

A MARXIST NEWSLETTER

Motion Forward Motion Forward Motion

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Dear friends,

Ours is a society that likes to talk about new generations of one sort or another. But how long is a generation? When it begins or ends, who makes it up, and how much it is a matter of politics and culture and not just demographics—these are hard to define.

Yet sometimes an era is unmistakably marked as one of generational passage. Twenty years ago February 23rd, Malcolm X was assassinated, forever, stamping the month, Black History Month, with a reminder of the radical phase of struggle he helped initiate. Malcolm X came to symbolize the spirit and determination of a new Afro-American generation.

How much the sixties was an era of generational transition can be measured by the intensity of the Black movement's concern for education in those years. Educational reform has been central to Black struggle at least since the Civil War, but the sixties and early seventies was a perhaps unparalleled challenge to white public and higher education. The fight for desegregation, community control and Black Studies was a fight for a new generation of leadership.

Contrast this intensity with today's preoccupation with baby-boom vs post-baby boom, post-Vietnam and so many other generations. With the American empire beset on a number of fronts, its commentators anxiously search the contemporary scene for signs of generational transition to new leadership. Politicians appeal to it, marketers sell it, but it doesn't amount to much. The hokiness of it all as much as anything else signifies the shallowness of the ideological consensus of corporate America in the Reagan years.

But there is little comfort for us to take in this if we are unable to regenerate new leadership ourselves. Twenty years is a long time in political terms. Consider last year's Jesse Jackson campaign. The greatest success of the Jackson campaign may have been Jackson's ability as a Black leader to speak for progressivism as a whole. Mass struggles begun a generation ago prepared the way for his rejection of a ghettoized junior-partner status vis-a-vis organized labor and other liberal institutions in mainstream politics. Although the Rainbow could not use this strength to force change in 1984, we should take this less as a sign of defeat than as marking the beginning of a new era of struggle. We should also recognize the significance of Jackson's focus on the Southern dual primary—as highlighting how important the empowerment of the Black movement's traditional base still is to any renewed progressivism in this country.

At this time of year honoring Martin Luther King and contributing to Black History Month, we might think of the generational scope of the new phase ahead. It was in this spirit that we prepared this issue of *Forward Motion*, seeking out perspectives on Black education and organizing for it. A number of the articles highlight setbacks and shortcomings in Black Education and Black Studies today, but the importance of the work ahead should both encourage and infuse us with determination to press forward again.

NOTE: *production problems delayed us in mailing out some of the October and December FMs and also caused printing errors on some of the December copies. We regret these problems and are working with our printer to correct them. Please bear with us.*

The book review of ***A Guest of Honor*** which appeared in the last issue of ***Forward Motion*** was written by Nadine Myers. ●

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Twenty Years After Malcolm: Reviewing His Legacy

Editorial

February 21, 1985 marks twenty years since the assassination of Malcolm X. Those twenty years have witnessed the rise and decline of a modern revolutionary wing of the Afro-American people's movement; COINTELPRO and the elimination of many progressive and revolutionary leaders; the expansion of and later attack on various reforms aimed at eliminating racist discrimination; the increased fight of Black women for their rightful place within all spheres of the Black Liberation Movement and U.S. society; developing connections between the Afro-American people's movement and progressive movements for social justice and national liberation nationally and internationally; and the growth of the Black vote from an initial upsurge in the late 60s and early 70s (e.g., National Black Political Assembly period) to Rev. Jackson's Rainbow Coalition Presidential Campaign. February 21st should give us all pause to consider Malcolm X's relevance to the situation in the 1980s, and indeed, his legacy is no less important today than it was in 1965.

Malcolm was greatly concerned with the revolutionary section of the Black Liberation Movement and its relationship with the rest of the Black Liberation Movement. The work he attempted to carry out toward the end of his life was oriented toward the concept of a broad united front of African-Americans against white supremacist national oppression. While Malcolm was a pro-socialist revolutionary, he reached out to others in the Black Liberation Movement to seek a common accord. The now famous picture of Malcolm shaking Martin Luther King's hand, and the title of Malcolm's own organization (Organization for Afro-American Unity) are illustrative of this point. The Black Left should consider this, especially in light of problems which have led to the decline of the National Black United Front and the National Black Independent Political Party. Black liberation depends on the united front perspective.

The slogans "the Ballot or the Bullet" and ". . . By Any Means Necessary . . ." indicate a second matter of relevance. While these slogans have generally been associated with the absolute right to self-defense for Afro-Americans (and the Afro-American movement generally), they have a broader implication. *They represent Malcolm's concern for various methods of struggle for Afro-American liberation.* In 1965 the Civil Rights sections of the Afro-American movement advocated non-violent methods of protest. Malcolm criticized this stance and continually spoke against it. He encouraged various forms of confrontation with the forces of reaction in the U.S. One might call this something on the order of a united front in practice.

Today we see an unexpected electoral upsurge arising from the Black Liberation

Movement. This upsurge has not always received the type of support from all sections of the Black Left (and multi-national Left) it merits. The implicit and often explicit thrust of this upsurge has been for political power and against the onslaught of the New Right. The failure of many Leftists to recognize this is indicative of a remaining "ultra-left" and often white chauvinist "blindspot" in various progressive movements. The electoral arena is one, increasingly important, realm of political struggle against national oppression, white privilege, the Right-wing, and for political power. Yet it is only one realm, to be linked with other forms of mass organizing, including work in the shops, among the unemployed, among women, for housing and for land. Each arena of struggle is limited and can not resolve the basic issue of national oppression. Yet combined together and with a leadership which is conscious, revolutionary and consistent, there exists a potential force to strike a blow against capital domestically.



Malcolm's concern for the promotion of African-American culture and history remains very timely. The weakening and outright elimination of Black Studies classes, programs and departments from high schools and colleges has accompanied the national Right-wing climate which makes it fashionable to be racist and reactionary. The ideological and political assault against Black Studies seeks to defame African-American culture and history and to make it an illegitimate part of the education process for all North Americans. This attack has also represented a means of blunting popular demands for studies programs and curriculum concerning other oppressed nationalities and women. Insofar as the Left fails to challenge this, working to bring together oppressed nationality teachers, educators and parents, it will permit the creation of another "historic void" where oppressed nationality students will lose touch with their roots, and white students will think that the only thing Black people can do is sing and dance.

February 21st should also, sadly, remind us all that repression — active, well-orchestrated political repression — is alive and well and living in the USA. The murder and incarceration of Black leaders, along with the now public COINTELPRO aim of discrediting progressive leaders of the Black Liberation Movement and preventing unity between the Black Liberation Movement and the labor movement, should serve as a permanent warning that the American tradition of "participatory democracy" has always been closely shadowed by national oppression and the often-time violent suppression of freedom fighters from all progressive social movements. The Reagan Administration's current strengthening of the CIA, surveillance of Central America activists in the US, and moves against Constitutional restrictions on the activities of the domestic police all point to decreased democratic liberties.

Malcolm X, El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, was certainly one of the greatest leaders of the Black Liberation Movement in this century. It is criminal that so many young people hardly know his name, let alone have any real sense of that for which he stood. Malcolm's strength of character, admirable defiance in the face of adversity, his warmth and humor, and unquestionable commitment to Black liberation and social justice are still deeply missed. After 20 years, though, his concerns and insights have remained so acutely relevant. The Left must make sure that he is never forgotten.

—R.T. Sims,
Executive Committee, P.U.L.

The Passing of a Freedom Fighter: Harry Haywood, Dead at 86



As *FM* goes to press, we were informed of the death of long-time Afro-American communist Harry Haywood. His death comes as a jolt to the many activists who have known him and those who have read his works.

Harry Haywood's life spanned over three quarters of a century. His adult life was devoted, as few have so devoted theirs, to the struggle for socialism in the United States

and for the complete liberation of African-American people. Haywood was not only an activist and committed revolutionary, but he was an accomplished theoretician. It was Haywood, in conjunction with other theoreticians of the Communist International who developed the Communist Party, USA's famous position of the existence of an Afro-American nation in the Black Belt South and right of that nation to complete self-determination. This position, which many bourgeois "scholars" have trashed as being an invention of Stalin and the Soviet Party, was in fact an historic current *within* the Black Liberation Movement.

Harry Haywood's importance does not rest with his contributions to the Communist Party and the Black Liberation Movement during the 1930s and 1940s. Haywood, during the 1950s, resisted the CP's abandonment of their revolutionary position on the Afro-American Question, and fought against the increasingly right-ward shift in the Party's views and policies. Forced out of the Communist Party in the late 1950s, Haywood could have retreated into complete obscurity; however, the strength of his character was seen in his direct participation in the effort, beginning in the early 1970s, to develop a new, and in fact, revolutionary communist party. Haywood's work with the October League (Marxist-Leninist) and later the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), along with his conversations and exchanges with other communists and nationalists alike, helped to shape the outlook of a new generation of revolutionaries.

Words can not do justice to the work of this outstanding communist. His is the passing of a friend, comrade and teacher for those following the path of revolutionary Marxism. His presence and contributions will be greatly missed.

—R.T. Simms
for the Executive Committee,
Proletarian Unity League

A Look At Black Studies Today

The following is an interview with Dr. James Jennings, Dean of the College of Public and Community Service (CPCS) of the University of Massachusetts-Boston. Dr. Jennings is an Afro-American/Puerto Rican political activist and student of Black political thought in the U.S., originally from New York City. Dr. Jennings has been Dean of CPCS since 1983, is the President of the Black Political Task Force (a Boston-based organization of Black electoral activists and politicians), and has had articles published in numerous journals and books. A recent article by Jennings has just been published in The New Black Vote, edited by Rod Bush (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1984). Forward Motion talked with Dr. Jennings about the current state of Black Studies in the US, specifically programs on predominantly white campuses.

* * * * *

Forward Motion: How do you see the current state of Black Studies programs on college campuses today?

James Jennings: If I used the 1960s as a base or frame of reference, one could say that Black Studies is in a difficult situation. Black Studies Departments have been under attack at various levels such that the situation can be considered dismal. While it is true that there are a few Black Studies Departments surviving intact, many programs and Departments have been all but eliminated. This has an impact not only on Black people but on the society generally. When you think about the research and scholarship which was beginning to come out of the Black Studies Departments nationally, you realize how much of that is being lost or has been lost.

FM: When would you say that the attack on Black Studies really got going?

JJ: I should be very clear: the attack on Black people, and specifically Black people in the area of education has been an on-going assault. It is only in the relatively recent past that major white colleges permitted Black people to even enter their institutions. To a certain extent I think that one could answer your question by saying that Black Studies has represented an on-going threat to these institutions in some form or another, whether through the existence of a few Black students or through the existence of actual Black Studies programs. Therefore, I do not think that it would be correct to say that the attack on Black Studies started at a certain point. When one looks at the history of American higher education one can only see the deep resistance there to the very idea of Black Studies.

In the mid 60s and early 70s, a movement developed among Black students to push for Black Studies Programs and Departments. At that point resistance to the basic idea of Black Studies crystalized, but the resistance was always there. At the time of this

push, many colleges did what they could to make sure that Black Studies would never really get off the ground. Take the situation at Brooklyn College in New York some years back, a situation with which I am familiar. During the struggle for Black and Puerto Rican Studies, students were *physically assaulted* by racist whites in a cafeteria because these Black and Puerto Rican Students has chosen the Studies program as their major. At Hunter College, also in New York (my alma mater), there was major resistance by the administration to the demand for Black and Puerto Rican Studies. Professors would discourage their students from any connection with Black and Puerto Rican Studies. At Harvard University, the Afro-American Studies Department has gone from an aggressive, popularly supported Department fighting for a legitimate Black Studies programs to the situation today, of a weak or seriously weakened Department. As indicators of this weakness one can look at the lower number of concentrators [majors — *editor*], the number of faculty, as well as the nature of the appointments.

FM: Dr. Jennings, can you talk more about the forms of resistance used to undermine Black Studies?

JJ: There are actual institutional mechanisms which are being used, including decreasing the budgets of Black Studies programs, providing inadequate staffing of the Departments, determinations as to who the Chair of the Black Studies Department reports to in the administrative hierarchy. Control of administrative resources can effectively kill a Department. You see, it is not enough for a college to say that “. . . We have a Black Studies Department . . .” The college or university must demonstrate the actual support mechanisms which it is willing to provide in order to insure the survival of the program or Department.

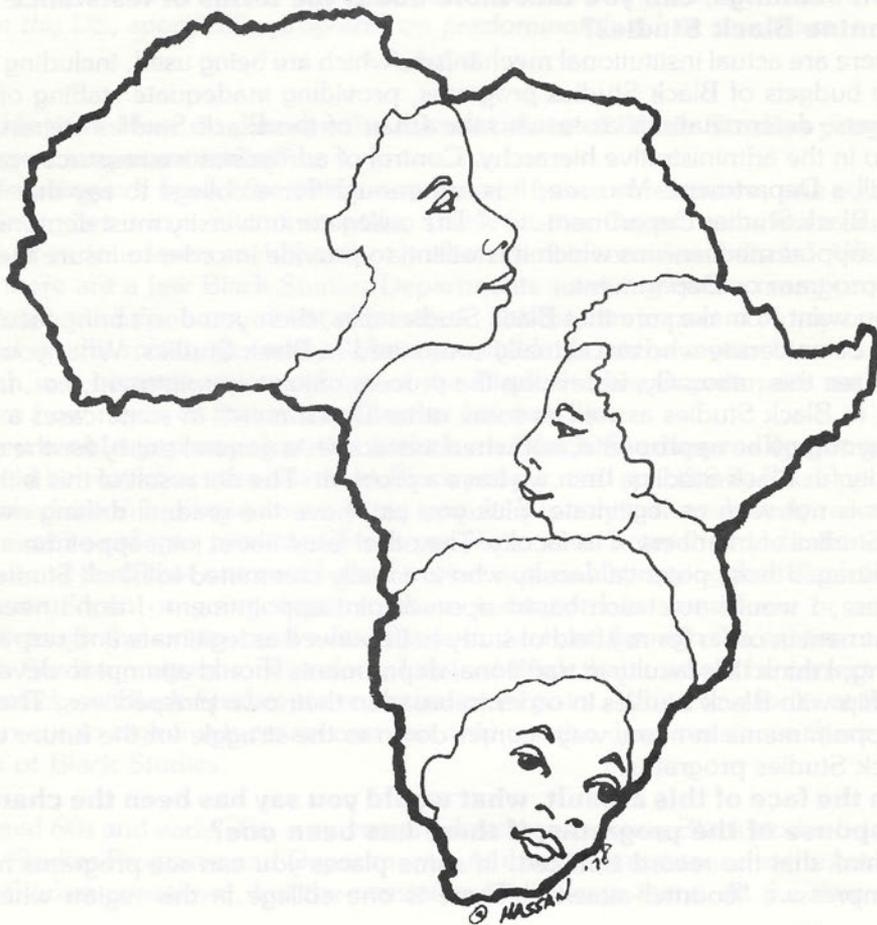
If you want to make sure that Black Studies dies, then you don't bring faculty to the college or university who are actually committed to Black Studies. What you do, and we can see this nationally, is develop the process of joint appointment, i.e., faculty attached to Black Studies as well as some other Department. In some cases a joint appointment may be appropriate, but when it becomes a general policy for the choosing of faculty for Black Studies, then we have a problem. The net result of this is that Black Studies is not seen as legitimate, plus you can have the gradual drifting away from Black Studies of members of its faculty. The other issue about joint appointments is that it discourages those potential faculty who are really committed to Black Studies. In my own case, I would not teach based upon a joint appointment. I don't need a joint appointment in order for my field of study to be viewed as legitimate and respectable. If anything, I think that faculty in traditional departments should attempt to develop a relationship with Black Studies in order to broaden their own perspectives. The issue of joint appointments in many ways comes down to the struggle for the future existence of Black Studies programs.

