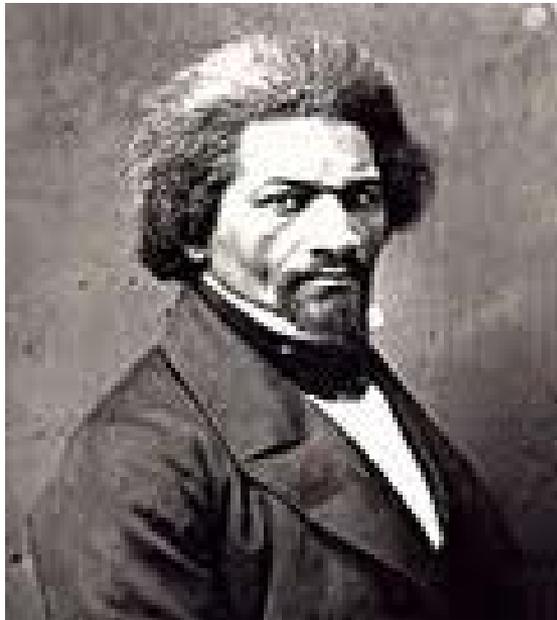
**F**ELLOW CITIZENS: I accepted your invitation to speak to you on the great question of these days, with very little consideration of what I might have to offer: for there seems to be no option. The last year has forced us all into politics, and made it a paramount duty to seek what it is often a duty to shun. We do not breathe well. There is infamy in the air. I have a new experience. I wake in the morning with a painful sensation, which I carry about all day, and which, when traced home, is the odious remembrance of that ignominy which has fallen on Massachusetts, which robs the landscape of beauty, and takes the sunshine out of every hour. I have lived all my life in this state, and never had any experience of personal inconvenience from the laws, until now. They never came near me to any discomfort before. I find the like sensibility in my neighbors; and in that class who take no interest in the ordinary questions of party politics. There are men who are as sure indexes of the equity of legislation and of the same state of public feeling, as the barometer is of the weight

## Census of 1860

No.	States	Free Population	Slave Population	Total	Per Centage of Slaves
1	South Carolina	301,271	402,541	703,812	57.2
2	Mississippi	351,700	436,696	788,396	55.1
3	Louisiana	376,280	433,070	809,350	47.0
4	Alabama	529,181	435,132	964,313	45.1
5	Florida	78,686	61,753	140,439	43.9
6	Georgia	595,097	462,232	1,057,329	43.7
7	North Carolina	661,586	331,081	992,667	33.4
8	Virginia	1,105,192	490,887	1,596,079	30.7
9	Texas	121,750	180,682	302,432	30.0
10	Arkansas	324,323	117,104	441,427	26.5
11	Tennessee	834,063	275,784	1,109,847	24.8
12	Kentucky	930,223	325,490	1,255,713	19.5
13	Maryland	500,846	87,188	588,034	12.7
14	Missouri	1,067,362	114,965	1,182,327	9.7
15	Delaware	110,420	1,798	112,218	1.6
		8,283,053	3,950,633	12,233,686	32.3



