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THE BICENTENNIAL AND THE BLACK LIBERATION STRUGGLE

TWO CENTURIES OF STRUGGLE

Editorial Comment

"ETHNICITY": NEO-CLASS
COLLABORATIONISM

Henry Winston

THE NORTH AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

ORATION IN MEMORY OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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Two Centuries of Struggle

The month of February 1976 brings together the observance of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution and the celebration of Afro-American History Week. The coming together of these two highlights a key facet of U.S. history, the struggle for Black liberation—a struggle which goes back to the beginnings of slavery in the early 17th century and continues today as a central feature of the U.S. scene.

The Revolutionary War, by putting an end to the strangulating rule of British colonialism, opened the way to the development of the emergent U.S. bourgeoisie and with this to the rise of the working class and the modern class struggle. Indeed, it was the growing working class, together with the mass of small farmers, which became the main force in the fight for democratic rights, which the capitalist class sought from the outset to limit to itself.

One section of the people in the colonies, however, benefitted not at all from the newly acquired democratic rights and institutions—namely, the mass of Black chattel slaves, whose status was left completely unchanged. The reactionary, inhuman institution of slavery not only continued to deprive the slaves of all rights as human beings; it placed its stamp on the development of the entire country. The slaveholders became a decisive force, operating against the interests of the workers and small farmers and holding back the development of industry in the North.

In the forty years before the Civil War the abolition of chattel slavery of the Black people became the dominant political issue in the United States. While it was in the interests of the burgeoning industrial capitalism of the North to abolish chattel slavery, the capitalists sought their objectives through compromise after compromise with the arrogant, brutalizing Southern slaveholders. The driving forces who carried on the struggle against the slave power before the Civil War were the Abolitionists, large sections of the working class, impelled most urgently by their self-interest as an exploited class, the small farmers, and the Black people themselves, both in the South and North. And, in the military struggle of the Civil War itself, it was these forces who shed their blood and made the home-front sacrifices that saved the Union and abolished chattel slavery.

A most significant and all-too-often underrated factor in both the political and military struggles were the Marxists, inspired by the

tenets of scientific socialism. They were particularly important in raising the consciousness of the working class to the necessity of Black liberation as a prerequisite to the struggle for working class freedom.

The destruction of the slave-holding power and the freeing of the slaves were truly revolutionary acts profoundly affecting the future history of the U.S. But they did not put an end to the special oppression of Black people. Following the brief interlude of the Reconstruction, an unholy alliance was forged between the rising Northern monopoly capitalists and the Southern plantation owners which led to the return of masses of freed slaves to the semi-slave status of sharecroppers. It led, under the instigation of the monopolists, now the dominant force in the country, to the institution of one of the most cruel systems of discrimination, segregation, brutality, lynching and murder in the world, founded on the propagation among whites of the poisonous ideology of racism.

Today the Black people are no longer sharecroppers. They have become in the main proletarians, living in the cities and working in the factories of all regions of our country. But their oppression continues no less than before and they suffer severe discrimination in all aspects of life. Racism continues to be massively disseminated throughout the country, with monopoly capital as its primary source. Racist ideology and practice are a source of enormous super-profits to the monopolists, at the expense not only of Black but also of white workers. The continued practice of racism remains the chief obstacle to the unity of the democratic forces and the most potent weapon of the forces of reaction.

Racial oppression extends also to other minorities—the Chicano, Puerto Rican, Indian and Asian American peoples. The fight against racism remains at the very heart of the democratic struggles of the people of the U.S. against monopoly power today.

In this issue we attempt to give some historical picture of the struggle for Black liberation, concentrating in the main on the period leading to the Civil War, on the Civil War itself and its aftermath. Included here are articles on the Abolitionist movement, basic assessments of the nature of the Civil War by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, an historical assessment of Lincoln by the great Black Abolitionist Frederick Douglass, material on the post-Bellum status of Southern Blacks, a review of Black-labor relations, and a polemic by Henry Winston against modern misinterpretations of "ethnicity." Together they indicate the pivotal nature of the question of Black liberation throughout the history of our country.

"Ethnicity": Monopoly's Neo-Class Collaborationism

In this Bicentennial year, the national and international role of the United States stands in ever sharper contrast to the revolutionary year of its birth. However, even its birth was shadowed by slavery—and now the U.S. has become the main center of world imperialism, counterrevolution, racism and reaction. Today U.S. monopoly's internal economic and social crisis and the intensifying general crisis of imperialism's shrinking world provide a stark contrast to the crisis-free world community of socialist nations.

In less than 60 years after the October Revolution and three decades after the defeat of Axis fascism, primarily by the first socialist land, many more new nations have come into being than in the previous five hundred years of capitalism—their emergence made possible by the existence of the new world socialist system.

It is this new majority of nations against whom U.S. imperialism and its NATO, Japanese, Zionist and apartheid South African partners are arrayed—everywhere from the United Nations to Angola. And in this Bicentennial year there is an increasing parallel between U.S. monopoly's strategy against the oppressed and exploited internationally and at home—with Daniel P. Moynihan assigned a central role in each arena.

As if synchronized to coincide with Daniel Moynihan's appointment as U.S. imperialism's chief spokesman at the UN, Harvard University Press in 1975 published *Ethnicity*, edited by Moynihan, Professor of Government (until his UN appointment), and Nathan Glazer, Professor of Education and Social Structure, at Harvard.*

What this volume seeks to project—as revealed in the introduction by Moynihan and Glazer and in articles by Daniel Bell, Martin Kilsen and others—is a domestic counterpart of monopoly's offensive against the so-called "tyranny of the new majority" in the UN. The material in this book provides new levels of racist divisiveness for the ruling class's domestic strategy, whose goal is to prevent formation of a mass political alternative to its two parties.

Of course, the strategy itself is only too familiar, since its essence is racism—reinforced by monopoly's twin weapon of anti-Communism. Yet it would be a serious error not to recognize its new aspects,

* Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1975.

which parallel at home the new features of monopoly's neo-colonialist strategy globally.

This volume seeks to define, refine and expand the dimensions of a strategy that would contain the hard-pressed masses—especially the working class—through a stepped-up process of fragmentation of its various components. Moynihan and his associates attempt to conceal the racist, anti-working-class character of this strategy by advocating social action based on “ethnicity” instead of *class*. By substituting “ethnicity” for class, these ideologists simultaneously attempt to obscure the inherent connection between class exploitation and national oppression under capitalism.

The clue to why “ethnicity” is a divisive concept can be found in Webster's dictionary, which defines the word “ethnic” as “of, pertaining to, or designating races or groups of races discriminated on the basis of common traits, customs, etc.” What is of particular interest here is the use of the phrase “discriminated on.” According to this, races are “discriminated on”—that is to say, distinguished by —“common traits, customs, etc.” But an all-important fact is omitted from this definition: i.e., certain races are discriminated *against!*

An example of institutionalized racism's saturation of every aspect of life in this country can of course be found in dictionaries which ignore the distinctions existing in real life between the white “ethnic” groups and the oppressed minorities. What determines the status of Black people in this society is not “common customs” but *common oppression*. If one equates white “ethnics” with Black and other oppressed minorities, the special struggle to remove the racist barriers facing the oppressed can be dispensed with. The concept of “ethnicity” sets an ideological atmosphere in which affirmative action programs for jobs and education of Blacks can be twisted into “racism in reverse.” When one substitutes “ethnicity” for class, one projects race against race—instead of projecting struggles of the multiracial, multinational working class and the oppressed minorities against the white ruling class.

Moynihan and his associates see the substitution of “ethnicity” for the decisive, unifying role of the working class as the only way in which monopoly can prevent the “tyranny” of a new domestic majority—a people's anti-monopoly formation. By denying the special needs of the oppressed, “ethnicity” separates the various components of the working class—in order to head off the emergence of united class power, the only force that can lead a people's alternative to the monopoly-imposed crisis of existence. But such an alternative can come into being only to the extent that the white component of the working class resists monopoly's racist strategy in all its forms,

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and particularly by the support it gives to the struggle for the special needs of the oppressed.

“A Matter of Strategic Efficacy”

In their introduction to *Ethnicity*, Moynihan and Glazer quite frankly set forth monopoly's problems:

. . . it is not usually enough, or not enough for long enough, to assert claims on behalf of large but loosely aggregated groups such as “workers,” “peasants,” “white collar employees.” Claims of this order are too general to elicit a very satisfactory response [from employers or government], and even when they do, the benefits are necessarily diffuse and often evanescent, having the quality of an across-the-board wage increase which produces an inflation which leaves everyone about as he was. (*Ethnicity*, pp. 8-9.)

We won't take time out to deal with the view that workers' wages rather than monopoly's profits, control of government and global operations are the source of inflation—except to note that despite wage freezes, wage cuts, and layoffs and massive unemployment, inflation continues to mount. Instead, we'll go directly to Moynihan and Glazer's presentation of the central aim of the “ethnicity” strategy:

As a matter of strategic efficacy, it becomes necessary to disaggregate, to make claims for a group small enough to make significant concessions possible and, equally, small enough to produce some gain from the concessions made. A British prime minister who does “something for the workers” probably doesn't do much and most certainly does even less for his party. Doing something for the Scots, however, becomes an increasingly attractive and real option for Westminster. *That* much in the way of resources can be found, and the Scots are likely to know about it and to consider it a positive gain, at least past the point of the next general election. (*Ibid.*, page 9. Emphasis in the original.)

Here Moynihan and Glazer bluntly state that the point of the “ethnicity” strategy is to “disaggregate”—fragment—the working class, and thus prevent independent class action.

“Ethnicity” has, of course, two hands. Its “left” hand tells Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Asian Americans and Native American Indians that the “militant” approach is for each group to “go-it-alone.” In this way “ethnicity” lures the oppressed away from asserting their special claims alongside of and as part of the working class as a whole.

At the same time “ethnicity's” right hand makes the traditional racist appeal to the white majority—telling them that the oppressed

minorities have no special needs and are not their allies but their competitors.

According to the "ethnicity" concept, if separate groups "assert claims," they will "elicit a very satisfactory response" from the ruling class. But if claims are advanced as part of a united working-class struggle, "the benefits are necessarily diffuse and often evanescent,"—and everyone will be left "about as he was."

How this strategy operates was effectively demonstrated in the recent period by the government's handling of the "anti-poverty" programs. The "ethnicity" spokesmen told Blacks that the Puerto Ricans were getting "too much," while Puerto Ricans were told "everything" was going to the Blacks. At the same time, white "ethnics" were informed nothing much was left for them because it all went to the Blacks and Puerto Ricans. This strategy helped "disaggregate" the working class and its allies to the point where job training programs, adult education programs and child care and senior citizens' centers are "bottoming out" for everyone. And the "racism in reverse" concept which denied the need for affirmative action for jobs and education for the oppressed minorities "disaggregated" the masses to the point where educational opportunities for all low and middle income people are being slashed away. "Ethnicity" is particularly destructive to the oppressed minorities, but it also does increasing violence to the needs of the white masses.

The history of this country proves that the "ethnicity" strategy—adjusted by Moynihan and his colleagues to meet monopoly's even sharper requirements in the present period of general crisis and decline of capitalism—produces results not for the exploited but for the exploiters. This strategy has a long record of leaving everyone not "about where he was" but *behind* "where he was." The Black people, for example, find themselves today not "about" where they were ten years ago, but worse off. The Black economic gains of the sixties encompassed only a small minority of the Black people, and yet even these gains proved "evanescent."

Neo-Class-Collaborationism

In the strategy of "ethnicity"—which denies both the crucial needs of the working class as a whole and the special claims of the oppressed—one can see the domestic corollary of monopoly's neo-colonialist operations in Africa, Asia and Latin America. One can see this parallel, for instance, in the role assigned to the class collaborationists. In fact, the ideology of "ethnicity" both amplifies and refines the traditional forms of racist class collaboration and can more accurately be described as neo-class-collaborationist.

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In today's context neo-class collaborationism is of special importance to monopoly: There is now intensifying rank-and-file resistance to the policies of Meany and other top labor officials, a resistance given increasing impetus by Black and other minorities in the trade unions, and by the liberation movements as a whole. At the same time more and more signs appear indicating a growing desire for a political alternative to the two parties that offer only racism, unemployment, poverty and inflation to the masses. Thus it is certainly a matter of "strategic efficacy" for monopoly to "disaggregate" the working class and its allies—to prevent the struggles of the oppressed in the labor movement and the society as a whole and the workers' fight for better wages and conditions from combining into an anti-monopoly front and a mass political alternative.

Traditionally, class collaborationism has meant rewarding a privileged minority of skilled white workers at the expense of the mass of workers, with the majority of white workers kept "in line" through racist-induced fears that the demands of the oppressed minorities would cause their own conditions to descend to the level of the oppressed.

But neo-class collaborationism allows monopoly to vastly extend and more flexibly use its twin weapons of racism and anti-Communism. Through "ethnicity" monopoly can make concessions to a privileged minority *within* each racial and "ethnic" component, while the crisis of existence for the overwhelming majority of each group grows worse.

When Moynihan and Glazer assert that "doing something" for the Scots instead of the English working class has become "an increasingly attractive and real option" for the English ruling class, they are suggesting that "doing something" for a particular nationality may placate them and also weaken unity between the working class and that nationality. (They are also implying inequality between the "English" and the Scots without indicating its nature—which is not a matter of color but has its source in the "English" ruling class.)

By analogy they are also suggesting that such a strategy applied at home might succeed in deceiving the Black people "at least past the point of the next general election." This cynical comment, added to Moynihan's concept of "benign neglect," indicates the direction in which monopoly wants to push the country in the Bicentennial election year.

In concluding their introduction Moynihan and Glazer express a certain fear that "ethnicity" will not succeed in side-tracking the class struggle:

(Continued on page 28)

The North American Civil War*

London, October 20, 1861.

For months the leading weekly and daily papers of the London press have reiterated the same litany on the American Civil War. While they insult the free states of the North, they anxiously defend themselves against the suspicion of sympathizing with the slave states of the South. In fact, they continually write two articles: one article, in which they attack the North, and another article, in which they excuse their attacks on the North. *Qui s'excuse s'accuse.***

In essence the extenuating arguments read: The war between the North and South is a tariff war. The war is, further, not for any principle, does not touch the question of slavery and in fact turns on Northern lust for sovereignty. Finally, even if justice is on the side of the North, does it not remain a vain endeavor to want to subjugate eight million Anglo-Saxons by force! Would not the separation of the South release the North from all connection with Negro slavery and assure to it, with its twenty million inhabitants and its vast territory, a higher, hitherto scarcely dreamt of, development? Accordingly must not the North welcome secession as a happy event, instead of wanting to put it down by a bloody and futile civil war?

Point by point we will probe the *plaidoyer**** of the English press.

The war between North and South—so runs the first excuse—is a mere tariff war, a war between a protection system and a free trade system, and England naturally stands on the side of free trade. Shall the slaveowner enjoy the fruits of slave labor in their entirety or shall he be cheated of a portion of these by the protectionists of the North? That is the question which is at issue in this war. It was reserved for *The Times* to make this brilliant discovery. *The Economist*, *The Examiner*, *The Saturday Review* and *tutti quanti***** expounded the theme further. It is characteristic of this discovery that it was made, not in Charleston, but in London. Naturally, in

* The following article is taken from Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Civil War in the United States*, International Publishers, New York, 1937, pp. 57-70.

** He who excuses himself accuses himself.—*Ed.*

*** Address of counsel for the defense, i.e., plea.—*Ed.*

**** All such.—*Ed.*

America every one knew that from 1846 to 1861 a free trade system prevailed, and that Representative Morrill carried his protectionist tariff in Congress only in 1861, after the rebellion had already broken out. Secession, therefore, did not take place because the Morrill tariff had gone through Congress, but, at most, the Morrill tariff went through Congress because secession had taken place. When South Carolina had her first attack of secession in 1831, the protectionist tariff of 1828 served her, to be sure, as a pretext, but also only as a pretext as is known from a statement of General Jackson. This time, however, the old pretext has in fact not been repeated. In the Secession Congress at Montgomery all reference to the tariff question was avoided, because the cultivation of sugar in Louisiana, one of the most influential Southern States, depends entirely on protection.

But, the London press pleads further, the war of the United States is nothing but a war for the maintenance of the Union by force. The Yankees cannot make up their minds to strike fifteen stars from their standard. They want to cut a colossal figure on the world stage. Yes, it would be different, if the war was waged for the abolition of slavery! The question of slavery, however, as, among others, *The Saturday Review* categorically declares, has absolutely nothing to do with this war.