FM: In the face of this assault, what would you say has been the characteristic response of the programs, if there has been one?

JJ: I think that the record is mixed. In some places you can see programs mounting very impressive “counter-attacks.” There is one college in this region where Black

faculty members have gotten together in order to develop a closer connection with Black State Legislators. I think that this is an important and positive response. Perhaps Black faculty in other colleges can use this type of model.

At the other end of the spectrum are situations where Black Studies has been taken over or co-opted by the University. Some faculty from Black Studies programs support such moves. Faculty can be appointed to Black Studies programs despite their own ignorance of Black Studies. There is also the issue of white faculty appointed to chair Black Studies programs. I would not say that only Blacks can chair Black Studies Departments, but I do not believe that American higher education has reached a point where we can afford to be that "liberal" about such a matter. While there may be white faculty who have a very scholarly understanding of Black Studies, at this point a Black Studies chair holds a very important symbolic value. Also, the chair must be able to easily communicate the needs and views of the Black Studies program or Department to other sectors of American society.



One important issue regarding the future of Black Studies concerns what is called "ethnic studies." The question of ethnic studies has a lot to do with how the whole matter is framed. Is ethnic studies a situation of ". . . Negroes in Chapter 12 . . ." or is ethnic studies a situation where each nationality can examine its own history and culture in conjunction with other nationalities. So, the move toward ethnic studies can be a means of diluting Black Studies or it can be a move which co-exists with Black Studies if it is supportive of Black Studies.

FM: Would you say that the same point is true with regard to the rise of "women's studies" programs on many campuses?

JJ: The best way to respond to that is to mention a memo which I read some years ago in the *New York Times*. It referred to a statement or memo of then President Nixon to the effect that sexism was a more important issue than racism. This is so symbolic of the way that the power structure will use or play-off Blacks and women, or in this case, Black Studies and Women's Studies. There is nothing which says that there has to be *either* Black Studies or Women's Studies. But if you have a situation where resources earmarked for Black Studies are shifted to Women's Studies while Women's Studies fails to be more accessible to women of color and the experience of women of color, you have a problem. If Women's Studies were truly accessible to women of color and the experience of women of color, I contend that Women's Studies would become Black Studies. The problem today is that when one talks about Women's Studies one is generally talking about *white* Women's Studies.

FM: I would like to digress a minute. Earlier you spoke of a department for "Black and Puerto Rican Studies." How do you evaluate that experience?

JJ: One could probably write a book about that whole experience of two peoples of color attempting to come together. I was involved in that effort in the earlier stages at Hunter. The concept of "Black and Puerto Rican Studies" was a very advanced concept in that it prevented the administration from playing these two groups off against one another. The existence of a Black and Puerto Rican Studies Department had a profound impact on the consciousness of the Black and Puerto Rican students. It not only provided a means for gaining a better understanding of their own respective histories, but it also showed them what they had in common with one another. Unfortunately, at a certain point (and this was when I was in the process of leaving Hunter) the Department split and the Blacks and the Puerto Ricans took up opposing positions. I think that this in part reflected the fact that the initial leadership of the movement for Black and Puerto Rican studies was advanced, while those who later came forward did not hold as advanced views.

As it turned out, however, something happened which healed the split. I think that there developed a growing realization that it was a mistake to separate. This is not to say that a single department of Black and Puerto Rican Studies should be the model, necessarily. I think that the choice of *one* Department at Hunter reflected many things including the conditions which the students faced and the objectives of the administration.

The actual form of the Department should be secondary to insuring that the Department receives strong administrative support, including its own choice of faculty. The Department must have a strong foundation, including assurance that it will instruct and guide students via a *Black* perspective. This is of particular importance given the historic absence of Black students and faculty from the campuses of most of these white institutions. The issue of focus exemplifies this problem. Many Black Studies Departments have a focus on one or another aspect of the Black experience. This is fine. However, the core of Black Studies must be historical. There are Black Studies Departments *today* which have no courses in Black politics or the educational experience of Black children and perhaps one course on some aspect of Black history. This type of situation is unpardonable.

FM: Given this assault on Black Studies, how critical is the relationship between Black Studies Departments and the broader Afro-American community?

JJ: If there was a word stronger than "critical" I would use that to emphasize the importance of strengthening the link between Black Studies Programs and Departments and the Black community. The rationale for the development or strengthening of this relationship should not be just one of helping the survival of Black Studies Departments. I think that Black scholars have a *moral* obligation to provide educational services to the Black community. Black educators and students must respond to the various concerns and demands of the larger Black community. They are in a pivotal position given that left to themselves, the universities will continue to ignore the Black community (as Columbia University in New York tried to do in 1968 when they were building a gymnasium in the middle of the Black community and Black people could only enter through a side door).

The key to the survival of Black Studies programs, though, is a relationship with the larger Black community. A powerful institution, in this case a university, will not respond to the demands of a relatively weak Black Studies Department, whereas the direct involvement of the larger Black community will force these same institutions to take another look. We're talking here about the actual politics of the situation. This relationship is crucial.

FM: What role do you see for Black students and other progressive students in the struggle to defend Black Studies?

JJ: Let me preface my answer by saying that Black students have played a critical role in bringing about change. The introduction of Black Studies would not have happened had it not been for the actions of Black students. If Black students are not involved in the struggle to defend Black studies, nothing will happen. Black students, though, must have a community-oriented approach. Community-aware Black students make for stronger Black studies programs. These students are aware of what is outside the university, what issues are on the minds of the community, and what needs to be done. In order to better defend Black Studies *more* actors have to get into the fight. If the fight is just between the Black Studies programs and departments and the University,

Black Studies will probably lose. If I am fighting someone who is 250 lbs., and certain important things are at stake so I can not run, then I am going to look to see who can assist me and what I need to do in order to enlist them in the fight. Black students can increase the scope of the conflict by lending themselves to all sorts of community efforts. At a certain point that becomes Black Studies. The Department then becomes something of an organizational convenience or vehicle for all sorts of educational activities.

FM: Would you say that Black students have a role to play in what might be called the ideological battle for the legitimacy of Black Studies?

JJ: Certainly, though I am concerned about what might be called a developing "generation gap" or something. There is this issue of the consciousness of many of the newer students. For this reason a direct connection with the community is important in terms of broadening the perspective of the students. If that doesn't take place, then the hearts of Black students may be in the right place but they might not understand how to carry forward the struggle around Black Studies. Without that pro-community perspective, Black students may be misled or just be unable to rise to their tasks. I think that Black students' actual experiences through struggle and involvement in the community will be the primary influence on the development of their consciousness.

FM: Is there anything else which you would like to add that we haven't covered?

JJ: Yes, I think that Black students have to move away from feeling defensive about Black Studies. Too many Black students look at Black Studies as the province of the "crazies" or "malcontents" and don't recognize the legitimacy of Black Studies. I think that for someone to go through school and not be exposed to Black Studies makes it truly impossible for them to call themselves educated. I think that I would feel educationally "superior" to that person who has taken loads of courses in politics, economics, etc., but has no real grasp of the Black experience and has shied away from Black Studies programs. My message to Black students would be that Black Studies may be the salvation of American higher education. To paraphrase a message of Rev. Jesse Jackson's Presidential campaign, one day we (Black people) were slaves and the next day the saviours of America.

FM: Thank you very much Dean Jennings. ●

Black Liberation By Any Means Necessary

The following is an excerpt from a presentation at a 1983 socialist activists' conference on "Searching for Answers." The author, Komozi, is a long-time Black activist and a student of the Afro-American national question. Here, Komozi outlines the historical continuity of the Black struggle as a national movement. For publication in FM, Komozi has added a comment connecting the Jesse Jackson presidential campaign to these historical themes.

* * * * *

In the 1920's, the communists learned from the Garvey Movement. This great mass movement made it crystal clear that the Afro-Americans have a hunger for land and power. Before the Garvey Movement, the Marxists in America stumbled around in the dark on the Afro-American Question! They found they had to study the rise and fall of Garvey and the Harlem Renaissance: millions of Blacks demanding self government. Where is the Black Man's government? That's what the Garveyites used to say. It made history. It also made the Marxist-Leninists re-assess the importance of the Afro-American Question and Self Determination.

But it is necessary for us to know that the national theory for Afro-Americans starts much earlier. It has its indigenous roots. Before Garvey, before the Bloodbrothers, Blacks said we are a nation within a nation. George Padmore is wrong on this score. In his famous book *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, Padmore says the concept of a black nation was imported from Russia. But both black nationalism and Pan-Africanism have Afro-American roots.

Martin Delany and a host of other early Black freedom fighters of his period before the Civil War said clearly that Blacks are a nation inside an oppressor nation. These discussions took place in the Black Convention Movement, when most Blacks were still in slavery. There were heroic slave revolts and there was the beginning of the Black freedom movement among the free Black community. There was an American Colonization Society (white) aiming to deport free Blacks to Africa, to put down the threat of a united resistance to the institution of slavery. When deportation didn't work, they got restless and provoked race wars like the one in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1929, which drove 1,200 Afro-Americans into exile in Canada. The Conventions were called together to search for a way out of this national persecution. Their answer was solidarity with the slaves and resistance. This resistance grew from the David Walker Appeal and the Nat Turner-type revolt to Henry Highland Garnett's Call for the slave revolts and

the Civil War. This period must be looked into to understand how the concept of the Black nation and self determination took shape among Afro-Americans.

The Black Freedom Movement has been the spearhead of the Black Man's fight for national freedom and national equality. From its birth our movement has embraced different wings, different methods, ideologies and philosophies of struggle, but it aims to knock down all the obstacles to our freedom and development as a people by any means necessary. Like the brother Frederick Douglass said, it may be moral or physical, but it must be a struggle!



So it started a long time before Garveyism, and it continued through the Pap Singletons and Bishop Turners and others seeking a homeland where Blacks could be free and equal. But Garvey brought something new to Black nationalism in America.

Garvey was profoundly influenced by the epoch of national revolts that developed in his early manhood. Marcus Garvey came to Harlem before the U.S. entered WWI. James Weldon Johnson and W.E.B. DuBois moved to Harlem and assumed leadership of the NAACP. A. Phillip Randolph and Chandler Owens established the radical newspaper, the *Messenger* and the Urban League set up headquarters in New York, too. Harlem attracted both political and cultural leaders. It developed as the center of Black protest, the place many Blacks looked for the most advanced thinking on Black freedom. Black soldiers also returned to Harlem after the war. They thought they had fought to guarantee all men the right of self determination and they paraded up Lenox Avenue to a jazz step. But Uncle Sam welcomed them home with the Bloody Red Summer of 1919, an outburst of race riots against Blacks across the country. Marcus Garvey came to center stage in the Black freedom movement with a vision of a world preparing for revolt.

Garvey made contact with the liberation movements in London, where he studied African history and nationalism under such rebels as Duse Muhammad Ali, an Egyptian intellectual. The Third World Revolt was awakening and beginning to kick Western imperialism in the behind in Africa and Asia: revolt and revolution in Egypt, Afghanistan, Korea, Iraq, Mongolia, China, Turkey and Persia.

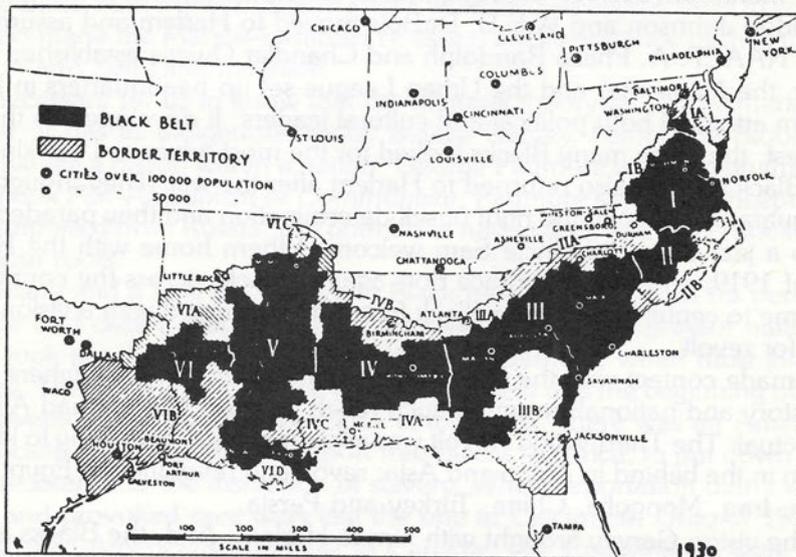
This is the vision Garvey brought with him to Harlem. And, the Blacks at the grass-roots from coast to coast were ripe for this message. Garvey understood the situation of the ex-slaves of America, and expressed our yearning for liberation and nationhood. Thus, Marcus Garvey electrified the Black masses as no leader had done before

him. He was one of the greatest political agitators of the 20th Century.

He understood that all our dreams of freedom and dignity had been deferred too long! The Black masses felt that enough had been enough, and already too much. There were no cheeks to turn. The poet Claude McKay expressed the same militancy, that later Malcolm X would tap. *If we must die*, let it be a life for a life, and a head for a head. If the Black Man has got to bleed, the oppressor must bleed too! Garvey said the Black Man had been used to fight in every war, but the time had come when he must fight for himself to make the Black Man free.

The Garvey movement and the Harlem Renaissance were visible signs expressing a new stage of Black national consciousness. Actually, this Afro-American upsurge was an expression, also, of the Third World Revolt; millions and millions of dark peoples refusing to be the slaves of imperialism! At first the American Communists were totally out of step with this new consciousness. They made no headway at all into the midst of the Black freedom fight. The origins of the Marxist theory of the Black nation came when they began to understand the ripening Black consciousness in cities like Harlem.

Understanding the origins of the Marxist theory of Black self determination in the 20's, we get a clue to our starting point for updating the theory of Black self determination today. It must be derived from an analysis of the Black Revolts of the 60's and the resulting movements in the 70's. The 60's witnessed the greatest mass revolt for Self Determination in the history of America. Whether they were Panthers or Cultural Nationalists, the demand was for Self Determination. Malcolm X was the Father of this Black Revolt preaching self determination, self respect and self defense.



BLACK BELT AND BORDER TERRITORY

Source: James S. Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, (New York: International Publishers, 1936)

We can learn from the upsurge of the 20's and the Black Revolts of the 60's; national consciousness ripens in both the North and the South, both in the urban Black concentrations and in the countryside. In a word, the Black Belt has no monopoly on Black national development or national bondage. Too many Marxists are still tied to old formulations, like the national question is essentially a peasant question. They want to do another count of sharecroppers, but they miss the essentials of the question. We must follow the development of Black people, our history, and especially follow the development of the Black freedom struggle.