# Emancipation = Abolition + Civil War + Reconstruction



# FREEDOM!

William Lloyd Garrison

John Brown

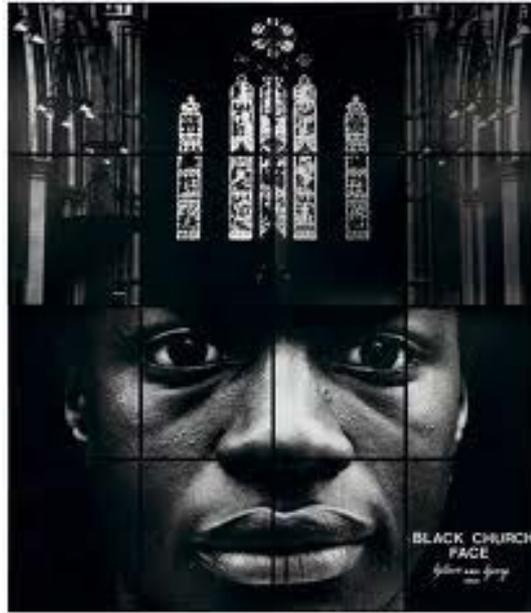
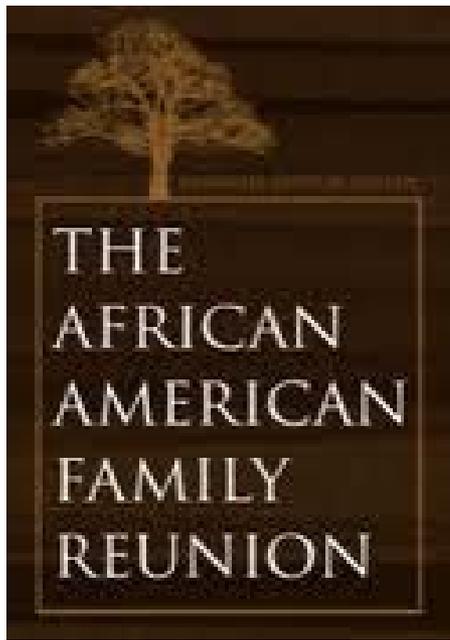
Abigail Kelley

