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**AFRICAN AMERICAN INTELLECTUALS AND
BLACK CULTURAL NATIONALISM BETWEEN
1965 AND 1975: THE CASE OF AMIRI BARAKA**

**Thesis Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Candidacy for
The Degree of Doctorat d'Etat in American Civilization**

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DEDICATION

**To the memory of my maternal grandmother
To the memory of my parents**

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The gestation of this thesis has been long and laborious. Begun with a more restricted focus in the late 1990s, it was frequently waylaid by the demands of teaching and family. In the long run this has proven to be a blessing, because a number of interesting studies on related themes published during the intervening years have deepened my understanding of the issues that must be addressed in any study of black cultural nationalism.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the impact of African American intellectuals on black cultural nationalism with particular inclination to Imamu Amiri Baraka as a political activist in the 1960s and 1970s. This research examines the transformation of LeRoi Jones from a provocative literary artist to Imamu Baraka, a controversial intellectual activist. The thesis considers Baraka's prospect of America's racial struggle in that era of unrest. Too little critical attention is focused on the controversy concerning Baraka's adeptness in his dual role as artist and politician. He still remains one of the least understood currents in American history. While a number of studies focused on his literary competence, until now few have considered his comprehensive connection with electoral politics, protests, and community development projects. Conditioned by the political dynamics of black cultural nationalism, Baraka's mutation caused the rise and demise of his leadership. The several happenings would participate in the formation of Baraka's intellectual activism at both local and national levels. Priority and consideration are given to his intellectual activism which was influenced by African political leaders whose countries, newly independent, were still struggling against the negative heritage of European colonialism. His radicalization followed a course similar to other black radicals whose political maturation was framed by domestic conformity, black urbanization, the civil rights movement, and third world decolonization. Therefore, the work's contribution to American historiography rests on efforts to broaden discussion on the complex relationship between Baraka and black cultural nationalism beyond its presently narrow understanding and interpretation, and suggests an approach which will open a new path of inquiry in the concerned field.

RESUME

La thèse examine l'influence des intellectuels afro-américains sur le nationalisme culturel noir et prend comme exemple l'activiste politique Imamu Amiri Baraka durant les années 1960 et 1970. Cette thèse sonde la transformation de LeRoi Jones, une figure littéraire et artistique controversée, en Imamu Baraka, une personnalité politique également controversée. Cependant, la thèse est confrontée à la perspective des intellectuels nationalistes noirs en relation avec la lutte raciale aux états unis durant et après la révolte des afro-américains. Cet intellectuel engagé représente l'un des courants les moins compris dans l'histoire des états unis d'Amérique. En d'autres termes, si un grand nombre d'études examinent son talent littéraire, peu d'historiens considèrent son implication spontanée et extensive dans la politique électorale et les initiatives prises pour le développement de sa communauté à Newark, New Jersey. Conditionnée par la dynamique politique du nationalisme culturel noir, la métamorphose de Baraka a forgé son apogée et causé son déclin en tant que leader. Une importance est donnée à sa vision intellectuelle qui a été influencée par des leaders du tiers monde, en particulier africains dont les pays, récemment indépendants, continuaient leur combats contre le résidu culturel du colonialisme européen. En effet, la radicalisation de Baraka a suivi une trajectoire similaire à celle de ses prédécesseurs radicaux noirs qui ont vu leur maturité politique se former grâce à une conformité domestique, une urbanisation noire, un mouvement de droits civiques et une décolonisation des pays du tiers monde surtout en Afrique. En résultat, la contribution de cette thèse à l'historiographie américaine dépend de l'analyse de ce cas afin d'élargir le débat sur la relation complexe entre Baraka et le nationalisme culturel noir au-delà d'une compréhension et interprétation souvent limitées et propose une approche qui permettra d'ouvrir une nouvelle voie de recherche dans le domaine concerné qui n'est profondément pas exploité.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

ABB	African Blood Brotherhood
AFL	American Federation of Labor
ALD	African Liberation Day
ALSC	African Liberation Support Committee
APP	African People's Party
BAM	Black Arts Movement
BARTS	Black Arts Repertory Theater/School
BCD	Black Community Defense and Development
BCM	Black Convention Movement
BNLF	Black National Liberation Front
BPP	Black Panther Party
BSCP	Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
BWC	Black Workers Congress
BWUF	Black Women's United Front
CAA	Council of African Affairs
CAP	Congress of African People
CFEP	Committee for Fair Employment Practices
CFUN	Committee for Unified NewArk
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
COFO	Council of Federal Organization
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CP[USA]	Communist Party
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCP	French Communist Party
FEPC	Fair Employment Practice Committee
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
ILGWU	International Ladies' Garment Workers Union
LCFDI	Loundes County Freedom Organization
LRBW	League of Revolutionary Black Workers
LSNR	League of Struggle for Negro Rights
MBCM	Modern Black Convention Movement
MDP	Mississippi Democratic Party
MFDP	Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
MSTM	Moorish Science Temple Movement
MWIV	Marine Workers Industrial Union
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NBA	National Black Assembly
NBPA	National Black Political Assembly
NBPC	National Black Power Conference
NBWUF	National Black Women's United Front

NHA	Newark Housing Authority
NIRA	National Industrial Recovery Act
NJHFA	New Jersey Housing Finance Agency
NMU	National Maritime Union
NNC	National Negro Congress
NNLC	National Negro Labor Council
NUL	National Urban league
NWRO	National Welfare Rights Organization
OAAU	Organization of Afro-American Unity
OBPU	Organization of Black People's Union
PAC	Project Area Committee
PASOA	Pan-African Students of America
PUSH	People United for Self-Help
PWU	Packinghouse Working Union
RAM	Revolutionary Action Movement
RNA	Republic of New Africa
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SHMP	Spirit House Movers and Players
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SOBU	Student Organization for Black Unity
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
SWOC	Steel Workers Organizing Committee
TANU	Tanzanian African Nationalist Union
UAW	United Automobile Workers
UB	United Brothers
UCC	United Community Corporation
UMW	United Mine Workers
UN	United Nations
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
WCC	White Citizens' Council
WPC	Women's Political Council
YOBU	Youth Organization of Black Unity

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INTRODUCTION

Among American domestic issues that shape controversy in American history is cultural nationalism. The present thesis examines the influence of African American intellectuals on African American cultural nationalism with particular interest in Imamu Amiri Baraka, formerly known LeRoi Jones, as a political activist. There are several constituents of black cultural nationalism but from one standpoint, Baraka is a vivid sample. From another, he is the perfect example of black activism in America in that period.

The aim of the present work is to call attention to the complexities and nuances of Amiri Baraka's involvement in black cultural nationalism between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s. The complex relation between Baraka and black cultural nationalism is the marker value of his period's accomplishments and deficiencies, its cleavages and its effects on the form and content of Baraka's nationalist vision. To understand Baraka's role as a radical intellectual, it is necessary to scrutinize the ambiguities and ambivalences of a period that continues to capture the political and cultural imagination of many American and non-American scholars.

The choice in this research is therefore made on a defying and controversial personality of Amiri Baraka because his intellectual activism made several contributions to a greater understanding of the ways black cultural nationalism had contested prevalent concepts of artistic manifestation, racial identity, and black authorization. Baraka's distinct intellectualism provides tangible and persuasive examples of the larger themes concerning the dynamics of cultural nationalism. The problematics of black cultural nationalism and its dynamics are central to this thesis

and help clear up common suppositions about black intellectualism and the role of audiences in sustaining these arguments.

Historical reconstruction and analysis are absolutely an essential methodology to follow if we are to understand this complex figure and its effective role in the dynamics of black cultural nationalism. The used methodology then initiates a sustained critical examination of the political rise and fall of Baraka as a political figure. Moreover, historical reconstruction is deemed necessary to uncover the issues concerning Baraka. These issues mattered and tracked those concerns which were transformed in the face of the historical, social, and ideological shifts that shaped Baraka's intellectual activist life.

However, the major concern of the thesis is not only to analyze the thought of one black man and where to situate him. Despite formidable handicaps, the rise of a number of African American intellectuals led to the dynamics of cultural nationalism which were basically part of a traditional feeling that had been shaped by continually painful circumstances. The relationship between black intellectuals and their various reactions towards the events that affected their whole community was a serious indicator of the political dynamics of black cultural nationalism. This element leads to a profound exploration of the origins of the role of these intellectuals in the concerned field. Such intellectuals are too numerous to cite. The list may be limited to figures like Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, Langston Hughes, Malcolm X, Martin L. King, Jr., Paul Robeson, Angela Davis, Richard Wright, Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Maulana Karenga, and Amiri Baraka.

Up until the mid-1970s, black intellectual history had remained tightly linked to slavery, segregation, exclusion, and other forms of racial oppression in the United States. The components of this history, at different periods of their existence, became influenced by philosophies and movements that dramatically affected black thought. The history of these intellectuals is thus stimulating, inspiring, and daring. History witnessed in the recent past the emergence of dynamic African American intellectuals who became closely involved in activism within their community, thus, to be labeled intellectual activists. This model of intellectuals became linked to the practical tasks of transforming theoretical concepts into real social forces. In other words, the intellectual activist of the 1960s and 1970s was not removed from society; he instead conceived the spectrum of possibilities for a new social world and, through articulation, seeks to persuade others to accept that new vision. The intellectual activist, therefore, takes part in practical life as a constructor, an organiser, a permanent persuader, and not just a simple orator.

Amiri Baraka belonged to that category of black intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s who elaborated an important lasting project through which they struggled with the issues of their race. His aim was to defend the black standing, to enforce his action, to upright the perception of events, to oppose injustice, and finally to celebrate cultural achievements. By assuming such a role, he was expected to represent the connection between the grassroots community, its present needs and future aspirations. Studying and investigating Baraka's intellectualism and his deep involvement in cultural nationalism is an indispensable addition to standard African American history which strives to understand and explain the heterogeneous and

fractured black intellectual tradition that evolved in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

If we bracket the semantic problem of black cultural nationalism and the issue of defining it for that matter, then the artistic and social practices evidenced in the work of Baraka are representative of larger processes of cultural and political innovation, and wider philosophical positions on the link between art and society, between aesthetics and ethics. Indeed, this broader field incessantly originated throughout Baraka's intellectualism. One urge was to synthesize all of these divergent ideas into a coherent narrative to show the historical inevitability of Baraka's emergence as an intellectual leader.

As a significant activist in the different movements that shook the established status quo, he reached apogee during the emergence of the Modern Black Convention Movement. Through his long experience, he tried to explain the meaning, impact and objectives of black cultural nationalism. He thoroughly examined its nature as it had been espoused and manifested in the ideologies of previous generations of black nationalists who had influenced his intellectual activist career.

Amiri Baraka is the type of intellectuals who favors a far more radical view of the role of the black intellectual. His deliberate ideological shift is defined by his contribution to black intellectual activism. Baraka's intellectualism was conditioned by his dynamic and challenging experience that had been shaped by adverse circumstances compelling him to seek alternatives to the lasting marginalization of the black community. Most of the time, these alternatives were misinterpreted, and

then violently repudiated by an extremely hostile environment.

The latest works advance a serious debate on Baraka's political stand which is believed to be long tardy and ineffective. Likewise, not only are these works pioneering because they address Baraka as a political artist and creative activist but signal the beginning of a new scholarly moment in their efforts to situate their analysis of Amiri Baraka within the context of a detailed portrait of black cultural nationalism in a local community (Newark, New Jersey) as well. They also attempt to ground this enigmatic artist within an historical context and assess his political activism.

Baraka's experience in intellectual activism reflected an African American cultural tradition. This tradition was viewed as an urgent necessity for activists like Baraka. During a period of unrest, he became one of the significant leading intellectuals who were transmitted this tradition which would be forged according to their own understanding and developed through the circumstances of their time. He tried to operate with a consciousness pervaded with a long black tradition, regenerate, and respect a legacy of a variety of black intellectuals that survived and surpassed the hardships encountered during its establishment. The conceptual framework of the dynamic stages may be regarded as a response from black intellectuals to the prevailing hostile situation and the hard conditions of blacks at all points.

The emergence of Baraka as leader of the Modern Black Convention Movement which represented the nucleus of cultural dynamics was formed by a series of decisive factors notably the awareness of black nationality formation. His concept of

an expanding black nationality formation was based on an immediate, liable, and conscious black national community. The unique channel of success could be built only through the creation of a permanent harmony between black elected officials and grassroots organizations mutually supporting each other. The picture of black nationality formation would be incomplete if either of the two previously mentioned elements were to be disregarded.

On the one hand, originating from the local urban areas, the politics of black nationalism grew to eventually become a national phenomenon. That is, contrary to the argument that urbanization would inevitably result in assimilation, the urbanization of the African American community in the 1960s was accompanied with a significant spread of black nationalism. On the other hand, if African American cultural nationalism was essential to black revolt, the role its politics played in the freedom movement of the 1960s should be looked into correlation between the dynamics of black nationalists and black Marxists. Rivalry existed between these two camps, dating back to the struggles between Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the American Communist Party. But there is also a history of ideological borrowing between black nationalism and socialism. This element may be a major theme in the emergence of such leading black figures who established their respective organizations as Hubert H. Harrison and W. E. B. Du Bois in the American Socialist Party, Cyril Briggs in the African Blood Brotherhood, A. Philip Randolph in the National Negro Congress, and more recently, Huey P. Newton in the Black Panther Party and Amiri Baraka in the Congress of African People.

One of the major objectives of the thesis is to examine Baraka's cultural approach to Black Power, the phenomenal spread of black nationalism in the urban centers of late twentieth-century America, and the rise and fall of the Modern Black Convention Movement. During the 1960s and 1970s, the dynamics of black nationality formation wove the important networks resulting from Black Power conferences and black political conventions into the important fabric of the Modern Black Convention Movement. To understand the serious influence and unprecedented spread of the Modern Black Convention Movement, it is important to analyze the politics of black cultural nationalism which became the stirring engine in the struggle for political democracy.

The other objective of this research is to expose the impressive transformation in Baraka's cultural nationalist politics that facilitated the developing black conventions. At first, Baraka attempted to attenuate the frictions between the competing political interests in the Modern Black Convention Movement. But, between 1972 and 1975, the conflicting political and ideological views and positions within the Modern Black Convention Movement were very apparent. In 1974, Baraka's faction of the Congress of African People shifted to the Left, adopting a revolutionary Third-World Marxist line of conduct. Three elements combined to cause the decline of the Modern Black Convention Movement (MBCM): the racial violence practiced by white vigilantes, the political disloyalty and broken promises of elected black officials, and the racist and segregationist policies championed by the U.S. government. In the aftermath of those chaotic events, the black national political

community including its pivot, the grassroots, became increasingly confused, fragmented, and disillusioned by the shattering of Black Power.

Beside the institution of slavery, racial oppression, and group conflict, urbanization was also one of the principal sources of black nationality formation. African American nationalism spread rapidly in the cities because of the nature of urban bureaucratic competition and conflict in a multi-ethnic capitalist society. Ironically, when blacks moved to the North, they were not absorbed into white America. First, blacks were not enthusiastic to assimilate. Second, whites opposed black integration. Instead, African Americans developed a distinct national culture and consciousness as a reaction. Being urbanized in a separate way resulted in the important black commitment to establishing the foundations for a distinct national community.

The so-called black urbanization motivated the formation of the ghetto which, in its turn, generated a new black ethos and contributed to a significant extent to the formation of black nationalism in the urban areas. Certain aspects of cultural assimilation had a close hand in black nationality formation. In the modern urban society, such formation was accelerated as dominant “nationalities” monopolized positions of wealth, power, and privilege constructing bureaucratic ethnic boundaries. This practice led to the exclusion of other “nationalities,” particularly those oppressed groups. Scholars widely agreed that blacks belonged to that category of groups in the United States.

As African Americans moved to the Northern urban industrial centers in great numbers and improved their level of education, the bureaucratic ethnic boundaries

consolidated with white racism to exclude and isolate a rising black elite. By setting in motion the grassroots communities, an emerging radical black intelligentsia attempted to give a new vision of black nationalism through their unprecedented mutual support in the 1960s. As a number of the emerging black elite developed in the ghettos, that amalgam established the conditions for the growth of a grassroots intelligentsia. The new breed of black students sought identity and was particularly receptive to black leaders.

The velocity of black nationality development actually accelerated as African Americans were acculturated. During the civil rights revolution, antagonism reigned between two distinct nationalisms: a mainstream American nationalism and an African American nationalism. Trying to destroy Jim Crow racism, a so-called American nationalism penetrated into new dimensions of the social and cultural life of black America, attempting to impose conformity. In the 1960s, an increasing number of black students accessed the national universities and colleges of white America. This phenomenon resulted in the spread of black nationalism at a great pace among African American college students, artists, and intellectuals in general. Many of those people were alienated as the bureaucracy demanded that African Americans replace their identity with that of the white to “deserve” an appropriate place in America. Blacks resented the implication that they had to become “white” to have that opportunity. Black youths reacted by supporting the forces of cultural nationalism rather than conform to the white norms. The same threat was felt by the grassroots who saw that federal urban renewal schemes finally aimed to destroy many black communities. As many metropolitan centers embarked on large programs of urban

renewal, they unintentionally accelerated the process of a black nationality establishment.

Group intrigues in the American political arena represent another strong reason for the acceleration of black nationality formation since the 1960s. Such conflicts helped shape ethnic political traditions for other American minority communities, and forge nationality consciousness for African Americans. Nationalities essentially are conflict groups. The emergence of black politics in America was accompanied by group shock, the kind of collective suffering which stimulated the development of a collective nationality consciousness. Consequently, both concerned groups, black intellectuals and grassroots, advocated violent and/or radical solutions to their problems. Analogous to this paradigm, Black Power groups in the 1960s and 1970s proposed a number of radical solutions to racial oppression.

The principal political strategem of cultural nationalism expressed a radical sense of the 1960s urban crisis. The nationalists considered members of the Third-World liberation movements more than simple allies. To them, they were victims who were leading a similarly complex and lasting struggle in a different and remote space. Supporting the fight for independence in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the politics of cultural nationalism proposed a layout of black liberation that involved struggles for regional self-government in urban centers in conjunction with oppressed people of color in the United States, especially Latinos - Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans. Tactically, this maneuver involved mass social mobilization for black autonomy at the municipal level and for proportional representation at higher levels of government. From these semi-autonomous urban areas, African American cultural

nationalists sought to speed the process of nationality formation through the rapid spread of independent black economic, institutional, cultural, and political development. Stressing the American government's failure and mainstream economy in providing urgent service programs and cooperative economy as rational alternatives, the cultural nationalist program of African American radicals was to establish analogous institutions in the vacuum that was formed by the urban crisis.

Looking then into these issues from a broad view of American history, it can be argued that black nationality took shape as a reaction to racial oppression, nationality conflict, and ethnic competition in the United States. Black struggle for freedom was an undertaken effort to eradicate racial oppression. By implication, such an action for liberation was a solid front effort made to block exclusion. The freedom movement was the basis of African American endeavors to gain equality and promote the socio-economic and cultural development of the people of African ancestry. The best approach to the subject of nationality formation is the examination of the dynamics of cultural nationalism. These points strengthen the idea that the politics of cultural nationalism played a substantial role in nationality formation between the 1960s and 1970s.

The thesis is composed of seven chapters. The task, addressed in chapter one, is to expose and explain the continual evolution of black nationalism from slavery to the emergence of the Modern Black Convention Movement. The historical events show the development of black nationalism and its impact on African Americans whether intellectuals or grassroots. The emphasis on exposing black nationalism and its dynamics in detail is fundamental to the understanding of the African American

intellectual position toward the crises which affected the black mind all along that period.

Chapter two is concerned with the probing into the politics of nationality creation at the local level and the attempt to examine several crucial dimensions of Amiri Baraka's political development, including his visit to Cuba. Baraka's early endeavors to launch a mass political movement in New York City did not bring about the expected result. Although he was unsuccessful in his initiatives in Harlem, the years between 1960 and 1965 constituted a formative period that established the ideological foundation for the Modern Black Convention Movement which later took root in Newark, New Jersey. A new generation of intellectual leaders rose in black ghettos in that turbulent period began to identify the destiny of the black freedom movement with the fate of revolutionary nationalist movements in Fidel Castro's Cuba, Mao Tse Tung's China, and Patrice Lumumba's Congo.

In strategizing its self-transformation, that generation chose such paradigmatic figures as Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, and Amiri Baraka for direction and stimulation. Attempting to expand that process of self-reconstruction, nationalists stressed the urgency of "cultural revolution" as a component of black liberation. After Malcolm X's assassination, was launched the Black Arts Movement by young writers, a movement that pictured the grassroots as the guiding force in this revolution. However, the Harlem Black Arts Movement did not succeed to guarantee the minimum political support necessary to endure the ghetto development of New York City. As a result, Amiri Baraka had left Harlem to return to his hometown, Newark, in 1966.

Chapter three examines how Baraka began to find his bearings under the influence of Stokely Carmichael's initiation of the Black Power experiment, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale's development of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California, and Maulana Karenga's inauguration of the US Organization in Los Angeles. Baraka was projected into the political circle in 1967 and became one of the most notable leaders who linked the fate of black freedom movement to the political momentum generated by the 1960s urban uprising. That momentum became linked to the Modern Black Convention Movement when the 1967 National Black Power Conference opened in Newark in the aftermath of one of the harshest revolts in African American history.

Chapter four explains the political philosophy of black cultural nationalism and shows how it entered the urban political terrain in the midst of violent racial conflict, and how the two most notable cultural nationalists, Amiri Baraka and Maulana Karenga, took leadership of the Modern Black Convention Movement by elaborating the politics of nationality formation. Although they were at odds over several issues, both activists converged at a common point on the philosophical development of black cultural nationalism.

Cultural nationalism and its relation with politics are explored in chapter five. The Modern Black Convention Movement was embodied by the politics of cultural nationalism in 1968 as a key forum for black freedom. Those assemblies became an important process for legitimatizing African American leadership and reaching a consensus on the political agenda. Baraka's group formed a coalition with the Young Lords Party, and created an operative political alliance between black and Rican

communities. By disclaiming much of the old denominationalism in cultural nationalist politics, Baraka created a new kind of organization, the Committee for a Unified Newark, to marshal the African American community in the fight for freedom. Kenneth Gibson, the African American and Puerto Rican assembly candidate, was chosen in 1970 the first black mayor of a cardinal northeastern city.

Chapter six debates the historical national Gary Convention of 1972 where Baraka tried to convince the delegates to modernize black nationalism and reinvigorate African-American political culture, as everything rested on training a new leadership and elaborating a new strategy. Despite their ideological divergences, the organizations and black political figures attending the convention understood that their objective was to help promote the politics of black nationality formation and black cultural nationalism at the national level. Despite its shortcomings, the Gary Convention was regarded as the last recourse for black leaders to forge a solid front especially when national presidential elections would soon take place.

The dilemmas facing Amiri Baraka and his organization are explained in chapter seven. The fate of Baraka and the Congress of African People (CAP) became conditioned by the rise and fall of his ambitious local community development projects. The projects were a reflection of Baraka's enthusiasm and commitment to urban renewal as well as to housing and economic development in favor of blacks. Although the chapter concludes with the fall of Amiri Baraka as a leader and the resulting disintegration of the Modern Black Convention Movement (MBCM), it

justifies Baraka's penchant for grassroots mobilization and his momentary influence within national black politics.

Little scholarly work has been done on Baraka's involvement in black cultural nationalism. Little scholarly work has been done on Baraka's involvement in black cultural nationalism. Be it positive or negative, the continuing presence of Baraka's legacy in academia and cultural expression is comparatively little sustained. Scholarly attention to his contribution to developing black nationalism in his period is even undermined. Academic assessments generally seem to be convincing that we already know all we need to know about Baraka as an intellectual activist.

The recent literature includes Charlie Reilly's Conversations with Amiri Baraka (1994) and Rod Bush's We are not what we Seem (1999) which engage black intellectuals and black nationalism with new insights and from new perspectives. The publication of Stokely Carmichael's Ready for Revolution (2003) has also significantly changed the historiographical approach to black cultural nationalism. Scot Brown's Fighting for US (2003), too, marks a new era in the study of the subject. Among other valuable works, Werner Sollors's Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones: The Quest for a Populist Modernism (1978), Jerry watts's Amiri Baraka: The Politics and Art of a Black Intellectual (2001), John Hutchinson's The Dynamics of Cultural nationalism (1987), William Banks's Black Intellectuals (1996) and Komozi Woodard's A Nation Within a Nation (1999) signal the beginning of a new scholarly moment in their efforts to ground their examination of a single figure within the context of a detailed portrait

of Amiri Baraka as an intellectual activist. Finally, William van Deburg's New Day in Babylon (1992) essentially examines the various aspects of the studied movement.

The present research joins an intellectual debate already in progress and engages in exploring the origins and development of the different characteristics of black cultural nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s. It is certainly not an attempt to write an intensive history of the entire movement – a subject that seems to be beyond the scope of the present thesis. It is rather an endeavor to fill in the void within a controversial subject. Certain issues such as Black Arts and Black Power conceptions, together with other nationalist political and cultural movements, are given significant attention in this work.

The thesis ultimately probes into what was concordant with all facets of Baraka's intellectual career especially his pledge to grassroots, racial identity, and direct action. Baraka exemplified a strain of social activism that requires extensive consideration and attention. His political commitment from the late 1960s onward was consistent with a worldview that he constructed from the wide range of ideologies and traditions he had engaged with since his earlier years. He combined art with political theories of prominent black nationalists of various stripes who championed radical political change in their community. The thesis opens up with an overview of the inception and various forms of African American nationalism from the period of Slavery to the modern era, with a focused effort to appraise its change over time, explain its impact, and decipher its shifting appeal.

CHAPTER ONE

Black Nationalism: From Slavery to the 1960s

A. The Roots of Black Nationalism

Although some post-Civil War black leaders believed that the American dream could and would include the African American people, many other African Americans, especially the poor, were suspicious. Fearing that African Americans would never be allowed to become equals either economically or politically in the prejudiced political and social environment of the United States, they embraced racial nationalism rather than integration. These “race first” defenders became known as black nationalists.

Black nationalism philosophically is a distinct body of concepts whose ideas have flowed throughout the African-American experience. Overall, it rests on the belief that African Americans possess a collective history and identity developed during slavery ¹. In his work, The Crisis, Manning Marable, intellectual black activist and historian, defines black nationalism as a political and social tradition that includes certain specific characteristics: First, the advocacy of black cultural pride and the integrity of the group implicitly or explicitly rejects racial integration. Second, the advocacy of extensive contacts between Africans abroad and at home is important in the identification with the image of Africa. Black nationalists insist on interaction between African Americans, people of African descent in the Caribbean, and Africans

¹ Most manifestations of black nationalism advocated the building and maintenance of autonomous institutions as in the black town movement of the late 1800s. See Clarence Lang in Against the Current. Vol. XVI, N°II # 92: May-June 2001.

on the continent of Africa itself. Third, black nationalism is interpreted as the creation of all-black social services such as educational institutions, self-help agencies, and religious organizations. In addition, Support for group economic advancement is essential. It is concretized through black cooperatives, buy black campaigns for the sake of promoting capital formation within the African American community (2, 18). In sum, Marable interprets black nationalism as political independence from the white-dominant political system and support for the development of black protest political organizations and formations. In Amiri Baraka, Lloyd Brown views black nationalism as a system of beliefs and practices epitomizing African Americans as “a distinct people with a distinct historical personality” (36) who sought to “build political frameworks that would enable them to define, defend, and develop their interests as a people” (Helan and Oliveira 72). In its broadest definition, the term describes anything from the most basic expressions of black group consciousness to the most elaborate appeals for black emigration, Pan-African alliances and Black Power.

Expressions of nationalist ideas in the United States originated in the eighteenth century. Since that time, this movement has matured in types that are at once various, complicated, and often at odds with each other. Black nationalism is based on social movements, political theories, and cultural practices that remain greatly influential in the contemporary period (Runcie 192). This chapter studies some of these developments, with particular attention to the ideological frameworks and historical perspectives underlying different leaders and organizations that have shaped black nationalism throughout its African American history.

Much of black history has encompassed the struggle for overcoming negative social forces manifested in both a pre- and post-slave society. Throughout most of this history, laws, social mores and folkways compelled African Americans to look for various ways which would allow them to realize their potential by seeking opportunities for intellectual, economic, political self-determination and independence (Karenga 28). Black scholars generally focus on two tendencies of African Americans to realize their full potential in society. The first tendency concerns the longing for integration by emphasizing complete participation as American citizens. The second tendency appeals to a kind of nationalism where blacks physically, culturally and psychologically feel autonomous from white society, articulating common action of African Americans that is based on shared heritage and collective concerns (Ladun 44). It is then necessary to analyze black nationalism and discuss essential African American advocates of this ideology as an expression to attempt to annihilate societal racism.

Although black nationalism does not have a common definition or understanding among scholars and historians, there is a shared ground that it is one of the most complex movements in the United States. It is also one of the major foundations in the black political landscape. Scholars agree that the beginning of the black nationalist era is not of recent happening. This kind of nationalism mirrors an “authentic sentiment of the overwhelming majority of black people in the United States” (Dawson 125). In many respects, black nationalism dominated contemporary black thought and developed various aspects of African American culture, religion, politics, and economics.

As an expression of group consciousness, and a desire for black independence and self-determination, black nationalism is traced to the eighteenth century with the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church by Bishop Richard Allen (Glaude 215). The development of the slavery issue in the early nineteenth century in a democratic society stimulated by both pro- and anti-slavery forces, took part in dividing the United States and eventually leading to the Civil War. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, African Americans were faced with the very negative prospect of social, economic and political exploitation in society (Carmichael and Hamilton 241). It is at this point that the issue of black nationalism emerged. The concept of black nationalism in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was based first on a subject people under political, social and cultural oppression through foreign military rule, and their wish to turn tail from colonial exploitation (Moses 17). In other cases, it represented the feeling to bring together traditionally divided people. It attempted to politically unite these people whether they were residents of African territories or descendants of those Africans who had been systematized by the slave trade.

The inception of black nationalism in the nineteenth century is perceived in the colonization movement which advocated black emigration from the United States to Africa and Latin America. However, a black's desire for emigration was to gain political freedom which seemed unrealizable by blacks as a minority group. Martin Delany, the father of black nationalism and representative of the separatist philosophy, summed up the major theme in the black nationalist creed when he wrote:

Every people should be the originators of their own designs, the projector of their own schemes, and creators of the events that lead to their destiny, the consummation of their desires. Situated as we are in the United States, many, and almost insurmountable obstacles present themselves. We are four and a half millions in numbers, free and bond; native hearts and virtues, just as other nations; which in their pristine purity are noble, potent, and worthy of example. We are a nation within a nation; as the Poles in Russia, the Hungarians in Austria; the Welsh, Irish and Scotch in the British dominions (The Condition...).

He also commented that since black people were a minority in the United States where many and almost insurmountable hindrances presented themselves, a separate black nation was vital in attaining self-determination.

Black advocates of nationalist ideology firmly stood against those who were in favor of an integrationist approach (McCartney 16). They believed that black people were an important segment of the United States and had a stake in securing their freedom and staying in the United States (Bracey, et al 172). Black historians paid attention to the contradictory position of pro-slavery Southerners who had been “in favor of” black migration. As a result, black and white abolitionists were not convinced of the Southern endorsement of emigration as an accomplishable alternative to ending slavery. Southerners held this position to erode the national influence of anti-slavery forces and get rid of free blacks in the South.

Although black nationalism included in the debate on emigration in the early nineteenth century was neither financially feasible nor widely accepted by black

people, it provided an ideological perspective on black political thought which would come out again in the twentieth century with Marcus Garvey's movement (Brown and Shaw 36). Using a more conventional definition, nationalism is a state-mind among citizens which promotes a sense of loyalty to a particular nation-state (Snyder 246). This loyalty combines the abstract nature of one's national identity with the reality of their geographical environment.

For blacks, nationalism involves negotiating the conflicting considerations of African ancestry and American citizenship. In other words, could blacks embrace one identity without downplaying the other? On the one hand, blacks acknowledge the fact that they are Americans (Anderson 42). On the other, they cannot deny their unique experiences as African-Americans. Their emphasis on what Gary Gerstle, a professor of American history, calls 'racial' over 'civic' identity lies at the heart of black nationalism. American nationalism represents a mix of a "civic tradition" that attempts to realize ideals of liberty, equality, citizen rights and democracy, and a hostile "racial" line that persistently tries to make second-class citizens out of African Americans (American Crucible xv, 454). Blacks have something of a dual identity, a "double consciousness" (Du Bois 157) because they are caught between a self-conception as an American and as a person of African ancestry, and black nationalism allows them to embrace their status as members of a nation within a nation.

As an ideology, black nationalism falls into four general types: religious, cultural, economic, and revolutionary. Each type of thought proposes a specific agenda for addressing racial inequality (Essien-Udom 288). These various lines of

nationalism advance a variety of strategies. Generally, these strategies are employed so that blacks unite, gain power, and liberate themselves. Specifically, they include separating from white society by gaining political self-determination, becoming economically self-sufficient, promoting racial solidarity and self-reliance, winning control by blacks over their communities, and viewing racism as the most serious crisis in the United States.

In a more simplistic consideration, black nationalism mirrored a political and social movement which was striking in the 1960s and early 1970s among African Americans. The movement's supporter was Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) of the 1920s. Its objective was to acquire economic power and to instill among blacks, "at home and abroad", a sense of community and group feeling. Many champions of black nationalism envisioned at that time the eventual creation of a separate black nation by African Americans (Kinfe 32). As an alternative to being integrated within the American nation, which was and still is predominantly white, they sought to maintain and promote their separate identity as a people of black descent. With such slogans as "Black Power" and "Black is Beautiful," they also attempted to inculcate a sense of pride among blacks (Carmichael and Hamilton 15). Black nationalism remains therefore a complex set of beliefs stressing the need for cultural, political, and economic autonomy of African Americans.

Deracinated from their original homeland, Africa, and constrained to move to America, African Americans found themselves in a land of permanent servitude. This dramatic act represented a crucial difference between black Americans and any

European (white) ethnic groups who had escaped an oppressive situation prevailing in their countries of origin. In contrast to the other New World slave systems which produced racially stratified social orders specifically in Latin America and the Caribbean, racial slavery in British North America produced a distinct two-caste system, a dynamic of racial formation splitting groups into whites and blacks (Jordan 512). As a result, African Americans started to grow into a separate nationality during the period of slavery (Stucky 96). A clearer picture of black America was gradually emerging. The cultural foundation for a new “browning” aesthetic was enforced by the creative works of W. E. B. Du Bois at the turn of the century and of the Harlem Renaissance during the 1920s (Mkalimoto 12). The African American nationality formation peaked with the birth of the Black Arts Movement (BAM). In this regard, the various imported African groups were identified as African Americans who had produced a rich group life of culture, community, religion, folkways, and consciousness.

Under the system of slavery, the pre-literate, pre-modern Africans, with their sacred world view, were culturally alienated into the secular American society into which they were thrust (L. Levine 53). They were also completely refused access to the ideology which formed the heart of the consciousness of other Americans. They were compelled to fall back upon their cultural structures of reference that made any sense to them and gave them any feeling of fragile security. The shaping of a common culture under these circumstances of racial bondage was facilitated by the ethnic diversity of their West African ancestors.

These early African Americans shared an important concept toward their origins, existence, and aspirations. Their common means of cultural expression could well have constituted the basis for a sense of common identity and world view capable of resisting the vicissitudes of slavery (Rocker 64). That strong African American foundation brought into existence a unique sense of nationality that expanded into the free black communities which moved up to the North. The contours of nationality development were proposed by a variety of expressions of identity and solidarity in black conventions (L. Levine 70). These feelings proved that African Americans viewed themselves as a persecuted nation, deviated from its historical way by the insurmountable obstacles of the Atlantic slave trade, slavery, and white racism.

Generations of African American leadership articulated their sense of nationality and group identity in the expressive politics of the nineteenth-century convention movements and in the twentieth-century freedom movements. The conventions started locally at least as early as 1817 in Richmond, Virginia, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Aptheker 69). Called together by Bishop Richard Allen ¹, Reverend Absalom Jones and entrepreneur James Forten, about 3,000 African Americans assembled in Philadelphia at Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in January 1817 to discuss the suggestions of the American Colonization Society (ACS). Privately, James Forten favored black settlement in Africa. He felt

¹ Richard Allen, a former slave who purchased his freedom in 1780, was founder of the African American Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and co-organizer of the Free African Religious Society with his close friend, Absalom Jones, in 1787 in Philadelphia.

that the African Americans would never become a nation until they “come out from amongst the white people” (Rocker 112). It was the same national feeling expressed later by John Mercer Langston, a black abolitionist and Congressman, who declared that African Americans should have a nationality before they could become anybody (Cheek and Cheek 365). Nevertheless, the great majority at that black convention strongly opposed and denounced the projects of the ACS ¹ to send free blacks for permanent settlement in Liberia. The black assembly declared its sense of identity, birthright, self-worth, and republicanism:

Whereas our ancestors (not of choice) were the first successful cultivators of the wilds of America, we their descendants feel ourselves entitled to participate in the blessings of her luxuriant soil... We will never separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population of this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering and of wrong (Bethel).

Tied by the feeling of being a distinct nationality, those who were free would not go voluntarily to Africa and abandon their own people in chains.

The conventions became national in scope with the increasing assemblies of the 1830s. However, African American leadership came together under difficult racial

¹ On January 15, 1817, James Forten and other black leaders organized a meeting at Bethel to debate the ACS and the concept of colonization. Almost 3,000 black men were present in the church. Three prominent black ministers, Richard Allen, Absalom Jones and John Gloucester, endorsed the idea of immigrating to Africa. However, when James Forten called for those in favor to say “yea,” not a single voice was heard. When he called for those not in favor, one great “no” rang out that seemed “as it would bring down the walls of the building.” As Forten wrote to Paul Cuffe on January 25, “there was not one sole [sic] that was in favor of going to Africa.” Wiggins, Rosalind Cobb. Captain Paul Cuffe’s Logs and Letters 1808-1817, Howard University Press, Washington, D.C. 20017, 1996.

conditions. It met in the aftermath of the racist attacks of white mobs in Cincinnati, Ohio ¹. They forced half of the black community to flee to Canada in 1829 (Litwack 73). That crisis reached dramatic proportions as state after state issued and passed legislation against incoming black migration. As increasing racial oppression in the North caused the spread of the African American assemblies, the Black Convention Movement (BCM) was more and more encouraged to withstand that inimical phenomenon.

The forty blacks who attended the first National Convention in Philadelphia in 1830 reached a common ground on the vitality of such meetings which would initiate a tenor that would predominate for the next three decades. This group would branch out to several states and organize their own conventions. These, in turn, would lead to the establishment of other organizations. The number of conventions, organized at three levels, flourished to such an extent that it was reported in 1859 that colored conventions are almost as frequent as church gatherings (Moses 28). As a center for political debates about the future of African Americans, the BCM was one of the main training grounds for such leaders as Frederick Douglass, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Henry and Mary Bibb, John S. Rock, Henry Highland Garnet, and Martin R. Delany. The strategy and orientation of the struggle for equality were ardently debated at the conventions of the 1840s and 1850s as African American leaders tried to form an independent stance regarding black destiny. At one Independence gathering,

¹ Tensions led to a three-day race riot in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1829 during which a mob of over 200 whites drove between 1000 and 1200 Cincinnati blacks out of the city – about half of the total black population who were in violation of the Black Codes, originally passed in 1802 to limit activities of free blacks. Driven out blacks scattered to other northern cities and Canada.

Frederick Douglass asked white Americans:

What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in the Declaration of Independence, extended to us? ...What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants brass fronted mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy – a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages (“What to the Slave...”).

Speaking at one of the antebellum summits in the 1840s in “An Address to the Slaves of the United States,” Henry Highland Garnet, the well-known black abolitionist and clergyman, argued that no oppressed people had ever guaranteed their freedom without resistance. He urged his fellow blacks to revolt and strike for their existence. He was convinced that it was the time for an open defiance and reminded “every slave throughout the land” (qtd in Aptheker 110) that the days of slavery were counted, that they could not be more exploited than they had been, and that they could not suffer greater injuries than they already had.

Putting an end to the “peculiar institution” was manifestly present through a profoundly symbolic act of self-determination and self-definition. The ritual of the

social death of slaves involved the loss of their names in servitude. However, the process of rebirth pivoted upon the descendants who would take African naming (Patterson 91). Free blacks celebrated emancipation by taking a new name. It transposed the enslavement process and confirmed the free black's newly won liberation just as the loss of an African name had earlier symbolized his bondage. Freedom also offered blacks the chance to get rid of their ludicrous classical names that had entangled them in slavery and to adopt common Anglo-American names (Berlin 51). Very few free blacks preserved nicknames like Caesar, Pompey, or Neptune. In bondage, most blacks had one single name. Yet freedom gave them the opportunity to take more than one.

Possessing a new identity was essential to the establishment of a new life and the creation of a free community. Names contained with social meaning, reflecting in many cases personal experiences, historical happenings, attitudes to life, and cultural ideas and values. It is not easy to forget that in many ways emancipation was remarkable. Finding and adopting a family name for oneself was an outstanding act that few people experienced (Nash 79, 83). This process of cultural re-definition comprised two stages: first, the symbolic riddance of the slave past, and second, the invention of an authentic Afro-American identity.

The group situation of African Americans Leaders at the conventions was defined as that of conquered identity, analogous to other persecuted people around the world as the Poles in Russia, the Hungarians in Austria, and the Irish and Scotch in Britain (McAdoo 95). African Americans were an oppressed nation and a distinct

national group held in detention. However, Frederick Douglass asserted that whether free or not, African Americans were becoming a nation in the midst of a nation. He further contended:

The distinction between the slave and the free is not great, and their identity seems one and the same. The black man is linked to his brother by indissoluble ties. The one cannot be truly free while the other is a slave. The free colored man is reminded by the thousand petty annoyances with which he meets of his identity with an enslaved people and that with them he is destined to fall or flourish. We are one nation, then. If not one in immediate condition, at least one in prospects (“A Nation...”).

The Michigan state convention call comparably insisted on black self-determination. It held the belief that blacks were an exploited people struggling to be free and had evidently followed the examples of the oppressed nations which preceded them. The convention taught blacks that liberties could be obtained only in balance with their own efforts in their own cause (Moses 31). Therefore, in accordance with this belief, blacks would rise, and, like any oppressed people in the world, unite themselves together and “wage unceasing war against the high handed wrongs of the hideous monster of tyranny” (Aptheker 122). The meaning of national identity and global consciousness were part of the establishment of black America. The successive generations expressed this concern of nationality formation as they attempted to fashion united fronts against an unbearable white supremacy (Hall 203). African Americans found themselves amid a ceaseless struggle against a deceptive

democracy which came to be defined as a spurious principle based on freedom for the ruling race which tyrannized the obsequious groups.

On the one hand, one of the durable psychological inclinations in American history was the tendency to make the United States a tight-knit all-white nation. On the other hand, white Americans, particularly the governing circles in Washington, D.C. remained deeply split over the national fate of African Americans. The Republican proposal in the House Report on Emancipation and Colonization (1862), which advised internal colonization of blacks and a policy of racial containment in the South, was a political washout. For example, one outlook in the Republican circles was manifest in General William T. Sherman's Special Field Order No.15¹, profiling the colonization of black people on the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia and on a strip of land thirty miles inland on the East Coast from Charleston, South Carolina to Jacksonville, Florida (Frederickson 130-31).

The order granted black settlers with "property titles" to forty-acre lots on lands abandoned by Confederate proprietors. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton gathered and General Sherman in a summit with twenty black ministers in Savannah,

¹ Formal debate about reparations for African Americans originates as far back as 1865 when General William Tecumseh Sherman issued a special field order that set aside tracts of land in the Sea Islands and around Charleston, South Carolina for the exclusive use of Black people who had been enslaved. In less than half a year, the ownership of the land reverted back to Whites. See W. Tecumseh Sherman, Special Field Order No. 15: "Forty Acres and a Mule," reprinted in *When Sorry Isn't Enough: The Controversy over Apologies and Reparations for Human Injustice* 365, 365-66 (Roy L. Brooks ed., 1999). General Sherman's Special Field Order No. 15, issued on January 16, 1865, was codified in Section 4 of the Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865, in April of 1865. Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865, ch. 90, § 4, 13 Stat. 507, 508. See Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*, at 159, 190-91 (1988). Not surprisingly, Sherman's land grants threatened the new peace among the states. See In the summer and fall of 1865, Southern States' opposition to Reconstruction was increasingly difficult for the new President, Andrew Johnson, to ignore. He succumbed to pressure and ordered that the land be returned to its pre-Civil War White owners, forcing black families to leave their homesteads immediately.

Georgia, on January 12, 1865. Sherman requested that the African Americans make clear “in what manner you would rather live, whether scattered among whites or in colonies by yourselves” (Litwack 288). The majority of the delegation preferred the black race to live separately. They based their choice on the perpetual presence of tententiousness which would take a long time to do away with specifically in the South (Aptheker 312). If Sherman’s ordinance were carried out on a permanent basis and if the concept were applied to other regions, the consequence of the black and white populations in the South would have profoundly altered the future history of the region because by dividing the two races, there would be less racial friction.

As late as April 1865, President Lincoln reconsidered the colonization of black people. He had openly opted for colonization in his earlier political career (Frederickson 175). However, there was some controversy about his position after African American soldiers fought and died for the Union during the Civil War. One week before his death, Lincoln met with General Benjamin F. Butler ¹ who recalled that the President spoke to him of “exporting” the newly freedmen (Berwanger 31). “But what shall we do with the Negroes after they are free?” Lincoln asked. “I can hardly believe that the South and North can live in peace, unless we can get rid of the Negroes ... I believe that it would be better to export them all to some fertile country with a good climate, which they could have to themselves”(qtd in Butler np). Along

¹ The authenticity of Butler’s report has been called into question, notably in: Mark Neely, “Abraham Lincoln and Black Colonization: Benjamin Butler’s Spurious Testimony,” *Civil War History*, 25 (1979), pp. 77-83.

with a request to Butler to carefully examine the question of how best to use “our very large navy” to send “the blacks away,” the President showed great interest for the project.

Until his death, Lincoln did not believe that co-existence between white and black was viable, and regarded resettlement of the blacks as the favored option to racial antagonism. “Although Lincoln believed in the destruction of slavery,” reached a conclusion that black historian Charles Wesley in The Journal of Negro History, “he desired the complete separation of the whites and blacks. Throughout his political career, Lincoln persisted in believing in the colonization of the Negro” (8). When General Butler looked into the logistics of shipping more than four million freedmen overseas, he reported back to Lincoln the impracticability of his project (Frederickson 214). The colonization plan was a total unsuccessfulness for several reasons, ranging from white paternalism to practical politics. The most rigid plans for “Yankee Apartheid” were neglected in Washington, D.C. A considerable number of influential Republicans dismissed the unpractical plan for colonization at the end of the Civil War. Radical Republicans were the most inimical to colonization ideas (Painter, Exodusters... 123). They constrained the possibilities of full black American citizenship.

Frederick Douglass, who knew Lincoln quite well, described him in a speech delivered in 1876:

In his interest, in his association, in his habits of thought, and in his prejudices, he was a white man. He was pre-eminently the white man’s

President, entirely devoted to the welfare of the white man. He was ready

and willing at any time during the first years of his administration to deny, postpone, and sacrifice the rights of humanity in the colored people, to promote the welfare of the white people of this country ¹ (qtd in Weyl and Marina 169).

Allan Nevins, a prolific and prominent historian, summed up Lincoln's view of the complex issue of race, and his vision of America's future. In The War for the Union, Nevins mentioned that Lincoln's conception ran beyond the mere freedom of four million blacks (10). It meant a far-reaching change of American society, industry, and government. A gradual planned emancipation, a concurrent transportation of hundreds of thousands and perhaps even millions of people overseas, a careful governmental nurturing of the new colonies, and a payment of unprecedented sums to the section thus deprived of its old labor supply – this scheme carried unprecedented implications. To put this into effect would immensely increase the power of the national government and widen its abilities. If even partially workable, it would mean a long move toward making the American people homogeneous in color and race, a rapid stimulation of immigration to replace the workers exported, and an imbuing change in popular outlook and concepts. Even if it seemed impossible and undesirable, Lincoln continued to cling to his vision.

For most Americans today, Lincoln's plan to "solve" America's vexing racial problem by resettling the blacks in a foreign country probably seems strange and utterly impractical, if not outrageous and cruel. At the same time, though, and

¹ Frederick Douglass, "Oration Delivered on the Occasion of the Unveiling of the Freedman's Monument in Memory of Abraham Lincoln," in Washington, DC, April 14, 1876.

particularly when considered in the context of the terrible Civil War that cost more than 630,000 lives, it is worth reflecting just why and how such an improbable scheme was ever able to win the support of a leader of the stature and wisdom of Abraham Lincoln.

Moderate Republicans argued that the black presence in the political arena was absolutely vital to make the Southern states loyal members of the Union (Richardson 88). When the 14th Amendment granted blacks the US citizenship, the “three-fifths of a man” clause on representation was made null and void. The South was ultimately supposed to receive an unprecedented number of new congressional seats through that nullification. Black voting in favor of Republicans in the South was necessary to secure national power for their party (Ferrell 156). Without black votes, the Republicans would have won the war only to lose both the White House and Congress.

B. Black Nationalism in the post-Civil War Era

The Reconstruction’s program objective of bringing the South back into the Union revolved on black participation at national level, mainly in elections. In this sense, the prospects for African Americans’ incorporation into the American nation were for the first time promising. Finally, the most fundamental reason that the absolute colonization plans were rejected is that black labor was the basis for the development of the Southern economy. Not only was slavery regarded as a system of racial domination, but as an economic channel of production as well (Du Bois 428). Black labor became essential to reconstructing the war-torn Southern economy.

Many black nationalists were now overwhelmed by the new situation and started losing their bearings on the unexplored terrain created by the Civil War and Reconstruction (Exodusters... 142). As African Americans were swept into the political arena by the Fifteenth Amendment, black nationalists encountered unprecedented competition for the loyalties of black people at the end of the Civil War. The Republican Party, the party of Lincoln, established hegemony over the black vote during Reconstruction. In some counties in the South, blacks enjoyed considerable social and economic advantages from black political control. For example, in Beaufort, South Carolina, black rice labor struck for better wages and adequate living conditions. In the light of black political power in that state, Governor Chamberlain rejected the rice planters' demand and sent in troops to crush black labor renitence (Ferrell 163).

The black workers were encouraged by the support of such black elected officials as Congressman Robert Smalls. A Civil War hero, Smalls was a significant reference of black power, and symbol of the revolution that had put the bottom rail on top, at least in local politics (Foner 94-95). When twentieth-century proponents of the civil rights movement labeled their efforts Second Reconstruction, they aspired for new leadership of the political caliber of U.S. representative Robert Smalls who, from slave to politician, served five terms in Congress as the representative from South Carolina. His record as Congressman was considerable. He struggled for equal travel facilities for African Americans and for the civil and legal protection of children of mixed parentage. He became a very influential black member in the South Carolina

Constitutional Convention of 1895 (Miller 102). He would be simply considered as one of First Reconstruction great symbols for Second Reconstruction blacks.

However, with the waning of Reconstruction, the national Republican Party left its political supporters in the South at the mercy of the planters and Klansmen. The debacle of national support for Reconstruction dramatically halted the possibilities of African American civil rights for nearly a century. As a consequence, the status quo was so depressing that later in 1962 when the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) paid a visit the grassroots intellectual activist and outspoken advocate for civil rights, Fannie Lou Hamer, on a Mississippi plantation, they noticed that she still believed she had no right for the franchise (Raines 249). Earlier historiography suggested that the demise of Reconstruction was caused by the 1876 Hayes-Tilden Compromise ¹, known as the “Gentlemen’s Agreement” in the Washington circles which put an end to the presidential election crisis of 1876. According to this line of argument, the Republicans betrayed African Americans principally by withdrawing federal troops from the South (The Washington Informer 15), opening the way for a racist bloodbath and the overthrow of Republican governments in that area.

¹ As far as blacks were concerned, the essence of the Compromise was that the Democrats would support the Republican Hayes for president if he would agree to withdraw federal troops from the South and grant a series of economic benefits that for all practical purposes would go only to the white aristocracy which included many former slaver owners. The deal was struck. Hayes became president. But by withdrawing federal troops from the South, the nation was in effect abandoning blacks. It is no accident that shortly after the Hayes-Tilden Compromise, the terrorist Ku Klux Klan was established with the violent aim of “putting the blacks back in their place.”

Thus, the Hayes-Tilden Compromise had the effect of ending one of the most promising periods in black American history, re-establishing white supremacy in the South, and laying the historic foundation for many of the problems which plague blacks to this very day.

Many other factors were included in the tragic end of Reconstruction. Beside the sharp decline of popular support and the growth of conservative sentiment, there was an increasing desire for reconciliation on the part of Northerners. Several combined hindrances failed to prevent the Northern conciliatory behavior to conceptualize and take place. The spread of terrorism and oppression in the South went hand in hand with the collapse of federal election enforcement. Moreover, the revival of racism in political campaigning speeded the substitution of Democratic governments in the South for Republican ones. This change helped bring about conservative victories in the North. The other indications which contributed to the Northern retreat from Reconstruction were reflected first, by the restriction on federal action imposed by judicial decision and second, by the initiation of a conservative Southern policy in 1875 (Gillette xi). Perhaps, the two main reasons for the end of Reconstruction are the attempt of the Republican Party to act as if a practically military situation was one of politics as usual. In addition, Northerners lacked enough engagement, zeal and resistance necessary for a prolonged struggle for black American rights over white Southern imperviousness (Perman 188). Since any successful fight for African American equality was to be elongated, "Black Reconstruction" was a fiasco.

Being isolated, blacks found themselves fighting against Klan terrorism as they were forged into a separate national group during a crucial era of black nationality formation. In the 1870s, when Henry Adams, a grassroots Republican political organizer, visited the Louisiana home of his friend, he found the house burned down. His wife told him that more than fifty white terrorists had burned and killed her husband because he defended his political rights. When she asked Adams if the terrorists would be brought before the law, he was filled with sorrow to realize there

was no justice for colored people. Mrs. Johnson prayed God to “help us get out of this country and get somewhere where we can live” (Exodusters... 86).