The origins of the Jim Crow racism and national bondage we suffer as Afro-Americans goes back to the slave trade and slavery. We have to study the whole master-slave relationship as it developed its unique form in American culture. Slavery in the midst of capitalism. One race enslaving another race and culture. Sharecropping and peonage in the Black Belt is a *form* of our national bondage. These urban ghettos, Uncle Sam's gutless version of Apartheid's bantustans, are another *form* of our national bondage. Think about it: has the intensity of racism diminished in the North? Has the horror of racism declined with the number of sharecroppers? All this police brutality, the killer cops and white mob violence against Blacks is the Northern expression of lynching. When that mob dragged Willie Turks thru the window of his car in New York and beat him to death that was lynching!

The stench of the old master-slave relationship is still here today in the form of Jim Crow racism and national bondage. Some thirty million Blacks, aliens in the land of our birth, a nation within a nation, but a nation without power. The aim of the freedom movement is to destroy these oppressive *relations* between the nationalities; they are the continuation of the slave relations in the 20th century. That is what is peculiar about our national bondage in America.

I'd like to conclude now because time is short, even though there is much more to discuss about the Black freedom struggle, but this background is necessary to understand our fight against Reagan today. We have to be crystal clear about the nature and objectives of our freedom struggle. Reagan has launched a war of public opinion to prepare the way to strip Black people of our human rights and he is using tricky language to make our freedom fight look like something strange and alien to most Americans. Our aim is national freedom and national equality. Self Determination is a *means* towards that national equality. Self government is a basic right. But we cannot allow anyone to use the slogan of self determination to isolate Blacks from our potential allies. Self Determination is our demand for national equality, the equality of free nations and peoples.

The situation demands our utmost clarity. How can affirmative action be finished, when oppressed nationalities are still forced to live in inferior housing, attend inferior schools, etc.? That's not national equality! Thirty million Blacks paying first class taxes for second class citizenship. Reagan is preparing the way for the continuation of Jim Crow into the 21st Century. They are trying to close out the 2nd Reconstruction, and it may take bloodshed. Uncle Sam hasn't put down the slave-whip or the butcher knife.

Jesse Jackson's political campaign was a real eye-opener. This movement was a legal expression of the fight of Black people for self determination and national equality. Moreover, Jackson's campaign was an extension of the fight to insure voting rights, and of course, his campaign was a contingent of the Black Freedom Movement.

In the midst of the campaign, we saw the Jackson-Farrakan unity tested, but this unity was merely a symbol of something which had already developed in our community. Jackson himself is a continuer of the legacy of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., Jackson embodies that kind of unity in his own political development. In the context of the American political arena, the Jackson campaign showed how powerful the teachings of Malcolm X are today.

Twenty years after Malcolm talked about the impact of challenging the political establishment, Jackson tried it. We found out that our neighborhoods, where the politicians come to make false promises which they don't intend to keep, is our turf! We can beat them on this ground, and they must come through this arena every two or four years. We hold the balance of power. If these oppressed regions of the country were organized politically, to demand our rights, we could decide who goes in the White House and who goes in the Dog House. We should look back at Malcolm's speeches like the "Ballot or the Bullet," and learn from his keen sense of agitation and tactics. Malcolm X was one of the greatest agitators in the 20th Century.

This is a period full of many challenges which can be met, if we put our hearts and minds to the effort. The Afro-American masses, and the American masses generally, are watching to see if we can shoulder our responsibilities — we must point the way forward. We dare not disappoint them.

—Komozi
September 16, 1983

Child's Play

A Look at Some Developmental Factors Affecting Black Youth

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

—Gwendolyn Brooks

This essay addresses some of the concerns of a hypothetical urban community as regards its youth. For the sake of identification, the community will be called Roxbury. There are many other names that would be just as appropriate — Watts, for example, or East Palo Alto, or maybe West Philly — but the name Roxbury serves the purposes of this essay.

Roxbury is a black community with a rich history and great variation in its population. There are doctors, lawyers, architects; there are small businessmen, electricians, busdrivers; and there are women, lots of women, who work in low-paying jobs or receive financial assistance from the government to raise their children, which they often do singlehandedly.

These women are worried about their children and other children in Roxbury. There are a lot of kids, a gaggle or so every block. About half of the kids are teenagers, most of whom attend public high schools. Some of the kids (too many, really) have dropped out of school, and a few of the kids voluntarily desegregate suburban schools. All of the kids hang out on the corners, with or without parental consent.

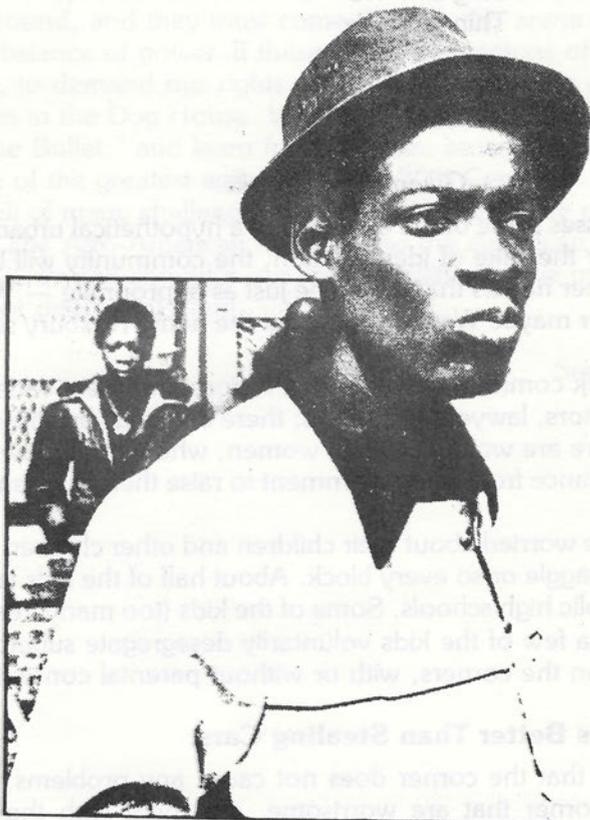
Breakdancing: It's Better Than Stealing Cars.

Everyone knows that the corner does not cause any problems. It is the kids who hang out on the corner that are worrisome, out there with those ghetto-blasters, skipping and gliding on those pieces of cardboard. Breakdancing has not yet lost its thrill. Of course if there were not breakdancing, there would be some other kind of dancing.

Dancing is not really the problem. Neither is woofing, or smoking cigarettes, or the other things the kids do standing on the corner, in view of the community. The problem is what they do when they leave the corner and move into the shadows. What they do then is anybody's guess.

The crowd on the corner thins out. First he goes home to rehearse for the school play. (The other kids laugh; he's kind of odd.) Then those two wander off. (She's fast, anyway.) The foursome takes off like racehorses. (Word has it that they stole two cars last week.) Then those other three disappear. (He's got some reefer in his pocket.) Pretty soon they are all gone, and only one of them has gone home.

Nobody has left the corner to go to their job. No one has rushed off to choir practice. None of the kids has gone to work out at the gym. The Pre-Med Club has claimed no one's time. What has claimed everyone's time is the most immediate, available relief from boredom.



Far too many of Roxbury's youth are aimless, and far too many are bored. These young people are not motivated to achievement in the long term, because they feel powerless to achieve their goals. They imitate rather than risk to create. They stay within the confines of their particular communities rather than explore the wealth of activities available in the metropolitan area. They consume rather than produce. Their development has brought them to a point, at age 16 or 17, where they can neither look back fondly on childhood nor eagerly anticipate adulthood.

Child development should prepare young people to achieve the successes of adulthood, to take personal responsibility and develop interests in activities they can influence. The major activities of childhood — exploratory play, imitative fantasy play, free group play and group play with rules — should provide an opportunity for young people to rehearse for adulthood work and social roles and adult leisure activities. Yet, it may be safe to estimate that 60% of Roxbury's youth are not emotionally or socially ready to meet successfully the challenges of adulthood.

Growing Pains

A child's development begins well before s/he is born. A black child from poor economic circumstances may experience poverty and racism before s/he even sees the world. Economically deprived mothers, which comprise 60% of Black single mothers, according to 1982 statistics, are more likely than other mothers to be in poor physical health, to have an inadequate diet and to receive insufficient pre-natal care. The possible consequences of poor pre-natal intrauterine health are many. Women in poor health are known to experience a greater number of stillbirths and miscarriages. For those who carry children to term, the rate of premature births and infant mortality are higher than average. Finally, the incidence of physical and neural defects is significantly higher among children whose mothers suffered from poor pre-natal care, inadequate diet, poor physical health, as well as those mothers who gave birth before the optimum childbearing ages of 20-28. (Approximately 25% of all black children in the US are born to teenagers.)

Pregnant black women are at high risk for depression. This depression stems in part from acceptance of negative attitudes projected onto Black women by the racist and sexist society called America. It stems in part from the poor economic circumstances under which the majority of Black women live, circumstances which are concrete manifestations of those racist and sexist attitudes. It is thought that a fetus continues to respond to stress and depression experienced by the mother well beyond the termination of that stress or depression. It is *known* that the fetus responds negatively to the use of drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine, all of which provide temporary relief from physical and emotional symptoms of stress and depression.

A Child Is Born

Gary is born on February 7 to his depressed and poorly prepared young mother.

Gary comes home from the hospital on February 10 to his new Roxbury home, the one with inadequate heat, poor ventilation, high insect and rodent infestation, and high vulnerability to crime. This housing situation is not extraordinary and extreme; it characterizes much of the housing in Roxbury, which is part of an older city with regressive housing regulations.

A child develops and changes at a rapid pace in the first two years, but in order to achieve optimum development, the child has to trust his or her environment. This basic trust enhances a child's ability to cope with his/her environment, and lays the foundation for a healthy, pro-social personality.

But Gary has come home with his depressed, fearful and therefore emotionally unavailable mother. She worries about how cold the house is; she worries that Gary will come in contact with the roaches, who have been in unclean places; she worries that Gary will pick up mouse droppings as he gets a little older; she worries that he will touch the wires exposed by the missing panels in her bedroom. This infant senses his mother's distrust of the environment, and experiences his mother's anxiety.

As a toddler, Gary learns his mother's distrust of the environment when he starts to explore that environment on hands and knees or unstable legs. "NO! Don't touch that!" "NO! Don't go there!" "NO! Stay away from that!" These warnings are repeated over and over as Gary reaches towards the mouse droppings, or crawls toward the seductive exposed wires in the bedroom, or follows the fascinating cockroach on its journey across the kitchen floor.

The infant-toddler period is important. Basic trust allows a child to explore his/her environment, develop mobility, enhance coordination, and gain manipulative skills. Basic trust allows a child to move from total dependence on his parent to coping with his/her environment autonomously and finally to mastery of that environment. If the child cannot trust the environment, then s/he will be less inclined to explore. If s/he is protected from exploring that environment, or if s/he has so many negative experiences in the explorations that s/he withdraws from exploration, s/he will not develop the familiarity with the environment and the autonomy needed to master the environment.

Where's the Massa?

But then, Black people are not supposed to master their environments. White men are supposed to be the masters in this country. They are no longer called Master — they are now called Mister — but they make the decision as to whether Gary's mother should receive job training so she can make more money. They decide whether she should receive fuel assistance and food stamps. They decide whether she is eligible for Section 8 housing. They decide whether her child will receive an education which will allow Gary to compete in this literate and technological society.

Gary's mother has little power to control her destiny, and little faith that she could if she were allowed the chance. She is not allowed to belong to the white world, but receives the message daily, through the media, that the Black world and Black culture is

inadequate, unacceptable and laughable. Black people cannot talk (Mr. T on "The A-Team"); Black people cannot raise their own children ("Webster" and "Different Strokes"); Black people do not know "appropriate" social behavior (Nell Carter on "Gimme a Break"), and if they do know "appropriate" social behavior, they are extraordinary (Diahann Carroll on "Dynasty").

Maybe it is just as well that Gary is not trained for mastery of the environment. There is a good chance that he will not have the opportunity to exercise or demonstrate that mastery. American racism historically has punished autonomous and assertive behavior on the part of Black people. It has discredited and disrespected creativity and initiative. It has undermined self-confidence, self-love and self-knowledge. And it has rewarded docility and servility. Jesse Jackson ran a Presidential race, but Clarence Pendleton is in the Presidential Cabinet. One can be certain that "President" Mondale would not have appointed Jesse Jackson to his Cabinet.



Power Plays

Gary learns at an early age that he may be prevented from becoming powerful. He picks up on his mother's feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. He sees his mother's restricted activity, most of which takes place within the confines of the community. He experiences his mother's frustration when her involvement in job training results in a job which pays less than AFDC. This growing boy watches his mother as she tries to play a game the rules of which are kept a secret. He gradually loses the motivation to

gain full mastery over his environment.

The opportunity for mastery is lacking in Gary's life. There is not enough money to pay the bus fare, much less the fee, to send him to art, drama or tennis classes. The school Gary attends offers none of these types of activities. There is not enough space at home to maintain a model collection, and not enough money to purchase the types of toys which promote understanding of scientific concepts, encourage creativity, enhance conceptual development. After school, Gary has the option of playing stickball, kickball or watching TV. After he has grown tired of those activities, there is basketball, and breakdancing. Reading is a possibility, though most of it concerns worlds he may never see and people he may never experience, and assumes his values and beliefs are those of the majority culture. (They publish lots of books about themselves.) And then there is the corner

At Least They Have Good Taste

Gary, as a Roxbury teenager, may be able to translate his limited child experiences into an adult job or leisure activity. He might become a professional basketball or baseball player, or open a sporting goods store, or even become a dancer. Of course, all of these would require him to meet the challenge of American racism head on, in fighting to attend college, or fighting to get a small business loan for his sporting goods store. The person who can become a professional athlete or dancer is extraordinary, and the person who can run a successful small business has to have special talent and connections. Gary has neither, and he is not prepared for anything else. Gary does not simply face the challenge of adulthood; he faces the challenge of Black adulthood in a society which prefers him to be docile, ignorant and powerless.

The corner is familiar, friendly and inexpensive, and does not challenge self-confidence and self-worth on the basis of racial identity. As long as Gary wears his Calvins and his Nikes, he is accepted. If he chooses to drink with the kids in the shadows, well, they only drink Hennessey, Remy-Martin and Harvey's, like they see in the commercials. They know they can at least have the superficial symbols of American success, even if they cannot achieve the real thing.

—Candice S. Cason

(Candice Cason is a child and family worker, community activist and supporter of Forward Motion.)

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Helping Children Imagine King's Dream

Reflections on a Successful Black History Writing Contest

"Does anyone know what war Dr. King opposed?" I asked a small high school class as I was showing a slide show on his life and the movement to make his birthday a national holiday.

A pause, and then a hand went up. "The Civil War?" a student asked.

"Nope, that's probably one war he would have supported. Anyone else want to take a guess?"

"The World War?" I didn't even ask which one or if the student knew there had been two. I just said, "No," hearing one more confirmation that the school system was failing in its job. After a guess of Korea and my hint that it began with a "V" the students guessed it.

That was two years ago while organizing for the first annual Martin Luther King writing contest in Milwaukee. Incidents like this had convinced members of a small progressive teachers' caucus in the public school system to initiate a creative approach to increasing and improving the teaching of Black history in the public and private schools.