**We were “free”, but being lynched,  
still on our knees picking cotton!**



**In segregation we became an organized community!**

# Community formed



# A push and a pull:

Black people moved North in Great Migrations



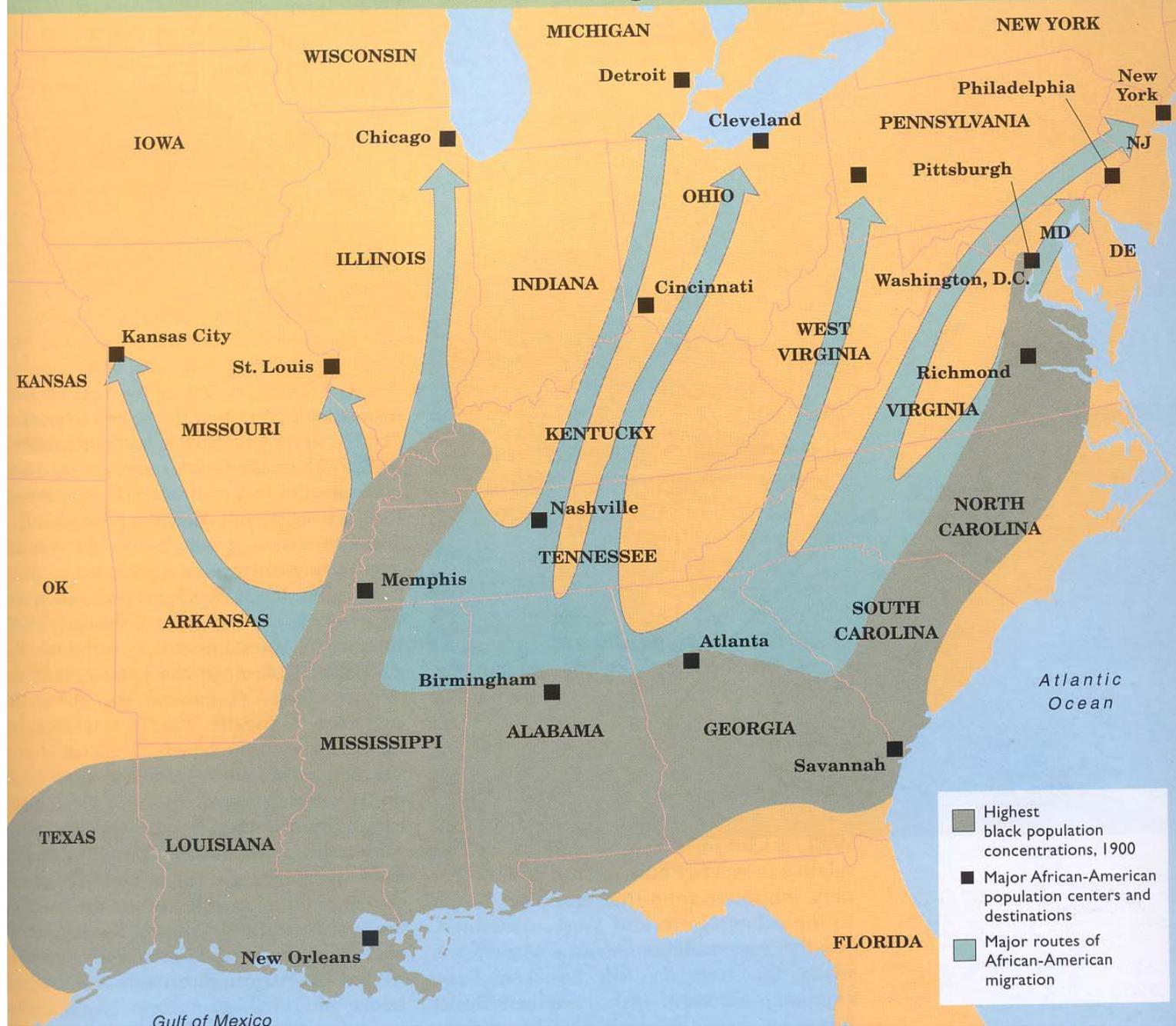
Down South was getting rough



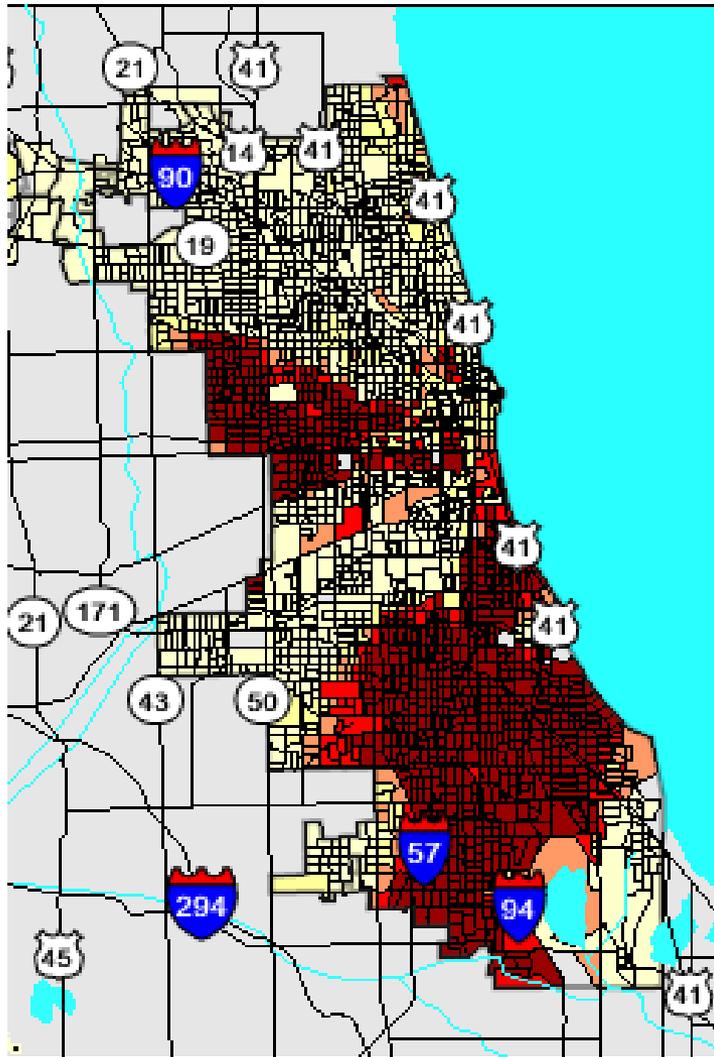
Up South (North) was a little better



# The Great Migration



# The city became the Black community home



# Crisis becomes a way of Black community life

Single-Parent Households  
(Percent of Households with Children)

	All	White	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Native Americans
1970	11%	9%	32%	NA	NA	NA
1980	20%	15%	46%	21%	NA	NA
1990	25%	19%	55%	30%	NA	NA
2000	30%	22%	62%	33%	18%	43%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
NA: Not Available