Disappointed by the betrayal of the Republican Party and the uncovered terrorism of the Democratic Party, Henry Adams turned into one of the grassroots leaders who led the mass mobilization for the “Kansas Exodus” out of the Deep South in the 1870s. Adams estimated that some 98,000 people were ready to join the movement to abscond Southern fear. The mobilization to establish black colonies in the West was planned by Benjamin Singleton from Tennessee. Many blacks felt they were left behind by their elite during this tribulation. As the black establishment advised them to stay in the South, thousands of destitute African Americans adhered to the migration movement. They thought that land property was the only means to full citizenship rights. Although nearly 10,000 blacks from Kentucky and Tennessee migrated to Kansas (Grossman 23), the greatest majority were so severely impecunious that they could not raise the resources for the transmigration.

The North’s broken promise of Reconstruction encouraged the southern racists to enthrall the African American people and to firmly establish a relationship between blacks and whites that essentially came to be based on the concept of “internal colonialism” (Blauner 214). After acting to give black people freedom, equality, and the franchise, it allowed the white South to demote them to a state of forced labor, to overlook their rights, and to disenfranchise them by force, intimidation, and law (Sitkoff, New Deal... 3-4). The combination between the national government and the two major political parties reflected a deliberate silence while white racism confined African Americans into semi-colonial oppression. The Congress refused to get involved as the South willingly deprived blacks of the right to vote. In fact, at the

beginning of the twentieth century African Americans were no more congressional members. The Supreme Court seriously restrained the practice of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. In 1883 it made the Civil Rights Act of 1875 null and void and asserted that Congress did not have the power to regulate the conduct and transactions of individuals ¹.

Since both the Republican and Democratic parties rejected the importance of black votes for national elections, the civil rights of African Americans would not figure on the national political agenda until the New Deal. The socialist labor movement worsened the situation by adhering to the white supremacy and reinforcing its rise as 3,220 black people were lynched between 1880 and 1930 (Brundage 42). It was noted that blacks could not turn with hope to the socialists. Jack London, the famous novelist repeatedly boasted he was white before being socialist. He openly exposed his racist views that non-whites and specifically blacks were an inferior race and used topics of white supremacy to receive the votes of white workers ².

Most African Americans lost their voting rights with the failure of Reconstruction in the South. Yet those who could still vote cast their ballots for the

¹ The Civil Rights Act (1875) was introduced to Congress by the uncompromising Radical Republicans Charles Sumner and Benjamin Butler in 1870 but did not become law until 1st March, 1875. It promised that all persons, regardless of race, color, or previous condition, were entitled to full and equal employment of accommodation in “inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public amusement.”

² In London’s 1902 novel, Daughter of the Snows, the character Frona Welse states the following lines. (Scholar Andrew Furer, in a long essay exploring the complexity of London’s views, says there is no doubt that Frona Welse is here acting as a mouthpiece for London):

We are a race of doers and fighters, of globe-encirclers and zone-conquerors While we are persistent and resistant, we are made so that we fit ourselves to the most diverse conditions. Will the Indian, the Negro, or the Mongol ever conquer the Teuton? Surely not! The Indian has persistence without variability; if he does not modify he dies, if he does try to modify he dies anyway. The Negro has adaptability, but he is servile and must be led. As for the Chinese, they are permanent. All that the other races are not, the Anglo-Saxon, or Teuton if you please, is. All that the other races have not, the Teuton has.

Republican Party until the Great Depression. On the other hand, black people did not remain desperate. During the first decades of the twentieth century, some 1.5 million African Americans migrated to the northern industrial centers in search of a better life (Lemann 240). That migration influx caused strategic black urban concentrations that influenced the flow of national politics, and in the process shaped a new black consciousness. Before long, a number of former opponents, especially the communists, the labor unions, and the Democratic Party, welcomed the adherence and support of African Americans in the industrial and political arenas. Liberalism, communism, and trade unionism forcibly became the principal ideological contenders of black nationalism in the twentieth century.

C. Black Nationalism in the Twentieth Century

At the turn of the century, there was a resumption of black nationalism as African American nationality formation entered a new period marked by class development, remarkable ghetto formation, rapid urbanization, and anti-colonial stand. Although the Berlin Conference of 1884 marked the European disarray for Africa, that imperialist contest helped brand the concept of “Africa for Africans.”

In his historical and cultural efforts to absolve the image of Africa, Edward Wilmot Blyden, the Liberian intellectual, forged the idea of the “African Personality” (Lynch 211). He drew conclusions from his research in Africa that Africans had constructed the Great Pyramids, Islam had been more positive for Africans than Christianity, African culture and civilization were promoting, and the African people contributed a distinct spirituality to world civilization that was manifest in their culture, customs,

and concepts (Redkey 189). Bishop Henry McNeal Turner was a teacher of black nationalism and Pan-Africanism in America. Turner was a religious nationalist who who was alarmed by the idea of black people worshiping a God who looked like the men who sought to lynch them. He insisted that God was black (Ashante 83). Turner who pioneered the African Methodist Episcopal Church, spread his message of black pride in Africa through his missionary work and consequently white authorities feared his influence.

In 1903 W.E.B. Du Bois made a noteworthy contribution to African American identity, black nationality formation, and Pan-Africanism with his publication of The Souls of Black Folk. Contributing to the concept of the African Personality, Du Bois explored the definite psychology of black folk and argued that the precious legacy of black culture was evident in the spirituals. In collaboration with Henry Sylvester Williams ¹, Du Bois launched the earliest Pan-African summits at the turn of the century, beginning with the one in London in July 1900 and followed by five international Pan-African summits between 1919 and 1945. The first Pan-African Congress was held in Paris in February 1919, the second took place in London, Brussels, and Paris in September 1921, the third was organized in London, Lisbon,

¹ Henry Sylvester Williams was a Trinidadian who organized the first Pan-African Conference in 1900. Organizing this conference was a unique achievement for which Williams is given little credit today. When he formed what was first called the African Association, one of its aims was to “promote the interests of all subjects claiming African descent, wholly or in part, in British colonies and other places especially Africa, by circulating accurate information on all subjects affecting their rights and privileges as subjects of the British Empire, by direct appeals to the Imperial and local Government.” Williams influenced WEB Du Bois, who participated in the 1900 conference and who has come to be known as the father of modern Pan-Africanism. In fact in his writings Du Bois claims he originated the Pan-African idea. His famous Address to the Nations with its prophetic statement “the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line” came to be regarded as the defining statement of the conference. For more details see One of our Forgotten Heroes Henry Sylvester Williams By Deborah John.

and Paris in 1923, the fourth occurred in New York City in 1927, and finally, the fifth was held in Manchester, England, in 1945. Among all these summits, however, it was the fifth Pan-African Congress that fostered Pan-Africanism and applied it to decolonizing Africa. The fifth summit, attended by such African figures as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Jomo Kenyatta, Patrice Lumumba, and Kwame Nkrumah who were to become leaders of their respective countries Nigeria, Kenya, Congo, and Ghana, contributed to the momentum of African independence (Ohadike 212). The fundamental for that momentum was established by the anti-colonial enthusiasm of the First World War.

Black radicals including nationalists and socialists were encouraged to stick to African nationality as they witnessed uprisings in Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Mongolia, China, Russia, and Ireland during the First World War. This was the conception of revolt expressed by the pioneer of black radicalism, Hubert Harrison. Harrison was one among the 142,868 West Indian immigrants who settled in the United States between 1899 and 1932. Nearly half of those black immigrants lived in the State of New York (Gaines 121). If there were an early possibility of combining black nationalism and socialism, that prospect would be well-represented by Harrison. He spread his political activities between the black struggle and the socialist movement. He was a self-educated and socialist intellectual who developed into a nationalist. He deserted the Socialist Party because the white radicals refused to fight racism (Sekayi 58). He was convinced that it was essential for blacks to adapt their own politics. Deceived by a racially divided labor market, he deduced that black workers had interests that were distinct from those of white workers. Men like Harrison started the Harlem street corner oratorical tradition, which was to be institutionalized by the time

Malcolm X emerged. The ascending sense of black nationality was enforced by the gathering of thousands of black migrants in urban enclaves. The political agitators took opportunity to appeal to this new sense of black nationality.

There was a real development of black enterprise after the 1890s. This enterprise gave birth to a new black middle class which grew thanks to the concentration of black people in the ghetto where nationality formation was taking place too. The new black middle class established commercial relations with its community. Booker T. Washington was among the leading supporters of racial consciousness that was necessary for the economic solidarity and business foundation of that newly emerging middle class (Meier 73). The structural connection between the black middle class and the African American community further stimulated nationality formation.

While Booker T. Washington was supporting political abandonment for black people under the banner of accommodationism, W. E. B. Du Bois and the Niagara Movement antagonized the founder of Tuskegee School and were determined to defend the civil rights of African Americans in 1905. According to Hubert H. Harrison, “political rights are the only sure protection and guarantee of economic rights. [...] Every fool knows this. And yet, here in America today we have people who tell us that they ought not to agitate for the ballot so long as they still have a chance to get work in the south” (Harrison and Perry 65). Nicknamed the “Black Socrates” of the Harlem Renaissance, Harrison launched the “New Negro Radicalism” of the era, used the slogan “Race First,” and introduced Marcus Garvey to the Harlem political community (Hooker 213). Garvey was welcomed by Harrison to give a speech at his Harlem Liberty Party gathering (Marika 152). The Jamaican

rhetorician attracted the audience when his speech given before Harrison's independent black party promulgated the beginning of Garveyism in the United States.

Marcus Garvey learned a lot about the colonial liberation movements when he was studying African history and anti-colonial nationalism in London under the teachings of Duse Mohammed Ali, the Egyptian intellectual and editor of the Africa Times and Orient Review. Garvey migrated to the United States in 1916, a time when Harlem was developing into a mecca of black culture and African American remonstrance. That metropolis was shaping a great concentration of forefront intellectuals, journalists, and civil rights leadership. The circumstances that made Harlem and New York appear practicable metropolises of black cultural, intellectual, and political life, were in part the fruit of the large mobility of gifted blacks to the city in the years before the war (Huggins 18). Yet, more interesting, what characterized Harlem from the other flourishing black centers were changes, seemingly concentrated in Harlem, in the character of Negro behavior and agitation.

Harlem became the hub of famed black personalities to play an important role in their respective organizations and movements: W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Charles S. Johnson in the National Urban League (NUL) and the Harlem Renaissance, A. Philip Randolph in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), and the radical newspaper, The Messenger, Cyril V. Briggs in the combative African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) and its newspaper, the Crusader (Kusmer 234). Indeed, Cyril Briggs's Crusader served as the elatedness for the militant Robert F. Williams's newspaper which adopted the same name in the 1960s.

The growing black population in Harlem became part of a significant national urban prodigy. The Great Migration of almost 1.5 million black people from the South to Northern and Western urban areas had a profound national impact on black consciousness (Trotter 96). This considerable number of African Americans reflected the basis for the black ghettos which from that time on became a major characteristic of urban American life. One consequence of this new black urban situation in the ghetto “was the sense of common destiny prevalent to some extent in all socio-economic classes in the black community” (Hill xxx). As the course of African American nationality consciousness expanded in urban areas with heavy concentrations of African American population, that new sense of black consciousness was the basis for the popular spread of the Garvey Movement and for the development of black nationalism.

In that context, Marcus Garvey advocated the issue of black nationalism and self-determination so vigorously that it swept him to center stage in the rising African American ghetto (Haywood, Black Bolshevik... 77). Garvey articulated the vision of anti-colonial resistance in his own original way, linking the future of the urban black migrants with the destiny of the colonial subjects, and that attracted the attention of those colored people even outside the United States. One of the greatest political protestors of the twentieth century, Garvey asked “where is the black man’s government?” His Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) expanded its branches in thirty-eight US states as well as in forty-one countries (Smith-Irvin 65).

In his early years, Garvey carried out a broad-based black united front, including both the Moorish Science Temple Movement (MSTM) and the African Blood Brotherhood. The MSTM was established by Noble Drew Ali in Newark,

New Jersey, in 1913. It spread to Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Chicago, paved the way for the emergence of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam. Looking to Islam for inspiration, Noble Drew Ali considered black people in the United States as a distinct nationality. In parallel, the ABB, formed by Cyril Briggs, demanded self-determination of black people. Cyril Briggs introduced through the ABB black involvement in the American communist movement. A young member of ABB, Harry Haywood, emerged as a significant theorist of black nationality for the American Communist Party and the Communist International.¹

After the heyday and decline of the Garvey movement, black nationalism faced astounding competition for the constancy of African Americans. In the competition for allegiance of black workers, the Communist Party was compelled to make concessions to nationality consciousness. Without that flexibility the communists would have made no furtherance among African Americans. In 1930, radical groups like the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR), headed by Harry Haywood and Langston Hughes gave priority to the demands for equality of black workers, women, youth, soldiers, writers, clerks, small business people, and nurses. Besides equal rights, it articulated decent housing, jobs, education, and culture. The LSNR considered blacks a nation that was striving to manhood but whose growth was violently retarded and which was viciously persecuted by American imperialism after

¹ For more on Cyril Briggs and Marcus Garvey, see Theman Thomas, Cyril Briggs and the African Blood Brotherhood: Another Radical View of Race and Class During the 1920s. U of California, Santa Barbara, 1981, 121-85; Tony Martin, Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Dover: Majority Press, 1976, pp. 240-42; and Cyril Briggs, "The Decline of the Garvey Movement" The Communist. (June 1931): 547-52.

having been enslaved for more than three centuries (Betts 213). The league was convinced of the black continual struggle for real and effective freedom which was supposed to have justly been gained after the Civil War.

The Left also adopted a new strategy for rallying African Americans in industry. In Hubert H. Harrison's time, black radicals discovered that class unity was deflected by the American split labor market which had divided workers into two antagonist racial groups. In the 1930s, however, and while establishing the groundwork for the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), white radical organizers attempted to put forward a stratagem to mobilize the ranks of labor. While the American Federation of Labor (AFL) had accredited segregated locals for black labor, CIO organizers recruited black workers into the same union locals as white wage earners. The CIO strategy was informed by rigid experiences learned from years of defeat in strike struggles, especially in meatpacking factories, steel mills, and coal mines. In the mid-1930s, John L. Lewis's United Mine Workers (UMW) made a positive effort at union organizing by preferring the backing of black leadership, by employing black organizers in their campaign, by electing black officers, and by seeking equal pay for equal work, with no heed to race. David Dubinsky followed the same approach in organizing black workers into the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union in the mid-1930s. Indeed, he opposed the discrimination applied against black delegates at a Chicago union gathering by moving the assembly to a new meeting place (New Deal... 180). A number of the other unions retracted from the AFL and carried on this new organizing strategy.

Labor leaders who practiced what they proclaimed won new respect in the black community. John L. Lewis advocated civil rights legislation and endorsed the critical organizing efforts of A. Philip Randolph and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. These workers had been recklessly striving for union recognition from the railroad industry since the 1920s. Much of the success of CIO's new renown came from the quality of its organizers. Many belonged to the radical wing, or were labor intellectuals, communists, and socialists. They regarded the CIO as a democratic social movement. For example, Victor and Walter Reuther organized their protest against racial discrimination at Detroit's City College. They later entered the movement to unionize automobile workers (Smith 48). The communists were at the forefront of these changes. This was their great time in the fight for racial equality in industry.

No group within the CIO engaged in racial justice more than the communists. For instance, the radical Harry Bridges of the Marine Workers Industrial Union (MWIU) found out that because of the considerable number of black maritime workers, the only successful strategy was interracial unionism (Zieger 354). Moreover, the communists favored the election of African Americans to union leadership positions. Communists like Jesse Reese in the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, Ferdinand Smith in the National Maritime Union, Revel Cayton in the longshoremen's union, and Henry Johnson in the Packinghouse Workers Union headed the struggle for African American representation in union leadership (Thompson 296). These African American radicals also urged the white union leadership to contribute money to the civil rights movement (Bush 199). This new strategy effort created a wide gap in the racial caste system in American

industry and forged an important link in the development of the black and labor coalition which eclipsed black nationalism after the decline of Marcus Garvey's UNIA.

In reality, these progressive initiatives were feasible because of the American labor's position during the Great Depression. The CIO would have failed without a black and labor amalgamation. The great number of black labor in the mass production industries made unionization imperative. They formed a dangerous strikebreaking – perhaps fatal – union-busting power outside the unions (New Deal... 188). The examples of this situation were detected in the automobile, meatpacking, and steel industries. Black Americans represented twenty percent of the steel workers. Not to fail at its union organizing campaign, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) adopted an elaborate strategy to win over the black community (Foner 92). The CIO Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee followed the same path by putting into practice the same strategy as that of the steel workers.

Furthermore, in these labor struggles, African Americans were taught important political lessons about the strength of mass action, particularly about the powerful potential of boycotts and dislocation. The period of the 1930s was then a determinative turning point in the relation between the labor movement and the black community. Nevertheless, African Americans remained an independent force, with their own agenda. A great number of blacks rallied against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1936 (Carson 128). They also backed the Council on African Affairs as W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson articulated the cause of independence for Africa in the 1940s. In his cultural and political work, Robeson exposed Edward Blyden's concept of the African personality and began the important transformation of cultural

nationalism from an elite literary current into a philosophy which celebrated African American folk culture. Robeson explained that he wanted to be an African and that black identity and spirituality were a life-long and hard mission (Haywood 459). He warned black Americans that the real value and pride of blacks lied in the fact of being Africans rather than simple imitators of Europeans.

One of the most significant black united fronts in the twentieth century was the National Negro Congress (NNC), founded in Chicago in 1936. The NNC helped establish the foundation for a black and labor consolidation, stressing black organizers to employ African American labor into the steel workers' union drive in Chicago. Not less than 8,000 people, both blacks and whites, assembled to endorse the promotion of an agenda for black equality (Harris 84). The NNC's full commitment is demonstrated by its alliance with anti-fascist movements in Europe and anti-colonial struggles in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The gathering of the NNC received great support. In a message reprobating the Italian invasion to Ethiopia, Chinese Premier Mao Tse Tung sent a supporting message stating "the First National Congress of the fighting black people, 12,000,000 strong in America against every form of national and racial oppression" (Thompson 302). The NNC formed a large movement which recognized that although African Americans had many organizations with different agendas and stratagems, what was urgent was a united front to strive for a minimum program of unity. A. Philip Randolph was elected the first President of the Congress.

The American communist movement made a strong mistake in interfering with the independent political development of the NNC on foreign policy issues. While

the NNC opposed fascism around the world, under the influence of Stalin, the American communists inside it lined up that black organization with the Hitler-Stalin accord. A. Philip Randolph resigned in protest accusing the American Communist Party of having gone against the organizational independence of the NNC (Harris 119). Randolph warned in his resignation speech African Americans of the imperilments of relying on whites for the financial backing of their leading organizations.

A. Philip Randolph initiated the March on Washington Committee during the Second World War, warning that unless President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order outlawing discrimination in hiring by unions and employers and ending segregation in the military services, 10,000 African Americans would march on Washington. When the overpowering reaction from black people encouraged Randolph to build the momentum for a march of 100,000, the White House attempted to co-opt the black labor leader. Roosevelt did not want to lose the moral edge in the ideological part of the war against fascism in Europe (Katz 86, 89). Randolph strongly demanded an executive order. When negotiations did not succeed to stop the march, President FDR issued Executive Order 8802¹ in June of 1941, prohibiting discriminatory employment practices by Federal agencies and all unions and companies engaged in war-related work. The order also established the Fair Employment Practices Commission to enforce the new policy. Yet, this measure was

¹ Through concession, President Roosevelt issues Executive Order 8802 outlawing racial and religious discrimination in the defence industries and on government training schemes following a threat by A. Philip Randolph and other black leaders to mount a 100,000-strong protest march on Washington DC. The AFL rejects a resolution from Randolph protesting against the exclusion of black workers from affiliated trade unions. Executive Order 8802 is considered the most radical civil rights actions taken by the government since Reconstruction although, in practice, the results did not prove positive for African Americans. (Historicaldocuments. Com)

so unsatisfying that in May 1943, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9346 establishing the President's Committee for Fair Employment Practices which required from companies with Government contracts not to discriminate on the basis of race or religion (Woolley and Peters). These executive orders were important incentives for black workers to withstand racist attacks from white wage earners in the railway and shipping industries.

One of the major setbacks for black Americans during the New Deal was the unbearable racism and segregation that were institutionalized in federal urban policy (Hirsch, "Black..." 54). The severe segregationist policies of the federal government considered African Americans as "internal colonies" in urban areas forming the fundament for "American Apartheid" (Moses 269). At the same time, a second great black migration sparked the urbanization of 4 million more African Americans between 1940 and 1970 (Katz 184). These structural developments established another episode of black nationality formation. In this sense, the political and cultural dynamics of black nationalism were profoundly affected by the Third World Revolution in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Moses 341, 371). As black America's identification with the Third World spread out, African American nationality development released a new radical type of black cultural nationalism, one separate from the elitist nineteenth-century nationalism that remained detached from the grassroots. By opposition to the classical bourgeois black nationalism, which stood aloof from the black communities, this new cultural nationalism shaped and promoted black folk culture as the foundation for a black nation.

These developments took shape just after the rise of what became known as the “second” ghetto in the United States (Hirsch, “Black...” 66). The “first” ghetto resulted in the birth of an open racial animosity between whites and blacks in the cities, particularly after the First World War. Whereas the “second” ghetto was the fruit of systematic public policy aimed at racial segregation. The mold for the government policies that engendered the “second” ghetto was made in the midst of racial hatred (Taylor and Hill 92). A fusion of business, civic, and political leaders as well as university officials formed urban policy and legislation aimed to focalize and contain the African American population in the ghetto.

The “second” ghetto, which was the alternative to the urban race problem, became the pattern for federal housing legislation (Hirsch, Making... 175). On a national level, the “second” ghetto developed as a principal part of federal urban policy. Beginning with the New Deal in the 1930s, the federal government accelerated the extension and continuance of high levels of residential segregation. The federal government supported between 1935 and 1950 a vehement racist consciousness and insisted upon discriminatory practices as a sine qua non for support from federal housing agencies. This federal involvement in housing segregation made a dramatic difference. Blended with the slum clearance, urban renewal, public housing, and highway construction programs of the 1950s and 1960s, these government initiatives encouraged and staked white move to the suburbs, helped deprive older towns of their middle classes, and practically guaranteed that blacks would remain isolated within economically weakened key cities (Haywood, Equality... 96). These ghettos were much greater than the first segregated communities.

They covered vast areas in major cities, and by 1970 fourteen of these urban centers comprised at least 180,000 African Americans (Katz 211).

The new kind of black nationalist consciousness represented a serious impact on the growth of the ghetto and the increased awareness of race which accompanied the migration from rural to urban areas. One former Garveyite explained that before migrating from Omaha, Nebraska, to Chicago, his nearest black neighbor in that South Omaha section was several miles away. In South Omaha where African Americans were scattered, the sense of black community was generated by the church. Comparable to the 10,315 black people of Omaha in 1920, Chicago where he got involved into the Garvey movement, had 109,458 African Americans (Kusmer 231). It became one of the most significant concentrations of people of African descent in the world. Black nationalism's accent on racial unity appealed to many urban blacks who were, for the first time, living in a social environment that resembled, even if on a rather small scale, an all-black nation.

If the "first" ghettos had a spectacular impression on black consciousness, the "second" ghetto was an even stronger social constitution for black nationalist sentiments. One aspect of African American existence that would survive the decade of the twenties was the sense of common fate regnant in all socio-economic classes in the black community as a result of the fortification of the ghetto. In the twenties this new racial consciousness engendered both the Harlem Renaissance and the Garvey movement. Four decades later, in a much more explosive setting, it would end in black revolutionaries and cultural nationalists with more combativeness than Garvey.

In both cases, the fundamental social foundation of these phenomena was the urban ghetto.

Many cities witnessed dramatic concentrations of African Americans in the 1970s. For instance, there were approximately 214,000 in St. Louis, 250,000 in Cleveland, 335,000 in Los Angeles, 411,000 in Washington, D.C., 482,000 in Detroit; 529,000 in Philadelphia, 812,647 in Chicago, and 1,088,000 in New York City (Harvey 119). As black people focalized in these ghettos in huge numbers, they produced African American communities with their own particular sets of behaviors, values and cultures. Exposing details on the folkways of Harlem in the 1960s, LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) vividly reported in Home:

There are hundreds of tiny restaurants, food shops, rib joints, shrimp shacks, chicken shacks, ‘rotisseries’ throughout Harlem that serve “soul food”—say, a breakfast of grits, eggs and sausage, pancakes and Alaga syrup—and even tiny booths where it’s at least possible to get a good piece of barbecue, hot enough to make you whistle, or a chicken wing on a piece of greasy bread. You can always find a fish sandwich: a fish sandwich is something you walk with, or ‘Two of those small sweet potato pies to go.’ The Muslim temple serves bean pies which are really separate (103-4).

The new urban generation insisted that black Americans were just as separate in their music and dance as in their cuisine. Soul music, a blend of rhythm and blues and gospel whose origins went back to the 1950s, was key to the flourishing of an “imagined community” in black America (Anderson 198). As an endemic expression of the black experience, this sort of music served as “a repository of transcending the medium of entertainment, soul music provided a ritual in song in song with which

blacks could identify and through which they could convey important in-group symbols” (Deburg, New Day... 205). For the new artists and writers music became the nucleus of their very sense of being.

LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) detailed in Blues People, the weight of modernization, urbanization, radio, and race records on black nationality formation. The interaction between the different provincial blues traditions in this new fundamental structure fed the development of national African American music styles. One important result of race records was that with the rapid spread of blues, certain types of singing became paradigms for many emulous blues artists. Before race records, blues form usually relied on strictly local tradition. The race recordings began to set forth extra-local models and styles of blues-singing which influenced younger blacks (Harvey 212). The radio also had a staggering impact on blues in a similar fashion. The radio also had a staggering impact on blues in a similar fashion. Because of this, gramophone records themselves contributed whole styles of blues-singing (Hirsch, Making... 157). And even though the local traditions were preserved, the first blues stars and nationally known blues personalities emerged thanks to the phonograph record. It was easily noticeable how this record device stimulated the existing folk tradition and caused the creation of another kind of tradition which was utterly different from any other in the past.

The expansion of the black ghetto brought forth a new black ethos and highly participated in nationality formation in the urban areas. As blacks moved to the North, they were not assimilated into white America. Instead, they produced a quite separate

national culture and consciousness by synthesizing various elements chosen from their regional and local backgrounds (Hirsch, "Black..." 53). In other words, ambiguous discussions of assimilation only help to obscure the fact that in the twentieth century, African Americans were urbanized and modernized in a very distinct style that erected the groundwork for a separate national political community.

These cultural developments were weakened by the institutional racism that structured the emergence of the "second" ghetto. The structural meaning of "blackness" reflected flagrant disparities in the racial allocation of power, authority, and wealth (Katznelson 39). These inequities were felt most bitterly in the ghetto. The new black ethos of the 1960s mirrored the very distinct tension between the promise of freedom in the North and the harsh realities of the segregated, dark ghettos. In his autobiography, Claude Brown asked after fleeing racial oppression in the South "where can we run to if we are already in the northern promised land?" (Brown 245)

The physical surroundings in the black ghetto mocked the new sense of pride that was flourishing in these semi-autonomous black communities. In his autobiography, Huey P. Newton, the founder of the Black Panther Party (BPP), remembered the interior of ghetto housing. The kitchen was his sleeping place. That memory came often back to him whenever he remembered people crowded in a tiny living space, he always saw a child sleeping in the kitchen and feeling disturbed about it. Although the kitchen was never supposed to be a bedroom, that was all people like Newton possessed. He still burned with the sense of bitterness and felt every time as

he crept to bed near the icebox (Bloom 189). Similarly, in Home, Baraka described his confinement in black America with a sense of profound discontent:

Despair sits on this country in most places like a charm, but there is a special gray death that loiters in the streets of an urban black slum. And the men who walk those streets, tracing and retracing their steps to some hopeless job or a pitiful rooming house or apartment or furnished room, sometimes stagger under the weight of that gray, humiliated because it is not even 'real' (94).

Baraka's writing enforced his generation's sense that these ghettos were all connected. Life and its possibility in these places had been structured and established almost identically. The shaping was as old as its sources: the frustration, anxiety, and hatred that blacks had always inherited in America. The ghetto had become a standard of a nationwide oppression for African Americans. Moreover, for them, the grip of racial crisis reached beyond the "second" ghetto into the work place to create a special category of labor exploitation (Hirsch, "Black..." 66). During the New Deal, the Roosevelt administration and Congress did not succeed to create a national labor market. Thus, they caused another major racial damage to people of African origin and, eventually, resulted in worsening the relationship between blacks and whites.

At first the National Industrial Recovery Act's aim was (NIRA) to establish a national labor market and national minimum wage in the country. The Roosevelt administration, however, compromised on the race question to win the legislative approval of powerful Southern politicians (Harris 92). On June 13, 1933, the United States Congress successfully passed the NIRA which was part of FDR's New Deal

agenda. With the 1933 NIRA, the federal government established regional wage standards, willingly preserving the legacy of slavery and caste in the Southern labor market by paying blacks lower wages than whites for the same work (Fraser and Gerstle 66). The weight of the disparities in that New Deal legislation was deleterious on the black working class, endangering the health and restraining security of generations of African Americans. Reprobating this institutionalized racism at congressional hearings, the NAACP proved that the important objective beneath the organization of regional wage standards was the institutional establishment of lower wages for African Americans.

The civil rights group announced that the boundaries of the southern region expanded in the North touching every industry where black workers were concentrated. The New Deal created twofold labor market in legislation like the NIRA. During its hearings, Southern politicians and businessmen alike seriously warned the nation that if the government attempted to force employers to offer equal pay for the races, that black workers would easily be preferred to white wage earners (Dubofsky 245). The far-reaching results of this legislation demonstrated disparities established during the early New Deal which would negatively affect workers a generation later (R. Levine 102). Social Security which the federal agency established to provide old-age insurance for workers, did not concern those job classifications in which blacks were heavily employed.

Many African American laborers were compelled to quit their jobs at the end of the war boom. The protest of African Americans in the work place was led by radical black workers in the early 1950s. More than one thousand militant black workers,

representing tens of thousands more, assembled to form the National Negro Labor Council (NNLC) in 1951. The Council's tactic was to keep itself away from multiracial unions, while building autonomous black caucuses in order to shape the special demands of black workers (Harris 189). Met with the Communist Party's opposition to their activities during this difficult struggle, black autonomy in the communist movement remained an urgent issue for African American activists who were mobilizing black labor united fronts.

Supported by Paul Robeson, the most prominent personalities in the NNLC were "Big Red" Coleman Young, once-socialist-leaning and militant Detroit UAW mentor and who was later elected that city's first black mayor; Ernest "Big Train" Thompson, a militant United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers organizer labor representative in Bayonne, New Jersey; Bill Hood, representative of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) at the Ford River Rouge plant; Clarence Coggins, a political organizer in Newark, who helped organize the election of that city's first black mayor; and Vicki Garvin, the executive secretary of the NNLC in New York City, who would work for African liberation with Maya Angelou and W. E. B. Du Bois, and afterwards with Malcolm X (Woodard 36). The NNLC was organized into twenty-three local councils to defy the Jim Crow policies of the powerful companies, and to locally strive on political, economic, and social fronts (Harris 237). A nationwide campaign against Sears Roebuck, the famous mid-range chain of international department stores, for example, was successful in defeating that company's discriminatory hiring policy.

The task was not limited to industrial organization. Some of its best part was

achieved in black residential communities. The New Jersey Negro Labor Council, for example, called in its political program in the community for the unity and organizational framework for the election of Irvine Turner, the first black city council representative in Newark in the early 1950s (R. Levine 241). First, the NNLC succeeded to mobilize broad based endorsement to change the structure of Newark's government from an at-length commission into a mayor-council ward system which allowed some proportional representation (Nelson 202). It had proven impossible under the commission form for blacks, women and other minorities to attain representation and the government was kept under the control of a small ruling clique.

Newark's government contained under the new system council representatives of five wards. The great majority of black Americans lived in the ghetto in the Central Ward. Turner was swept into office by a black and labor coalition after campaigning as a progressive anti-McCarthy candidate condemning the H-bomb. The New Jersey branch of the NNLC initiated a neighborhood political assembly during the political mobilization (Harris 402), Newark's first black political convention, to choose Turner as a candidate.

Turner's election meant that it was the first time an African American had succeeded to undermine the powerful white front of municipal government in New Jersey, propelling black political mobilization for representation throughout the state (Nelson 278). African Americans became more aware of the question of dignity and the power they would win in that struggle. Those first developments may help understand why the Modern Black Convention Movement (MBCM) became infixed so quickly in Newark during the black revolt of the 1960s.

However, with the decline of the communist movement, the NNLC lost adherence. Many of the political achievements made by that movement were absorbed by ethnic political machines. Irvine Turner became the black leader of the Central Ward in Newark (Curvin 30-31). Moreover, the NNLC was attacked by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), and deserted by the Communist Party. In Washington, the HUAC jeopardized the careers of many black artists and intellectuals, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, and Langston Hughes. While Hughes renounced his early radicalism, Robeson was deprived of his passport (R. Levine 145). In this uncontrolled situation, the HUAC maligned Du Bois, then a leading anti-nuclear war activist in his eighties, considering him a threat to America. Du Bois, who was president of the Council on African Affairs, was simply charged of being an unregistered agent of a foreign power and tried in federal court (Franklin and Meier 82). The American Communist Party later undermined its demands for black self-determination, and the party's key leaders expelled Harry Haywood, the leading black communist who championed a radical African American demand to national equality and black liberation, while he was living in exile in Mexico.

These negative developments caused a severe fissure between communists and black nationalists. The official communist and socialist contempt for black nationality emulations hindered cooperation and established a "Chinese wall" between the two movements on the eve of the black revolt in the 1960s. Many of the leading veteran cultural nationalists in the 1960s had suffered the disloyalty of the communists and socialists during the 1950s (Ditmer 75). Queen Mother Moore, the outspoken civil rights leader, left the communist movement and opted for black nationalism and Pan-

Africanism (Curvin 102). Harold Cruse became a leading black intellectual nationalist, warning the Black Power generations about the great dangers of embracing Western Marxism. Abner Berry, an important communist, helped Max Stanford and other young black militants establish the African People's Party (APP) in Philadelphia (Montgomery and Johnson 71). In parallel, after his affiliation with the Left, John Henrik Clarke, a black historian, was an advisor to Malcolm X in the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

Internationally, the power of revolutionary nationalism tremendously evolved in the anti-colonial movements¹. However, prominent leaders at the same time who were repudiating Western colonialism became increasingly skeptical of Soviet political intentions as well. Aimé Césaire, one of the founding fathers of the Negritude Movement and a leading communist in Martinique, deserted the French Communist Party (FCP) in 1956, firmly stood against both the Soviet and French parties (Weisbort 42). Making a solid case for ideological, political, and organizational independence from the FCP, Césaire explained that he was not opposing communism, but rather maintaining that colonized nations could not delegate anyone to act on their behalf them, to do their searching and to make their discoveries:

We cannot henceforth accept that anyone at all, be he our best friend, answer for us. If the aim of all progressive politics is somebody to restore their freedom to colonial peoples, then the day by day activities of

¹ In China, the communists and the nationalists forged an alliance against the invasion of Japan. They also established the Viet Minh, an alliance to drive out the French in Vietnam.

progressive parties must at least not contradict the supposed objective and not every day wreck the very bases, the organizational as well as the psychological bases of this future freedom; and those bases boil down to one postulate: the right to take the initiative (Letter... 11).

Césaire understood that people of color need to adopt self-determination, and eventually notified against treating the colonial question as an appendage of a global matter.

Western Marxism was misdoubted in many quarters among the people of color in the 1950s. Meanwhile, black America took its destiny in its own hands, led by Thurgood Marshall's NAACP legal strategy. The case of Brown v. the Board of Education (1954) ruling by the Earl Warren Supreme Court paved the way for a new stage of struggle over the pressing issue of school desegregation and the permanent question of black citizenship. Outside the White House, President Eisenhower, who had the executive power for enforcing the Brown decision, firmly opposed the Court's ruling. Eisenhower often reminded that designating Warren to the Supreme Court was the most serious mistake he ever made as Chief Executive (Montgomery and Johnson 152). Eisenhower provided no national leadership on the crucial civil rights issue of his day. In 1956, 101 Congressmen in total, in the Deep South, ratified the "Southern Manifesto." The manifesto plainly stated that the Brown Decision represented "a clear abuse of judicial power" (Congressional Record, vol. 102, Part 4). That political leadership set the stage for the massive development of the White Citizen's Council, which remorselessly attacked the NAACP in the South.

The middle class White Citizens' Council (WCC) ¹ projected the financial extinguishment of Southern organizations and leaders. The WCC's real victory lay in its ability to apply economic retaliations on those who favored and actively pushed for desegregation. The Council's program of "legal challenge of federal oppression" had a wide echo (Ditmer 93). If the rank and file often emerged from the working class, the leadership just as often originated from the business, professional and governing elite. In the Deep Southern states, where its strength and its respectability were considerable, the Council's controlling impact was felt in every branch of government.

In this regard, African American protest seized the opportunity in 1955 when the resistance of Rosa Parks set in motion the Montgomery Bus Boycott. She was given full support by both Jo Ann Robinson, a leader of the Montgomery Women's Political Council (WPC), and E. D. Nixon, a former Garveyite and President of both the local Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) and the NAACP. The Montgomery leadership made its choice on the young Martin Luther King Jr. to lead the protest. The black working people of Montgomery, particularly women domestic workers, marched toward freedom. They boycotted the buses for 381 days (Sitkoff, Struggle... 52). Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and James Farmer's Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) had restored the

¹ White Citizens Council was first established in Mississippi following the United States Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, in the case of Brown v. Board of Education, when the court reversed the 1895 ruling in Plessy v. Ferguson, declaring that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

legal struggle for civil rights by carrying the issues into the streets and compelling the federal government to get involved in crisis situations in the 1960s (Weisbort 38).

The racial crisis unleashed the most important black awakening in African American history. The student sit-in that took place on February 1, 1960 at Woolworth's Greensboro, North Carolina, backed black youth activism, and paved the way for the emergence of the SNCC (Carson 98). The SCLC organizer, Ella Baker, made certain that the SNCC was created as an independent organization so that it could find its own bearings in the struggle for equality. This era of the civil rights movement reflected a new bold defiance of the caste system among African Americans and their backers. The SNCC made a main breakthrough in the civil rights movement when Robert P. Bob Moses, a leading SNCC figure, followed the organizing philosophy of Ella Baker in Mississippi (Payne 86). When Moses arrived in Mississippi he found out that there was a long tradition of resistance and deep networks of black struggle.

These tactics appealed to an active minority that built the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), particularly such reliable grassroots women leaders as Fannie Lou Hamer, the lady who was "sick and tired of being sick and tired," Septima Clark, Unita Blackwell, Ruby Hurley, and Winnie Hudson. 80,000 black people voted for the MFDP candidates in 1963 (Carson 145). The MFDP's defiance to the segregationist official Mississippi Democratic Party at the 1964 National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, was a key landmark in the black liberation struggle. When President Johnson bludgeoned the votes of liberal Democrats to reject the official seating of the full MFDP delegation, that crucible began the radicalization

of a young generation of student activists raged by the disloyalty of the liberal establishment. James Baldwin, black writer and community activist, raised one of the most challenging issues of identity, purpose, and direction for the civil rights movement when he once asked “Do I really want to be integrated into a burning house?” (The Fire... 64) This stand had a great weight on black community leaders who sought greater community unity and self-determination by promoting black nationalism, rather than racial assimilation.

That radicalism was hardly contained as King’s SCLC took the initiative for a national march on Selma, Alabama, after state police ferociously attacked peaceful demonstrators on March 7, 1965 (Weisbort 145). The Selma march assembled public opinion for the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Ironically, that was to become a landmark in the history of African American nationality formation (Struggle... 201). After the Voting Rights Act, black nationality formation increasingly evolved within the political arena. The Watts uprising of August 1966 ingenerated the awakening of a new force which proved difficult to reckon with.

The SNCC organized the Selma March as springboard for its political gathering in Lowndes County, Alabama. Indeed, local people were helped by SNCC adherents in the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. The Lowndes County experiment enforced widespread agreement that it was time for the SNCC to begin establishing black political organizations (Sellers 1). Those were the backbone of the BPP. Soon after having started a unique *March against Fear* from Memphis to Jackson in 1966, to protest against racism, James Meredith was assassinated. A number of civil rights organizations such as CORE, SNCC and SCLC – rushed to Mississippi to continue

the protest. In the same month, controversies within the civil rights movement surfaced. SNCC's new leader, Stokely Carmichael stirred rallies of African Americans with a new commotional slogan, "Black Power" (Carmichael and Hamilton vii-viii). The noteworthy motto was the most vigorous instrument of political agitation in black America since Marcus Garvey's mass mobilization during the 1920s.

At the outset of the Black Power phenomenon, SNCC activists raised several key organizing issues for radicals. Too often, scholars forget how ambiguous the issues looked in 1966 and they neglect the original concerns that remained unanswered at the time. Vanguard activists wanted to know if the concept of Black Power, which had grown out of their political work in rural Mississippi and Alabama, was actually relevant to mobilizing and organizing in northern black ghettos (Carson 178). They wondered what would be the value of the black vote in urban areas and around which issues African Americans could be organized. They also asked if African Americans would try to develop alternative or parallel political structures in urban areas as the SNCC had done with the MFDP and the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in the rural South. Moreover, the SNCC wanted to identify the "levers of power for poor blacks" (Sellers 187).

The expansion of black nationalism, therefore, was based on the gaining of freedom from racism, class oppression, political disenfranchisement, exploitation, and repression. It fundamentally started as a debate between black leadership in the mid 1800's as to what should be the social agenda of Africans in the United States (Payne

186). Black nationalism as an solution to assimilation goes back to over one hundred years, as black leaders explored alternative political and social ideology to crush racial discrimination against African Americans in the United States (Weisbort 162). Many grassroots organizations used nationalist philosophy to correct problems of racial discrimination and poverty, and to take ownership of their communities through collective social action. Yet the organizations and movements of that period emerged thanks to the political motivation and their leaders' political maturation which grew through multiple experiences, whether personal or collective.

With different philosophies, doctrines, approaches, and stratagems to fight a common foe: white oppression and exploitation despite the so-called socio-economic improvements, black intellectual activists – including Amiri Baraka – were going to play a crucial role in developing the sense of self-determination, self-respect and black nationality formation. The next chapter will eventually look into Baraka's political maturation as an important paradigm for the dynamics of black cultural nationalism and how his maturation would contribute to shaping a more severe opposition to a progressing white backlash against which African Americans were going to struggle by employing any means necessary.

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CHAPTER TWO

Amiri Baraka's Political Maturation

A striking narrative of psycho-social events deeply marked the development of Amiri Baraka's persona as an intellectual nationalist. Indeed, Baraka's involvement in black nationalism symbolized the ideological adjustments many blacks were expected to follow during the 1960s and 1970s. His political maturity reflected the challenge faced by black intellectuals who sought to express viewpoints and embrace social attitudes steeped in Afrocentric racial consciousness and cultural pride. The intricacies attending this challenge to redefine social identity and to liberate it from the influences of white cultural assimilation are evident when examining the context and design of Baraka's own entry into the black cultural revolution.

In the 1970s, Baraka advocated a far more radical stand of the role of the black intellectual. His experience was shaped by unfavorable circumstances which forced him to seek ways out from the permanently existing marginalization of the black community. Most of the time, the sought-out alternatives were misinterpreted, and then rejected by an extremely racist surrounding. Baraka's experience in intellectual activism showed an African American cultural tradition which was believed to be an urgent necessity for activists like him, who, during a period of unrest, became the outspoken intellectual of this tradition that was shaped by African Americans who had preceded him. This forged tradition was developed according to Baraka's proper understanding and through the circumstances of his time.

Amiri Baraka is considered one of the most prolific and influential African-American literary figures. He is a widely published poet, essayist, playwright,

fictionalist, journalist and painter. His authority on African-American literature is considerable. Plays, poems, novels, essays, short stories, jazz operas and music criticism are all present in his works, and all serve as a bridge for his outspoken social and political commentary. He is a multifaceted personality which shifts with such astonishing velocity that critics define him as “one who is no longer there, while his admirers have been challenged to readjust themselves to his new position” (Banks 120). By all indications, he and his art were in the 1970s part of a continually evolving political process and thus stood squarely in the forefront for the creation of a black revolutionary tradition in African American literature and culture.

Born Everett LeRoy/LeRoi Jones, Imamu Amiri Baraka was the child of middle-class African American parents in Newark, New Jersey, where his scholastic abilities took him to the best institutions available. As Baraka recalled in his autobiography, his classmates were more often white suburbanites than inner-city children of his own blood. He was encouraged to express himself through art and music. He remembered being instructed piano, drum, and trumpet lessons, drama class, and art school. One of the few blacks in his high school, Baraka practiced sports, mainly baseball and basketball. He admitted that if he had been a little bigger he would never have been a writer. Yet Baraka was still considered by other students as a stranger. His parents boasted the idea of their son’s success at an overwhelmingly white school, but his distinct status caused him deep feelings of frustration and estrangement (Reilly 242). Later in his life, He would never cease to scorn the “values of assimilation” his parents held dear.

Baraka was an outstanding student, succeeding with honors from Barringer High School and won a scholarship to Rutgers University in 1951. Shortly before enrolling in college in 1952, he started using his first name in its Frenchified spelling, LeRoi. But a growing sense of cultural displacement obliged him to transfer in 1952 to Howard University (a traditionally African American institution) at Washington, D.C., where he studied with the distinguished black scholars (Hudson 97). He would eventually criticized Howard University as the fortress of the black bourgeoisie he hated: “Howard University shocked me into realizing how desperately sick the Negro could be, how he could be led into self-destruction and how he would not realize that it was the society that had forced him into a great sickness” (Baraka, Autobiography... 48).

But despite his direct attack, Baraka’s years at Howard were of great benefit to him. He studied philosophy, religion and literature, and was exposed to the ideas of notable black poets, music critics, and scholars (Holloway 124). Baraka confessed that several of his tutors provided him with an important background in European classics as well as black American culture. He particularly studied the blues with Sterling A. Brown, a poet of the Harlem Renaissance who wrote in black vernacular (Benston, Imamu... 124). Highly praised by Baraka, all three left a permanent impact on his intellectual and artistic formation (G. Watts 22). Highly praised by Baraka, all three left a permanent impact on his intellectual and artistic formation.

Baraka left Howard in 1954 without completing his bachelor’s degree. He returned to his native city, Newark, to enroll in the U.S. Air Force where he obtained the rank of sergeant. It was in the army that he resumed his education. While in that

service, he started his intellectual and artistic instruction in sincere intent by writing poetry and reading excessively (Hudson 186). Baraka was the base librarian when his contingent was positioned in Puerto Rico. The library proved very positive to him because it became a place where he and other colleagues would cultivate themselves with the available interesting books ranging from Thomas Hardy to Proust to Kafka. He was simultaneously attempting to publish his poems in magazines such as Kenyon Review and The New Yorker. Suspecting him to be a communist, he was dismissed from the army in 1957 and returned to civilian life. He recognized while invoking the incident that “someone said I was a Communist. As it turned out now it’s true” (Publishers Weekly).

At that time, the burgeoning counter-culture movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s known as the Beat Generation was just beginning to touch the consciousness of America. The Beats were challenging the stagnant literary establishment and the stiff and firm moral code of the country. Baraka quickly joined the rebellious group, considering them as fellow outsiders. The ideal shared by the Beats and Baraka was to look beyond, or rise above, racial obstacles. Baraka explained to David Ossman:

I’m fully conscious all the time that I’m an American Negro, because it’s part of my life. But I also know that if I want to say, ‘I see a bus full of people,’ I don’t have to say, ‘I am a Negro seeing a bus full of people.’ I would deal with it when it has to do directly with the poem, and not as a kind of broad generalization that doesn't have much to do with a lot of young writers today who are Negroes (The Sullen... 58).

Greenwich Village became Baraka's residence, a heart of the developing cultural revolution. He encountered and married Hettie Cohen, a Jewish woman, who shared his tastes in music and literature. Cohen worked for the Partisan Review where Baraka published his first piece in 1958. It was a defense of the innovations of Beat writing, declaring that young writers “must resort to violence in literature, to shake us out of the woeful literary sterility which characterized the ‘40s” (Partisan Review 472.). Baraka and Cohen created a literary magazine, Yugen, advantageously displaying the new poets. He wrote “a letter — on toilet paper stationery — to Beat poet Allen Ginsberg soliciting works” (W. Harris, The LeRoi... 54) and was rewarded with contributions from Ginsberg, Philip Whalen, Gregory Corso, Gary Snyder, Jack Kerouac, and other members of the group. He wrote a number of early works, including his 1964 Obie award-winning play, Dutchman, and his pioneering history of African American music and cultural ethos, Blues People (Hill 1498). As the publisher of two important avant-garde magazines, Yugen and Floating Bear, Baraka became one of the most preeminent editors of the new Beat poetry.

Baraka developed an important relationship with Ginsberg. He recalled that they endlessly debated poetry and literature. It was clear to Baraka that his poetry would not have evolved as it had without Allen Ginsberg's ideas because he let him in “on poetry as a living phenomenon, a world of human concern, and literature as a breathing force in one's life, the task of a lifetime” (Benston, Imamu... 188). Baraka grew and matured because of these ideas. Even by resisting some of Ginsberg's other ideas, he still developed because of his contact with them. Baraka's relationship with

Ginsberg, his editorship of Yugen (1958-1962) and Floating Bear (1961-1963), and creation of Totem Press quickly made him one of the leading figures of the Greenwich Village scene (Early 312). He began to write prolifically, contributing poetry and reviews of books and music.

However, even as Baraka was becoming a key member of the Beat Generation, he was distancing himself from the movement. Despite learning a great deal technically and intellectually from the Beat writers, soon he became disillusioned. He complained that the Beat poets were, for the most part, apolitical (Baraka, "lecture"). They criticized the system, but had no agenda for changing it. Baraka felt an increasing sense of disappointment with this kind of passivity (Watts 167). He viewed these bohemians as "simply carping beatniks accomplishing nothing" while he was struggling to become a revolutionary, "someone who would change the material conditions of the black masses" ("Lecture").

Baraka reached a turning point in his life when he went to Cuba in 1959. He met the revolutionary Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, and other influential African American figures like Robert F. Williams, an exiled activist and author of Negroes with Guns which was a pivotal influence on Huey P. Newton, founder of the future BPP. This happening greatly took part in transforming Baraka's personality as a black intellectual who was profoundly determined to adopt and spread the principle of identity alteration. The politically committed artists and intellectuals influenced him to abandon the Beat preoccupation with the soul and to tackle society's problems in a more aggressive fashion (Bogues 10). Baraka did not change overnight. He did, however, return from Cuba with a new sense of political mission and a stronger

determination to identify with artists of the Third World than with those of the white vanguard.

Baraka's remarkable change was forcibly brought on by the image of a revolutionary Fidel Castro and the legendary spirited achievements of the Cuban revolution which had a seminal impact on black Americans (Sollors 57). The generation which forged the Black Arts Cultural Revolution was equally influenced by the same vision. As a part of this generation, Baraka confirmed as much in his Autobiography when he showed that "the Cuban trip was a turning point in my life" (175). In fact, this trip initiated his conception of art as being political. The book of poems titled The Dead Lecturer (1964) reflected his desperate need to create a black political art and keep himself aloof from the village intellectuals and artists who failed him.

In 1960, invited by the black journalist, Richard Gibson, the young Baraka joined the group of Harold Cruse, John Henrik Clarke, Ed Clark, Julian Mayfield, and Robert F. Williams to directly witness the Cuban Revolution. Many of these black writers had contributed to a special July 4th issue of the newspaper supplement, Lunes de Revolución (Home 14). Baraka was curious to learn from Robert F. Williams, the hero of the self-defense groups in the black revolt because of his daring position against the Klan practices in Monroe, North Carolina, in the late 1950s. But LeRoi Jones was observed by Cruse (Amiri Baraka) to weigh the impact that important journey to the Sierra Maestra would have on the younger generation (Cruse, The Essential...132). It was noted in Havana that Baraka made a positive impression on the revolutionary intelligentsia of the Castro regime.

Harold Cruse thought it extraordinary that the young Cuban rebels and Baraka had so much in common: “they actually talked the same ‘language’”. He concluded that for Baraka’s “impressionable generation, this revolutionary indoctrination, this ideological enchantment, was almost irresistible” (Young 26, 34,). But it appears that even such political seniors as John H. Clarke and Harold Cruse were subjugated by the trip to Cuba to meet Fidel Castro. In addition, Cruse reported that they were caught up in “a revolutionary outpouring of thousands of people making their way up the mountain roads to the shrine of the revolution, under the hottest sun-drenching any of us Americans had probably ever experienced.” (The Essential... 139).

Enthralled by the new attention given to African American writers, Cruse remarked:

The ideology of a new revolutionary wave in the world at large had lifted us out of the anonymity of the lonely struggle in the United States to the glorified rank of visiting dignitaries. ...Nothing in our American experience had ever been as arduous and exhausting as this journey. Our reward was the prize of revolutionary protocol that favored those victims of capitalism away from home (Rebellion... 214).

He was convinced that without a cultural identity which adequately defined himself, the black American could not even identify with the American nation as a whole. He even coined the ideas of the triple cultural, economic and political fronts by which the successes and failures of black revolutionary movements were determined. By virtue of his concern with the African American community

exercising its own conscious choice and decision in terms of culture and economics he was a cultural nationalist. The appeal Cruse made in Rebellion or Revolution for a radical cultural theory indicated that he was a harbinger of the Afrocentric concept (89).

Cruse saw these issues from the viewpoint of African American history and investigated the various dimensions of the issues from the outlook of political maturation and cultural consciousness. When one reads his works, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual and Rebellion or Revolution, his idea of the crisis in the African American community is clear. For him, the fundamental question facing the community was a cultural one, not simply one of singing and dancing, but one concerned with the sum total of their behaviors, artistic, social, and communal. “Whose culture,” he asked, “do we uphold, the Afro-American or the Anglo American?” (Rebellion... 148) Only the Afrocentrists of Cruse’s type could answer the question in the manner he would appreciate because they believed through the same trajectory that the cultural crisis was considered a way for weakness or strength in their community. If blacks were able to resolve the cultural question, they would be able to confront all other issues such as economic unity and social maturation.