The Contest's Origins: Black History Turned Colorless

In 1981, the caucus, Educators United (Educadores Unidos), had managed to get the union, the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA), to endorse the idea of a national holiday for Dr. King's birthday and to hold its first workshop on the teaching of Black history.

As in most urban school systems, white supremacy and discrimination are not uncommon. In Milwaukee, two decades of struggle against segregation in the schools led to court-ordered integration in 1976. While initially supported by large sections of the Black community, the plan finally implemented by the School Board was so unequal in terms of busing and school closings that more and more people began to criticize it. That struggle continues even now as new proposals for metropolitan integration are debated. But as teachers, some of us saw another aspect of assimilationist integration that got very little attention: the decrease in the teaching of Afro-American history, including to Black students (who now comprise nearly 50% of the student population).

One positive if unintentional consequence of the school board's past racist policy of segregating black staff and students into inner-city schools was expanded teaching of Afro-American history and culture focusing on February, Black History Month. This

declined drastically with the integration of the teaching staff (which is still only 18% black). With Black teachers dispersed, the likelihood of month-long activities during February declined, special days such as "dashiki day" all but vanished, and Black History Month soon lost ground to Respect Week, Human Relations activities and ethnic festivals where all nationalities were treated "equally."

A particularly obnoxious example of this backtracking took place during Black history month at a middle school that had been integrated a few years earlier. Some Black teachers had organized a school-wide Black History Assembly Program and the special guest had suggested that the program be closed with "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the Black National Anthem. In order to familiarize the students with the words the Black teachers printed up copies of the song and distributed them to all homerooms. The Black vice-principal who was helping to organize the event went over the PA system and told homeroom teachers to have their students practice reading the song. Immediately a number of white teachers converged on the MTEA Building Representative (steward) who was white and demanded the union do something about this unreasonable(!) demand. He did and the announcement was retracted. The special guest ended the program with the song anyway, much to the chagrin of several white teachers. Later, partially as a result of this incident, the central administration issued an edict saying that the national anthem of any other country or people could only be played if accompanied by the U.S. national anthem.

The Contest Begins

Late in 1982 members of our caucus hit on the idea of a writing contest as a way to encourage teachers to teach more Black history. A contest would allow us to make an end run around the central bureaucracy and put forward a relatively more accurate portrayal of Black history while also building the progressive network. So we started organizing a writing contest: chose a theme, solicited endorsers, and put out publicity. The theme the first year was "Imagine a Dream — Imagine a dream that you and Dr. King would share for Milwaukee and the world today."

The executive committee of the MTEA initially hesitated to endorse the contest and did so only after a floor discussion at the general assembly of the Building Representatives (BRs). The discussion centered on "who was behind this contest" and whether the union should help out financially. The endorsement was nearly unanimous but financial support was denied. As a compromise a hat was passed which raised \$150.

The contest itself was open to all public or private school students in the city of Milwaukee from kindergarten to 12th grade including students in high school equivalency programs. Different categories existed for various levels with the allowable number of words increasing from 50 in first and second grade to 300 in high school. Kindergarten classes were allowed to do group projects. Essays could be submitted in either English or Spanish. Students' essays were judged on clarity and creativity in interpreting in their own lives King's ideas.

The success of the contest the first year outstripped our limited organizational structure. With 1800 essays to judge, an awards ceremony to plan and prizes to find (including the hand production of 1800 ML King lapel buttons) we all but burned out.

But the children had spoken of their dreams: "If I had a dream," wrote a white 3rd grade student, "I would wish that there were no prejudice . . . I would make the world a nicer place to live in — no pollution, no more wars, no more killing." And every participant received a lapel button and a certificate of participation. Over night some schools were deluged with hundreds of ML King buttons that the students wore proudly.

The Second Year: Peace with Justice

Although we pledged to ourselves the second year to be better organized we hesitated in planning the contest as some caucus members thought that if we did the contest we'd have no time for anything else. Starting late the second year was a bit easier, however, because our legitimacy had been established. In addition, we decided to have the contest organized by a broader committee than just our caucus, both so that more (non-teacher) community people might participate and in order to decrease any apprehensions the union leadership had about our intentions. Thus the ML King Writing Contest Committee was formed.

"The Dream Continues"

M.L. King Writing Contest



AWARDS AND RECOGNITION CEREMONY
MARCH 8, 1984

"Those of us who love peace must organize as effectively as the war hawks. As they spread the propaganda of war, we must spread the propaganda of peace. We must combine the fervor of the civil rights movement with the peace movement. We must demonstrate, teach, and preach, until the very foundations of our nation are shaken...."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The theme for the second year was "The Dream Continues — What can I do to work towards Dr. Kings' dream of peace with justice?" The committee consciously

chose that topic in hopes of directing some teaching and discussion towards the problems of war and injustice in Central America. We distributed major excerpts of King's *Beyond Vietnam* speech in a small resource packet that we made available to all schools through the union's BRs.

During the second year we received more endorsements as politicians fell over each other to get their name on our publicity. The MTEA was much more supportive also, printing the basic brochure and poster and distributing them through the BRs. This proved much more successful than distributing the materials through the principals which we had done the first year.

Nearly 2500 students participated in the second year and a multinational crowd of over 500 parents, children and teachers participated in a moving awards ceremony where the top 40 finalists were honored. The winner in the 3rd/4th grade category, Sharonda King, expressed a lot of children's feelings when she read her essay at the ceremony: "We are keeping Dr. King's dream alive by sharing and learning about different cultures. We are discussing how children from different races can have respect for each other. We can use non-violence every day. We learn to fight with words and our sensible minds rather than violence as our weapons. We are sharing freedom together. We shall be like sisters and brothers. We will learn to respect each other. We will learn to walk together and play together. We will be as one blood."

At the ceremony all the winners were given prizes including books, educational toys, Black history calendars, gift certificates, magazine subscriptions, etc. Buttons were again distributed to all participants and essays were displayed at the local ML King public library.

But as much as the numbers showed success, the quality of the essays, nearly half of which were straight biographical sketches, showed some weaknesses. Few essays showed a very deep understanding of the relationship between peace and justice, and we all found out how difficult it is to teach these concepts in a short period of time. The other major problem we had was with standardizing and coordinating the preliminary judging which included nearly 75 people.

The Third Year: Getting Organized

Two weeks after the school year started this year we held our first organizing meeting. By early November we had chosen our theme and broken down into 4 different subcommittees: judging, fundraising, publicity and education/resources. This year's theme is: "Why is Dr. King an American hero and what would you have to do to follow in his footsteps?" The MTEA is again giving full support and printing up a 30-page resource packet that the ML King Committee has put together. Working through the MTEA's Human Relations/Minority Educators we have helped organize a workshop on how to teach Black history which will be held in January prior to the contest which runs through the first three weeks of February.

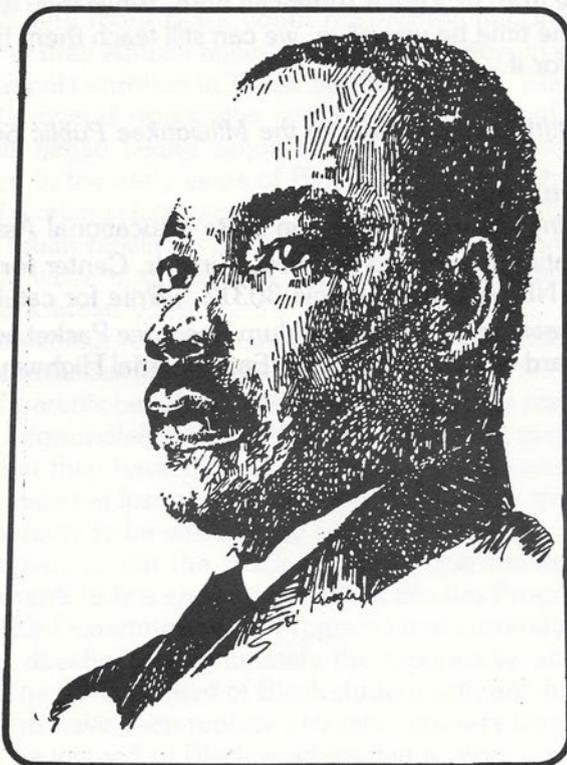
This year the committee has grown to include at least two dozen active organizers with nearly a hundred more helping by selling raffle tickets or judging. We hope that at

least 300 teachers will participate and involve over 3000 students.

Reflections on the Work

This is mass education initiated by left forces. We consciously saw a problem and developed a creative solution that allowed us to maintain a great deal of initiative while at the same time working through a racist school system. The contest has expanded beyond all of our hopes, putting us in contact with many progressive-minded people.

At the same time it has put us face to face with our own inexperience which has manifested itself particularly in fund raising and publicity.



On a more general educational level two criticisms have been leveled. One is by some who don't like the competition inherent in contests. We've been aware of this and have down-played competition by giving all participants both a lapel button and a certificate of participation. Moreover, we think it is good to specifically honor those students who have excelled.

The other criticism has been that an ML King writing contest centers too much on King, at the expense of the movement as a whole and other leaders as well. This is a

problem, especially given the general level of ignorance that exists in our society about Afro-American history (even among teachers). We have tried in our educational materials, however, to stress that King should be taught within the context of Afro-American history and struggle, that people remember that it is "the people who make history" — the Rosa Parks and the other 50,000 people of Montgomery who boycotted for a year. Finally we stress what we feel is King's most overwhelmingly positive feature: that he was an activist. He not only criticized injustice. He did something about it. He not only decried discrimination and inequality, he struggled against it. He not only wanted peace, but gave his life for it.

For we realize that the children we are teaching about King were born after the assassin's bullet stole from us a great American hero. While they will never know what it was like to live at the time he was alive, we can still teach them his dream and the necessity to struggle for it.

—Bob Peterson

Bob Peterson is a fifth grade teacher in the Milwaukee Public Schools.

MLK Teaching Guides:

ML King Jr. Teaching Guide. Washington State Educational Association.

Historical and educational materials from ML King Jr. Center for Social Change, 449 Auburn Avenue NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30312. (Write for catalogue.)

Dr. ML King Jr., Great American. Curriculum Resource Packet available from Los Angeles County Board of Education, 9300 East Imperial Highway, Downey, California 90242.

Prospects for Black Student Activism in the Boston Area

Black Studies Programs and Black student activism within the greater Boston area are both at a very low point. Black Studies and Black student activism are inseparable since Black Studies was born out of Black student activism. The demand for Black Studies grew as more and more Black youth realized the importance of their history and the contribution of their African ancestors as major factors in defining themselves.

As more Black students enrolled in Black Studies courses, Black students became more conscious of the overall oppressive conditions Black people face. More importantly, Black students began taking action to change this. A significant number of students who enrolled in the early years of Black Studies came from grassroots backgrounds and were of working class parents. Their opportunity to go to college came as a result of the mass urban rebellions of the 1960s. The mass movements of the '60s forced predominantly white institutions — especially on the East Coast — to enroll large numbers of Black urban youth.

Today a larger percentage of Black students who are enrolled come from more middle and upper middle class families able to fully or partially finance their education. Most of the students' parents benefitted and received jobs as a result of the movement of the '60s as well. Unfortunately, today's students have what may be classified as historical amnesia, in that they have little or absolutely no understanding of the blood, sweat and tears and even the loss of life that paved the road — thus making it possible for them and their parents to be where they are.

As the years changed, so did the Black Studies Departments. Not only did they change from Departments to less empowered Black Studies Programs, but many were simply dismantled. The Departments and Programs that currently exist have changed in both purpose and direction. Unfortunately the progressive and activist instructors who played a role in the development of Black student activism and the formulation of Black Studies Programs have been replaced by more conservative instructors and program directors. This new breed of Black academician is more concerned with tenure, and social, economic, and professional stratification than with the preparation of Black students for a lifetime contribution to the Black community.

Individualism and personal stratification are, in turn, reflected in the attitudes of Black students. And with this "mind set," today's Black students are positioned in a dangerous zone where many seem to take progress that Black people have gained for granted. Despite these changing times, some Black students continue to struggle within the universities, trying to broaden the relationship with the Black community. These few students are part of the same student network who five years ago played a

crucial role in the development of the now defunct Boston Black United Front and the Community Justice Committee. Those organizations led community struggle against police brutality and murder and racist and sexist violence.

The prospects of rebuilding a new, city-wide Black student network are very good. This is due in large part to the impacts of the 1983 Mel King mayoral campaign and the Jesse Jackson presidential campaign which aroused and activated many Black students. Although these campaigns were electoral in nature, they got students to focus not only on local community concerns but national and international concerns as well. It will also be interesting to see what impact the unrest in the Black townships of South Africa will have among Black students. The recent wave of arrests of Black American leaders protesting against apartheid may also enhance the prospects of Black student activism in the greater Boston area and elsewhere.

With these developments, we can look with real hope that Black student activism will come alive in '85.

—T.M.

T.M. is a Black community activist from Boston.

Poems From Black History

FREDERICK DOUGLAS by Robert Hayden

When it is finally ours, this freedom, this liberty, this beautiful
and terrible thing, needful to man as air,
usable as earth; when it belongs at last to our children,
when it is truly instinct, brain matter, diastole, systole,
reflex action; when it is finally won; when it is more
than the gaudy mumbo jumbo of politicians;
this man, this Douglass, this former slave, this Negro
beaten to his knees, exiled, visioning a world
where none is lonely, none hunted, alien,
this man, superb in love and logic, this man
shall be remembered. Oh, not with statues' rhetoric,
not with legends and poems and wreaths of bronze alone,
but with the lives grown out of his life, the lives
fleshing his dream of the beautiful, needful thing.

★★★

CHILDREN'S RHYMES by Langston Hughes

When I was a chile we used to play,
"One—two—buckle my shoe!"
and things like that. But now, Lord,
listen at them little varmits!

*By what sends
the white kids
I ain't sent:
I know I can't
be President.*

There is two thousand children
in this block, I do believe!

*What don't bug
them white kids
sure bugs me:
We knows everybody
ain't free!*

Some of these young ones is cert'ly bad—
One batted a hard ball right through my window
and my gold fish et the glass.

*What's written down
for white folks
ain't for us a-tall:
"Liberty and Justice—
Huh—For All."*

*Oop-pop-a-da!
Skee! Daddle-de-do!
Be-bop!*

Salt'peanuts!

De-dop!

★★★

THE SONG OF THE SMOKE

by W.E.B. Dubois

I am the smoke king,
I am black.
I am swinging in the sky.
I am ringing worlds on high:
I am the thought of the throbbing mills,
I am the soul toil kills,
I am the ripple of trading rills,

Up I'm curling from the sod,
I am whirling home to God.
I am the smoke king,
I am black.

I am the smoke king,
I am black.
I am wreathing broken hearts,
I am sheathing devils' darts;
Dark inspiration of iron times,
Wedding the toil of toiling climes
Shedding the blood of bloodless crimes.

Down I lower in the blue,
Up I tower toward the true,
I am the smoke king,
I am black.

I am the smoke king,
I am black.

I am darkening with song,
I am hearkening to wrong;
I will be black as blackness can.

The blacker the mantle the mightier the man,
My purpl'ing midnights no day dawn may ban.

I am carving God in night,
I am painting hell in white.
I am the smoke king,
I am black.

I am the smoke king,
I am black.