COMING SOON - AN ORIGINAL CTI22 DOCUMENTARY

## WHY ARE BLACK WOMEN SO FAT?

**FACT:** 53% OF ALL BLACK WOMEN, 40 TO 59 YEARS OF AGE ARE OBESE!

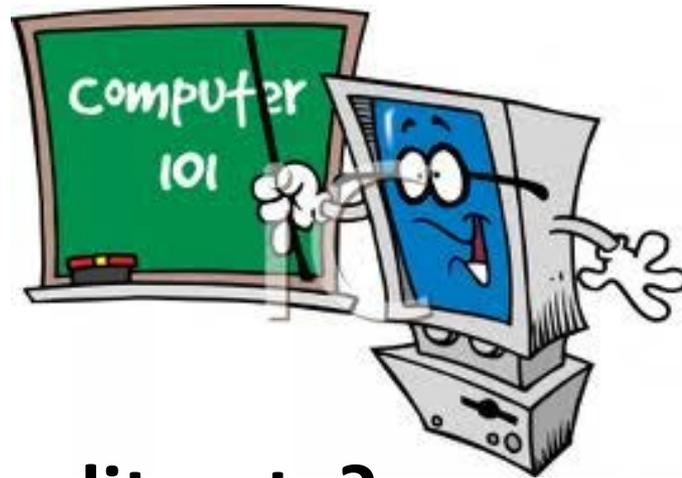
**FACT:** 78% OF ALL BLACK WOMEN ARE EITHER OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE.