In fact, Afrocentricity is about African people being “agents and actors” (Asante and Kemet, Afrocentricity... 127). In Cruse’s construction of the problems of black community he noticed that either they had denied, lost, or given away their agency to become different from who they were. Some did not support African American culture because in their minds it was separatist. They wanted to demonstrate that they were Americans, meaning that they supported Anglo-American culture. But Cruse

would not identify with that generation of Third World rebels in quite the same manner as Baraka would. Baraka's contacts with such leaders as Fidel Castro in Cuba, Mohammed Babu in Tanzania, and Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X in the black revolt in the USA challenged his identity both as a writer and as a man. Baraka was on the path to finding himself, and it all revolved around the sense of kinship that he felt with that generation of radicals in Cuba, Africa, and Asia. Their problems would become the primary concerns of Amiri Baraka and his "wing" of the black liberation movement.

Although Baraka remained in Greenwich Village, he became increasingly involved in the social life of Harlem. During the early 1960s, He seemed to regard himself as an intermediary between the black and white worlds. He wrote two significant works of fiction at that time, The System of Dante's Hell and Tales. Both showed his determination to pull away from Greenwich Village. He confessed to Kimberly Benston in Boundary 2, "I was really writing defensively. I was trying to get away from the influence of people like Robert Creeley and Charles Olson. I was living in New York then and the whole Creeley-Olson influence was beginning to beat me up. I was in a closed circle ... and I felt the need to break out" (qtd in Benston, Imamu... 312). Still, he continued to work closely with Beat writers. He and poet Diane Di Prima founded the magazine, Floating Bear in 1961. The two were also instrumental in organizing the American Theatre for Poets. Baraka scorned the notion of a separate black society in his essay "Black Is a Country," insisting that America was as much a black country as a white one. "The lives and destinies of the white American are bound up inextricably with those of the black American," he added

“even though the latter has been forced for hundred of years to inhabit the lonely country of black,” (Home 85). He was temporarily attached to his belief in a world free of color lines even as he sought to establish for himself a stronger ethnic identity.

Baraka had totally repudiated the cultural and political values of the Beats by mid-1964 and had begun verbally attacking his Greenwich Village friends, white liberals, and the white community in general. His anti-bourgeois attitude had been altered into a militant black nationalism inspired by Malcolm X (W. Harris 39). An integrated society was not only impossible, he now believed, but also objectionable. Ironically, Baraka’s fulminations against the white world uplifted his popularity even further. He was for a time overwhelmed by invitations to hip, white, New York City high-society parties. But he meant what he said about turning his back on that world. (Reilly 72). By the end of 1965 he had ended his marriage to Hettie Cohen, broken his ties with the white literary establishment, and settled in Harlem. Yet, it cannot be denied that Baraka’s trajectory toward black nationalism passed through the Beat poetry, and jazz sessions of Greenwich Village. His early development in Greenwich Village as well as his increasing yearnings for black identity and for what Amilcar Cabral, the Guinean revolutionary leader, once called “a return to the source” (Smith 175) are the components of a nationalist pattern.

There are well-justified reasons which brought Baraka to leadership in the mid-1960s and the end of the 1970s as well. On the one hand, the African American deception and disillusionment at the waning of American idealism in the late sixties, the blending of white repercussion in national empowerment in America during the heyday of the civil rights movement, the permanent entanglement of many African

Americans in poverty and second-class citizenship, a resumption of interest and pride in African heritage, the emergence of a black arts movement, and ultimately the failure of traditional assimilationist politics all yielded a more forceful struggle to put an end to the threatening discriminatory practices (Sollors 86). On the other hand, the egression of a generation of African post-colonial leaders who adopted Marxian and other variants of socialism proposed options to the western capitalist system. Many of those energies found expression in Amiri Baraka whose personality and established organization, the Congress of African People (CAP), became positively affected by what is sociologically, culturally, and politically known as the dynamics of black cultural nationalism. This type of nationalism proved essential for the creation of the MBCM.

The impact of the CAP was so important that it allured a variety of intellectuals. Its supporters were a formidable score of writers, artists, and political activists. This attraction can be explained by the longing of these CAP adherents for new programs, organization and leadership to achieve black freedom (Baraka, African... 45). Therefore, the CAP's birth represented a golden opportunity for the black national community to unite. The MBCM found itself well-positioned in an era of an exceptional awakening of black consciousness and self-determination. It was also important because it epitomized a particular moment of black anger in American history.

The critical turning point in Baraka's life was the assassination of Malcolm X on February 21, 1965 (Harper 387). After Malcolm's death, Baraka favored the black revolution. Further in his identity transformation, he married the black actress and

dancer, Sylvia Robinson of Newark, New Jersey. Symbolizing the depth of his transformation, Hajj Heesham Jaaber, the Islamic minister who buried Malcolm X, changed Baraka's first name, LeRoi Jones, to Ameer Barakat, "Blessed prince" in Arabic. Subsequently, Maulana Karenga, a leading cultural nationalist from Los Angeles and the founder of US Organization, Africanized the name Ameer Barakat¹ making it "Amiri Baraka" in Swahili, and gave Baraka the distinctive title "Imamu," meaning spiritual leader. Amiri Baraka reported that Sylvia was named Amina (faithful) after one of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) wives (Karenga 19). Later, under Karenga's influence, he adopted the name Amiri, Swahilizing the first name (Sollors 99).

As Baraka's inspiration of leadership was a mix of African American models, the most important one could probably be associated with the relatively short but significant activist path of Malcolm X who had the great tribute to the establishment of the Black Power movement. Malcolm offered guidance to grassroots militancy by spreading his philosophy which was based on self-determination, self-defense, and self-respect. His contribution to the black nationalist tradition was to link that tradition with the mass movements of his time (Marable 138). Given the cultural aggression and degradation which blacks suffered from within a hostile white society, he believed that the liberation of his people had to begin with a healthy appreciation of self (Condit 301). Malcolm X also advocated that African-American people control

¹ Barakat in Arabic is pronounced "Body-Cot," [sic] the Swahili dropped the "t" and accented the next-to-last syllable, hence *Baraka*. Amiri with the rolled "r" was pronounced "Amidi".

the politics and economics within the African- American community, and strive to establish control over the territory where they had been forced to subsist by a racist and exploitative society front:

Although I'm still a Muslim, I'm not here tonight to discuss my religion. I'm not here to try and change your religion. I'm not here to argue or discuss anything that we differ about, because it's time for us to submerge our differences and realize that it is best for us to first see that we have the same problem, a common problem, a problem that will make you catch hell whether you're a Baptist, or a Methodist, or a Muslim, or a nationalist. Whether you're educated or illiterate, whether you live on the boulevard or in the alley, you're going to catch hell just like I am. We're all in the same boat and we all are going to catch the same hell from the same man. He just happens to be a white man. ("The Bullet...").

The most popular themes were those of self-determination, self-respect and self-defense. Malcolm embodied the black ethos and the new man produced by revolutionary black consciousness (Breitman, By Any Means... 218). He sought to flesh out several of the most challenging lessons of Malcolm: the urgency of the modernization of black nationalism, the priority of black cultural revolution, the centrality of the African revolution, and the necessity of developing a black ideology of self-determination, one reflecting the African American ethos (Gilroy 254). In addition to Elijah Muhammad's thrust of self-reliance, borrowed from Booker T. Washington's philosophy, Malcolm X emphasized the need for ethical reconstruction

and cultural revitalization in the African American community (Strickland 63-64). For many, the personal case of Malcolm X's personal moral reconstruction was particularly important.

As the most significant representative of the new black ethos, Malcolm's example of self-discipline and self-transformation was not without a great impact (Helan and Olivieira 213). He shaped his philosophy of self-transformation in a three-step program for change, approachable by anyone, urging a new generation to "wake up, clean up, and stand up." Black leaders and activists in the community had first to become politically aware of who they were and utterly conscious of the burdensome situation of their people. This was the black consciousness driving force in the black uprising. Then they had to raise their standard of ethics and behavior, so that they would be upstanding in the struggle for black freedom. Malcolm insisted that those who wanted to lead the black revolution would have to refrain from taking alcohol and abusing in drug because such pathologies deepened the already existing social problems in the ghetto, and such leaders would be puppets in the hands of their foes. Finally, they had to be prepared to rise up for equality and justice for black people (Gilroy 301).

Scholars in that period did not place enough emphasis on Malcolm's work for the modernization of black nationalism (Lincoln 312). He was rather intensely interested in the use of mass media for black nationality formation, particularly newspapers. He personally initiated the newspaper "Muhammad Speaks" to spread the Nation of Islam movement (W. Harris 123). Malcolm was the bridge between the old nationalism and the new, developing a secular nationalism in tune with

many of the innovations of the civil rights revolution. He used an agitational slogan “the Ballot or the Bullet” to support the voting rights of African Americans in 1964 (Wood 145). He emphasized the importance of voting as a solution to ending discrimination against blacks. He addressed both the poor voting decisions and also the denial of legitimate voting rights to blacks (Asante and Kemet, Malcolm X... 165). Because elections had been so narrowly decided in 1964, the black vote became a determining factor. Malcolm X believed in the right to use the “weapon” of voting:

I’m one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. I’m speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim.... When white people are evenly divided, and black people have a bloc of votes of their own, it is left up to them to determine who’s going to sit in the White House (Speaks... 229).

Malcolm also sought to experiment with the use of group voting in order to gain some degree of political autonomy in Harlem (By Any Means... 245).

In contrast to the Nation of Islam which traced the group identity of the black community back to the Asiatic black man, Malcolm X increasingly insisted on African group distinctiveness (Gibson 89). It is not easy to say whether this African emphasis was the result of his reflections upon his parents’ background as followers of Marcus Garvey’s Pan-African nationalism, his development within the Harlem nationalist tradition with its heavy emphasis on African identity, or the close contact which Malcolm X established with the new generation of such revolutionaries

as Mohammed Babu in Zanzibar (Curry 34). Malcolm placed a great deal of confidence in the African revolution and in the 1955 Bandung Conference of Africans and Asians held in Indonesia, insisting these were models both for forming black united fronts and for breaking Western oppression over people of color (Kieh 296). This trust manifested itself in the significance the younger generation placed in the Third World Revolution. Stressing the need for African Americans to develop their own revolutionary ideology and organization, Malcolm X urged them to search for philosophical and political approaches rooted in the African personality. He taught that if black people wanted to be free, they could not be guided by the thinking of their former slave masters (Flick 166). To him, the logic of the oppressor was always different from the logic of the oppressed.

Malcolm saw black music as the paradigm for the creation of an alternative black ideology of change, because it represented an area of black psychological autonomy. Explaining the importance of music for the black, John Illo wrote in “The Rhetoric of Malcolm X” that:

Music comes from within. It’s his soul, it’s that soul music. It’s the only area on the American scene where the black man has been free to create. And he has mastered it. He has shown that he can come up with something that nobody ever thought of on his horn. ...Well, likewise he can do the same thing if given intellectual independence. He can come up with a philosophy that nobody has heard of yet. He can invent a society, a social system, an economic system, a political system, that is different from anything that exists or has ever existed anywhere on this earth (7).

Malcolm X contributed to laying the political and cultural basis for a black united front of various classes and social groups which would bond together the Modern Black Convention Movement. He was convinced that the problem facing black people in America was larger than all other personal or organizational differences. He urged black leaders to direct their energies toward solving the “unending hurt that is being done daily to our people here in America” (Malcolm X 21). Under his sway, the urban black poor were not isolated (Flick 185). Instead of middle-class reformers on a mission in the ghetto, the poor would have allies in their struggle for dignity and justice.

These ideas of the new black nationalism had a considerable impact on Baraka’s generation because it sought to interpret and carry on the legacy of Malcolm X who paved the way so that major social stratum, the grassroots, would aspire to national leadership in the black revolt. They were the kind of people former generations had pushed into the background of the movement. For instance, consider the leaders who were galvanized by this new message in the Black Panthers: Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Hutton, and Fred Hampton. These leaders would not have come to the forefront under the hegemony of the traditional NAACP. As black people made their own history, according to Malcolm X, the masses at the grassroots level would become the vanguard for black liberation (Neal, “New Space...” 122). This became a major theme in the poetry, art, and plays of the Black Arts Movement.

Because of these powerful influences, what began in the black arts as a critique of the white establishment’s interpretation and evaluation of black music, poetry, and

drama, led to a thoroughgoing social challenge to racist and capitalist hegemony over the cultural life of the black community in the Modern Black Convention Movement. This anti-hegemonic thrust of the black arts was meaningful because it showed this movement the ideological challenge of the prevailing action to take and the lasting stratagems to adopt against unfavorable American politics (Toll 53). In its original stage, this social movement sought the creation of autonomous institutions where new interpretations of art and society, running counter to those of the white establishment, could materialize.

Even though the last year of Malcolm X was crisis ridden, he stood as an indestructible force for the new nationalism. He called his new gospel black nationalism but it was no longer the classic nationalism (Goldman 148). Many new writers and intellectuals, who were not drawn to Islam, sought out Malcolm X's leadership, especially after his break with the Nation of Islam and his call for a broad black united front. As a result, the assassination of Malcolm on February 21, 1965 was an awesome psychological setback to the nationalists and civil rights radicals (Clark 170). Larry Neal, one of the most influential scholars and philosophers of the BAM, knew this more than many other writers, because he actually witnessed and experienced the events of that tragic moment. Neal was present at the Audubon Ballroom in Upper Manhattan that Sunday as children sat next to their parents and Malcolm X mounted the platform. He recalled the event:

It could have been church. There was such a very diverse grouping of black people. Some of the women were tricked up real fine in their Sunday clothes. There were many young children there. The sun was shafting

through the windows. The audience had quieted down in anticipation of Malcolm; and after what seemed like two or three long minutes Malcolm came out (qtd in Lincoln 221).

Malcolm had said only a few words of greeting when a shooting started out. The bullets knocked him over backward. A wild noise broke out among the 400 blacks in the Audubon Ballroom at 166th Street and Broadway. As men, women and children ducked under tables and flattened themselves on the floor, more shots were fired. Some witnesses said 30 shots had been fired (The New York Times 9). His own extravagant past made it easy to overlook his desperate warnings that he had been marked for murder by the Muslims, the anti-white, anti-integrationist black sect he had served so sincerely for several years and fought so ferociously since his defection a year ago (Newsweek 26).

After all, had Malcolm not said that his life was in danger? Had not the man's home been bombed only a week before his assassination? Many black nationalists were preoccupied by such questions ("New Space" 27). The outcome of the event compelled new leaders to come to prominence as older leaders faded into the background in disbelief at the brutal murder of Malcolm X. Benjamin Karim, Malcolm's assistant minister, observed that after Malcolm's death, a great number of unorganized black students and activists became more radically politicized (Remembering... 188).

There was an outpouring of expression by artists and writers about the meaning of Malcolm, the most definitive symbol of the black revolution. Two of the most

significant voices were Ossie Davis, with his eulogy “Our Own Shining Black Prince,” and Amiri Baraka, with his song “A Poem for Black Hearts.” At Malcolm X’s funeral, Davis explained that “Malcolm was our manhood, our living, black manhood! This was his meaning to his people. And, in honoring him, we honor the best in ourselves” (Breitman et al., The Last Year... 112). Further developing the theme of Malcolm X’s nobility, Davis’s eulogy and Baraka’s poem, more than any others, expressed the combination of adoration, rage, and guilt that fired the minds of his generation. Consider the excerpt of a manifesto Davis offered an enraged black community:

Did you ever talk to Brother Malcolm? Did you ever touch him or have him smile at you? Did you ever really listen to him? Did he ever do a mean thing? Was he ever himself associated with violence or any public disturbance? For if you did, you would know him. And if you knew him, you would know why we must honor him: Malcolm was our manhood, our living, black manhood! This was his meaning to his people. And, in honoring him, we honor the best in ourselves. Last year, from Africa, he wrote these words to a friend: My journey, he says, is almost ended, and I have a much broader scope than when I started out, which I believe will add new life and dimension to our struggle for freedom and honor and dignity in the States (Eulogy...).

Both were writing these praising literary pieces so that blacks would know for a fact the great sympathy and support they had among the African States for their human

rights struggle. The principle is based on preserving a united front wherein their most valuable time and energy would not be wasted fighting each other .

Amiri Baraka expanded his contribution to a practical side. He planned to establish the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School (BARTS). As its name indicates, it would be a repertory theater in Harlem, as well as a school. As a school it would set up and continue to provide instruction, both practical and theoretical, in all new areas of the dramatic arts in Harlem. At that stage, a locus had not been chosen, but Baraka's idea was that the school would give “both practical and theoretical” schooling (Clark 189) in various fields of drama such as acting, writing, directing, set designing, production, and management.

While the program was particularly aimed at black youth, the Black Arts also anticipated offering a place for professional artists to perform their talents. Baraka announced that funds for the Black Arts project would be raised from the proceeds of performance of several plays that took place on March 1, 1965 (Revolutionary... 102). On March 28, 1965, a benefit concert for the newly formed Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School was organized at the Village Gate in New York City. Prepared by LeRoi Jones, originator of the organization, this event reflected an historic junction of influential figures in the “avant-garde” jazz movement of the 1960s. The concert gathered various voices from the non-mainstream fringes of the jazz community, many of whom were ingrained in improvisatory methodologies that defied traditional premisses about jazz. In addition to performances by John Coltrane and Sun Ra, two of the primary innovators of the new music, Archie Shepp and Albert Ayler, were also among the performers. The concert gave prominence to jazz

artists such as Sun-Ra and his Myth-Science Arkestra, Betty Carter, John Coltrane, Elvin Jones, Lewis Worrell, Sonny Murray, Bill Harris, Marion Brown, and Roger Blank (Baraka, “Voice...”19). This new music, or “New Black Music” as Baraka named it, became the soundtrack to an expanding black nationalism in literature. He argued that:

African-American music like the other profound expressions of that culture can only be strengthened by the whole people focusing in on the struggle for Self-Determination for the African-American Nation!-- whether black artists or black businessmen, black workers or progressive people of any nationality. The only way for the music to achieve self-determination is for the people to (The Music... 180).

Harlemites got acquainted with Baraka’s opening of the cultural institution, the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School when Sun-Ra and his Myth-Science Arkestra organized a march of writers and artists across 125th Street in Harlem, with Albert Ayler and his brother Don blowing and Milford Graves beating his drums. The floating Black Arts flag was symbolic (“Voice...” 36). The flag contained black and gold colors with masks representing Afrocentric theater of comedy and tragedy.

In fact the sixties were part of an historical Vanguard. What Baraka and his supporters attempted to innovate was a revolutionary black art. Baraka actually perceived Black Arts Movement as mass-based cultural revolution, confronting U.S. domestic colonialism/apartheid (Ellis 21). As per the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School, Baraka was daily in touch with Larry Neal and Askia Touré, and his staff, including not only intellectuals such as Harold Cruse, Larry Neal, Askia

Muhammad Touré, Max Stanford ¹, and Cornelius Suarez, but Sonia Sanchez, Barbara Hamilton, Barbara Carter, Sis. Kimako, Kelley Marie Berry, Ojiko others. They participated in discussions with Sun Ra, Andrew Hill & other musicians, William White, etc., in stirring, visionary seminars, debates, philosophical exchanges, which they saw as expanding revolutionary consciousness (Heckman 24-25).

The jazz musicians attracted the crowds with their music at the major gatherings the Black Arts organized in Harlem. Championing black self-determination, Amiri Baraka came with the idea that Harlem split from the United States (Benston, Performing... 232). Speaking as the Director of the Black Arts, he opted for unity: “if you want a new world, Brothers and Sisters, if you want a world where you can all be beautiful human beings, we must throw down our differences and come together as black people” (Black Music... 112). Moreover, he advised those “groups, organizations, viewpoints, religions, had better to come together, agreed on one term that they were black people, and that they were tired of being oppressed” (Baraka, Daggers... 166). The Black Arts put into practice an interesting program for young people, an expanded project funded by some \$44,000 from HARYOU-ACT, the major Harlem anti-poverty agency. It instructed 400 students black studies (Black Magic... 112). Some of the poets who attained prominence at the Black Arts were Sonia Sanchez, Larry P. Neal, Clarence Reed, Clarence Franklin, Sam Anderson, and Ed Spriggs (Neal, Visions... 97).

¹ Larry Neal, Askia Muhammad Touré, and Max Stanford were three of the earliest and forceful voices in the Black Arts/Black Aesthetic Movement. As architects of the Black Arts/Black Aesthetic Movement, they responded on many levels to the culture of black liberation. Their works, widely published in Black Scholar, Soulbook, Black Theatre, Black World, and Freedomways embodied the ideology of a people seeking to reclaim their images and history.

The Harlem Black Arts experiment caused the development of a national Black Arts Movement and the erection of some 800 black theaters and cultural centers in the United States (Neal, "The Social Background..." 11). Writers and artists in several urban areas started to assemble to build alternative institutions modeled after the Harlem Black Arts Repertory Theater/ School, fusing the Black Arts and Black Power. The Black Arts Movement expanded quickly through a number of important Black Arts festivals and conventions between 1966 and 1967 ("Voice..." 36). Baraka held a Black Arts festival in Newark, New Jersey, in 1966, featuring Stokely Carmichael, the leading proponent of Black Power, and Harold Cruse, the key theorist of cultural nationalism ("The Black Arts..." 23). That event was highly positive to the flourishing of Baraka's own cultural troupe, the Spirit House Movers and Players in Newark.

The growth of Black Arts in San Francisco attracted together Ed Bullins, Jayne Cortez, Marvin X, Amiri Baraka as well as Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panther Party (BPP). Meanwhile two Black Arts conventions in Detroit mobilized artists and writers in the Midwest (Visions... 108). Around 300 people attended the first Black Arts Convention in Detroit which occurred in 1966 (Performing... 256). The scope of the convention went beyond the arts, for in addition to workshops on literature, music, art, and drama, there were workshops on education, religion, black history, and politics ("The Black Arts..." 24). This convention had national impact because people came from most of the major cities across the nation.

This widespread tightly contributed to the emergence of a series of Black Arts institutions across the nation: the Free Southern Theater in New Orleans led by

Kalamu ya Salaam, the Concept East Theater and Broadsides Press in Detroit led by Dudley Randall, the New Lafayette and the National Black Theater in Harlem under the guidance of Barbara Ann Teer, Spirit House in Newark directed by Baraka, the Afro-Arts Theater and the Organization of Black American Culture in Chicago led by Gwendolyn Brooks and Haki Madhubuti, formerly Don L. Lee (Ladun 46). The Black Arts Movement inspired Chicago's giant mural "Wall of Respect," devoted to the new voices of the black revolt, which influenced murals in ghettos across the country. A multitude of new black arts and black studies journals provided vital forums for the growth of a new generation of writers and a national Black Arts Movement: Umbra, Liberator, Black World, Freedomways, Black Scholar, Cricket, Journal of Black Poetry, Black Dialogue, Black America, and Soulbook (The LeRoi... 218). By 1968, Larry Neal and Amiri Baraka edited Black Fire, a thick volume of poetry, essays, and drama, which drew national attention to the transformation that was under way among African American writers.

Despite the broad-spectrum impact of the Harlem Black Arts on the Black Arts Movement in the United States, the original Black Arts Repertory Theater/School was momentary. The Black Arts Movement in Harlem remained a small, isolated circle of artists and radicals which had not yet learned how to knit itself into the fabric of the black community (Powell 235). Instead of adhering to the politics of mass mobilization, the Harlem Black Arts wheeled around sectarian conflicts within the ranks of religious and cultural nationalism. Harold Cruse openly opposed the black nationalist enticement of withdrawal from the rest of the world, arguing that the politics of cultural nationalism could not afford to become one that retracted from

social realities of the white power structure under the pretense of separatist nationalistic moods (The Crisis... 439). In fact, Cruse urged the Black Arts Movement to avoid the harmful fringe element that jeopardized to take over the Harlem cultural center, proposing that the leadership develop a concrete political agenda which addressed the impressive and pressing crises affecting the ghetto.

None of that took place. Instead, a nihilistic group of youth at BARTS destroyed the program from the inside. According to Harold Cruse and Amiri Baraka, the group expelled everyone else who would disagree with their views. Baraka left in disgust, and Larry Neal was shot in Harlem on the night of March 10, 1966 (N. Harris, "Larry Neal..." 478). At the end of the Harlem Black Arts Movement, the program had disintegrated because an anarchist Muslim sect took over the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School. Members of that violent seceding group shot Larry Neal and made the Harlem Black Arts shatter. Even before that tragic incident, a broken Baraka had receded to Newark, New Jersey, feeling hopelessly defeated and profoundly shaken by the failure of the Harlem Black Arts Repertory Theater/School (Baraka, "The Wailer" 248) and simultaneously attempting to look for the adequate type of leadership and organization to combine culture and politics.

Baraka would show the same spirit of identification with young African writers like the Kenyan, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. In this passage, Ngugi caught the impact of the convulsion in the Third World on his generation of African writers (Nagueyalti 18). He became equally influenced by Frantz Fanon, one of closest counterparts within the post-World War II black Diaspora. A celebrated psychiatrist from Martinique who wholeheartedly supported the Algerian Nationalist Movement, social theorist of the

anti-colonial revolutionary struggle against French rule in Algeria (Hansen 3). He is best known for The Wretched of the Earth, a best seller in America in 1965, and still considered by many to be the ideological layout and political manifesto for an African Third World Revolution.

David Macey described Fanon as a man whose “commitment to Algeria and to his own vision of African unity was total” (Frantz Fanon... 415). He was a kind of “historian,” challenging the dominant narrative of white authority, and rejecting the philosophy of non-violence. He not only believed that the oppressed had the moral right to employ violence to defend themselves against the colonizer, but that such violence indeed was psychologically essential for eliminating the self hatred and cultural dependency, which crippled the minds of many non-whites within racialized societies (Hansen 10-11). His revolutionary decision to connect race, class and imperialism into the formulas of analytic psychology created entirely new equations on humanity and society which influenced not only post-colonial studies, but gave rise to the U.S. Black Panther Party as well as entire revolutions.

Black consciousness was the necessary sine qua non, Fanon understood, enabling blacks to remake critically both their world and themselves. Through his fiery and provocative literary masterpiece, Fanon boldly asserted that colonization was always a violent phenomenon. His analysis focused on the dialect between the colonizer, most of the time white, and the colonized, generally non-white. The relationship between the two antagonists was born in violence, perpetuated and dissolved by violence. Fanon justified his view by arguing that the settler and the native were old acquaintances. In the same context, Fanon convincingly showed that

“the challenging of the very principle of foreign domination brings about essential mutations in the consciousness of the colonized, in the manner in which he perceives the colonizer, in his human status of the world” (A Dying... 69).

If The Wretched of the Earth was not the reference book for the black revolution, it was certainly a sourcebook of revolutionary slogans. If the mystery still shrouds the circumstances of Fanon¹, there is no doubt about his endless commitment to the cause of justice and liberty on behalf of the oppressed and the colonized, those he labeled “the wretched of the earth ” (Bulhan 5). Fanon’s position as a leading theoretician of black consciousness and identity, nationalism and its failings, colonial rule and the inherently “violent” task of decolonization served as a parameter of his centrality to the movement for Algerian self-determination in the 1950’s and forged his diverse career as a political activist and critic (Anadolu-Okur 241). “Violence, Fanon argued most famously, “is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect” (The Wretched... 73). He provided us with a legalization of violence emanating from the typical example of colonial oppression.

Fanon endorsed violence for reasons transcending the exigency of self-defense or the eradication of a degenerate social system. He saw violence as an indispensable rehabilitation for a cultural disease brought about by colonial control. The mere colonizer’s departure was not enough. Liberation and dignity could not be recovered

¹ Some Fanon scholars consider Fanon’s death “mysterious” since the CIA had brought the reluctant but desperately ailing Fanon to the United States for treatment for leukemia. The CIA, according to Peter Geismar’s book Fanon (1971, p. 184), had confined Fanon into a hotel for eight days interrogating him and leaving him without treatment he urgently needed, forcing him to hire his own private nurse.

unless the colonized got involved in violent practices (Kebede 539). He strongly maintained that “The native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms. When his rage boils over, he rediscovers his lost innocence and he comes to know himself in that he himself creates his self.” (Fanon, Wretched...Preface). This reason was enough for Fanon to adopt or at least “to prescribe” violence with a therapeutic effect.¹ Like his contemporary Che Guevara, Fanon was whirled into a career as a revolutionary in a foreign land by his work as a doctor (Jackson 483). Having borne witness to the unspeakable suffering inflicted by the French Army, he came to believe that the revolution contained the seeds of rescue, not only for Algeria but for the whole colonial world.

In this regard, the close link between Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon, and Amiri Baraka is clearly noticeable in the principle of self-transformation of black consciousness. Baraka’s rise as an African American intellectual was encouraged and enforced by what was happening beyond the U.S. boundaries: African liberation movements against the white European colonialism. He believed that African Americans and Africans shared the same weight of suffering and were tirelessly searching the road of liberation. Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania were a source of conviction and inspiration for Baraka’s black consciousness and cultural nationalism (Revolutionary... 135).

¹ On this point, see Adam Shatz, ‘Frantz Fanon’: The Doctor Prescribed Violence” published in the New York Times, September 2, 2001 and David Austin’s interesting response in “Frantz Fanon’s Diagnosis” published in The Star (Toronto – Canada), October 26, 2006.

The link between Baraka and the three prominent political figures is manifest through their thought on national liberation movements in Africa at that time. They regarded national liberation as an absolute right of colonized people to freely control their own destiny and that the objective of this liberation was national independence (Cabral 102). As well-experienced African representatives, they argued that the basis of national liberation, whatever the formulas adopted on the level of international law, was the inalienable right of people to have their own history, and the objective of national liberation was to regain this right usurped by oppressive and exploitative powers (Edgett 288). Nyerere justified well this belief when he stated that “we create our own African personality and identity. We again rededicate ourselves in the struggle to emancipate other countries in Africa; for our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent” (Freedom ...194).

For both African and African American intellectuals in general and intellectual activists in particular, the period of the 1950s was the decade of the high noon of the African people’s anti-colonial struggles for full independence. The decade was heralded, internationally, by the independence of India in 1947 and by the triumph of the Chinese Revolution in 1949. In Africa the decade saw armed struggles by the Kenya Land and Freedom Army, Mau Mau, against British colonialism, and by the FLN against French colonialism in Algeria (Langley 157). On the other hand, blacks reacted through intensified resistance against the massacre perpetuated by the South African Apartheid regime in Sharpsville.

The decade was also marked with the independence of Ghana in 1957 and of Nigeria in 1960 with the promise of more to follow. The USA simultaneously saw an upsurge of civil rights struggle spearheaded by African Americans (Dayal 59). In this period black Americans faced unbearable conditions. They hoped to achieve fundamental changes, not just increasing advances. The aim behind the civil rights movement was to show that African American's rights could be guaranteed only if they initiated a mass movement, take risks, employ direct action, demonstrate an ability to disrupt the normal functioning of society, and maintain that disruption until concessions were won. In the short, medium, and long run, Legal victories, political shift, cultural changes, and media coverage followed from, and depended on, the success of mass action.

The moment Amiri Baraka was being involved with Richard Gibson, a CBS journalist, in the liberation movements of the Third World and support for the civil rights leader Robert F. Williams and Cuba, his writings on the black revolt and the Third World revolution were becoming incrementally linked. Full of embitterment, he categorically rejected the feeling of liberals who assumed that they were curiously qualified to tell African Americans and other oppressed peoples of the world how to conduct their struggles (Baraka, Black Fire... 96). Baraka expressed his identification with the rise of Third World revolutions. He argued that the new countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America were not interested in "shallow conscience-saving slogans and protests of moderation or 'political guarantees'" (Langley 257). He focused on the revitalization theme in the Third World Revolution.

Third World leaders such as Fidel Castro in Cuba, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Ahmed Sukarno in Indonesia, and Gamal Abdel-Nasser in Egypt, worked tirelessly to guarantee national independence in their struggle against colonialism, racism, and all forms of aggression and domination. They antagonized Western criticism about the way they were operating the resurrection of their people. Further, Baraka was puzzled by the white liberal preoccupation with black identity in the 1960s. He wondered why there was so much ado about black people calling themselves “Afro-Americans” (Black Fire... 145). However, the commotion about a new black identity was probably produced by the United Nations demonstration, protesting the murder of Patrice Lumumba. Baraka was at the cutting edge of those arrested at that protest (“The Wailer” 251).

In 1960, Patrice Lumumba, the charismatic premier of the newly independent Republic of the Congo, emerged from a modest Congolese background. Like Malcolm X, he had no university degrees, but with his zeal and determination he had become a man of the people and a fiery symbol of African nationalism (Dayal 174). Many of the colored students identified with Lumumba, a young man with high aspirations despite the humiliations of white colonialism. Lumumba experienced the Congolese form of double consciousness as he struggled to make something of himself in the civil service. In the Belgian Congo, they developed a name for an upwardly mobile class of urban Africans. They were called “*evolués*,”¹ meaning civilized, with the implication that most Africans were not (Hennessey 101). Such experiences had a special resonance to young black people in South Africa and the United States. But despite such barriers to his development, Lumumba seemed

unstoppable in his rise to political leadership in the Congo and to acceptance in the hearts of young people around the world.

Just as the rise of Lumumba reflected determination for many people to fight against colonial aggression and all its forms, it disturbed some Western interests. The United States made no secret of the fact that it backed secessionist forces aiming to dismember the Congo in order to keep its mineral wealth in the hands of Europeans. Soon after Lumumba's election as prime minister, violence erupted in the new nation (Kanza 144). As he traveled around the world, seeking support for the new republic, Patrice Lumumba spoke in several cities in America. He was warmly received in July, as he talked to an audience of black students at Howard University about the Congo crisis (Dayal 186). When he spoke on July 24, 1960 in New York City, stressing the strategic value of his nation's resources, black people were drawn to Lumumba and the fate of the rich mineral Congo (Hennessey 135). In effect, for a generation of students whose attention was concentrated on the struggle to control Africa's mineral wealth, the Congo Crisis was a serious threat in world political economy (Emmerson 402). They learned that Western Europeans were determined to use any means necessary, including the use of mercenaries, to promote their interests and particularly any to control African mineral riches.

¹ The essentializing of the differences between colonizer and colonized is evident in the Western philosophical rationalizations of the endemic violence that characterized the project of colonialism (Levy-Bruhl 1923; Brelsford 1935). The denigration of and protection against ongoing racial hybridization that had been portrayed as impossible was routinized in formal state institutions that sought to prohibit and punish racial mixture (Goldberg 2000: 27). The denigration and punishment of mixture was also carried on in the informal but pervasive discourse among colonial administrators and missionaries on Africans who had adopted European ways. Referred to in the derogatory terms "evolué" and "deraciné," these Africans were considered rootless and consequently both physically and mentally defective (Lugard 1923: 79; Tempels 1952: 19).

John Henrik Clarke, the UN correspondent on African Affairs, sought to explain the overwhelming attraction for Lumumba in the black community. Considered as the symbol of the black man's humanity fighting for recognition, Lumumba became a hero and a martyr to Afro-American nationalists because (Witte 189). "When the Congo emerged clearly in the light of modern history" Clarke explained, Lumumba "was its bright star. He was a true son of Africa and was accepted as belonging to all of Africa, not just the Congo. No other personality has leaped so suddenly from death to martyrdom" ("The Passing..." 389). Raul Peck, the director of "Lumumba," the only movie to explore neo-colonialism in the depth it deserved, illustrated well this view. The Haitian film director and co-writer regarded Lumumba as a Christ-like figure.

Lumumba's dignity was one of his characteristics that struck Raul Peck. On the way to his execution, people were buffeting him, abusing him, and the two other detainees were extremely terrified. They had shadow of doubt about their end, but Lumumba was already somewhere else. He was above death. He reminded Peck of the sentence Christ delivered about his killers, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (The Los Angeles Times). Lumumba inspired the same awareness in Africa that African Americans had in America during Kennedy's period. If the wind of the civil rights movement blowing in the United States, there were 25 African countries which gained their freedom from 1960 to 1961.

Guided by the revolutionary spirit of African leaders such as Nasser in Egypt, Sekou Touré in Guinea and Nkrumah in Ghana, Lumumba emphasized the uniqueness of black history in Africa underlying the need of African countries to withdraw from the destructive impact of European colonization.. So he represented a

moment of elation (Merriam 208). After his fatal death, many people became interested in politics for the first time, and there were demonstrations all over the world. Peck's movie tried to catch that juncture in history, where everything was still possible for Africa (Proyekt 36). Lumumba's murder rekindled the flame of Afro-American nationalism which was introduced to the political sphere by the "riot in the gallery of the United Nations in protest against the foul and cowardly murder of Patrice Lumumba" (Legum 146).

The political ferment among African Americans had some time to develop during the Congo Crisis, lasting from 1960 up to the murder of Patrice Lumumba in 1961. The protests mounted around the world as the situation worsened in the Congo. As the Belgian interests usurped power in the Congo, scandalous reports poured out of Africa about the death of Lumumba's daughter, and soon about the violent treatment of Premier Lumumba himself in incarceration. The whole world watched impotently as they put an end to Patrice Lumumba's vision of a unified Congo (Witte 234). With the news of his murder, people around the world were deeply moved. Large international protests and big demonstrations took place in many of the principal world capitals. They expressed their outrage all over Europe, with protests in Paris, Dublin and Bonn. The Belgian embassies in Belgrade and Rome were attacked by Yugoslavian students and Italian youths (Hennessey 147).

In a tribute to Congo's first President Patrice Lumumba, in the essay "Lumumba's Death: Could We Do Otherwise," published in his book Toward the African Revolution in 1964, Frantz Fanon observed that "Lumumba believed in his mission. He continued to express Congolese patriotism and African nationalism in

their most rigorous and noblest sense". Such progressive national leaders as Nehru, Nkrumah and Touré had insisted throughout the Congo Crisis that the world recognize Lumumba's government as the legitimate representative of the Congo, and firmly denounced his murder ("The Passing..." 285). Deeply touched by the murder of Lumumba, Third World leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Touré of Guinea, saw Lumumba "as a brilliant nationalist leader" and considered his "fatal downfall the result of a conspiracy among his enemies both foreign and domestic"(Williams 4). In Asia, stirred by Lumumba's unexpected death, students blustered in Bombay, Colombo, Karachi, Malaya, and New Delhi. It was reported that the biggest demonstration that was led by the renowned Premier Zhou-en-lai in Beijing, China, was attended by 100,000 people (Legum196). Demonstrations were organized in the United States, too. The most important ones occurred in Washington, D.C., where a number of Howard University students were arrested, and in Chicago, where black people carried signs saying: "Shame on the West!" (Merriam 245).

Yet, the most dramatic indication of black outrage was demonstrated at the United Nations headquarters in Manhattan, New York City in 1961. A group of African American women in black veils and men in black armbands surprised Americans when they took their protest right onto the floor of the Security Council which was debating the Congo Crisis. Key officials in the U.S. foreign policy circles had on several occasions indicated that they were against Lumumba¹, and favored the

¹ The 1975 report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on Alleged Assassination Plots first made public the top-level American plan to eliminate Lumumba, concluding that CIA chief Allen Dulles had ordered the murder. The report documented that a CIA scientist was sent to the Congo to murder Lumumba with "lethal biological material" (tucked in a diplomatic pouch), although it concluded that Lumumba's eventual murder was through more conventional means.

Belgian interests and the dismemberment of the Congo (Smith 225). Thus, while the U.S. Representative Adlai Stevenson was speaking, about sixty men and women break into the Security Council conference room, interrupting the session, and fought with guards in a protest against the United Nations policies in the Congo and the murder of former Congo Premier, Patrice Lumumba². After the violent clash between demonstrators and the special UN police force, twenty people were treated for injuries by UN medical personnel (kanza 292).

There was another contingent of black people protesting outside the UN headquarters. As that group marched from First Avenue westward across Manhattan, the marchers chanted “Congo, yes! Yankee, no!” That protest met the same kind of repression as the one inside. As a member of that group, Amiri Baraka, was beaten and arrested (Baraka, Autobiography... 278). Others were attacked at the corner of 6th Avenue and 43rd Street by mounted police, seeking to prevent them from taking the demonstration to Times Square (Omi and Winant 84). A mass rally was held in

² The American cable traffic that followed independence reflected the near panic over the prospects of Lumumba's pursuit of an independent foreign policy: The Congo was to be the first of many countries sacrificed in reaction to the Cuban fiasco. As CIA station chief Lawrence Devlin warned in an 18 August 1960 cable:

EMBASSY AND STATION BELIEVE CONGO EXPERIENCING CLASSIC COMMUNIST TAKEOVER GOVERNMENT WHETHER OR NOT LUMUMBA ACTUALLY COMMIE OR JUST PLAYING COMMIE GAME TO ASSIST HIS SOLIDIFYING POWER, ANTI-WEST FORCES RAPIDLY INCREASING POWER CONGO AND THERE MAY BE LITTLE TIME LEFT IN WHICH TAKE ACTION TO AVOID ANOTHER CUBA

Cited in Weissman, “The CIA and U. S. Policy,” the cable was reproduced in U. S. Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities. Interim Report: Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 20 November 1975), p. 14. Weissman cites other cables warning of the communist proclivities of the Lumumba circle, notably a French press secretary, the Ghanian Ambassador, Guinean advisers, and so on.

Harlem to protest police repression, but another issue drew national media attention. Some U.S. officials were quick to label the demonstration part of a “worldwide communist conspiracy” (Bloom 179). The issue of an international communist plot became a major concern, and in that context the New York Times sent reporters to Harlem to explore the social origins of the demonstration. Their findings were exposed in a series of articles in the week following the UN demonstration (Omi and Winant 97).

Reporters objected the idea that the protest was run by communists and succeeded to convince the public opinion that a new breed of African American nationalists based in Harlem were behind that happening. What was initially reported on the demonstration made the United States charge of a communist plot appear ridiculous. Those reports made it clear that the black demonstrators opposed any support from the American Communist Party. For instance, outside the UN, Benjamin Davis, the first black man on the New York City Council and a well-known member of the American Communist Party was actually pushed away when he attempted to join the picket (Allen 301).

The protesters were not black Communists. The feeling was intense among many blacks in relating African struggles for freedom to their own fight against discrimination and prejudice (Hutchinson 389). The protest was the work of a black united front, a diverse group ranging from black nationalists in the tradition of Marcus Garvey to a new breed of black radicals supporting the causes of Robert F. Williams and the Cuban revolution. The amalgam proved that African Americans might forget about their ideological differences and unite in times of extreme crises.

The demonstration chants were not communist slogans. During an interview, Daniel H. Watts, the editor in chief and publisher of the Liberator magazine, made it clear that they were not an appurtenance of any communist organization (Watts 3). The number of the supporters of African liberation was expanding. Later, Daniel Watts became the leader of an organization named “On Guard” in 1961. When the organization was founded in June 1960, it had 450 members, including chapters in Denver, Chicago, San Francisco, and Houston (Omi and Winant 112). About a dozen members of “On Guard” had gone to the United Nations planning on a quiet demonstration, wearing symbols of mourning for Lumumba, black veils and armbands (Hutchinson 391). Watts denied the accusation of belonging to any communist affiliation or having relationship with communists: “We are Afro-Americans, fighting for African liberation” (Watts 7). “On Guard” was considered a part of the “Harlem Writers Guild” which was established as a writers’ workshop in the “Village” of Harlem in New York City in 1950 and led by Rosa Guy. Along with Daniel Watts in the leadership of “On Guard” was Richard Gibson, the former CBS journalist who invited Baraka to Cuba in 1960 (Sollors 189).

It is at this stage that Baraka turned into an ardent supporter of the politics of black cultural nationalism. On the one hand, Baraka’s political maturation took place during a formative era in which he was considered as a revolutionary artist and a radical intellectual. On the other, his real and effective emergence as a political leader became concrete during the Newark uprising of 1967. As a Newark native, he headed the Modern Black Convention Movement (Baraka, African... 39). The conditions that would help Baraka achieve political leadership were quite ripe. His personal

transformation as literary figure was essential because it set the stage for future important struggles. Those who are familiar with Baraka's challenging literary works in both prose and poetry randomly represented by Home, Dutchman, Black Fire, and Raise would notice the manifest and spontaneous images that testify to Baraka's real sense of radical black identity, purpose, and direction. In sum, a considerable segment of the black national community became interested in Baraka's accounts of self-transformation (Hutchinson 421). His significant contribution with Larry Neal and Askia Muhammad Touré enforced the vision for the foundation of the Black Arts Movement. As a result, African American writers and artists were attracted by Baraka's world. This event was a sufficient motive to pave the way for the politics of the Modern Black Convention Movement.

Amiri Baraka represented the right pattern for self-transformation. Considered as the father of the Black Arts Movement, his longing for identity, purpose, and direction caught the imagination of a generation of African American readers. To varying degrees, this generation shared a strong sense of racial consciousness and enunciated a mood of alienation and despair (Banks 259). The disillusionment of Baraka and his generation eroded the hopes of the future generation and hit it quite hard. It served to increase the level of bitterness in the Afro-American community as a whole. Although the American dream was believed to include African Americans, thousands of them, especially among the lower classes, were extremely doubtful.

Baraka's political maturation was developed in light of the particular challenges facing black intellectuals in the second half of the twentieth century and the struggle to balance political and artistic aims. Baraka's role as the chief spokesman for the

Black Arts Movement began with his immersion into the predominantly white world of the Beats which provided him with an early and receptive audience for his work (N. Harris 25-26). It was during this period that Baraka created some of his most complex artistic work. His articulation of black rage, as voiced by his characters, was, in many ways, a breakthrough (Cleaver 21). Influenced by the philosophies of Third World, mainly Africans, Baraka increasingly distanced himself from the white circle and adopted a greater political tone, creating works that affirmed the assertive militancy of black people (Steigerwald 314). Baraka's various facets of his career - artistic sensibilities, political concerns, and creation of the Black Arts Movement - suggested an attempt to expose his full commitment. He belonged to a group of activist artists who used their work to evoke political change.

As scholars acknowledged, Baraka was not an easy black intellectual to categorize. Often associated with the Black Arts Movement, his works were fiercely political. For Baraka, ethics and aesthetics were inextricably linked and that black art had to be politically focused and community-oriented. His message was one of the hallmarks of the movement because it was a radical call for the black community to nurture itself and to recognize its own self-worth through change which was interpreted as a dynamic: "If we are Black, let's stretch our hands across the waters, stretch our hands together and say, 'from this day forward I will live my life for the Black man and when I can no longer live my life for the Black man, I will give my life for the Black man'" (Baraka, African... 55).

Although provocative, if not controversial, Amiri Baraka reflected a comprehensive and trenchant analysis of the activist's career and the black

intellectual's role in cultural nationalism. Baraka's emergence in the 1960s and his continued influence in the mid-1970s can also be read as a general commentary on the condition of black intellectuals during that time. As a focal point for a broader analysis, Baraka's case illustrates the link between his intellectual life and that of other well-known blacks who tried to concretize concepts which focused on the black crisis.

However, Baraka's activist journey became more interesting to investigate and his move to Newark is considered another serious step which would closely contribute to forming a politically committed intellectual and an ardent black supporter of self-determination and self-identity. To interweave Baraka's art and political activism, it is necessary to know that from his early immersion in the New York scene through the most dynamic period in his life and work, he had to be situated within the various worlds through which he traveled from Beat Bohemia to full involvement in black nationalism.

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CHAPTER THREE

Newark, The Native Son, and Black Power

Baraka returned to his native hometown where he became deeply involved in the Black Power movement. He regarded the movement as a message for black flight from an America which was defined by the ethos and desires of the white oppressor. He insisted that Black Art was inherently attached to Black Power which he described as the absolute necessity for black people to identify the world in their own terms (Baraka, "The Pan-African..." 67). He conveyed this vision with as much passion as Wilson commanded in one of many fiery essays written in the spirit of cultural nationalism. Creditable is "The Need for a Cultural Base to Civil Rites & BPower Mooments," in which Baraka evidenced that:

Black Power movements not grounded in Black culture cannot move beyond the boundaries of Western thought. The paramount value of Western thought is the security and expansion of Western culture. Black Power is inimical to Western culture as it has manifested itself within black and colored majority areas anywhere on this planet. Western culture is and has been destructive to Colored People all over the world. No movement shaped or contained by Western culture will ever benefit Black people. Black power must be the actual force and beauty and wisdom of Blackness ... reordering the world (47).

Carmichael and Hamilton attempted to explain the term in Black Power published in 1967. "It is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community," they wrote. "It is a call for Black

People to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support their own organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of [American] society” (43-44). Black unrest about the slow pace of change was growing in 1966. Many black people, especially the young, begin to examine a prevailing assumption of the civil rights strategy that changing the outlook of blacks required the goodwill of whites. It was a call for black people not merely to be included within the just society, but for the just society to embrace blackness, as a value determined by black people and secured by their power.

Yet, Black Power originated from a series of blended inspirations. In fact, black motivations comprised thwarting with the pace of black empowerment in America during the heyday of the civil rights movement despite legal and political gains. Many African Americans stagnated in poverty and practically categorized second-class citizenship (Clever 52). Corroborated by the presidential candidacies of George Wallace and Richard Nixon, blacks were frustrated by the languishing of American idealism in the late sixties and the consolidation of white backlash in national politics (Marable, Black... 122). They were pulled towards a resumption of interest and pride in African heritage and the emergence of a black arts movement. They felt that traditional integrationist civil rights politics had given all that it could and that something newer and more militant was a natural evolution (Peeks 21). The shared understanding is their interpretation of late 1960s urban race riots as expressive form of revolutionary consciousness among dispossessed African Americans (Cross 49). There was the emergence of a generation of post-colonial African leaders who espoused Marxism and other variants of socialism and suggested alternatives to

western capitalist economic system.

In his essay “The Black Arts Movement,” Larry Neal revealed the effects of the Black Power on the Black Arts Movement. He wrote that “the political values inherent in the Black Power concept are now finding concrete expression in the aesthetics of Afro-American dramatists, poets, choreographers, musicians and novelists” (59). Black Power artists accentuated the pivotal importance of productive autonomy and self-representation. This period, then, stretching over nearly a decade from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, signaling a critical point in the history of both the black American community and American race relations. Evolving combativeness in the African American community was marked by the outbreak of violence in urban black neighborhoods during that era, including race riots in Los Angeles, Calif., Newark, N.J., and Detroit, Michigan (Schaller and Schulzinger 78). Black activists tried to gear the expanding disappointment by establishing black nationalist organizations.

Many of these energies found expression in the person of Amiri Baraka who dealt with the movement’s cultural-nationalist outlook as connected to the artistic realm. Baraka’s concernment to this period emanates from the fact that he was seriously influenced by figures like Malcolm, Lumumba, and Fidel Castro. He also theoretically conceived the corollaries of urbanization on black nationality development. Newark, Baraka’s base and CAP’s national headquarters, forms the case study of this chapter, serving as an index to the triumphs and failures of black cultural nationalism elsewhere. His disappointing experience in Harlem led him to transfer his activism to his native town (Killian 56) where the black community also

lived with the same despondency, pauperization and racism as in many parts of the United States.

Parallel with his lasting commitment to community-based political militancy, Baraka exerted a leading role in national Black Power organizations. Starting in 1967, he became the forefront in the National Black Assembly (NBA) movement. That movement brought together nationalist activists and mainstream black political leaders. The NBA was crucial in controlling grassroots African American support to the formative figures in the Congressional Black Caucus and it was a source of advocacy for the emergence of African American mayors of many principal American cities (Cashman 116). In this era, Baraka allied with such political figures as Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Stokely Carmichael and Huey Newton in giving Black Power a typical inflection (Carmichael and Hamilton, Black Power... 184). The seeds of his leadership began to come out by 1966, a period of appalling black uproar when Stokely Carmichael made Black Power more popular, largely through his usage of the term while reorganizing the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) so that whites would no more hold leadership responsibilities.

Speaking for the SNCC in June 1966, Stokely Carmichael introduced the new agitational slogan "Black Power" ("Black Power..." 22). Demanding large political and social experimentation with black liberation and political autonomy, the SNCC challenged a new generation of leadership to realize self-determination, self-respect, and self-defense for black America (Powell 146). Baraka was so motivated by that project that he immediately went into the streets of Newark's inner city and stamped the Black Power slogan on the walls (Baraka, African... 179). He launched a new

cultural organization, the Spirit House Movers and Players (SHMP), a repertory group which traveled across the nation performing the new plays and poetry of the Black Arts Movement (Cashman 220). Baraka also established his new cultural center, the Spirit House in the middle of Newark's Central Ward ghetto. When the SHMP funded the Black Arts Cultural Festival in Newark that year, Stokely Carmichael was the keynote speaker.

As the Black Arts Movement spanned into other urban places, Baraka was no longer insulated. Moreover, in the aftermath of the dreadful Watts agitation of 1965, a new generation of political organizations spreading a militant black consciousness was born, especially in California. Solicitous to see the controversial West Coast Black Power experiments at first hand, Amiri Baraka accepted an invitation to teach black studies at the San Francisco State College in the spring semester of 1967 (Cantor 194). Baraka settled at the San Francisco Black House of the Black Arts West which was used as both the cultural center and the residence of Ed Bullins, Marvin X, and Eldridge Cleaver. Baraka traveled from San Francisco to Oakland in 1967 to examine the extraordinary development of the Black Panther Party (BPP) started by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale (Benston 253). According to Baraka, the specter of the militant street youth organized by the Black Panthers revamped faith in the prospect of effective grassroots political organization (L. Brown 165). He was even more impressed by the Los Angeles US Organization created by Maulana Karenga whom he first met in late 1966. Karenga arrived unannounced at the Spirit House in Newark and initiated their relationship (Baraka, *Autobiography...* 226). At first Baraka did not know what to think, but after visiting the rapidly growing US

Organization he was convinced that Karenga had developed the most important paradigm for Black Power.

Returning to Newark with these model leaders and organizations in mind, Amiri Baraka was propelled into the political realm in July 1967 uprising in New Jersey's largest city, Newark. As the 1967 National Black Power Conference opened in Newark in the aftermath of one of the most brutal rebellions in the United States, Baraka became first in rank among the leaders who linked the future of the black freedom movement to the political momentum brought into being by the African American urban uprisings of the 1960s (Castells 94). After the revolt and the Black Power Conference, Baraka and his supporters established the United Brothers, an organization of black men and women, to fight for power in that city where African American population had increased to over half.