I am cursing ruddy morn,
I am nursing hearts unborn;
Souls unto me are as mists in the night,
I whiten my blackmen, I beckon my white,
What's the hue of a hide to a man in his might!

Sweet Christ, pity toiling lands!
Hail to the smoke king,
Hail to the black!



HARLEM
by Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?



The Bennie Lenard Case: A Seven Year Struggle for Justice

Over the years many support committees have been built around many court cases. This article discusses one such case. It raises issues which differ somewhat from those encountered in doing work in defense of people facing criminal charges, since it involves a civil rights suit. These kinds of suits are notorious for taking years to resolve. This particular case was filed in Chicago by Bennie Lenard, a Black worker at a plant in a white community called Melrose Park just outside the city. Lenard was arrested without provocation and badly hurt while in the custody of the Melrose Park Police Department in January, 1977.

What follows here is, first, a summary of what happened in the legal proceedings. To understand the case and to learn from work done in its support, it is important to have some sense of its complexities and of the time frame involved in working in the courts. This might help give a better sense of why court fights can be part — but only part — of a broader strategy in the fight for equality and social justice. Then we'll get into some of the organizing questions which have come up during the case and some of their implications.

Lenard's case is perhaps unusually complicated, but it shares features with other important cases. One which comes to mind is the Karen Silkwood case, in which the Silkwood family tried to force liability on Kerr-McGee, to collect damages for Silkwood's radiation contamination and death, and to deter future corporate irresponsibility through a civil lawsuit. Another is the civil rights suit brought by the family of Fred Hampton and other Black Panthers against the city of Chicago, the State's Attorney and the Federal government, which dragged through the courts for 14 years before the case was settled.

The common denominator in all these cases is that they are civil actions brought by individuals who have been damaged by powerful entities. The cases have been in the courts for years, and they are part of broader struggles for justice: for occupational safety and health; for Black liberation; against police repression and brutality. Though each has been part of a broader movement, each also has its independent character within the legal system. One lesson in Lenard's case has to do with to what extent mass organizing is both possible and necessary when tied to a court action such as this.

The Trials

Lenard's descent into the court system began on January 31, 1977, when he was arrested by the Melrose Park police after a minor traffic incident in which a young white woman ran into his car. Following his arrest and after some 14 hours in the hands of

the police, Lenard was hospitalized for almost two months with severe eye and shoulder injuries. To justify Lenard's injuries, the police charged Lenard with nine separate offenses.

Organizing began, even while Lenard was still hospitalized, with three goals: first, to build pressure to beat the misdemeanor criminal charges against Lenard; second, to indict the cops who had been responsible for his injuries; and third, to begin a campaign in support of the civil rights action which was filed against the police and the Village of Melrose Park.

The first two efforts were closely connected and were largely based among workers at International Harvester, where Lenard was active in UAW Local 6. The Lenards refused to adopt the attitude that this sort of thing happened to Black people all the time, there was nothing to do about it, and they should cut their losses. They and many of Lenard's co-workers in the plant were particularly concerned about holding the Melrose Park police accountable, because it was widely thought that the all-white police force was actively hostile toward the many Black people who worked at factories in the white community there. So progressives in the plant, at the Lenard family's request, helped locate attorneys who would undertake a case framed in political terms as well as pursue more conventional legal strategies.

The net result of this phase of the case can be briefly summarized: helped by packed courtrooms and extensive publicity, Lenard was acquitted on eight of the nine counts, and the ninth was later thrown out on appeal. And despite grand jury testimony and much pressure placed on the States' Attorney's office, the State's Attorney never asked the grand jurors to vote out a true bill against the Melrose Park police (though observers feel it is likely that such a true bill — i.e., an indictment — would have been voted had the grand jury been asked).

Lenard's first civil rights trial began in February, 1980 (3 years after his arrest) and lasted five-and-a-half weeks in front of an all-white jury.

According to Lenard's testimony, after the accident he was handcuffed, put in the back of a squad car, and called racist names. He was hit in the face and eye with a hard object, like a nightstick, causing a permanent loss of vision. He was taken, semi-conscious, to the police station, dragged out of the squad car, and beaten and kicked into unconsciousness again. Then he was thrown onto the concrete floor of a cell, stripped to his underwear, doused with water, and left under a fan blowing air from an open window. The police refused to tell his family where he was for hours, and when the family came to the station they were greeted with racist insults as well. At the family's insistence, the police took Lenard to a nearby hospital, where he was given some Tylenol-3 and an icepack, and returned to a cell. Finally, after some 14 hours, Lenard was released on bond. His family immediately took him to a Chicago hospital, where he spent 39 days recovering from the injuries he suffered in police custody. Later that year he was hospitalized again for surgery.

The Melrose Park officers testified that Lenard slipped twice on the ice as they took him to the station, and once going up the stairs in the station, and that he fell on his

face three times, resulting in whatever injuries he suffered.

When the trial ended, the judge dismissed the Village of Melrose Park from the suit. The jury found that two Melrose Park officers were liable for having conspired to violate Lenard's civil rights and that their actions were motivated by racial hatred. Yet inexplicably, the jury also found that Lenard had not been beaten.

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Jury finished, but questions remain

CLEARCUT vindication eluded almost all parties in the Melrose Park police brutality suit decided last week in Federal District Court, Chicago.

A six person jury absolved of all liability the village and two of the four policemen named by Chicago resident Bennie Lenard as participants in an allegedly racially motivated beating that left him partially blind.

But was Lenard, a black employe at the International Harvester plant in the village, beaten by the two remaining defendants, policemen Robert Argento and Joseph Sansone? That issue hasn't been resolved.

Both sides have indicated that they may appeal. And both claimed victory.

THE JURY found that Argento and Sansone conspired to obstruct justice and deprive Lenard of equal protection under the law, and that they maliciously prosecuted him following a minor traffic accident three years ago by charging him with nine misdemeanors. All of the charges have been dismissed or dropped on acquittal.

But attorneys for the two policemen interpreted the verdict as a victory when



Bennie Lenard was awarded \$360,000 in damages last week in a case stemming from his alleged beating by police. This photo was taken in 1977 during a break in Lenard's trial on charges filed against him by police.

the jury said neither the policemen nor the village deprived Lenard of his civil rights.

They said that decision indicated that the jury accepted the policemen's contention that Lenard injured himself while resisting arrest, rather than Lenard's allegations of police beatings.

Two days later, the same jury stunned courtroom observers by awarding Lenard \$360,000 damages, including punitive damages of \$150,000 from Argento and \$75,000 from Sansone.

Then it was Lenard's turn to cheer, even though he originally sought \$18 million in damages.

"**WE ARE VERY** pleased," said his attorney, Cecile Singer of Chicago. "I don't think the jury gives \$360,000 just because someone was locked up in jail for 14 hours. I think what the jury said is clear."

And Judge Joel M. Flaum concurred with the policemen's interpretation and barred any testimony regarding damages suffered by Lenard as a result of the alleged beating. Flaum's ruling eliminated all of the testimony Singer was ready to present to document damages, she said.

Singer is confident the jury would have increased its award to \$1 million if it had heard that testimony.

JOHN POUST of Chicago, attorney for the policemen, said they were "extremely surprised and really baffled by the award," it having been determined that they weren't guilty of the beating.

Without elaborating, Poust said he will file several posttrial motions. Lenard may appeal the ruling that absolved Melrose Park of liability, Singer said.

The jury's findings should be examined by the U.S. attorney's office with an eye toward prosecution of Argento and Sansone, she added.

Mayor C. August Taddeo said Friday that the village will once again review the incident in light of the jury's findings. An internal police department investigation of the policemen's actions never was concluded.

"The good name of the village was upheld," Taddeo said. "We definitely feel vindicated. I'm behind the policemen 100 per cent—you can never tell what a jury is going to do."

The jury was not allowed to hear medical testimony about the extent of Lenard's injuries or their possible causes, because the trial had been divided into two sections: the first to determine liability, the second to determine damages. Once the jury decided there had been no beating, the judge would not allow testimony about Lenard's injuries. Even without such testimony, the jury returned a judgement of \$360,000 against the officers.

Both sides appealed. Three years after the trial, and 14 months after the case was argued on appeal, the Seventh Circuit found that the two officers had indeed conspired to deprive Lenard of equal protection of the laws, but that the trial judge's instructions to the jury had been wrong. For one thing, the appeals court held, Lenard should have been allowed to put on evidence about his injuries. So the case was sent back to Federal District Court for a trial to determine the extent of Lenard's damages, with limits on what kind of testimony could be presented in the damages trial.

In April, 1984 (more than 7 years after Lenard was arrested), the second trial began.

The first jury had not been allowed to hear medical testimony about the injuries Lenard and his doctors attributed to his beating. But the second jury was not allowed to hear anything about what caused his injuries. The jury awarded Lenard \$267,195. Neither side appealed the award, but Hartford Insurance Co., Melrose Park's insurance company, is refusing to pay off.

The case's legal contortions make it difficult to explain. Even lawyers who have followed all the proceedings have trouble keeping track of what has happened. For example, why would a jury which found that Lenard hadn't been beaten award him \$360,000, much of it in punitive damages? (That damage award ironically was uncollectible under the Melrose insurance policy, while Lenard's attorneys believe the second jury's award, though smaller, is potentially collectible.) Lawyers and other activists familiar with the case feel that much of the tortured reasoning found in the various court opinions comes from two interlocking factors: First, the courts' unwillingness to concede that there was actually a beating by two white cops, (and in fact the courts' historic cover-up of such beatings); but second, their desire to see Lenard get something, whether from some version of fairness or from a view that there would be trouble if he were left completely empty-handed.

The remaining legal issues boil down to whether Melrose Park has any legal responsibility to pay off part of the judgement against its officers, or whether it can get away with cutting the cops loose; and whether Hartford must pay the judgement under its insurance policy, or whether Lenard will ultimately find himself in the position of trying to collect a sizeable judgement from two individual policemen without many financial resources. These issues aren't glamorous, but they do raise important moral and political questions, and legally their resolutions are far from clear. It may be two or three more years before the matter is finally settled by the courts.

Today Lenard is still working at International Harvester. He can no longer see well enough to read or to drive, and his shoulder is permanently injured. He told reporters after the second trial that a roomful of money could not compensate him for having had his life destroyed by the Melrose Park police. He is 48 years old and is still waiting to see a nickel of the money he has been awarded. There is a lot of work ahead if he is to collect anything, and the outcome is far from certain. Yet Lenard has no doubts about the importance of having fought to get this far, and has no plans for getting out now.

Organizing and the Case

Lenard was an activist in the UAW, at Harvester, and in his community, and his response was an activist's response: to sue the police and Melrose Park, and to organize in support of his case.

Bennie Lenard's case became well known in the Black community in Chicago, and is still discussed today. There was much organizing and publicity about the case before and during the initial civil rights trial. The story was initially covered by the *Chicago Defender*, the city's principal Black-oriented newspaper, and subsequently received

extensive coverage in the rest of the city's papers and on the air. Lenard and his wife Ardrella spoke before the trial at many Black churches and had built up good relationships with Black community and political activists. Ironically, most people who knew of the case think that Lenard got his \$360,000 years ago.

The atmosphere in the city has changed greatly since the first trial. Black people in Chicago got Harold Washington elected Mayor and saw the appointment of the city's first Black police superintendent. They also elected two new aldermen with significant histories in struggle against police brutality: Bobby Rush, former Black Panther Minister of Information; and Wallace Davis, who was brutalized and shot by Chicago police and later received a 6-figure settlement from the city of Chicago for his serious injuries. The City has awarded major settlements to at least three families of victims of police killings, a dramatic reversal of past city policy. Had Lenard's injuries come at the hands of Chicago police, the case certainly would have been settled under the new administration.

Despite these changes, the strength of the Black community was not brought to bear significantly in Lenard's second trial. One reason was the age of the case, which for example made it difficult to interest the media in new developments like the second trial. Extensive publicity had been important in mobilizing, especially among Black people in the earlier years of the case, but the media wasn't interested after the first civil rights trial, and couldn't be used to reach people beyond the support committee's own contacts for the 1984 trial. Another reason was the committee's inability to mobilize in the community due to the committee's diminished size and strength. It would take patient work for a long time for supporters to rebuild some of the connections made before the first trial.

Lenard has worked at Harvester for 20 years. In 1977, Harvester had about 6000 workers and a strong union presence. At the time of the first trial, Lenard and his supporters at Harvester, in the local, and elsewhere in the UAW organized very actively for his case. The core of his support committee came from Harvester, though it was expanded beyond the union local early on the work. Today, Harvester is down to a workforce of 600, and Lenard is one of the lower-seniority workers. The vast majority of activist workers in the local have been laid off, and the union's treasury has been decimated by shrinking membership and corruption. Harvester workers several years ago were able to contribute several thousand dollars to Lenard's support committee, largely through plant gate collections; but at the retrial they were not a factor, because their own ranks had been so ravaged.

Building the Bennie Lenard Support Committee

One important factor in shaping support work for the case was the state of the Left and progressive movements. In 1977 in Chicago the Left was relatively large, and certainly a force able to make its presence felt within the broader mass movements, at the courthouses, in the shops and communities where its members were active. For a variety of reasons, the Left was unable to consolidate that influence over the years

even though other changes were taking place in the city which contributed to the dramatic shifts which culminated in Harold Washington's elections as mayor in 1983.

Immediately after Lenard's arrest, progressives at Harvester and their circles of supporters began to build a committee which would publicize the case, pack the courtroom for the trials, and thus create a favorable public climate and pressure in the courtroom. Their ability to mobilize, along with particular support for the case in the Black community, played an important role at critical points during the first years of the case.

By the time of the first civil rights trial, Lenard's case had resulted in a sizeable support committee (the BLSC) whose membership reflected the state of the (rather sectarian) Left of the time, and the higher profile and level of activity the Left was able to maintain then as well. Committee members were predominantly white leftists, though the committee drew Black supporters as well. Members brought the differences which existed in their section of the Left into the committee, and the difficulties the Left had in resolving its differences. BLSC members worked extremely hard. They handed out thousands of leaflets, and set up scores of speaking dates before thousands of people. But in retrospect the Lenards and others also recall the support committee meetings as ideological battlegrounds, where anyone unfamiliar with the Left's internal battles was uncomfortable and unlikely to return to a meeting.

During the time from 1977 through the first civil rights trial (in 1980), the main controversy within the BLSC came from a fundamental difference in perspective. Activists in the case started from the proposition that Lenard's case was important, but that it was one case of many and the work being done in Lenard's support was mainly important for its value in educating the masses and in advancing the mass movements. Sometimes this led to viewing Lenard simply as one among many members of the support committee. If there were a difference of opinion between the Lenards and committee members over a tactical decision, for example, some thought the difference should be settled by putting it to a vote of the committee, with the Lenards' votes having the same weight as any other committee member. The Lenards believed this view disregarded their very different stake in the outcome of the case. Not that the Lenards minimized the broader importance of their struggle for others trying to fight racist police brutality; after all, they were the ones who had initially decided to fight back and to make the fight a political one. Rather, their bottom line was that they could not walk away from the case, as others could and did over the years for many different reasons. They could not allow the support committee to make decisions which they felt they could not live with. This was one situation which forced them too often to have to mediate between different factions within the committee.