It is above all to be remembered that the war did not emanate from the North, but from the South. The North finds itself on the defensive. For months it had quietly looked on, while the secessionists appropriated to themselves the Union's forts, arsenals, shipyards, customs houses, pay offices, ships and supplies of arms, insulted its flag and took prisoner bodies of its troops. Finally the secessionists resolved to force the Union government out of its passive attitude by a sensational act of war, and *solely for this reason proceeded* to the bombardment of Fort Sumter near Charleston. On April 11 (1861) their General Beauregard had learnt in a parley with Major Anderson, the commander of Fort Sumter, that the fort was only supplied with provisions for three days more and accordingly must be peacefully surrendered after this period. In order to forestall this peaceful surrender, the secessionists opened the bombardment early on the following morning (April 12), which brought about the fall of the place in a few hours. News of this had hardly been telegraphed to Montgomery, the seat of the Secession Congress, when War Minister Walter publicly declared in the name of the new Confederacy: "No man can say where *the war opened today* will end." At the same time he prophesied "that before the first of May the flag

of the Southern Confederacy would wave from the dome of the old Capitol in Washington and within a short time perhaps also from the Faneuil Hall in Boston." Only now ensued the proclamation in which Lincoln summoned 75,000 men to the protection of the Union. The bombardment of Fort Sumter cut off the only possible constitutional way out, namely, the summoning of a general convention of the American people, as Lincoln had proposed in his inaugural address. For Lincoln there now remained only the choice of fleeing from Washington, evacuating Maryland and Delaware and surrendering Kentucky, Missouri and Virginia, or of answering war with war.

The question of the principle of the American Civil War is answered by the battle slogan with which the South broke the peace. Stephens, the Vice-President of the Southern Confederacy, declared in the Secession Congress, that what essentially distinguished the Constitution newly hatched at Montgomery from the Constitution of the Washingtons and Jeffersons was that now for the first time slavery was recognized as an institution good in itself, and as the foundation of the whole state edifice, whereas the revolutionary fathers, men steeped in the prejudices of the eighteenth century, had treated slavery as an evil imported from England and to be eliminated in the course of time. Another matador of the South, Mr. Spratt, cried out: "For us it is a question of the foundation of a great slave republic." If, therefore, it was indeed only in defense of the Union that the North drew the sword, had not the South already declared that the continuance of slavery was no longer compatible with the continuance of the Union?

Just as the bombardment of Fort Sumter gave the signal for the opening of the war, the election victory of the Republican Party of the North, the election of Lincoln as President, gave the signal for secession. On November 6, 1860, Lincoln was elected. On November 8, 1860, it was telegraphed from South Carolina: "Secession is regarded here as an accomplished fact"; on November 10 the legislature of Georgia occupied itself with secession plans, and on November 15 a special session of the legislature of Mississippi was fixed to take secession into consideration. But Lincoln's victory was itself only the result of a split in the *Democratic* camp. During the election struggle the Democrats of the North concentrated their votes on Douglas, the Democrats of the South concentrated their votes on Breckinridge, and to this splitting of the Democratic votes the Republican Party owed its victory. Whence came, on the one hand, the preponderance of the Republican Party in the North?

Whence came, on the other hand, the disunion *within* the Democratic Party, whose members, North and South, had operated in conjunction for more than half a century?

Under the presidency of Buchanan the sway that the South had gradually usurped over the Union through its alliance with the Northern Democrats, attained its zenith. The last Continental Congress of 1787 and the first Constitutional Congress of 1789-1790 had legally excluded slavery from all Territories of the republic north-west of the Ohio. (Territories, as is known, is the name given to the colonies lying within the United States themselves that have not yet attained the level of population constitutionally prescribed for the formation of autonomous states.) The so-called Missouri Compromise (1820), in consequence of which Missouri entered the ranks of the United States as a slave state, excluded slavery from every remaining Territory north of 36° 30' latitude and west of Missouri. By this compromise the slavery area was advanced several degrees of longitude, whilst, on the other hand, a geographical line setting bounds to future propaganda for it seemed quite definitely drawn. This geographical barrier, in its turn, was thrown down in 1854 by the so-called Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the originator of which was St[ephen] A. Douglas, then leader of the Northern Democrats. The Bill, which passed both Houses of Congress, repealed the Missouri Compromise, placed slavery and freedom on the same footing, commanded the Union government to treat them both with equal indifference and left it to the sovereignty of the people, that is, the majority of the settlers, to decide whether or not slavery was to be introduced in a Territory. Thus, for the first time in the history of the United States, every geographical and legal limit to the extension of slavery in the Territories was removed. Under this new legislation the hitherto free Territory of New Mexico, a Territory five times larger than the State of New York, was transformed into a slave Territory, and the area of slavery was extended from the border of the Mexican Republic to 38° north latitude. In 1859 New Mexico received a slave code that vies with the statutebooks of Texas and Alabama in barbarity. Nevertheless, as the census of 1860 proves, among some hundred thousand inhabitants New Mexico does not yet number half a hundred slaves. It had therefore sufficed for the South to send some adventurers with a few slaves over the border, and then with the help of the central government, its officials and contractors to drum together a sham popular representation in New Mexico, which imposed slavery on the Territory and with it the rule of the slaveholders.

However, this convenient method did not prove applicable in other Territories. The South accordingly went a step further and appealed from Congress to the Supreme Court of the United States. This Supreme Court, which numbers nine judges, five of whom belong to the South, had been long the most willing tool of the slaveholders. It decided in 1857, in the notorious Dred Scott case, that every American citizen possesses the right to take with him into any Territory any property recognized by the Constitution. The Constitution recognizes slaves as property and obliges the Union government to protect this property. Consequently, on the basis of the Constitution, slaves could be forced to labor in the Territories by their owners, and so every individual slaveholder is entitled to introduce slavery into hitherto free Territories against the will of the majority of the settlers. The right to exclude slavery was taken from the Territorial legislatures and the duty to protect pioneers of the slave system was imposed on Congress and the Union government.

If the Missouri Compromise of 1820 had extended the geographical boundary-line of slavery in the Territories, if the Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854 had wiped out every geographical boundary-line and set up a political barrier instead, the will of the majority of the settlers, then the Supreme Court of the United States, by its decision of 1857, tore down even this political barrier and transformed all the Territories of the republic, present and future, from places for the cultivation of free states into places for the cultivation of slavery.

At the same time, under Buchanan's government the severer law on the surrendering of fugitive slaves enacted in 1850 was ruthlessly carried out in the states of the North. To play the part of slavecatchers for the Southern slaveholders appeared to be the constitutional calling of the North. On the other hand, in order as far as possible to hinder the colonization of the Territories by free settlers, the slaveholders' party frustrated all the so-called free-soil measures, *i.e.*, measures which were to secure to the settlers a definite amount of uncultivated state land free of charge.

In the foreign, as in the domestic, policy of the United States, the interest of the slaveholders served as the guiding star. Buchanan had in fact purchased the office of President through the issue of the Ostend Manifesto, in which the acquisition of Cuba, whether by robbery or by force of arms is proclaimed as the great task of national politics. Under his government northern Mexico was already divided among American land speculators, who impatiently awaited the signal to fall on Chihuahua, Coahuila and Sonora. The restless, piratical expeditions of the filibusters against the states of Central

America were directed no less from the White House at Washington. In the closest connection with this foreign policy, whose manifest purpose was conquest of new territory for the extension of slavery and the rule of the slaveholders, stood the *reopening of the slave trade*, secretly supported by the Union government. St[ephen] A. Douglas himself declared in 1859: During the last year more Negroes have been indented from Africa than ever before in any single year, even at the time when the slave trade was still legal. The number of slaves imported in the last year has amounted to fifteen thousand.

Armed propaganda of slavery abroad was the avowed aim of the national policy; the Union had in fact become the slave of the three hundred thousand slaveholders who held sway over the South. A series of compromises which the South owed to its alliance with the Northern Democrats, had led to this result. On this alliance all the attempts, periodically repeated since 1817, at resistance to the ever increasing encroachments of the slaveholders had hitherto suffered shipwreck. At length there came a turning point.

For hardly had the Kansas-Nebraska Bill gone through, which wiped out the geographical boundary-line of slavery and made its introduction into new Territories subject to the will of the majority of the settlers, when armed emissaries of the slaveholders, border rabble from Missouri and Arkansas, with bowie-knife in one hand and revolver in the other, fell upon Kansas and by the most unheard-of atrocities sought to dislodge her settlers from the Territory colonized by them. These raids were supported by the central government at Washington. Hence a tremendous reaction. Throughout the North, but particularly in the Northwest, a relief organization was formed to support Kansas with men, arms and money. Out of this relief organization arose the Republican Party, which therefore owes its origin to the struggle for Kansas. After the attempt to transform Kansas into a *slave Territory* by force of arms had failed, the South sought to achieve the same result by way of political intrigues. Buchanan's government, in particular, exerted its utmost efforts to relegate Kansas into the ranks of the United States as a *slave state* with a slavery constitution imposed on it. Hence renewed struggle, this time mainly conducted in Congress at Washington. Even St[ephen] A. Douglas, the chief of the Northern Democrats, now (1857-1858) entered the lists against the government and its allies of the South, because imposition of a slave constitution would contradict the principle of sovereignty of the settlers passed in the Nebraska Bill of 1854. Douglas, Senator for Illinois, a northwestern state, would naturally have lost all his influence if he wanted to

concede to the South the right to steal by force of arms or through acts of Congress Territories colonized by the North. As the struggle for Kansas, therefore, called the *Republican Party* into being, it occasioned at the same time the first *split within the Democratic Party* itself.

The Republican Party put forward its first platform for the presidential election in 1856. Although its candidate, John Frémont, was not victorious, the huge number of votes that were cast for him at any rate proved the rapid growth of the Party, particularly in the Northwest. In their second National Convention for the presidential election (May 17, 1860), the Republicans repeated their platform of 1856, only enriched by some additions. Its principal contents were the following: Not a foot of fresh territory is further conceded to slavery. The filibustering policy abroad must cease. The reopening of the slave trade is stigmatized. Finally, free-soil laws are to be enacted for the furtherance of free colonization.

The vitally important point in this platform was that not a foot of fresh terrain was conceded to slavery; rather it was to remain once and for all confined to the limits of the states where it already legally existed. Slavery was thus to be formally interned; but continual expansion of territory and continual extension of slavery beyond their old limits is a law of life for the slave states of the Union.

The cultivation of the Southern export articles, cotton, tobacco, sugar, etc., carried on by slaves, is only remunerative as long as it is conducted with large gangs of slaves, on a mass scale and on wide expanses of a naturally fertile soil, that requires only simple labor. Intensive cultivation, which depends less on fertility of the soil than on investment of capital, intelligence and energy of labor, is contrary to the nature of slavery. Hence the rapid transformation of states like Maryland and Virginia, which formerly employed slaves on the production of export articles, into states which raised slaves in order to export these slaves into the deep South. Even in South Carolina, where the slaves form four-sevenths of the population, the cultivation of cotton has for years been almost completely stationary in consequence of the exhaustion of the soil. Indeed, by force of circumstances South Carolina is already transformed in part into a slave-raising state, since it already sells slaves to the states of the extreme South and Southwest for four million dollars yearly. As soon as this point is reached, the acquisition of new Territories becomes necessary, in order that one section of the slaveholders may equip new, fertile landed estates with slaves and in order that by this

means a new market for slave-raising, therefore for the sale of slaves, may be created for the section left behind it. It is, for example, indubitable that without the acquisition of Louisiana, Missouri and Arkansas by the United States, slavery in Virginia and Maryland would long ago have been wiped out. In the Secessionist Congress at Montgomery, Senator Toombs, one of the spokesmen of the South, has strikingly formulated the economic law that commands the constant expansion of the territory of slavery. "In fifteen years more," said he, "without a great increase in slave territory, either the slaves must be permitted to flee from the whites, or the whites must flee from the slaves."

As is known, the representation of the individual states in Congress depends, for the House of Representatives, on the number of persons constituting their respective populations. As the populations of the free states grow far more quickly than those of the slave states, the number of the Northern Representatives was bound very rapidly to overtake that of the Southern. The real seat of the political power of the South is accordingly transferred more and more to the American Senate, where every state, be its population great or small, is represented by two Senators. In order to maintain its influence in the Senate and, through the Senate, its hegemony over the United States, the South therefore required a continual formation of new slave states. This, however, was only possible through conquest of foreign lands, as in the case of Texas, or through the transformation of the Territories belonging to the United States first into slave Territories and later into slave states, as in the case of Missouri, Arkansas, etc. John Calhoun, whom the slaveholders admire as their statesman *par excellence*,* stated as early as February 19, 1847, in the Senate, that the Senate alone put a balance of power into the hands of the South, that extension of the slave territory was necessary to preserve this equilibrium between South and North in the Senate, and that the attempts of the South at the creation of new slave states by force were accordingly justified.

Finally, the number of actual slaveholders in the South of the Union does not amount to more than three hundred thousand, a narrow oligarchy that is confronted with many millions of so-called poor whites, whose numbers constantly grew through concentration of landed property and whose condition is only to be compared with that of the Roman plebeians in the period of Rome's extreme de-

* Preeminent.—Ed.

cline. Only by acquisition and the prospect of acquisition of new Territories, as well as by filibustering expeditions, is it possible to square the interests of these "poor whites" with those of the slaveholders, to give their turbulent longings for deeds a harmless direction and to tame them with the prospect of one day becoming slaveholders themselves.

A strict confinement of slavery within its old terrain, therefore, was bound according to economic law to lead to its gradual effacement, in the political sphere to annihilate the hegemony that the slave states exercised through the Senate, and finally to expose the slaveholding oligarchy within its own states to threatening perils from the side of the "poor whites." With the principle that any further extension of slave Territories was to be prohibited by law, the Republicans therefore attacked the role of the slaveholders at its root. The Republican election victory was accordingly bound to lead to the open struggle between North and South. Meanwhile, this election victory, as already mentioned, was itself conditioned by the split in the Democratic camp.

The Kansas struggle had already called forth a split between the slave party and the Democrats of the North allied to it. With the presidential election of 1860, the same strife now broke out again in a more general form. The Democrats of the North, with Douglas as their candidate, made the introduction of slavery into Territories dependent on the will of the majority of the settlers. The slaveholders' party, with Breckinridge as their candidate, maintained that the Constitution of the United States, as the Supreme Court had declared, brought slavery legally in its train; in and by itself slavery was already legal in all Territories and required no special naturalization. Whilst, therefore, the Republicans prohibited any increase of slave Territories, the Southern party laid claim to all Territories of the republic as legally warranted domains. What they had attempted by way of example with regard to Kansas, to force slavery on a Territory through the central government against the will of the settlers themselves, they now set up as law for all the Territories of the Union. Such a concession lay beyond the power of the Democratic leaders and would merely have occasioned the desertion of their army to the Republican camp. On the other hand, Douglas' "settlers' sovereignty" could not satisfy the slaveholders' party. What it wanted to effect had to be effected within the next four years under the new President, could only be effected by means of the central government and brooked no further delay. It did not escape the slaveholders that a new power had arisen, the *Northwest*, whose

population, having almost doubled between 1850 and 1860, was already pretty well equal to the white population of the slave states—a power that was not inclined either by tradition, temperament or mode of life to let itself be dragged from compromise to compromise in the manner of the old Northern states. The Union was still of value to the South only so far as it handed over the Federal power to it as the means of carrying out the slave policy. If not, then it was better to make the break now than to look on at the development of the Republican Party and the upsurge of the Northwest four years longer, and begin the struggle under more unfavorable conditions. The slaveholders' party therefore played *va banque!** When the Democrats of the North declined to go on playing the part of the "poor whites" of the South, the South procured Lincoln the victory by splitting the vote, and then took this victory as a pretext for drawing the sword from the scabbard.

The whole movement was and is based, as one sees, on the *slave question*: Not in the sense of whether the slaves within the existing slave states should be emancipated or not, but whether the twenty million free men of the North should subordinate themselves any longer to an oligarchy of three hundred thousand slaveholders; whether the vast Territories of the republic should be planting-places for free states or for slavery; finally, whether the national policy of the Union should take armed propaganda of slavery in Mexico, Central and South America as its device. In another article we will probe the assertion of the London press that the North must sanction secession as the most favorable and only possible solution of the conflict.

Die Presse, October 25, 1861.

* That is, staked all on a single card.—*Ed.*

Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln*

I warmly congratulate you upon the highly interesting object which has caused you to assemble in such numbers and spirit as you have today. This occasion is in some respects remarkable. Wise and thoughtful men of our race, who shall come after us, and study the lesson of our history in the United States; who shall survey the long and dreary spaces over which we have travelled; who shall count the links in the great chain of events by which we have reached our present position, will make a note of this occasion; they will think of it and speak of it with a sense of manly pride and complacency.

I congratulate you, also, upon the very favorable circumstances in which we meet today. They are high, inspiring, and uncommon. They lend grace, glory, and significance to the object for which we have met. Nowhere else in the great country, with its uncounted towns and cities, unlimited wealth, and immeasurable territory extending from sea to sea, could conditions be found more favorable to the success of this occasion than here.

We stand today at the national center to perform something like a national act—an act which is to go into history; and we are here where every pulsation of the national heart can be heard, felt, and reciprocated. A thousand wires, fed with thought and winged with lightning, put us in instantaneous communication with the loyal and true men all over this country.