The Black Arts Movement, the ghetto uprisings and the explosive African American identity developed a new generation of Black Power organizations and leadership (Peeks 75-76). The blending between these leaders, organizations, and the deep consciousness of both African American nationality and racial oppression became amazingly strong in the context of the black urban uprisings of the 1960s. The ghetto uprisings of the 1960s marked a major climacteric in the black revolt. During the first wave of turmoil in the 1960s, 329 major rebellions spread out in 257 different cities. After King's fatal end on April 4, 1968 there were more than 200 uprisings in 172 cities (Feagin and Hahn 89). Wave after wave of black youth demanding local autonomy were galvanized by the Black Power slogan. Indeed, the movement was not just a battle cry. It was the practice of a marginalized community

that “transformed the walls of its prison into the boundaries of its free city” (Castells 114). A third wave of youthful activists joined the black revolt following 500 racial confrontations in 1969 (Feagin and Hahn 107). The racial confrontations were the most violent expressions of ethnic conflicts which shaped black consciousness and spread the demand for African American self-determination.

As the uprising spread from city to city, a new generation of Black Power organizations developed in their wake. Each of these organizations developed a distinct perspective about the meaning of Black Power, and each experimented to test the effectiveness of its approach to black liberation. Despite their different tendencies, these organizations shared some fundamentals and their political trajectories established a common pattern. Each organization claimed to be the true heir of Malcolm X (Benston 278). Each organization concluded that black America suffered as an internal colony of the United States. Each demanded self-determination for the African American community. Furthermore, many of these groups embraced black nationalism and later incorporated significant elements of Marxism.

In the aftermath of the August 1965 Watts Rebellion in Los Angeles, two rival political styles generated in California: the cultural nationalism of the US Organization and the revolutionary nationalism of the very militant and controversial group, the BPP (Wilson 58). In Los Angeles, Maulana Karenga, formerly the young student activist Ronald Everett, benefited from the phenomenal spread of the Black Arts Movement as he developed cultural nationalism which became the influential political style of the US Organization.

Born in Maryland, during his youth Karenga and his family migrated to

California where he learned African studies and several languages, including Swahili, at the University of California and earned the M.A. degree in political science. He founded the US Organization on September 7, 1965 (J. Harris 416). The US Organization insisted that African Americans created a cultural nation in need of a black cultural revolution as well as Black Power (S. Brown 132). Influenced by the political ideology and style of Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, Karenga's organization was named "Us" as opposed to "them" (Smallwood 169). Stressing self-determination and self-reliance in black freedom, the appellation "Us" has a denotation parallel to the Irish nationalist group "Sinn Fein" meaning "ourselves alone," (Hall 219) the rallying cry of the 1916 Easter Revolt.

Early in the promotion of US Organization, Karenga proposed that African Americans learn Swahili. On the one hand, impressed and inspired by Malcolm X's ethical reconstruction in the Nation of Islam, Karenga considered him as a cultural revolutionary who almost solitarily altered the way black people thought about themselves. On the other, he emphasized the need for a black cultural revolution guiding black America toward seven principles: black unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, the intent of nation building, creativity, and credence and triumph of black freedom (Karenga, Kawaida... 84). As segment of his cultural program, Karenga developed a popular African American holiday, Kwanzaa, to teach the seven principles during a week-long celebration of black patrimony. Kwanzaa is today celebrated by a considerable number of African Americans. As part of its political program, the US Organization organized the Black Congress, an important united front group, encompassing many

of the new militant organizations in Los Angeles. Maulana Karenga's influence spread quickly because of his role in the organization of the National Black Power Conferences between 1966 and 1969 (Karenga, Kwanzaa... 56). Finally, as part of the US Organization ideological program, Karenga established a doctrine for the new black nationalism, which he labeled Kawaida, meaning "tradition and reason" (Kawaida... 91).

Karenga met Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in a study circle in the early 1960s. While the US Organization's cultural nationalism emerged in Los Angeles, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale developed revolutionary nationalism as the forceful political style of the Black Panther Party in Oakland (Jones 94). Actually, Newton and Seale were not the first Black Panthers. There were earlier groups organized by the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) in the aftermath of Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee's voting rights experiment in Lowndes County, Alabama, led by Stokely Carmichael (Ogbar 96). In 1965, one year before the Black Power slogan emerged, the independent Lowndes County Freedom Organization stood up to white terror in the Deep South, using a black panther to symbolize its defiance.

A number of black activists from northern cities provided material support for self-defense to the Lowndes County Black Panthers, and asked Stokely Carmichael if they could form Black Panther organizations in their urban centers. Consequently, Black Panther groups developed in Chicago, New York, and San Francisco (Allen 168). In New York, alongside Eddie Ellis, Ted Wilson, Donald Washington, and Walter Ricks, one of the leaders of the Harlem Panthers was Larry Neal, a co-founder

of the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School. In July 1966, with the public backing of Stokely Carmichael, the Harlem Party established its headquarters and opened Malcolm X Liberation School. Twelve Panthers were arrested in September 1966 in Harlem during a school boycott. It was their first direct-action campaign (Ogbar 189). Their membership estimated at 100. The Black Panthers were in communication in San Francisco with Robert F. Williams, the exiled leader of the RAM, in Cuba (Brisbane 209).

When the Watts uprising was over, Newton and Seale started examining the need for a new kind of organization of their own in Oakland. Those exchanges generated the founding of the Black Panther Party for self-defense in October 1966 (Horne 74). Although Black Panther organizations emerged in other cities before the Oakland Panthers, the revolutionary grassroots party established by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale quickly developed a militant stand which actuated them into the forefront of the Black Revolt (Newton and Hilliard 200). The determinative political style of the renowned Oakland Black Panther Party soon shadowed the earlier Panthers in New York and San Francisco (Cantor 210).

Instead of forwarding a new value system in the manner of the US Organization, the Black Panthers introduced and put into force a ten-point program claiming an end to obstreperous and defiant police aggressiveness and capitalist exploitation as well as the right to full employment, decent housing, meaningful education, military exemption, and black self-determination (“The Ten Point1”). The program elucidated that the principal political purpose was a United Nations-managed plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects would be

allowed to take part, for the object of deciding the will of black people as to their national destiny (Seale 403). Eventually, the debate between Newton's revolutionary nationalism and Karenga's cultural nationalism became a major characteristic of the ideological combat over the management of the Black Power movement.

Equivalent processes developed following the 1967 Detroit revolt. In 1968 the Republic of New Africa (RNA) and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) arose. The Republic of New Africa, led by Imari Abubakari Obadele¹, asked for land to create an African American nation in the Deep South (Pinkney 125). However, the LRBW matured into a black Marxist organization. The League was the fulfillment of several black revolutionary union insurrections, especially in the automobile industry – for instance, the Ford Revolutionary Union Movement and the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (Carson 253). In the 1970s some of the more radical adherents of the LRBW built a Marxist-Leninist organization called the Black Workers Congress (BWC), announcing that African Americans were an oppressed nation in the Black Belt South and demanding the right of self-determination (W. Harris 75).

As a consequence of the urban rebellions, a new generation of Black Power organizations developed a radical leadership, demanding black self-determination and generating four essential political styles: Marxism, revolutionary nationalism,

¹ At the pinnacle of the Black Power Movement in the late 1960s, brothers Milton and Richard Henry, (acquaintances of Malcolm X who renamed themselves Gaidi Obadele and Imari Abubakari Obadele, respectively) assembled a group of 500 militant black nationalists in Detroit, Michigan to discuss the creation of a black nation within the United States. On March 31, 1968, 100 conference members signed a Declaration of Independence outlining the official doctrine of the new black nation, elected a provisional government, and named the nation the Republic of New Africa (RNA). (See Imari Abubakari Obadele - The Struggle for Independence and Reparations from the United States: An Exploration).

territorial nationalism, and cultural nationalism (Geschwender 139). The most extensive expressions of Black Power in the 1960s were cultural, and the leading figure in the maturing of the politics of cultural nationalism was Amiri Baraka. Parallel to the BPP and LRBW, Baraka's Congress of African People unfolded from black nationalism to Third World Marxism (Carson 275). The movement, in contrast, followed a separate political path through the politics of cultural nationalism in Newark.

Amiri Baraka had developed in the revolts the July 1967 a political and cultural awareness for the axiom of self-determination, drawn from his acquaintance with Fidel Castro, the Cuban revolution, Malcolm X, and the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Generating from the development of black consciousness, black self-determination, in this way, included a process of self-emancipation (Hutchinson, "Cultural Nationalism..."). However, just how that process would span out in the Black Power period was vague. Even before the Newark insurrection, Baraka searched for answers to these intriguing questions about black liberation: What kind of ideology and organization would be suitable for black revolution? What combination of nationalism and socialism would be right for blacks in the USA? (African... 211) While teaching in 1967 at San Francisco in the first black studies program in America, Baraka gave heed to the development of militant organizations in California, attempting to learn where his Harlem experiment had failed. Inspired by the disciplined Panthers and the US Organization (Reilly 118), Baraka retreated to Newark more assured about establishing a new Black Power organization based on those West Coast patterns.

However, upon his return, Baraka found the largest city in the nation's most urbanized state already in turmoil around four fevered issues, which would result in the resurrections of July 1967: the lack of political representation for the city's black majority, the local government's schemes to replace a black community of 20,000 people with the campus of a medical college, the absence of black representation at the Board of Education, and the outrageous and brutal acts of white police against black New Jerseyites (Woodard, The Making... 125). Detailing these issues, although by 1967 more than half the population of Newark was African American, an Italian American political machine headed by Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio had a throttlehold on local governing. It had full authority on City Hall, the Newark Housing Authority, the municipal courts, and the police department (Hayden 45). Fifteen percent of New Jersey's global population was Italian American, and some 82,238 inhabitants of that ethnic group were concentrated in metropolitan Newark and neighboring communities (Carson 118).

Reviewing Italian American political strength in the four States: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey in 1970, Chuck Stone maintained that Newark (New Jersey) is comparatively the only area that illustrated total political control by Italians. This area had two Congressmen, Peter W. Rodino of the Tenth Congressional District and Joseph G. Minnigh of the Eleventh Congressional District (W. Harris 128). Both were Italian. Newark had an Italian Mayor, Hugh J. Addonizio who was a former Congressman. Italians did more than governing the city. They had full domination over it. The mayor's administrative assistant, the police director, the chief magistrate of the municipal court, the president of the city council, the director

of public works, the business administrator of the city, and the assistant director of the city's Housing Authority were all Italian (Stone 141). This white political machine held its power despite the exceptional white flight from the city. In his study of Newark, Robert Curvin concluded that the racial changes after the Second World War were nothing less than cataclysmic. There were some 384,000 whites in 1940, but only 265,706 remained in 1960. In a short period, a massive flight occurred. The city lost another 70,000 white people in 1967 (Curvin 84).

On the other hand, it was estimated that between 1950 and 1970, some 130,000 black people moved to Newark. African Americans increased to 17 percent of the city's population in 1950. They were 34.5 percent of Newark's community in 1960., Within 54.2 percent of the population, blacks in Newark represented the largest urban concentration of African Americans in New Jersey in 1970 (Jackson and Jackson 123). Newark stood in terms of cities with black majorities among those with the greatest percentages beside Washington, D.C. and Gary, Indiana (Greenberg 228). This situation called for strong group leadership. Nevertheless, there was an extreme and incessant leadership crisis in black Newark. For decades the civil rights organizations had not encouraged an interesting furtherance in uniting the considerable mass of Newark's black community (Wolak 67). Several studies found that most of the members of Newark's self-isolated black elite lived in the suburbs and took little interest in the enormous problems of the inner city.

Yet, a new black leadership rooted in the community in 1966 was unfolding alongside the ascendance of a serious controversy over a planned inner-city medical school campus proposed to displace a black community (Wright 34). This issue

generated unprecedented interest and activity in black Newark. It became known as the Medical School Crisis. The officials at City Hall and the Newark Housing Authority (NHA) ordered that some 20,000 black people give up about 183 acres in the inner city to pave the way for the construction of the proposed New Jersey College of Medicine and Dentistry campus (Wright 128). This emplacement was three times greater than had been initially planned. This created deep bitterness in the black community, and residents thronged the planning board hearings for weeks in a useless effort to have the medical school site decision inverted (Kaplan 84). The Medical School crisis gathered the many various classes that remained in the inner city and triggered a combative perception of black community identity in contest with the constraints behind the new medical school schemes. The medical school was an important part of the program for growth projected to build a post-industrial economy in Newark (Woodard, The Making... 188). As the struggle developed it became clear that the official white vision for Newark's post-industrial economy left out the majority of African Americans.

The crisis deepened against the background of the collapse of Newark's industrial economy. Black Newark found itself ensnared in a retrograding status. Industries between 1938 and 1944 left at such a speed as to represent a loss to the city of Newark of three hundred million dollars in calculated valuation (Kaplan 112). Two hundred and fifty manufacturers moved out of Newark during the 1950s. These losses increased in the context of growing suburban investments (Curvin 87). Examining the years between 1954 and 1956 alone, it is estimated that roughly 90 percent of the capital directed to the erection of new factories in the New York metropolitan

region was invested in suburban areas (Teaford 52). The situation deteriorated throughout the 1960s. A total of 1,300 manufacturers left. The complete employment disadvantage between 1958 and 1970 was burdensome. Newark lost 20,056 manufacturing jobs. Interpreted differently, it means a loss of 24.2 percent (Curvin 91). The impairment of this decline was produced by the fact that the manufacturing sector concerned many blacks who had made their first employment progress during the 1940s.

During the rebellion of July, there were some twenty-four thousand unemployed black men within the city limits. According to the city's application for planning funds under the Model Cities Act, Newark possessed the nation's greatest percentage of bad housing, the highest rate of crime, and the most serious venereal disease rate, maternal mortality, and new cases of TB. Concerning both birth rate and infant mortality, Newark was ranked second and seventh in the case of drug addicts. The 1960 census revealed that more than half of the adult black population had less than an eighth-grade education (Teaford 58). The collapse of the industrial base of Newark's economy led the black community to impel school reform. African Americans were convinced that the quality of education in the public schools affected the life opportunities of their children in the job market.

When the Secretary of the Board of Education, Arnold Hess, announced that he would retire, another struggle spurred between City Hall and the black community. While the black community proposed Wilbur Parker, a certified public accountant, to supersede Arnold Hess, Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio chose James Callahan, a white high school graduate (Smith 79). The conflict over black representation at the Board

of Education was just as serious as the Medical School crisis. The African American community demanded some representation in the Board's bureaucracy on the basis that some 70 percent of the school population was black. Moreover, since the standard argument against black designations had been that they were unqualified, the black community was outraged at Mayor Addonizio's firm opposition to Parker's candidacy. Besides being a public accountant, Wilbur Parker was also the city's budget director (Campbell 61). This schism was especially important in view of black middle-class hopes for upward mobility in the city's bureaucracy. This is the classic form of the social conflict that produces nationalist movements. Thus, in this heated clash the African American community increased its mass mobilization for representation in the administration of the Board of Education. New organizations and leaders began to appear on the political scene such as SNCC chapter led by Phil Hutchins, the Afro-American Association spearheaded by Willie Wright, and the Spirit House headed by Amiri Baraka (Quadagno 56).

Several Board of Education meetings saw disturbance by protests as this issue became a principal focus for the black freedom movement. The stalemate between City Hall and the black community ended in an unsatisfactory deadlock when the outgoing secretary took the decision to remain on the job for an extra year. The controversy over integrating the city's educational bureaucracy particularly infuriated middle-class African Americans, who looked at this bureaucracy as a promising vehicle for social mobility (Allen 170). The sources of one key element of black nationalism were in these unsuccessful endeavors of the black middle class to include the official bureaucracy. This class was educated in the competitive ethic to crave for

such positions in the system. Once they had understood that they could not get into this world because they were uneducated, they carried on their learning. Now that they were educated, they had to confront white groups who would use their political and bureaucratic power to monopolize these positions through racial discrimination (Smith 93). Therefore, the “young, gifted, and black” aspirants were discriminated against despite their educational credentials (Hayden 72). This positioned the black middle class and the civil rights movement in a classic nationalist dilemma. Caught in this quandary, many in the black middle class contributed to the spread of black cultural nationalism, particularly its political demands for proportional representation in the government. In such situations people would opt for nationalism, particularly where the alternatives of large-scale emigration or proletarian socialist revolution were hard to achieve.

While the community struggled over the issues of the size and location of the medical school as well as the black representation at the Board of Education were important, clearly the most volatile component in this standing was police violence. The uprising in Newark began on July 12, 1967. That was the night that fighting exploded in the Central Ward at the Fourth Police Precinct, after some people in the black community caught a glimpse of a black cab driver named John Smith, who was savagely beaten, as the police dragged him into the police station (“LeRoi Hits...”). Because of the solidarity of cab drivers, “Smith’s arrest was quickly reported by other black cab drivers over their radio. Within a short time word of the arrest had expanded throughout black Newark, along with rumors of Smith’s beating. A large and angry mob assembled in front of the Fourth Precinct stationhouse (Allen 180).

Hearing about the circumstance, the leadership of Newark's Congress of Racial Equality and other civil rights organizations called for a demonstration to intervene in the police beating. By 1967 the CORE had been working on the explosive issue of police brutality for some time. Among Newark's 1400 member police force only 250 were African Americans (Boger and Judith 419). The CORE had demanded in 1965 a civilian review board to consider the black community's complaints of racism and police brutal attitude. But Mayor Addonizio dismissed the case.

Meanwhile the black community was assembling, anticipating the worst had occurred to John Smith, and claiming to see him. This gave rise to demonstrations the following day. The mood in the crowd eventually became serious. CORE members attempted to deflect the mob by leading a march on City Hall, but the attention of the black youth in the streets was enthralled on the precinct station house. Before long, stones, bottles, and Molotov cocktails rained down and hit the side of the police station. Seventy-five riot policemen, wearing helmets, stormed out of the precinct attacking those demonstrators who remained across the street and clubbing anyone they could meet on their way ("LeRoi Seized..."). Indeed, it was reported that the cops beat everyone and anyone with black skin without distinction, including a black policeman dressed in civilian clothes and several black newsmen. Swearing and mounting racial slurs the club-swinging cops indiscriminately smashed into the protesters ("Violence...").

The peaceful stage of the struggle was over. After laying siege to the Fourth Police Precinct in the Central Ward, the demonstrators attacked a mile-long section of the Springfield Avenue commercial area, and then headed downtown. It was reported

that the weapons used by the protesters were bricks and pieces of concrete that they threw at the police. The night after John Smith had been beaten, Amiri Baraka would be given a similar treatment (“Racial...”). Baraka’s bad treatment by the police during the Newark riots took on a national tone, classifying him on an important list of political defendants including Angela Davis and Huey P. Newton. Amiri Baraka, accountant Charles McCray, and actor Barry Wynn, riding in Baraka’s vehicle, were stopped and arrested by police officers during the top part of the disorder and violence in the Central ward. After they were brutally beaten, they were charged with unlawfully carrying firearms and resisting arrest (Porambo 42).

Baraka was marked for life. Local newspapers showed Baraka in police detention, pictured him handcuffed to a wheelchair, covered in his own blood. He recalled that he was left in the hospital hallway, handcuffed to a wheelchair, completely covered with the drying blood, his head on fire. That is the way his wife, Amina, saw him when she arrived. The police attributed Baraka’s wounds to a thrown bottle by some unknown person (Reilly 174). However, Baraka accused the police of premeditated violence, and as far as the firearms were concerned, Baraka claimed he did not know where they had come from and suspected that the police had ‘concealed’ them (“A City’s....”).

Reporter Ron Porambo provided the following account by Baraka of his brutal beating that night:

We were told to come out of the camper bus. When I opened the door and stepped down, one detective ... preached to me, screaming that we were ‘the black...who’d been shooting at him. I said that we hadn’t been

shooting at anyone ... whereupon he hit me in the face and threw me against the side of the camper. The detective then began to jab me as hard as he could with his pistol in my stomach, asking, 'Where are the guns?' I told him that there were no guns. As they beat me they kept calling me 'animal' and asking me, "Where are the guns?" (51)

In his own autobiographical account, Baraka added that the blood felt hot in his face. He couldn't see. He could only feel the wet hot blood covering his entire head and face and hands and clothes. They were "beating me to death. I was being murdered and I knew it. ... But then I could hear people shouting at them" (Autobiography... 226). Ron Porambo did his own investigation and discovered that black police officer knocked him to the ground and began to beat him so viciously that he didn't know how that "little man" was still living: "I started to go over and butt in, but I just knew they were going to kill him from the way they were beating him and I figured they'd just kill me, too. Man, I was crying. That was all I could do without committing suicide" (Porambo 64). Feeling powerless and humiliated, the unnamed black officer never found his voice. He told Porambo that he didn't testify at the trial because "it would have been just another Nigger telling lies on the whole Newark police force" (84). The first trial ended in Baraka's conviction and a prison sentence, but at the end of a second trial that ruling was overturned.

The beatings of John Smith and Baraka were not isolated experiences. Black Newark was occupied by white troops. At Mayor Addonizio's request, New Jersey Governor Richard J. Hughes sent in three thousand National Guardsmen, called up from the surrounding white suburbs and five hundred white state troopers (Methvin

75). "The line between the jungle and the law might as well be drawn here as any place in America," Hughes announced (Robinson 138). To his mind the black community was indeed a "jungle" which encroached upon and threatened to destroy so-called white civilization.

Although no one was ever arrested for snipping, the image of the urban guerrilla was a convenient excuse as the troops opened fire on the black community. The reign of terror resulted in the deaths of more than twenty blacks, including six women and two children (Aarons, "Troops..."). A number of these victims were killed in their homes. For instance, Mrs. Eloise Spellman, a widow and mother of eleven children, was killed as she looked out of her tenth floor apartment. When she dropped, Mrs. Spellman's daughter caught her mother's dead body. Blood was everywhere. Bullet patterns marked the building from the sixth floor upward (Bergesen 163).

For these white troopers, black life was worth nothing. In another case, James Rutledge, a 19-year-old, was executed as he lay on the floor in a looted tavern. One witness reported that a trooper shot Rutledge with a rifle from about three feet away. While Jimmy lay on the floor, the same trooper started to shoot him some more with the rifle. As he fired, he yelled 'Die, you dirty nigger, die you dirty nigger, die, die' (Porambo 89). James Rutledge's head and body were riddled by forty-five bullet holes. It was clear that the police and the military had engaged in pattern of systematically blind violence, terror, abuse, intimidation, and humiliation to keep African Americans in a subordinate position. The evidence referred to a military bloodbath and suppression in Newark rather than a two-sided war (Methvin 212). The conclusion drawn by blacks in the ghetto was confirmed by private Newark lawyers,

professors of constitutional law and representatives of the state American Civil Liberties Union.

The second National Black Power Conference (NBPC) took place in Newark in July 1967. One thousand black people were present at the conference and debated issues of rebellion in the shadow of the Newark and Detroit uprisings that summer (Hayden 83). Detroit's unrest had been one of the worst in American history. The national Black Power Conferences, organized between 1966 and 1969 (Singleton and Wildin 302), represented the launching of the Modern Black Convention Movement. This movement became a center for the development of national black leadership in a number of ways. It created a forum for an ideological struggle over the direction of the black revolt and became a political training ground for new leadership, offering workshops and plenary sessions where young people were exposed to new political perspectives. It also nurtured in many local leaders a new identity in a national movement and created the political atmosphere for the development of black united fronts.

The Newark Rebellion of 1967 catapulted Amiri Baraka into the political arena and paved the way for his new organization, the United Brothers. On July 20, 1967, only a few days after the smoke had cleared from the Newark insurrection, the already scheduled NBPC began its proceedings. It was a bold act of defiance. The Black Power Conference summit of 1967 indicated the beginning of a new phase of the movement. The NBPC of 1967 placed a great deal of emphasis on the presence of reformist elements and corporate funding (Deburg 155). Yet, whatever the original

plans for the conference might have been, the background of urban revolts made this question the key issue on the agenda: Rebellion or Revolution?

The meeting of 1967 was the result of a one-day Black Power Planning Conference on September 3, 1966 called by Harlem Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. in Washington, D.C. That planning session was attended by 169 delegates from 37 cities, 18 states and 64 organizations (Robinson 171). The meeting established of 1966 a Continuations Committee charged with the responsibility for planning the first National Black Power Conference. According to Chuck Stone's account, that body included five men: Isaiah Robinson of New York, Omar A. Ahmed of New York, Chuck Stone of Washington, D.C., Maulana Karenga of Los Angeles, and Nathan Wright, Jr. of New Jersey (Deburg 198).

It was Wright's idea to host the conference in Newark, and between 1966 and 1967 a number of meetings were held there to formulate the black congress (Robinson 181). It was after one of those meetings that Maulana Karenga went to the Newark headquarters of the Black Arts Movement, the Spirit House, and introduced himself to Baraka. Baraka and his new wife Bibi Amina Baraka lived in the Spirit House, which served as both their home and office (Singleton and Wildin 423). That meeting was probably in 1966, because during the spring semester of 1967 Baraka left Newark to teach black studies at San Francisco (Baraka, *Autobiography...* 272). That casual meeting between Baraka and Karenga grew into a very close political friendship, particularly between 1968 and 1970.

At the Newark Black Power Conference, the key debates revolved around the choice between reform and revolution. Both trends were evident at the sessions.

Seeking a representative meeting, the conference drew a body reflecting the diversity within the black community. The Congress drew both civil right leaders and black militants. The sessions opened with a press conference on Thursday, attended by Reverend Jesse Jackson and Maulana Karenga (Hutchinson, The Dynamics... 133). Calling for a black united front at the meeting, black nationalists like Maulana Karenga insisted that they could all keep their individuality, their differences, and still moved in the same direction.

Originally the conveners expected some 400 delegates, but the attendance swelled to more than 1,000 during the four-day conference and included a few remote representatives from militant groups in Bermuda and Zimbabwe (Hayden 91). Some leaders began looking forward to an international Black Power Congress in the near future. Each of the fourteen workshops held six sessions where position papers were presented over the four days of the conference (Walters 396). The workshops were organized around such issues as the urban crisis, social change, economic development, family, religion, youth, fraternal and civil groups, culture, professionals, black politics, alliances and coalitions, as well as nationalism and internationalism.

While the workshops were substantial, the plenary sessions were electric. At the beginning of one session, Sam Anderson, a young Harlem poet and mathematician, mounted the stage replacing the U.S. flag with a black nationalist flag (Bloom 126). During that session, the conference introduced the new chairman of SNCC, H. Rap Brown who spoke about black liberation in a manner that everyone understood: "If this country doesn't come around, then black people are going to burn it down" (qtd in Stone 213). He ended his talk assuring the plenary that he would return after

speaking in Cambridge, Maryland, where some “brothers and sisters” needed him (Hutchinson, The Dynamics... 202). In addition to H. Rap Brown, the plenary greeted its other new heroes: Robert F. Williams, Muhammad Ali, and Amiri Baraka. At that meeting, Baraka, still bandaged from the police beating, insisted that what had developed in Newark was “a rebellion of black people for self-determination.” He then added, “The next time, don’t break into liquor stores. Go where you can get something to protect yourself!” (African... 247)

No one at that summit was fiercer than Maulana Ron Karenga (Castells 79). As had been the case with the Black Congress, Karenga emerged as a central theorist who provided a model for the conference’s participating organizations on how diverge ideological positions could function cooperatively (Baraka, Autobiography... 289). Those who attended the National Conference of 1967 on Black Power in Newark were impressed by Karenga’s insistence upon the need to promote what he called ‘operational unity’ (Watts 102). The conference resolution calling for a political task force to assist in unseating Newark Mayor Hugh Addonizio became a focal point of an emerging alliance between Karenga’s US Organization and various political forces in Newark.

Baraka, who had been injured in a police beating, became even more energetic in Newark politics after the uprising. He was in close contact with and in certain instances a leading member in, a few key organizations that would collectively ignite a campaign to increase African American political representation in Newark: the United Brothers, Black Community Defense and Development (BCD), and a

collective of local artists called the Spirit House (Watts 109). Eventually, these forces merged and became a sort of East Coast affiliate chapter of the US Organization. Baraka recalled that “it was Karenga, who on one of his visits, suggested that we formally bring together the United Brothers, and the Spirit House forces – Karenga suggested the name Committee for a Unified Newark (CFUN)” (qtd in Reilly 247).

It does not seem that the Black Power Conference had any smooth effect on the black revolt. In addition to the formidable content of the meeting already provided, most of the media agreed that the meeting represented a broad cross-section of the black community, with many thinking about the issues raised by the riots (Benston 277). The African American intellectual patchwork present en masse in the meeting testified that the delegates included representatives of the NUL, SCLC, NAACP, CORE, and SNCC (Castells 98). The other groups included such black nationalist organizations as US, from Watts, Harlem’s Mau Mau and the Organization for Afro-American Unity which was founded by Malcolm X.

Furthermore, Black Muslims, teachers, laborers, civil servants and two New York City police inspectors were attending the all-black meeting (Stone 175). The conference brought together many of the diverse elements from black communities across the country. Intellectual Nationalists, Muslims and Mau Mau sat down with moderate and conservative intellectuals in the workshops to help build black power programs for African Americans” (McAdam 108). Some of the debated points sounded radical, but when they were studied they had a lot of validity because they reflected what the black militants had agreed upon: “if the system doesn’t work for you so you must change the system” (Robinson 194).

Perhaps, the most radical sessions of the Black Power Conference took place at a church in the Central Ward. One four-hour mass meeting was held at the Mount Zion Baptist Church at the end of the first day's sessions. At that rally, Floyd McKissick, the chairman of National CORE, urged a recall movement to rid City Hall of Mayor Hugh L. Addonizio (Russell 21). There were three resolutions passed at the rally. First, to demand the release of persons still in jail after last week's rioting in Newark, second, to support the 'right of black people' to revolt when conditions made it necessary, and third, to ask the United Nations to investigate Newark under the authority of its charter on colonial territories (Marable and Mullings 458). The evidence suggested that rather than either ending or co-opting the militant thrust of the Black Power experiment, the NBPC in 1967, coming on the heels of a wave of urban rebellions in Atlanta, Detroit, and Newark, marked the beginning of the National Modern Black Convention Movement (Deburg 245). The call for Black Power and a black united front helped galvanize a new set of organizations in Newark.

A new organizational network was slowly coming together. For instance, a growing circle of women gathered around Amina Baraka to discuss black liberation and African culture as she established the African Free School at the Spirit House in 1967 (Carson 258). At first they established an informal group, the United Sisters. Later, they developed into political activists in the Congress of African People. Another group that formed in the wake of the 1967 Black Power Conference originated in nearby East Orange. They were known as the Black Community Defense and Development (S. Brown 109). Still another group gathered around Amiri

Baraka himself and formed a defense committee to help with his trial for gun charges stemming from the rebellion (Baraka, African... 312). They joined a core of young men and women doing poetry and drama at the Spirit House.

The turning point came when the United Brothers (UB) idea emerged in 1967. That development began when Harold Wilson, a Baraka's childhood friend, joined with the poet at the Spirit House. Wilson was a community merchant, a retailer alternating between groceries, clothing, and furniture. Apparently, during the Newark Rebellion the National Guard had riddled Harold Wilson's furniture store with bullets (Bergesen 179). With his extensive network of contacts in Newark, Wilson began to mobilize resources and recruit men to form the core of a new political organization. He would become the first elected spokesman for the group. According to oral tradition, John Bugg, a door-to-door salesman, was the first recruit, and it was he who thought of a name for the new organization – the UB (Carson 296). Probably in November 1967, Amiri Baraka, Harold Wilson, and John Bugg sent a letter to a list of black intellectual leaders of Newark, requesting their support in organizing a black convention. More than a dozen men attended the summit meeting that took place on December 8, 1967. The call drew Kenneth Gibson, Theodore Pinckney, Donald Tucker, Earl Harris, Harry Wheeler, Junius Williams, Eugene Campbell, Eulius "Honey" Ward, David Barrett, and Russell Bingham (Watts 129). Together they would change the complexion of politics in Newark.

While Eulius Ward was already the chairman of the Central Ward Democratic Party, the United Brothers was pivotal in the political careers of many of the other men, propelling them to both elected and appointed public offices. On the one hand,

Harry Wheeler, was appointed the head of Newark's Manpower; Eugene Campbell, superintendent of schools; and Junius Williams, executive director of Model Cities program. On the other hand, David Barrett was elected President of the United Community Corporation; Donald Tucker, Councilman-at-large; Earl Harris, the first black President of the City Council; and Kenneth Gibson, the first black Mayor of Newark (Baraka, African... 316).

Several of these men joined the black Cultural Revolution and changed their names, to become full time cadres in a growing movement that unfolded first as the United Brothers, then as the Committee for a Unified NewArk (CFUN), and later as the CAP. LeRoi Jones became Imamu Amiri Baraka, the Spiritual Leader. Harold Wilson, a chief community organizer, took the name Kasisi Mhisani. David Barrett, a key political officer, was named Kaimu Mtetezi. John Bugg, a chief economic officer, changed his name to Kite Safidi. Finally, Russell Bingham, premier political advisor, became Baba Mshauri (Gellner 113).

Although at times the United Brothers was perceived as an all-male organization, these men worked alongside a number of dedicated black women at the core of the organization such as Shirley Johnson, Linda Wheeler, Rosa Lee gray, Louise Layton, and Golden E. Johnson, the last of whom eventually became a Newark municipal judge. Furthermore, a number of the women in the United Brothers joined the black cultural revolution, became full time cadres, and changed their names as well. For example, Jackie Bugg became Muminina Fahamivu, and Carolyn Reed became Safi Mfuasi (Reilly 278). These new leaders envisioned a black united front, an organization of organizers and an intellectual political vanguard bold

enough to lead the black community in a ruthless struggle for power. In sum, the United Brothers started strengthening their ranks by committing themselves to the politics of cultural nationalism, and pledging a protracted struggle for black liberation.

Baraka's penchant for grassroots mobilization and his momentary influence within national black politics were indicators of his determination to develop wider identity-based political struggles. Between the 1967 Newark Black Power Conference and his formation of the CAP in 1970, Baraka emerged from relative obscurity to exercise considerable influence within black radical circles. He was central to efforts to develop a national black political vehicle. His strongest contribution rested in his spontaneous involvement in local black power politics, making of Newark a model of black nationalist influence within African American political culture during that period.

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CHAPTER FOUR

African American Cultural Nationalism: A Remodelling

Black cultural nationalism is an expression of aspirations for African American freedom. The implications of this type of nationalism were significant for all those involved in social protest in the critical period of the 1960s and 1970s. There were many black cultural nationalists in the sixties and seventies but one of the most Afrocentric was Baraka who hoped that if he offered African Americans an alternative cultural framework and identity, their anger and frustration could be more positively channeled.

Baraka viewed cultural nationalism as an indispensable and primary aspect of the black liberation. His aim was to ignite the black cultural revolution by introducing an alternative value system and aesthetic expressions to the broader African American community. Beside his personal contribution to the maturity of the politics of black cultural nationalism within the Modern Black Convention Movement, Baraka sought to establish Newark's Black Power experiment and its black political convention as a national prototype for the black liberation movement. In this new pattern for black liberation, leadership would be accountable to the will of black assemblies. Black leadership would be legitimate through the black conventions (Baraka, Revolutionary Culture... 143). It was clear that in the 1968 Black Power Conference in Philadelphia, the politics of cultural nationalism became part of a national movement to build a black political party. However, one of the most controversial questions raised in the early stages of that movement concerned the focus to be given in its political activity: the ballot or the bullet?

During this period several factors contributed to black nationality formation. For one thing, the black nationalists led in the political mobilization of the black community which helped to shape a new black consciousness of African American nationality (Omi and Winant 148). The fact that the black cultural nationalists like Baraka developed an expressive style of politics with its own political conventions. This style aimed at consolidating black identity and enhancing nationality formation. Furthermore, the politics of cultural nationalism was born in a period of extreme racial conflicts and struggles which penetrated into the urban political arena. One of the basic functions of social conflict is group identity formation and solidarity (Coser 12). Accordingly, nationalists are primarily conflict groups (Wirth 724). Such conflicts helped to shape nationality consciousness and ethnic political traditions for African Americans, Irish Americans, and Jewish Americans.

The emergence of black politics in Newark was accompanied by “group trauma,” the kind of “collective suffering” which stimulated the development of a collective nationality consciousness (Bayor 302). At the early stages of nationality formation, the group’s development proceeded much faster than the power structure’s willingness to include them into the polity. This rendered the group politically invisible, and consequently such emergent groups advocated violent and/or radical solutions to their problems (Eisinger 17-18). In this sense, the serious discussions between reform or revolution at both the 1967 Black Power Conference and the 1968 Black Political Convention in Newark had a close link with the formative phase in the promotion of black politics. Those debates served as a major indication that the black community in Newark was not yet incorporated into the political system (Katznelson

118). This contributed to black nationalism's distinctive global consciousness and radical potential in American politics.

A significant indication of nationality formation is the extent of support that nationalist candidates received from the black community. In its election debut, Baraka's United Brothers group was supported by more than 70 percent of the voters in one black ward and by more than 80 percent in the other (Eisinger 47). These facts suggest the outstanding rate of black nationality formation that expanded in Newark during this period. By the 1968 elections, the black convention movement and mass mobilization were crucial, formative experiences for Newark's black political community. Within this context, black nationality formation gained substantial ground in 1968, setting the stage for major victories in the 1970 municipal elections (McDaniel and Balgopal 11). Because of these dynamics, black intellectual leaders, with ideologies across the political spectrum, began to give special attention to the Black Power experiment developed in Newark, as that urban center became a major city for the politics of black cultural nationalism.

In the midst of a whirlwind of speaking engagements collecting resources for the Poor People's Campaign, Martin L. King met with Baraka in Newark on March 27, 1968. During his visit to Newark, King addressed an enthusiastic audience of 1400 students and teachers at South Side High School, sounding some of the major themes of Black Power and black consciousness (Himes 78). "Stand up with dignity and self-respect," King told them. For far too long black people had been ashamed of their race. "Now," declared King, "I'm Black, but I'm Black and beautiful!" (MLK Project)

In the afternoon King surprised Amiri and Amina Baraka when he arrived at their front door for an unexpected meeting in their home and headquarters, the Spirit House. King was tracked by the news media and hundreds of supporters (Washington 356). In spite of the striking contrasts between the political ideologies of these two leaders, the situation in the country was rapidly changing, and King was approaching key proponents of Black Power. In Baraka's office, King did not appeal for help. Instead, he insisted on the importance of a concerted black political strategy, warning Baraka that the increased division between black leaders was dangerous, sterile, and damaging to the black cause (Sollors 89). King spoke to the militant intellectual about the need for a unified African-American leadership. The meeting made an impression on Baraka and his organization, and signaled the possibility for a broader black united front, one that would include such civil rights organizations as King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (Himes 112). That evening King spoke to a massive audience at Newark's Abyssinian Baptist Church in the midst of three of the most largely populated high-rise public housing projects in the Central Ward. The people in the church responded with a lengthy round of cheers, when King announced that "the hour has come for Newark, New Jersey, to have a black mayor" (Baldwin 245).

Tragically, one week later, on April 4, 1968, King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee by James Earl Ray (Fairclough 325). That night more than one hundred cities exploded with black rebellion, posing the worst domestic threat since the Civil War. The magnitude of the uprisings was so significant that in the ensuing month there were 202 violent incidents in 172 cities with 27,000 arrests, 3,500 injured and

43 deaths (Kelley 882). That storm of black rage, protesting King's death, represented the most direct challenge ever posed to the American social order, an order historically based on racial discrimination and ethnic fragmentation among the lower classes.

In the aftermath of King's assassination, there were more than 200 black urban uprisings, making a major turning point for the Black Revolt (Castells 50). As the uprisings spread, the state troopers, National Guard, and U.S. Army units attempted to restore control in those highly uprising areas like Memphis, Nashville, Jackson, Birmingham, Raleigh, Baltimore, Harlem, Boston, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Youngstown, and Chicago (Coser 66). In Boston, the United Front, including the CORE and SNCC, rallied 10,000 black people at White Stadium in Roxbury. With a Black Nationalist flag flying at half-mast the front presented twenty-one demands; one of them simply called for black control over Roxbury (Fairclough 334).

In Washington, D.C., federal troops surrounded the White House, and "manned a machine-gun post on the steps of the Capitol". It was reported that more than 11,500 armed troops were being deployed in and around the nation's capital (Mutasow 396). Enraged by white hatred and losing faith in the prospects for powerful white liberal allies, the old social controls would no longer restrain the black community. Subsequently, diverse political forces in black America would find new ways to work together against racial oppression (Sollors 102). In the midst of this national upheaval, sections of the civil rights establishment sounded a new theme. They began to look inward and emphasized a common interest that black people felt, whether they were

moderates or radicals. This caused an important realignment of political forces in the freedom movement, making possible united fronts between black radicals and moderates.

During the national crisis that had been triggered by King's murder, the leader of the CORE, Floyd McKissick, refused to attend an emergency meeting with President Johnson at the White House because he saw that such militants as Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown of the SNCC were not in attendance (Mutasow 402). Similarly, Whitney Young, the head of the moderate, integrationist, and establishment-oriented National Urban League, made a major tactical shift in 1970, putting him on the road to a black united front with Imamu Baraka (Castells 91). At a press conference, Young said that he did not care about how white people felt or how sorry they were. He wanted to know what actions they would take. On the one hand, Young urged the Congress to set the tone with its actions on legislation pending for civil rights, housing, and employment. But on the other hand, he insisted that if nothing was done, "people like me may be revolutionists" (Sollors 211).

Shaken by the tragic event, the leader of the Urban League argued that "there are no moderates today. Everybody is a militant. The difference is there are builders and burners." He explained to reporters that, "If you think I am not as angry as Rap Brown, then you misread me. I'm just no fool. I'm not going to give them an excuse to kill all Negroes with all the new weapons and practice they have." Young added that he was no longer a moderate, but that "he would not be a stupid revolutionary" (Young 34-35). Thereafter, Whitney Young became an important participant at the

1968 National Black Power Conference in Philadelphia as well as at the 1970 Congress of African People in Atlanta (Shank 467).

The death threats against Baraka were also increasing. As many artists and writers gathered in New York shocked at King's murder, the playwright Ed Bullins was informed that "the officials of Newark, the New Jersey state government and the Mafia were vowing to 'kill' LeRoi" (Bullins 23). In the aftermath of King's death, many black nationalists were alert to the threat that reactionary forces would take the opportunity to terrorize black revolutionaries (Brown 124). There was little doubt in the freedom movement that white vigilantes and reactionaries on the police force wanted to unleash armed terror on unarmed black youth.

Taking into account the police mentality of the time, in The Second Civil War, Garry Wills reported that the white racism that he discovered was profound and wondered why the police were obsessed with the use of tanks. He even considered that the tanks were symbolic of steel gloves for handling black people. The police actually preferred did it as one manipulated "some foreign substance, with gloves on, the thicker the better, gloves of steel" (Wills 16). Reviewing a number of urban rebellions in Violence as Seen through a Prism of Color, Letha See reported some thoughts about the strategies police would have used to halt black uprisings:

In Philadelphia, a military man would have taken control of the highest buildings in the ghetto. In Newark, gas would have stooped their dangerous burgeoning once for ever. You won't find a greater proponent of gas than I am. We've used it several times in Cambridge, Maryland, with excellent results (29).

Wills, on the other hand, reflected that for him the investigation turned into “an odyssey in reverse. One that made me lose, in some measure, my home, the things I had taken for granted, had thought of as familiar and safe” (Wills 40). In the aftermath of the racial confrontations in Watts, Detroit, and Newark, the U.S. Army stockpiled weapons for airlifts for the summer, and trained SWAT teams at Fort Benning, Georgia (Sellers 67). The preparations for repression were also local. The city police forces assembled armored vehicles, helicopters, high-powered rifles and deployed undercover agents into the ghettos (O’Reilly 240). This act explained the police determination to crash the uprisings by applying any means necessary.

With these dangers in mind, some of the black nationalists cautioned black youth. Baraka and the United Brothers distributed flyers that say “Don’t be a chump. Support the United Brothers and black convention. Don’t riot. Come together as blacks and support blacks. Take this city by ballot. This is not punking out. This is being smart” (Baraka, The Creation... 113). When Baraka was asked why he was out in the Newark streets trying to prevent racial violence, he responded that “we’ve come to the conclusion that the city is ours anyway, that we can take it with ballots (Beginning... 58). At the Spirit House, surrounded by posters of such Black Power proponents as Maulana Karenga, Huey P. Newton, and H. Rap Brown, Baraka explained that “we’ve issued a call for a black convention to pick black candidates for every city office” (The National... 82). Baraka’s political involvement in such event greatly encouraged the creation of a political convention in his home town.

Baraka’s black political convention announced a new stage in black nationality formation, and that new identity and consciousness developed in the context of group

conflict: black against white. Increasingly, white racism had become a decisive part of the fabric of Newark's political culture. In the 1968 special election to fill two vacancies on Newark's city council, ethnic politics turned into "an abrasively widening schism between Italians and blacks" (Stone 125). By 1968, the violent conflicts which had raged in Newark's work places, public schools, and city streets, stormed into the political arena when two Italian-Americans won seats on the city council: Anthony Giuliano and Anthony Imperiale (Gooding 224). The entrance of these two figures into the political arena announced the end of any hope of racial moderation or effective white liberalism in Newark during that period.

Detective Anthony Giuliano had been a leader in the Policeman's Benevolent Association (PBA), which resisted black demands for a civilian police review board to examine charges of police brutality (Castells 125). While Anthony Giuliano left little doubt about his intentions for "law and order," neither did Anthony Imperiale. He was not only the chief of the North Ward vigilantes, arming them and leading white attacks on blacks and Puerto Ricans as his cars patrolled and enforced the ghetto borders, but Imperiale was also making national links with such racists as the former Governor George Wallace of Alabama. As governor, Wallace had defied a federal court order by refusing to admit two black students to the University of Alabama (Stone 133). In fact, he was infamous for declaring war on black equality: "I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say, Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!" (Graham 95-96). In New Jersey, Imperiale headed the presidential campaign for Wallace's racist American Independent Party. Newark's black community was

alarmed when it heard that the Italian-American community had chosen Imperiale and Giuliano as its political representatives (Gooding 234). The choice of the two Italians was to deepen the racial crisis in Newark more than ever.

Race and power had become the most important issues in the Newark political arena. In fact, by 1969 white power was threatening to become white terror against the black and Puerto Rican communities (Graham and Burr 125). What Councilman Anthony Imperiale meant by “law and order” became clear during his victory statement of November 1968: “We’re going to support the police, right or wrong!” (Goldberger 10). At a white rally in Newark’s North Ward, some vigilantes demonstrated a threatening and perverse version of call and response. When one participant shouted, “Why can’t we kill a thousand niggers and about fourteen thousand Puerto Ricans?” Another racist answered, “The other way round!” (Katznelson 102)

Blacks suspected that there might have been some association between Anthony Imperiale’s group, the Klan and its imprisoned Grand Dragon, J. Robert Jones of North Carolina. Doubtless, the campaign that Anthony Imperiale ran for George Wallace accounted for the 4,000 votes Wallace received in the North Ward (Graham 131). At any rate, Imperiale did not need any encouragement from the Klan or George Wallace. At times, Newark’s racial conflict was like that of Alabama and Mississippi. Imperiale’s role in the worsening racial confrontations was significant. He delivered a speech to a white audience of screaming supporters at Vailsburg High School, savaging civil liberties and civil rights, and then attacking such black leaders as

Martin Luther King and Baraka. Afterward, the huge crowd of whites, excited by Imperiale's racism, attacked nine unsuspecting black Seton Hall College students in the streets of Vailsburg, a small residential enclave in the Newark's West Ward (Castells 136). The reached conclusion is that Imperiale had been the direct cause in turning that audience into a "bloodthirsty mob" rampaging through the streets, with several white people attacking black youths.

The prognosis of this white rage is easy to guess. Sam Raffaello, one of Anthony Imperiale's political advisors, a lawyer, made it right when he argued that "Tony can be mayor of Newark, he can be governor. Tony is sweeping the country, everybody's talking about him" (Goldberger 14). But for Anthony Imperiale, in the aftermath of numerous racial confrontations with blacks and Puerto Ricans, the reward would be a seat in the New Jersey State Senate. Baraka could only deceptively concede that Imperiale had developed into "an authentic spokesman for his people" (Mangel 249). However, for Baraka, white repression had become a personal matter.

Indications of a well-supported pattern of intimidation against the leaders of the Black Revolt are easily detected in Newark police officer Frank Hunts' racist acts. Regarding the African-American children in the community as "dirty" and "little niggers," Officer Hunt watched the streets in front of the United Brothers headquarters with unequaled zeal. On one occasion, Officer Hunt extravagantly confronted Baraka and boasted that "I'm gonna take you out before this is over!" He proudly insisted that "I got your picture; I use it for target practice. I'm gonna blow your brains out!" Later, carrying a shotgun, Officer Hunt, threatened Baraka, raving that, "Imperiale is gonna clean you people up!" (Levine 65) When Baraka arrogantly

responded that “without that shotgun you’d be a punk,” Hunt took the activist into detention, accusing him of using obscenity and resisting arrest. In Newark’s justice system, that meant that Baraka was convicted, fined, and imprisoned for two months (Watson 177).

Coming in the aftermath of the assassinations of Martin Luther King in April and Robert Kennedy in early June, the 1968 black political convention in Newark represented a major turning point in the Black Revolt, opening a new period of united fronts between black radicals and moderates (O’Reilly 251). Newark’s black assembly was chaired by one of the United Brothers, Harry Wheeler, a Newark school teacher and communist activist. Wheeler opened the three-day convention on Friday, June 21, by announcing the aims of the summit. As part of the United Brothers drive for political control of the city in 1970, when the positions of mayor and city council would be contested, the convention aimed to win two seats on the Newark City council in the special elections of November 1968 (Baraka, The Creation... 156). These elections would be a significant preparing path for the political contests of 1970.

Spokesmen for the United Brothers who clearly understood that their immediate aim was to see blacks running for office, whatever their party affiliation, insisted on the fact that competition among black candidates might result in a white candidate winning office without his receiving a majority of votes cast (Watts 139). But in order to work for all that, the Newark Black Political Convention had to become an important legitimating process for the leadership of the black community. So, it had to be representative in order to claim to be the voice of the community. The Black

Convention insisted that its candidates were the community choice (Bryce 45). Its candidates ran on a black agenda backed by the black assembly.

The purpose of the summit was the development of a platform on important city issues. For the most part, the black agenda was a re-statement of the concerns and demands of the grassroots movements in Newark's black community. There were a number of workshops where resolutions were discussed in preparation for the political platform. In those sessions there were heated discussions about the direction of convention policy on urban renewal and housing, social welfare, public health, black youth, education, black politics, and police violence. To curb police brutality, the convention pushed for a civilian review board (Watts 154). This had long been the demand of the CORE and other civil rights forces on that matter.

The most challenging issues surrounded the political tactics that the movement in Newark would use to win its demands in the other areas: the ballot or the bullet. Not everyone was convinced that electoral politics was the way forward. Moreover, some of the militants connected to the SNCC questioned whether the United Brothers were representative enough to lead this movement (Blauner 50). Since the power to choose leadership was vested in the convention, that issue was settled by the voting process at the plenary sessions which approved the platform and candidates. The most important issue of leadership would be decided by those who worked in the campaign after the convention. In the end, the workshop on politics did agree on a process. The black assembly took the decision that it would endorse only one candidate for each office and that political hopefuls had to attend the convention, submit to its scrutiny,

and seek its nomination (Bryce 68). By the end of the political deliberations, Theodore Pinckney and Donald Tucker were nominated by the Black Convention for the two seats on the Newark City Council (Baraka, The Creation... 124).

The platform issues were announced in an eight point program based on the workshops proceedings, which addressed city financing, health and welfare, housing and land use, urban education, employment, political fundraising, voter registration, and political organization (Crowe 11). Between the Black Political Convention of June 1968 in Newark and the National Black Political Convention of March 1972 in Gary several major black political assemblies developed important agendas to set priorities for the African American political community (Baraka, The National... 102).

Since the black assemblies were the broadest expressions of deliberative summits in the black community, neglecting the agendas which were developed was a monumental mistake. These black agendas revealed an African American political community not only determined to struggle against the conditions in the ghetto, but equally resolved never to surrender to slum death (Baraka, The Creation... 137). The proceedings of these black assemblies cast doubt on at least three major assumptions about black nationalism. First, the rise of black nationalism could be seen as the measure of the breadth and depth of pessimism and despair (Stone 47). Second, because of pride and denial, black nationalism and black consciousness neglected the issues of poverty and social disorganization in the African American community (Wilson, The Declining... 113). Third, the African American idea of a black

nationality in the United States is “at best a political mirage and at worst an escapist ‘fantasy’” (McAdam 108).

Yet, the black agendas were clearly focused both on identifying the social horrors of poverty and despair in the ghetto, and on finding solutions to those shocking conditions. For instance, the participants in the sessions on health and welfare decided to emphasize the establishment of day-care centers, the rehabilitation and employment of drug addicts, and a complete re-evaluation of the current welfare system (Draper 81). They saw no contradiction between expressing black pride and solving the community’s serious social rehabilitation and social responsibility in their community.

Similarly, in the face of Newark Housing Authority’s (NHA) aggressive urban renewal plans for the devastating demolition of thousands of units of housing and the horrendous construction of high-rise public housing projects and highways running through the heart of the black ghetto, the black assembly discussed restoring the Newark Housing Authority (Baraka, The Creation... 156, 164). The black convention also considered black control of the Newark Model Cities program and development of a stand against the construction of any further highways through the city; development of a program for private acquisition of land and de-emphasis of the construction of high-rise apartments. The NHA was controlled by the Italian political machine in 1968. During the 1970s, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development charged that the agency was controlled by the underworld (Woodard, The Making... 101). The convention agenda made clear the broad-based concern with these issues, which became the foundation for Baraka’s policy emphasis on black

control of urban renewal and housing development. Baraka and his planning office, the Project Area Committee (PAC), which planned and actually revitalized a one 100-acre community in the heart of the ghetto, fought the Newark Housing Authority in a struggle for power (Wilson, The Declining... 125). These are plans intended to face the problems in the ghetto.

In the face of a school drop-out rate more than 30 percent, community people in the sessions on urban education demanded reforms, including the teaching of black history starting at the grade-school level, support of community control of the schools and a more equitable plan for more black administrators in the school system (Wilson, Truly... 88). Although the majority of Newark's pupils were black, the curriculum reflected the concerns of whites. These demands were a reflection in the community of the struggle for black studies and relevant education taking place at the time in colleges and universities (Stone 141). Meanwhile black college students on campuses were demanding that the institutions of higher education provide material support to the school children in the black community.

To provide the black convention movement with broad based support, the participants decided that political fundraising campaigns should be directed not solely at people in high places but at every level of the community (Deburg 64). These activists did not believe in voter registration without political education, so they considered a house-to-house voter registration drive to educate the black community to the importance of electing black councilmen and the ultimate goal of a black mayor in 1970 (Wilson, Power... 97). These are not the ideas of a movement paralyzed by pessimism and despair; the politics of cultural nationalism

was about increasing the mass mobilization of the black community in the struggle for power.