During that time, many BLSC members were against any "concessions" to a legal strategy. Their opposition to compromises in either mass or legal tactics had several sources: a failure to understand the complicated legal case; a more general unwillingness in principle to compromise; and, though never spelled out, doubts about whether lawsuits have more than educational value in advancing the cause of Black liberation or social justice. This put the Lenards, and their lawyers, in a difficult position at times.

The lawyers did not always have political unity with the support committee. And they sometimes did not have either the inclination or the time, given the demands of the case and of their other commitments, to struggle through every disagreement. Further, the same politics which led people to see the Lenards as just two more members of the support committee also led them to see the lawyers as working for the BLSC rather than for the Lenards. The Lenards were placed in a position of having to arbitrate political differences within the support committee, sometimes by making final decisions about legal tactics and strategy in consultation with their lawyers outside the support committee setting.

In the years after the first civil rights trial, the committee was unable to sustain itself. Much of what continuity there was came from the Lenard family. They have been involved for years in many activities beyond the scope of the case; things like Bennie's work as union committeeman and delegate, and Ardrella's in the Black United Front. Both were involved in the Washington campaign, and others in the family have worked on the committee as well as in other struggles. Without the Lenards' determination to keep fighting, no one could have continued to work on the case.

By mid-1984, support work was being done by less than a handful of activists, none of whom had been involved in the work around the first trial or has any significant base in the city. One reason the committee was unable to keep going was the sheer length of time the case dragged on between the first and second trials; the other side was in a much better position to wait the system out. Another was that the activists had little to tie themselves to the case. They were not personally involved, as the Lenard family obviously was. Only one organization which had members in the original BLSC even existed at the time of the second trial. Its representatives had rotated through the committee over the years, though the organization maintained its commitment. As committee members changed their priorities, their organizational affiliations, and sometimes their politics, they weren't able to stay active on the case and they moved on.

This transience certainly hurt building support for the second trial. While one or two people had remained in contact with the Lenards, the second trial came up very quickly after it got back onto the courtroom track, and there were only about 3 months available before the second trial to get work going. There wasn't time to rebuild the BLSC beyond its now-tiny core, let alone to do much community outreach. The work of reconnecting with supporters in the Black community fell to the Lenards themselves, but they had to spend time preparing for the trial. Activists who once had bases of support in various locals or shops had been laid off or had left their jobs, the support committee, or both; and the unions they worked in had also been badly hurt by the recession and changes in the political climate.

Even so, the support committee was able to organize one fundraiser which was done on a small scale but was very successful; it put out a press release before the trial started and one during the trial; and beginning about a week before the trial it circulated brochures about the case primarily to students and to some Black churches. It was able to get people to the courtroom during the trial. Currently the committee is working on a

letter-writing campaign directed at Hartford Insurance Co., to try to publicize Hartford's refusal to settle the case and to build public pressure on Hartford.

Today, if a similar case were initiated, it seems likely that those doing support work would be able to develop a more protracted view of what kind of support work would be necessary. Supporters would have to understand that once a legal case is initiated, particularly one of any complexity, it inevitably comes to take on a life of its own, especially because of the time span involved. Few who are not personally involved or affected can sustain the commitment to activism on a single case over years and years. This underscores the importance of building relationships with organizations — with political and community bases, like the Black churches — which maintain their institutional selves though their memberships may turn over through the years.

Before the first civil rights trial, struggles within the BLSC mirrored struggles on the Left about the value of reform work. Today, activists would probably have a clearer understanding of what is involved in seeing a civil rights suit through to completion, and would be better able to see that winning a civil rights suit involves issues and tactics distinct from the broader mass movement of which it is a part. While the overall political climate nationally has shifted to the Right since Lenard fell into the hands of the Melrose Park Police Department, the Black community has come into its own in Chicago. Work done on the Lenard case has undoubtedly contributed to political change in Chicago. A sense of the impact of cases like Lenard's should help sustain long-term work.

The Lenard case has been remarkable, not because it has lasted so long, but because it has been fought so hard and so publically for so long. It's obvious from the drawn-out court proceedings that the legal system has served to support a war of attrition against the Lenards, against people of color who are the main victims of police brutality, and against everyone else who tries to fight against police crimes. The Lenards have refused to be beaten down by the legal process. A new sense of injustice is generated each time the facts in the case are retold. The Lenard case shows something of the complexities and commitment involved in this kind of struggle, one which must take place both in the community and in the courts.

—Peggy Baker

Peggy Baker has been doing support work for the Bennie Lenard case. For more information about the Bennie Lenard case or to participate in the letter-writing campaign directed at Hartford Insurance, contact the Bennie Lenard Support Committee at P.O. Box 20716, Chicago, IL 60620.

Party Up, Part III: Organizing To Learn, Learning To Win

The last installment of this series concluded by contrasting two different conceptions of the party within Marxism. One view, with support in some of Marx and Engels' writings, regards the party as either consciousness or theory. The party is consciousness in the sense that it arises as the expression of the unfolding socialist consciousness of the working class. The party merely represents this consciousness; it does not seek to create or shape it significantly. Since socialism must be the creation of the self-activity of labor, the party should be no more than the instrument and product of this self-activity. If the workers have not attained Socialist consciousness, then there is little socialists can or should do, besides write back and forth to each other. To put themselves in the position of attempting to rouse the working class would be either futile, because the workers' self-activity is too limited and they are therefore not ready; or dangerous, because it would mean imposing a new domination on the workers, that of the self-appointed leadership. In a different version of the same basic conception, the party consists in a small advisory group dedicated to theoretical study. When the workers' self-activity generates sufficient socialist consciousness, they seek out the intellectuals for advice about how to wage their struggle or reconstruct society. This model is roughly the idea many people have about the relationship between Poland's *Solidarnosc* and its intellectual advisers from the former KOR group led by Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik and others.¹

Lenin counterposed a new idea of the party within Marxism (although even before Lenin, many if not most Marxists foresaw a more independent and active role for the party than that envisioned by Marx in the mid-1840s). He rejected the idea that the workers' self-organization in economic struggle would ever produce durable revolutionary convictions among large sections of the working class. Just as the state is not simply the instrument of the ruling class, but also has a formative role in constituting the ruling class as a class, so too does the workers' party help constitute the working class as a class acting in its own independent interests. "The essence of Lenin's contribution to Marxism . . . was that there must be *organization* and *direction* if the revolutionary process was to be advanced."² The party had to be more than the workers' own consciousness incarnate or a Marxist think-tank — it had to lead the working class in organizing itself to put an end to capitalism and usher in socialism.

If the party was to lead the revolutionary process, then Marxists had the task of fashioning the type of organization that could lead. Many criticisms of the principles governing the functioning of "Leninist" parties are in fact criticisms of the idea (some

would say, the pretension) of directing the struggle in the first place. Some of the theoretically more sophisticated Marxist critics of Leninism have recognized as much. Anton Pannekoek, the Dutch council communist, rejected any "leadership-oriented revolutionary party," arguing for organizations that "adopt a role completely different from that which present day [communist and socialist] parties aspire to play."³

The distinctive organizational principles of the "Leninist" party are the conclusions Lenin and others have drawn from the leading role they believed a Marxist party must fulfill. These principles include a concern with the boundaries of a party, with the distinction between membership and other types of connection to a party. "Precisely because there are differences in degree of consciousness and degree of activity, a distinction must be made in degree of proximity to the Party."⁴ Lenin argued that only a party membership restricted to active members could lead the whole class and the rest of the people. To allow a large inactive, dues-paying membership would tend to dampen the active role of a party in the class struggle. At the same time, it would make its decision-making process less democratic. On the other hand, the restriction on membership would enable the party to function more democratically than could a party with a larger but less involved membership. Those who made decisions would also be those who carried them out; those who did the work would decide how to do it.

But the chief organizational principle governing the "Leninist" model, and also the most controversial one, is known as democratic centralism.

Democratic centralism is sometimes understood as a collection of rules. The list is well-known among veterans of the 1970's and deceptively simple: the part is subordinate to the whole; the individual is subordinate to the collective; the minority is subordinate to the majority; a lower level is subordinate to a higher or more responsible level in the hierarchy of party committees; and the entire membership is subordinate to the "central" or chief policy making committee.

But democratic centralism is more than the regulations that insure, in a time-honored phrase, the unity of will and action of a Marxist organization. Democratic centralism is also and more importantly the precondition for and the principle of the elaboration of party policy and line. Democratic centralism is the particular form taken within a Marxist organization by what Mao called the mass line. Democratic centralism is also what permits a Marxist organization to practice the mass line. Mao describes the mass line as:

. . . take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action . . .

Democratic centralism therefore means above all the centralization of the ideas of the people and the disciplined propagation of these ideas once they are centralized.⁵

This runs contrary to a common interpretation of probably the most controversial point in Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?*, his argument that socialist ideology has to be

brought to the working class from outside the everyday economic struggle. Many people think that the party in *What Is To Be Done?* grows out of the superior Marxist knowledge supposedly possessed by a few intellectuals. The few intellectuals then spread their truths, and the party results from enough people accepting them, polishing them up, and applying them. But if that were the case, democratic centralism would not be necessary at all, except as a sop to the membership, to humor them into thinking that they have input into the process. All that would be needed would be centralism to get the word out. That is how many groups calling themselves Leninist and interpreting *What Is To Be Done?* in this way have run, but it's not what democratic centralism is about.

Far from being a result of already existing Marxism, a party or a party-form (defined as a Marxist organization functioning along roughly democratic centralist lines) is the precondition to Marxism. Marxist knowledge about the world is knowledge about how to change a world of exploitation, oppression and war. The only way Marxist knowledge about the world can be acquired is through the operation of democratic centralism and its "developed form," the mass line.

Democratic centralism presupposes political unity, though it is also the principle that allows for the strengthening of political unity. To work, democratic centralism additionally requires: internal democracy to enable the organization to gather in the ideas of the people and to evaluate them; discipline in the conduct of the discussion (debates that go on forever do not allow for any centralization of ideas or testing in practice) and in carrying out the policy decided upon; the gradual centralization of correct ideas; and the guidance of a leadership that has learned a little about distinguishing correct from misleading ideas and systematizing the correct ones. Each member and each leadership can only evaluate and systematize through the development and application of Marxist theory.

Of these various conditions for acquiring Marxist knowledge about changing the world, the guidance of capable leadership is finally the key to it. It is the key because knowledge is not a fixed result, but a process, and the process involves assessing many experiences, reaching some conclusions and then testing the conclusions. The ability to draw in all the relevant experience and make something new out of it is the pivot on which the process turns. A capable leadership can guide an organization in the development of its political unity, make internal democracy real, enable an organization to alter bad policies and put something in their place. But none of this can be accomplished, and what of it exists will be squandered over time, if there does not exist a group of people capable of reliably telling what's true or what gives more evidence of being true from what is not true or is unsupported by facts. Without a capable leadership, no amount of internal democracy or discipline will lead to the centralization of better ideas than the organization started with or to the implementation of a fruitful policy.

Democracy serves centralism in the sense that democracy must serve the centralization of correct ideas which can then be tested in the service of the struggle. Centralism

also serves democracy in the sense that centralism must give democracy purpose. The Marxist party exists above all to lead class struggles. It does not exist above all to represent opinion, whether of its members or of the people as a whole. The people already have their many ideas — there is no need of a party simply to mirror again all the ideas of the people. The purpose of a party is to serve the people's struggle, to fight against the tightly centralized leadership of the bourgeoisie. This is the difference between the party as consciousness and the party as a leading nucleus of the people.

Suppose we grant that a party is necessary in the long run. Is a party-form — a democratic-centralist organization that strives to function on a country-wide basis — necessary today? A number of socialist activists have concluded that it is not.⁶ Their arguments must be examined at another time. But from what has been said, it is clear that without democratic centralism, the process of acquiring Marxist knowledge about the world is seriously hampered.

Democratic centralism must exist today for three interrelated reasons:

1. for the taking of political and theoretical initiatives which go beyond the immediate, practical tasks that arise out of each individual's or each collective's mass work.

2. for the centralization of the elements of theoretical debate, and to insure that theoretical debate *progresses*. This has been one of the chronic shortcomings in the debate on the splintered Left.

3. for the application of a single political line. This last point is contested by many activists today, and so needs a thorough discussion. But briefly: Most everyone agrees that a line must be verified through practice. A line does not jump into our hands straight from a hard day at practice, however. Starting from both direct and indirect practice (history), a line is arrived at on the basis of Marxist theory. In order to verify anything, it is essential that whatever it is one wants verified be as clear as possible, that the bases on which it was arrived at be understood by all members of the organization, that the questions it is supposed to answer be understood by all also. If different people are applying different lines then the results of practice cannot be summed up to see whether in fact the line has been verified or falsified. Every line takes different questions to practice and every line finds a different set of answers significant and another set of answers insignificant. Therefore, two different lines cannot be evaluated at the same time, since each has discarded as insignificant results that may be crucial to an evaluation of the other. (It is impossible to be equally responsive to all aspects of practice at the same time). A line that calls for bringing white and Black workers together only around the issues they talk about when everybody is sitting together in the cafeteria may reach a very different conclusion from practice about the needs of the members of the plant than a line which gives more emphasis to dealing directly and independently with discrimination. This isn't to say that in every situation, everyone has to do the same thing. Sometimes organizations can agree to try different things at the same time. But this can only work, and can only lead to an advance in understanding and effectiveness, where everyone is agreed on the problem that different approaches are supposed to answer, and agreed on how to evaluate jointly those different approaches.

Otherwise the application of different approaches will lead to the division of the organization or to its dispersal.

A disciplined organization can correct a mistake. A disciplined organization can learn even from a bad policy because everybody has applied it and it is possible to sum it up collectively. A disciplined organization can make some gains even with a wrong or with an incomplete policy; indeed, because there is such a vacuum on the Left, almost any socialist-oriented organization can grow, at least for a time, if it consistently propagates its politics.

An undisciplined organization cannot correct a mistake (nor can an overcentralist one). An undisciplined organization cannot learn from a bad policy because different people have gone about their work in opposed ways, and there is no ability to look at the same picture and agree on what happened. A bad policy will wreck an undisciplined organization. But even a good policy can wreck an undisciplined organization. An undisciplined organization cannot learn even from a good policy, and often cannot make any gains even with a good policy. "The costs of any error made by a united party can easily be overcome; the damage done by a split or by a prolonged state of latent rupture can be irreparable and mortal." (Gramsci)

In the present period in the U.S., there is always the problem in Marxist organizations that people are reluctant to give power to the center because they don't have much confidence in the experience of the leadership. We cannot have leadership unless people agree to it, and we cannot have leadership unless there is going to be a delegation of power and responsibility from the membership to a leadership. Without enough confidence to give over power, there is no leadership and without leadership there is no Marxist organization. The party principle requires ceding power to a center. The experience of the working class movement with the power accumulated by party centers has been mixed, however. That contradictory legacy will be the subject of a future article in this series.

—Charles Sarkis

Footnotes

1. Diana Johnstone has recently pointed out that this picture misrepresents the relationship between the two in Poland. "How the French Left Learned to Love the Bomb," *New Left Review* 146, p. 21-22.
2. Ralph Milliband, *Marxism and Politics*, pp. 122.
3. Richard Gombin, *The Origins of Leftism*, p. 95.
4. Lenin, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*.
5. There is a good analysis of these issues in Kostas Mavrakis, *On Trotskyism*, p. 54-61, and it influences what follows. The Mavrakis' book is extremely biased in its assessment of Trotsky, and apologetic about Stalin, but it is good in some of its exposition of Mao and Mao's influence on Marxism.
6. See the articles in *The Problem of "the Party"*. *Contributions to a Discussion*.