Few facts could better illustrate the vast and wonderful change which has taken place in our condition as a people than the fact of our assembling here for the purpose we have today. Harmless, beautiful, proper, and praiseworthy as this demonstration is, I cannot forget that no such demonstration would have been tolerated here twenty years ago. The spirit of slavery and barbarism, which still lingers to blight and destroy in some dark and distant parts of our country, would have made our assembling here the signal and excuse for opening upon us all the floodgates of wrath and violence. That we

* Presented here is the text of the speech made by the great Black Abolitionist leader, Frederick Douglass, at the unveiling of the Freedman's Monument to Abraham Lincoln in Lincoln Park, Washington, D.C., April 14, 1876. The text of the speech is taken from a pamphlet published jointly by Pathway Press and the Frederick Douglass Historical and Cultural League, New York City, 1940.

are here in peace today is a compliment and a credit to American civilization, and a prophecy of still greater national enlightenment and progress in the future. I refer to the past not in malice, for this is no day for malice; but simply to place more distinctly in front the gratifying and glorious change which has come both to our white fellow-citizens and ourselves, and to congratulate all upon the contrast between now and then; the new dispensation of freedom with its thousand blessings to both races, and the old dispensation of slavery with its ten thousand evils to both races—white and black. In view, then, of the past, the present, and the future, with the long and dark history of our bondage behind us, and with liberty, progress, and enlightenment before us, I again congratulate you upon this auspicious day and hour.

Friends and fellow-citizens, the story of our presence here is soon and easily told. We are here in the District of Columbia, here in the city of Washington, the most luminous point of American territory in its body and in its spirit; we are here in the place where the ablest and best men of the country are sent to devise the policy, enact the laws, and shape the destiny of the Republic; we are here, with the stately pillars and majestic dome of the Capitol of the nation looking down upon us; we are here, with the broad earth freshly adorned with the foliage and flowers of spring for our church, and all races, colors, and conditions of men for our congregation—in a word, we are here to express, as best we may, by appropriate forms and ceremonies, our grateful sense of the vast, high, and pre-eminent services rendered to ourselves, to our race, to our country, and to the whole world by Abraham Lincoln.

The sentiment that brings us here today is one of the noblest that can stir and thrill the human heart. It has crowned and made glorious the high places of all civilized nations with the grandest and most enduring works of art, designed to illustrate the characters and perpetuate the memories of great public men. It is the sentiment which from year to year adorns with fragrant and beautiful flowers the graves of our loyal, brave, and patriotic soldiers who fell in defense of the Union and liberty. It is the sentiment of gratitude and appreciation, which often, in presence of many who hear me, has filled yonder heights of Arlington with the eloquence of eulogy and the sublime enthusiasm of poetry and song; a sentiment which can never die while the Republic lives.

For the first time in the history of our people, and in the history of the whole American people, we join in this high worship, and march conspicuously in the line of this time-honored custom. First things are always interesting, and this is one of our first things.

It is the first time that, in this form and manner, we have sought to do honor to an American great man, however deserving and illustrious. I commend the fact to notice; let it be told in every part of the Republic; let men of all parties and opinions hear it; let those who despise us, not less than those who respect us, know that now and here, in the spirit of liberty, loyalty, and gratitude, let it be known everywhere, and by everybody who takes an interest in human progress and in the amelioration of the condition of mankind, that, in the presence and with the approval of the members of the American House of Representatives, reflecting the general sentiment of the country; that in the presence of that august body, the American Senate, representing the highest intelligence and the calmest judgment of the country; in presence of the Supreme Court and Chief-Justice of the United States, to whose decisions we all patriotically bow; in the presence and under the steady eye of the honored and trusted President of the United States, with the members of his wise and patriotic Cabinet, we, the colored people, newly emancipated and rejoicing in our blood-bought freedom, near the close of the first century in the life of this Republic, have now and here unveiled, set apart, and dedicated a monument of enduring granite and bronze, in every line, feature, and figure of which the men of this generation may read, and those of after-coming generations may read, something of the exalted character and great works of Abraham Lincoln, the first martyr President of the United States.

Fellow-citizens, in what we have said and done today, and in what we may say and do hereafter, we disclaim everything like arrogance and assumption. We claim for ourselves no superior devotion to the character, history, and memory of the illustrious name whose monument we have here dedicated today. We fully comprehend the relation of Abraham Lincoln both to ourselves and to the white people of the United States. Truth is proper and beautiful at all times and in all places, and it is never more proper and beautiful in any case than when speaking of a great public man whose example is likely to be commended for honor and imitation long after his departure to the solemn shades, the silent continents of eternity. It must be admitted, truth compels me to admit, even here in the presence of the monument we have erected to his memory, Abraham Lincoln was not, in the fullest sense of the word, either our man or our model. In his interests, in his associations, in his habits of thought, and in his prejudices, he was a white man.

He was pre-eminently the white man's President, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men. He was ready and willing at any time

during the first years of his administration to deny, postpone, and sacrifice the rights of humanity in the colored people to promote the welfare of the white people of this country. In all his education and feeling he was an American of the Americans. He came into the Presidential chair upon one principle alone, namely, opposition to the extension of slavery. His arguments in furtherance of this policy had their motive and mainspring in his patriotic devotion to the interest of his own race. To protect, defend, and perpetuate slavery in the States where it existed Abraham Lincoln was not less ready than any other President to draw the sword of the nation. He was ready to execute all the supposed constitutional guarantees of the United States Constitution in favor of the slave system anywhere inside the slave States. He was willing to pursue, recapture, and send back the fugitive slave to his master, and to suppress a slave rising for liberty, though his guilty master were already in arms against the Government. The race to which we belong were not the special objects of his consideration. Knowing this, I concede to you, my white fellow-citizens, a pre-eminence in this worship at once full and supreme. First, midst, and last, you and yours were the objects of his deepest affection and his most earnest solicitude. You are the children of Abraham Lincoln. We are at best only his step-children; children by adoption, children by force of circumstances and necessity. To you it especially belongs to sound his praises, to preserve and perpetuate his memory, to multiply his statues, to hang his pictures high upon your walls, and commend his example, for to you he was a great and glorious friend and benefactor. Instead of supplanting you at this altar, we would exhort you to build high his monuments; let them be of the most costly material, of the most cunning workmanship; let their forms be symmetrical, beautiful, and perfect; let their bases be upon solid rocks, and their summits lean against the unchanging blue, overhanging sky, and let them endure forever! But while in the abundance of your wealth, and in the fullness of your just and patriotic devotion, you do all this, we entreat you to despise not the humble offering we this day unveil to view; for while Abraham Lincoln saved for you a country, he delivered us from a bondage, according to Jefferson, one hour of which was worse than ages of the oppression your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose.

Fellow-citizens, ours is no new-born zeal and devotion—merely a thing of this moment. The name of Abraham Lincoln was near and dear to our hearts in the darkest and most perilous hours of the Republic. We were no more ashamed of him when shrouded in clouds of darkness, of doubt, and defeat than when we saw him

crowned with victory, honor, and glory. Our faith in him was often taxed and strained to the uttermost, but it never failed. When he tarried long in the mountain; when he strangely told us that we were the cause of the war; when he still more strangely told us to leave the land in which we were born; when he refused to employ our arms in defense of the Union; when, after accepting our services as colored soldiers, he refused to retaliate our murder and torture as colored prisoners; when he told us he would save the Union if he could with slavery; when he revoked the Proclamation of Emancipation of General Frémont; when he refused to remove the popular commander of the Army of the Potomac, in the days of its inaction and defeat, who was more zealous in his efforts to protect slavery than to suppress rebellion; when we saw all this, and more, we were at times grieved, stunned, and greatly bewildered; but our hearts believed while they ached and bled. Nor was this, even at the time, a blind and unreasoning superstition. Despite the mist and haze that surrounded him; despite the tumult, the hurry, and confusion of the hour, we were able to take a comprehensive view of Abraham Lincoln, and to make reasonable allowance for the circumstances of his position. We saw him, measured him, and estimated him; not by stray utterances to injudicious and tedious delegations, who often tried his patience; not by isolated facts torn from their connection; not by any partial and imperfect glimpses, caught at inopportune moments; but by a broad survey, in the light of the stern logic of great events, and in view of that divinity which shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will, we came to the conclusion that the hour and the man of our redemption had somehow met in the person of Abraham Lincoln. It mattered little to us what language he might employ on special occasions; it mattered little to us, when we fully knew him, whether he was swift or slow in his movements; it was enough for us that Abraham Lincoln was at the head of a great movement, and was in living and earnest sympathy with that movement, which, in the nature of things, must go on until slavery should be utterly and forever abolished in the United States.

When, therefore, it shall be asked what we have to do with the memory of Abraham Lincoln, or what Abraham Lincoln had to do with us, the answer is ready, full, and complete. Though he loved Caesar less than Rome, though the Union was more to him than our freedom or our future, under his wise and beneficent rule we saw ourselves gradually lifted from the depths of slavery to the heights of liberty and manhood; under his wise and beneficent rule, and by measure approved and vigorously pressed by him, we saw that the hand-writing of ages, in the form of prejudice and proscription,

was rapidly fading away from the face of our whole country; under his rule, and in due time, about as soon after all as the country could tolerate the strange spectacle, we saw our brave sons and brothers laying off the rags of bondage, and being clothed all over in the blue uniforms of the soldiers of the United States; under his rule we saw two hundred thousand of our dark and dusky people responding to the call of Abraham Lincoln, and with muskets on their shoulders, and eagles on their buttons, timing their high footsteps to liberty and union under the national flag; under his rule we saw the independence of the black republic of Haiti, the special object of slaveholding aversion and horror, fully recognized, and her minister, a colored gentleman, duly received here in the city of Washington; under his rule we saw the internal slave trade, which so long disgraced the nation, abolished, and slavery abolished in the District of Columbia; under his rule we saw for the first time the law enforced against the foreign slave trade, and the first slave-trader hanged like any other pirate or murderer; under his rule, assisted by the greatest captain of our age, and his inspiration, we saw the Confederate States, based upon the idea that our race must be slaves, and slaves forever, battered to pieces and scattered to the four winds; under his rule, and in the fullness of time, we saw Abraham Lincoln, after giving the slaveholders three months' grace in which to save their hateful slave system, penning the immortal paper, which, though special in its language, was general in its principles and effect, making slavery forever impossible in the United States. Though we waited long, we saw all this and more.

Can any colored man, or any white man friendly to the freedom of all men, ever forget the night which followed the first day of January, 1863, when the world was to see if Abraham Lincoln would prove to be as good as his word? I shall never forget that memorable night, when in a distant city I waited and watched at a public meeting, with three thousand others not less anxious than myself, for the word of deliverance which we have heard read today. Nor shall I ever forget the outburst of joy and thanksgiving that rent the air when the lightning brought to us the emancipation proclamation. In that happy hour we forgot all delay, and forgot all tardiness, forgot that the President had bribed the rebels to lay down their arms by a promise to withhold the bolt which would smite the slave system with destruction; and we were thenceforward willing to allow the President all the latitude of time, phraseology, and every honorable device that statesmanship might require for the achievement of a great and beneficent measure of liberty and progress.

Fellow-citizens, there is little necessity on this occasion to speak at length and critically of this great and good man, and of his high mission in the world. That ground has been fully occupied and completely covered both here and elsewhere. The whole field of fact and fancy has been gleaned and garnered. Any man can say things that are true of Abraham Lincoln, but no man can say anything that is new of Abraham Lincoln. His personal traits and public acts are better known to the American people than are those of any other man of his age. He was a mystery to no man who saw him and heard him. Though high in position, the humblest could approach him and feel at home in his presence. Though deep, he was transparent; though strong, he was gentle; though decided and pronounced in his convictions, he was tolerant towards those who differed from him, and patient under reproaches. Even those who only knew him through his public utterances obtained a tolerably clear idea of his character and his personality. The image of the man went out with his words, and those who read them knew him.

I have said that President Lincoln was a white man, and shared the prejudices common to his countrymen towards the colored race. Looking back to his times and to the condition of his country, we are compelled to admit that this unfriendly feeling on his part may be safely set down as one element of his wonderful success in organizing the loyal American people for the tremendous conflict before them, and bringing them safely through that conflict. His great mission was to accomplish two things: first to save his country from dismemberment and ruin; and second, to free his country from the great crime of slavery. To do one or the other, or both, he must have the earnest sympathy and the powerful co-operation of his loyal fellow-countrymen. Without this primary and essential condition to success his efforts must have been vain and utterly fruitless. Had he put the abolition of slavery before the salvation of the Union, he would have inevitably driven from him a powerful class of American people and rendered resistance to rebellion impossible. Viewed from the genuine abolition ground, Mr. Lincoln seemed tardy, cold, dull, and indifferent but measuring him by the sentiment of his country, a sentiment he was bound as a statesman to consult, he was swift, zealous, radical, and determined.

Though Mr. Lincoln shared the prejudices of his white fellow-countrymen against the Negro, it is hardly necessary to say that in his heart of hearts he loathed and hated slavery.* The man who

* "I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel."—*Letter of Mr. Lincoln to Mr. Hodges, of Kentucky, April 4, 1864.*

could say, "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war shall soon pass away, yet if God wills it continue till all the wealth piled by two hundred years of bondage shall have been wasted, and each drop of blood drawn by the lash shall have been paid for by one drawn by the sword, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether," gives all needed proof of his feeling on the subject of slavery. He was willing, while the South was loyal, that it should have its pound of flesh, because he thought that it was so nominated in the bond; but farther than this no earthly power could make him go.

Fellow-citizens, whatever else in this world may be partial, unjust, and uncertain, time, time! is impartial, just, and certain in its action. In the realm of mind, as well as in the realm of matter, it is a great worker, and often works wonders. The honest and comprehensive statesman, clearly discerning the needs of his country, and earnestly endeavoring to do his whole duty, though covered and blistered with reproaches, may safely leave his course to the silent judgment of time. Few great public men have ever been the victims of fiercer denunciation than Abraham Lincoln was during his administration. He was often wounded in the house of his friends. Reproaches came thick and fast upon him from within and from without, and from opposite quarters. He was assailed by Abolitionists; he was assailed by slave-holders; he was assailed by the men who were for peace at any price; he was assailed by those who were for a more vigorous prosecution of the war; he was assailed for not making the war an abolition war; and he was most bitterly assailed for making the war an abolition war.

But now behold the change: the judgment of the present hour is, that taking him for all in all, measuring the tremendous magnitude of the work before him, considering the necessary means to ends, and surveying the end from the beginning, infinite wisdom has seldom sent any man into the world better fitted for his mission than Abraham Lincoln. His birth, his training, and his natural endowments, both mental and physical, were strongly in his favor. Born and reared among the lowly, a stranger to wealth and luxury, compelled to grapple single-handed with the flintiest hardships of life, from tender youth to sturdy manhood, he grew strong in the manly and heroic qualities demanded by the great mission to which he was called by the votes of his countrymen. The hard condition of his early life, which would have depressed and broken down weaker men, only gave greater life, vigor, and buoyancy to the heroic spirit of Abraham Lincoln. He was ready for any kind and any quality of work. What other young men dreaded in the shape

of toil, he took hold of with the utmost cheerfulness.

A spade, a rake, a hoe,
A pick-axe, or a bill;
A hook to reap, a scythe to mow,
A flail, or what you will.

All day long he could split heavy rails in the woods, and half the night long he could study his English Grammar by the uncertain flare and glare of the light made by a pine-knot. He was at home on the land with his axe, with his maul, with gluts, and his wedges; and he was equally at home on water, with his oars, with his poles, with his planks, and with his boat-hooks. And whether in his flat-boat on the Mississippi river, or at the fireside of his frontier cabin, he was a man of work. A son of toil himself, he was linked in brotherly sympathy with the sons of toil in every loyal part of the Republic. This very fact gave him tremendous power with the American people, and materially contributed not only to selecting him to the Presidency, but in sustaining his administration of the Government.

Upon his inauguration as President of the United States, an office, even where assumed under the most favorable conditions, fitted to tax and strain the largest abilities, Abraham Lincoln was met by a tremendous crisis. He was called upon not merely to administer the Government, but to decide, in the face of terrible odds, the fate of the Republic.

A formidable rebellion rose in his path before him; the Union was already practically dissolved; his country was torn and rent asunder at the center. Hostile armies were already organized against the Republic, armed with munitions of war which the Republic had provided for its own defense. The tremendous question for him to decide was whether his country should survive the crisis and flourish, or be dismembered and perish. His predecessor in office had already decided the question in favor of national dismemberment, by denying to it the right of self-defense and self-preservation—a right which belongs to the meanest insect.

Happily for the country, happily for you and for me, the judgment of James Buchanan, the patrician, was not the judgment of Abraham Lincoln, the plebeian. He brought his strong common sense, sharpened in the school of adversity, to bear upon the question. He did not hesitate, he did not doubt, he did not falter; but at once resolved that at whatever peril, at whatever cost, the union of the States should be preserved. A patriot himself, his faith was

strong and unwavering in the patriotism of his countrymen. Timid men said before Mr. Lincoln's inauguration, that we had seen the last President of the United States. A voice in influential quarters said "Let the Union slide." Some said that a Union maintained by the sword was worthless. Others said a rebellion of 8,000,000 cannot be suppressed; but in the midst of all this tumult and timidity, and against all this, Abraham Lincoln was clear in his duty, and had an oath in heaven. He calmly and bravely heard the voice of doubt and fear all around him; but he had an oath in heaven, and there was not power enough on the earth to make this honest boatman, backwoodsman, and broad-handed splitter of rails evade or violate that sacred oath. He had not been schooled in the ethics of slavery; his plain life had favored his love of truth. He had not been taught that treason and perjury were the proof of honor and honesty. His moral training was against his saying one thing when he meant another. The trust which Abraham Lincoln had in himself and in the people was surprising and grand, but it was also enlightened and well founded. He knew the American people better than they knew themselves, and his truth was based upon this knowledge.