In line with the concern for mass participation, the black convention movement was concerned about participatory democracy. The nature of the political organization considered by the black summit was decisive for the development of the politics of black nationalism. Those present at the political sessions decided on the establishment of a united black front committed to the convention's platform and to work with the convention for the implementation of the points covered in the platform (Deburg 92). The largest body was the representative black assembly, which would establish a black united front to carry out its wishes as expressed specifically in the resolutions of the workshops (Draper 92). It was an interesting proposition, but could it be done? Was that the answer to some of the burning issues of organization, mass mobilization, and party program in the Black Power experiment?

Speaking on Friday evening to an audience of some 600, Amiri Baraka called for the "political emergence of the Black man" (Draper 188). "We say we want to govern ourselves," he told his audience, "what we want is for black people to control their community" (Baraka, The National... 148). On Saturday Maulana Karenga addressed the plenary. He combined a discussion of the immediate work of voter registration and precinct organization, with the invocation of his long range vision of black liberation. Most of his emphasis was on winning black activists over to the process of mobilizing and organizing the black community in the political field. He insisted that they would win leadership in the broader community by winning election

victories, explaining the importance and practicality of establishing a black united front in the political arena, Karenga introduced the slogan, “Unity without uniformity” (Crowe 21). He envisioned black politics as part of a cultural revolution involving a process of self-emancipation, creating a new man and a new woman, who would – as the poet Baraka said – “walk tasting the sunshine of life” (Baraka, Revolutionary Culture... 78).

By far, the most controversial figure to address the Newark Black Political Convention was the new leader of the SNCC, Phil Hutchings. When he delivered the keynote address, the air was charged for a number of reasons. The SNCC was the vanguard group in the Black Revolt. Hutchings had been the leading SNCC field organizer in Newark for several years before he replaced H. Rap Brown as the national program secretary (Runcie 195). In Newark, the SNCC had worked out of the Black Liberation Center on South Orange Avenue before that office was mysteriously bombed one night. On the heels of the increasing radicalization of the SNCC, apparent with each successive election of national leaders since Stokely Carmichael in 1966 and H. Rap Brown in 1967, the movement was anxious to hear from Phil Hutchings the political line that had come out of SNCC’s private executive sessions in 1968 (Johnson 57).

Many people in the freedom movement were attracted by the ideological debates between the leading revolutionary nationalists associated with the Black Panther Party of Oakland and the foremost cultural nationalists aligned with Karenga’s US Organization of Los Angeles. Some were also aware that those debates were degenerating into firefights in the streets between the rival groups on the West

Coast (Brown 156). But just where the SNCC would side in these disputes was not altogether clear. At one point that year, SNCC's James Foreman had acted as a mediator between the Panther Party and the US Organization. To make matters even more complicated, the leaders of the SNCC were sending out mixed signals (Pearson 56). While H. Rap Brown had criticized certain kinds of cultural nationalism for having more than substance, Stokely Carmichael reproached several brands of revolutionary nationalism for emphasizing alliances with whites in the New Left at the expense of a broad black united front (Woodard, *A Nation...* 75). There were rumors circulating about negotiations of a merger between SNCC and the Black Panther Party. If the rivalry between the Panthers and US Organization were to break out into a shooting war in Black America's Northeast, what would that mean for Newark's black convention movement?

Hutchings raised a number of burning issues to the convention like the SNCC-Panther alliance, the danger of gun veneration, the choice between reform and revolution, and the necessity for a black united front (Runcie 189). First, Hutchings led some to believe that a merger between the Panthers and the SNCC had been consummated. The audience roared when he explained that "an alliance with the Black Panther Party was initiated because 'there was no difference between the Democratic and Republican Parties'" and that black people needed their own party (Crowe 18). He insisted that the black panther would be the symbol for the new party. However, in reality the merger between the Panthers and SNCC was never accomplished. The negotiations had been disastrous. Consequently, party building by organizational mergers would be put off for several years by ideological warfare

between the different factions in the Black Power movement (Brown 172). Concerning the gun cultism which was surfacing in the Black Revolt, Hutchings said that guns were not good without political education and that blacks couldn't just run out into the street and get shot (Pearson 124). What they needed was a strategy and a plan to take over.

Most controversial were Hutchings's dull remarks about reform and revolution, and the issue of the ballot or the bullet. Attempting to face the issues squarely, Hutchings could not help but reflect the profound uncertainty of black radicals on the most important strategic question. He was of two minds. On the one hand, he insisted that control of Newark by black people was impossible: "You won't have control of Newark unless you take over the whole country. The honkies still would maintain control over you through the state and federal government" (Brown 221). Further, Hutchings told the black assembly that

Black Power means tearing down capitalism because it has served as a means of enslaving black people. Yet, on the other hand, if there is to be a black takeover, Newark will be the key city. In terms of white racism Newark is an urban Mississippi, if we can't get black power here, we can't get it anywhere. Blacks should get it either with the ballot or the bullet. (Qtd in Baraka, The Creation... 112).

Finally, Hutchings's call for black solidarity was welcomed by the plenary because it signaled that whatever differences the factions held to, they should not fight each other. Hutchings visualized a black united front, consisting of moderates and

militants, with several functions (Pearson 124). A front which would provide an umbrella of defense, set an example of how well organizing works, create a forum on diverse opinions, and create a national linkage with other communities.

The Black Political Convention of June 1968 launched the momentum for Black Power in Newark, bringing the most controversial issues of the Black Revolt into the political arena. While black radicals raised strategic issues before the black convention, they could not provide definitive answers. Like many other urban centers, Newark would have to come to its own answers to these issues through mass mobilization and political experiments (Johnson 156). Yet, the first step in Newark's Black Power experiment seemed promising. The black community was forging a black united front of radicals and moderates in the UB and in the black political convention movement. Baraka would report on the early results of this experiment before a national audience at the Black Power Conference in Philadelphia (Baraka, The National... 187). He sought to establish Newark's Black Power experiment and the Black Convention Movement as a national paradigm for the black liberation movement.

In the midst of the 1968 campaign, Baraka, Maulana Karenga, and the black convention candidates journeyed to Philadelphia where they joined thousands of other delegates and observers from around the country at the third annual Black Power Conference (Baraka, The Creation... 114). The Continuations Committee of the Black Power Conference anticipated 2,000 black people representing 600 organizations would assemble that Labor Day weekend to discuss strategies for black liberation and to hear such speakers as Maulana Karenga, Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap

Brown, Max Stanford, Baraka, Rep. John Conyers, Jesse Jackson, and Whitney Young (Draper 159). By Friday, the summit had already drawn at least 2,500 people from across the country. By the end of the conference more than 4,000 black people had registered (Johnson 164).

The purpose of the summit was to plan implementation of the Black Power philosophy that came out of the Newark Black Power Conference of 1967. The conference would last four days, Thursday through Sunday, with speakers and workshops (Brown 172). There were ten workshops: black women, students and youth, religion and mythology, economics, politics, education, communications, culture, history, and community organization (Deburg 112). The subjects of the papers presented ranged from job creation and communications to nationhood.

The conference drew national attention to Maulana Karenga and his Los Angeles US Organization. While Nathan Wright remained in the leadership of the National Black Power Conference Continuations Committee, Maulana Karenga was recognized in 1968 as its chief organizer and foremost theoretician (Pearson 242). He told several thousand delegates to the conference in his Friday night speech that defense and development were two essentials for black survival. Speaking to an overflow crowd, Karenga received a standing applause as he insisted on a common front (Brown 236).

For the 4,000 delegates engaged in the four-day discussions of strategy and tactics, the mood was one of angry militancy, disenchantment with the nation's present political establishment and insistence on black self-determination. The black assembly passed a number of resolutions by unanimous vote, including one calling

for the unilateral and immediate withdrawal of the United States from the war in Vietnam, and another calling for firm resistance by draft-age black youth against “being used as cannon fodder for this racist imperialistic war” (Draper 213). The political recommendation placed party building at the top of the Black Revolt’s agenda developed in the workshop.

The National Black Power Conference in Philadelphia voted unanimously to work for the establishment of a national black political party to lead black communities in the struggle to control their own space (Baraka, The Creation... 134). The plenary sessions demonstrated that the summit was single-minded in its pursuit of black self-determination. Maulana Karenga was instructed to convene a national constitutional convention for the formation of the national black party. He explained that they would win self-determination, either through the established political system or “by any means necessary” (Brown 238).

Baraka received warm support from the audience when he spoke about the political importance of Black Power experiment unfolding in Newark. He was seeking the Philadelphia summit’s endorsement for the United Brothers candidates, Donald Tucker and Ted Pinckney, and for the struggle for power in Newark (Ogbar 145). The Black Revolt was committed to black political power, and Newark became a key city for that experiment in black liberation. With the endorsement of the Philadelphia summit came a stream of talent and resources to the United Brothers (McAdam 109). At the national level, black leaders began paying special attention to the events unfolding in that city.

As both the theoretician and practitioner of the politics of cultural nationalism, Maulana Karenga spent a great deal of time training Baraka and helping him organize the UB. As far as the political veterans in the United Brothers were concerned, Karenga was well schooled in political organization. He gave Baraka training in how to organize precinct work effectively (Sprague 28). That was the period of Baraka's apprenticeship under the 24-year-old Maulana Karenga who helped with the planning of the 1968 campaign, raising funds from Newark's black undertakers for a strong and innovative voter registration drive and advising the young United Brothers candidates about how to present themselves to the wider community. One United Brothers candidate, Donald Tucker, remembered that as a young black militant, he did not want to switch from his African dress in order to campaign for a city council seat election (McAdam 118). Ironically, it was Maulana Karenga who convinced him that it would be politically counter-productive to campaign in his dashiki (Ogbar 159).

At any rate, the United Brothers had to organize black voter registration and the campaign for the special November election. Several groups that had worked together with Baraka on the convention were pulled together by Maulana Karenga to establish a campaign organization to coordinate political activities. Karenga felt that the name, the United Brothers, sounded too sinister for the political arena (Hilliard 85). For the larger umbrella organization, he proposed a new name, the Committee For A Unified Newark, which was later abbreviated to the Committee For Unified New Ark, known to many as CFUN. Because he was dealing with three distinct political circles in the Newark area with different organizational styles and attitudes, the best Karenga could

do was to form a coalition in order to coordinate the campaign (Robinson 74). Maintaining their differences, each group conserved its own leadership and structure.

The United Brothers came into the structure with its increasing political influence and grassroots organizing. Kasisi Mhisani (Harold Wilson) was elected its first chairman. Baraka brought the writers and actors in the Spirit House Movers and Players into the new structure. They were responsible for culture and communications during the campaign. A third group came from a base of operations in East Orange, New Jersey. They called themselves the Black Community Defense and Development (BCD) (Sprague 47). This group was led by two men, Balozzi Zayd Muhammad and Mfundishi Maasi. While Muhammad had worked at the United Nations, Maasi was a material arts instructor. The people in the BCD styled themselves after the military wing of Karenga's US Organization, the Simba Wachunga (Young Lions). CFUN was jointly headed by Baraka, Balozzi Zayd Muhammad, and Mfundishi Maasi (Baraka, Revolutionary Party... 73).

After King's assassination, the leadership of the Black Revolt had to make some difficult choices. Many thought that the movement was on "death ground on which one must fight or die" (Sun Tzu 131). In this situation, Baraka began to emphasize taking power with ballots instead of bullets. Black leaders had very few viable choices: "When the Black Panther comes," said Anthony Imperiale, "the White Hunter will be waiting" (Ogbar 167). If black people were not consciously prepared and organized to meet this eventuality, then the genocide would be an all too tangible reality.

To make matters worse, before the Modern Black Convention Movement, Newark's militants were poorly organized and had little support mobilized for their cause. At best, many were impressive speakers, but very few were actually community organizers. In this context, Baraka began to insist that it would take more than rage to dislodge the white grip on political power in Newark (Baraka, Beginning... 211). The Black Revolt would have to find a way to unify and mobilize the black community. For the United Brothers, the upcoming political contests were battles in a prolonged people's war against white racists. Baraka plainly explained:

What you've got to do is get your people together to fight. Your people. The war ain't gonna be on today and off tomorrow. It's going to be years and years. It's gonna be generation to generation. It's gonna be people passing on information and passing on ways to kill him off. Nobody decided not to kill him, but face the reality (The National... 195).

In Baraka's point of view concerning self-determination for African Americans, it was more important to make alliances with black civil rights organizations than with the white New Left organizations. He sarcastically remarked that "better a nationalist is trying to join with the NAACP or join behind the NAACP to bring about real change, where possible, than discussing theoretical nationalism in coffee shops, or smoking bush with 'revolutionary' devils" (Baraka, Raise... 162). He was especially harsh in his criticism of Left groups, particularly the Progressive Labor Party, which condemned all shades of black nationalism:

Nationalism is reactionary. That's Progressive Labor talk. Lenin, Trotsky and all that scum to the contrary, the people themselves, they will dig this, man. They are not going to be making no damn détentes with hippies or others. What we're talking about is building institutions for black people, first, you know (Toward... 39).

Baraka's own approach was to abandon the African American political tradition and to revolutionize black political culture with the politics of cultural nationalism (Llorens 47). Baraka's sense of the politics of cultural nationalism emphasized innovation and improvisation by suggesting that there was no reason why black people's proven ability to create and to improvise musically couldn't be adapted to the formation of new social and political structures. Black music offered essential instruction "in mental decolonization and self-definition at least as cogent as any 'political' broadside of the day" (Autobiography... 178). Baraka was exploring how African American folk culture, particularly its music, might provide a model for the Black Power experiment and the politics of cultural nationalism (Deburg 216). Behind this exploration, Baraka seemed seriously committed to changing the political and economic racial structures which constrained black life in the United States.

That experimentation in black political culture developed in the context of extreme racial and ethnic conflict. The tone of the 1968 political campaign was set by the tenor of the national white political reaction to the Black Revolt. Seeking the

White House, Richard Nixon developed the “Southern Strategy,”¹ assuring the South that once elected he would grant them autonomy in racial matters (Graham 304). Looking forward to a similar kind of neglect of civil rights enforcement in the North, Imperiale and Giuliano employed the “law and order” slogan, the same byword that Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew used in the presidential race. Moreover, Imperiale’s campaign for George Wallace brought that presidential candidate about 4,000 votes in the North Ward of Newark (Stone 189).

CFUN led its “Peace and Power” campaign with a great deal of energy, but the young organization lost the November 5, 1968 election (Ogbar 155). In the two political wards with the major concentrations of the Newark black community, the United Brothers ticket received 73 percent of the votes cast in the South Ward and 86 percent of those cast in the Central Ward (Sprague 91). There are at least two different hypotheses of that defeat: one offered by Chuck Stone in his important analysis of the emergence of a new black politics, Black Political Power in America. The other by Robert Curvin in his work, Persistent Minority, analyzing the rise of the new politics specifically in black Newark. While Stone attributed the United Brothers’

¹ In American politics, the Southern strategy is defined to the core of the Republican party in winning U.S. Presidential elections by securing the electoral votes of the U.S. Southern states. The phrase “Southern strategy” was devised by Nixon strategist Kevin Phillips. In an interview included in a 1970 New York Times article, he confidently referred to the importance of the Republican electoral new strategy:

From now on, the Republicans are never going to get more than 10 to 20 percent of the Negro vote and they don't need any more than that... but Republicans would be shortsighted if they weakened enforcement of the Voting Right Act. The more Negroes who register as democrats in the South, the sooner the Negrophobe whites will quit the democrats and become republicans. That's where the votes are. Without that prodding from the blacks, the whites will backslide into their old comfortable arrangement with the local democrats.

loss to inadequate black voter registration (Stone 202), Robert Curvin explained the defeat in terms of the crucial differences between number of black votes cast in the presidential race of November 1968 and those cast in the city council contest (*The Persistent...* 117). There are three reasons to believe Curvin's interpretation. First, while Stone's analysis was part of a national survey of black politics, Curvin was able to observe these developments much more closely as a political scientist focused on the dynamics of black politics in Newark. Second, from that vantage point, Curvin specifically noted that the United Brothers led a strong voter registration drive. And, third, he explained that nearly half of those voting in the presidential race in the Central Ward and almost 63 percent of those in the South Ward did not vote at all in council races (192). In their first campaign the United Brothers and the Committee For Unified New Ark achieved a considerable degree of political hegemony in the black community. However, the national influence of the Democratic Party was much stronger.

To the experts and political veterans it was perfectly reasonable that the United Brothers convention ticket would lose its first election. After all, that year's campaign was only a dress rehearsal for the real showdown in 1970 (Winant 143). But that was not the way youth in the ranks of CFUN saw it. They were nearly shattered. Karenga helped the organization review its experience in the campaign and provided them with "Kawaida", his own political doctrine of black nationalism and cultural revolution (Karenga 25, 48). For Baraka he provided some special instructions and readings on leadership and cadre development. Unfortunately, many in CFUN, including Baraka,

became increasingly convinced of the accumulated fact of Karenga's "infallible" guidance (Frederickson 130). After the November election colorful posters appeared all over the black community with a message from CFUN, apologizing for losing the election.

The signs included both an African proverb provided by Karenga and a new slogan. The proverb introducing the apology read: "To stumble is not to fall, but to go forward faster. The new slogan advised: Get it together for 1970!" (Reilly, 78).

While failing in that first political contest, the 1968 convention, campaign, and election were formative experiences for CFUN. Baraka's movement had taken several steps to advance the Black Power experiment. Black consciousness was developed into a new and explosive force in the elections. Moreover, similar to the way a socialist or labor party contributed to class formation by its leadership and mobilization, a black nationalist party like Baraka's CFUN stimulated nationality formation in the political arena. The Black Convention's first bid for leadership in the black political wards was to consolidate their efforts to achieve community control over public institutions.

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CHAPTER FIVE

The Catalyst of Black Nationality Creation

The 1970s represents the peak for the politics of black cultural nationalism. The birth of a national black community was significantly marked in this period by the development of the dynamics of nationality formation from the local political arena to the national political stage. It resulted in the rapid emergence of the National Black Convention Movement (NBCM) in the form of four national organizations: the Congress of African People (CAP), the Black Women's United Front (BWUF), the National Black Assembly (NBA), and the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) (Gaines, Uplifting... 14).

In addition to his enduring devotion to community-based political activism, Baraka also played a significant role in national Black Power organizations. One year after the launching of the National Black Convention Movement in 1966, Baraka got involved in a Newark convention. In agreement with Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher and Michigan Congressman Charles C. Diggs Jr., Baraka organized in 1972 the National Black Political Convention which was significant for the black freedom movement in that period (Hutchinson, The Dynamics... 121). During that convention, The delegates agreed on the National Black Political Agenda which became known as the Gary declaration, a statement that was a major step toward creating an independent black political party (Wilson 47). The Gary declaration adopted seven major areas: economic, human development, communications, rural development, environmental protection, political empowerment, and international policy (Ladun

19). The Gary Convention saw the birth of the National Black Political Assembly.

The MBCM emerged as a national structure that embraced the growing tensions between the reality of black diversity and the calls for African American unity (Baraka, Toward... 89). The black convention constructed its own democratic process of agenda building around the principle of proportional representation, articulating the numerous viewpoints within the black community and giving each perspective due weight in decision making (Gaines, "Not Ready..." 551). In essence, agenda building was a counter-hegemonic strategy that meant changing the political discourse on local and national issues. Instead of black communities passively awaiting whatever political candidates might decide were the pressing issues in the next election, black assemblies took the initiative in their own hands to determine and define those issues which they felt were most important, speaking in a language that they clearly understood. Baraka proposed in these circumstances that the politics of cultural nationalism would win the fight for hegemony over the black community.

Baraka became convinced through the Newark Black Power experience that African Americans would have to fashion their own ideology in order to liberate themselves from racial oppression in America (Dyson 12). Emphasizing the importance of a black cultural revolution to win the minds of black people, Baraka insisted specifically on a psychological separation "away from assimilation or brainwashing or subjugation by the mind of the white nation" (Sollors 144). In this regard, he was concerned that too many black revolutionaries, who studied the classical political works of Marxism, were doing so uncritically. He charged that they

were so hypnotized by these European writings that they did not keep in mind the vastly different circumstances which distinguished the situation of the European working class from that of African Americans in the United States (Baraka “Black Nationalism...” 23). For Baraka, the black experience was the basis for the development of a new political ideology, and that experience had been a history of internal colonialism and of racial oppression distinct from class oppression (Marable and Greene 10). Therefore, he was convinced that the black revolutionary struggle in the United States was for national liberation from internal colonialism and that it was not a direct fight for socialism.

Nevertheless, Baraka increasingly in the 1970s proposed that the fight for the black freedom expanded in phases. The first phase was for national liberation, and the second phase was for social change, involving some form of socialism (Ladun 45). Furthermore, although Baraka argued that the Black Power experiments in Newark in the struggle against internal colonialism suggested a pattern for the national movement, the international dimensions of his politics became more pronounced as he rose to leadership in the national black political arena (Baraka, The National... 79). Baraka suggested three anti-colonial African models for the politics of cultural nationalism, combining national liberation and socialism.

The first model concerns Amilcar Cabral’s Partido Africano da Independencia da Guine e Cabo Verde (PAIGC)¹ which was leading the fight against Portuguese

¹ PAIGC stands for the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde in Portuguese.

colonialism in the West African territories of Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands. The second model is found in Sékou Toure's Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG)¹ in West Africa which had led a successful radical movement against French colonialism in the 1950s. The third model was that of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's Tanzanian African Nationalist Union (TANU) which led the independence initiative in East Africa (Cruse 24-25). Baraka came of age during the formative years of Third World independence, the decade between the 1949 Chinese Revolution and the 1959 Cuban revolution. These international developments left a permanent mark on Baraka's cultural nationalism.

In 1961, when Baraka was arrested at the United Nations, protesting the murder of Patrice Lumumba, African Americans actively supporting African liberation represented only a handful of the activists inspired by the independence movements in such African nations as the Congo, Egypt, Nigeria, and Guinea (Llorens, Ameer... 28). However, by 1970, black nationalism's African liberation support efforts represented the sentiments of millions of African Americans who grew up during the triumph of freedom movements from Tanganyika to Algeria. The path followed by Nyerere's TANU in Tanganyika had been peaceful, but the road taken by revolutionaries in Zanzibar and Algeria had been bloody. By the 1970s, most of the liberation movements in Africa were involved in a specific phase of armed warfare against white colonialism (Gibson 123). At that time, black nationalists led a

¹ PDG from the Democratic Party of Guinea in French.

determined national community in the support of African liberation movements, targeting South African domination in South-West Africa (Namibia), Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau, and white minority rule in both Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa (Franklin 148). These African liberation movements had defeated in 1975 Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, and subdued white minority rule in Zimbabwe (Helmreich 189). Inspired by African ideals of nation building and liberation, the central theme of Baraka's politics of cultural nationalism became black self-determination.

As 3,000 black people met in Atlanta, Georgia, on Labor Day in 1970 to establish the Congress of African People, both black self-determination and Pan-Africanism were central themes (Poinsett 66). While the Atlanta Pan-African summit was aimed at black people in the African Diaspora, the gathering also embraced other oppressed peoples in the spirit of the Bandung Conference. According to Arnold Pinkney, the first Congress of African People attracted delegates from around the world, including Afro-American integrationists and separationists, peoples of African descent from the Caribbean and South America, Africans from independent nations and colonies, oppressed minorities from other continents, including Australian aborigines, and observers from the Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Japanese communities (Pinkney 132). The purpose of the Congress was the establishment of unity among peoples of African descent throughout the world and the development of political, economic, and social institutions to liberate blacks from oppression.

The Congress of African People in Atlanta was the successor to the annual National Black Power Conferences between 1966 and 1968. The 1969 Black Power

Conference in Bermuda had been a disaster. The Burmese Government banned many of the militant leaders from attending the international gathering (Baraka, “The Congress...” 4). In the aftermath of that catastrophe, a number of Black Power leaders, particularly those associated with gathering support for Baraka in the 1970 Newark election, began discussing how to rescue those annual meetings (Marable and Greene 13). Learning from the preceding bad experience, this group decided that one of the weaknesses of the movement was that there was no organizational structure to follow through on the radical resolutions of those summits. Establishing a broad working federation of black nationalists was one of the central goals of the Congress of African People (CAP) in Atlanta.

The CAP marked a turning point in the black revolt in several regards. This summit witnessed the introduction of the leading black nationalists into the national black political community that was just taking shape (Baraka, Revolutionary Culture... 7). The Atlanta Congress also represented a temporary end to the political exclusion of black nationalists from the dynamics of the national black political arena. In line with this, that first Congress represented a considerable degree of unity in the black revolt, drawing both civil rights and black nationalist leaders (L. Brown 258). Moreover, the widespread unity of black nationalists at the Atlanta gathering was unprecedented (Baraka, African... 66). Finally, the Congress of African People established an important early step in the formation of a national black political community.

Considering the goal of establishing a federation of nationalists, the widespread unity of that political camp in Atlanta was encouraging (Pinkney 147). For the first time, that congress drew together such figures from the fragmented black nationalist camp as Malcolm X's widow, Betty Shabazz, the national representative of Elijah Muhammad, Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam, a spokesman for Stokely Carmichael, Howard Fuller (Owusu Sadaukai) of Malcolm X Liberation University and the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU), Imari Abubakari Obadele of the Republic of New Africa, and Baraka of the CFUN (Bush 262).

The Atlanta Congress was also encouraging because the black nationalists had never before attracted so many black elected officials and civil rights leaders to a Pan-African summit (Melvin 110). The range of participants included such black elected officials and political figures as gubernatorial candidate John Cashin of the National Democratic Party of Alabama, Julian Bond of the Georgia legislature, Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, and Mayor Kenneth Gibson of Newark, New Jersey. There was also the attendance of such civil rights leaders as Rev. Jesse Jackson of People United for Self-Help, Rev. Ralph Abernathy of the SCLC, and Whitney Young, Jr. of the National Urban League (Glaude 113). In fact, the list of international representatives included Roosevelt Douglas of the Organization of Black People's Union, addressing the problems of black people in Canada and the West Indies, Raymond Mbala, speaking for one of the liberation groups in Angola, Evelyn Kwanza, voicing the concerns of the people of Zimbabwe fighting the Rhodesian government, and Ambassador El Hajj Abdoulaye Toure, the Guinean representative to the United States (Gomes and Williams 229).

In a major departure from the traditional competition and rivaling of these factions in the black revolt, the Congress of African People called for working coalitions between black nationalist and civil rights organizations around concrete programs for the development of the black community. The Pan-African summit elected as its first chairman a 27-year-old Harvard instructor in Afro-American studies, Heyward Henry (Chrisman 4). Symbolizing the pivotal role that the Congress of African People would attempt to play as a bridge between the various wings of the black freedom movement, Heyward Henry warmly greeted Minister Louis Farrakhan and Whitney Young, holding their hands aloft in a gesture of unity (Crowe “Methodology...”15). This marked the beginning of a brief period of hegemony in the Black Revolt for the black cultural nationalists. During that period, the Congress of African People named the slogans, thus the banners read: “It’s Nation Time” (Baraka, African... 169).

Paradoxically, as Baraka’s CFUN publicly launched the Congress of African People, secretly his organization and Maulana Karenga’s US Organization had decimated their political alliance. Unfortunately, in order to lead a new phase of the Modern Black Convention Movement and to protect that black assembly from the warfare that had plunged the US Organization into the abyss, Baraka found it necessary to break with Karenga (S. Brown, The US... 46). As much as Baraka admired Karenga, he understood that the Modern Black Convention Movement was essential to the further development of the politics of cultural nationalism. The rupture between the Congress of African People and the US Organization remains obscure.

Taking into account the development of these facts, it is important to know that during the period leading up to the founding of the Congress of African People, Karenga was increasingly estranged from the new momentum. At the same time, Baraka was receiving indications that something had gone seriously wrong with the US Organization in Los Angeles (Deburg 275). There were reports that the war between the US Organization and the Black Panther Party had paralyzed the work of Karenga's group, leaving it more and more isolated from the black community. Even worse, there were stories that the strain of the constant bloodshed had impaired Karenga's judgment (S. Brown, Fighting... 134).

Former members of the US Organization began to arrive in Newark, declaring to Baraka that Karenga was losing his wits and that he was increasingly paranoid about police agents and was tormenting members of his own organization (Crowe "The National..." 16-17). The situation became increasingly tense. On the eve of the Congress of African People, Karenga sent orders to Baraka to abandon the summit. That order put Baraka in a precarious situation. Theoretically, Maulana Karenga was the ranking leader of the national Kawaida movement, and Karenga had promoted Baraka to the rank of imamu, or spiritual leader, of that structure in Newark, just as he had designated Imamu Sukumu in San Diego, California (S. Brown, Fighting... 148).

However, Baraka and CFUN had in fact developed considerable autonomy at the head of the Modern Black Convention Movement in Newark. That movement had dynamics of its own, and those dynamics had conducted a new group of leaders who

had no organizational allegiance to Karenga. So, Baraka had to choose between his loyalty to Karenga and his devotion to the Modern Black Convention Movement. Apparently, he did not want to make a choice. He believed in Karenga's doctrine and actively promoted the Seven Principles throughout the country, arguing that it was the ethical foundation for the politics of cultural nationalism (Baraka, Autobiography ...266). However, he disobeyed Karenga's direct order to boycott the summit meeting (Hutchinson 167), and that set the stage for a political and organizational break between the two foremost proponents of cultural nationalism.

At any rate, at the eve of the Congress, Karenga sent several of his men from Los Angeles to Atlanta to intimidate Baraka's leadership. Unexpectedly, Karenga's men carried briefcases apparently filled with firearms – briefcases with concealed weapons had become a wicked trademark of the US Organization (Bogues 171). That raised the possibility of another tragic shootout within the ranks of the Black Revolt, the probability that the chaos that had consumed the Black Power movement on the West Coast would spread to the East Coast. Fortunately, even after several confrontations, there was no bloodshed in Atlanta.

Although there was no shooting, behind the scenes Baraka called CFUN to gather in Atlanta to announce the formal split between his group and the US Organization (Baraka, New Era... 86). In the rift, the BCD leadership of Balozi Zayd Muhammad and Mfudishi Maasi stood with the Congress of African People (Glaude 124). The San Diego leader Imamu Sukumu also broke with Karenga, standing with the Congress. Two years later, at the Second International Congress of African People in San Diego, once again members of the US Organization arrived at the summit to

menace the new leadership (Llorens 65). Again, there were confrontations, and bloodshed was narrowly avoided. Yet, Baraka and Karenga shifted apart.

In 1970, Maulana Karenga and two other members of US were found guilty of torturing two women¹ who were once members of his organization (Wolfe 166). To make matters worse, Karenga's wife, Haiba Karenga, testified "that she heard screams coming from the garage where her husband and the co-defendants were holding the two women hostages" (S. Brown, The US... 78). However, there were a number of inconsistencies in the testimony, including the fact that initially Deborah Jones did not name Maulana Karenga in those charges until a grand jury theft charge pending against her was dismissed. Karenga maintained his innocence, and his attorney argued that the state had encouraged Deborah Jones to make false accusations against his client (Mulshine).

Nonetheless, such was the debacle of the US Organization in 1970. After several years in prison, Karenga made a remarkable comeback. The details of Baraka's political break with Karenga's US Organization remained obscure until the 1980s when the poet published the first edition of his autobiography. Although this was one of the strangest developments in the Black Revolt, Baraka did not allow that awesome personal and political setback to endanger the success of the Congress of African People in Atlanta (Nagueyalti 16). By 1970, the CFUN had developed more

¹ On May 9, 1970 Karenga initiated the torture session that led to his imprisonment. The torture session was described in the L.A. Times on May 14, 1971. "Karenga accused the two victims of trying to kill him by placing crystals in his food and water. When they denied it, allegedly they were beaten with an electrical cord and a hot soldering iron was put in Miss Davis' mouth and against her face. Police were told that one of Miss Jones' toes was placed in a small vise, which then was tightened by the men and one woman. The victims Deborah Jones and Gail Davis were whipped with an electrical cord and beaten with a karate baton." Karenga was convicted and was sentenced on Sept. 17, 1971 to serve one to ten years in prison. After being released from prison in 1975, here made himself as Maulana Ron Karenga.

than enough independence, confidence, and experience to lead a national movement.

In keeping with the new collective leadership of the Congress, the Pan-African gathering held eleven workshops to determine the character of black programs for the 1970s. These sessions were led by an impressive array of black intellectuals, namely, scholars, writers, and activists. These intellectuals coordinated the eleven workshops: religion by Rev. James Cones and Bill Land, history by John Henrik Clarke and Yosef Benjochannan, creativity by Larry Neal, education by Preston Wilcox, black technology by Ken Cave, community organization by Lou Gothard, law and justice by Raymond Brown, communications by Tony Brown and Lou House, economics by Robert S. Browne and Dunbar S. McLaurin, social organization by Bibi Amina Baraka, and political liberation by Amiri Baraka (Baraka, *The Beginning...* 56). These workshops were established as ongoing work councils, and in the national movement their leaders were charged with the implementation of key items in the resolutions which were the beginning of a "Black Agenda" for the 1970s (Baraka, *New Era...* 81). As the chair of the Political Liberation Work Council, Baraka began to play a new role in the development of a national black political community as a national spokesman for black nationalism.

With its new emphasis on Pan-Africanism, the Congress of African People (CAP) set the stage for the next developments, African Liberation Day (ALD) and the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). A generation of black political leaders forged its identity in the politics of black revolution and African liberation. It would become knowledgeable of the struggles against racism and colonialism in Southern Africa during the 1970s and assume what it considered its international

responsibility to end white minority rule (Bogues 122). The Congress of African People resolved to raise funds to send to the liberation forces fighting in Africa, and to help establish an African Liberation Front to work with the various national liberation fronts throughout Africa, the Caribbean, South and Central America as well as the U.S.A. (Baraka, The Congress... 11). To express its solidarity, the summit sent greetings to the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa and to the Non-Alignment Conference in Zambia (Baraka, African... 57).

The participants felt that without an effective black national political presence to influence foreign policy, the CAP could not realize its aims for African liberation. In line with the resolutions of the 1968 Black Power Conference in Philadelphia, the Atlanta Pan-African summit mandated the formation of a black political party (Baraka, Revolutionary Party... 73). The resolutions outlined the procedures necessary for party building. In the urban areas where there were large concentrations of black people, CAP resolved to work on black voter registration, to mobilize, organize and politicize the black community, to run black and Puerto Rican candidates, to make alliances with other people of color, and to establish Third World relations (Aikens 39). One of the first steps in this process laid the groundwork for the first National Black Political Convention at Gary, Indiana and the establishment of the National Black Assembly, the largest black pre-party formation in the history of the United States.

This Pan-African summit decided to federate the groups attending the National Black Power Conferences into a new organization, the Congress of African People. The summit committed itself to the development of a process of forging a common

political program, creating one umbrella political organization, the “prototype” for a black party, establishing a communications network for the movement, and pooling and increasing the various resources necessary for black liberation and Pan-Africanism (Baraka, Black People... 42). In line with this goal, the CAP resolved to either establish its offices in the black communities represented at the summit or “use existing community organizations as CAP oriented structures” (Baraka, “The Pan-African...” 26). There were, in fact, more than 200 local organizations represented at the summit. While at least forty cities were represented at the Atlanta Congress, the new organization planned to focus on about thirty urban areas with black population centers ranging from Newark (138,035), Pittsburgh (100,692), Gary (69,123), and Boston (63,165) to New York (1,087,931) and Chicago (812,647) (Baraka, “The Pan-African ...” 29).

The CAP galvanized many of the local leaders and organizations into a new generation of men and women who would become national leaders in the Modern Black Convention Movement (Glaude 198). In the 1970s, the CAP had an extensive national organization reaching at least 25 urban black concentrations, with a branch in San Diego led by Imamu Sukumu; one in Wilmington, Delaware, led by Mwanafunzi Rahsaan and Cheo Kamau Opio; another in Chicago, Illinois, founded by Mwalimu Haki Madhubuti (Don L. Lee). At least four in New Jersey – Camden, East Orange, Jersey City, and Newark – headed by Poppy Sharp and Weusi Msafiri, Balozi Zayd Muhammad, Ndugu Kabili, and Baraka respectively (Baraka, Strategy... 154). Four organizations were founded in New York State and led by Dalila Kudurain Albany, Cheo Simba in the Bronx, Bill Land in Manhattan, and the largest one by

Jitu Weusi in Brooklyn Largest one by Jitu Weusi in Brooklyn. (Anderson 21). Eventually Baraka was among those black intellectual activists who were determined to spread such kind of organizations through the USA attempting to reach a common objective: to establish a black united front and get full support of their grassroots community.

While the debate over the best path to black liberation was necessary, the new stance at the CAP insisted that a black united front was to be established for common defense against repression and for the development of community programs. The CAP commented that the continuation of the shooting war between revolutionary nationalists and cultural nationalists was discouraging and impermissible (Baraka, Revolutionary Culture... 125). The Political Liberation Workshop led by Baraka specifically called for an alliance between cultural nationalists and the Black Left:

In the case of the U.S.A. specifically the Congress should establish a Black National Liberation Front (BNLF), and set up a body to consolidate the Congress of African People with all the various black revolutionary movements in the U.S.A. including the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW), the Black Panther Party (BPP), and the Republic of New Africa” (African... 98).

Baraka asserted CFUN’s ideological influence over the youthful organization in his outline of the various positions within the black liberation movement (Hutchinson 112). His argument established the main political orientation for the new organization. Baraka insisted that black people had to fashion their own unique

ideological and political program because the situation in the United States, especially for African-Americans, was singular. He stressed that the United States was not China or nineteenth-century Russia, nor even Cuba or Vietnam (Keiser 89). America was the most highly industrialized nation ever to exist. It was a place where “the slaves ride in Cadillacs and worship their slave master’s image, as God” (Baraka, Toward... 64). Baraka was convinced that American power over Africans around the world be broken before the other colonial powers were completely destroyed. He kept reminding his fellow blacks that they were a different nation.

While the situation in the U.S. was distinct, Baraka did not want the black nationalists to ignore international developments. He instead believed that the African liberation movements had set important examples of nationality formation with their broad based united fronts against colonialism and their reorganization of national life in the liberated areas. He insisted again that:

Newark or New Ark, the nationalist sees as the creation of a base, as example, upon which one aspect of the entire black nation can be built. We will build schools or transform present curriculum to teach National Liberation. We will create agencies to teach community organizing, national and local politics, and send brothers all over the country to recreate the model. We will nationalize the city’s institutions as if it were liberated territory in Zimbabwe or Angola. There are nations of less than 300,000 people (Baraka, Raise... 163).

While calling for a common front with the different varieties of Black Nationalism, Baraka did not hesitate to sharply criticize the old nationalism and to re-interpret Garveyism according to the New Nationalism (Baraka, Revolutionary Culture... 145). He criticized both the program of a black Zionist return to Africa and the notion of an immediate seizure of five states in the South.

First he addressed his remarks to those in the workshop who insisted, as did the Republic of New Africa, on seizing several states in the Black Belt South believing that the South might be the great strategic battleground of the African Americans perhaps because it had the food and space to allow a people to survive, against great odds. But whatever blacks would do with themselves, actually, they would first organize. If the struggle was raised, and of such a nature that they would all go into the South, or that they migrated constantly because of the mounting pressures that forced people to that realization, then it would still be a raised level of political consciousness that permitted that move (Baraka, "The Practice..." 39). Pragmatically, Baraka stood against immediate repatriation: "We feel that Repatriation people must understand, and to a certain extent the Separation (meaning to remove to Africa or another part of the U.S.) people, that black people ain't going anywhere. It is very difficult, as you well know, to get them to go up the street to a meeting" (Baraka, Revolutionary Culture... 121).

Baraka wanted to shift the emphasis of the teachings of Marcus Garvey from the establishment of the land base in Africa by African-Americans to political and cultural solidarity with Pan-Africanism, African socialism, and the liberation movements (Baraka, African... 102). This was the way to end the domination and

humiliation of Africans all over the world. But “Back to Africa” for certain, in all the ways blacks could reestablish contact, since they understood their connection racially, historically, culturally, politically, and emotionally (Aikens 41). Garvey’s thought was best interpreted as a movement to recreate the power of the African state, to create Africa as a unified power base, to demand respect for black people the world over. This was Pan-Africanism because wherever blacks were, they had a commonality based on a common struggle.

Rather than repatriation to the Black Belt South or to the African continent, Baraka insisted on a black cultural revolution, one separating the hearts and minds of African-Americans from white hegemony. He outlined the case for revolutionary cultural nationalism by arguing that

In the meantime we must separate the mind, win the mind, wage the revolution to win the black man’s mind so we will begin to move together as a people conscious that we are a people, struggling for national liberation. Separation must come mentally before any physical movement can begin. Separation away from assimilation or brainwashing or subjugation by the mind of the white nation. And that separation from white control must be a prerequisite for the mental and emotion trip ‘Back to Africa,’ i.e. the realization that we are an African people, meaning Black of a common color, culture and consciousness. And whether we call ourselves Arabs, Saudis, Sudanese, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Kamites, Hamitic, we have only said Black a number of different ways (African... 117-18).

Unlike Marcus Garvey and the UNIA, the Congress of African People never considered and encouraged the move to Africa (Colston 235).

Increasingly, in discussions with the African liberation movements of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Zimbabwe, the African radicals asked if the Congress of African People was truly revolutionary and Socialist. In that international context, CAP began to take ideological issues more seriously, and ultimately it would re-assess its views on race and class in the struggle for black liberation. In these circumstances, the ideological and political dialogue between the cultural nationalists and the Black Left called for several of the leading cultural nationalist organizations to move rapidly to the Left (Genovese 58). At the head of the Modern Black Convention Movement, Baraka's organization would chart its own unique road from black nationalism through Pan-Africanism to socialism.

One major step in the radicalization of the Congress of African People was the development of the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). African Liberation Day reflected CAP's deepening involvement in international politics. The CAP resolutions condemning white colonialism in black Africa announced a new initiative among the top leaders of the black nationalist movement to strengthen their direct ties with the African liberation movements at the very same time that President Nixon increased his support of the white colonial regimes (Hamilton 11-12). By 1972, fifteen former State Department officials, including two under secretaries of state and 12 ambassadors of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, denounced President Richard Nixon for expanding contacts and communications with South Africa and

Rhodesia. They also condemned Nixon's increase in aid to stimulate trade with Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique, saying that Nixon's measures conveyed "a sense of collaboration" and that they retarded "the eventual independence of black Africans" (Baraka, Black People... 58).

By that time, the black nationalist community had already taken its own political initiative. The idea for African Liberation Day developed in the mind of Milwaukee-born Owusu Sadaukai (Howard Fuller) during the period between the 1970 Atlanta Congress of African People and the 1972 National Black Political Convention. Owusu Sadaukai had been closely associated with the SNCC and Stokely Carmichael. He followed Carmichael as he developed his emphasis on Pan-Africanism in the late 1960s, and at times acted as his official spokesman (Carson 253). Much of this work was done in association with an organization headquartered in North Carolina, the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU), which involved a number of SNCC veterans. Owusu Sadaukai developed extensive contacts with foundations, and when the emphasis of the Black Revolt changed to institutional development, he founded Malcolm X Liberation University in Greensboro, North Carolina (Essien-Udom 274).

In 1971 Owusu Sadaukai visited Africa, talking to leaders of the struggles against Portuguese colonialism in Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola (Woodard, The Making... 19). On his return to America, Sadaukai elaborated on plans for political education and community mobilization which would culminate in a national demonstration on May 25th, the anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (Genovese 175). By a January 1972 meeting

at Malcolm X Liberation University, Sadaukai's idea had become "African Liberation Day," to be held on the Saturday closest to May 25th, the day the Organization of African Unity had established for demonstrating international solidarity with African liberation struggles (Franklin 211). Thus, the planning for African Liberation Day began, targeting the efforts for May 27, 1972, a day on which African-Americans would demonstrate their support for the end of colonialism in Africa (Colston 258). Malcolm X Liberation University and the SOBU provided the beginning of a network for such a political statement, but Sadaukai wanted to enlist the support of the various black nationalists around the nation to make African Liberation Day (ALD) a major event. SOBU contacted the CAP leaders early in those talks, and the major Pan-Africanists agreed to the ALD 1972 their full support (Essien-Udom 189). The CAP used its political contacts to enlist support among black elected officials.

On May 25, 1972, black leaders met at Howard University in Washington, D.C., for two days before the African Liberation Day at the African American National Conference on Africa to hammer out a new approach to foreign policy. At that meeting the chairman of the Black Congressional Caucus, Louis Stokes of Ohio, told the delegates that "it is time to make America live up to her 200-year commitment to freedom and self-determination" (qtd in McDaniel and Balgopal 4). The chairman of the African-American National Conference was Michigan Representative Charles C. Diggs, Jr. who was also the head of a congressional sub-committee on Africa. The conference extended the African-American criticism of U.S. foreign policy in Africa, drawing special attention to President Nixon's diplomatic support of white minority

regimes in Southern Africa (Colston 272). Generally, the speakers criticized the United States, Britain and France for the support given to those white colonial rules. At the end of those sessions they decided to establish a new national organization, the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) (Betts 53). Before the birth of TansAfrica organization, the ALSC was one of the most important forces for African liberation in African-American history.

The ALSC was for the 1970s what the Council on African Affairs, led by Paul Robeson and W. E. B. Du Bois, had been in the 1940s. The ALSC mobilized an unprecedented degree of grassroots support for African liberation movements. Assembled by local branches of the ALSC, participants came from all over the United States (Lynch 12). Over 10,000 Afro-Americans demonstrated against Portuguese colonial oppression in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. They also called for majority rule in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa, and pledged financial and political support to the liberation movements in Southern Africa (Helmreich 98). One goal was to influence American policy toward Africa, and it was significant that Congressman Diggs not only agreed to the rally, but he promised to continue to fight for freedom and justice in Africa (Runcie 24). Nothing like this had happened since the days of the Council.

Black people from the Midwest, South and Northeast began to gather in Washington, D.C., early Saturday, May 27, 1972 for African Liberation Day (McDaniel and Balgopal 23). Generally, teenagers at the march wore African symbols. The youth organized by the Congress of African People were specifically dressed uniformly in black and green (Betts 56). The new branches of the CAP were

demonstrating the effectiveness of their organizational efforts by bringing large delegations of community people, including their teenage members.

As the CAP youth lined up city by city, the representation from Chicago, South Bend, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Wilmington, and Washington, D.C. was impressive (African... 134). Teenagers from Newark's African Free School had the honor of carrying the African Liberation Day banner at the head of the march. Other young people carried banners and signs saying: "Arm Yourself or Harm Yourself," and "Black People Must Unify." And some carried signs saying, "Africa for the Africans," and "We are An African People" (qtd in Hampton and Fayer 109).

Not to be outdone by the youth, on the frontline of the march was the revered elder, Queen Mother Moore, 74 years old, an activist in the movement since the days of Marcus Garvey in Harlem (Bermazohn 213). Also on the frontline were U.S. Delegate Walter Fauntroy of Washington, D.C., George Wiley of the National Welfare Rights Organization, humorist Dick Gregory of Chicago, Roy Innis of Harlem CORE, and poets Haki R. Madhubuti (Don L. Lee) and Baraka of the Congress of African People (African... 152). The march differed from recent demonstrations as well as from civil rights marches not only in its all-black composition, but in its strong black nationalist tone.

There were various estimates of the numbers of demonstrators at the first African Liberation Day in Washington, D.C. While the police estimate was somewhere between 8,000 to 10,000, the African Liberation Day Coordinating Committee consistently reported that some 30,000 marched on Washington, D.C., and that another 30,000 demonstrated at the other rallies in San Francisco, Toronto,

Dominica, Antigua and Grenada in the West Indies as well (Washington Post 9). The turnout far exceeded the 3,000 predicted by metropolitan police, but fell within the 10,000 to 15,000 persons predicted by organizers of the demonstration (Elbaum 154). In any event, the march on the nation's capitol was the largest black demonstration in recent Washington history to show black support for Africans who were struggling against European colonialism and to denounce United States policy in Africa. The march was considered the greatest moment for liberation in the history of black America because contrary to the civil rights protests, they had rallied in such numbers without support from the white news media.

The route of the demonstration was typical of that period of black mobilization and struggle. The organizers knew how to rally the community. Although the demonstration stopped before several of the official missions to bring attention to the African Liberation Support Committee's criticism of the U.S., Portugal and South Africa, for the most part it marched through the black community to convey its message to the people and to attract even greater numbers to the rally (Hine 314). Some of the marchers beat drums as they marched through the city, and the caravan was headed by a truck featuring players from Friendship House in Southeast Washington.

The parade ended with a gathering as thousands rallied on the grounds of Lumumba Square. Looking out over thousands of activists, the speakers expressed their determination as they voiced opposition to racism, colonialism and imperialism and called for revolution and independence (Bermazohn 224). The master of ceremonies, Washington's Walter Fauntroy introduced U.S. Representative, Charles

Diggs. Standing in front of a black nationalist flag, dressed in a purple dashiki, Charles Diggs told the gathering that, “We are sounding a warning that no longer will the movement for justice stop at the water’s edge” (Plummer 35).

SNCC veteran, Cleveland Sellers, read a message from Stokely Carmichael, who was out of the country, calling for African-Americans to take “a revolutionary posture” toward “colonialism and imperialism,” to found a black political party and to “totally free and unify Africa” (Warner 74). Meanwhile, the presence of the Black Panther Party at the African Liberation Day rally signaled a new period of unity among African-Americans. The Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party, Elaine Brown, called for unity and urged an end to divisions among blacks. Representing the Congress of African People, the gifted young poet Haki Madhubuti (Don L. Lee) read a moving Pan-African poem to the huge gathering and Baraka spoke at length about the need for the organization of a party for black liberation and African revolution, one strong enough to carry those struggles through to the end (Baraka, African... 177). Madhubuti and Baraka were very warmly received, but perhaps the most stirring words that day were delivered by the initiator of the whole project, Owusu Sadaukai.

The gathering held on to each word as Sadaukai reminded them of Frederick Douglass’s philosophy of reform:

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This

struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand (Douglass 197).

The rally reached a crescendo when thousands stood in unison, joining Sadaukai as he chanted the watchwords of the new period: “We are an African people” (Steady 198).

The African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) was launched on that note as one of the most important mass organizations in the U.S.A., and the most influential among African-Americans on U.S. foreign policy. There were annual African Liberation Days throughout the 1970s, but none would ever match the claim of 60,000 participants made for the 1972 activities (Helan and Oliveira 63). ALSC developed a diverse regional leadership, chaired internationally by Dawolu Gene Locke in Houston. The Caribbean section was chaired by Tim Hector, the South was led by Owusu Sadaukai in Durham, N.C., the Midwest was headed by Haki R. Madhubuti, and the East was directed by Imamu Baraka (Gooding 56). These regional leaders were members of the ALSC Executive Committee, along with such at large figures as Nelson Johnson and Abdul Alkalimat (75). Ironically, the ALSC, originally conceived to support the fight against white supremacy in Southern Africa, would have a profound impact on the black freedom movement in the U.S., pushing it increasingly to the Left.

While the emergence of ALSC placed foreign policy at the top of the developing black national political agenda, the establishment of the Black Women’s United Front signaled that African American women, particularly black nationalist women, demanded full equality in the black national political arena. The BWUF was

called for in July 1974 at the International African Women's Conference initiated by Bibi Amina Baraka and the Social Organization Council of the Congress of African People (Gomes and Williams 172). It was an historic meeting, coming on the heels of the May 1974 ALSC Conference in Washington, D.C., and the Sixth Pan-African Conference which took place in June 1974 in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania (Betts 179). Both redefined Pan-Africanism with socialism in mind.

The modern style of black cultural nationalism strategically based its strength on introducing one of the most neglected but effective elements: black women who, in such golden opportunity, were determined to fight for their rights and prove their significant impact in constructing a powerful MBCM (Steady 210). The combination of Pan-Africanism and socialism had already radicalized the Women's Division of the Congress of African People, which had been steeled in the struggle for gender equality beginning with the Committee For Unified New Ark (CFUN).

Paradoxically, while the CFUN was publicly endorsing the conservative notion that the submissiveness of black women was "natural," the Women's Division courageously launched inside the organization in 1971 a determined combat against the introduction of polygamous practices. As a stream of former US Organization members arrived in Newark to join the CFUN, secretly a few of them began to invoke the traditional African concepts of polygamy on the basis of extremely naïve understandings of Africa (Baraka, *Autobiography...* 289). Both Amina and Amiri Baraka denounced the introduction of this practice in the CFUN. He also warned that the women were revolutionary comrades deserving nothing less than full respect and that in that organization it was intolerable to treat women otherwise. Before long, a

few of the high-ranking former US members resigned, charging that Baraka was a “revisionist” of the doctrine (Baraka, Revolutionary Party... 208). That battle against polygamy became a protracted one as the CFUN became the political headquarters and exemplar for the national CAP organization, projecting a monogamous family ideal. As these tensions became both national and ideological, the battle against polygamy grew into the struggle against male chauvinism (Steady 214). All of that culminated in the more general fight for gender equality within both the Congress of African People and the Modern Black Convention Movement.

Ultimately, within the CAP, male chauvinism became an offense punishable by both denunciation and demotion. Those protracted struggles produced the women’s leadership that developed the ideas within the CAP for the 1974 Afrikan Women’s Conference (Rocker 74). Hundreds of blacks gathered in Newark to discuss the conditions for the liberation of black women. They talked about ways in which they might draw the broadest possible range of black women together: women in the work place and students in the schools, as well as mothers on welfare, those in prison, and even some in other women’s organizations (Steady 227). The delegates from some 28 states decided that a new organization was needed to deal with the concerns of black women on a consistent basis (Baraka, The National... 223).

The official task force established to put the new organization on its feet represented seven groups: the All African Peoples Revolutionary Party, National Welfare Rights Organization, Black Workers Congress, Pan-African Students of America, Youth Organization of Black Unity, Ethiopian Students, and the Congress

of African People (Harding 78). As a consequence of this long struggle, the BWUF saw light at a Detroit summit on January 25, 1975, attended by 500 women and men who expressed their determination to defeat what they thought were the triple barriers to the liberation of black women: racism, capitalism, and imperialism (Baraka, Strategy...19). Signaling the radical fervor of the black women mobilizing that gathering, the poster calling for the Detroit meeting declared its slogan: the “abolition of every possibility of oppression and exploitation” (Baraka, Autobiography... 358).