Responses To Party Up

Progressive organizing has been an essential part of our ability to sustain ourselves as revolutionaries in the face of the defeat of the party building efforts of the 1970's. However, the comrade is correct when he points out that while progressive organizing is a necessary part of revolutionary struggle, it is not sufficient to resolve the contradictions it addresses. Sarkis is also correct when he asserts that if we restrict our practice to participation in reform struggles, we run a substantial risk of losing the revolutionary perspective and enthusiasm that allowed us to make valuable contributions to these struggles in the first place.

The question then becomes, how can we develop an approach to party building in the 1980's that integrates progressive organizing as an inherent part of that process? This question confronts, indeed haunts, all of the relatively small Marxist-Leninist organizations and revolutionary minded individuals that are the scattered remnants of the anti-revisionist party-building movement. What seems essential is to initiate some collective discussion of these questions.

In this regard, we feel that *Forward Motion* can play a key role. The task before us is to take the first steps to rebuild an anti-revisionist party-building tendency. Clearly, the development of such a tendency and ultimately a genuine party of the working class in this country is going to be a protracted struggle. We do have the advantage of a lot of sharp negative lessons from our immediate past. We need to see if we can unite on the conclusions to draw from those lessons.

We don't have a specific proposal at this time as to what sort of project would best move this work forward. We do feel that it is important for a broad range of forces to struggle together to arrive at one. Some suggestions are: 1) a joint theoretical journal; 2) a loose network of collectives organized around a particular practical focus such as Central American support work; 3) wider participation in mass organizing newsletters such as *Forward Motion* or the Federation of Revolutionary Socialists *Bulletin*; 4) a party building conference to discuss these problems.

There are pluses and minuses to each of these projects and focusing on one doesn't eliminate the possibility of working on others. Also, this list of suggestions is far from complete.

The most important thing is to initiate a collective discussion and arrive at a collective decision. We would urge the comrades of the Proletarian Unity League to continue to use *Forward Motion* as a forum for furthering this process.

We would like to commend the comrades raising the question of the party and urge other forces to participate in this struggle.

Comradely regards,
Joseph Plunkett for ORU

Response to the Sarkis article:

This brief article is in response to Charles Sarkis' article, "Party Up", in the June 1984 issue of *Forward Motion*. I fully agree with his conclusion, that "the reaction to the 'party-building' of the 1970s has to be a more realistic, more Marxist party-building in the 1980s." The question, of course, is how we are going to do this in the nonrevolutionary (to put it mildly) conditions we find ourselves in in the United States today. For that matter, who are "we"?

"We" are Marxist-Leninists, in local collectives and regional or national Marxist-Leninist organizations, or unaffiliated individuals (like myself). We are anti-revisionist, well aware that the Soviet Union is not a socialist society leading the way to communism, and greatly influenced by the work of Mao and his comrades in attacking revisionism and building socialism in China. At the same time, we are successors to a tradition which has not clearly examined and broken with fundamental theoretical and organizational errors of decades of domination of the international communist movement by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In the 1970s, things were easy. We knew we had to follow the lead of the Communist Party of China in combatting revisionism, and we had to build a real communist party to take the place of the revisionist CPUSA. So, basing ourselves in the works of The Big Five (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao), we set to work drawing up Party platforms and creating The Party. Unfortunately, we somehow managed to come up with rather a few parties and pre-parties, each voraciously competing with the rest for hegemony among Marxist-Leninists. Moreover, we blindly followed the practice of the Third International in creating bureaucratic organizations which constituted caricatures of democratic centralism.

The result, as we know only too well, has been disaster. Not only have we not created the vanguard party, we have not even created a viable national organization which can constitute the center of a party-building movement. We have burned out many revolutionaries and left the Left wide open to ideological domination by revisionism. We have learned some things, however: that we must examine critically what has been passed down to us as Marxist-Leninist theory, especially in terms of current social conditions in the U.S., rather than slapping together high-sounding platforms from the works of The Big Five; that we must organize ourselves in a democratic way which releases the energy and initiative of all the group's members; and that we must take a protracted view toward organizing ourselves on a national scale, accepting that there are strong ideological differences among ourselves which will have to be resolved in comradely, systematic theoretical and political struggle. If we have learned this much, then we may be able at last to move forward.

A Marxist-Leninist Theoretical Journal

As one important way of moving forward, let me suggest the creation of a Marxist-Leninist theoretical journal. Given that there exists no leading center for party-building in the U.S., it is important that we at least systematically develop and exchange our views on Marxist-Leninist theory, in a way which politically draws together both existing organizations and unaffiliated Marxist-Leninists. Such a journal should deal mainly with questions of theory, with applications to our social conditions. It should also include summations of our party-building experiences, but not concentrate much on experiences in the mass movements, which are already published in such magazines as *Forward Motion*. In fact, we should regard the theoretical journal as the major aspect of a project which could include other forms of discussion, such as national study groups on particular theoretical and political questions facing us.

We should be clear that this project, and its main component (the theoretical journal), make no pretensions toward being an organizing center of the party-building movement. Such a center is clearly needed, but the project should be seen as promoting the evolution of a center by serving as a means for movement-wide theoretical development and struggle. This sort of project would have been unthinkable in the 1970s: first, because of its limited scope, rather than working toward the immediate formation of the vanguard party; and second, because it presupposes that Marxist-Leninists are willing to accept that they have ideological differences that will not be resolved quickly, and be supportive of each other throughout the protracted process of achieving political and organizational unity. For the sake of the revolution, I hope that we have learned enough about the effects of sectarianism and small-circle mentality to be able to work together on such a project.

I see this project involving both organized and unaffiliated Marxist-Leninists, with a political basis of unity along the lines of the first section of this article. (The project's basis of unity, in both its political and organizational aspects, must of course be specified explicitly in point form, but my purpose here is to initially put forward my ideas for the project.) No organization should seek to dominate the project, and the project should be supportive of all the organizations taking part in it, in publicizing their views and activities. There must also be a way for individual Marxist-Leninists to involve themselves in the project as fully as they wish, grasping and building the project as their own. Organizationally, there must be well-defined responsibilities for the work of the project, including an overall coordinating committee, and there must be periodic congresses to evaluate past work, set policy for future work, and elect officers. There should also be some means of systematic discussion of what the project is doing (an internal bulletin).

The journal itself should be of high quality, regarding physical appearance as well as theoretical level, and it should be distributed as widely as possible in Left bookstores. Thus we are talking about a long-term, "professional" project which will hopefully play an important role in building the revolutionary movement in the U.S., a project which

should not be undertaken without commitment from Marxist-Leninist organizations and individuals sufficient to ensure its success. I look forward to hearing your reactions to this proposed project.

—Sammy Michaels
P.O. Box 20067
Seattle, WA 98102

The British Miners Strike and Labor in Thatcher's Britain

Britain isn't what it used to be, and the same goes for British politics, Britain is no longer the strong welfare state it once was, where all could expect to be taken care of from the cradle to the grave. Since her election as Prime Minister in 1979, Margaret Thatcher has drastically altered Britain's course away from what some on both sides of the political spectrum have called 30 years of "socialism."

This new direction has included getting the state out of the business of owning and running British industries, severe cuts in social spending, and restructuring the British economy itself. To accomplish these tasks, the Conservative Prime Minister has had to take on the unions.

Having lived under Ronald Reagan for four years, a lot of this sounds very familiar. But our social "safety net" has never been as extensive in the US as it has for people in Britain, nor has the British labor movement ever been as powerless to resist attacks upon itself as its US counterpart. In light of this, you might get an idea of what's at stake and of the intensity of the present battle being waged in Britain.

The differences, and the similarities, of British and U.S. labor and politics are remarkable. They reach out and grab you. Though the battle is far from over, British society in many ways has already begun to resemble the dog-eat-dog, private enterprise American ideal of Ronald Reagan, Thatcher's ideological twin.

I had the opportunity of getting a closer look at British Labor this past summer. The British National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) have been engaged in a bitter national strike since March to prevent the shutdown of what the Thatcher government calls unprofitable mines, twenty of them to be exact, which would wipe out 20,000 jobs. The closing of these mines is only phase one of Thatcher's game plan to get the government out of the mining industry altogether. If Thatcher succeeds in closing these mines, the next step is to sell off the rest, putting what's left of the mining industry into private hands.

The strike began in the militant Yorkshire area on March 9 and quickly spread to most other coal areas. However, the stoppage has been less than 100% among Britain's 186,000 miners. Although the NUM leadership declared the strike a national one, most miners in many of the smaller mining areas and in the highly profitable Nottinghamshire coalfield have continued to work. This has caused deep divisions and resentment in many mining communities, and has led to violent confrontations between striking miners and scabs and police, with scores being sent to hospitals. Divisions over this strike have even surfaced within families.

Inevitably picketers have initiated some of the violence. Yet British trade unionists point to the police overwhelmingly as the main perpetrators of picket line violence. Never before, many said, have they seen so much police violence.

The excessive police violence has given way to new attitudes among miners concerning the role of the police. People now talk of Northern Ireland coming to England, since some of the police units used against the strikers received their "anti-riot" training in the streets of Belfast and Derry. Freedom of movement is also restricted in mining areas with roadblocks set up designed to prevent miners from traveling to "trouble" areas under threat of arrest. The British press has been unrelenting in its tirade against the strike and the NUM leadership and has gloated over polls suggesting that public opinion is far from unanimously behind the strikers.

Far from being the monolithic militant bloc that I imagined it to be, the British Labor movement as a whole has not been prepared, or willing, to give the miners' struggle their wholehearted support. Many national and local unions as well as local branches of the Labor Party have taken up collections for the miners. But some key union leaders like Frank Chapple of the Electrical workers and Bill Sirs of the Iron & Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) publically attacked the strike just days before Britain's Trades Union Congress (TUC — Britain's national trade union federation) was to meet for its annual congress, at which the miners' strike was to be the most prominent issue on it's agenda.

The miners' strike overshadowed the rest of the business of the 116th Congress of the TUC. Held in Brighton, England from September 3-7, the congress was attended by 1200 delegates from 98 unions, the majority of whom appeared willing to stand behind the miners in their struggle to save the mines and their jobs. This support was reflected in the leadership of the TUC — in its General Council. (The General Council is the British equivalent of the AFL-CIO Executive Council).

The material assistance given to the miners from other unions has been invaluable. At the Congress, however, the question was how much pressure could they bring to bear upon the Thatcher government to save the miners' jobs. There were calls from some unions to back the strikers with more militant action, including one proposal for a 24-hour general strike. But it became increasingly clear that the trade union movement would only deliver limited backing to the miners. Representing power station workers, who are in a unique position to deliver effective support to the miners because of their relationship to the coal industry, Frank Chapple flatly announced that "power workers will be told to carry on with their normal duties," adding that the "miners do not deserve the support of other unions."

Even one of the leading left-wingers in the labor movement, Ray Buckton of the Train Drivers union, conceded that "Some of our own members require a lot of argument and persuasion before they will take a risk on someone else's behalf." Coal stock is carried by train from the operating mines to the power stations.

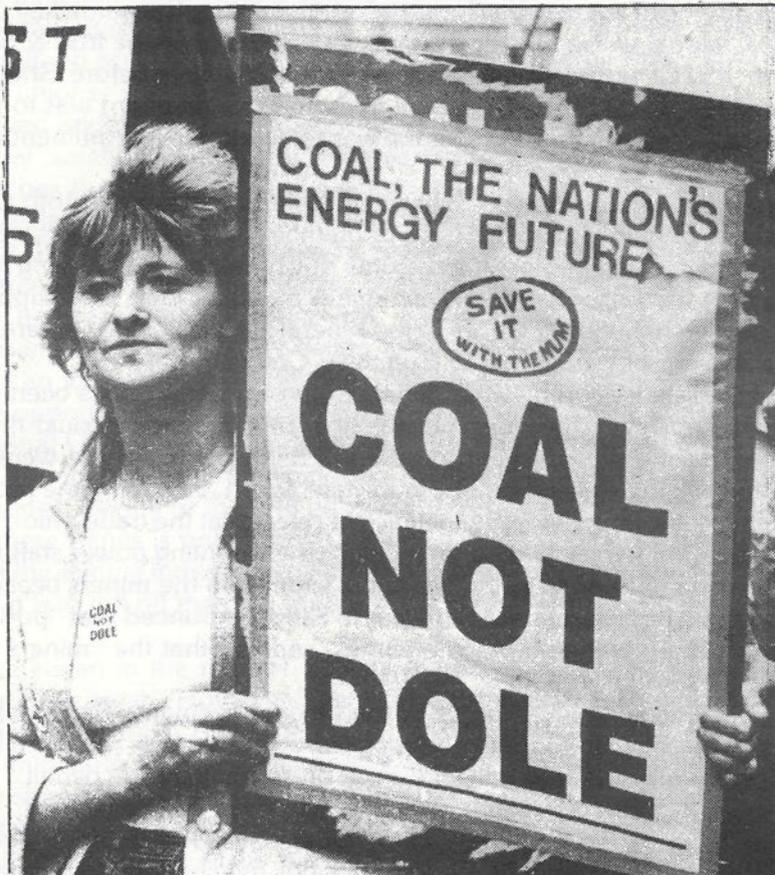
Even so, the overwhelming majority of the Congress delegates approved, over the objections of the more right-wing unions, resolutions fully backing the miners. Several

thousand miners from around Britain had also come down to Brighton to demonstrate outside the congress, pressing their fellow unionists inside the hall to stand behind them in their struggle and to let their fury loose on Steel Union leader Bill Sirs, with chants of "scab" and "judas" for his unions' refusal to get behind their strike.

Delegates inside the hall, likewise, interrupted the speech of General Secretary-elect Eric Hammond of the Power Union at several points. Still, the victorious pro-miners resolution of the TUC was described by political observers as more than the trade union movement could deliver.

A Few Observations

I make no claim to know all the ins and outs of this strike or to understand all the complex problems facing British labor, but it's sometimes useful for an outsider like myself to have a fresh look from a different perspective.



Barnsley miners' wives demonstrating their support for the strike.

Maggie Thatcher came to power in Britain a year before Reagan was elected president of the US. She took charge of a troubled economy promising better times for Britain's people and a more healthy and competitive economy, and gave what is now the all too familiar austerity program: belt-tightening, budget cuts, and a hard line against the demands of labor. Britain already had a tremendously high unemployment rate, but the people of Britain hadn't seen anything yet. Unlike in the U.S. where unemployment leveled off temporarily, the jobless rate in Britain just continued to grow. Joblessness in this nation of about 58 million is around 4 million.

Thatcher's right wing policies have met a much higher level of opposition here than Reagan's have in the U.S. The political spectrum in Britain is much more polarized than in the US as well. For one thing, a more militant and ideological working class tradition in the British Labor movement has meant that more left politics have a legitimacy and a mass following that does not exist in the U.S.