Fellow-citizens, the fourteenth day of April, 1865, of which this is the eleventh anniversary, is now and will ever remain a memorable day in the annals of this Republic. It was on the evening of this day, while a fierce and sanguinary rebellion was in the last stages of its desolating power; while its armies were broken and scattered before the invincible armies of Grant and Sherman; while a great nation, torn and rent by war, was already beginning to raise to the skies loud anthems of joy at the dawn of peace, it was startled, amazed, and overwhelmed by the crowning crime of slavery—the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. It was a new crime, a pure act of malice. No purpose of the rebellion was to be served by it. It was the simple gratification of a hell-black spirit of revenge. But it has done good after all. It has filled the country with a deeper abhorrence of slavery and a deeper love for the great liberator.

Had Abraham Lincoln died from any of the numerous ills to which flesh is heir; had he reached that good old age of which his vigorous constitution and his temperate habits gave promise; had he been permitted to see the end of his great work; had the solemn curtain of death come down but gradually—we should still have been smitten with a heavy grief, and treasured his name lovingly. But dying as he did die, by the red hand of violence, killed, assassinated, taken off without warning, not because of personal hate—for no man who knew Abraham Lincoln could hate him—but because of his fidelity to union and liberty, he is doubly dear to us, and his memory will

be precious forever.

Fellow-citizens, I end, as I began, with congratulations. We have done a good work for our race today. In doing honor to the memory of our friend and liberator, we have been doing highest honors to ourselves and those who come after us; we have been fastening ourselves to a name and fame imperishable and immortal; we have also been defending ourselves from a blighting scandal. When now it shall be said that the colored man is soulless, that he has no appreciation of benefits or benefactors; when the foul reproach of ingratitude is hurled at us, and it is attempted to scourge us beyond the range of human brotherhood, we may calmly point to the monument we have this day erected to the memory of Abraham Lincoln.

(Continued from page 7)

. . . some say the ethnic conflict is simply the *form* that class conflict has been taking on certain occasions in recent decades, and without the motor of class exploitation nothing else would follow. (*Ibid.*, p. 25.)

Like Moynihan and Glazer, Daniel Bell also hopefully embraces the "efficacy" of "ethnicity." But he too reflects doubt as to whether "ethnicity" can indefinitely hold back united working class struggles. As if to warn corporate monopoly of the dangers ahead, Bell writes:

. . . while ethnicity has become more salient than before, saliency is not predominance, and . . . for many political issues, functional interest groups and classes may be more important than the ethnic and communal groups in the society. (*Ibid.*, p. 174.)

Conflicting views on the role of race and class and the connection between the two have recurred at almost every turning point in the Black liberation struggle. The revival in many forms of the concept of race over class—including the views expressed by the "ethnicity" ideologists—is directly related to the present stage in U.S. monopoly's strategy to counter the multi-racial people's struggles at home and the peoples' struggles against neo-colonialism in Africa.

IDEAS IN OUR TIME

HERBERT APTHEKER

The Abolitionist Movement

The Abolitionist movement in the United States was the second great revolutionary effort to succeed in our history—the first, of course, being that movement which resulted in the establishment of the nation. The Abolitionist movement had three interrelated purposes: 1) to abolish slavery immediately and without compensation to the owners; 2) to combat racism and racist practices in the North; 3) to assist the free Black population. Certainly the first goal was the basic one in the nineteenth century, but the other two were consciously part of the Movement and their historical treatment has been very meager.

Generally in the literature, the Abolitionist movement has been presented as a reform effort, with white people as inspirers, strategists and leaders. This is erroneous. The Abolitionist effort was a revolutionary one and therefore necessarily was a Black-white movement, for in the United States no democratic effort—let alone a revolutionary one—can be anything but a united struggle of peoples of all colors and ethnic origins. Furthermore, since the movement was especially concerned with the position of Black people, it naturally was those people who were its grand strategists, most effective tacticians, most persevering adherents and especially its pioneers.

The movement was a revolutionary one because it sought the overthrow of the ruling class—the ruling class not only in the South but also in the nation as a whole. Of course, the slaveowners utterly dominated the economics, ideology and politics of the South—though not without significant challenge from the slaves and, increasingly as the years rolled on, from the non-slaveholding whites. But that class, which numbered not more than about 175,000 at its highpoint in 1860, also constituted the greatest single economic interest in the nation as a whole prior to the Civil War. Their ownership of some 3,500,000 slaves worth perhaps three and a half billion dollars, plus their ownership of the cotton, tobacco, rice, sugar, hemp, lumber-products that they produced, and of the land which that labor made fruitful, plus the buildings and tools and animals, made of that interrelated, highly class-conscious oligarchy by far the greatest

single vested interest in the nation as a whole. Based upon that foundation, that class dominated both political parties—Democratic and Whig (while tending to favor the former)—and therefore dominated the Congress and the Presidency. It dominated the judiciary and its ideology was the ruling one not only in Mississippi but in the nation as a whole. That is, the major publishing houses would print nothing offensive to the slaveholding class, the major universities would not hire professors who condemned slavery and the leading newspapers of the nation—with extremely rare and partial exceptions—at least acquiesced in slavery's existence and excoriated the "fanatical" Abolitionists.

The Abolitionist movement, then, stood opposed to all of that; it was in principled opposition to the ruling class and the state and all its apparatus of persuasion, domination and coercion. That movement was revolutionary exactly in the sense that it sought the overthrow of the ruling class in the only way in which a ruling class can be overthrown; *i.e.*, it sought the elimination of that form of private property the ownership of which defined that ruling class and gave it its power. The slaveowners were the ruling class and the Abolitionists sought the immediate, uncompensated abolition of slave property; nothing else could *end* slavery and nothing else could *terminate* the power of the slaveowners. That is not a reform movement; it is a revolutionary one.

The available literature is meager, too, on the *movement* feature of the Abolitionist struggle. Most of the available works—and especially the textbooks—give readers an impression of a rather formless, nebulous conglomeration of (generally white) people of benevolent feelings (or malevolent, if the author opposes Abolitionism, as many books still do) who somehow were able to stir up considerable commotion and influence significant political developments. The reality is otherwise. The Abolitionist movement was a *movement*; that is, it was highly organized on national, regional, state-wide, and local levels. In addition, it contained organizations of particular components of the population, as of women and of youth. It was served by a professional revolutionary cadre—men and women who devoted their entire lives to the movement; it held regular meetings and conventions, had formal constitutions and organs of agitation and propaganda. Its points of concentration and its campaigns did not simply "happen"; on the contrary, they were the results of collective and prolonged discussions and debates and on the basis of such efforts would be determined a policy of concentrating upon ending the domestic slave-trade, for example, or petitioning Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, or in the federal

territories, or fighting in Massachusetts, for instance, to abolish jim-crow schools, or jim-crow transportation. In this way, there came into being—especially among the Afro-American people, but always with white allies—vigilance committees and the underground railroad and major rescue attempts, which helped capture the attention of the nation and, indeed, of the world.

The Abolitionist movement, like all revolutionary efforts, had its inner struggles against opportunism, sectarianism and racial and sexual chauvinism. This movement, too, like all revolutionary movements, not only was Black-white but also reflected male and female joint struggle. Indeed it is reflective of the deeply revolutionary nature of the struggle to abolish slavery that it was exactly that movement which witnessed the first appearance of significant public participation by women and which in turn helped inspire the organized movement in the United States for the liberation of women.

The Abolitionist movement also was a basic component of the overall democratic struggle of humanity. That is, its effort to abolish slavery, its commitment to oppose racism, its male-female reality, all reflected a new definition of "people." When the Fathers of this Republic wrote "people" they had in mind what propertied white males of the 18th century had in mind by that word—*i.e.*, people like themselves, and not people of other colors, and not women and not the propertyless. But the Abolitionist movement of the 19th century broadens the meaning of people; its usage is anti-elitist and anti-racist and anti-male-chauvinist. When the Abolitionist movement sought freedom it sought freedom for the least among the people and therefore its blows were directed towards human emancipation.

Hence, too, one sees in the struggle against slavery a significant effort to preserve and extend freedom of press and speech and assembly and to oppose aggressive, expansionistic foreign policies emanating from Washington—as that which made war upon Mexico and threatened war upon Spain in order to annex Cuba.

Furthermore, this battle to abolish slavery is part of the whole history of the labor movement in this country and in the world. Most of the Black people labored as slaves—skilled and unskilled and not only in the field but also in the city and not only raising cotton but also digging coal and not only producing hemp but also making iron. In this very real sense, the Emancipation Proclamation and the XIII Amendment abolishing slavery are great documents in the history of the labor movement. This is at the heart of Marx's insistence that labor in a white skin cannot be free while labor in a black skin is branded. This is the point, negatively, in the

insistence by the leading ideologists of the slaveholders—as George Fitzhugh, for example—that only slavery “solves” the class struggle for it makes of the worker so much “capital” in the pockets of the owners.

Abolitionism struck at the heart of so-called “civilization” as envisaged from John Locke to John C. Calhoun; that is, government exists to secure private property and the security of that private ownership of the means of production is the fundamental function of the State. Our slaves, insisted their owners, belong to us by the same right and the same law and with the same justification that the land and the factories belong to you in the North. If on Monday, they warned, the flames of Abolition should light up our plantations and consume our property in slaves, then on Tuesday you had better watch out that the tenants on your lands do not treat you similarly and that on Wednesday the workers in your factories do not feel it is their turn to emulate the slaves and the landless farmers. Once yielded the precedent in any form of property rights, and then the ownership of all private property is in jeopardy and its sanctity is vitiated. When that goes, there goes also the sacredness of contract and if that goes then what has become of “civilization”? This is why the pro-slavery propagandists insisted that the Abolitionists were communists and socialists as well as atheists and barbarians.

One of the essential purposes of the racism which bulwarked slavery was to hide this anti-elitist, basically revolutionary quality of Abolitionism.

Abolitionism, then, was part of the democratic, egalitarian, anti-elitist quality of the entire fabric of human history. Further, it was fundamental to the liberation of the Afro-American people and while that liberation is a basic part of the history of the United States and of the world, it also is a history in and of itself. In this sense, then, Abolitionism is part of the liberation struggles of the especially oppressed peoples and nationalities of the earth. In our country, because of the organic character of Black-white unity, one sees the merging of all these struggles; this is dramatized in the Civil War where the original avowed purpose of the salvation of the Union was only possible if there occurred the emancipation of the Black people—and the emancipation of the Black people in turn was only possible if one saved the Union. To save the Union it was necessary to end slavery; to end slavery it was necessary to save the Union.

Another feature of the revolutionary quality of the Abolitionist movement was its internationalism. The effort to end slavery in the United States was part of the effort to end slavery in Mexico and all Latin-America and the West Indies.

The struggles of the slaves in Virginia and the slaves of Jamaica,

of the slaves of Mississippi and of Haiti, of South Carolina and Cuba—these are all one mighty component of the inspiring human resistance to insult and enslavement. The anti-slavery men and women in the United States had comrades in the same struggles in Mexico and Brazil, in France and England, in Ireland and Cuba. These revolutionaries knew each other, visited each other and helped each other.

And, of course, the humanistic essence of anti-slavery and its anti-elitist and basically labor component made all Marxists friends of the struggle to abolish slavery, with the leadership of that undertaking falling upon Marx himself. This brought decisive results during the Civil War with the key role played in the diplomacy of that War by the working classes of Europe.

In this great crusade within the United States there appeared some of the noblest figures not only in the history of our nation but in that of the world. From the best among the Black and white people who preceded us in this country came such colossal figures as the indomitable Harriet Tubman, the clear-visioned Wendell Phillips, the stalwart Sojourner Truth, the brilliant Frederick Douglass, the magnificent John Brown.

Someday a dramatist will appear among us and he or she will be able to do full justice to that moment when the jailed and chained Nat Turner faces the court-appointed questioner who comes seeking an admission from the 30-year old slave-rebel that what he had attempted was foolish and wrong. It was important to the slaveholders that this rebel whose uprising had rocked their society to its heels, be made to confess failure and fault. This slaveowners' representative came to Nat Turner the day before he was to be hanged. He told Turner that all was lost, that his comrades had been hanged and that he himself would be executed the next day. Tell us, he demanded and implored, that you know that your act was stupid and wrong.

That lackey of the masters reports, himself, what the rebel did and said. He raised himself from his cot, there in the county jail in Virginia back in 1831, stood up, and with one hand shackled to the cement wall he spread his other arm wide and, looking at the inquisitor, said to him: “Was not Christ crucified?”

I believe that in all the record of the history of the United States—with its many moments of high drama, from Bunker Hill to Harper's Ferry, from the Boston Massacre to the Haymarket martyrdom, there is no single moment so filled with drama and with meaning as that one instant of immortal defiance and challenge.

Such were the struggles of our Abolitionist comrades; such is the heritage of valor and of effectiveness that they have bequeathed to us.

SERGEANT CAULFIELD

A Leader of Struggles

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Sergeant Caulfield was born on May 5, 1906 into a sharecropper family in Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana, where he spent most of his life. From childhood he experienced the extreme poverty suffered by Black sharecroppers in the deep South, and most of his adult life was dedicated to fighting for the economic and political rights of the Black people, becoming a recognized leader in these struggles, as the brief autobiographical excerpt which follows demonstrates.*

He did much to help organize sharecroppers and poor tenant farmers, from his participation in organizing the Farmers Union in Pointe Coupee and adjacent parishes to taking part in 1952 in helping to form the Brotherhood of Sharecroppers and Tenant Farmers, consisting of Black and white sharecroppers and poor farmers from Georgia, Louisiana, Alabama and East Texas. Later this became an organization devoted to winning the right to vote.

Because of his activities in behalf of the farmers and his leadership in fighting for the right to vote, he was hounded by the FBI.

He joined the Communist Party, he writes, in 1936 and he remained a staunch member of the Party up to the time of his death. He held a position of unquestioned leadership and respect among those with whom he was joined in struggle, and he held his head high under the most difficult of conditions and never gave up.

He died on August 30, 1975, leaving behind him a substantial family—four sons, three daughters, two sisters and a brother-in-law—as well as many comrades and co-workers. He was one of the best sons of the Black people and his death is deeply mourned by all who worked with him or knew of him.

The following autobiographical note shows why.

I was born in the Parish of Point Coupee, State of Louisiana. I was raised without a father. My mother raised me, three sisters older than I, myself and one brother. Another sister came later.

I worked in the fields at the age of 13, to have a house for my mother and sisters to live in. I had a pretty rough life while growing up. Many days I went to the field and didn't have food to eat. I had one egg some mornings and didn't know where dinner was coming from. Most of the time we stopped at 11:00 and went fishing. If we didn't catch fish we had no dinner. All those years

LEADER OF STRUGGLES

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I found that my mother never drew any more than \$50 out of her year's work.

In 1935, I joined the Farmer's Union. I and some others organized quite a few people in the surrounding parishes—some people in St. Laundry parish and quite a few in the Arroyles parish. On August 15, 1936, at noon, I joined the U.S. Communist Party. I joined with five other men.

We started our fight in 1937 over soil conservation payments. At that time the government allowed the landlord to make one contract, covering all the sharecroppers on the plantation, and he would get one check and give the sharecroppers a small share of it. We got together and drew up a petition. We got over a thousand people to sign the petition and sent it to the Secretary of Agriculture in Washington, D. C. Everyone who signed the petition had to meet at the courthouse to attend a hearing concerning a fair price for labor: the landlords vs. the sharecroppers.

Thousands of people were there that day, including landlords from all over the state. Two of the men who helped work with the petition had to leave the parish at the time of the hearing. That left the whole thing in my lap. I had to defend the rights of millions of sharecroppers who had never had a check from the federal government. When the clerk of the court swore me in to testify against the landlord, I came forward and started defending the petition. I testified how unfair landlords had been with sharecroppers. I was told to stop my testimony. The third time, I refused to get down. I said, "I was called here to do a job. I expect to finish."

After I finished my testimony and went back to my seat, the county agent got up behind me and said he knew some landlords hadn't played fair with sharecroppers. Then he looked at me and said: "Sergeant Caulfield, if you want trouble, you can get it."

The hearing was over and thousands of people gathered around the courthouse talking about what the next move might be. Some said I wouldn't live to see the next day, because the people I was fighting were known to be killers. We went back and organized a committee to send to Washington, D.C. to ask the Secretary of Agriculture to accept the contract for each person to get his own check, and that was done. We got checks for many who had never received a check from the federal government in their lives. This happened in 1938.

We had a strong organization in 1940-41. In 1941, I went to New York to a peace conference. There I saw Paul Robeson and Benjamin J. Davis, Jr. We were fighting for peace. We had drawn up

a plan before we left Louisiana to come back to Washington, D.C. Some unfair practices were going on in Point Coupee. Under the Farm Security Administration, they put one of the worst supervisors in Point Coupee Parish. The sharecroppers had to buy mules and tools to work with. The superintendent got together with the warden of Angola State Farm and bought all the condemned mules they had on the State Farm and then sold them to the sharecroppers. Many of the mules didn't live to make a crop. The sharecroppers had to go back and make another loan to buy another mule before the year was up. And that put some sharecroppers in very deep debt. It was totally impossible for them to get out of debt.