Nonetheless, these women faced some sobering ideological barriers to full equality. Indicative of the situation of black women in the freedom movement, the BWUF fought two initial battles. First, some black activists questioned the necessity of an independent organization led by black nationalist women. Second, even more activists disagreed with the proposal to make anti-sexism one of the political principles of the BWUF. By the Second Assembly of the BWUF in Atlanta, Georgia on October 25, 1975, the fledgling organization adopted three principles of unity: “Anti-Racism, Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Capitalism” (Solomon 122). Yet at that point, the principle of anti-sexism remained too controversial for adoption without risking a split in the young organization. To make matters even more complicated, the BWUF wanted to place its emphasis on the problems of working women (Warner 146). That conference assigned to the Detroit BWUF the responsibility to draft a detailed platform on anti-sexism (Steady 238). Thus, the Atlanta summit began an important debate about the merits of political work against sexism within the ranks of the black freedom movement.

In a major departure from past black nationalist practice, the BWUF decided to endorse the December 1975 National Fight Back Conference sponsored by the Marxist-Leninist organization, the October League (Solomon 175). They also decided to support the Defense Committee for Cheryl S. Todd and Dessie X. Woods, as a blow against the crime of raping black women. Ms. Woods was the black woman inmate who killed a prison guard to stop him from raping her. Defense committees sprang up all across the country. They decided that the emphasis on the right of a woman to self-defense, especially against rape, was of such importance that they made it into a national program of BWUF (Sindberg 14). The BWUF aimed to draw even more black women into the struggle for black liberation by addressing the issues that were of immediate concern. That Atlanta summit was followed by a number of assemblies in other cities. Local chapters, in some cases acting as regional centers, were established in the Bronx and Albany (New York), Newark (New Jersey), St. Louis (Missouri), Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), Detroit (Michigan), South Bend (Indiana), Washington, D.C., Columbia (South Carolina) and Baltimore (Maryland) (Bennett 157).

Raising the political consciousness of women and men about the triple oppression of black women was another concern of the BWUF. In their developing analysis, imperialism oppressed black women on the basis of their race, class, and gender. The BWUNF educational programs had an important impact on modern black nationalism. It reminded many nationalist leaders that in the nineteenth century black

nationalism stood in the vanguard of the fight for the political equality of black women. While women could not participate in much of the black convention movement, they played leading roles in the historic 1854 Cleveland black nationalist convention (Harding 185-86). Furthermore, leading cultural nationalists such as Amiri Baraka, Haki Madhubuti, and Maulana Karenga began to repudiate sexism and male chauvinism in Black America. By 1975 Maulana Karenga endorsed the defense of Joanne Little, who was on trial in Wake County, North Carolina in a case parallel to that of Dessie X (Solomon 147).

Woods insisted that actually the African American people were on trial: “We sit at the same defense table, hear the same lies the system has assembled to take her life and deny her right to defend herself against rape and all the psycho-cultural assumptions and violence it represents” (qtd in Rucker 89). As far as Karenga was concerned, the real issues in the Joanne Little case spoke “to the right of women everywhere to be free from sexual abuse, oppression and exploitation and it raised the question, and simultaneously reaffirm the right, of an oppressed people and each of its members to resist its oppression everywhere and on all levels of life and struggle” (Sindberg 28). In fact, Karenga’s argument for the support of Little, demonstrated the degree to which cultural nationalists took seriously the issues raised by black women in the struggle such as those in the BWUF:

We must do this because she is our sister in nation and struggle, because she is one of us, sharing the same history and oppression and because we know in awful and agonizing detail the history of our oppression and exploitation and the many ways it’s been executed, especially against our

sisters, mothers and daughters. It is thus a clear choice between the world of a sister against that of the system which oppresses and exploits us daily. There is no third choice; we either support our sister or the system, her truth or the organized and institutionalized lies of the oppressor (“Joanne... 37-38).

For Newark CAP, the recognition of the leadership of women was long overdue. In one sense, the BWUF was a new beginning for women in the CAP. They would be partners in struggle with black men and would no longer tolerate anything less than equal status in the Black Revolt (Bennett 214). They welcomed men in the meetings because they wanted progressive black men involved in the struggle to tolerate black women. They asked men for their cooperation but not for their permission in the fight for women’s equality (Steady 229). It was deduced that the mobilization of all the concerned sectors of black America around the issues of anti-sexism was essential to black nationality formation.

Amiri Baraka’s political enthusiasm was at the heart of those developments. His contribution and efforts to significant political projects such as the Congress of African People, the ALSC, the National Black Women’s United Front (NBWUF), and the National Black Political Assembly (NBPA), represented the latest articulation of black struggle for freedom and self-determination and organization of a united front to mobilize black people at what would be the capstone of Black Power Movement, the National Black Assembly (NBA) held in Gary, Indiana, in March 1972.

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CHAPTER SIX

The Urge for Black National Political Unity

The most prominent step in the process of forging modern black cultural nationalism was the National Black Political Convention (NBPC) that was held in Gary, Indiana, in 1972. The Gary Convention was the culmination of a number of processes unleashed by the tumult of the Black Revolt of the 1960s. These uprisings stirred all the basic social, economic and political segments of the black community to express their particular perspectives, concerns, and aspirations. That period witnessed the increased differentiation of African Americans and the formation of black organizations and caucuses in nearly every area of American life. One consequence of this broad and complex insurgency was that each social group left its special imprint on the Black Revolt, and this new portrait of African American diversity frustrated many black leaders.

In that particular situation, there would be no new national leadership linked to the masses until a national black political community developed. The Modern Black Convention Movement (MBCM) attempted to embrace the tension between diversity and unity within the national black community between 1972 and 1975 (Deburg 141). That social movement constructed its own democratic process of agenda building around the principle of proportional representation, voicing the numerous viewpoints within the black community and giving each perspective due weight in decision-making. The Gary Convention drew an estimated 1,800 black elected officials within an assembly estimated at somewhere between 8,000 to 12,000 black people (Morris

40). The new process of agenda building and the mass mobilization for the Gary Convention demonstrated the extent of the appeal of the MBCM.

At first, the most influential black elected officials and leaders of the civil rights establishment were reluctant to hold the National Black Political Assembly (NBPA) to determine a black political agenda for the 1972 Presidential elections. They instead preferred small and exclusive meetings of the black elite to establish themselves as the patronage referees for the emerging national black political community (Benjamin 86). With this vehicle they would bargain for political patronage with the Democratic Party. Thus, rather than attending the Black Leadership Unity Conference organized by the Congress of African People (CAP) at Howard University in June 1971 in Washington, D.C., Jesse Jackson called exclusive meetings in Chicago and Cleveland, involving Mayor Carl Stokes, Congressman John Conyers, and John Cashin (Sowell 212). These meetings undermined the Black Leadership Unity Conference which was attended by only two major political figures, Newark's Mayor Kenneth Gibson and the former New York State legislator, Basil Patterson (Dawson 73). Only two representatives attended, sitting in for the National Urban League (NUL) and a local chapter of the NAACP (Cashman 231). The participation of civil rights organizations was waning, too.

In response to this split in leadership, a number of the black nationalists were reluctant to pursue a black united front strategy for the 1972 national elections (Bynoe 78). A spirit of pessimism was very apparent in the meeting. However, in response to that pessimism, the CAP headed by Baraka initiated a mass political dynamic which led to the Gary Convention, drawing together black nationalists and black elected

officials. Several summit meetings were decisive in this initiative, particularly the Black Political Convention at The East in Brooklyn, New York, on July 4, 1971 (Jennings 87). The East was the popular black cultural and educational center established in Bedford-Stuyvesant by the controversial educator, Kasisi Jitu Weusi (formerly Les Campbell) (Smith 147) who had been a teacher in the hotly contested community controlled schools in New York.

The Convention at the East drew a significant assembly of black nationalists. The Washington, D.C. Black United Front sent Douglass Moore who defeated U.S. Representative Walter Fauntroy in their black convention election. Moore would go to the Gary Convention as the head of the important Washington delegation (Shank and Conant 208). Muhammad Ahmed (formerly Max Stanford)¹ who played a considerable role in the nationalist movement was sent to represent Philadelphia's African People's Party (APP) (Sowell 214). They came from such communities as Roxbury (Massachusetts), Brooklyn (Manhattan), Queens (the Bronx), and Syracuse, (New York), East Orange and Newark (New Jersey), Philadelphia and Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), Alexandria (Virginia), Washington, D.C., Durham (North Carolina), and Cleveland (Ohio) (Smith 189). For the most part, the meeting was attended by black political activists who wanted to formulate a strategy for 1972.

The conference represented a good opportunity for a gathering like the National Black Political Convention (NBPC) in 1972. Amiri Baraka was determined to dispel

¹ Ahmed Muhammad Ahmad was one of the leading historians and theoreticians of revolutionary black nationalism in the 1970s. He founded the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) which fused Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X with Marxist revolutionary thought. RAM was the only secular political organization that Malcolm X joined before his fateful trip to Mecca in 1964.

the pessimism that had surrounded the Washington summit and to regain the party-building momentum (Watts and Free 97). His new plan was not simply a matter of putting the black nationalist house in order but of establishing a national black political community for the purpose of advancing a stratagem for modernizing black nationalism and revitalizing African-American political culture, arguing that everything rested on training a new leadership and developing new strategy and tactics. The centerpiece of the East Conference was for the CAP a position paper developed by Baraka, "Strategy and Tactics of a Pan-African Nationalist Party," which provided an overview of his plans. Baraka gave priority to the importance of modernizing black nationalism and revitalizing black political culture (Baraka, The National... 89). He then proposed several immediate organizational and political priorities for African-Americans which were embodied in developing political cadre organizations, creating circles of operational unity with black elected officials and civil rights leaders, establishing a broad united front of black nationalists and Pan-Africanists on the regional and national levels, building an African Nationalist Party, organizing a national voter registration drive, and finally holding a national political convention and running their own black candidates in 1972.

Black nationalists, insisted Baraka, had to "run candidates from district leaders through to President," (African... 59) for several reasons. A Presidential campaign on a separate party line would help black nationalists run for public offices ranging from seats on local school boards to those in the U.S. Congress. Newark CAP was already making preparations for a new black congressional seat. Black nationalists

would initiate through this concept a legal challenge to New Jersey's political map (Morrison and Thomas 86). Baraka explained that blacks were forced to enter the race for president because it was the only way to qualify for an entire line on state wide tickets. Baraka also thought that running for president might attract some respected black political figures into the nationalist political camp. There were a number of such people discussing the possibility, ranging from Carol Stokes to Shirley Chisholm.

While Baraka proposed this stratagem, he was never uncritical of the purpose of some of these figures (Gill 175). More to the point, in his estimation of the black presidential hopefuls of 1972, Baraka insisted that some of these public figures were using a fake black presidential dynamic to mask their real attempts to establish themselves as national patronage referees. For this reason, Baraka urged that it was essential for the black nationalists to sincerely intervene in the 1972 political arena, so that black people would not mobilize themselves only to discover they had been betrayed (The National... 102). Taking the state maneuver of Alabama's John Cashin as an example of the tactics he was proposing for the 1972 national elections, Baraka pointed out that:

Just as John Cashin runs for Governor of Alabama not because he actually thinks that is accomplishable, but because by so doing he can provide the impetus to take control over the elective offices that the community actually can take and can control. And finally whatever we leave uninfluenced by Nationalism will be white controlled" (Strategy... 121).

Such a betrayal might result in demobilizing the black community with distrust for years to come.

Yet the heart of Baraka's argument was his third point that forcefully insisted on the political training of cadre which, he thought, was essential to the African American success in the political arena. Important to any movement blacks could make as a people, was the selection and training of the cadre "the committed, the dedicated, and those of us who move out of a clear sense of identity – African; Purpose – Restore Our People To Their Traditional Greatness; Direction – Black Nationalism" (Strategy... 123). These cadres were the agents for the cultural and political revitalization of African American people necessary, in CAP's vision of politics, to heal the historic wounds of white supremacy.

Placing these trained political activists at the center of his new strategy, Baraka contended that without such cadres forming an inner circle of politically conscious people, the movement for black liberation would be impossible to create. He described that inner circle by arguing that "If the so-called inner circle is confused like successive waves from some heavy weight's initial impact, the entire circumference of that dynamic will be equally weak" (Toward... 16). Placing his emphasis on the ethical reconstruction of the black nationalist, Baraka stressed these cadres who would have to be held to a higher code, "a value system superior to the one that enslaves our community" (A Black... 83). This is basically how the cadre could survive, emotionally, intellectually, or morally. Without this new code, black nationalists would not be able to continue to struggle for black liberation.

Baraka's ruthless self-criticism of the ideological and political weakness within the ranks of the black nationalists was second only to his harsh words for white opponents. He was especially critical of nationalists who were "drunk with the rhetoric of revolution" (Revolutionary Party... 175). He appeared more critical when he stressed that "we should not make any statements we cannot back up, in ways that our community can see and understand. Crackers killed in revolutionary sentences are walking around killing us in the real streets" (The Concept... 42). Instead of revolutionary rhetoric, black people wanted actual social changes in their lives. "We must learn to build houses, and how to acquire the land necessary to build houses," he advised blacks, "We can write revolutionary slogans in the lobbies of those buildings if we like, as part of our educational programs, but we must learn to build those buildings and get hold of the political power necessary to effect this dynamic, now" (Strategy... 139).

Sampling his own experience in Newark's urban social movement, Baraka believed that as far as the community was concerned, the most revolutionary Africans would be those who could deliver goods and services, build health centers, hospitals and housing, and those who could actually run and create schools, and transform the present educational process (Revolutionary Culture... 54). By 1971 the ideas of social change and these cadres ¹ were integral to Baraka's concept of revitalization:

¹ This emphasis on the cadre development was influenced by Baraka's reading of the writings of Maulana Karenga, Sekou Touré, and Mao Tse Tung.

We recreate ourselves as African Men in the last part of the twentieth century. We recreate ourselves as African Philosophers, African Historians, discussed a range of issues such as political empowerment, economic development, human resources, and communications. These sessions are African Politicians, African Economists, African Artists, African Soldiers, and African Scientists, not of any past era, not in any far away land, but here and now (Spirit... 81).

While the rhetoric of revitalization was important, the follow-through was decisive. After the East convention there were preparatory sessions at Howard University at which policy experts prepared the outline for the national black environmental development, international relations, rural development, and Agenda developed by the Gary Convention (Walters, Black... 56).

While the Washington heated gathering stressed the importance of building a black party and the Brooklyn Convention underscored the value of creating cadre, on the Labor Day of 1971, the Northeast Regional Conference of the CAP in Newark emphasized the strategic and practical significance of a national black political convention. Rather than specifically focusing attention on plans to build a black political party at the regional conference, the CAP highlighted the practical benefits of establishing a national political organization. When asked about working in the Democratic Party, Henry Heyward, a prominent member in the CAP, replied that “we are discussing the whole range of political options open to black people” (Morrison and Thomas 136). He focused the media attention away from talk of a break with the

Democratic Party and toward the discussion of a 1972 national political convention (Watts and Free 114).

The Northeast Regional CAP gathering of about a thousand black people used the political developments in Newark as a paradigm for Black Power. The 1,000 delegates from 15 states studied the anatomy of successful black political campaigns, including that of Mayor Kenneth A. Gibson of Newark as well as successful organizing techniques in 11 workshops (Lusane 67). Baraka explained that Newark would be used as a case study for the Black Power experiment focusing on such black united front organizations as the “Black Leadership Conference, an organization of divergent black community leaders who meet weekly to discuss city affairs with city officials” (Creating... 83). Baraka, chairman of the Committee for a Unified Newark which functioned as the CAP’s chapter, thought that these and other techniques which had worked successfully would be presented for study, analysis and modifications by each of the concerned workshops (The Concept... 75).

Building a broad black united front was more than an idea discussed in the workshops. It was an important feature of the Newark conference itself. CAP’s developing alliance with civil rights organizations drew the Urban League’s Eastern regional director, Alexander Allen who explained that the situation in the freedom movement had changed. There was a time when blacks felt that liberation could come with individual working to improve their own situations. But now blacks realized that liberation would come only on a group basis through joint strategies development (Walters 104). Consequently, the CAP had regained the momentum for building a black united front and sponsoring a broadly-based national black political convention.

Despite the success of these summit meetings, the influential political figures meeting with Jesse Jackson remained distant from this broader process of agenda building (Beitz and Washburn 142). Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary decided to intervene in this situation. Hatcher and Baraka had been working together, for some time, struggling for black political equality. In fact, Hatcher had intervened in Newark to support the 1969 black and Puerto Rican Political Convention, when it was under attack by local black politicians. Furthermore, Hatcher spoke at the Atlanta Congress of African People (Baraka, African... 64). Then, Hatcher and CAP leaders closed ranks in the struggle for proportional representation inside the Democratic Party, demanding a proportional share of the 1972 convention delegates and the \$6 million presidential campaign fund for black voter registration (Jennings 96).

Unity and momentum were brought into the summit that took place on September 24, 1971 in Northlake, Illinois. The Northlake Summit was called by Mayor Richard Hatcher to discuss a black strategy for 1972 (Nesbitt 156). The summit boasted an impressive list of co-sponsors: Charles Diggs, Coretta Scott King, Jesse Jackson, Julian Bond, Imamu Baraka and Willie Brown, the California State Representative (Self 121). In Manning Marable's assessment, the Northlake Conference was probably the only instance between 1965 and 1983 when representatives of virtually every major tendency of the black movement met together in the same place (Race... 137).

Key leaders from three sectors of the black community were in attendance: civil rights leaders, black politicians, and black nationalists. From the civil rights community, there were Andrew Young (SCLC), Vernon Jordan (Urban League), Rev.

Jesse Jackson (PUSH) and Coretta Scott King (Newman 47). From the ranks of those civil rights leaders who had become elected officials, there were such figures as Georgia State Representative Julian Bond (SNCC) and U.S. Delegate Walter Fauntroy (SCLC) (Walters 117). The leading black elected officials in attendance were U.S. Representatives Charles Diggs and John Conyers of Michigan, an Augustus Hawkins of California, as well as the host, Mayor Richard Hatcher (Beitz and Washburn 201). There were key political figures such as Barbara Jordan who was a Texas state legislator, Maynard Jackson who would become the mayor of Atlanta, and Percy Sutton, Malcolm X's attorney, who would become New York's Manhattan borough President (Nesbitt 178). Also represented was the National Welfare Rights Organization, by its leader, the former CORE activist, George Wiley (De Leon 451). Roy Innis spoke of both Harlem CORE and a number of black nationalists concerned with the busing issue. Then there were political experts such as James Gibson and Antonio Harrison (Newman 81). Meanwhile, the political agenda of the new nationalists were represented by Baraka and other CAP leaders.

Baraka provided the most detailed description of the process. He reported that there were a number of different perspectives at the parley and several specific strategies (Hard... 28). The content of the meeting was hopeful but confused. The main proposals advanced were Julian Bond's idea that black people should run as favorite sons from various states, so as to bring blocs of black delegates to the Democratic National Convention. Julian Bond stated very forcefully in his paper that a black party was not the answer at this time (Johnson 194). Percy Sutton advanced the idea of a black running for President of the United States "to nationalize

the black vote” and give the national black community greater bargaining power on consolidated demands (Baraka, “Toward...” 56). Before the Northlake Conference, that idea had been presented by U.S. Rep., John Conyers, and former Cleveland Mayor, Carl Stokes (Whittemore 245).

The most likely candidate for a black presidential strategy in 1972 would have been Brooklyn’s U.S. Representative Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman in the history of the U.S. Congress (Alexander 542). However, it became apparent by the end of 1971 that these politicians, most of whom were men, would not support her presidential candidacy. When Chisholm distanced herself from the Modern Black Convention Movement (MBCM), she lost that opportunity to press her position before the national black political community in 1972. Baraka advised Chisholm to attend the Gary Convention, but she showed no interest in any particular accountability to the MBCM (Davis 158).

In her own defense, Shirley Chisholm later said that even if she had had the time, she might not have attended the Gary Convention because of all the negative reports she had heard in regard to her Presidential candidacy (Chisholm 54). She based her argument on the point that she didn’t intend to present herself in front of a group of people who were just going to slash her right and left when she saw herself moving in an entirely different direction (Brill 91). She added that the fact of the matter was that many of them were very upset because they felt she should have come to them and discussed her potential candidacy before she went out there and made the announcement. But to her, the fact of the matter was again that black men were no different from white men or no different from yellow men or whatever color

they might be. She knew that they would not give support to her candidacy (Johnson 198). Although people had raised some money, she had some very good support among the female and the Hispanic population (Hampton and Fayer 220). Chisholm felt that some of the leaders at Gary would have mocked her bid for the Presidency. Although her distrust of black men was definitely justified, especially by her treatment in the Congressional Black Caucus, her decision not to attend the Gary Convention might suggest that she trusted the white men in the Democratic Party more than the black men in the NBPC (Brill 112).

In any case, for the nationalists, the Presidential candidate was not the central issue. Until late 1971, all of the black nationalist gatherings had stressed the priority of forming a party. They wanted an independent and, in some cases, revolutionary black political party. Nonetheless, at the Northlake Conference, the CAP maneuvered as it had at the Northeast Regional meeting by arguing instead for both the utility and the urgency of a National Black Convention (Baraka, Revolutionary Party... 196). Baraka had come to understand, after a series of public and private meetings, that the idea of a black political party was premature if they wanted the support of black elected officials in 1972 (Bennett 72). Yet, the CAP had developed a number of options that might lead to the creation of a black political party, and the political convention was at the top of that agenda.

Baraka expected the convention would try to bring “all the tribes of black people in America together” (Baraka, Hard... 70) to talk about political priorities and certainly about 1972, an American Presidential year that normally meant a lot to the national black community. Baraka also noticed that one of the most important tasks of

the convention was to define what kind of continuing priorities should be sounded for black people. He hoped that there would be some talk of a continuing mechanism and some structure upon which to build a permanent party, the absolute sine qua non of black political movement (Baraka, "Toward..." 58). In addition to this organizational dimension, Baraka thought that by pressing the immediate demands for black equality publicly to the Democratic Party, they would hasten the day when blacks left the ranks of the Democrats in numbers large enough to establish a broadly based black political party of their own (Spirit... 87). His other expectation would be the creation of some kind of third place in American politics with a goal to strategize for the election of black elected officials and to establish a black agenda.

Key to that strategy, Baraka aimed to have an unprecedented number of black leaders at all levels involved in dual tactics defined by fashioning a black agenda of demands on the outside and demanding concessions from the Democratic Party on the inside. He wanted black leaders to see the other face of the Democratic Party, the face that himself and Hatcher had seen in their struggle for proportionate representation at the 1972 Democratic National Convention (Bennett 85). But it was not an easy task for Baraka to reach his immediate goal and it would take a longer time without a national organization that would coordinate black demands and hold national leaders accountable in power negotiations.

A number of leaders at Northlake seemed receptive to Baraka's idea of a black political convention, but as was the case with earlier summits, the procedures for further discussion and implementation of that approach broke down soon after the meeting because there was no legitimate ongoing structure (Cashman 209). Actually,

the decisive summit meeting was the first National Conference of Black Elected Officials sponsored in November 1971 by the Congressional Black Caucus (Baraka, African... 97). A private meeting of key black leaders at that gathering established both the decision and the procedures for a black political convention.

The meeting that was held at Washington, D.C. on November 18-20, 1971, involved black elected officials at the municipal, county and state levels, from across the country. One panel discussion at that conference focused on a 1972 black strategy. The panelists included Richard Hatcher, Charles Diggs, Percy Sutton, Coretta Scott King, and Imamu Baraka (Morrison and Thomas 158). In addition to meeting of March 27, 1968 between King and Baraka, a few days later, Martin Luther King also met with Representative John Conyers and Mayor Richard Hatcher to develop a national political strategy (Walters 144). These same leaders had earlier joined with Stokely Carmichael, Floyd McKissick, Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Andrew Young, Hosea Williams, and Rev. Ralph David Abernathy in June 1968 to establish the National Committee of Inquiry to “evaluate the Presidential candidates” and make voting recommendations to the national black community (Hoffer 131-132).

Prepared with the assistance of Tony Harrison, a brilliant young Alabama political activist, Mrs. King’s position paper was entitled “The Transformation of the Civil Rights Movement into a Political Movement” (Baraka, “Toward...” 61). Baraka’s question that attracted the attention of many conferees concerned a black national strategy for the Presidential elections. In November 1971, the matter had gone beyond the exclusive control of the black establishment in its small private

meeting. It had become a mass question that would be either answered or tabled in public, not in private, and in either case black leaders would be held accountable.

At the Washington Conference which took place in November 1971, the development and execution of any unified black strategy for 1972 had been problematic (Reed 45). After almost a year of discussions with the black political establishment, not one binding decision had been made on this broader question. Even if workable plans were proposed and agreements were reached, there was no mechanism for carrying out decisions (Hutchinson 100). Without an organization, none of the leadership could be accountable. Worst of all, the public never knew the substance of those summit meetings. Baraka used that panel discussion to press once again the case for a political convention where issues could be debated openly and decided democratically (Baraka, New Era... 78). He was in favor of a unified strategy. Yet, this was clearly the last chance for the proposal because if black politicians were not involved, if they refused to enter these strategic discussions, then the black nationalists would call their own mini-convention without them.

Baraka's appetite for pragmatic political involvement grew. Empowered by Gibson's successful campaign in Newark, Baraka wanted to give substance to the symbolic unity displayed in the congress (Watts 185). Blacks, Baraka thought, were on the brink of a new political moment if only they could organize. During the 1970s, such optimism was widespread among black activists and political observers, much of which stemmed from their electoral success at the city and local levels. The victories of black mayoral candidates in Cleveland (1967), Gary (1967), and Newark (1970) seemed to be harbingers of a new day (Cashman 247). By 1970, twelve blacks were

serving in the U.S. House of Representatives (Shank and Conant 284), and in 1971, in hopes of maximizing their power through co-ordination they formed the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) (Bynoe 96).

Stimulated by these electoral successes, Baraka began talking with established black political figures about organizing a pre-election political gathering that would have two strategic objectives: (1) creating a national mechanism to register black votes and (2) providing blacks with a national organization to work with the two dominant American political parties (The Concept... 88). The possibility was discussed by Baraka who attended numerous meetings with various black political leaders (Baraka, Beginning... 157). The figures who were present at the Conference endorsed Baraka's idea of holding an independent black political convention in 1972.

Nonetheless, there was an impasse at the Washington conference at the very last moment. Shirley Chisholm decided to attack publicly the Congressional Black Caucus for "its lack of political nerve" (Chisholm 75). They had ignored her daring bid for the Democratic nomination. At a hectic plenary session, U.S. Representative Ron Dellums supported her criticism, also crying foul on the issue of gender discrimination (Gill 181). All this unfolded before an audience of hundreds of black elected officials drawn from across the United States. Baraka urged the Black Congressional Caucus to do something. He wisely noticed that if it could not agree to Chisholm's presidential maneuver, then what leadership would the Caucus provide for developing a Black Strategy for 1972? In a small conference room, away from the public discussion, key political figures including Richard Hatcher, Jesse Jackson, and Imamu Baraka met with Charles Diggs and the Black Congressional Caucus

(Poinsett, "Black..." 67). The Caucus had been backed into a corner. It had to show some leadership and some political backbone. Baraka pressed his case for a political convention again. This time, with the support of Diggs, Hatcher, and Jackson, he won the backing of the other leaders (Reed 84).

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) press release called for a national black political convention. In December, another summit of these black leaders decided for the convention site, Gary, Indiana, and for its triumvirate leadership: Richard Hatcher, Charles Diggs, and Imamu Baraka (Baraka, The National... 118). By January, a session of a blend of black intellectuals and political experts began drafting the framework for a national black agenda at Howard University. In a matter of weeks, thereafter, the massive political mobilization for the Gary Convention took its place in history (Baraka, Toward... 110). In the following weeks, the CAP became a national headquarters for organizers across the country as requests for information poured into Newark (Poinsett, It's Nation... 99). The significant call to the Gary Convention was distributed widely in black America. The defiance was to combine the black role as the vanguard in the fight for a new society. To accept that challenge was to adopt independent black politics. There could be no equivocation on that issue. It was a unique choice because white politics didn't and would never bring the changes African Americans needed. Galvanized by Gary's call, the mobilization that led to the national convention came from hundreds of community leaders and local black elected officials who had decided that the time had come for the black community to become the master of its own destiny.

Baraka was one of the black nationalists who played a crucial role in preparations for the National Black Political Convention (NBPC) scheduled in Gary for March 10-12, 1972. Baraka and the CAP managed to draw some 10,000 black people from across the country – including about 1,800 black elected officials – to the NBPC in Gary (Pierce 12). Among the key leaders were U.S. Representative Charles Diggs, Jr., Gary's Mayor Richard Hatcher, Jesse Jackson, and Black Panther leader, Bobby Seale (Baraka, Autobiography... 312). Yet, most convention officials acknowledged that Amiri Baraka, the 38-year-old Newark native's influence predominated during the convention (Delany 42). No one else had the organization or the strength that he had.

The grassroots was the mainstay of the Gary Convention. Black communities across the country organized themselves along new lines, and that process unleashed a significant tide of black political energy around the development of a national black political agenda. Agenda-building was a key element in the Modern Black Convention Movement (MBCM) (Jennings 178). Agenda-building stressed mutual respect among the various leaders of the black community for their different concerns, and emphasized the principle of proportional representation. But at a deeper level agenda-building meant that the priorities would come from below in the Modern Black Convention. This process struck a powerful blow at the hegemony of the two-party system in determining issues for the black community. The MBCM took the initiative out of the hands of the Democratic Party leadership and their brokers. Instead, that initiative would rest with grassroots leaders in the black community (Self

231). The agenda they would set was rooted in demands of the urban social movement that gripped big city politics.

Agenda-building supported by Baraka allowed those local demands to develop into a coherent national platform for social change and black development. This process unfolded in a matter of weeks in a number of states with large black urban concentrations (Chafe, Civilities... 189). In this regard, Baraka provided another window into the changing composition and mood of black leadership in those cities. No longer was the emphasis on the civility of the Negro establishment. This new leader spoke to white America in a harsh language born of the Black Revolt (Keiser 242). Not only did his political language change, but he attempted to foster independent black political institutions committed to black liberation. He was convinced of never transforming and democratizing the U.S. society by conforming the established rules of the political game. He understood that struggling for power required a variety of tools essential for dismantling the hierarchies of authority and institutions that oppressed black people (Creating... 102). That meant going well beyond the Democratic and Republican Parties.

Building upon the rich traditions of national black conventions and congresses of the past by constructing networks of activists was a necessary step forward into the future. Baraka suggested that “we now live in different times, and that we need to adjust our political message to be more acceptable to the mainstream” (The Concept... 93). He constantly reminded blacks that economic, social, and political conditions confronting black people at that time were not an aberration, but a deliberate consequence of the unequal and oppressive institutions of power and

privilege that define that mainstream.

Baraka strove to bring together a large representation of people in order to create a new form of politics along cooperative lines, with broad community involvement. This conference is remembered primarily for Baraka's "Black Manifesto" which put forward the National Black Political Agenda, a national program which sought an independent black politics striving toward changes in the realms of politics, economic development, international policy, communications, and other major issues including black unity through black vote (The National... 120). His priorities at Gary were to empower African Americans by increasing awareness, participation in the electoral process, and eventually voter turnout.

To achieve the engagement goal, Baraka's proposed an agenda aimed to ensuring voter empowerment by providing training, programmatic support to guarantee registration, protecting and promoting voters' constitutional rights, monitoring redistricting and census information, and assuring fair and proportional elected representation (Jennings 204). However, the composition of the membership of this movement reflected the increasing participation of black women. For instance, during the controversial New York Political Convention held in Brooklyn, 339 delegates were elected, half of them black women (Chafe, The Road... 112). The steering committee adopted Baraka's platform at the meeting, emphasizing black self-determination. The resolutions expressed concerns ranging from reparations to land use, education, and social welfare.

In addition to calling for quality public education and free higher education, Baraka proposed that the aid to dependent families for impoverished people be

established at a minimum of \$10,000 (African... 218). These proposals were to become the most important concern of the urban social movements at the Convention (Castells 67). In the day-to-day struggles in the community for economic relief, better schooling for black children, and decent housing for their families, black women at the grassroots were also the main force of the Modern Black Convention Movement.

Through more illustrations, the Essex County Black Political Convention in New Jersey was not without its own brand of controversy. While several hundred black people from Montclair, East Orange, and Newark met inside West Kinney Junior High School on the weekend of January 14-16, 1972, outside about fifteen black people registered their opposition to the movement (Terrell 142). The picketers were led by Reverend Horace P. Sharper, who expressed alarm at concessions won by community struggles from the Newark Board of Education, especially one which supported the symbols of black liberation in the public schools (Katznelson 33). The protest was specifically opposed to a resolution passed by the Newark School Board to fly black liberation flags at all schools and classrooms where blacks were in the majority and the city's decisions to rename some streets and schools for such black leaders as Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, Marcus Garvey, and Malcolm X (Sowell 221). In one case, Newark CAP had proposed that the city's Arts High School be renamed after John Coltrane, the musical genius, and in another case, one school after W. E. B. Du Bois, the intellectual titan (Castells 73). At the bottom of the protest was that group's outrage that Baraka and the Modern Black Convention Movement were successfully turning Newark into a showplace for black nationalism

and black liberation (91).

Although the black community had been excluded from the workings of the Essex County and Newark political machines, it participated en masse at the black assemblies convened in their own neighborhoods (Moore 81). It was evident that the poor in the black community would strongly press for demands and voice their own concerns when mobilized and organized. By sharing similar points with Baraka's strategy, the agenda at the Essex County Political Convention was, therefore, expected to emphasize the immediate and pressing issues of the community struggles in New Jersey's urban centers like police brutality, inequalities in health care, public education that lacked dignity and equality, and unequal economic and political arrangements between the black and Puerto Rican urban centers and the white suburbs.

Following the Baraka style, the Essex County Black Agenda proposed a number of alternatives to the urban crisis, most of which involved the reconstructing of power relations. It even supported his valuable claim that if the black community was to become the master of its own house, then it had to have control over urban renewal in terms of the funding and the redesign of urban spaces (Baraka, Creating... 110). For instance, in the housing workshop of that convention, the community – including tenant leaders, advocacy planners, construction workers, small contractors, and church developers – discussed the impact of the urban crisis and urban renewal on their communities, and developed some guidelines for alternative community developments: affordable housing, centers of culture, education, communications and commerce in their neighborhoods, and community-inspired career training and

economic development (Curvin 44).

The resolutions of such workshops were first gathered from a consensus of the views articulated by leaders like Baraka and then fashioned into agenda items dominated by a grassroots perspective. These agenda items were supposed to benefit the maximum number of black people in that area (Katznelson 89). They were from the bottom up, in the sense that the initiative remained in the hands of those representing the poor and working people in the immediate neighborhoods. When Baraka was asked about the effectiveness of these resolutions, he plainly responded that they would primarily benefit the community which had direct control over its work through mass meetings (Creating... 119).

Yet, as a native of Newark, Baraka noticed that the redefinition of urban space in Newark was more than a technical issue. It was an immensely political question. As people became involved in planning community spaces that were wholesome for their families, they began to challenge the role of the black community in the urban social order as the designated ghetto and slum (Shank and Conant 191). Baraka felt that if blacks had the power, they would not design their neighborhoods to be ghettos and slums, but rather community spaces where they could nurture their children. He wondered why there were no parks for their children in the Central Ward, why the city had built nothing but overcrowded high-rises with public housing funds, and wanted to know who owned the private property in the Central Ward. Such matters were at the heart of Newark's urban social movement (Drotning and South 32).

Baraka attempted to expand in the assembly the areas controlled by such community-based advocacy planning agencies as the PAC which seized the initiative from the Newark Housing Authority (NHA) for planning a nearly 100-acre urban renewal site (Keiser 237). The same process was applied to alternative schools, health centers, youth programs, and child care agencies. In other words, this agenda-building process meant changing the political discourse on local and national issues (Terrell 151). Instead of passively awaiting whatever political candidates might decide in the next election, Baraka was among those black leaders who urged the black assemblies to take the initiative in their own hands to determine and define issues they felt were most important, speaking in a language that they well understood.

The New Jersey State Black Political Convention drew delegations from such black communities as those in Jersey City, Elizabeth, Willingboro, Trenton, and Camden, as well as those from Essex County (Morrison and Thomas 185). After fashioning their local black agendas into a platform for the state, these community leaders and elected officials listened to Baraka who not only was instrumental in pulling together the Gary Convention but emphasized the importance of black people charting their own destiny in the political arena, free of control and coercion from powerful white interests (Hampton and Fayer 272). Like those in dozens of other states, these delegates were headed for Gary to announce their new leadership and direction to the world. In their plans to make the New Jersey delegation truly representative, the conventions raised funds so that no delegates would be passed over for financial reasons.

Fashioned at Gary, the national black agenda represented the will of hundreds of black communities. Agenda-building was a unique process of creating broad-based united fronts and representative leadership grounded in democratic political principles (Newman 94). The results were unprecedented for black politics. In North Carolina, grassroots organizations mobilized themselves for the Gary Convention. As Baraka recalled:

Our preparation to go to Gary for the convention was enormous. First of all, we had a statewide convention ourselves, in North Carolina. Thousands of people attended. And, of course we sent delegates from across the state of North Carolina to Gary. Some went by bus, some went by car, some went by plane. We drove up. And all the way up, we were thinking about what we were going to see when we arrived in Gary (The National... 134).

On another level too, like his fellow activists, Baraka reflected on the road to Gary and the course of the Black Revolt:

It was a good notion to go to Gary, Indiana, when we all knew we're going to a funeral. I had gotten tired of going to funerals. ...I have to emphasize King's assassination was a tragic blow to the movement. So four years later, March of '72, for us to be gathering up our wherewithal to go to Gary, Indiana – hey, that was a good shot in the arm for the movement. Because it meant that somehow the various forces, all these local struggles, survived that repression. Somehow we survived the grief that we all had from Dr. King's loss. And somehow we were making a statement that we

were going to pick up that baton and run with it again in the 1970s
(Revolutionary Culture... 152)

In the usually divisive setting of black politics, Baraka was politically optimistic about agenda-building which had produced a platform that would represent the culmination of months of feverish pre-convention organizing that would result in community and black nationalist groups coupling with politicians as convention delegates (L. Brown 133). With its emphasis on mutual respect and proportional representation, he expected that most perspectives in the black community found a place in the platform of this social movement.

However, not all perspectives were represented at the Gary Convention. The denunciation and boycott of the Gary Convention by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was ominous (Crowe, "Locating..." 10). The NAACP circulated a memo at the convention, directed especially to the large number of veteran NAACP members including emerging local leaders from the rural South in attendance that severely attacked the legitimacy of the convention. Although Gary's call was drafted by two important figures, U.S. Delegate Walter Fauntroy of Washington, D.C. and Illinois State Senator Richard Newhouse of Chicago, the NAACP argued that the draft preamble was rooted in the concept of separate nationhood for black Americans (Hoffer 174). NAACP members assumed that the convention called for withdrawal from the American political process on the theory that this was white politics. They also believed that it proclaimed the doctrine of racial superiority because it held that only persons of African descent were capable of spearheading movement toward desirable change in society (Baraka, Beginning...

192). Coming from the executive office of Roy Wilkins's assistant, Baraka charged that the black agenda was rooted in black nationalism and that its rhetoric was revolutionary and announced that the MBCM had strong opponents on the outside of the national gathering ("Black..." 25).

While the division between black nationalists and the civil rights establishment still carried considerable weight, the events triggered by the convention revealed that by 1972 the rift was no longer the central and exclusive conflict in the black national community. The foregoing discussion emphasized the common front which began to emerge in the Black Revolt as early as 1968 in the aftermath of King's assassination (Baraka, Hard... 65). That common front was increasingly evident in Baraka's politics of cultural nationalism since then. Furthermore, most of the authors of the Gary Convention Call, especially Walter Fauntroy and Richard Newhouse, were neither black nationalists nor revolutionaries (Banks 142). Considering that Walter Fauntroy, formerly King's assistant in SCLC, was the U.S. Delegate representing Washington, D.C., and that Richard Newhouse was a state senator representing Illinois, NAACP's warning could be viewed as simply an assailing at the convention (Broder 210).

At the national executive level of the NAACP, the tactic of alienating and isolating any currents of black political autonomy had been a pattern evident since the first stirrings of the black awakening, when the SNCC proposed the slogan "Black Power"(Benjamin 136). Rather than join in the process of discussions in the black national community, the NAACP chose to hold itself aloof and to isolate those

leading the black assembly by calling them separatists, extremists, and revolutionaries aiming to withdraw from the political process (Reynolds 117). Since most of the Gary delegates had been searching for new ways to achieve meaningful black equality, they resented that NAACP disturbing stand.

Considering the unprecedented number of black delegates at the 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami, including their great number at the Gary Convention and who also became delegates to the Miami Convention, the NAACP charge was misleading. Rather than leading to a withdrawal from the American political process, Gary led instead to a new intensity of struggle for black equality and proportional representation within the American political arena. Ironically, after the Gary Convention, Baraka and the CAP found themselves increasingly in situations in which they were defending the equal rights of the black community against white segregationist forces.

Understanding those paradoxes during that transitional period was key to developing an appreciation of the fabric of the new political culture unfolding in the MBCM. Baraka defined that culture as an instrument that “interwove the concerns for self-determination with those for equality, autonomy with proportional representation, and social rehabilitation with Cultural Revolution” (Revolutionary Culture... 164). As a result, the division between black nationalists and civil rights advocates would be applied with greater caution during that period. The distinctions drawn from the early 1960s were a hindrance for 1972 (Tate 221). The lines between forces in the freedom movement of the 1970s were increasingly more complex (Benston 56). While battles between integrationists and nationalists were beginning to wane, another one was

freshly developing. The struggle that was coming to the forefront at Gary was nominally between grassroots community leaders like Baraka and black elected officials. Specifically, a line emerged between, on the one hand, rising black leaders who were accountable to the group politics of the black community, and on the other hand, black public figures and professional politicians who were retreating to the habitual politics of individualism and brokerage. Baraka labeled that type of politician's stand as "conspiratorial behavior" ("The practice..." 40).

In contrast to the MBCM's search for a black agenda rooted in the politics of proportional representation, both broker and patron-client politics were based on the premise of a handful of blacks shaping either "personalized links with influential whites" or small group links with powerful interests within the black political arena for purposes as varied as those powerful concerns (Katznelson 72). Later, as Baraka attempted to implement the independent agenda developed at Gary, he realized that these black political brokers and clients increasingly represented a Trojan horse inside the walls of the insurgent black convention movement.

The Gary Convention opened on Friday, March 10, 1972 under the leadership of Imamu Baraka of the CAP, Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, and U.S. Representative Charles Diggs of the Congressional Black Caucus (Bogues 245). Thousands of black people arrived at Gary's West Side High School that weekend to hear a list of speakers including Bobby Seale, Chairman of the Black Panther Party, Minister Louis Farrakhan, of the Nation of Islam, U.S. Representative Walter Fauntroy, and Reverend Jesse Jackson (Blauner, "Blacks..." 57). Looking at the workings of the

convention, it was observed that Baraka was himself a movement with an effective organization. His people were simple in taste, yet dedicated and hard working (Crowe, "The National..." 14). In a real sense, they held together the staff work of the convention in places where committees need skills and long hours of devotion to tasks" (Nesbitt 188). The Congress of African People had built a strong national organization since its founding in 1970. Assembling its cadre from across the nation, the cultural nationalists were able to function as the backbone of the Gary Convention.

Delegates assembled by states so they could caucus around their floor tactics and state resolutions (Hampton and Fayer 284). Still, Baraka met people from other states and regions at the convention, exchanged information and experiences, and found that they shared common points. They were preoccupied with local issues of schools, housing, social welfare and health care (Fikenstaedt 39). Most delegates were enthusiastic to meet each other for the first time, and to begin to feel their collective strength as they created a national movement and the sense of a national political culture (Poinsett, "It's Nation..." 101).

When the delegates reached Gary, Indiana, the air was exceptionally tense. Baraka remembered "a sense of pride, just to be there. To know that we'd made it out of those local struggles around the country to come into this convention to express the aspirations of the people we left back home" (The Concept... 98). A New York Times reporter captured some of that mood. He found enthusiasm and a near-universal anxiousness to maintain a network or a conduit aimed at keeping the

geographically and philosophically diverse black communities in contact with one another (Lukas 3). Baraka spoke of the convention in historic terms, evoking meaning for black people that dated back to the enslavement of Africans (The Concept... 102). Representing the United Citizens Party of South Carolina, attorney John Roy Harper, the party's founder, called the convention "the most significant event to happen to black people since 1619 when our ancestors were first brought to the colonies as slaves" (Smith 211).

For Baraka, the development of a national autonomous political community was a key step in any real development of a new black politics. One black Republican state legislator, Michael K. Ross of Washington State, emphasized that "the importance to us ... is that we have a conduit to plug into to keep up with the national political thought of black people" ("Toward..." 70). Barbara Jordan, the influential Democratic Texas State senator, explained that building a black political community was also an important advance on the state level. "The ongoing structure," Jordan said, "will give blacks in Texas this vehicle for communicating with others" (Hampton and Fayer 296). Thus, both black Republicans and Democrats agreed that the development of a self-directed and structured African-American political community was important.

In line with the national convention's theme, "Unity without uniformity," the delegates represented much of the breadth of the Black Revolt. Baraka stated that the diversity and intensity of that assembly was striking (New Era... 125). It was an incredible sight to behold. There was that sense of these delegates who had come

together as a people, and a warm feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood that Baraka was not sure they had been able to duplicate since. But he was certain that people were there about serious matter, and saw it as a meeting that would have a long-term, long-range impact on the lives of black Americans (Self 142). The diversity of attitudes at the convention was reflected in the wide variations in the appearance of the delegates (Bogues 251). But the leaders were confident that the sessions would achieve their goal – defined by Baraka as the unification of the black people.

That diversity was not limited to the Republican and Democratic state representatives already mentioned. It embraced black Democrats and Republicans at the national level. In addition to Democratic U.S. Representative John Conyers, Ronald Dellums, and Charles Diggs, at least two prominent black Republican members in the Nixon Administration attended the convention: Robert Brown and Samuel C. Jackson (Adler and Colburn 39). In his comments to the press, Robert Brown, a Nixon aide, toyed with the notion that an autonomous black vote might be used to the Republicans' advantage. He told news media that it did not appear that blacks "would put all their eggs in one basket [reference to the Democratic Party] this year" (R. Brown). But Brown was not the most prominent Republican at the convention. Also attending the Gary Summit was the highest ranking black official in the Nixon Administration, the General Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Samuel C. Jackson who served as a Platform Committee Chairman of the convention. When the press reached him, he boasted that "there are black Republicans on each committee" (Thompson 72).

The unification and mobilization of the national black community had immediate political implications which were cast in a more independent light by U.S. Representative Charles Diggs. He was one of the black politicians who strongly supported the belief that if the white power structures showed new interest in black politics, it was because of the recognition of the impact of the convention (Tate 172). The major political forces and personalities had already provided wide evidence that from the White House to various statehouses and courthouses around the country they were well aware of the profound implications of this movement and were uncomfortable about it (Adler and Colburn 51). They obviously saw this measure as a new touchstone for approval in the political arena. Congressman Diggs clearly lacked no enthusiasm for the Modern Black Convention Movement. As a founder of the Congressional Black Caucus and one of the three conveners of the Gary Summit, Diggs was selected to chair the crucial general sessions the first day of the National Black Political Convention (Bogues 264).

However, a major problem developed with Diggs as a leader because he was acquainted with neither the grassroots language of that new political culture nor its insurgent sense of order. The Black Revolt had generated its own leadership, a new generation that had emerged out of the street-fighting and community struggles of urban black America (Smith 238). They spoke its language and understood its grassroots sense of order in the movement. With Diggs at the helm, the situation became tense as the number of black people attending the assembly reached to estimates soared from 4,000 counted early Friday to estimates ranging from 10,000 to 12,000 on Saturday (Reynolds 243). Baraka remarked that anyone facing that

massive gathering would have had a problem of maintaining order, but during those hectic Saturday plenary sessions, Diggs added to the obvious difficulties of the new assemblage by infuriating leader after leader, state by state, with his style of leadership (Morrison and Thomas 303).

One problem was that Diggs attempted to apply Robert's Rules of Order in a heavy-handed fashion, inappropriate to the grassroots dynamics of the Modern Black Convention Movement. On the surface, people were angered whenever Diggs rather abruptly cut off their elected state leaders who were struggling to formulate their presentations and floor motions. At one point, Diggs misread a voice vote at the end of a long discussion, and the mood of the assembly turned bad (Reynolds 247). The deeper problem reported by Baraka, however, was that Diggs could sense only anarchy looking at that huge assembly, and that he failed to give community, municipal, county and state leadership due respect (Thompson 85). The heart of the unity built in the mobilization for Gary was mutual consideration. A number of states were threatening to leave Gary before the critical plenary. Baraka worried that if delegates had left en masse before the session's closing at which they established a new organization, the NBA would be known as the nadir rather than the zenith of black nationalism.

The burning issue of a black political party, raised by Mayor Richard Hatcher and Jesse Jackson, held most people's attention. The attendance at the convention reached its high point, and every speaker was emboldened by that huge national black assembly. Baraka remembered the event:

That morning I still had some concern that not very many people would show up. Well, the truly wonderful thing was when I got to the hall, and came from behind the stage and out onto the platform, I saw a veritable sea of faces. It was probably one of the most glorious moments of my life when I walked out and saw all these black people of every color, every hue, and every shade (New Era... 134).

The vitality of the unprecedented grassroots mobilization had charged the atmosphere. The program included such legendary leaders as Bobby Seale of the BPP. Seale was warmly received and many were glad that he had survived the police repression that had slaughtered some of the best leaders of that generation. The murder of Fred Hampton by the Chicago police was in the forefront of everyone's mind (Hampton and Fayer 302). The controversy that evening was not generated by the BPP, but rather by the burning questions raised by Reverend Jesse Jackson and Mayor Richard Hatcher.

In light of Mayor Richard Hatcher's struggles for equality inside the national Democratic Party, the militant tone in his speech was not surprising. Hatcher had argued for black equality using the principle of proportional representation inside the party. If blacks were 20 percent of the delegates to the national Democratic vote in 1968, then they deserved 20 percent convention and of its resources in 1972 (Franklin 263). Because of the pressures applied to the Democratic Party by a new generation of maverick black Democrats, the party conceded to increase the number of black delegates at its 1972 National Convention in Miami and to select Yvonne Braithwaite

Burke as the convention's co-chair (Hutchinson 120). Hatcher symbolized the political vitality and black pride of his generation.

Supporting part of Mayor Hatcher's policy, Baraka got involved in this important event by voicing the frustrations of progressive black elected officials who were trying to change the conditions in America's major cities during the nation's worst urban crisis and receiving very little help from national leaders during the Nixon years. The black assembly roared during Baraka's keynote address when he declared that blacks demanded the eradication of heroin from the ghetto, now eating away the vitals of black youth. He insisted that black people knew that white society would never tolerate it "in such epidemic proportions in suburbia" (Crowe, "Methodology..." 12). He found total support from the assembly which was listening to his speech in which he declared:

This convention signals the end of hip-pocket politics. We ain't in nobody's hip pocket no more. We say to the two American political parties this is their last chance. They have had too many already. These are not idle threats. Only senile fools would think so. The choice is theirs. I, for one, am willing to give the two major political parties one more chance in the year 1972. But if they fail us, a not unlikely prospect, we must then seriously probe the possibility of a third party movement in this country (Beginning... 198).

However, Baraka opposed Hatcher's suggestion of an alliance that included white people. Baraka was sure that after centuries of hostility, conflict, manipulation, and betrayal, many black people were suspicious of white allies. There was great

anticipation as Hatcher explained that a third party movement would take from the Democrats not only African Americans, but other peoples of color – the Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, the Native Americans, and the Asian-Americans as well (McCartney 258). Yet, siding with Baraka's opposing view, the assembly offered Hatcher a chorus of "No's" rejecting his suggestion that "we shall also take with us the best of white America" (Reed 91).

Speaking after Mayor Hatcher, Reverend Jesse Jackson sensed the nationalist mood of the assembly on this issue and took the challenge a step further with his remarks on a third party movement. Since 1970 it had been evident that in some ways Jackson was moving closer to the black nationalist camp. An eye-witness to the vitality and mobilizing power of Baraka's politics of cultural nationalism, Jackson had been prominently involved both in the Pan-Africanist Atlanta Congress of African People and in the Newark elections where he allied himself with Baraka and the Committee For A Unified NewArk (Strategy... 145). Jackson was involved in 1971 in a number of strategic meetings that looked at the possibility of an independent, black third party (Poinsett, "Black..." 68).

Jesse Jackson opened the address with his usual greeting, borrowed from the New Ark, by asking "What time is it?" and in response the assembly replied, "It's Nation Time!" In retrospect he remembered that he had drawn much of the strength of "Nation Time" from a poem written by Amiri Baraka (Hampton and Fayer 310). The sense of people saying "'what's happening?'" , the answer was "it's Nation Time; it's time to come together. It's time to organize politically. ...It's time for blacks to enter into the equation, it is indeed, whether you're in California or Mississippi, it is Nation

Time” (Beitz and Washburn 214). Jackson insisted on the formation of a black political party (Poinsett, “It’s Nation...” 103). He argued that nationhood was the politics of multiple options and one of those options was the creation of a black political party (Hampton and Fayer 318). He explained that without the option of a black political party, blacks were doomed to remain in the grip of the Democratic Party and in the rumble seat of the Republican Party (Poinsett, “It’s Nation...” 105).

The difference between the stands taken by Mayor Hatcher and Rev. Jackson toward the Democratic Party heated up the debate on the floor of the convention, and it also drew a great deal of media attention. The media reported that this encounter between Jackson and Hatcher was the main threat to unity at the convention. The speeches certainly generated a great deal of controversy. But that evening Jackson played down the differences that emerged. Jackson endorsed George McGovern as the Democratic candidate for president of the United States within weeks (Hampton and Fayer 331). However, the real threat to the unity and success of the assembly went undetected by the media. That was the immediate threat that delegates, insulted by Congressman Charles Diggs at the plenary session, would leave en masse for home, and boycott the decisive last sessions (Jennings 209). For Baraka, that prospect spelled disaster. Without an organizational structure, legitimized by the political convention, no new mass movement would be initiated.