Socialism isn't nearly as dirty of a word here, and various visions of socialism have a working class following, particularly in the trade unions. Furthermore, Thatcher's policies of hardship for Britain's working class have pushed the trade unions further to the left. The Labor Party left wing appears to have shed its traditional role of loyal opposition. Its more combative approach to the political and economic struggle has created some political realignments, mainly a split in the Labor Party itself, with more moderate forces deserting to form a more conservative social democratic party. Thus far, the social-democrats' hopes to become a major political party have not materialized.

As an American trade unionist, I could certainly appreciate the fact that our counterparts in Britain can be open socialists in their unions. That's certainly hard to do in most US unions. Not only are socialist views tolerated, but in many of the British unions, from the national level on down, they are even encouraged.

It was kind of nice to sit through part of the Trades Union Congress and listen to union leader and delegates both begin speeches with "As a socialist . . ."

In many instances, some of these socialist trade union leaders are more than your traditional social-democrat of western Europe. Arthur Scargill himself, head of the miners' union, has pro-Moscow leanings. Though Scargill's leanings are unfortunate, they give an idea of the level of tolerance in the British union movement.

What is truly ironic about this is that the Polish state, which he supports against the outlawed union Solidarity, one of the greatest working class movements we've seen in decades, has been selling coal to Britain throughout the strike, no small contribution to the Thatcher government to hold out against the striking miners.

Another thing which impressed me about the Congress was what appeared, by US standards, the democratic nature of the proceedings themselves. There seemed to be a lot of democratic discussion on many issues. You got the sense of rank and file participation. And issues like racism and international solidarity, and Reagan's foreign policy and the US presidential elections were hot topics.

Unity around opposition to Reagan's military buildup in Europe, particularly in Britain, was substantial, with a few unions, such as the Electrical Union not surprisingly,

being in the minority. One leader railed against the Reagan administration turning Britain into the "world's biggest aircraft carrier" with all the advanced weapons, missiles, and nuclear powered submarines that the US has been sending over.

Parallels With US Labor

In certain ways, you can't help but envy British labor. They have a left wing, and a significant one at that. A socialist consciousness runs through sectors of the British working class. We don't have those things in the US.

Still, British labor has some serious problems, some of which bear a striking resemblance to the problems and weaknesses we face in the US labor movement. In this nation of about 58 million, 4 million are unemployed, and there are no signs that this will change for the better any time soon. I spoke of the conservative Thatcher government's attempts to dismantle the welfare state, and I must stress this is no rhetoric. The Tories are dead serious about it.

The British unions, as in the US, have suffered declines in membership. At the end of 1983, membership in the TUC stood at 10,082,144, compared with 10,510,157 in the previous year. A loss of almost one-half million members.

This massive jobless rate, in addition to massive cuts in funding for health care, education, and other social services in Britain, you would think, should be enough to unite the British working class to topple the conservative government.

But despite the efforts and organizing of labor's left wing, racism and nationalism are still strong in Britain. Upon Britain's victory over Argentina in the Falkland Islands/Islands Malvinas war, Thatcher called for national elections. Her handling of that dispute caused Thatcher's popularity to swell and she was easily reelected. Opposition to the government's anti-working class politics collapsed in the face of jingoism and Britain's aggression against a third world nation. The Falkland Islands war was to many British what Iran and the hostages were to many Americans.

The composition of the 1200 delegates at the TUC congress was a telling sign of the weaknesses of British labor. Only 13% of the delegates were women, though it was pointed out that the number has risen from previous congresses. The number of non-white delegates was extremely low. Several delegates made impassioned speeches to their fellow delegates for the unions to deal with the fact that non-white people don't see the unions as belonging to them, and for the unions to aggressively combat discrimination.

One of those delegates was a middle-aged white woman from a London hospital, with an unmistakable Irish brogue. Being Boston Irish, I appreciated that. Anyone growing up in Boston would understand why.

But it seemed evident at the congress that labor activists and leaders could whip up more enthusiasm for fighting the US military buildup in Britain than they could for a stronger and more consistent fight against racism in Britain. And while resolutions were adopted supporting freedom struggles in many parts of the world, when it comes to the Irish struggle, even mild resolutions can be very controversial. When a resolution was

proposed opposing the use of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland, support for this was far from unanimous.

Britain's Black & Asian Communities

Britain's "race problem" first gained widespread international attention in the early to mid seventies with the rise of the racist National Front, which began organizing before Thatcher came along. They openly organized against the minority population and advanced a number of blatantly racist views, such as the idea that Blacks and Asians, etc. were the major cause of unemployment, that it was "outrageous" that these Black "foreigners" would be allowed to enjoy jobs and benefits of Britain's society while true Britons (read white people) were out of work. They openly advanced slogans like "keep Britain white" and demanded strict immigration laws, and some demanded that Britain's minority populations be "sent home." Britain's non-white immigrants arrived relatively recently. At the end of the second world war, as former colonies throughout Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean gained independence, hundreds of thousands from those colonies, being British subjects, settled in Britain.

This immigration lasted throughout the 1950's and 60's, until rising white British resentment led to stricter immigration laws. You don't hear as much from the National Front these days. Perhaps the Front's blatantly vicious brand of racism, with the wearing of the union jack, and yes, nazi swastikas, was just a little too distasteful for British society. After all, Thatcher could certainly appeal to white racist hostility toward non-whites, which she did when she first ran for the office of Prime Minister. She cleaned up the rhetoric, but the Conservatives had done essentially what the Front was agitating for with the adoption of harsh immigration laws toward African, West Indian, and Asian "British subjects."

When it comes to the issue of race, Britain is in some ways a mirror image of US society, though there are some important differences.

Most of those immigrants settled in the large cities, occupying the worst of the housing, with only the least-paying and most menial jobs available to them. Although many whites like to complain about "foreigners" taking their jobs in an economy suffering from massive unemployment, the fact remains, like in the US, that non-white unemployment is far more severe than it is for whites.

And, increasingly, police harrassment and deportations of non-whites is becoming more and more common.

One thing that I did find interesting was that there is little racial segregation by neighborhood. In London, for example, with exceptions like the Black community in Brixton, in the south of London, neighborhoods are not racially segregated at all. Segregation is more according to class or income level.

I spoke with one young Black woman who was a delegate at the Trades Union Congress, and we attempted to do a little comparison of the situation of Black people in the USA and Britain. Never, she said, did Black people in Britain experience the terror and violence at the levels that Afro-American people have in the US, particularly in the

South. On the other hand, she spoke of an insecurity that Black people in Britain have, of not having a long history in Britain as compared to over 400 years in the US.

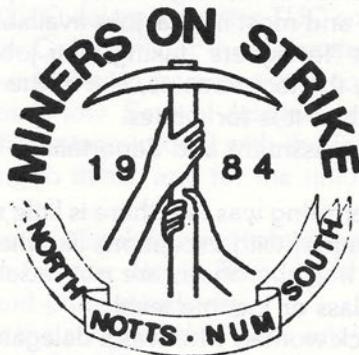
Proportionally, the number of African, West Indian, and Asian people in Britain combined is much lower than that of Black people alone in the US: Roughly 3 million out of 58 million compared to about 30 million out of 215 million. The fact that the numbers of Blacks in Britain are so relatively low by US standards gives a sense of insecurity and powerlessness.

Also, unlike Afro-Americans, who have a history in the US that is longer than that of many white people, non-white people in Britain have only been in Britain for a few decades, and therefore are still not considered British by many white Britons. British-born sons and daughters of immigrants from India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Jamaica, Trinidad and elsewhere are still considered foreigners in the land of their birth. For example, the unionist I spoke with complained that white delegates would approach her and ask whether she was a guest trade unionist from some African nation.

There are some more favorable signs. A few years ago, the depressed state of the British economy sent unemployed youth into the streets and a number of English cities erupted into urban rebellion. Like the urban riots in the U.S. over a decade ago, many of these rebellions centered in Britain's Black communities. Unlike the US rebellions, however, many of those in Britain saw Black and white youth rioting together.

* * * * *

In conclusion, at the time of this writing (December 1984), the miners continue to hang on, with tremendous support from some sectors of the British working class but little or none from others. Looking back at the British Trade Union Congress I attended, it appears that the TUC leadership had hoped that the threat of wider action by the labor movement as a whole would force the Thatcher government to come to terms with the miners and abandon the shut-down plans. Unfortunately, the Congress has not had this effect.



The government has held firm. Facing winter and the holiday season nine months into the strike, the Thatcher government offered extensive Christmas bonuses to lure

striking miners back to work. A few did drift back, but in most areas and on the whole, the miners are holding firm.

As the strike entered its tenth month, violence continued on the picket lines between police and miners, particularly in the north of England and in Wales, where miners have armed themselves with homemade spears and firebombs and fought pitched battles with police. Neither the union nor the government shows much sign of giving in any time soon, and many miners take the attitude that they are literally striking for their lives.

Some press reports in the US have recently suggested that the strike is slowly crumbling. I asked a visiting striker about this and he emphatically declared that these were British government propaganda. He added that as long as strikers had food to eat for themselves and their families, they would hold on.

This determination and spirit might give you a bit of the flavor of the struggle now going on in Britain. In spite of the hard times, I would say that British labor is in better shape than its US counterpart. With a higher level of consciousness, British labor shows greater resistance to the policies of Thatcher and Britain's ruling classes. Socialist politics and culture has a home in much of the British working class today. This is not the case in the United States, where socialist politics are still an unwelcome orphan among US workers.

At the same time, as I have tried to suggest here, British labor has its limits, and this shows up in the far from unanimous support for the miners from British labor as a whole — or in Thatcher's reelection on the heels of the Falklands war. It has been said by many that the subjugation of Ireland by England is the key to the weakness of the British working class. Historically, there is great truth to this, but I wonder whether today the oppression of people of color in Britain is an even greater factor in the weaknesses of the working class movement. For now, I can only say that British labor's solidarity and strength exists side by side with racism and narrowness. Let us hope that in this miners' struggle and beyond, British labor can forcefully use the one to overcome the other.

-Seamus Flaherty

Students and Reagan

That the majority of students voted to re-elect Ronald Reagan for a second term (fifty-six to sixty percent depending on whose figures you want to use) is something which a lot of progressive observers found startling. While students, and youth generally, didn't go for Reagan in substantially greater numbers than any other age category, what happened this time around on the campuses is noteworthy particularly in light of the long history that students have had for progressive political action.

Before analyzing what went down on the campuses, an important point should be made. Students are not a homogeneous mass and here a key factor that should be considered is nationality. Reagan's support on campus was drawn from white students. Black and other oppressed nationality students did not vote for Reagan in large numbers. The motion, at times substantial, that took place around the Jackson Campaign is a reflection of where minority students are at.

The primary purpose of this article is to look at the Reagan vote. It is not an overall view of the trends and forces on campus.

Two Kinds of Supporters

It is useful to divide the Reagan vote into two categories. First there is the consolidated Right which agrees with the Reagan program up and down the line. The active section of the hard Right is reasonably well organized and very well financed. It is composed of groups like the Young Republicans, Young Americans for Freedom, and the religious nut groups like the Marathas. Secondly there are Reagan's soft supporters who are numerically and politically more significant. These people tend to define themselves as "middle of the road" politically and have many disagreements with the specifics of the Reagan program.

While growing, the hard Right is by no means the dominant political force on campus. The recent attempt by Young Republicans to hold a nation-wide "Student Liberation Day" to celebrate the anniversary of the invasion of Grenada illustrates this. By all measures it was a dismal failure. Progressive forces such as the United States Student Association, CISPES, and the Progressive Student Network countered it by organizing Student Peace Day activities which were more widespread and attracted greater numbers of people. In Boulder, Colorado, one thousand students confronted a relative handful of Rightwingers who tried to stage a Grenada event. In Madison, Wisconsin where Young Republicans brought in a "rescued" medical student to speak, counter-demonstrators outnumbered the Right about twenty to one. Humiliated and demoralized, the Young Republicans abandoned their own event.

It's not off base to characterize the organized Right as largely being a paper tiger.

Media claims that the campuses are now "hotbeds of conservatism" aren't in accord with reality. On the other side of the coin, the hard Right is growing. However, its expansion is more a reflection of the shift on campus towards a more conservative political environment, as opposed to being the leading cause of that change.

The Soft Support

Far more important than the hardcore Reaganites is the soft support that the Republicans have garnered on the campuses. A critical challenge for student activists in the upcoming period will be to make inroads into this grouping.

The main reason that many of these students voted for Reagan was that the vision of a future he offered up was that of stability, opportunity, a chance to "make it", mixed in with more than a little national chauvinism. In this period a vision of these components is going to get a receptive hearing on campus. Even though many disagreed with Reagan's stands on the ERA, the Freeze etc., it's clear these issues weren't people's number one priorities when they got to the polling booth.

The attractiveness of this vision is based on several factors. One is that the deep felt cynicism towards politicians and politics generally has left many students open to appeals based on self-interest of the most narrow kind. For students the question: "what's going to happen to me when I get out of school?" is a big one. The tendency to study hard in a career-oriented field is based on the understanding that good jobs and a comfortable position in society are not things that are going to come automatically.

That Reagan was in a superior position to articulate the needs and desires of the majority of students is the culmination of a definite historical process. First-time voters in the last election were ten years old when Jimmy Carter became president. Throughout his administration—which is part of the collective historical memory of most students—there was a widespread (and not altogether incorrect) perception that things in this period were going to hell or at least getting worse. For many, their recollection of the Carter years was highlighted by inflation and hostages in Iran.

Students today grew up in a period that was characterized by a decline of the U.S. The most graphic example of what happens when the U.S. tries to hang on to its empire by military force — Vietnam — is something that most students have read about in high school history texts, and to an extent the ruling class summation that "we should only fight wars we can win" has been accepted. One reaction to this deterioration of the position of U.S. imperialism has been the steady increase of national chauvinism and the growing strength of an outlook that sees world events from the perspective of Soviet-U.S. contention or "us versus them." For example, despite the strong current of resistance, the majority of students supported the invasion of Grenada because they saw it as "stopping the Soviet Union."

Along a similar vein, another symptom of the decline of the U.S. — its economic decay — has largely been summed up as "the failure of liberalism." While this isn't necessarily wrong, students who see things this way tend to be more receptive to attacks

on social services (the ones that don't effect them personally.) The fact that the economic position of the petit-bourgeoisie has stabilized for the moment, and that most students come from the middle class, has given a certain credibility to Reagan when he speaks to the future that students will face.

Mondale

A second but extremely important part of Reagan's success among students was that Mondale was such a lousy candidate. Most students did not find much appealing about him in the first place, and his strategy of downplaying peace, the ERA, etc. and emphasizing budget deficits (an issue which most students understand very little) did not help any. A major section of the students who did vote for him did so more out of dislike for Reagan than support for Mondale. Still this doesn't mean that "Reagan didn't win, Mondale lost." To say this underestimates the strength of Reaganism on the campuses and leads to a confused view of the balance of forces at this time.

Conclusion

The growth of the Right in U.S. society has had a definite effect on the campuses. Universities and colleges aren't islands. The student Left is likely to find tougher going ahead. This means we will have several important tasks. First, we should organize along the broadest possible lines around the the key issues — for example Central America work. Secondly close attention should be paid to fight the Right on the campuses. This means attempting to cut into their base and taking on different offensives that they launch. For example, they should not be allowed to hold anti-choice rallies without visible and vocal opposition.

This article is largely based on a roundtable discussion of some members of the student commission of the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters.

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