When we left New York City, we went to Washington D.C. to the Agriculture Department and presented our case before the Agriculture Department. I had been talking to the superintendent about these things. He told me the sharecroppers weren't feeding the mules and that was why they were dying. But we found out the mules had been condemned on the State Farm in Angola.

I had a three-day talk with the Agriculture leaders at the Farm Security Administration. They told us they were going to send some investigators to look into the situation. One week after we had come back, they sent investigators down from Washington to see if our statement was true. They came to me every day while they were there for three weeks. Every day, they made rounds in the parish and then they came back to me, to see if I would still stand up to my report against the superintendent of the Farm Security Administration. They told me before I left Washington, "If we find all these charges are true, we will fire every one of them."

After the investigation was over in the parish, the investigators came back to me. They told me, "I guess you wonder why we came to you every day while we were here. It was because you're the one who made those charges." The first day they came, they went to the superintendent of our parish. They told him; "Sargeant Caulfield was the one who made the charges." The superintendent told them: "Whatever Sargeant Caulfield tells you is true because he does not lie about anyone." All the people involved in cheating the sharecroppers in Point Coupee Parish were fired.

While we were there we saw about some back pay on the sugar farm where we had tied up some of the landlord's payments. Later the farm laborers got their payment. I was always busy fighting against the things I thought were wrong. It gave me many restless nights.

In 1952, I thought Negroes* should have the right to vote in Point

Coupee Parish. My uncle and I got up on the morning of the fourth Friday in March, seeking registration in New Rhodes. We didn't know what office to go to. We went into the High Sheriff's office and we asked them where the voter registration office was. He said: "What you registering for, to go into the Army?" We answered, "No. We want to register to vote." "Negroes don't register to vote," answered the Sheriff. I said, "I know they don't. That's why I am coming today, to register." We got into an argument. He told me, "Go back home. Whenever the Negroes get the right to register, I'll let you know, and you can come to register." I told him: "I don't buy it that way. It's been too long now." He warned me, "We are expecting a lot of trouble from you."

He followed me two blocks on foot. My uncle didn't cut into the conversation at all. But he was standing by. My uncle is a preacher pastoring two churches. He said to me: "We have to get more strength behind our backs for the right for Negro people to vote. He spoke of a coming meeting with 50 preachers, and promised that he would ask the president to give me a chance to speak. They allowed me to speak for 30 minutes. At that meeting, five preachers joined with me in an organization which would fight for the rights for Negroes to vote. We started the committee that day. We didn't have any money and had to hire a lawyer. I was the chairman of the committee. We went around and raised a thousand dollars to pay the lawyer's fee. Many people in the parish gave fund raising affairs, cooking suppers and charging for them, etc.

After we raised the money, we went to Alexander and hired a Negro lawyer named Louis Berry. He came to our meetings and made several speeches. We hired him to fight our case. He filed the case in the Federal Court in Baton Rouge. The people in Point Coupee didn't put up any resistance against the case. But they hired two lawyers to fight us in the EBR Parish. We had a hearing. The two lawyers for the segregationists argued that Louisiana couldn't allow us the right to file the case in Federal courts. Our lawyer argued that we should have such a right. And the judge reached over and got the petition and told the lawyer, "Yes, they have a right to file here." Then the judge passed the case to the Clerical Court and he put it in the chamber with no date set for a hearing.

This wasn't the only case filed in the court that day. There was another case filed for the same thing—the right to vote—by the same lawyer. After the judge set the case aside I figured I didn't have

* The term "Negro" is used by the author throughout. It has been left unchanged.—Ed.

any concrete facts to tell my people in the parish. I figured it would all be buried in a lot of red tape and nothing else when I finally got to the witness stand. I went back home and tried to study what should be done next. The next few days, I called the committee together and told them the judge had set the case aside. I went to Alexander and got the lawyer to pull the case out of Federal Court. I asked the lawyer to have a hearing as soon as possible. He asked me if I was afraid. I told him no.

He did pull the case out of the Federal Court and filed it in the Civil Court in New Rhodes and then notified me about what he had done. Then I had to go back to get the people together again to meet in court. The same sheriff followed me wherever I went but I would not stop.

When we had the hearing, there were hundreds of people on hand. The lawyer and I walked into the court together, to where the judge was seated. The judge told the Clerical Court to get the case, without any argument. Then he held the case up and said, "I've heard too much of this." And he asked the lawyer, "Are you ready for me to hand down the decision in this case?" The lawyer answered: "I'm not ready. I want to take it to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court can give the decision to give more Negroes the right to vote." He picked a committee to take the case to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court handed down the decision and we won the case. In May 1953, for the first time in the Parish of Point Coupee, a Negro registered to vote.

I visited people in the parish who had filed their case the same time we did in the Federal Court and told them what we had done, suggesting they do the same. They wouldn't and left their case in the Federal Court. When the case came up for a hearing, they lost it. But we were able to win our case against the segregationists.

During the time we had the case filed in the court, the FBI called a meeting with all the elected officials and landlords and said to them that I was a dangerous man. They told them that after a lot of investigation they had proof that I was a dedicated Communist. They said I had won my way with the people in the Parish and they couldn't get anyone to testify against me. He told them that they in the Parish must tell the people on their plantations that Sargeant Caulfield was a dangerous man, and that it was dangerous to talk to him. But I didn't lose a friend.

I organized the NAACP into the Point Coupee Voter's League. A year and a half later, when an election came up, we had about 2,500

Negroes registered to vote against about 4,000 whites. We and the politicians felt that 2,500 Negroes had the balance of power if they stuck together. We had the Negroes organized and allowed politicians to come to our meetings and make bids for Negro votes. But we were waiting for an issue to fight for. We had problems in the parish and state and I, as president, felt that since Negroes finally had the vote for the first time since the Reconstruction, we should get something out of our vote. They had passed a "right to work" law in the State of Louisiana. We felt the "right to work" law would destroy all labor unions. Under the law, laborers didn't have the right to strike.

The committee went around looking for somebody to get the "right to work" law off the books. One senator, out of the 18th senatorial district, agreed that if he was elected he would vote for repealing the law. I was looking for someone in the House of Representatives to sponsor the repeal of the "right to work" law. We returned to Point Coupee Parish and talked to the man who was already elected in the House of Representatives. He had voted for the "right to work" law. Elections were coming up soon and he wanted to go back to the House of Representatives. We talked for a long time about the "right to work" law. He spoke of the other problems in our parish. But as chairman of the committee, I insisted we had to get rid of the "right to work" law because it was poison to organized labor. The representative said, "If you'll send me back to the House, I will vote to repeal the 'right to work law.' I said to him, "Will you go into the chambers and get this law up for repeal?" He answered that he would. I asked him if he would make that the first article on his agenda. He promised. Then we called a meeting and informed the people what we had done. And they voted at the meeting to endorse the representative for the next election. He won by a large majority.

In the first session in the House of Representatives (and in the Senate), the question of the "right to work" law came up. One man, a racist segregationist, Senator Willie Renack, said to the representative of Point Coupee Parish, whose name was Tom Gemere, "I'm surprised at you. You voted for the right to work law and now you bring it back for repeal." All the men in the House and Senate had their eyes on these two men. Willie Renack told Tom, "I know why you bring this law up for repeal. You have made some kind of concession with that goddam Sargeant Caulfield and he is a member of the Communist Party, and you have to give him some satisfaction when you go back home." The voting concluded with the segregationists losing and our winning. They took the "right to work" law off the books.

In 1956, a friend and I started riding around the parish talking to people about their problems. We entered a home that we had never been to before. This woman had lost her husband. She had two granddaughters living with her. She told us she had a son who worked on a farm. He had 10 children. He made 10 bales of cotton. After he paid his debts he didn't have anything left for his children, no food, no clothing. Her son came in and told us the same thing. Before we left, we told the man we would do something for him. We didn't know what we were going to do. We could not think of a solution to this grave problem. It was a restless night for me. I know there were more people suffering in the same way as this family. I thought up a possible solution to this problem.

On December 24, 1956, I entered the office of the Parish representative and spoke with him and the county agent of that Parish. I didn't bring a committee because it was late and I felt I could do the job alone. I told them the condition of some people in the Parish. The Parish representative looked at me and said, "Sargeant, tomorrow is Christmas. Come down here Monday morning. I'll take you over to the courthouse and see that you get \$700." I was furious. I said: "You didn't really understand me. I'm not talking about myself. I'm talking about people in need. I have run into people here who were farm laborers where landlords have plowed right up to their door. They can't raise chickens. Neither do they have a garden. They can't raise a pig. Can these people I'm talking about get \$700 each?" He said, "No."

He said it would take a lot of money to feed these people. I answered that the U.S. government had surplus food stored that would finally be taken out and dumped into the sea. Why couldn't the suffering people in our Parish have some? He said, "You live in the North end of Point Coupee Parish. How would it be if we drew a line half way down the Parish and helped the North end, because the South end made a big pecan crop this year, and they should have some money." I insisted the entire Parish needed the help. He answered, "We agree that you should have it." He suggested the first Monday in January to go before the responsible committee and argue our case before them. I then got up, got my hat, thanked him and walked out.

I called a meeting of the Point Coupee Voters League and asked them to go with me on the first Monday of January. They came. I told the committee about the needs of the people in the Parish. They all voted to help. We were very happy.

It wasn't long before everybody in need got some money in Point

Coupee Parish. I felt I and the Committee had done a good job. This was the first time in history in all the State of Louisiana that people in need were helped by the government.

For fifteen years I had been trying to fight for education for Negro children. I attended all education meetings. I could see some elected officials from the School Board at the meetings. Their answers to the appeal for schools for Negro children was always, "No money." On the 17th of May, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed segregation in the field of education. I called the Committee and explained the potential which could be gained from this decision of the high court. We made plans. Five of us went to the School Board and I was spokesman of the group. As soon as we entered, there was talk about loan delinquencies at the time. I had been begging them to build schools for Negroes. The Superintendent and I did most of the discussing. He complained, "Mr. Caulfield, on every ground we've met, we fell out. Why?" I said: "Because you didn't want to do a goddam thing for Negroes." We fought for 15 minutes. Then I spoke, saying: "Mr. Lorio, I have been begging you for 15 years to build a Negro school and you haven't done it. I'm not going to beg any more. Goddam it, I'm going to make you do it." He demanded I get out of his office. I refused. He complained, "I did all the School Board allowed me to do." I answered, "That wasn't a damn thing because you didn't do a damn thing." He again demanded I leave. He expressed the wish that the Committee would expel me. I told him that that was impossible. The third time he told me to go, I left, but first I told him I would be back. This superintendent then tried to get the sheriff to arrest me for "disturbing the peace." The sheriff said, "You've got to get along with Mr. Caulfield because he's got these people behind him and you can't tell what course he might take."

About a week later, the Superintendent of Education sent for me and told me to come in. The School Board had met and agreed to build seven schools. I went immediately. When I walked in, the Superintendent said, "I'm proud to see you, take a seat." Then he added, "Our long fight for schools for Negroes is over. The School Board has agreed to build seven schools for Negroes, five elementary and two high schools. I'll assure you that the men will build the school in your end of the parish first. And the rest of them will soon be built." They built it. They told me that day, "After these schools are completed, you have permission from the School Board to go in these schools any time you feel like it and see how they are operated." I was a happy soul. It was a long, hard fight, but we won.

Black Women in the Fight for Women's Rights

I have just seen a beautiful thing

Slim and still

Against a gold, gold sky,

A straight black cypress,

Sensitive,

Exquisite

A black finger

Pointing upwards.

Why, beautiful still finger, are you black

And why are you pointing upwards?

Angelina Grimké, 1825

In her seminal essay, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," Angela Davis described the unique character of the Black woman's experience in the United States:

... [S]he was a victim of the myth that only the woman, with her diminished capacity for mental and physical labor, should do degrading household work. Yet, the alleged benefits of the ideology of femininity did not accrue to her. She was not sheltered or protected; she could not remain oblivious to the desperate struggle for existence unfolding outside the "home." She was also there in the fields alongside the man, toiling under the lash from sun-up to sun-down.

This was one of the supreme ironies of slavery: in order to approach its strategic goal—to extract the greatest possible surplus from the labor of slaves—the Black woman had to be released from the chains of the myth of femininity. . . . In order to function as a slave, the Black woman had to be annulled as woman, that is, as woman in her historical stance of wardship under the entire male hierarchy. The sheer force of things rendered her equal to her man. . . . The attainment of slavery's intrinsic goals was contingent upon the fullest and most brutal utilization of the productive capacities of every man, woman and child. . . . The Black woman was therefore integrated into the productive force.¹

Marxists have long contended that a root cause of the oppression

of women in exploitative societies and most especially capitalist society, has been their exclusion from productive, and therefore social life. Indeed, Engels in his book *The Origins of the Family* described this first division of labor which resulted in female domesticity and the creation of a nuclear family under male hegemony as the "world historical defeat of the female sex."² It is of striking significance, therefore, that Black women in slavery achieved an equality with Black men unknown to their white counterparts in the society as a whole. Even in the aftermath of slavery and on into the twentieth century, a far greater proportion of Black women than white women (generally two-thirds to three-fourths of the Black women) worked outside their own homes.

The Black Woman's Approach to Emancipation

It is from such social conditions that the particular consciousness of Black people concerning woman's emancipation arose. Black women rarely approached the issue of their emancipation in sexual terms, i.e. man vs. woman, even when sections of the Black male population were influenced by male supremacist ideology. The obstacle to their emancipation was not Black manhood. For the Black woman, based upon her history and her experiences, liberation meant, and must mean, the liberation of the race.

The outstanding Black woman journalist Lucy Wilmot Smith posed the issue of womanhood in 1889 in this way:

The Negro woman's history is marvelously strange and pathetic. . . . Born and bred under both the hindrance of slavery and the limitations of her sex, the mothers of the race have kept pace with the fathers. They stand at the head of the cultured, educated families whose daughters clasp arms with the sons. The educated Negro woman occupies vantage over the Caucasian woman of America, in that the former has had to contend with her brother every inch of the ground for recognition; the Negro man, having had his sister by his side on plantations and in rice swamps, keeps her there now that he moves in other spheres. As she wins laurels he accords her the royal crown.³

Historically Black men have distinguished themselves in support for woman's rights. Frederick Douglass, who attended the first Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 and supported the demand for suffrage when even few women were willing to do so, was a source of infinite pride to Black women. On the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Seneca Falls Convention, in 1908, the Black educator, Mary Church Terrell, for example, ex-

tolled this "magnificent representative" of her race:

The incomparable Frederick Douglass did many things of which I as a member of that race which he served so faithfully and well am proud. But there is nothing he ever did in his long and brilliant career in which I take keener pleasure and greater pride than I do in his ardent advocacy of equal political rights for women and the effective service he rendered the cause of woman suffrage sixty years ago.⁴

Likewise, a conspicuous theme in much of the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois was the subjugation of women, most especially Black women. In 1920, in an essay on the "Damnation of Women" Du Bois described the "unendurable paradox" of woman's position in society:

The world wants healthy babies and intelligent workers. Today we refuse to allow the combination and force thousands of intelligent workers to go childless at a horrible expenditure of moral force, or we damn them if they break our idiotic conventions. Only at the sacrifice of intelligence and the chance to do their best work can the majority of modern women bear children. This is the damnation of women.⁵

Du Bois proposed the following solution: "The future woman must have a life work and economic independence. She must have knowledge. She must have the right to motherhood at her own discretion."

Tributes celebrating the intellectual capabilities and moral fiber of the Black woman appeared with regularity. They were written by both men and women. Pride in womanhood forms an important part of the Black heritage in the United States, and the suffering of the Black woman, especially under slavery, forms an important part of the Black experience.

As a consequence of the social conditions peculiar to Black women, they not only manifested an early consciousness of the woman's rights issue, but one that tended to be relatively free of bourgeois trappings. One of the earliest declarations of the rights of women was written by a Black woman who signed herself only as "Matilda." She wrote her opinions in the form of a letter to the editors of *Freedom's Journal* on August 10, 1827:

I don't know that in any of your papers, you have said sufficient upon the education of females. I hope you are not to be classed with those, who think that our mathematical knowledge

should be limited to "fathoming the dish-kettle," and that we have acquired enough history, if we know that our grandfather's father lived and died. 'Tis true the time has been, when to darn a stocking and cook a pudding well, was considered the end and aim of a woman's being. But those were days when ignorance blinded men's eyes. This diffusion of knowledge has destroyed those degraded opinions, and men of the present age, allow that we have minds that are capable and deserving of culture.⁶

The first American-born woman to speak publicly in the United States was Black. Her name was Maria W. Stewart. She delivered four lectures in Boston in 1832 and 1833. Urging both the abolition of slavery and equality for women, she was subjected to much humiliation and abuse, and was finally forced to abandon her public appearances. With the organization of the Female Anti-Slavery Societies a few years later, more women ventured to speak in public, and secured the collective support of the women in the Societies.

It is also in the context of the social conditions under slavery that one can appreciate the legendary heroism of Harriet Tubman, not as a fluke of historical circumstance, but as the logical and historically necessary consequence of the struggle against slavery. General Tubman, as John Brown liked to call her, was a fighter in the army of liberation. She was also a symbol of liberated womanhood.