Baraka attempted to build a working agenda in the state caucuses. He was making necessary assurances to each state that its most important agenda items would be heard in the limited time that was left. Alabama was the most hectic caucus that Baraka approached. At one point during the negotiations with the Alabama caucus, in

a provocative move, John Cashin accused Baraka of being an “agent” for the Republican Party (Strategy... 152). Baraka was understandably livid. Nevertheless, by working at it, the CAP found enough common ground for solutions to most of the procedural difficulties that had frustrated that plenary session. The media, unaware of that unrelenting work, would focus exclusively on the forcefulness of Baraka’s personality (Barsamian 14). In the following meeting CAP leaders met with more than twenty nationally known political figures in special sessions to further refine the adequate procedures, so that they could air the pressing issues brought by state caucuses from various regions of the nation.

Baraka was the chairman of that tumultuous plenary session. Major political leaders had failed to calm the uncompromising minds, and now they passed the baton on to a prophetic poet to move the agenda. Because of the mistakes during the preceding session, a two-day agenda of work had to be packed into one (watts and Free 133). But as the rhythm of the sessions began, and it seemed that the evening’s work had paid off, Baraka came to life in the role of parliamentarian (Self 147). With a new surge of energy from the massive assembly of black people, he sped up the proceedings by keeping controversies within the state caucuses rather than on the general floor, which would have tied up the flow of the plenary sessions.

Reporters who had not covered the development of the Modern Black Convention Movement were not used to Baraka in this role. They were also surprised by the language of the new political culture (McCartney 341). The reporters often felt they had to assume the role of translators between black culture and white America:

Mr. Baraka, who was wearing a Kaunda suit, spoke often in an impassioned manner and moved easily from the language of the Parliamentarian to that of the urban slums. He often delighted his listeners, especially during tense periods, with colloquialisms. At one point he found it difficult to end a five minute recess. He told the group, 'Even for bloods.' Bloods is often used as a synonym for blacks among black people (Hutchinson 146).

The media generally noted that Baraka had emerged as the leader of this insurgent black united front. It was reported that many in the assembly believed that Baraka's handling of himself and the convention could project him as the new black folk hero. His private self came out. He laughed and joked at news conferences and while chairing the meeting. He dropped the stern, serious expression that most Americans associated with him. He seemed relaxed and worked tirelessly with blacks of political persuasions ranging from the NAACP to the ultra-nationalist (L. Brown 138).

However, those involved in the Modern Black Convention Movement between 1968 and 1972, were not surprised by Baraka's leadership at the Gary Convention. Both civil rights and nationalists figures had their personal vision of Baraka in this role (Thompson 122). Florence Tate, a black nationalist from Washington, remarked that "this isn't a new Baraka. It is just another stage of his development. From LeRoi Jones in the Village and Harlem, to the name change and to Newark, he is merely catching black people where they are, rather than imposing his ideology" (qtd in Deleon 453). Her analysis of Baraka's tactics was perspective. She did not think as some other nationalists did, that Baraka had compromised himself (461).

He was moving to help black people to get into the system so they could realize that once they got in, they would see that it was no good for them.

By opposition to the insights of the national office of the NAACP which condemned the Gary Convention before hand, many civil rights figures praised Baraka's politics of cultural nationalism (Adler and Colburn 51). When Baraka gave up trying to explain black problems to whites through his activities and writings, he turned to a black nationalist approach and was consistently for black unity through the system. According to Reverend Albert Sampson of Chicago, a former aide to Martin Luther King, "what white America does not understand is that Baraka does not want to control anyone. ...He is like Shakespeare. He wants to write the scenario. But he is not interested in acting in the play, he wants to move on" (qtd in Dawson 104).

Baraka's leadership at Gary was part of the assembly's statement of unprecedented unity. A number of civil rights leaders, including Coretta Scott King, raised their clenched fists in a Black Power salute during the black national anthem and joined the assembly as it roared, "It's Nation Time!" (Smith 220). Although Coretta King had met Malcolm X's widow, Betty Shabazz, before that occasion, she remembered that they had never spent as much time together as at the Gary Convention:

I think the fact that we were there together, at least presented some semblance of unity. I think that sent a message to...the American people – black people and white people alike. ...I think it was a very forward step to bring the black community and black leadership together in a kind of

family relationship. ... I don't think we've attempted anything since then of that magnitude" (qtd in Hampton and Fayer 334).

Betty Shabazz felt pleased that the organizers had the correct sensibility to have the conference and felt that it was motivating when people came together and discussed their own agenda (Jennings 68). Although some critics thought that the Gary Convention failed because it had not established a third political party, Betty Shabazz rejected the idea of failure because blacks came together and crystallized their thinking at the specific time (Watts 195).

Baraka convinced the convention to accept a proposal to create an ongoing structure, naming fifty state chairs and another from the District of Columbia as a steering committee to see that the plans growing out of the convention were implemented ("Toward..." 75). The steering committee would fashion a new national organization within weeks, the National Black Political Assembly (NBPA), which most members shortened to the National Black Assembly (NBA). This assembly generated a national black agenda, a fifty-five page document that changed the political discourse for the black community on a number of local, regional and national concerns (Self 157). Changing that discourse was a major breach in the hegemony of the two-party system over black politics. Knowing the history of candidates taking black votes for granted, the black assembly aimed for accountability (Nesbitt 192). As one of the essential NBA initiators, Baraka favored a black agenda which contained model pledges that black communities across the nation would use in the political arena, seeking to make the elected officials accountable to the black

community (Lusane 173). Hence, the commitment for black candidates required a candidate seeking the approval of the MBCM to make the following pledge:

As I campaign, and if I am elected, I will conduct the daily affairs and decision making of my activity, and / or office, so as to reflect the actual, explicit desires and concerns of the black community beyond question. In this manner I will constantly act out my accountability to the manifest interests of the black community, as revealed, at present, through the National Black Political Convention and whatever instrument(s) this Convention will establish as a means of follow-through. (Baraka, Strategy... 156)

The national concerns were divided into seven basic areas: economics, human development, communications, rural development, environmental protection, political empowerment, and international policy (Harding 230).

First, Baraka insisted that the economic impoverishment of the community in America was clearly traceable to the historic enslavement of black people and to the racist discrimination to which they had been subjected since their so-called emancipation (Black People... 98). Indeed, much of the unprecedented economic wealth and power of American capitalism was obviously built upon the exploitation of black people (Bailey and Flores 136). He called for a series of reform measures at Gary such as reparations in the form of land, capital and cash, the establishment of a black united fund, the institution of a “buy black” campaign combined with a national black consumer protection commission, the founding of parallel black unions whenever there were racist unions, the application of pressure on white churches,

corporations and institutions to make meaningful investments in black communities, and finally the exploration of alternative forms of economic organization and development of a system that promoted self-reliance, cooperative economics, and people ownership and control of the means of production and distribution of goods (Mier 182). All those proposals were practically backed by the agenda which emphasized that there would be no full economic development for blacks without radical transformation of the economic system which had so clearly exploited blacks for so many years.

Second, Baraka insisted that in every phase of black history in America, the human development of the black community was seriously impeded and that the black community did not control the instruments and institutions of its social, cultural and educational development (Poinsett, "It's Nation..." 136). Baraka proclaimed "We have been – and are now- a colony, living in the midst of a society committed to values other than the development of the human spirit" (qtd in Bailey and Flores 138).

Third, Baraka gave communications a great deal of consideration. He spoke of the crucial role of black-controlled media:

From the beginning, those who enslaved us understood that by controlling communications they could control our minds. Over the years, as the white communications forces continued to tell the world lies about us, the black newspaper became our primary agent of communications. From its inception in 1827, it kept us informed about ourselves, because we owned it" (Black People... 109).

With such concerns in mind, Baraka motivated the assembly to struggle for the control of television and radio outlets (Poinsett, "Black..." 170). Of the approximately 355 black-programmed radio stations in America, 345 were owned by whites, some of whom became millionaires through the exploitation of the black public. At this stage, there were no black-owned television stations in the country (Mier 188). The agenda aimed to make sure that no cable television came into black communities unless they controlled it.

Fourth, Baraka brought to debate the problems of the South. He depicted the gloomy picture of how rural blacks had been historically subjected to the lash of Southern oppression and terror (Newman 99). They lived under a political and economic system which limited rights of political and economic participation, and circumscribed their capacity for growth and development. He protested that government policy and practice had historically sought to repress blacks' self-determination, manage and control their rate of progress, and often deny their very existence ("Black..." 27). Their material environment was characterized by the worst the American social system had to offer (Gilroy 174). Similar to the powerless urban ghettos, Baraka observed that black rural communities housing was poor and structurally unsound, and controlled none of the housing production process. They were tenants rather than owners. Even the land they toiled for centuries had seldom been theirs to own, control, or pass on to their heirs. When health services were available, they were of low quality, high cost and outside the control of black communities (Drotning and South 41).

Fifth, Baraka set the pace for the issues of environmental racism. The critical impact of the environmental pollutants – noise, air, solid waste, sewage, rodents and pests, and lead poisoning – on black inner-city residents had not yet been fully recognized (Smith 226). So far, the major thrust of the ecology movement had been directed toward environmental issues that did not adequately protect the health and life of black urban dwellers (Tate 228). According to the Baraka, the major consequence of the present policies and practices of industrial plants, slumlords, and governmental agencies was the powerful pollute, while the powerless suffered the atrocities of the pollution.

Sixth, the foreign policy of the United States was a key to Baraka's concerns on international policy and black people at the Gary Convention. The assembly's global interests were well understood through Baraka's belief that because the history and culture of black people were fundamentally related to their African birthright (Revolutionary Culture... 187). He was deeply concerned about the movement of colonized African countries from subjugation to independence and from neo-colonized states to fully independent ones (Bailey and Flores 198). While he attacked Western imperialism (Walters and Smith 57), headed by the U.S. for its policies on the African continent in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, Baraka also criticized it in Vietnam, the Middle East, the Caribbean and other places in the Third and Pan-African World.

Seventh, Baraka pointed out that none of these areas of concern could be changed without organization, mobilization and political power. Taking an historical perspective, he declared that the bondage of black people in America was sanctioned

and perpetuated by the American political system – for the American political system was one of politics dedicated to the preservation of white power (Smith 231). For Baraka the suffering of black people was the result of the workings of the American system. Baraka then expected that the political agenda was to transcend this system (Reynolds 252). Its duty was to speak boldly and without reservation to the problems of black people in the 1970s. He urged that the National Black Political Convention (NBPC) should create a structure to be called the National Black Assembly and an election process to that body to continue permanently after the NBPC (The National... 142). It called for the NBA to organize and mobilize a community-based movement toward amassing the needed resources and power to achieve full black empowerment, to study reapportionment and redistricting and develop and implement strategies for striking down gerrymandering by whites designed to destroy black political power.

After serious consideration to and adoption of Baraka's interesting points, the agenda addressed the specific problem of the political status of the District of Columbia: "The nearly 800,000 residents of our Nation's Capital have that dual distinction of being the only citizens of our nation who are by law denied the right to self-government (the last colony) and the only major city in this country with a 72 percent Black population" (Bailey and Flores 201-202). These two facts were not unrelated. Baraka's concerns adopted by the national black agenda set the course for the work of the MBCM and its leadership for several years. Baraka marked an important stage in the development of the MBCM at the Gary Convention.

Although historians have barely acknowledged the MBCM, the Gary Convention generated a great deal of press coverage and controversy. The black press was not only sympathetic but actually identified with the efforts of the convention and its coverage of the dynamics before and after that huge assembly was considerable. The black media agreed that the experiment in Gary gave an especially insightful assessment of the NBPC and its prospects (Marable 138). The summit was viewed as a test and a trial – 20th Century blacks wrestling with the difficult questions of power, unity and cooperation (Thompson 310). Baraka’s criticism towards the convention revealed a clear ambivalence about the results of that experiment in Gary (Walters and Smith 105). He considered the convention an important first step, revealing both the worst and the best of black politics. He noticed that at its worst, there was a viciousness, division, and jealousy.

There was rhetoric rather than hard working reality. Confusion, disorganization and poor planning were also detected in that gathering. A massive distrust represented by the failure to unite behind a single candidate or a unified national platform was apparent, too. At its best, it was certainly the most representative national convention or conference ever held by African Americans (Baraka, The Concept... 110). Yet Baraka’s enthusiasm about the summit was shown through his argument that for the first time in more than fifty years, black people from across the nation gathered together in Gary to deal with the most basic survival issues in these most oppressive times in modern history. Much of the turmoil at the plenary sessions reflected the fact that “every possible viewpoint, every possible ideology, every possible category of Black Americans was represented” (Reynolds 256).

The Gary Convention offered a range of varied intellectual opinions that reflected the black people's endeavor to get together with all of their weakness and all of their strength (Tate 233). There was a general sense of commitment to the eventual betterment of the condition of black Americans, highly emotional responses to Reverend Jesse Jackson and Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher, a great deal of productivity within a 24-hour period, and the beginnings of political power movements that would have local implications in New York and elsewhere for years to come (Adler and Colburn 58). This convention was certainly a beginning as modern black intellectuals started to seriously wrestle with crucial political issues in their own manner.

These developments between 1970 and 1974 consolidated the standing of Baraka as a pivotal leader of the black national community (Pease and Pease 218). His climb to that rank was tied directly to the flowering of the MBCM. His rise in the black national political arena was so important that most convention officials acknowledged that Baraka's influence predominated during the convention (Delany 46). In the same vein, Vincent Harding noted that Baraka's "tough-minded and powerful presence, based in a highly disciplined, Newark-based black nationalist organization, was the central force in the convention's leadership" (Harding 243).

While for Vincent Harding the National Black Political Convention embodied the watershed between the Black Revolt of the 1960 and the political movement of the 1970s, for Manning Marable "Gary represented, in retrospect, the zenith not only of black nationalism, but of the entire black movement during the Second

Reconstruction” (Marable 140). The Gary Convention was an unprecedented gathering of black people which surpassed all other indigenous efforts in the Black Convention Movement, particularly on the critical issue of fusion. Most of the earlier summit meetings were simply elite gatherings that failed to establish any connection with the masses of black people (Cronon 37). The Modern Black Convention Movement was a radical departure in this regard, representing the grassroots ethos of the Black Power movement. The Gary Convention and the NBA were historic events. The National Black Assembly elected U.S. Rep. Charles Diggs as its President, Mayor Richard Hatcher its Chairman, and chose Amiri Baraka as its Secretary-General (L. Brown 152). The Gary Convention and the national black agenda reflected bold strokes. It represented black nationality formation unfolding at the center of the African American political arena.

Finally, this convention was held to test the degree of unity between the different political groups and to reach a kind of compromise through a unified leadership and try to promote black political and socio-economic development in a period when the grassroots was almost completely marginalized. Choosing Baraka for this task was not a coincidence because he showed to all those who were present at Gary that his mission was first to understand the grassroots and second to establish a close link between this grassroots and its leadership through a clear agenda which would not only discuss problems but to solve them. The Gary Convention represented a precedent in black history as far as unity between leaders and grassroots was concerned. A positive attempt was made to rally black leaders with their different philosophies, political opinions and different partisanship. The convention looked like

the last 1970s bastion for the preservation of at least the then-famous slogan “Unity without Uniformity.”

Unfortunately, thus far the discussion of the 1972 Gary Convention was limited to a focus on the failure of that insurgency to establish a third political party. However, the MBCM may be studied more fruitfully as an indication of the unfolding of a new political consciousness and an insurgent political culture. The point here is that the MBCM was developing its own structures and processes – particularly agenda building. Despite the negative picture of resistance to blacks’ political attempts to accommodate themselves into political and economic status quo, some evidence indicates that Amiri Baraka, as a black grassroots activist was using the electoral arena as not only a response to depressed socio-economic conditions in the black community but also a way to directly challenge those private leaders who continued to support public policy framework that had not substantively changed racial and economic hierarchies in urban America.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

From Gradual Political Disillusionment to New Ideological Mutation

Two important local events would cause Baraka's eviction from black leadership. The project of Kawaida Towers and the development of Kawaida community represent an essential narrative to explain and analyze not only Baraka's leadership demise but his ideological shift from a black cultural nationalist to a Marxist-Leninist, yet permanently preserving his intellectual activism. The transformation of Baraka occurred through a self-conviction after the political black and white conspiracy directed against his ambitious scheme to improve Newark black community. He felt that demise with bitterness and disillusionment.

Baraka's significant contribution lies in his involvement in local black power politics. He took Newark as a model, developed the Committee for the Unified Newark (CFUN) and helped create the Black and Puerto Rican Political Convention which facilitated the election of Newark's first black mayor, Kenneth Gibson (Lively 147). To win the election, Baraka adeptly integrated conventional campaign tactics with an assertive racial identity politics promoted through local cultural institutions like Spirit House. Baraka and CFUN contrived a meaningful project for the campaign that would awoke a common black and Puerto Rican identity, emphasized progressive platform principles and even controversial issues, register and mobilize blacks and Puerto Rican voters (Benjamin 187). Yet, the eventual showdown between Gibson and Baraka over the Kawaida Towers housing complex enforced the development of

Baraka's wider political struggles.

When its second international assembly took place in San Diego, California, in 1972, Baraka's CAP was already one of the most important black nationalist organizations in the United States (Aranson 14). Its branches were spreading in various regions of the country, and in the process, the CAP had been instrumental in developing several new national organizations embodied in the National Black Assembly (NBA), the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), and the Black Women's United Front (BWUF) (Komozi 213). At the center of all these developments was CAP's national program office in Newark and its leader, Amiri Baraka. After two years of service, the terms had expired for CAP's first national officers (Baraka, A New Era... 121). As a result of the San Diego Summit, the national leadership was reorganized along the lines of an executive committee and ministries.

In the election of the second national chair, Baraka's leadership in the mobilization for the National Black Political Assembly and for African Liberation Day was a major consideration. Baraka led in the development of a number of institutional prototypes that would be exemplary for other branches of the CAP. Many leaders of the new branches were trained in Newark at the Political School of Kawaita (Baraka, Kawaita Studies... 68). Consequently, with black nationalism at its peak, Baraka was elected its national chairman at the second general assembly of the CAP. As a chair, he began fashioning the loose federation structure into a new national vanguard organization, drawing from his own reading of the experience of the CFUN as well as those of African liberation movements.

In the early 1970s, the CAP was at the summit of its hegemony in the Black Revolt. It all rested on the foundation of a unique political alignment forged by the Modern Black Convention Movement (MBCM), embracing the Black Arts Movement, the Black Power movement and Pan-Africanists (Ahmed 65). Baraka's NewArk was much more than a simple geographic designation. It represented an urban vision and a shared covenant among diverse sections of the black community.¹ While the mainstay of CAP's mass support was its leadership in the MBCM, its ideological and spiritual concern was its faith in the power of black consciousness. When that vision was shattered and that social covenant abandoned, the foundation for the MBCM as a black united front no longer existed. As a significant initiator of the movement, Baraka considered faith in the black will for self-determination the heart of the politics of black cultural nationalism and its Black Power experiments during the 1960s and 1970s. In his major manifesto of that period, A Black Value System, Baraka insisted on the meaning of black faith. For him, it meant black man's freedom through which any commitment to whites would be avoided. He even interpreted the rejection of this faith by African Americans as an emotional commitment to white people (13). In the same process, he described the nature of that faith by explaining that:

“Imani” is faith – Faith in your leaders, teachers, parents, - but first faith in blackness – that it will win. Simple faith, like church people say that's what

¹ According to American historian John Hutchinson, this kind of belief is the center of the politics of cultural nationalism.

we want – hard rock emotional faith in what we’re doing. The same way your grand mamma used to weep and wring her hands believing in Jeez-us, that deep connection with the purest energy, that is what the Nationalist must have. Can you understand this? ... That we must believe in Nationalism. We must believe in the justness of our struggle and the certainty of our victory, No matter how long this might take. There is no time. Only change (Kawaida Studies... 89).

By 1974, however, those political circumstances had changed quite dramatically. That vision was shattered and CAP’s faith in its own experience was profoundly shaken (Benjamin 192). Baraka was deeply moved by the crisis that had begun to affect the Newark black community as it was expanding beyond the traditional ghetto boundaries of the Central and South Wards. As the black expanding disturbed elements in the local white power structure, white leaders in the North Ward mobilized their community into a series of violent attacks on African Americans (Lively 210). The situation deteriorated and racial violence spread to the two white neighborhoods of Vailsburg and Irvington, two white adjacent enclaves of Newark’s West Ward. In 1973, there was a strong white classical opposition to the entrance of a few black students to the Vailsburg and Irvington high schools (Castells 302). Baraka witnessed these racial conflicts that sent the high schools in both Newark and Irvington into a state of crisis and where white students attacked black students. A similar crisis erupted at Barringer High School in the predominantly white North Ward of Newark. New Barringer in the North Ward, another blast that fueled this crisis was the violence that exploded as white mobs began to beat the

black construction workers building Imamu Baraka's sixteen-story apartment complex, Kawaida Towers (309).

Even before that worsening crisis, black Mayor Kenneth Gibson started a containment policy to confine Baraka's expanding political power through the MBCM. Newark's 1971 anti-poverty election was the first open test of strength between forces within the convention movement (Benjamin 201). After a year of experience with the city's first black mayor, a number of vocal grassroots organizations and churches in the convention movement became increasingly anxious for Baraka who was openly confronting and criticizing Gibson for his lack of struggle against the old guard and white racism. Baraka was asked to take leadership. When the black convention forces ran Baraka's popular lieutenant, Kaimu Mtetezi (formerly David Barrett) (Warren and Nanus 35), for the presidency of Newark's antipoverty agency, the United Community Corporation, Mayor Gibson started his conspirative move and secretly established a bipartisan alliance, including both remnants of Hugh Addonizio's political machine as well as former members of the United Brothers (Nelson and Meranto 74).

Both Gibson and Eulius "Honey" Ward, who had been founding members in the United Brothers, sought to contain the popular power unleashed by Baraka's conventions. They allied themselves with Larrie Stalks and her defeated and convicted brother Calvin West who was a member of the Addonizio machine. Stalks represented a wing of the old guard political machine that still had a base in the Essex County Democratic Party (Glaude 156). Mayor Gibson had run his 1970 campaign on the pledge that he was a reformer who would clean out the corrupt machine

forces from the political arena (Warren and Nanus 41). However, if Gibson was to defeat Baraka and undermine the legitimacy of the Modern Black Convention Movement, he had to rely on forces outside the community and to portray Baraka as a racial extremist beyond the bounds of reason.

The maneuvers in favor of Mayor Gibson's new political alliance were quite evident because by opposing Amiri Baraka, the mayor would be given new access to the minority white voters in the 1974 election with the position that he, as a "moderate" black mayor, was the only one who could prevent a complete take-over by black militants bent on driving the remaining whites out of the city (Harris 96). In that first major test of strength, Baraka's forces crushed Gibson's slate in the 1971 election. Kaimu Mtetezi was elected president of the UCC, defeating the Gibson slate by a 2 to 1 margin (Mier 56). Furthermore, after the Gary convention in 1972, the CAP fashioned a new congressional district in Essex County and united the black community behind East Orange Mayor William Hart's unsuccessful bid for a seat in the U.S. Congress (Swain 11). The thing that Baraka's sharp opponents did not expect at all was that his political strength was not shrinking. It was defiantly flourishing because of two major reasons. First, Baraka was already very popular as one of the black artists who became totally committed to a cause which was difficult to gain. Second, the disillusionment of Baraka by Mayor Gibson was shown at different occasions whether official or not (Baraka, The Concept... 142). The black community of Newark took stand with Baraka who seemed to be more credible to lead.

The Kawaida Towers project exemplified the practical, progressive edge of black power politics. With the help of CAP organizers, Baraka gathered a talented,

multiracial team of architects, attorneys, and contractors to address immediate housing shortages and to carve out more meaningful, livable space in postindustrial Newark. Baraka and CAP activists secured funding from both the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and New Jersey's Housing Finance Agency to build a sixteen story, low-to-moderate income housing complex in Newark's predominantly Italian North Ward (The Meaning... 49). A political crisis quickly emerged over whether the city should grant tax reduction to the project. As pressure from reactionary local whites increased, endorsement from local black politicians untangled (Rich 147). Gibson's initial endorsement wavered while city councilman Earl Harris's opposition to the project was unequivocal. The Newark city council's possible refusal of Baraka's curtailment proposal halted the project and announced the collapse of radical influence over local black politicians.

However, the containment strategy against Baraka and the MBCM was much more effective in the midst of the Kawaida Towers racial crisis. If legal democratic elections did not succeed to defeat Baraka, then nonlegal violence and betrayal would be used to destroy him. It was precisely during this worsening crisis that Mayor Gibson and other major black officials that Baraka and the CAP had helped elect and appoint abandoned the black community to the tender mercies of the white vigilantes (Runcie 185). Not only did they refuse to defend the black community during this period of racial turmoil, but powerful black elected officials also attacked the very legitimacy of the Modern Black Convention Movement. Eventually, when black city councilmen emerged as allies of white agents of repression – crashing the urban perception of a New Ark – Baraka's confidence in his own nationalist strategy

shattered. Experiencing crisis in faith, Baraka began to consider the theories of socialism more seriously, and at the end of that process embraced Marxism (Steele 36). Ironically, these events began when Baraka and the CAP were at the pinnacle of their success. The dynamics of black cultural nationalism had never been stronger than in 1972.

Baraka's emphasis on institutional development and on transforming the ghetto into a "New Ark" were more than just a mere thought. The vision of the New Ark was sustained in part by Baraka's plans for housing and economic development. In 1970 some of the CAP's community organizers helped Baraka to mobilize a large Central Ward neighborhood to challenge the Newark Housing Authority's (NHA) plan to build more high-rise public housing (The Creation... 12). Working with the Central Ward community, Baraka's CAP decided to establish a Project Area Committee by applying Housing and Urban Development provisions. Baraka insisted that such neighborhoods had the right to a voice in the urban renewal process (Castells 323). Baraka deceptively concluded that a voice, without a hand in the planning of the new community, meant very little. So, he presented a proposal to NHA and HUD, and demanded the establishment of a site office to redesign the development of the nearly 100-acre neighborhood (The Meaning... 79).

The community organizer who led that work was Harold Wilson, a founding member of the UB. The CAP provided extensive resources to that community. Its economic department worked on the proposal for a planning office. With the approval of CAP organizers and other community leaders, Baraka designated Earl Coombs.

Coombs was a young man who had worked with Baraka before, at first in Greenwich Village and then in Harlem Black Arts. In those earlier days, Baraka and Coombs had discussed the development of a neo-traditional or neo-African aesthetic in architecture (Mier 67). By the 1970s, this unique combination of people, circumstances, and aesthetic concerns provided an opportunity for Baraka to flesh out the urban vision of the New Ark which was based on “black” standards of beauty and value, and free from white culture for validation.

Baraka basically sought to convert through the New Ark vision the whole spectrum of Newark CAP’s institutional and business development into a practical plan. In 1972, Baraka’s conviction of success in the daring black community’s project was based on the creation of a housing project that would tightly contribute to making many other communal developments possible (Wolak 156). The technical skills of architects and draftsmen committed to the development of African people rather than America and American money, made possible the development of this very ambitious program based on constructing sites that would specifically house the African Free School specialized in an electronics training program for young Africans, Publishing Company, African Free School Food Franchise, and an architectural design of Kawaida Towers, an apartment building which would house some 210 families (Blair 287).

This institutionalized planning had enabled Newark Baraka’s CAP to design and rehabilitate an abandoned Masonic Temple in the Central Ward. That abandoned building became “Hekalu Mwalimu” – temple of the teacher – named in honor of President Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (Terrell 144), and it served as a

community center, housing CAP's programs for education, career training, communications, and youth programs. In addition, Hekalu Mwalimu was the site of CAP's cafeteria for cooperative eating. Rather than each household cooking daily meals, Newark CAP dined collectively, and each employed adult paid a few dollars each week for the purchase and cooking of the food as well as for the employment of the head cook (The Creation ... 18).

The next positive step taken by Baraka was his written proposal which he sent to Newark's antipoverty agency, UCC, to operate the City-Wide Youth Communications in Hekalu Mwalimu. Baraka expected this program to teach black and Puerto Rican youth skills in electronic communications by providing career training and hands-on experience in running their own television and radio mini-studio in the community (Wolak 211). There the writers, directors, actors, and graphic artists from the Spirit House Movers and Players taught script writing, television direction, acting, and set design to black and Puerto Rican youth in order to drive a wedge into white resistance to the employment of people of color in mass media. (Glaude 183). Moreover, black freedom movement photographers and filmmakers, including Doug Harris, came to Newark as consultants to teach youth how to film with video equipment. The program trained dozens of youths in the 1970s.

Baraka's philosophy of this planning experiment provided a revealing glimpse of the New Ark strategy. In a CAP manual designed to be instructive for all branches of the national organization, the mission of the Kawaida housing project and its views on the urban renewal process were well defined (Kawaida... 124). Traditionally,

urban renewal was another fatal arm of white supremacy and segregation that uprooted the black community at the whim of white people who willingly built institutions to re-establish control of areas which had grown “too black”. Their intentional dispersal of black communities was directed to break up the social organization which existed, undermine potential political power, and impose development plans which suited the values and interests of white people.

Noticing that community needs were disregarded, while even the small gains which black people had made to put themselves back together were dissipated. Baraka’s ambitious project was intended to be a broad based popular movement of Africans in the Central Ward of Newark, revolting against the traditionally followed urban renewal process (Warren and Nanus 54). It became the most successful model for community control of land in Newark and one of the strongest voices in housing in the city. It also was a black nationalist alternative to the white supremacist policy of urban renewal. Baraka’s struggle in the African American community for control of 100 acres of land in the hearts of the city was popular, well supported, and involved everyone from African housewives to African doctors. If Baraka was insisting on the realization of such project, was able to organize, and rally the mass of people around the question of land, it is because blacks were able to see the project as directly related to their future (Gomes and Williams 83). Through constant and dynamic action, it was asserted that Baraka’s CAP was the legal representative of popular will of black people with the power to veto any development in their area which did not meet CAP’s approval.

Yet, Baraka clearly wanted much more than veto power over urban renewal. He stressed the concept that “the power of veto as a community organization is not enough” (Swain 21). The objective of Baraka was to transform reality so that Newark residents could get the maximum amount of social, economic and political self-determination over their lives. Baraka viewed his planning function as one of social transformation. One clue to direction of that planning was his admiration of the Tanzanian nationalist, President Julius Nyerere, and his socialist vision of “Ujamaa,” African communalism (Nagueyalti 20). Therefore, for the CAP, the housing project he elaborated was the matrix for his urban vision, the New Ark, the first attempt to practically realize what the Black Power experiment could mean for a new community life in a “liberated zone” (Wolak 218).

The housing plan development aimed to particularly low-rise and low-income units as well as an elderly complex, commercial development of cooperative businesses within a multipurpose center with family counseling, educational facilities, housing relocation services, and a theater; a park and recreation complex, a hotel for conferences and conventions, and institutional spaces, especially a communications center for a cable television studio, a radio station, and finally, a medical center located next to the elderly housing development (Mier 83). The key element of Baraka’s vision is easily identified through the Kawaida plan that provided for the development and expansion of black nationalist institutions and the development of a microcosm of the policies of Ujamaa, i.e., the beginning of the control of the means of providing goods and services on these 100 acres, planned economic and social

developments around the needs of the black community, and popular control of all political processes which affected their lives (Kawaida... 178).

Joining Earl Coombs on the Kawaida community development team were attorney Raymond Brown and housing consultant Alvin Gershen. Raymond Brown had served on Governor Hughes's special panel investigating New Jersey's 1967 civil disorders (Brooks and Lineberry 198). Developing a profound respect for Baraka's creativity and sincerity, Brown did a great deal to help realize his project and the other housing development initiatives of the Congress of African People. Brown was also active in the Modern Black Convention Movement, addressing the 1969 black and Puerto Rican Convention and heading the legal workshop at the founding of the CAP in 1970. It was Brown who introduced Baraka to Gershen, a committed Jewish liberal and one of the best housing consultants in New Jersey (Rueter 301).

The triumvirate Baraka, Brown, and Gershen, began to establish a development team, thinking that it would begin with Baraka's urban renewal plan. Gershen discovered a piece of private property in Newark that was ready for development, a plot of land in the North Ward. If the exact location did not seem important in the beginning, that locus in the predominantly Italian American North Ward was crucial as it later became the scene of some of the worst racial confrontations in Newark's recent history (Watts 371-372). Gershen had already the experience in the field by being involved in a similar project as the consultant for the development of a 23-story Jersey City apartment building, and he felt that with some modifications those same architectural plans could be used on the Newark site (Rueter 318).

The building of Kawaida Towers apartments was designed with a basement and first-floor plan providing for a 300-seat theater, rooms for art display, reading, and arts and crafts. For Baraka, it was a minor idea at first, only one building housing about 200 families – while the more serious plans in the Central Ward’s housing project involved several hundred housing units, a shopping center, and the development of a whole community (Keiser 75). Baraka conceived of it as an interesting test of some proposed ideas about community planning and housing amenities. It would also be advantageous to provide a project around which a professional development team of architects, engineers, planners, housing consultants, and real estate lawyers could form (Gomes and Williams 101). Eventually Baraka, Coombs and Gershen worked closely to pull together the development team for Kawaida Towers (Baraka, The Meaning... 84).

Because of the severe pattern of racial exclusion in the city, the black community in Newark could draw upon very professional resources of its own. Many of the professionals raised in black Newark had left for other cities where they could find suitable opportunities. Baraka worked on plans to team a few black people with white experts as a step toward developing an autonomous African American development team (Keiser 87). According to Baraka’s plans, at the end of the process the black personnel would have the required experience, track records, and professional licenses necessary to allow them to develop their own projects (Kawaida... 196). This was done with the specific aim of forming a team prepared to build a community on the new housing site in the Central Ward, and the general aim of developing communities in a number of other CAP cities.

Kawaida Towers was put together in record time. Speed was part of its strategy for success. Too many housing plans in Newark had already died on the drawing board. Kawaida Towers broke ground without ceremony in July 1972. The Congress of African People's urban planning commitment indicated the relationship between black politics and social development that Baraka sought to introduce through the National Black Assembly (Rueter 312). Later, in the assembly, it was resolved that black communities in general would develop plans to redesign sections of the major cities. However, everything rested on the success of the first housing project in Newark.

The CAP's dilemma ironically began on the most auspicious of all occasions on October 12, 1972, the day of the ceremonial groundbreaking at Kawaida Towers. That sixteen-story housing development represented one hopeful possibility: that if black people gained political power and used that power for social and economic development, the United States might avoid the permanent racial strife in its city trenches. The groundbreaking announcement stressed that Kawaida represented a new experiment in interracial cooperation between black and white leadership. The Temple of Kawaida sent out a press release emphasizing the "mix and match" concept. "This concept," it explained, "represents perhaps the most unique feature of Kawaida Towers. It results from the determination of the Temple of Kawaida and Baraka to give blacks the greatest possible control over their own institutions – in this case, housing" (The Creation... 41). That announcement concluded with this optimistic statement which suggested how important that particular housing development was for the Congress of African People. Baraka referred to Newark as

“New Ark,” which reflected his conviction that the city could be made to lead the rebirth of all the nation’s cities (The Meaning... 99). He viewed Kawaida Towers as one of the most important steps to be taken toward that rebirth.

The public version of the “mix and match” approach concerned the development of black leadership in terms of architects, contractors, housing consultants, and managers, but the private realities of that formula involved political power, access to it, and mutual concessions. Everything about Kawaida Towers was strategic. Having passed every state approval, the plans for Kawaida Towers were expected to be a successful development in Newark (Watts 387). In fact, the original architectural plans were award-winning. The choice of the general contractor, Bruno Lucarelli Jr., had a great deal to do with his political connections with the North Ward councilman Ralph Vallani (Finkenstaedt 108). He had grown senile, and very few people could communicate with him, but Lucarelli felt that he could win the support of Vallani and, with that, the Italian political support necessary for the project to secure enough votes for tax abatement (Rueter 357). Without those votes, no housing development like Kawaida Towers could happen under the housing finance programs of the HUD and the New Jersey Housing Finance Agency.

While the public knew little about Kawaida Towers before October 1972, the powerful Italian politicians in the North Ward already did of that project in intimate detail (Mier 97). Apparently, they had agreed that Newark needed some degree of racial cooperation, at least on such basic issues as housing. No new housing was being built in Newark, and the rise of corporate structures downtown mocked the residential stagnation of that city. Something had to be done, and in 1972 the only

group that had figured out a way for black development to proceed was Baraka's development team. Consequently, the Newark City Council approved a resolution, introduced by North Ward councilman Frank Megaro, for Kawaida Towers's tax abatement (Watts 209).

On a number of occasions during that period, Baraka told the head of his housing development department emphatically, "We have to live with these people" (Kawaida... 201). The Italian community, not the downtown corporate leadership, was viewed as the most important white group with which the black community had to find common ground. Wherever there were common goals that could be sought, objectives that were mutually beneficial and equitable for both communities, then privately Newark CAP would go the extra mile. At one meeting early in 1972, Baraka asked Bruno Lucarelli if he knew how to contact Anthony Imperiale, saying that if there were any construction jobs that Lucarelli could offer Imperiale's people, it should be done (Watts 212). Baraka's intention was to make sure that among the white workers at Kawaida Towers, the North Ward community was well represented. In brief, the important political leaders of the North Ward's Italian community – Councilman Ralph Vallani, Councilman Frank Megaro, and Assemblyman Anthony Imperiale – knew about Kawaida Towers in advance of the groundbreaking announcement (Finkenstaedt 134). However, no one anticipated what Stephen Aduato, a professor at Rutgers University, would do at the groundbreaking.

When all the television cameras had gathered for a groundbreaking shot demonstrating the new era of racial cooperation, Aduato upstaged the whole ceremony. He drew some of the cameras away with his press statement through which

he wondered why the project was given the name of “Kawaida Towers” instead of “Garibaldi Towers”. Through this intentional and not innocent behavior, Adubato triggered a power struggle among the leaders in the North Ward, raising several irritating questions such as “Who were the genuine white leaders, how could the old guard leadership have cooperated with an Imamu Baraka and was new leadership needed?” The political careers of a number of Italian political figures would rise and fall on how they responded to Adubato’s challenge (Keiser 142). Meanwhile, Adubato used the situation to construct a platform of high visibility for his own political career. For most of those politicians, silence was the wisest policy, because it could be documented quite easily that they worked for the development of Kawaida Towers. But Imperiale’s link to the project was so private and obscure that he could afford to maneuver to his advantage. He decided to take the initiative and picket the housing development.

On November 9, 1972, the picketing began. At first, most picketers were white, off-duty from suburban communities. White police officials appeared at rallies in the North Ward to encourage the demonstrators (Watts 412). The president of the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association urged his members to join the protest and vowed at one meeting, “If Kawaida Towers is built, my blood will be on its doorstep” (Curvin 42). In other words, the picketing was staged largely by forces among the police. But when that image of whites picketing against Imamu Baraka was shown on television, the new development drew hundreds more white picketers who vented their despise of the Congress of African People specifically and black advancement

generally. They were able to stop the construction work which at that point was nearly completing the foundation. Baraka made several press statements asking that there be no black protest at Kawaida Towers in the North Ward, and that everyone allow the law to handle the situation. But, step by step the situation degenerated, and Mayor Gibson offered no leadership, preferring instead to fade as far as possible into the background (Adler 107). The situation quickly got out of hand. The picket leaders developed a unique strategy. They warned that blood would run in the streets, and then petition the courts to stop the erection because of the danger of bloodshed (Brooks and Lineberry 214). The procedure worked well.

On November 13, 1972, Judge Irwin Kimmelman called for a seven-day moratorium so that the situation could cool off. The picket leaders understood that as a victory, they had stopped the construction. In court the plaintiffs, Anthony Imperiale and John Cervase, fabricated technical objections about the height of the apartment building and the legality of its tax abatement to disguise the racist objection. The justice system was the only actor that seemed blind to the real intent of the lawsuit (Baraka, The Creation... 51). During the case, Imperiale and Cervase charged vaguely that there was something technically wrong with the project and that specifically it had violated the zoning ordinance by building a high-rise in a low-rise residential neighborhood. That first suit initiated a four-year court battle, in which charge after charge against the development was fabricated by the Imperiale-Cervase legal counsel and then defeated one by one by the Kawaida Towers legal defense, Irving Vogelmann who was able to defeat Imperiale and Cervase at each and every turn (Baraka, Kawaida... 210).

Actually, it was a test of will, because Imperiale and Cervase had no case. Every government body that had approved the project had already checked the zoning ordinances for compliance. Baraka and his team knew from the outset that they would win the case in court because the original plans for a 23-story building had been cut down to sixteen stories so that it would fit the prevailing zoning for that neighborhood (Harding 96).

Within this context, it is interesting to know that when the television stations aired the footage of Kawaida Towers they never showed those high-rise apartments neighboring the new Kawaida construction. For those who were unfamiliar with that particular neighborhood – the vast majority of viewers – the news gave some public credibility to the position that the Imperiale and Cervase case had a legitimate “leg to stand on.” Then, on November 20, Judge Kimmelman made a preliminary decision that the project was in fact legal and that it met the necessary legal requirements (Mier 104). However, on November 21, the Newark City Council revealed how far the white racist leadership would take the struggle against Baraka and his CAP. The City Council voted to repeal the tax abatement for Kawaida Towers and to retain a lawyer to fight the development in court. Within a few days, white mobs stopped black laborers from entering the gate (Cheo 13).

Among the most convincing reasons behind Imperiale’s premeditated sharp opposition to Baraka’s housing project in Newark was his racial hatred. In other words, Imperiale, the assemblyman, was leading whites to break the law that he was himself breaking. On January 6, 1973, it was reported that a group of protesters opposed to the controversial Kawaida Towers housing project yelled racial epithets at

black laborers who crossed a picket line at the construction (“Racial...” 9). The epithets, “Nigger go home!” and “Go back to the jungle!” were accompanied by the placards the white protesters carried portraying black people as monkeys and Baraka as a monkey wearing an African hat (“Racial...” 10).

At several gatherings, Baraka bitterly admitted that white attitude was comprehensible. He permanently invoked the case of Newark’s black mayor Kenneth Gibson and his position towards that complex affair. Baraka became convinced that the betrayal of Gibson could easily be proven. Rather than providing leadership, Gibson preferred “invisibility” in the crisis at Kawaida Towers – definitely a hard act to perform at City Hall. However, leadership came from the community. Each night Baraka and CAP organizers visited the construction workers at home and encouraged them and their families. Each morning they spoke to the laborers, and each weekend rallies in the black community (Steele 52). A number of forces denounced the violence at Kawaida Towers, and called for both justice and reconciliation. Chief among them was subcommittee of the North Newark Clergy Group, headed by Reverend Frank Gibson, Jr. (Nelson and Meranto 188).

Scores of black labor and professional groups supported Baraka and Kawaida Towers, including the National Black Social Workers Association and the National Black Assembly. Significantly, the Fight Back and Black Economic Survival Groups in Harlem and Brooklyn were very supportive. They were prepared to send progressive black, Latino, and white trade unionists to build Kawaida Towers (Harris 112). During the National Black Assembly’s public hearing on Kawaida Towers, an Italian American trade unionist, Bill Carlotti from Fight Back, testified that their

2,000 members, the vast majority of whom were black and Spanish speaking, stood ready to build Kawaida Towers once order was restored (“Racial...” 11).

In an editorial broadcast, WNBC-TV expressed its support of Kawaida Towers and plainly argued that no one in Newark seriously questioned the need for housing in that city. Yet, North Ward residents, led by Assemblymen Anthony Imperiale and Frank Megaro, were resisting the high rise apartment called Kawaida Towers, a low income housing project sponsored by Temple Kawaida and black nationalist Baraka (Phalon 5). Those against the project were trying to use any and almost all means to block it – from keeping workers out, encouraging unions to disobey contracts, repealing prior legislation, to introducing ex post facto laws. Imperiale and Megaro were trying to trade on the white community’s dislike for what Baraka stood for. So they were blocking much-needed housing and inflaming the community. If they were worried about black discrimination against whites in the project, they would have recourse to anti-discrimination laws. The editorial stated “that’s what equal justice under the law is all about. The Kawaida Towers’ sponsors and the North Ward politicians should sit down and make peace. If they can’t do that face to face, then suitable stand-ins should be found. The building should proceed” (“Racial...” 12).

It boiled down to politics in November 1972. More precisely, as Baraka commented, it was the politics of American “Apartheid,” (Massey and Denton 227) involving the caste arrangements, both violent and institutional, that kept African Americans locked behind the walls of the second ghetto in the U.S. and the North Ward politicians were not the only ones involved. Baraka officially demanded that

Nixon's Labor Secretary, Peter Brennan, look into the situation. Not only had the white labor union leaders broken their contracts with Bruno Lucarelli of B. J. Builders by not coming to work but Kawaida Towers Not only had the white labor union leaders broken their contracts with Bruno Lucarelli of B. J. Builders by not coming to work but Kawaida Towers (Baraka, Autobiography... 359).

Baraka wanted Brennan to look into the charge concerning intimidation and provocation when "on one occasion a Business Agent from the Electrical Workers approached a Black Electrical foreman willing to go to Kawaida Towers and told him that he would never work anywhere else again"(Stevenson 265). Baraka also demanded that the Justice Department look into the matter, but the department maintained that it was not clear that any black rights had been violated. Privately, black Republicans close to the White House suggested that some action might come from the Justice Department if Imamu Baraka might consider an endorsement of President Nixon (Rueter 321). Baraka was outraged by such a behavior and concluded that black citizenship rights would not be enforced on their legal merit but in the light of political considerations.

In the meantime, on November 27, 1972, Baraka issued a detailed press statement listing his grievances, expressing his frustrations and criticizing Newark's law enforcement of court decisions. That day a North Ward white mob physically prevented black workers from entering the gates to work on Kawaida Towers. Baraka demanded police protection. The press release charged:

Today all pretense of law enforcement broke down and the mob, either through police unwillingness to stop them, or a gross inefficiency that must

border on actual criminality, took control. The reason we question the meaning of mob rule at the Kawaida Towers site, is that it is obvious that the police department is not functioning at any level that is acceptable to responsible elements in the community. The exploitation of this situation by the Imperiales, Adubatos, Megaros, each feverishly trying to outbigot the others would be laughable if it were not so serious in its implications (qtd in Baraka, Kawaida... 115).

The press recognized the high percentage of ethnic whites on the police department who identified with the white North Ward community, even though many of them did not live in Newark. It had photographs of the many white policemen who had actually been a part of the mob, illegally obstructing workers from entering the site (“Racial...” 12). It would imagine these policemen were off duty, or that picketing was their duty. It had photographs of white policemen acting as Anthony Imperiale’s bodyguards, at the site and the Newark City Council.

The Newark police director John Redden officially promised to enforce the law in Newark. Redden’s pledge was supposed to concern all Newark residents without exception. However, blacks and Puerto Ricans found themselves entangled in Redden’s racist bias. The lack of police law enforcement at the site of Kawaida Towers was a clear violation of the civil rights of Baraka, the members of the Temple of Kawaida, as well as the other citizens of NewArk who wanted to see Kawaida Towers built. The display of criminal anarchy, aided and supported by NewArk policemen, was open defiance of the courts and the Mayor of the City of Newark, and the citizens of Newark. Rather than arrest white picketers who had beaten black

people in the North Ward, police director Redden chose to resign, charging that it had been Baraka's fault for triggering the crisis. However, Redden also criticized the business community for its silence as the public order of the city unraveled. It was reported that Redden revealed that he might reconsider his resignation if responsible community elements broke their longstanding silence and moved to ease tensions in the city (Sullivan, "Redden..." 10).

A few days before announcing his resignation, Redden had blamed Mayor Kenneth Gibson and the city council for permitting the controversy and unnamed community leaders for increasing it. Redden accused these unnamed self-serving community leaders of having caused blacks and whites in Newark to be at each others throats. Specifically, Redden insisted that the Temple of Kawaida had planned to create the polarization by locating Kawaida Towers in the North Ward to provide confrontation under the guise of providing housing (Dulaney 86). In important ways, he supported the contentions of the leaders of the North Ward opposition to Kawaida Towers. His resignation was a component part of the benign neglect and institutionalized lawlessness that protected American "Apartheid." As a reaction to these hot events, Baraka strongly responded through Newark CAP that "we have seen a so-called liberal white police director so frustrated by having to enforce the law against whites that he had to resign" (Sullivan "Redden..." 11). He also argued that Redden could not enforce the law when it was a case of black legal rights against white perpetrators.

At any rate, Baraka advised to restrain the black community from protesting at Kawaida Towers, holding rallies in the Central Ward instead. This policy of restraint

was designed to avoid confrontations and violence at the site of the housing development. When the Marxist-Leninist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) announced a demonstration against racism at the Kawaida Towers site, Baraka urged black people not to participate in that action on the basis that no member of the PLP had consulted with Kawaida Towers Inc. or the Temple of Kawaida (Baraka, A New Era... 133). He complained that the apparent need for confrontation was a sign incorrect political evaluation or opportunism based on the same kind of racism which was expressed in another way by whites like Imperiale. One thing that the Temple of Kawaida insisted on as their second principle was the right of self-determination and this was “to define ourselves, name ourselves and speak for ourselves. Instead of being defined and spoken for by others, let the PLP and SDS begin to understand that we must determine for ourselves how to wage our own struggle” (Baraka, Kawaida... 196).

As soon as Redden announced his resignation, Baraka led community forces to demand a black police director, one who would enforce the law. While the city council stalled on the appointment of a new police director, Councilman Michael Bottone actually suggested that the post of police director should be abolished because it was too “political” (Dulaney 116). However, Baraka and several black leaders concluded that the proposal aimed at blocking Mayor Gibson from naming a black police director, something the Council members saw happening if Redden’s resignation was accepted.

In an interview, Frank Megaro, the North Ward councilman who originally sponsored the tax abatement resolution for Kawaida Towers openly expressed that his political future depended on whether he could help kill the apartment building project

(Phalon 7). Megaro had a great deal at stake. He was both North Ward councilman and state assemblyman. He pushed himself to the forefront of the demonstrators against Kawaida Towers, but that was not enough. He insisted that he would not have voted for a tax abatement grant to the project if he had known LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) was behind it (Cheo 15). However, the tax abatement had remained before the City Council for consideration for months. It first appeared on the City Council agenda on August 4, 1971. In fact, action was deferred twice, first on August 4 by Megaro himself. It is difficult to believe that Megaro, who sponsored the resolution, knew nothing about the sponsor (Phalon 7). At any rate, the application had received as much attention as any other project.

The North Ward leaders insisted that they were not racists. However, these politicians were so because the specific identity and race of the sponsor were the key issues, rather than the technical features of the development. Megaro explained why he had not questioned the Kawaida Towers application for tax abatement. He believed the project did not demand further scrutiny because Italian Americans were involved in it. He argued that he had been told by William Walls, the city Corporation Counsel, that the sponsors included not only Raymond Brown, a Jersey City lawyer, and Alvin E. Gershen, an urban planner but that some *paisans* [author's emphasis] – I don't like to use the term – were involved, Lucarelli, the builder and Bottelli, the architect' (Rich 178).

On March 7, 1973 Mayor Gibson agreed to intervene. At a meeting at City Hall attended by representatives of the Justice Department and the FBI, Gibson met with Baraka and Anthony Imperiale (Chevigny 174). The Kawaida Towers project was in

awkward situation. During this meeting Imperiale frankly showed his position in the case of the Kawaida Towers. He contended that he was not really concerned about those issues of zoning that had been raised in court, but he wanted the mayor or someone to help transfer the ownership of the development to a white group in the North Ward so that they could complete the construction. Mayor Gibson apologized to Imperiale for being unable to act in that direction without a legal backing (Harris 165). For Kawaida Towers' representatives, the accommodation was astounding.

This idea that the Temple of Kawaida should bring the grist to the mill for white developers and politicians was repeated on several occasions during that period. Baraka sarcastically criticized this stand that "it was a replay of the classic mobster movie where the Mafia cowers the prizefighter" (The Meaning... 110). It made the whites an offer that they dare not refuse. Even some powerful whites who did not respect their mortgage commitments were entitled to take over millions of dollars in such investments secured by the Temple of Kawaida. From that point on, the city unraveled into a state of near racial anarchy, engulfing the city council, the schools, and the black enclaves in the North Ward. City council meetings were paralyzed by the fierce struggle of the black community to replace the resigned white police director, Redden, with the city's first black police director, Edward Kerr. The city council categorically rejected the idea of appointing a black person to the job permanently (Brooks and Lineberry 219). However, Officer Kerr was appointed to the job on a temporary basis several times after massive demonstrations at the City Council meetings.

During the month of March 1973, Baraka led the black community to test the unions' principle of not crossing community picket lines. Between March 19 and March 26, they picketed the medical school construction under way in the Central Ward and witnessed the same unions which could not cross a white community picket in the North Ward, cross a black one daily in the Central Ward (Baraka, Autobiography... 371). One night a white mob attacked a small black enclave in another community in the North Ward, beating up black people and throwing garbage cans through their windows. There was no response from the police officials and even the city's black director of human rights could only stand by and shake his head (Kawaida... 216). Of course, attacking a black community in the 1970s, even a small enclave surrounded by white people, was risky business because it would turn against blacks.

At this same time, the high schools in Newark and Irvington were in a state of crisis because of the strong white backlash to the entrance of a few black students to the Vailsburg and Irvington high schools (Chevigny 191). The black community was expanding beyond the traditional ghetto boundaries, which disturbed the white power structure at Kawaida Towers and in the high schools. White students attacked black students in a suburb bordering Newark's West Ward at Irvington High School, and then in the North Ward of Newark at Barringer High School (Massey and Denton 210). During that period, one black student activist was found gunned down after he went jogging one morning (Chevigny 202).

The CAP cooperated with Newark NAACP to support the students and parents, demanding adequate police protection for their children. At night there were massive

workshops in which hundreds of parents and students discussed how the students could stay together, who they could call when attacked, and what kind of a system could be established for adults to intervene when such incidents occurred. Quietly, groups of black students began training in self-defense methods that were appropriate to mob and police attacks. Some students even studied the tactics of Latin American freedom movements where students made good use of black pepper against the horses of attacking mounted police (Dulaney 126). In a word, it was a desperate and complex situation.