**FACTS: CDC.GOV**

**FACT:** 61% OF ALL BLACK WOMEN, 60 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER ARE OBESE!

**TAKE THE SURVEY AT: [cti22.org/survey.htm](http://cti22.org/survey.htm)**

# A revolution is underway: The information society



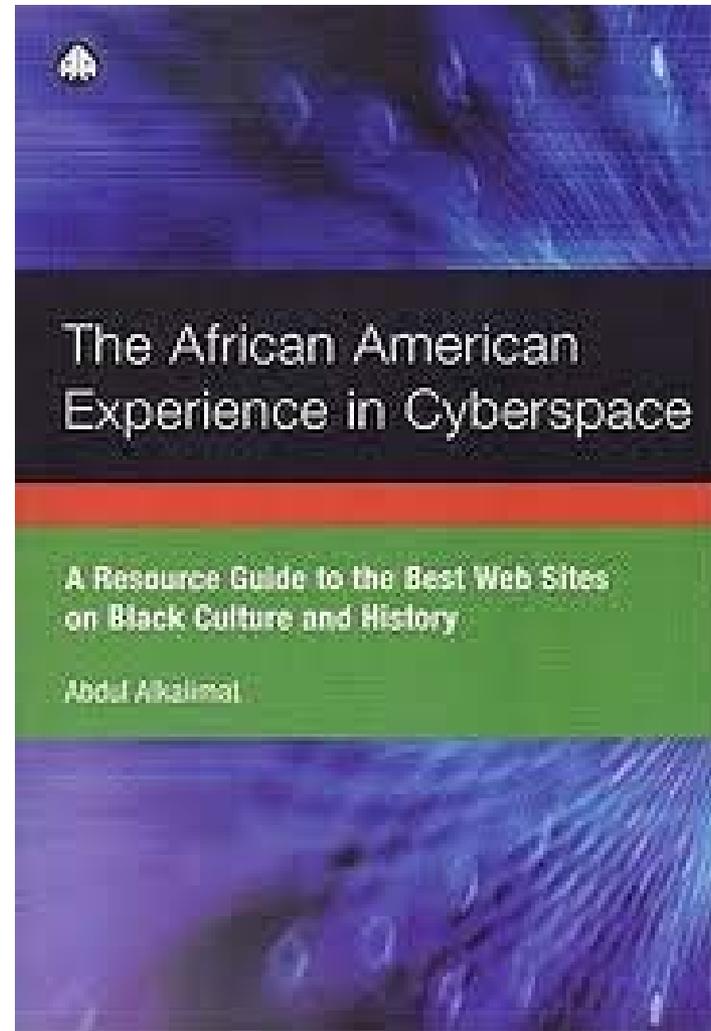
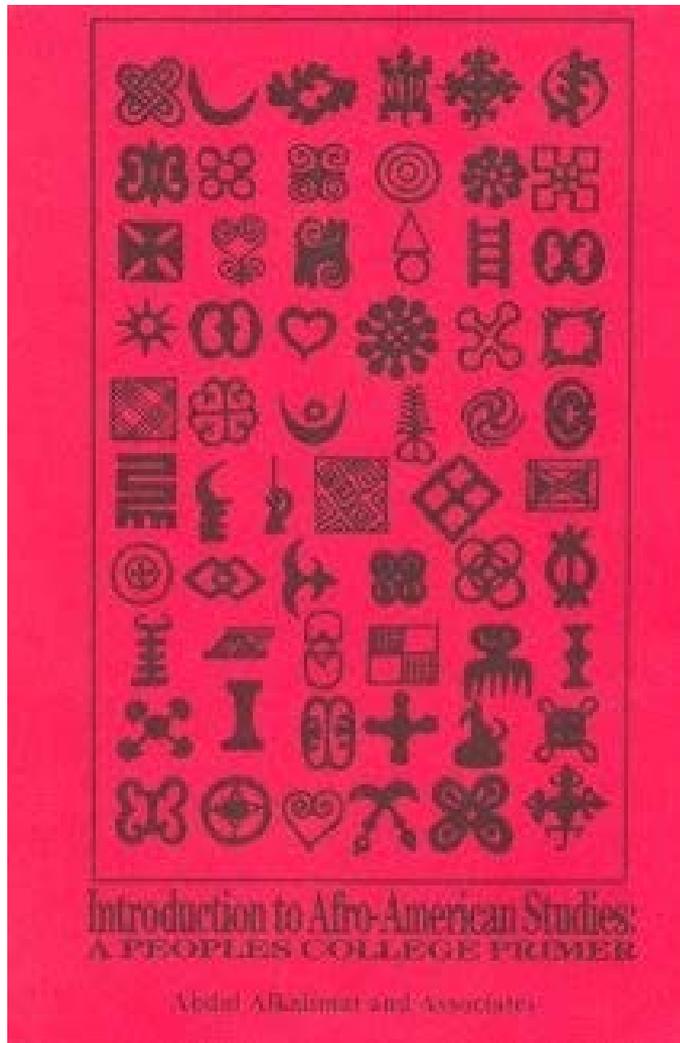
*What is  
the nature  
of the  
Black Freedom  
Struggle in the  
21<sup>st</sup> century?*

**Who is computer literate?  
Who has access?  
Who faces the digital divide?**



**We mainly have questions,  
not answers.**

# Texts based on the theory of historical periodization



<http://www.eblackstudies.org/intro/>

# Theory and research



**Macro: What are the major features of the modes of social cohesion and social disruption across all aspects of society?**

**Micro: What is the historical periodization of every specific aspect of society?**

**From empirical detail to abstract concepts, and always remember that method is key!**

# Theory and intellectual history

Mode	Carter G. Woodson	W. E. B. DuBois
Africa	The African Background Outlined (1936)	The World and Africa (1947)
Slave trade	--	The Supression of the Slave Trade (1896)
Slavery	Free Negro Families in the US in 1830 (1925)	John Brown (1909)
Emancipation	The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis 1800-1860 (1926)	Black Reconstruction (1935)
Rural	The Rural Negro (1930)	The Negro Farmer (1904)
Migration	A Century of Negro Migration (1918)	--
Urban	The Negro Wage Earner (1930)	The Philadelphia Negro (1899)

# **Theory and popular discourse**

**If this model of theory of Black history is accurate then it is the basis for an active popular discourse in every community church, barber shop, union hall, or street corner.**

**New societies have been created, revolutions**

**We are living at the beginning of a new revolution.**

**The final question: How can we become revolutionaries and advance the freedom struggle?**

**Lets get theoretical.**

**Its time for vision. Lets do this!**



**Thank you for watching.**

Please send comments to

**H-Afro-Am**

**African-American Studies**

**H-Afro-Am@H-Net.msu.edu**