Similarly, it is in the context of the slave experience that Sojourner Truth's now-famous speech before the Woman's Rights Convention in 1852 takes on its special character. Still bearing the scars of slavery Sojourner Truth could foster no illusions of bourgeois femininity. She spoke on the basis of her own experience. Her speech had an enormous impact on the all-white and predominantly *male* audience:⁷

That man over there say that women needs to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place; and ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man (when I could get it), and bear the lash as well—and ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard

* At this time, woman's rights conventions were still dominated by men, many of whom were from the clergy, and were intensely hostile to the woman's cause, and heckled the women speakers.

me—and ain't I a woman? . . .⁷

Equally critical in appreciating the particular features of the Black woman's conception of woman's rights is understanding the dimensions of the sexual abuses to which she was subjected under slavery. The Black minister, Alexander Crummell, described some of the contours of this abuse in a lecture on "The Black Woman of the South," delivered in 1891:

In her girlhood all the delicate tenderness of her sex has been rudely outraged. . . . From her childhood she was the doomed victim of the grossest passion. . . . If the instinct of chastity asserted itself, then she had to fight like a tiger for the ownership and possession of her own person and oftentimes had to suffer pain and lacerations for her virtuous self-assertion. When she reached maturity, all the tender instincts of her womanhood were ruthlessly violated. At the age of marriage—always prematurely anticipated under slavery—she was mated as stock of the plantation were mated, not to be the companion of a loved and chosen husband, but to be the breeder of human cattle for the field or the auction.⁸

The Black woman was the property of the master in the double sense of being both slave and woman. His sexual prerogative thus had a dual nature. The Black woman was both a sexual object for his personal proclivities, and a sexual object for reproductive, that is to say, economic purposes. Furthermore, rape was a mode of repression especially suited for the suppression of woman as potential insurgent. The rape of Black women was woven into the terrorist fabric of the slave system and maintained, with necessary modifications, in the post-slavery era.

The rationale used to justify the sexual abuse of Black women was their alleged promiscuity. Typical of the racist imagery was this vicious outburst by a wealthy southern white woman, writing on the race problem in a national magazine in 1904:

. . . [D]egeneracy is apt to show most in the weaker individuals of any race; so [N]egro* women evidence more nearly the popular idea of total depravity than the men do. They are so nearly lacking in virtue that the color of a Negro woman's skin is gen-

* The word Negro was always printed with a small "n" in all white-run publications until the 1930's. Recognition of the Negro people as a people—i.e., a nationality whose name was to be capitalized—came about only as the result of very great struggle. I have simply capitalized the "N" in these quotations.

erally taken (and quite correctly) as a guarantee of her immorality. On the whole, I think they are the greatest menace possible to the moral life of any community where they live. And they are evidently the chief instruments of the degradation of the men of their own race. . . . I sometimes read of virtuous Negro women, hear of them, but the idea is absolutely inconceivable to me. . . . I cannot imagine such a creation as a virtuous Black woman.⁹

It is out of such horrors that Black women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries placed particular emphasis on the apparently conservative, even Victorian standards of behavior in male-female relationships.

From the legacies of slavery the Black woman shaped the basic contours of her movement for emancipation: productive worker, fierce defender of chastity and honor, lover of children, protector of manhood, partisan of education, religion and racial pride. Black women, finally freed from the manacles of slavery, marched forward in the decades following the Civil War with boundless energy and enthusiasm. Dr. Anna Cooper, revered leader among them, articulated these feelings of ferment and optimism:

To be a woman in [this] age carries with it a privilege and an opportunity never implied before. . . . [T]o be a woman of the Negro race in America . . . is to have a heritage . . . unique in the ages . . . the race is young and full of the elasticity and hopefulness of youth. All its achievements are before it. It does not look on the masterly triumphs of the nineteenth century civilization with that *blasé* world-weary look which characterizes the old washed out and worn out races which have already, so to speak, seen their best days. . . .

Everything to this race is new and strange and inspiring. There is a quickening of its pulses and a glowing of its self-consciousness. Aha, I can rival that! I can aspire to that! I can honor my name and vindicate my race! . . . This . . . is the enthusiasm which stirs the genius of young Africa in America.¹⁰

The National Association of Colored Women

"Lifting As We Climb" was the motto of the National Association of Colored Women, founded in 1896, with Mary Church Terrell as its first president. While the Club movement among white women tended to serve primarily charitable functions, the Black women's efforts were intimately tied to the survival and progress of the race. Typical of the women's efforts was this report of the Association's biennial conference held in Denver, Colorado, in the summer of 1918:

The subject of industrial and living conditions for the newly arrived Negro in the northern cities . . . was discussed at length. . . . Many of [the] members are actively engaged in helping to adjust the newcomers to their strange environment. . . .

Responsibility for the less fortunate members of their race was the keynote of the conference which closely considered the questions of child delinquency and reformation, especially the abuses of the Negro child offender in many places. The president reported that she had seen a boy of eight wearing prison stripes in South Carolina and had heard a judge in Jacksonville, Fla., sentence seventeen boys of from eight to fourteen years to the chain gang. . . .

Day nurseries and homes for aged people received a share of the attention of the conference, as well as the more universally interesting questions of suffrage and prohibition.¹¹

The Association of Colored Women was a mass organization with considerable influence in the Black community. By 1911 it had 45,000 members, a vast network of state federations which spanned the country, and an impressive assortment of special departments that organized work in specific areas of concern, such as Kindergartens, Mothers' Meetings, Day Nurseries, Humane and Rescue, Temperance, Religion, Literature, Domestic Science, Music, Art, Forestry and Statistics.¹²

Black women in this period also pioneered in the struggle for woman's rights as they entered the work force as industrial and service workers, teachers, journalists, doctors, lawyers and political activists. For Black women, suffering both sex and race oppression, the struggle for higher education, especially in medicine and law, required extraordinary stamina and courage. Through the women's club movement, the NAACP and a host of independent efforts, Black women such as Ida B. Wells, Mary Terrell, Mary R. Talbert, Hallie Quinn Brown, Fannie Coppin, Lucy Wilmot Smith, Anna Cooper, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Verina Morton-Jones, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and Mary McLeod Bethune emerged as outstanding personages in the Black liberation movement. Many participated directly in the woman's suffrage movement.

The Woman's Suffrage Movement

Ida B. Wells, fearless crusader against lynching, was also a close friend of Susan B. Anthony and a life-long member of the Woman's Suffrage Association. In 1914 she founded the Alpha Suffrage Club in Chicago in order to organize women to campaign among Black

men to vote in favor of woman's suffrage. In addition the Alpha Club afforded Black women the opportunity to wield greater influence in local Chicago politics.

Mary Church Terrell was also a life-long member of the Woman's Suffrage Association. As a resident of Washington, D.C. she was among the ladies who regularly picketed the White House. When members of the Association successfully pressed their demand that women be placed on the Washington, D.C. Board of Education, Mrs. Terrell was one of the three women appointed (in 1894). She thus became the first Black woman to serve on a Board of Education anywhere in the country.

Mrs. Terrell was a frequent speaker at Suffrage Conventions, and in June, 1904 she was part of the U.S. delegation to the International Congress of Women held in Berlin. Her speech before the Congress caused a sensation because she delivered it herself in German, French and English successively. She began her presentation this way:

If it had not been for the War of Rebellion which resulted in victory for the Union Army in 1865, instead of addressing you as a free woman tonight, in all human probability I should be on some plantation in one of the Southern States of my country manacled body and soul in the fetters of slavery. . . . As I stand here tonight my happiness is two-fold, rejoicing as I do, not only in the emancipation of my race, but in the almost universal elevation of my sex.¹³

In the early phase of the struggle for woman's rights, the demand for suffrage was the critical issue. All else flowed from its success or failure. Black women made a unique and altogether decisive contribution to the battle for suffrage as a consequence of their crusade against lynching. For the extension of suffrage to women was intimately bound up with the preservation and implementation of Black male suffrage. Had Black men been totally disenfranchised and the Fifteenth Amendment repealed or rendered a nullity, it is doubtful that woman's suffrage could have been won. It is certain that it would not have been won when it was.

By the turn of the century there was serious debate in the country about repealing the Fifteenth Amendment. For example, Professor James E. Boyle of the University of Wisconsin published an article in May, 1904 titled, "Has the Fifteenth Amendment Been Justified?" in which he concluded it had not. Until the Negro people, Professor Boyle contended, learned to "build better and cleaner lives," and got "clear conceptions of right and wrong" the political franchise should

not be granted. "The question is now," he concluded, "what shall be done with that dead letter, the fifteenth amendment?"¹⁴

In order to prevent Black suffrage special laws were passed in virtually all the Southern states by 1910 to exclude the Black voter. In the aftermath of the Atlanta Massacre of 1906, for example, in which mobs of white hoodlums, aided by the police, invaded the Black community at will, killed twenty-five men, seriously wounded one hundred and fifty more, and forced more than a thousand men, women and children to flee the city, the Georgia legislature disenfranchised the entire Black population of the state in the spring of 1907.

A significant part of the campaign to disenfranchise Black men was also conducted through open terrorism. Thousands of Black people were lynched in the post-Reconstruction period, and the terror spread ever-northward as Black people fled the South. In 1929 the NAACP issued a study of lynching. In an admittedly conservative calculation based upon the killings acknowledged by white officials, the NAACP reported that between 1882 and 1927, four thousand nine hundred and forty-one persons were lynched in the United States. Another report, issued earlier, and based upon killings which white officials refused to acknowledge, placed the number of victims in excess of ten thousand.

Basic to these racist pogroms was the determination of Southern landholders and certain sections of northern industry and finance to strip Black men of the right to vote, thus to insure themselves hegemony over the political economy of the South. Ida B. Wells recounted the struggle of the Black man to exercise the franchise in her *Red Record* of 1895:

The government which had made the Negro a citizen found itself unable to protect him. It gave him the right to vote, but denied him the protection which should have maintained that right. Scourged from his home; hunted through the swamps; hung by midnight riders, and openly murdered in the light of day, the Negro clung to his right of franchise with a heroism which would have wrung admiration from the hearts of savages. He believed that in the small white ballot there was a subtle something which stood for manhood as well as citizenship, and thousands of brave Black men went to their graves exemplifying the one by dying for the other.¹⁵

The Anti-Lynching Crusade

It was Ida B. Wells who, almost single-handedly, launched the anti-lynching movement in the United States. Living in Memphis,

Tennessee, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, she owned and edited a newspaper, called (ironically!) the *Memphis Free Speech*. In 1892 three Black men, proprietors of a local grocery store, were lynched. Tom Moss, Calvin McDowell and Will Stewart had been close personal friends of Ida Wells.

Denouncing the lynchings in the *Free Speech*, Wells demanded that the murderers be brought to justice. Instead, the mob attacked her offices (luckily she was out-of-town on a business trip at the time) and burned them to the ground. Warned that she would be killed if she tried to return to Memphis, Wells took up residence in New York City and joined the staffs of the *New York Age* and the *Chicago Conservator*. Eventually she was to settle in Chicago.

Through her articles and public lectures she continued to disclose the facts about the Memphis lynchings and others that came to her attention. "Not content with merely telling her story in the Afro-American press, she sought to present her case before an international audience. By securing the support of . . . Frederick Douglass, she wrote and financed an anti-lynching pamphlet for distribution at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. And when [a] British editor . . . asked her to speak in England, Miss Wells departed . . . immediately."¹⁶

The British response to Wells' appeals for justice was overwhelmingly sympathetic. Considerable consternation soon arose among white officialdom in the United States when Wells spoke before members of Parliament and interviews with her appeared in the *London Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*. By the time she returned the international publicity had garnered additional support at home, and the anti-lynching movement now gathered considerable momentum. Black women by the thousands, in both the National Association of Colored Women and the NAACP, and elsewhere forged an impressive campaign.

While the movement did not succeed in winning passage of federal anti-lynching legislation until the 1930's it nevertheless forced a national debate on the issue, began to undermine the credibility of the racist rationales that Black men were rapists, killers and savages, and halted the drift toward nullification of the Fifteenth Amendment. These things were fundamental to the passage of woman's suffrage.

Indeed, as the issue of woman's suffrage was pressed to the fore, Southern advocates of racist subjugation perceived the dynamics of the situation clearly. Senator Lee S. Overman of North Carolina, addressing his colleagues six days after the submission of the Federal Woman's Suffrage Amendment to the States for ratification, con-

demned it as a reaffirmation of the Fifteenth Amendment "which we have always opposed in the South." Passage of woman's suffrage, he warned, would double the Black vote.

In the final months of struggle to secure ratification of the Federal Woman's Suffrage Amendment, Frederick Douglass' words uttered fifty years before, that woman's suffrage "depended upon the preliminary success of Negro suffrage," echoed with chilling accuracy. Those who sought to defeat woman's suffrage determined to unite Southern states in endorsing an opposition resolution. They required the endorsement of thirteen states to stop the Amendment. In the end ten states opposed ratification of woman's suffrage. They were: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, Louisiana and Virginia.

The last battle for ratification was fought out in the former slaveholding state of Tennessee which, according to the conservative estimates of the NAACP, had witnessed the lynching of two hundred and sixty-eight human beings since 1882. After a bitter struggle in which the enfranchisement and position of the Black people was the pivotal issue, the Tennessee legislature voted its approval of the Woman's Suffrage Amendment on August 18, 1920.

The greatest single weakness of the woman's suffrage movement was its all-too-frequent acquiescence in racism. Pressures were especially intense in Southern chapters of the National American Woman Suffrage Association where Black women were systematically excluded from membership, and leaders were prone to express considerable ambivalence on the issue of Black woman suffrage. But, even in the North Black women had to fight their way into women's conventions on more than one occasion. In June, 1900, for example, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin presented herself as a delegate from the Women's Era Club of Boston, and was refused admission to a National Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

White women were also extremely slow in responding to anti-lynching appeals from their Black sisters. As early as 1904 Mrs. Terrell pleaded with white women, especially Southern white women, to "arise in the purity and power of their womanhood to implore their fathers, husbands and sons no longer to stain their hands with the Black man's blood!"¹⁷ It was not until the 1917 Convention of the National Woman's Suffrage Association that an anti-lynching resolution was passed.

Acquiescence in racism remains a fundamental weakness of the women's movement today. Ignorance of the history of Black women, combined with fears of Black men founded in racist presumption,

and an unconscionable arrogance toward working-class people in general permeates all too much of the literature. This has already damaged the prospects for unity in the struggle against a common foe. It is hoped that this modest and preliminary effort may help to overcome some of those obstacles.

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BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN PITTMAN

A Man of Heroic Mold

"Nate Shaw" was born in 1885 in "Tukabahchee County" in east-central Alabama, and lived there until his death in 1973. A generation removed from chattel slavery, and illiterate for all his 88 years, he was nurtured and tempered by adversity. He never voted and "never had a nickel in the bank." He was beset by "all God's dangers": a childhood of material and cultural deprivation; the death of his mother before he was nine; the cruelties of his cowed and craven father; brutal exploitation and incessant hounding by thieving employers and landlords; a near-fatal encounter with sheriff's deputies; 12 years of imprisonment; the disapproval of his neighbors and—perhaps the most bitter of all—the disparagement and censure of his children. In a country whose rulers unceasingly proclaim their concern for "national security," Nate Shaw never experienced security in his life.

Nevertheless, he remained steadfast to principles he considered right. Though conscious of his total lack of legal protection, he never grovelled before his oppressors. When compliance might have eased his burdens, he never betrayed a fellow-Black or the Alabama Sharecroppers Union in which he held a fleeting membership. He was a gentle and considerate husband, a generous and devoted father and family provider, a faithful and reliable friend, and a man for whom labor was a vital necessity, and not solely for a livelihood, but as a source of self-knowledge and gratification. He was keen in observation and cautious in judgment. By assimilating his experience, he arrived at truths which eluded most of the best and brightest minds of his contemporaries. Though bereft after prison of personal possessions, he retained his self-respect. And near the close of his life he was able to say, "There ain't no get-back in me as far as I can reach my arm."

Thanks to Nate Shaw's remarkable memory and storytelling gift, he has left the present and future generations a record of his experience. The anatomy of the social system in which he lived and its consequences for the people enmeshed in its coils are dominant themes of Theodore Rosengarten's *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (Alfred A. Knopf Inc., New York, 1974, \$12.50). More-

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over, the autobiography offers other themes of general historical and philosophical import, and themes of special relevance for the people's struggles today and tomorrow. However, the totality of his experience may be summarized as another example of the basic stuff and heroic mold of individuals whose struggles against a rapacious and dehumanizing social system, though failing to achieve their own full emancipation, help to create a better world for humankind. It is another damning indictment of the calamitous impact of racism, and of the social system of which it is an integral, organic part, on the conditions and ways of life of all the people of the United States of America.

The indictment is authentic. Nate Shaw was a real person and Tukabahchee County is a real place, although both names are fictitious. This is explained by Theodore Rosengarten, the young white student who, in the course of 31 visits during 1971, recorded Nate Shaw's life story on 120 hours of tape, supplemented it with accounts by his children, and edited the narrative to eliminate repetitions and provide a chronological sequence.

Rosengarten's meeting with Nate Shaw in 1969 while engaged in a study of the long defunct Sharecroppers Union; his recognition that Shaw, a surviving member of the union, possessed information not only about the union but about the lives and times of three generations of Alabama's Black farmers; and the confidence which his sympathetic attitude and sensitive questions inspired in Shaw—these factors contributed to the richness and concreteness of the autobiography's details. However, says Rosengarten in his informative preface, "as a measure of protection and privacy, I have had to change the names of all the people and most of the places in the narrative." The necessity for such protection nowadays is an illuminating commentary on the absence of democracy and security in the Alabama governed by George Wallace and his patrons 200 years after the Declaration of Independence, 113 years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

Nate Shaw's story is an essential part of the story of Alabama through the years of his lifetime. But it is much more than that. It is the story of the evolution of capitalism in the United States from its premonopoly state to monopoly capitalism, or imperialism, and to state-monopoly capitalism. It is the story of capitalist development in agriculture. It is the story of the relationship of capitalism and racism through these several stages. It relates the effort of the Communist Party to implement its program of struggle against racism in Alabama's heartland of racism. It is an important part of the story of the Afro-American people's struggles to translate into reality the

promises of the Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Reconstruction Amendments to the Constitution, and all the subsequent statutes, legislation and court decisions affirming their full citizenship.

Therein lies the autobiography's indisputable authenticity. For although Nate Shaw's distinctive individuality was the product of the interaction of his personal and social characteristics with his environment, both his social characteristics and the principal features of his socio-political environment were common to the great majority of his fellow-Blacks throughout the period of his life. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s won the formal abolition of the old jim-crow institutions, but the realization in practice of this victory remains on the agenda of struggles today.

Rise and Decline of the Black Farmer

Shaw was a cotton farmer, living, as he says, about 16 miles from Tuskegee and Tuskegee Institute, which he frequently visited. When Shaw was 15 years old, six years after his father had put him to plowing, Afro-Americans operated 746,715 farms in the United States, 49.1 per cent of which—accounting for 70.5 per cent of all Black farmers—obtained their principal income from cotton. Of the total, 732,362 were in the South, of which 94,069 were in Alabama. Only 5 per cent of the 746,715 farms were operated by owners; 6.7 per cent were operated by part owners, 2.8 per cent by owners and tenants, 2.9 per cent by managers, 36.8 per cent by cash tenants, and 22.3 per cent by share tenants, or sharecroppers.

Says Professor Walter W. Jennings: "The average size of the farms operated by Negroes was 55.9 acres, the value of the products of the farm was about \$356, and the value of the farm property about \$732. On the whole, then, the farms operated by the Negroes were less valuable and less productive than those operated by whites, but the advance made during the period was little short of marvelous when we consider the handicaps encountered and the fact that the Negroes had been out of bondage for less than 40 years." (*A History of Economic Progress in the United States*, Thomas W. Crowell Co., New York, 1926, pp. 412-413.) On June 1, 1900, says Professor Jennings, the value of the farm property operated by Afro-Americans was \$546,723,508, "of which about two-thirds represented the land and improvements, a sixth the live stock, over an eighth the buildings, and the balance, implements and machinery."

Commenting later on this theme, Professor Harold Underwood Faulkner noted that although thousands of poor whites as well as Blacks were victims of the sharecropping system, Blacks "during

recent decades" had shown greater ability to surmount this status, with nearly 200,000 owning their own farms, aggregating 20,000,000 acres and valued at more than \$500 million. (*American Economic History*, Harper & Brothers, New York, Eighth Edition, 1960, p. 387.)

However, in 1969, approximately seven decades later, there were only 104,000 Black-operated farms in the United States, of which 63,000 or 60.6 per cent were fully owned, 19,000 or 18.3 per cent were partly owned, and 21,000 or 20.2 per cent were tenant and sharecropper farms. In Alabama, Black-operated farms peaked in 1920 at 95,200, but by 1959 had declined to 29,206.

In his article critically analyzing the 1969 Census of Agriculture (*Political Affairs*, March 1975), Erik Bert emphasizes the consequences for Afro-American farm operators of the "extraordinary changes which have taken place in U.S. agriculture in the past two decades." Between 1940 and 1969, Bert noted, "3,372,167 farms, more than one-half (52 per cent) of all farms existing in 1940, were wiped out, an erasure unparalleled in the history of self-employed capitalist agriculture." Moreover, says Bert, the reduction of Black operators in the South from 28 per cent of all operators in 1920 to seven per cent of the total by 1969—amounting to the elimination of nine-tenths of all Black operators in the South between 1920 and 1969—discloses "the much more drastic elimination of Blacks than whites, proportionately, in the South, and than all farmers nationally." And in the single half-decade between 1964 and 1969, he adds, "more than one-half of the Black farmers in the South were exterminated, a degree of non-military elimination probably without historic precedent."

Thus, Nate Shaw's life spanned the periods of both the highest and lowest levels of Afro-American farm operation. Yet, for reasons he describes, he never managed to acquire full ownership of a farm. Although one of his ten children, the only one still farming in 1969, belonged with his 60 acres among the 67,969 Black full and part farm owners in the South, Nate Shaw remained throughout his life one of the South's Black tenants and sharecroppers whose number, owing to the greater insecurity of tenancy and sharecropping relative to ownership, had dwindled to 17,282 by 1969. The statistics of Black farmers are the skeletal framework of the record of those years; Shaw's account provides its flesh and blood.

The Verification of Lenin's Analysis

Like that of millions of his Black and white fellow-farmers, Nate Shaw's course had been set against the powerful current of the objective forces of capitalist development in agriculture. "The fundamental

and principal trend of capitalism is the displacement of small-scale by large-scale production, both in industry and in agriculture," wrote V. I. Lenin in 1915. ("New Data on the Laws Governing the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture," in *Lenin on the United States*, International Publishers, New York, 1970, p. 172.) In Part One of this study, "Capitalism and Agriculture in the United States of America," Lenin dissected and elaborated the processes of expropriating small farmers as disclosed in the 1900 and 1910 U.S. Censuses, and in the *Statistical Abstract of the United States for 1911*. He noted that "the census-takers seem to have no inkling of the mass of misery, oppression and ruin concealed behind these figures." (*Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.) Taking into account the rapidly growing concentration of production, centralization of ownership, and the technological advances in the period of developing U.S. monopoly capitalism, Lenin pointed out that "those who control the banks *directly* control one-third of America's farms, and indirectly dominate the lot" (*Ibid.*, p. 203), and that "the expropriation of small-scale agriculture is advancing." (*Ibid.*, p. 205.) Thus, he foresaw the decline of U.S. farms from their peak of 6,453,991 in 1920 to the 2,730,250 recorded in 1969, the smallest number for any census in a century.

Farm "tenancy," the catch-all term with which the census-takers conceal the extent of sharecropping, held a special interest for Lenin. He noted that "the typical white farmer in America is an owner, the typical Negro farmer is a tenant. . . . These are not even tenants in the European, civilized, modern-capitalist sense of the word. They are chiefly semi-feudal or—which is the same thing in economic terms—semi-slave *sharecroppers*. . . . In 1910, free, republican-democratic America had 1,500,000 sharecroppers, of whom *more than 1,000,000 were Negroes*. . . . The sharecropping area, both in America and in Russia, is the most stagnant area, where the masses are subjected to the greatest degradation and oppression. . . . For the 'emancipated' Negroes, the American South is a kind of prison, where they are hemmed in, isolated and deprived of fresh air." (*Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.)

Lenin's analysis has since been verified by the course of U.S. socio-economic development, as noted by both Marxist and bourgeois scholars. Among the latter, Jennings reported that sharecropping "soon resulted in a system of "peonage," by means of which "especially the Negroes were ground down by the unscrupulous creditors." (*Op. cit.*, p. 412.) And Faulkner says, "While it might be an overstatement to say that slavery in the South was followed by a period of serfdom in which the Negro was held in bondage by being constantly in debt to the landowner or cotton factor, it would not be far from the truth." (*Op. cit.*, p. 387.)

In the two decades, 1950-1969, during the present state-monopoly stage of capitalist development, 1,094,532 tenant farms, 75 per cent of all those existing in 1950, were wiped out, their proportion to all farms declining from 26.9 to 12.9 per cent. The disproportionate elimination of Afro-American sharecroppers in 1910 was noted by Lenin, to only 16 per cent in 1964, and in the five-year period of 1964-1969, there was a further massive elimination of about 65,000 non-white tenants, that is, more than three-fourths of the 1964 number.

The Ruinous Role of Racism

What accounts for the disproportionate elimination of Afro-Americans in U.S. agriculture, especially in the South? Obviously it cannot be explained solely as a consequence of the concentration of production and the relatively weak and unstable status of sharecropping. The answer lies in the dominant feature of the social relations stemming from the production relations of chattel slavery, remnants of which survive to this day. This feature is racism.

It should be recalled that Nate Shaw was born in a time of accelerating class struggles, a time when U.S. monopoly capital commenced the extension of the doctrine of "Manifest Destiny" to Asia as well as Latin America. This was the period of the U.S. imperialist seizure of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines, its establishment of a protectorate over Cuba, and its armed intervention against the Boxer rebels in China. It was also a period of the birth of the American Federation of Labor, of the march on Washington of Coxey's Army of 20,000 unemployed workers, of Haymarket and the Homestead and Pullman strikes, of the founding of the Socialist Party, and of the great Populist upsurge and third-party movement of which one of the mass bases was the more than one million Afro-Americans, including 300,000 women, organized in the Colored Farmers' Alliance.

Readers of Shaw's autobiography are not told if Shaw was aware of these events during the first 15 years of his life, or if he ever became aware of them. It is not clear if Rosengarten's questions referred to them. Most probably Shaw was never aware of them, for he says, "From my boy days comin along, ever since I been in God's world, I've never had no rights . . . been cut out of education, book learning, been deprived of that." (P. 298.) And again: "My boyhood days was my hidin place. I didn't have no right to no education whatever. I was handicapped and handicapped like a dog. When I was deprived of book learning, right there they had me dead by the throat. I was deaf and dumb, didn't know nothin and weren't given no chance to my rights enough to come into the knowledge of what was right and what was wrong." (P. 542.)

Nate Shaw's deprivation of education was not the exception but the rule. As an example of "the most shameless and despicable oppression of the Negroes," Lenin noted that "while the proportion of illiterates in 1900 among the white population of the U.S.A. of ten years and over was 6.2 per cent, among the Negroes it was as high as 44.5 per cent! . . . One can easily imagine the complex of legal and social relationships that corresponds to this disgraceful fact from the sphere of popular literacy." (*Op. cit.*, p. 123.) Included in this complex of relationships were not only the lack of education but also the *miseducation* of the Southern masses, the systematic inculcation of racist ideology, the isolation and cultural starvation of both the urban ghettos and the rural Black settlements.

It seems highly improbable, then, that Shaw perceived the causal connection between U.S. imperialism's resort to aggression abroad and greater reaction at home and the increasingly brutal circumstances of his life. Shaw had no way of knowing that the southern states adopted new constitutions disfranchising Blacks in the late 1880s and early 1900s, that 1,955 lynchings of Blacks were recorded from 1889 through 1901, which were 42 per cent of all recorded lynchings from 1882 through 1947. He was unable to see, as Herbert Aptheker observed in citing the figures above, that the relationship between the appearance of U.S. imperialism and racist oppression "is not simply one of time; it is one of cause and effect," because U.S. imperialism "breeds and needs white chauvinism," which is "one of its most potent weapons for maintaining imperialism." ("American Imperialism and White Chauvinism," in *Toward Negro Freedom*, New Century Publishers, New York, 1955, pp. 88-95.) The terrorist suppression of the Black masses went hand in hand with the heavy increase of monopoly capital's investments in the South, and with the use of hired thugs and troops to beat back the working class in all parts of the country.

Yet, Shaw's memory recorded the effects of the onslaught of monopoly capital on his own life and that of his relatives, friends and neighbors. He witnessed the process of disfranchisement and explains why he never voted when it was possible to vote. He describes the numerous ways in which Blacks were cheated and robbed, how they were stripped of control over their own product, eliminated from selling their own vegetables and fruit, prevented from learning the use of machines and from obtaining government assistance, and kept in a state of lifelong impoverishment. ". . . I never did have nothin but some personal property. I aint been able to save a penny," says Shaw (p. 548), stating a fact of life for millions of his fellow toilers, Black and white. He recalled what he had learned about slavery, and his statement of what happened to Afro-American women

during and after slavery is another account of their rape and humiliation which racist ideologues persist in attempting to cover up.

It would be wrong to think that Shaw enjoyed no blessings. He seems never to have been ill, though at one time he suffered from back strain and, as age advanced, from increasing weakness. Hannah, his wife for 44 years until her death in 1950, was literate and a reliable helpmate in his dealings with greedy landlords and storekeepers, as well as in raising their family and safeguarding their possessions. From his labors, whether in farming, hauling, building, repairing, or making baskets and chair-bottoms, Shaw derived genuine pleasure and pride in accomplishment. And his brief experience as a member of the Sharecroppers Union, though it cost him 12 years in prison and almost cost him his life, opened for his keen intelligence a window on the world from which he saw the vindication of his determination to fight for the fruits of his labor and the eventual emancipation of his fellow Blacks.

When in 1931 in a nearby town a Black farmer was killed, the county sheriff wounded and a number of Black farmers arrested, Shaw says he "looked deep in that thing" and recognized that something unusual was going on. "I heard about it being a organization for the poor class of people—that's just what I wanted to get into, too. . . ." (P. 296.) He tells how and why he joined the union, how the meetings were held and how the literature was put out, the ever-present menace of stoolpigeons, and the union's objectives: "First thing the organization wanted for the colored people was the privilege to have a organization." (P. 298.) "Well, we was taught at our meeting that when trouble comes, stand up for one another." (P. 304.) "The way I caught it and the way I can explain it according to my best ideas, this here organization was working to bring us out of bad places where we stood at that time and been standing since the colored people has remembrance." (Pp. 303-304.)

Then, in December 1932, a group of sheriff's deputies attempted to dispossess Shaw's Black neighbor. Knowing he was next on their list, Shaw defended his neighbor, and when shot by one of the deputies, he emptied his gun at the attacker. That was the incident for which he was tried and sentenced, but his union membership was the real "crime." At his trial Shaw was defended by an attorney of the International Labor Defense (ILD). The prosecutor was the infamous racist politician, Thomas Heflin, a bigot of the Wallace-Eastland stripe. Nate Shaw's conviction and imprisonment at the age of 47, in the prime of his life, was but a single incident in the wave of terror unleashed in 1931 and maintained for nearly a decade by Alabama's rulers to smash the Sharecroppers Union.

In an appendix to the autobiography, Rosengarten gives a brief history of the Sharecroppers Union, acknowledging the Communist Party's role in its genesis and development, and citing some of its achievements. However, the sketchiness of his account underscores the need for a more detailed and thorough treatment by Party historians of the CPUSA's significant contributions to the emancipation of the Southern people in that period. The Party's efforts in rural Alabama were an outgrowth of the program adopted by its 1922 National Convention, which called for full equality for Afro-Americans in every sphere and elaborated measures to attain it. Further developed in 1930, these measures included organization of Southern toilers, Black and white, in industry and agriculture; defense of victims of racist oppression such as the nine Scottsboro youth, Angelo Herndon and Nate Shaw; and the formation of such organizations for struggle as the Southern Negro Youth Congress. Shaw's recollections bring into focus the burning need today for the organization of Southern labor, particularly in the states with so-called "right-to-work" laws, where racism is the major factor in the lower wages and inferior conditions of work imposed on white as well as Black workers.

A Philosophy of Life and Struggle

Jail and prison were schools for Nate Shaw. He reflected much on his experience. Concerning a letter from Tom Mooney, who was also framed and imprisoned for his union activities, he said: "I figured it like this: the workers of this organization knowed which ones was in prison and them that could read and write, they tried to show their feelings to the others. I sure taken him to be a friend to me." (P. 335.) He was grateful to the ILD for its watch over his safety in prison, and for sending money to his wife and family every month during his 12-year term. But in the 29 years of his life after leaving prison at the age of 59, he was never able to make up the time and energy lost. "I has one time in life, before I went to prison, I was doing good for myself; part of my labor being taken but I was climbin up in the world despite it, accumulatin personal property. But its been a dead drag for me ever since I been put in prison and come out." (Pp. 532-533.) He was 79 before he received help from the government—\$29 a month at the beginning, and later \$103 a month, with Medicare benefits which he didn't receive because "I aint been sick a minute since I went in and been drawing that relief."

Near the end of his narrative, Nate Shaw explains his philosophy of life. He tells why he never left the South like millions of others.

"I was born and raised here and I have sowed my labor into the earth and lived to reap only a part of it, not all that was mine by human right. . . . I stays on if it gives em satisfaction for me to leave and I stays on because it's mine." (P. 500.) He explains how the rich get to be rich—by "takin the other fellow's labor." (P. 544.) He says, "I feel my best sympathy and hold my best judgment for the poor Negro of my kind and the poor white man." (P. 544.) He observed the class oppression of the poor whites by the rich, and the identity of interests of the Black and white toilers. ". . . these big dudes of the white race, they've never showed no care and respect for the poor white man. . . . The poor white man and the poor Black man is sittin in the same saddle today. . . ." (P. 489.) And he foresees the "overturning" of "this southern way of life." "Who's to do it? It's the best people of the United States to do it, in defense of the uneducated, unknowledged ones that's livin here in this country. They goin to win; They goin to win." (P. 551.)

In 1970, fewer than four million Afro-Americans remained in the rural South. These were about one-third of the 12 million Blacks in the South, who were a little more than one-fifth of the total Southern population and about one-half of the total U.S. Black population. Industrialization and class and national struggles have produced significant changes. The decisive struggles of the Afro-American working people—96 per cent of all employed Blacks are wage and salary workers—are waged nowadays in the urban centers of industry and commerce. Alabama has become a part of the country's industrial heartland, and a Black steel worker now sits in the state legislature.

Yet, remnants of the slave system's relations of production, which are the foundations of other social relations, persist in the South, and are deeply embedded in the farming communities where Nate Shaw lived. Moreover, these social relations have now infected the entire country. A single statistic, the differential between the incomes of Black and white families, is sufficient to show their survival and continued virulence. That statistic encompasses all the inequalities in employment, housing, health and life expectancy, education, representation in government, and opportunities for cultural enrichment—all the inequalities that confront the present generations of Afro-Americans.

Today the elimination of these survivals of slavery is imperatively necessary for defense of the livelihood and liberties of working people of all colors and nationalities in the United States. The unity-in-struggle of Blacks and whites against the financial oligarchy and monopolies that maintain these survivals, a unity made firm by the

white workers' realization that their vital self-interests are also harmed by racism, can free the country from the grip of these dead hands of a barbarous past. Nate Shaw's autobiography is highly relevant for this struggle for the future of the United States. It discloses the characteristic features of these survivals at their point of origin, and the exemplary human qualities required to uproot and destroy them.

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The Black Worker and Organized Labor

As with all social phenomena, the treatment of the United States Bicentennial is subject to the influence of the class struggle. In fact, the battle of ideas over a correct interpretation of the Bicentennial can be expected to permeate all facets of U.S. life. From a working-class viewpoint the "Spirit of '76" means utilizing the working-class, anti-racist, democratic trend in U.S. history to help intensify the struggle against today's counterpart of King George III and the colonial lords and slavemakers of that day—the Ford Administration and the giant monopoly corporations it represents.

For instance, the militant traditions in the trade union movement, especially the lessons of the CIO organizing drive in relation to Black-white unity, can be a dynamic factor in the contract negotiations which come up this year for nearly six million workers, as well as in other economic struggles. The Black freedom movement supported by its white allies, spanning 3½ centuries, gives great impetus to the continuing struggle for full equality. And needless to say, the ideological struggle around the Bicentennial will be an important element influencing all candidacies in the 1976 elections.

The monopoly bourgeoisie has been preparing its own "celebration" of the Bicentennial for some time. Its interpretation flows from its hard-line, no-concession approach to the politico-economic crisis. The monopolists will attempt to foist racist, anti-Communist, anti-Soviet conclusions on the people and to use the Bicentennial as part of an over-all shift to the Right. Hence to bring forward the working-class, anti-monopoly, anti-imperialist, democratic trend in U.S. history and to make this interpretation an active factor in all struggles is an urgent task for progressives.

A recent book by Philip S. Foner* makes a remarkable contribution to this endeavor. Although Foner perhaps did not have the Bicentennial in mind his book, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker*, should be widely used in the labor, Black liberation, youth and other progressive movements as a basic educational text throughout 1976 and beyond.

More than one hundred years ago, Karl Marx gave expression to what might be called the general law of social struggle in the United States. "Labor in the white skin cannot be free as long as labor in the black is branded," he wrote. Foner's book is a chronology of

* Philip S. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1978*, Praeger, New York, 1973, \$10.00.

both positive and negative examples verifying this truth. On the basis of an enormous amount of research he is able to show how racist practices in the trade union movement helped to create a privileged stratum among white labor at the expense of Black workers, as well as of the working class as a whole.

From its very beginning the penetration of this ruling-class ideology of racism cropped the ears of the trade union movement and, with few exceptions, transformed labor's leadership, from Powderly to Meany, into watchdogs for the interests of monopoly within the working-class movement.

The Racist Pattern

After the Civil War, when trade unionism was taking hold as a national movement, a racist pattern and structure developed within the labor movement which greatly strengthened the ability of the ruling class to divide workers. The Jim Crow policy of segregated unions not only weakened but in many cases broke the back of unionism. Foner points out that "the obstacle to cooperation of black and white labor movements was basically economic and that cooperation was not possible so long as white trade unions refused to remove the economic barriers against black workers" (p. 41).

However, white workers by and large were unresponsive to this challenge, mainly because the leaders of the National Labor Union and of the Knights of Labor which followed it (not unlike the AFL-CIO leadership today) failed to comprehend, and even if they did, opposed any expression of Black-white unity beyond expedient convention resolutions.

Foner points out that many Black leaders understood that union organization was necessary if the racist offensive of that day was to be halted—not separate unions but a unified Black-white labor movement. "Our object," said Jeremiah Grandison, a Black labor leader from Pittsburgh, in 1881, "is to federate the whole laboring element of America." (P. 64.)

Sections of white labor understood that their interests lay in labor solidarity. C. C. Houston, editor of the *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, wrote that "the white man, in order to retain his wages and in the hope of increasing his wage scale, has not only to recognize but to assist the black man. . . ." (P. 86.) However, the predecessors of today's class collaborationists, who were in command of the labor movement, turned their backs on the Black workers. In fact, they were among the most aggressive proponents of Jim Crow and the *status quo* for labor as a whole.

Thus "blacks were reduced to peonage, powerless to resist com-

plete domination . . . the rise of craft unionism with its apprenticeship system was effectively barring the Negro from the more remunerative tasks. . . . Negro labor had no reliable allies in its efforts to retard, much less reverse, the worsening of the black's economic conditions." (P. 45.)

The craft union approach was and remains inextricably tied to exclusionary racist policies against Black and other oppressed national minorities, as well as exclusionary policies against women workers. Then, as it does today, it formed the backbone of reactionary and racist influences in the trade union movement, from Gompers to Meany. Jim Crow policies led to the demise of the Knights of Labor. "At the end it became an apologist for white supremacy," Foner says (p. 62).

Neither did the American Federation of Labor (founded in 1881) offer any help to Black workers. Despite the grave threat posed by the emergence of monopolized industry not only to Black workers but to the whole of organized labor, the AFL leadership refused to make common cause with Black labor or to break with craft unionism.

Samuel Gompers, after a brief flirtation with pronouncements about racial equality, became an open supporter of segregated locals. And when the depression of 1893 hit, he completely adopted the position of white skilled trades leaders that competition between Black and white workers could be eliminated only by "excluding Blacks from their unions and the labor market." This is a parallel to George Meany's demand to "preserve the seniority system as it is."

Blacks were ousted from skilled occupations in which they had worked since slavery. Consequently, until World War I Black people remained overwhelmingly concentrated in agriculture and in personal and domestic service. The AFL, according to Foner, could claim only 3.6 per cent Blacks out of a membership of 1,526,000. The policy of limiting union organization to skilled craft workers also had the effect of "excluding women and foreign-born workers, the vast majority of whom were unskilled," as well as Black workers (p. 82). Small wonder it was called the "business organization of skilled mechanics."

The rise of the Black industrial proletariat, beginning with World War I and accelerating during World War II, transformed Blacks from a predominantly rural people into one of the most proletarianized and urbanized peoples in the world. The number of Black workers in the mass production industries nearly doubled between 1910 and 1920, especially in iron and steel, auto, mining, shipbuilding and meat packing.

This development held profound implications for organized labor. Industrial organization, the need for Black-white unity and the self-interests of white workers in fighting for unionism became practical questions for millions of workers. But the AFL did nothing.

A sharp decline in industrial production and a racist offensive followed the end of World War I. Black industrial workers had their first encounter with "last hired, first fired." Massive unemployment and widespread discrimination on the one hand, and the gross opportunism of the labor leadership and influence of white supremacy among white workers on the other, forced a number of Blacks into strikebreaking.

That strikebreaking was a mass phenomenon among Black workers is a notion widely held by many historians including some on the Left. Foner makes a very important contribution in exploding this chauvinist myth. He shows that strikebreaking by Blacks, in the main, *resulted* from racist practices by white trade unionists, also that Black strikebreaking, while an important factor in certain key struggles, did not compare either in numbers or frequency to strikebreaking by white workers. In fact, during the CIO organizing drive, especially in steel and auto (that is, where the white workers took an advanced position in the fight against racism), Black workers and the Black community as a whole not only militantly supported unionism but ostracized Black strikebreaking and actively organized to prevent unemployed Black youth from being used as scabs.

The IWW and the CIO

In the history of U.S. trade unions only three movements have come close to measuring up to organized labor's responsibility in the fight against racism. Interestingly, all have been based on industrial unionism. One was the Industrial Workers of the World, the second was the Committee for Industrial Organization, and the third, today's rank-and-file movement, I will come to later.

The IWW introduced the principle of industrial organization to masses of workers. The "Wobblies" also made Black-white working-class unity a mass issue. They stand out as the only organization in U.S. history never to have chartered a single segregated local. However, the predominance of anarchist-syndicalist ideas led the IWW into a sectarian corner. In their opposition to political action they failed to recognize that the denial of political rights was a cornerstone of the apartheid-like system imposed on Blacks. While the IWW enjoyed tremendous support among Black masses its inability to withstand the combined attacks of the AFL and the government, along with its anarcho-syndicalism, prevented it from offering

a practical solution to the Black workers.

Where the IWW failed the CIO succeeded enormously. It had one important advantage over both the IWW and the AFL: the organized presence and leadership of Communists. The Communist Party elevated the questions of Black-white unity and Black equality to the level of principle. Clearly understanding the line of march, Communists were fundamental in building Left-Center unity among the millions of unorganized workers in basic industry. They understood that the Black workers were an indispensable, strategic sector of the labor force in basic industry without whose inclusion industrial organization was impossible, and that Black liberation is a special question.

The Communist Party also led the fight for an alliance between labor and the Black liberation movement. This alliance, expressed particularly in the solidarity between the National Negro Congress and the CIO, represents an outstanding chapter in U.S. history and a most significant lesson for the Bicentennial with respect to the necessity of Black-white unity.

It is no accident that in the period from the late thirties through World War II, Black people scored their greatest economic advance in this nation's history. Foner states that "in four years, organized labor achieved more for Black workers—with the participation of the Black workers themselves—than it had in almost a century of previous existence" (p. 232). The CIO drives brought higher incomes, better working conditions and some measure of job security for hundreds of thousands of Black workers.

Thus, with all its shortcomings—notably its failure to break down discrimination in promotion within industry and to deal significantly with unemployment among Blacks—"the CIO was unquestionably the most important single factor since the Civil War in the black workers' struggle for equality" (p. 237).

Within this process, Foner singles out the contribution of Black and white Communists in forging the alliance of the Black freedom movement and organized labor "without which many of the basic industries, especially the steel, auto and maritime industries, could never have been successfully organized" (p. 275).

The young generation of today, especially young workers who are subjected to inhuman speedup and the callous racism of the bosses or are thrown out into the streets, should learn well the relationship between class-struggle trade unionism, Black-white unity and the role of Communists and other Left forces. Foner shows that a specific purpose of the McCarthyite witch-hunts was to eliminate militant unionism and to destroy the Black-labor alliance. The starting point

was anti-Communism. As Foner says, "the purpose of Red-baiting attacks on the CIO was to destroy the 'center-left' coalitions, which were achieving the organization of the unorganized" (p. 276)—which was, it should be added, the precondition for uniting the working class, building the people's unity against racism, economic crisis and the fascist danger.

The class-collaborationist trend in the U.S. labor movement opened one of its most disgraceful chapters with its complicity in the cold-war offensive. Philip Murray and other Right-wing CIO leaders, as well as the Right-wing top AFL leaders, appealed to the monopolists and the government for help against the Communists. In 1949 the Left-led unions were expelled from the CIO, unions which were the "pacesetters in terms of wage scales and conditions won and in terms of Black equality" (p. 283).

And so by 1960 "there was no longer any organization in existence dedicated specifically to defending black workers and promoting their rights, even though black labor was facing increased discrimination in industry and in the labor movement" (p. 293). Over the next twenty-odd years no "official" labor body emerged to resume the brilliant legacy of the CIO during its organizing drives.

A number of Black labor formations, ranging from the National Negro Labor Council to the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, together with numerous Black caucuses in unions or shops, constituted the forward-thinking sectors which compelled sections of organized labor to take up, even if in a limited way, the special demands of Black workers.

Black-Labor Alliance

One of the most important contributions of the book lies in its treatment of the Black-labor alliance. Throughout the history of the U.S. labor movement the battle between class-collaboration and class-struggle trade unionism has profoundly affected the character of this alliance. There is also an interconnection with the class and ideological struggles going on in the Black liberation movement. One sees that from Frederick Douglass to W. E. B. Du Bois, from Paul Robeson to Martin Luther King Jr., there has always been a close allegiance to the labor movement. All insisted on a critical unity based on a community of interests. Du Bois, for instance, emphasized that "Negroes should work unceasingly to build black-white unity in the labor movement, but at the same time they should challenge and unrelentingly attack segregation and discrimination in the trade unions."

The reader will see that not only these outstanding Black leaders

but especially thousands of Black workers in industry put that principle into practice—men and women like Isaac Meyers, James H. Harris, Ben Fletcher, James W. Ford, Nelson Davis, Ben Carreathers, Velma Hopkins, Miranda Smith, Cleveland Robinson, Coleman Young, Ewart Guinier and countless others.

It also becomes clear that the struggle for the alliance of the Black liberation movement with the working class shows two tendencies. On the one hand, there is the effort to give it a more or less conscious working-class content, while on the other hand there is the tendency to make it subservient to the so-called liberal-labor alliance; that is, to put it under the domination of liberal bourgeois elements (especially in the Democratic Party) and class-collaborationist (particularly Right social democratic) forces.

The history of A. Philip Randolph is interesting in this respect. On the whole, his is a career of deserting the path of militant action for essentially unprincipled compromise at the decisive moments. In view of more than fifty years of such activity it is not surprising that Randolph, his institute and his protege, Bayard Rustin, are leading Right forces, advocates of Black people's reliance on the worst class collaborators in the labor movement and of trailing the Democratic Party and with Zionist, anti-Soviet, anti-Communist and anti-detente circles.

One is inspired on the other hand by the depth of unity between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the progressive sectors of the labor movement which Foner reveals. It is important to note that Dr. King became more and more allied with the rank and file-inclined unions and labor formations such as Local 1199 and the Afro-American Labor Council under the leadership of Cleveland Robinson. About the latter organization Dr. King said that it was "the embodiment of two great traditions in our nation's history: the best tradition of the organized labor movement and the finest tradition of the Negro Freedom Movement" (p. 377). To Dr. King the main purpose of the Poor People's Campaign was precisely "to unite black masses and organized labor in a campaign to help solve deteriorating economic and social conditions of the Negro community . . . heavily burdened with both unemployment and underemployment, flagrant job discrimination, and the injustices of unequal educational opportunity" (p. 377).

Among the weaknesses in the book—and there are several in my opinion—are insufficient treatment of the achievements of Black-white unity in concrete terms; a tendency to understate the interpenetration of racism and anti-Communism, especially in relation to the AFL-CIO period and what Foner treats as the "Negro-Labor

Alliance 1960-1968"; and lack of emphasis on the role of present-day rank-and-file movements.

I will deal only with what seems to me the key weakness. Foner's concluding chapter leaves matters in the hands of court decisions, the government bureaucracy and the remnants of the "Negro-Labor Alliance" (liberal, Right social-democratic, and class-collaborationist in my opinion), with the exception of a brief mention of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. With respect to the rank-and-file upsurge, he deals mainly with the League of Black Revolutionary Workers while barely mentioning the Miners for Democracy movement within the United Mine Workers.

Moreover Foner completely overlooks the establishment of the National Coordinating Committee for Trade Union Action and Democracy in 1970, which in new conditions combines some features of the TUEL and TUUL that preceded the CIO. In so doing, he fails to give attention to a potential power within the labor movement that further develops the best principles of the CIO and whose influence objectively surpasses all other progressive trends. This in my opinion is untenable.

Nevertheless, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker* is a very important work. One of its most significant features is that Foner brings forward many stalwarts of labor solidarity, Black and white. The reader finds that the exploiting classes first built a structure of segregation and devoted full attention to propagandizing racist ideology precisely to destroy the united struggles of Black slaves and white indentured servants, struggles which were frequent during the colonial period.

More important is the attention Foner gives to the victorious struggles, especially in the South, which Black-white unity was able to achieve even during the most intensive racist pressures. These workers, Black and white, offer an inspiration and a challenge to the labor movement today. Foner shows that Southern Black workers were "often among the most militant in the region" (p. 89). He shows also that white workers in a number of struggles, resisting heavy pressures from the employers, the government, the church and the news media, maintained firm unity with the Black workers.

Foner describes the New Orleans strike of 1906, for example, as "one of the most stirring manifestations of black-white labor solidarity in American history. Similar statements can be made about struggles in maritime, steel, lumber, textile and mining, especially in the South, as well as about the struggles in auto, electrical and meat packing during the CIO organizing drives.

Foner's book deserves the widest possible audience.

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