But the pace of white terror outstripped all those efforts. At Barringer High School, when black and white students fought each other, the Newark mounted police attacked several hundred black school children. The children were herded by the mounted police and then trapped between the high school and the iron fences of the surrounding park. The best that several vigilant Black Panthers and CAP members could do was to lead the children away from that military confrontation and withdraw to a safe place to protect their lives from the ready-to-kill and terrorizing white mob. From there they called for help, and Baraka arranged for several buses to deliver the children to their homes until the CAP could talk to their parents about what they wanted to do next (Baraka, *Autobiography...* 387). Trying to forget his own troubles, Baraka was of great moral support to black students who were profoundly agitated and ready to boycott the schools. For some time, each morning these same threatened students would assemble by the hundreds in the North Ward at Kawaida Towers to witness and encourage the few black workers as they walked through a wall of angry white protesters. It was a stand off.

During the night of March 25, 1973, several shotgun blasts were fired into CAP's headquarters and at the African Free School baby nursery (Chevigny 213). Taken together, Baraka saw these developments as bad signs that totally destroyed the basis for CAP's optimism for black development with white cooperation in Newark and led to a clear conclusion that racial tension in that region at least would not settle in the short run and probably never. Baraka explained that the obstruction of the Kawaida Towers development was a severe psychological blow (Harding 130). He remarked that the content was going to be black and they were going to be able to do things that other administrations were not doing. For example, eradicating the housing problem through Kawaida Towers building. They actually had plans. They had housing sites planned and had a lot of potential. According to Baraka, this was a sufficient reason for whites to come down on them so hard and stop them. He bitterly exposed his view that:

I remember the thing with Kawaida Towers – that it was right. Everything we did was right. We had followed the law and everything was right. But they refused to build it and they actually physically attacked us. That's when my whole philosophy changed. My whole outlook changed from the goals and aspirations of the organization in terms of what we can do. That's when the reality struck me that the power structure was still the power structure and that we were still subordinate. We were no...closer to realizing our goals than when we first started. That was really a big psychological blow to me that it happened like that. That was the

of the end from that point, when we weren't able to do that (Kawaida... 225).

Baraka admitted that the Kawaida Towers development in the North Ward was being destroyed by the same powerful dynamics of American "Apartheid" (Massey and Denton 235) that contained black people in the worst neighborhoods and turned black communities into ghettos. However, the confrontations at Kawaida Towers made the industrial forces behind ghetto formation more visible than ever before, thus informing the development of black consciousness.

Baraka asserted that after winning each and every legal encounter in court, the Temple of Kawaida lost the original Kawaida Towers design as the New Jersey Housing Finance Agency (NJHFA) began to voice the demands of the white mob, albeit more subtly in administrative language (Runcie 158). If the violent mob pretended the building was too tall, then the NJHFA would comply and the apartment building had to be pared down because of inflationary construction costs. These costs had escalated while the project languished in court between 1972 and 1975. Baraka estimated the original 1972 Kawaida Towers costing \$6.4 million would have been built at a price of more than \$10 million in 1975. Then, the New Jersey Housing Finance Agency proposed cost-cutting measures that effectively eliminated all the amenities that Kawaida Towers had offered to enhance apartment living (Cheo 19).

Meanwhile the development team was experiencing internal conflicts as the crisis continued. Since some of these proposals were coming from the contractor, Bruno Lucarelli, the Kawaida Towers board began to question the uncomfortable similarities between his proposals and those of Anthony Imperiale. The crushing blow

came when the NJHFA decided that the rents were to be higher, the apartments were to be smaller, and the building would have no amenities (Baraka, Autobiography 391). As far as Baraka was concerned, the building no longer served its constituency, which desperately needed decent and livable units for families with low and moderate incomes. The irony detected by Baraka at this stage of Kawaida Towers development was that money was no object because the city rejected the \$10 million in mortgage funds brought to Newark by Kawaida. But there was no additional funding available to finance the embattled Kawaida Towers that was already under construction (Runcie 195).

However, in a last-ditch effort, Baraka pressed Robert Notte, the head of the Newark Housing Authority (NHA), pointing to the ominously escalating black unrest triggered by the standoff at Kawaida Towers. Notte arranged a meeting with Baraka and another Kawaida Towers board representative in New York (Cheo 20). The surprising revelation came from Notte himself who made clear that the white much ado concerned more Baraka's close involvement in the Kawaida project than the project itself. At the meeting, Notte made the Kawaida Towers board an illuminating offer: if Baraka withdrew from Kawaida Towers in the North Ward, then Kawaida Community Development would receive twice the funding to build housing in the concerned ghetto. Since Robert Notte was the executive director of the NHA, the Kawaida board representatives wanted to know how he held the power to make a deal involving funds from the NJHFA which was the agency under which Kawaida Towers were subsidized. Only a few weeks earlier when Baraka had pressed Notte to talk to the powers in the North Ward Italian American community to resolve

the issue of Kawaida Towers, Notte had protested that he had no power in such matters. Now suddenly he had the authority to negotiate a \$10 million transfer of funds in order to maintain residential segregation (Baraka, Kawaida... 228).

Rather than submit to the white supremacist stance that black people had no right to build Kawaida Towers in the North Ward, Baraka rejected the offer (Stevenson 127). Anything less would have been an accommodation to American “Apartheid” and a betrayal of the rights and aspirations of African Americans for full equality. Meanwhile, despite the racial turmoil attempting to enforce the boundaries of the ghetto, the determination of Baraka was yielding some results in the Central Ward. The CAP managed to open a temporary medical facility right next to the future site of a senior citizens apartment building. Placing the emphasis on preventive health care, a free examination facility was to conduct a survey to find out the kinds of medical problems that were frequent in that community so that the permanent medical center could plan the proper health programs.

Black senior citizens committee was the most active and militant in that community. When the CAP explained the red tape at the Newark Housing Authority and urban renewal, the elderly complained that they had been waiting all their lives and that at that bureaucratic pace they would never live to see any change (Brooks and Lineberry 227). But in the wake of the confrontation at Kawaida Towers, several housing projects that had been delayed on the drawing board since the late 1960s were suddenly approved by the NJHFA (Mier 124). Baraka wondered how that could have happened so quickly, and if it had anything to do with diverting people’s attention from the standoff at Kawaida Towers.

The NHA was ready to build a senior citizens building in the neighborhood, and seed monies were ready for a park design in that area. The community was involved in the planning of those two projects. Architect, Earl Coombs, had been asking them to consider what they liked and disliked about the proposed the NHA design for that senior citizen apartment building. After a number of tours and a few mass meetings, the senior citizens noted their preferences. Coombs designed the first floor with many of the same kind of amenities for the elderly that were featured in Kawaida Towers (Cheo 21). That project was a success.

In terms of the park, which was provisionally named Nat Turner Park, Earl Coombs found a Philadelphia park designer who had experience with parks in Africa. Once the program for the park was decided, the designers could go to work. But Baraka and Coombs felt the program had to come from the people in that community. An extensive survey was conducted asking residents what they wanted to see in their park. The results showed that the community was divided into two camps about the nature of the park they wanted, split along the lines of the demography of the residents. Baraka and Coombs went to work with the survey results to develop a program that would reconcile the conflicting views (The Creation... 83).

Much of the planning had gone as it could go without mortgage commitments. A team of architects and structural engineers had been assembled in Newark, and they developed prototypes for some low-rise, neo-African housing in the Central Ward. Many of its apartments were designed with four and five bedrooms, so that they were suitable for the large families in that community. The Temple of Kawaida and Pilgrim Baptist Church agreed to be co-sponsors of the housing development (Mier 127). The

two organizations had developed a close relationship in Newark's Modern Black Convention Movement. Although the Temple of Kawaida secured the earliest mortgage commitments, it was finally the Pilgrim Baptist Church's Frederick Douglass Homes that were actually built (Cheo 21).

The final count down of the black betrayal in favor of white racial triumph occurred during 1974 when the Kawaida Towers crisis turned into a catastrophe because its sincere members including Amiri Baraka were swimming against strong current. One irony of this last development was when the Temple of Kawaida had received mortgage commitments of more than \$20 million to build low-rise housing in Newark. After extensive negotiations with private and public sources, there was more on the way (Steele 53). However, while the poor people in the Project Area Committee and in the Modern Black Convention Movement were elaborating their vision of the New Ark and while Baraka and the Temple of Kawaida were luring investments into the Central Ward, a group of Italian American and black politicians were scheming to destroy the new project and its urban vision.

In the 1974 elections one of the earliest convention candidates, Earl Harris, became the first black president of the Newark City Council (Nelson and Meranto 192). In that year Newark had a black mayor and a black president of the city council, both of whom had begun their careers through the Modern Black Convention Movement. These should have been optimum political conditions for black social and economic development. The CAP did not expect any community development to come out of City Hall because the politicians were entranced by the downtown corporate development. Yet, Baraka thought that development was possible if the

politicians would just stay out of the way (Steele 59). In fact, several of the black developers and investors that came to the CAP explained that they had been shut out by Mayor Gibson and the city council.

In the case of Earl Harris, Newark CAP had a long connection with his political career, beginning with its strong support for his candidacy at the Black and Puerto Rican Convention in 1969. The elder, Baba Mshauri, recalled that although Harris had been a member of the United Brothers Steering Committee, privately he felt he could not run for city council because he had no money. Mshauri reported:

I asked Earl – I said, “Earl, why don’t you get out there and run?” And his answer was, “I can’t afford it. I owe a lot of money from my prior election and I am broke.” I said, “Well, we are going to financially support our candidate” (qtd in The Creation... 88).

He agreed to run. But when Harris announced that he was a candidate on the convention slate for City Council in 1969, Mayor Hugh Addonizio decided to publicly humiliate him, by having Harris arrested in broad daylight for overdue parking fines (Harris 92) But Baraka and the United Brothers decided to support his campaign financially, and Harris agreed to run.

According to Mshauri, even the police officers apologized to Harris, saying that the orders had come directly from the mayor. Mshauri and the United Brothers decided to use their organizational funds to secure Harris’s release (Dulaney 131). Harris became one of the successful candidates in the 1970 drive for black political power. During that campaign he canvassed the poorest neighborhoods in the black community and promised that if they supported him he would rid the city of racism,

poverty, and drugs. Certainly, many thought of him as a man of the people who would keep his promises once elected. In sum, Earl Harris represented the ideal black candidate. Five years later, in 1974, Earl Harris became the president of the city council (Harris 200). When the Temple of Kawaida secured another \$10 million in the HUD mortgage commitments for 258 housing units in the Central Ward, the state knew Kawaida's development team could produce results (Kawaida... 229). The only requirement left was the tax abatement from the city of Newark.

Baraka described well the negative intention of Mayor Gibson and the team that worked with him on the project:

At the Housing Authority, the son-in-law of a Mafioso was the director. He took me into the conference room one afternoon and told me frankly. You take this architect, this consultant, and this construction firm and you go forward tomorrow, otherwise nothing. I told him all that was cool but how could I tell black people that I've been struggling for black development and then tell these are the people who're going to make a profit off this development? Gibson would do nothing but burp when he was told of these things (Autobiography... 393).

Not only did Baraka discover that the council headed by Gibson was corrupt to the bones but he showed his disappointment about the realization of the project as well because such a dirty practice applied by an officially elected black mayor would deeply undermine the black organizing and support of African American candidates at every election level in the future.

Yet, Baraka found it was urgent to solve the present deep crisis. While he knew that some white opposition would be orchestrated as the Temple of Kawaida began to develop the Central Ward housing, the exact public scenario that the underworld would use to take away those tens of millions designated for black development was still unknown (The Meaning... 117). Although the executive director of the NHA insisted that since the Central Ward was prepared for development, the Temple of Kawaida had to agree to front the development for the underworld. This revelation alarmed Baraka about the big shape of the conspiracy. While privately the Temple of Kawaida was being threatened by the mob, publicly, rather than white councilmen leading the charge against the Central ward development, there would be two black councilmen in the van of the opposition. The project was funded with federal and state guaranteed loans (Cheo 22). The only aspect of this development that had to come through the Newark City Council was the application for tax abatement.

Tax reduction policy was so vital for the promotion of this type of projects that in the case of the Temple of Kawaida, it became standard for the HUD housing program. Mayor Gibson's office sent the tax curtailment resolution to the city-council for its approval, and then one of the strangest episodes in Newark's black political history unfolded. Two black city councilmen joined with white city councilmen to oppose tax abatement for the housing development in the Central Ward: Jesse Allen, a former community organizer for the Students for a Democratic Society project, and Earl Harris, formerly of the Newark Black and Puerto Rican Convention (Phalon 10). Apparently, a number of the old guard black politicians had been involved in negotiations with the Newark Housing Authority, suggesting that if they blocked the

CAP from developing the land in the Central Ward, then several of that old guard would be named the sponsors for housing development with full Italian American political backing in Newark (Stevenson 273). Thus, it seemed that if the Newark Housing Authority could not convince the Temple of Kawaida to front the mob's development, it would find other black clients to act as buffers.

Both Allen and Harris made some strange statements against the Central Ward housing. Allen claimed that Newark needed no more housing. It is difficult to believe that Allen made that statement – in a city with the worst housing crisis in America. It is even harder to believe that he was ignorant enough to repeat it – but he consciously was since he was compiled to find any nonsense pretext to justify his opposition to the black housing project because of personally political and financial profits (Harris 218). Earl Harris used another set of tactics that revealed the depth of his involvement in that obstruction of black community development. The year before the Temple of Kawaida's application to the city for tax abatement, Harris instructed the city clerk to send a letter, dated October 16, 1974, to Patricia Q. Sheehan, a commissioner at the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, and William L. Johnson, executive director of the New Jersey Housing Finance Agency. Johnston was later investigated for improprieties connected with gambling debts he owed to the Mafia. Finally he was forced to resign (Stevenson 278). The letter said:

The Newark Municipal Council has been advised that the Temple of Kawaida is seeking governmental approval and financing for low and moderate income, medium density housing for projects located within the Central Ward Urban Renewal Project in the City of Newark. The Newark

Municipal Council has directed me to inform you that they are not disposed at this time to grant tax abatement for the above cited projects.

Very truly yours

Frank D'Ascensio

City Clerk (Blauner 159)

Next, Harris announced publicly that he had discovered that Imamu Baraka was a racial extremist, charged that Baraka was a dictator, and insisted that the Temple of Kawaida must never be allowed to build another development in Newark. He insisted that Newark was on the verge of a housing renaissance. He reportedly argued that “the next few years would see ‘one of the greatest renaissances in construction of needed housing in the city by men of good will and good faith, but not by those who seek to destroy, polarize and divide the country’” (Sullivan “Baraka...” 15). Harris explained that now he was the president of the City Council, a representative of “all the people,” and implied that Baraka and the CAP were to be purged from the public arena. Harris insisted that “the Council stood ready ‘to grant a tax abatement to any legitimate sponsor, other than Mr. Baraka’” (Phalon 11).

Reports that Mayor Kenneth Gibson and Earl Harris would betray the Kawaida development thrust began to surface in 1974. Baraka accused both men of participating in a crude shakedown with the mob. He also charged that those people wanted to get payoffs if they allowed housing to be built and that the City Council wrote the State a letter saying it was opposed to the construction of two story town houses for low and moderate income people on the vacant lots in the Central Ward (The Meaning... 119). Baraka argued that the year 1975 was the beginning of government cutbacks in the

housing development programs and that Newark would lose millions of dollars of that kind of mortgage finance, with subsidies for moderate and low income families, forever. Without the City's crucial approval of tax abatement for these town houses, the State would not release the \$10 million scheduled to construct 250 apartments that winter (Phalon 11). Tax abatement meant that non-profit housing projects did not pay tax so that the rents could remain low enough for low and moderate income family living. Baraka desperately fought for tax abatement because it was the key to the struggle of the people against City Hall resistance to the needs of the people, which was coming to a head on November 20th, at the City Council meeting (Kawaida... 229).

Three meetings showed the character of the government repression that Harris would mobilize against the Kawaida development plans. When a score of tenants from Newark's community approached the first city council meeting to discuss tax abatement for the project, the director of the Project Area Committee (PAC) was detained without charges by the police until the council meeting was over. In response, Baraka called for a massive protest at the November 20, 1975, City Council meeting of November 20, 1975. Council President Earl Harris created a police state in a tense city council meeting, when he was confronted by a mass of angry people united in a struggle to construct housing on the vacant lots in the Central Ward which had been embattled over the housing crisis and without decent housing, for the last decade (The Creation... 97).

In the presence of a host of people, Harris was challenged by Baraka who asked questions about his illegal financial dealings with big time developers, and the suffering it was causing the people of Newark to feed the vices of his infamous black political desire. Harris refused to answer any questions about his irregular political dealings, and when he was asked detailed questions about his rejection of the tax abatement necessary to construct housing for low-income families in the Central Ward, he resorted to calling in the city's tactical squad to intimidate the people he was supposedly elected to represent. When people would not be silenced by this display of fascist police tactics, Harris had police drag a dozen people out of the council meeting because they would not submit to the increasing exploitation that was carried on by the city council under Earl Harris everyday (Phalon 12).

Not only did Harris order mass arrest in that city council meeting but he made a ruling, later defeated by the courts, that no speaker before the city council could harshly criticize any of the councilmen during council sessions. Indeed, Baraka sarcastically called it "an illegal stand to call now any member of the city council a crook" (Adler and Colburn 140). This helped set the stage for the final showdown between Earl Harris and Baraka. On January 7, 1975, Mayor Gibson sent two letters to the city council, recommending tax abatement for each of the two housing projects sponsored by the Kawaida Community development corporation. He explained that "I find the proposed project meets a pressing need for housing in the City and hereby confer my approval for the granting of tax abatement" (Sullivan "Newark..."18). With that statement, Gibson effectively washed his hands of the matter; he knew what would happen next.

The showdown between Baraka and the Newark City Council came on February 5, 1975, the date that the council voted against tax abatement for the Temple of Kawaida housing developments. That vote meant the state and federal mortgage commitments that the Congress of African People had secured, along with the associated investments in community development, would be lost. The city council meeting was scheduled the time most people supporting the development were at work (The Creation... 100). So the CAP made a point of showing up at the meeting in full strength, and this time Amiri Baraka was one of the scheduled speakers. As the council meeting began, Earl Harris announced pointedly, “Decorum is the order of the day and slanderous remarks directed at any member of the council will not be tolerated. If you cause any disturbance, I will order you hauled out and arrested” (Novellino and Terrell 16).

The council chambers were tense. Everyone knew that Baraka and the CAP had gone through a dramatic political transformation, proclaiming themselves socialists. Baraka had developed a new and stinging critique of internal colonialism in Newark, charging that many of the black politicians created by the Modern Black Convention Movement had become neocolonial agents for white racism. In a speech that ended in his arrest, Baraka reviewed the history of Newark’s Black Revolt and the reasons why the black united front that took power in 1970 had disintegrated. Baraka charged that instead of black power, it had seen “black faces animated by white desires” (Steele 63).

According to Baraka, black people had been double-crossed by Earl Harris and Mayor Gibson on countless occasions. He boldly raised a series of direct and

pertinent questions about their suspected and even untrusting leadership. Addressing an excited, deceived, and angry black audience, Baraka wondered how black people's homes had been burned, how black people had been beaten by mobs with impunity in a city with a passive black executive, why there was a boom in downtown development with new office buildings and universities flourishing, while neither housing nor schools were developing for the black community, and finally what real difference a black mayor and black president of the city council had made (Mier 138). Further, Baraka accused the big corporations of playing a parasitic role in the city. He insisted that many of the problems were linked to the increasing class formation within the black community and a grouping gap that had removed one class of black people from the rest of the black community (Blauner 159).

Yet the problems did not stop with City Hall and the corporations. Baraka argued that more black faces in high places and assuming key responsibilities at the Newark Housing Authority meant nothing for the masses if they remained trapped in public housing, considered as "public dungeons" where they faced the "horror" of Newark as a "giant slum" (Novellino and Terrell 21). Since these black public officials had been unaccountable to the black community, they had deliberately caused the breakdown of the black united front, the basis for the Modern Black Convention Movement. Baraka accused again the black politicians of becoming "degenerate Negroes," who had used the offices created for them by the grassroots for "their own self aggrandizement and individual profit" (The Creation... 110).

For Baraka, Earl Harris had not only betrayed the cause of black people, but had sold his "soul" to the mob. He explained how he had spent three years putting

together ‘a complete package’ for the project in Newark’s community, and now it would all be lost because of the corruption and betrayal of Earl Harris. Baraka scolded the council by depicting it as a more oppressive body than its predecessors. He challenged Councilmen Earl Harris, James Sharpe, and Jesse Allen – whom he called ‘cafone,’ Italian slang for low-class – to courageously explain their ‘dirty’ actions and justify their attempts to block housing in areas where it was needed most (Sullivan “Baraka...” 19). Being unable to resist Baraka’s open defiance longer and visibly sunned by his revealing remarks, Harris admonished him to adhere to the stated rules, and as it was expected, ordered the arrest after Baraka uttered a profanity” (Novellino and Terrell 19). The angered Harris ordered the black socialist leader jailed. When Baraka’s wife Amina intervened, she and five other CAP members had been arrested too.

While Baraka and several of their comrades were booked in the police station, the Newark City Council voted 7-1 to reject tax abatement for Kawaida Community Development (Sullivan, “Newark...” 21). The lone dissenting vote was cast by South Ward Councilman James Sharpe, who would become the next mayor. Sharpe remarked that “the overriding important issue before us is the question of more or less housing for the city as opposed to our political differences” (Adler and Colburn 156). Earl Harris assured those present that the Newark Housing Authority had indicated construction of housing would begin on the Central Ward tracts within a few months. But its future would not be “dictated by the angry Kawaida ideology” (Wolak 243). Following his release, Amiri Baraka commented, “We’re not guilty of anything, we’re just protesting the fact that no housing is being built in the Central Ward”

(Kawaida... 231). Given these political circumstances, the Central Ward community development became hopelessly entangled in bureaucratic red tape and legal malaise.

In this study of black politics in Newark, it can be wondered about the sincerity of the reasons given by Earl Harris and Mayor Gibson for their abandonment of the Kawaida developments. Ironically, their stated reasons for abandoning Baraka seemed unjustified, since they joined with him at a time when he was more militant and much less willing to compromise. By 1974 Baraka and the CAP showed increasing signs of accommodation and willingness to work within the system (Curvin 126). Baraka had begun to make stronger efforts to allay fears of a black takeover while still insisting on black advancement. In this line, the use of white contractors and professionals on the Kawaida was necessary to accommodate to political exigencies.

At any rate, the Black Power experiment in Newark was over. Within a few months the funding for Kawaida Towers, Kawaida Community Development, the PAC, and the African Free School was withdrawn, and those programs were dismantled (Adler and Colburn 209). The NHA had the building that housed the PAC office, CAP's theater and television studio training program, the headquarters of the National Black Assembly and the African Liberation Support Committee, and classrooms for the African Free School demolished. In 1976, the New Jersey Housing Finance Agency buried the \$1.5 million foundation of Kawaida Towers (Blair 296).

To sum up, the Kawaida Towers project epitomized the practical, progressive edge of black power politics. CAP organizers gathered a gifted, multiracial team of architects, attorneys, and contractors to address immediate housing shortages and to

carve out more meaningful, livable space in postindustrial Newark. Baraka and CAP activists obtaining financing from both the Department of Housing and Urban Development and New Jersey's Housing Finance Agency to construct a sixteen story, low-to-moderate income housing complex in Newark's dominant Italian North Ward. A political crisis quickly unfolded over whether the city should grant tax reduction to the project. As tension from conservative local whites augmented, support from local black politicians untangled (Harris 225). Gibson's initial support vacillated while city councilman Earl Harris's opposition to the project was definitive. The Newark city council's expected refusal of Baraka's curtailment proposal derailed the scheme and announced the breakdown of radical influence over local black politicians

While these local developments established the background for the radicalization of Baraka's politics of cultural nationalism, they also weakened the political stronghold that gave power to his projection as a black national leader. The Modern Black Convention Movement began to experience serious political and ideological fissures in 1974 (Roark, et al. 208). As the 1976 national elections neared, the rift within the National Black Assembly leadership became even more intense. On the one hand, a number of black elected officials shifted from an allegiance to independent politics toward loyalty to the Democratic Party. On the other hand, Baraka's Congress of African People shifted from nationalism to national communism (Broder 183). In the national political arena, the Congress of African people examined the results of the Black Power experiment and charged that it had died at the hands of traitorous black elected officials.

In Baraka's analysis, internal colonialism, when faced with the challenge of Black Power, had changed into neocolonialism (Steele 96). In addition, Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Nation of Islam, died in February 1975. Amiri Baraka resigned his position as the general secretary of the National Black Assembly in December 1975. Both the African Liberation Support Committee and the Black Women's United Front were in disarray resulting from sectarian conflicts in 1976 (Baraka, Hard... 112).

By 1975 it had become generally accepted by all that Baraka had renounced black nationalism in favor of "scientific socialism" (Wolfe 265). No longer committed to Kawaïda, Baraka had become a disciple of what he called "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong" thought. What may have appeared to be a rather sudden move to the left was actually a change of heart that had been developing for several years. Baraka's disappointment with Newark Mayor Kenneth Gibson and the National Black Convention led to his conclusion that black nationalism did not serve grassroots community as it was originally intended to be. In an explicit way, Baraka concluded that black nationalism failed in its mission to bring practical results. He was withered by the establishmentarian policies of Newark's first black mayor, who had been elected in part through a black nationalist appeal that Baraka himself had fashioned.

Although to his credit Gibson had never identified himself as a black nationalist, the black nationalist sentiments then sweeping throughout black electoral success including Newark, created the political climate for his initial electoral success. By using his organization to register and transport voters to the polls, Baraka had played

a critical role in Gibson's first election. But Baraka had naively assumed that once in office, a black mayor would run city hall for Newark's black and Puerto Rican residents. Gibson himself thought Baraka was "naïve in believing black government in Newark could work revolutionary change" (Golin 122) then, when Baraka discovered that Gibson intended to govern the largest city in New Jersey according to liberal pragmatic political strategies – which meant not alienating those corporate interest left in Newark - Baraka realized the limitations of his nationalist analytical framework.

Baraka's adherence to black nationalism had blinded him to the significance of class differences in the black community as well as the different political interests arising from these class distinctions. Baraka's black nationalist thought did not take account of the preventing economic and social structures that limited the political options confronting blacks like Mayor Gibson who had entered establishmentarian power circles. Baraka had assumed that the United States was governed by a power elite that had unlimited powers over the whole range of social policies.

Baraka's experiences with the National Black Convention allowed him to see at first hand the opportunism governing so much of the political behavior of established black elected officials. The rush of some black elected officials to revoke their commitment to the Gary Convention taught Baraka that Mayor Gibson could not be an exception. Rather, the problem lay in the logic of electoral politics in which candidates sought personal gain and influence through compromise (Harris 237). Compromises meant engineered consensus, and consensus in American politics consistently excluded the protection of those concerns most dear to impoverished

black Americans. Gibson's unwillingness to try to expand the boundaries of Newark's governing consensus ultimately rendered his mayoralty of little benefit to the city's poor.

During this period of disillusionment with black electoral politics, Baraka was increasingly exposed to theories of African socialism, particularly those of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sekou Touré of the Republic of Guinea, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (Baraka, Black People... 145). The writings of these African political thinkers convinced him that there was nothing racially demeaning in appropriating the ideas of Karl Marx.

Amiri Baraka's rejection of black nationalism marked one of the most definitive points of Black Power's existence because his journey toward cultural nationalism had been paradigmatic in the development of the Black Revolt. The demise of Baraka's leadership was evidently caused by the vicious amalgam between white racism and black officials' betrayal during Newark's black housing projects. Perhaps his most enduring impact on contemporary politics, however, is the leadership that emerged from organizations he founded or inspired. Many former black intellectual leaders of the CAP, ALSC, BWUF and NBPA became local, state, regional, and national leaders of the National Black United Front and of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition (Allen 311). Baraka's odyssey from the Black Arts Movement to Black Power and beyond, offered an impressive inside view of the dynamics of the mass political and cultural nationalist movements for black liberation in the late twentieth century.

The waning of Baraka's leadership was signaled by his former colleagues who were furious with his ideological reversal. Realizing that any changes in his ideology would mean a modification in the ideology of the CAP, many black nationalists resigned from the organization. Through this unexpected repudiation, Baraka was going to be the target of those who supported him during the heyday of black cultural nationalism. Their opposition to Baraka's political mutation can be interpreted through their warning that the ideology of the leader was the ideology of the organization which worked as long as the leader was strong and positive, but what usually happens is that ideological development is resultantly tied to the personal development of the individual leader rather than to the collective development of the entire organization. Ultimately, Baraka promptly reacted to those unfavorable events when he responded to his adversaries:

I wasn't an elected official, I wasn't a mayor or wasn't a congressman, but I was a black nationalist, I was an activist...because of our organizing, our...pleading with people to come and...be part of the whole political development. And I thought it was important that the thing not fly apart. Can we do that? (Eyes...)

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CONCLUSION

By broadening historical parameters of black cultural nationalism, the thesis has explored the origins of Baraka's Intellectual activism which tried to deliver on its promise of black rights and the subsequent rise of Baraka as such. Baraka's intellectual formation moved through very distinct stages. Challenging the view that it was the inflammatory rhetoric of Black Power and the rising demands of black activists that derailed the civil rights movement, the present work has documented the efforts Black Power activists including Baraka to construct a vital and effective socio-political movement that combined black nationalism's analysis of racism's constitutive role in American society with an agenda of grassroots community organizing and empowerment.

On issues ranging from public education to welfare, Baraka's intellectual role was to remake black political landscape. In contrast to the top-down middle class leadership of traditional black intellectual groups, Baraka fundamentally altered the composition of black leadership in his community to include a new cohort of neighborhood-based working class and female black community activists. Baraka increasingly called for a "radical redistribution of political and economic power" not only in the USA but in the Third World as well.

Two important reasons held center stage in black cultural nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s: the Black Art Movement and Black Power which grounded well of a deepening African American commitment in their society. The thesis has explored two linked themes. First, the black intellectual's involvement in the dynamics of cultural nationalism and second, the relationship between the different black

intellectual groups who shaped a specific image about the concerned era and Baraka's main stream cultural movement. The work has attempted to weave together local, national, and international events to offer an illuminating chronicle of the movements linked with Baraka's role demonstrating how his radicalized components both found common sense and provoked antipathies.

Motivated by bitter racial experiments, Baraka rejected all forms of integrationist strategies, and instead, worked alongside blacks at the front of the struggle to construct a new paradigm of social and political change. His compelling examples of intellectual activism and leadership expanded the definition of political action to include his political work in both the public and private spheres. To emphasize the actions taken by Baraka's activism, an attempt has been made to simplify the complex relationship between race, activism, and political culture, and to identify factors that simultaneously hindered and facilitated grassroots efforts at social and political change.

Committed to a cultural revolt, Baraka was an organizer and grassroots leader who preached the gospel of black art in his political pursuits. For him, "art is revolutionary and insists on the whole world as its measure and the equality of its being. It demanded and forced in the human consciousness the outline of the whole self of the world." At the same time, he did not remain completely closed to self-criticism and change in his intellectual practice and personal life. He was often labeled an ardent provocateur who never attempted to replicate the hierarchies of power he explicitly sought to undermine. Although he was willing to risk his freedom and safety, he was unwilling to risk questioning the basic assumptions that defined

intellectual life and work. This history of contradictions is the history of the dynamics of black cultural nationalism.

Black cultural nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s was a long struggle which characterized its permanent dynamics. The role of blacks whether intellectuals or grassroots was significant in the sense that the two major sections forming that community became aware of their nationality formation and consequently very conscious of the hardships they encountered during their search for identity, purpose and direction that shaped cultural nationalism. Baraka at this stage understood that these differences did not represent a hindrance to realize common aspirations as an important community in the United States. His experience in the field was not new and the experiments of fight with the antagonist were not without effect because it was these experiments that preserved his role in the dynamics of cultural nationalism.

One of the most important political experiments of Baraka occurred in black cultural nationalism. He admitted that before the assemblies, the politics of cultural nationalism was confined to small circles of students and artists. However, Baraka considered black urban uprisings between 1965 and 1970 a galvanizer of a new generation in the struggle for liberation. For him, the massive tumult of the ghetto revolts set the stage for the fusion between the nationalism of small circles of radical artists and intellectuals and the nationalism of the broad urban masses. As a member of a militant generation, Baraka came out of that explosive mix, demanding self-determination, self-respect, and self-defense. In the midst of the uprisings, he adopted the politics of the Modern Black Convention Movement which had taken form

unleashing the dynamics of nationality formation and raised the slogan “It’s Nation Time!”

The foundation of the Modern Black Convention Movement was twofold: the black united front, and the black and Puerto Rican alliance. The first black move was embodied in the broad and vital black united front developed by Baraka’s repertory group, the Spirit House Movers and Players, and his political organs, the United Brothers and the Committee For A Unified NewArk. Baraka’s initiative attracted hundreds of community organizations, trade unions, student associations, and circles of artists and intellectuals and gathered mass assemblies to fashion an independent black political agenda. It was distinguished from a multitude of other conference resolutions because the grassroots ultimatum of that movement was not simply rhetoric. Instead, Baraka expected it to be a plan of action. He supported the 1968 Black Political Convention which produced a strategy for Black Power, ran candidates for municipal office, and galvanized the black community behind the politics of nationality formation. Baraka’s enthusiasm was reflected in the 1969 black and Puerto Rican convention which established a common agenda between those communities and ran a slate of candidates which won the municipal election in June 1970.

Alongside the black united front at the foundation of the Modern Black Convention Movement in Newark, was the black and Puerto Rican alliance in the struggle for municipal power. Beginning with a Mutual Defense Pact between Baraka’s CFUN and the Young Lords, it developed into the November 1969 Black and Puerto Rican Political Convention. That alliance endured through the racial

crisis in which the veterans of the Young Lords Party were reliable allies against the threat of white terror. The black united front and black and Puerto Rican alliance at the local level served as a strong base for a national movement.

Baraka attempted to form a national political community through the dynamics of the Modern Black Convention Movement in the 1970s. His politics of cultural nationalism resulted in the emergence of numerous national organizations, including Baraka's Congress of African People, the Black Women's United Front, the African Liberation Support Committee, and the National Black Assembly. At each attended assembly, Baraka urged African Americans to embrace their diversity, consolidate a sense of political community, celebrate their solidarity, and chart their future as an "indivisible nation." As an illustration, Baraka pioneered through the Modern Black Convention Movement in Newark a creative and open-ended experiment in urban politics that combined elements of cultural nationalism with radical political economy. At the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, delegates from around the nation put together a broad political agenda of black liberation and urban reform.

One of the mainstays of the Modern Black Convention Movement is Baraka's Congress of African People (CAP). As a leader of this organization, he took steps to implement the key resolutions of the black assemblies between summit meetings. From all around the country, he attracted a dedicated core of members who practiced the customs and values of cultural nationalism. Baraka made of the CAP an extensive national organization whose aim was to reach a great number of cities with black population concentrations. Baraka wanted to train young men and women to lead

CAP's organizational branches. These people eventually responded to local conditions and fashioned schools, cooperatives, institutions, associations, and networks in order to flesh out Baraka's program of self-determination, self-respect, and self-defense.

Furthermore, Baraka's intention in supporting the MBCM was to spread black nationalism in the major urban centers of America in a number of ways. Much of his political mobilization centered on the demand for regional autonomy through elected officials. The centerpiece of the black community agitation was the "Stop Killer Cops" program which organized black people to resist police brutality. Baraka also proposed the African Free School as solution to the serious educational crisis in the ghetto. The institutional development of the Modern Black Convention Movement practically adopted the Black Arts. In addition to drama and poetry, this movement developed local radio and television program, and national publishing companies and newspapers to spread the politics of cultural nationalism. The most popular nationalist ritual developed is the Kwanzaa celebration.

If the measure of an intellectual activist as Baraka was to speed the process of turning a particular population into a nationality, then the Modern Black Convention Movement played an outstanding role in the Black Power insurgency. Considering the following major criteria upon which any strong nationalist movement functions: a dedicated hard core imbued with the new nationalist values and tastes, an array of institutions and organizations, a set of clearly articulated myths and rituals, and a

fairly broad diffusion in the cities, the politics of black cultural nationalism played a critical role in nationality formation between 1965 and 1975.

The Modern Black Convention Movement was a vital component for the Black Power Movement which included the cultural, political, and economic programs developed by the Black Arts Movement which was pioneered by Amiri Baraka, the Black Panther Party, the US Organization, the Republic of New Africa, the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Nation of Islam, the Organization of Afro-American Unity, and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Together, these cultural and political formations galvanized millions of black people in the broadest movement in African American history. High school and college youth organized black student unions, professors and educators created black studies program, athletes mobilized protests against poverty and racism, workers fashioned militant unions, and soldiers resisted army discipline.

The Black Revolt was so thoroughgoing and the black Cultural Revolution was so unprecedented that it is difficult to understand how these developments can be trivialized by serious scholars. Perhaps because Baraka tried to raise through the politics of liberation the most profound aspirations for emancipation which were at that time unattainable. While Baraka became involved in some of the most creative experiments in the politics of liberation in America, a look at the conditions in the black ghetto immediately demonstrates that Black Power did not liberate African Americans from the yoke of poverty and oppression. African Americans were the most humiliated people in modern world history. Baraka himself enforced this image by arguing that many of the political forces and economic institutions which had

enslaved, conquered, and colonized them flourished for a long time. Thus, he reached a conclusion that black liberation, the process of emancipating blacks from racial oppression, would be a protracted and extremely complex struggle.

Consequently, the critical question cannot be whether or not Baraka's Modern Black Convention Movement emancipated black people. The more relevant issue is whether or not Baraka's participation accelerated the process of nationality formation and black liberation, and whether or not his cooperation with the various organizations hastened the death of white racism and internal "colonialism." A crucial part of the phenomenon then was the humiliation of slavery and colonialism. In Baraka's opinion, psychological liberation and cultural revolution remained essential components within the process of black liberation. By that measure, Baraka's period was a positively sustained quest for black freedom and for the abolition of racial oppression.

Baraka's role in black cultural nationalism focused national attention on the key problem, the ghetto. He remarked that in the twentieth century, African Americans were urbanized and modernized in a very separate manner, laying the modern foundations for a distinct black national political community. He also noticed that in the ghetto black America further developed into one of America's most distinct language communities. This development was due to African Americans who had moved to northern urban industrial centers in great numbers and raised their level of education. As a reaction, urban bureaucratic ethnic boundaries would amalgamate with white racism to exclude a rising group of educated black Americans. The emerging black intelligentsia increasingly sought to establish parallel institutional

developments where it might find appropriate positions. Baraka drew a valid conclusion that the pace of black nationality development speeded as African Americans were urbanized.

During the Black Power era, Baraka took advantage of that momentum by proposing a strategy of black liberation which involved struggles for regional autonomy in urban centers, an alliance with oppressed colored people in the United States, particularly Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans, the agitation against incidents of police brutality and against the failure of government services that dramatized the conflict between the municipal bureaucracies and the black community.

Some scholars consider Baraka's appraisal of the situation of the black ghetto in America an exception of pessimism. While it is true that Baraka's politics of cultural nationalism found racial integration into white America implausible, he made a sober assessment of the urban crisis for black America. This gloomy picture is confirmed by the size and segregation of the black ghetto since neither of the major political parties, Republican or Democratic, proposed a solution to American "Apartheid". Desegregation was permanently excluded from the national political agenda.

Baraka was confident about the capacity of African Americans to solve their own problems. He criticized those blacks who passively waited for whatever some political candidates might decide on their behalf what the pressing issues were in the next election. Baraka encouraged the black conventions to seize the initiative in their own hands in order to determine and define the pressing concerns which they felt

were most important, speaking in a language that they well understood. In that process, he hoped they would identify and distinguish the immediate interests and goals of the black national community. Baraka's success lied in those black assemblies which represented such an effective political presence. They were not only militant but they established their own agendas as well. Baraka's movement then gave priority to the problems of black America. He found that as blacks and Puerto Ricans migrated to urban industrial centers like Newark, the metropolis was in the midst of a post-industrial transformation. Many of those who labored hard in factories languished unemployed in the shadow of affluent corporate centers, subjugated by the horror of poverty and the violence of total despair.

While black America was entangled in the ghetto, Baraka was outraged by the federal urban policies of the New Deal and the Great Society and the post-industrial investment strategies of the corporate world which combined their forces to shower their bounty on white suburbs. While offering African American urban centers profound neglect, an unprecedented combination of both public and private investments in the segregated suburbs fashioned the modern structures of American "Apartheid". That contemporary face of "internal colonialism" was attacked by Baraka because it greatly contributed to shaping the deep inequalities. Baraka discovered that upper-class and middle-class white communities invested a great deal in their public and private schools, libraries, cultural centers, theaters, museums, and shopping malls for their youth, while the children of the black and Puerto Rican ghettos were subjected to shocking poverty and hopelessness. The walls of racism,

hatred, and indifference surrounding the two minorities compelled Baraka to denounce their exclusion from the great wealth of America.

That sad picture was encountered by the involvement of mass social mobilization for black self-government at the municipal level and for proportional representation at higher levels of government. From these semi-autonomous urban enclaves, Baraka's CAP sought to accelerate the process of black nationality formation through the rapid spread of independent black economic, institutional, cultural, social, and political developments. One basic driving force in that process of nationality formation was the increasing degree of conflict between the black communities on the one hand and both the welfare and police bureaucracies on the other. Another major driving force in that process was the collapse of basic government and commercial services in the second ghettos. In response, Baraka's strategy was to develop parallel black institutions in that void left by the urban crisis, emphasizing the failure of the American government and mainstream economy in providing basic services and offering black nationalism and cooperative economics as rational alternatives.

Many of the serious social and economic problems of the urban centers were inherited by black people. When cultural, intellectual and financial resources were concentrated in American cities, the white upper and middle classes fled most of those urban centers leaving behind them an unsolved urban crisis. When the abandoned cities became devoid of white cultural and material resources the cities, it was plausible to assign black people that awesome responsibility. To assume responsibility, blacks needed an adequate guidance because as a ghetto community,

they found themselves isolated and marginalized.

It is not astonishing that the appalling disparities in the American school system made a mocking contradiction of equal opportunity and democracy. Black ghettos existed for a century and that, like slavery, they would not disappear: an emphasis on the role of American “Apartheid” in the making of the underclass and the establishment of a permanently “internal colonialism”. In the face of these problems, Baraka stressed on cultural, political, and economic autonomy but it was not enough. With his politics of liberation, Baraka sought to change the walls of Black America’s prison into the boundaries of its free city.

Baraka viewed the effective leadership in black America as the one which addressed contemporary issues. For instance, in schooling and employment, the key problem in the black community is that the schools simply reproduced the inequalities in the occupational and societal structures. That system treated students on the basis of their racial status and class origins. The children of wealthy managers were cultivated to become the next generation of the upper class as well as high status professionals. Moreover, too many of the children of the oppressed were trained to take their place at the bottom of the post-industrial ladder in the low paying service sector of the economy, or even worse, in the ranks of the permanently unemployed and in the prisons. Baraka inferred that schooling institutions were so compartmentalized that they placed emphasis on strict rules and repressive behavioral controls. There was no wonder that many black children in the working class deliberately avoided going to school.

The most reactionary sectors of the business class stressed the kind of education that fit certain categories of people to work for the lowest wages. Those were the groups which fell in the lowest sector of the working class. Many of them were women and people of color. Increasingly, there was an expanding bottom of the social pyramid for unemployed youth. Their schooling was more and more like detention and they were being prepared to spend their time later in real prison. Unfortunately, too many liberals and moderates who witnessed what was happening to those children watched in political paralysis.

Baraka proposed some alternatives. First, blacks needed the type of schooling that would educate them to struggle against that negative system. Second, they needed the kinds of institutions that would produce an alternative agenda, an order of priorities from below, including decent employment and dignified and affordable housing, child care and health care. Third, at the bottom of such a process of grassroots agenda building were people in struggle, working step by step in mutual respect toward common understandings of social, political, cultural, and economic emancipation. Baraka was convinced that the real task of black schools was normally to teach people all the thinking, study, and research skills so that they might develop their own agendas together from below. He favored that kind of education which would also teach them how to work together to resist the disastrous imperatives of racism and capitalism.

Baraka was also alarmed by the danger of impoverished youth which was reflected by the guilty post-industrial economy of denying many inner-city youths the rites of passage that were markers of adulthood in industrial societies, particularly a

decent job and the income to establish a household. Baraka observed that the case of these frustrated and desperate youths was so appalling that in their turn, they were accused of being the direct cause in the establishment of racial and ethnic conflict, and violence resulting in prison terms. By contrast, they needed assistance in developing alternative structures and in struggling for alternative values which facilitated their coming together in the fight for democracy, economic justice, community development, and personal dignity. As far as Baraka's Congress of African People was concerned, it attempted to strategically provide an alternative value system that bound peoples together with new identity, purpose, and direction.

One lesson to learn from Baraka's commitment to black cultural nationalism is that creative experimentation with organizations, agendas, and institutions was a way forward. Another lesson from that period is that African Americans had a great storehouse of creative energy and that urban youth had tremendous untapped potential that was essential to the regeneration of black America. When college students, artists, and intellectuals intervene on the side of the grassroots, a great deal was possible. There was a great deal to be learned from the past experiments in black self-determination.

Baraka maintained that to close the door to the participation of black people with different ideologies or religions was to destroy the possibility of ending this urban catastrophe. Furthermore, while the ideological divergence and interchange between the cultural nationalists and the revolutionary nationalists were legitimate, Baraka plainly stood against the violent warfare between those two factions that reached a level of irresponsibility bordering upon treason. It turned the black

liberation movement into a plaything in the hands of the police who skillfully sought to expand the fratricidal bloodshed.

African Americans formed one of the largest national communities in the United States. They had distinct national interests in both domestic and foreign policy. Those issues and concerns were articulated at the 1972 Gary Convention in several interesting areas such as human development, economics, communications and culture, rural development, environmental protection, politics and international policy. Baraka had a deep understanding of those interests and maintained that national leadership could move its sights beyond petty sectarian interests. That kind of leadership was a responsibility that required national vision. He proposed an initial agenda on the development of a network of people to engage in coordinated and collective analysis of the contemporary conditions and future prospects of black life in the 1970s.

As an intellectual activist and leader, Baraka was one of those who grasped the complexity of the African American situation. This remark is applicable to those of his generation as well. By comparison, the intellectuals and radical theorists of the 1920s and 1930s did not fight for intellectual clarity and thus were incapable of establishing a black revolutionary synthesis of what was applicable from Garveyism, especially economic nationalism. They could have laid the foundation for a new school of revolutionary ideas, which, if developed and well exploited, would have maintained a programmatic continuity between the issues and events of the 1920s and the black movements of the 1950s and 1960s. The young African American

intellectuals of that period would probably not be facing a theoretical and intellectual vacuum.

Millions of Africans suffered under the humiliation and exploitation of colonialism. Baraka in the African Liberation Support Committee played an important role in backing the independence struggles of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Zimbabwe. That support was part of an international plan to isolate South African apartheid so that it would be overthrown. Those victories did not fall from the sky. They required both an elaborate strategy and a long struggle. That successful strategy illuminated what African American leadership and mobilization could do. As a declaration of independence from the American state and of solidarity with Third World liberation movements, opposition to colonialism was an important expression of Baraka's radicalism. For Baraka, an anti-colonial position was both a logical expression of his previous moral and ideological commitments and a reflection of his increasingly radical perspective on the black struggle and American society.

Baraka supported the idea that despite their different doctrinal thoughts, African American intellectuals and grassroots alike were at least internally convinced of the fact that the great people whose ancestors and their allies arose in moral outrage to destroy the evil of slavery, would certainly rise again and again until they succeeded to acquire their absolute rights and enjoy the same degree of material prosperity as the rest of Americans. As a politically engaged scholar, he embraced and sought to contribute to a long tradition of black intellectual activism. Being situated in Newark, he was well aware that he labored in the historical and intellectual shadow of perhaps

the most celebrated of these black activists, Malcolm X. As Baraka would later explain that the movement came into existence as a result of a commitment to the hopes and plans of the dead yet living people in the black intellectual community, most notably Malcolm X. It was not difficult for African Americans to remember and recount Malcolm X's activism toward the development of the Black Experience. By the time of Malcolm's assassination, Baraka's variant of black nationalism emphasized militant political engagement.

As a cultural nationalist of the mid-1960s and 1970s, Baraka was one who viewed the essence of a nation as its distinct civilization, generated by its unique history and culture. Explicitly, he understood that the nation was an organic entity, a natural solidarity expressing the spirit of a people. Such a cultural nationalist emphasized the importance of winning some measure of self-determination in order to create the conditions for the flowering of the black personality. Moreover, Baraka defined his cultural nationalism as a movement of moral regeneration which sought to re-unite the different aspects of the nation – traditional and modern.

Within this context, Baraka's influence on the political dynamics of cultural nationalism was manifest, immediate, and essential. The most important dimension of this black intellectual's avocation was his role in developing the politics of black cultural nationalism. He galvanized a second Black Renaissance, the Black Arts Movement, both individually and through the movement that he nurtured among black artists. He made an indelible contribution to modern African American culture and consciousness. His ideological and political metamorphosis into a militant political activist in the mid-1960s was influential as that of preceding influential black

intellectuals. The shared agreement is that Baraka was the committed artist par excellence. This commitment was due to his internal and external formative political influences in the form of an interesting and rich political and cultural patchwork.

Amiri Baraka sought to give guidance to the grassroots militancy during a turbulent era. Through his intellectual activism, he attempted to bridge the divide between black leaders and mobilized black masses. His main contribution to the black nationalist movement was to associate the tradition of Black Revolt with the mass movements of his time. As he observed the intensifying white socio-economic oppression against black people in the 1960s and 1970s, he managed to establish his own philosophy that would be used as guidance to improve the fragile relationship between black leadership and the grassroots. Although Baraka continued to challenge the American society as a whole, he also became increasingly critical of the national black leaders' lack of determination and positive result immediacy.

Baraka's efforts forged ties with grassroots activists. His intellectual legacy became a diverse set of ideas that had both conservative and radical implications - ideas that encouraged revolutionary enthusiasm. As an intellectual activist, he popularized the brand of rhetorical militancy, and succeeded in building politically an effective nationalist movement. His militancy produced lasting ideological and cultural contributions within the black militant community. Intending to create a unified and revolutionary black movement, he was determined to make of his ideas the basis of racial unity. He was a product of his time rather than an agent of historical change. His philosophy was not only ideas about political strategies and racial destiny

but also about ways of organizing black communities. He was a black organizer who established a model of community mobilization that emphasized the nurturing of grassroots leaders and organizations.

Baraka's project unleashed the power of communities, allowing residents to become confident of their collective ability to overcome oppression. He was one who learned in such a personal way to epitomize within himself all the other things his generation learned either empirically or vicariously. Perhaps more than any other figure of his age, Baraka's activist and artistic career embodies many of the contradictions and broader political challenges of developing popular democratic politics that intellectual activists continue to face. Baraka's Black Power activism was intimately linked to mass mobilizations that sought to challenge domination and transform public institutions into more democratic and responsive bodies. His substantive contributions to late twentieth century black politics and American radicalism are significant.

Despite formidable handicaps, Baraka was able to rise above crushing disabilities to progressively reverse an established status quo in order to create for black people worldwide alternate choices. These choices were embodied freedom movements, ideology of self-reliance, belief in common cultural affinity, and belief in a unified political destiny of racial greatness. However, perfection is an impossible quality to attain. Attempt to correct what is wrong is essential. As a black intellectual activist, Baraka succeeded to draw the attention and disturb the mind of those who opposed any dynamics to change the black status in the United States. He was blocked in many circles from receiving the kind of legitimacy its substance deserved.

Some critics pretend that Baraka failed in his mission of cultural nationalism because of his tough and uncompromising philosophy. Baraka had an important share in keeping in motion the political dynamics in black cultural nationalism between 1965 and 1975 before embracing Marxism.

Although Baraka's movement has been criticized by being trapped within a maze of contradictions, it succeeded in providing breathtaking possibilities for action which African Americans seized and expanded. It also created opportunities for blacks to be culturally more visible. Baraka, for the most part, succeeded where others had failed to recognize how the culture of protest sought to elevate a freedom movement, bent on gaining autonomy, nationality formation, and black pride.

Baraka's objective to put principles into practice and to learn through errors was not due to lack of continuity in the movement. As a pioneering member of the Black Arts Movement, Baraka remained in positions of influence throughout the 1970s and shepherded his movement through successive periods of growth and change. As a leader and a longtime activist, he successfully passed on critical knowledge about using the stratagems of direct action as a tool for social change. This information allowed black cultural nationalism to build on its experience and develop increasingly effective forms of resistance.

By exploring what black intellectuals discovered and passed on by focusing on what Baraka did rather than only what he wrote and said, the present study concludes that action was, above all else, the distinguishing feature of Baraka's movement. As a well-experimented activist, Baraka explained in the early 1970s that the power of

protest of black cultural movement stemmed the actions it undertook, not from its political statements or the private beliefs and associations of its participants. Engaging in acts of resistance placed Baraka in direct confrontation with the state. Resistance was also a performance designed to influence black public opinion. He was a central part of the radical conception of black politics and a vivid expression of the movement's cultural values. Baraka's actions lied in how to create a vanguard political culture that would challenge the most fundamental relations of power in the American society.

Despite Baraka's setbacks, his ideas on cultural nationalism and its relationship with Black Art and black activism played a vivid complexity in the concrete activism he was involved in. Again, the actions he undertook, more than rhetoric, remain the most valid telling, and compelling evidence of what he attempted, what he achieved, and where he felt short. When his actions as well as his words are examined, they underlie contradictions that plagued the history of this idealistic movement for black socio-political change. The black cultural movement came close to challenging the basic relationships of power in twentieth-century American life. Some of its inability to root out the causes of injustice and racism reflected forces beyond the power and control of that movement. Yet internal decisions and cultural assumptions worked in favor of Baraka's influence. Despite imperfections, his intellectual activism went so far and all his cultural displays were highly valued by a large margin of blacks who identified themselves with Baraka's struggle. His cultural forces of rebellion ultimately stood against the fault lines of inequality that divided and still divide American society at large.

The dynamics of black cultural nationalism guaranteed new concepts and strategies that worked in favor of black grassroots. Now, the accepted evidence is based on the theory that what emanates from African Americans is expected to be radical because it shakes the foundations of the American Establishment and, therefore, there should be no astonishment if the dynamics of black cultural nationalism are given the label of “radicalization” and so are black intellectuals including Amiri Baraka who remains one of the most despised activists by those whites who oppose the black racial advancement in America.

At his most creative moments, Baraka’s cultural nationalist contribution resulted in a meaningful political engagement and positively affected African-American politics. The purposive political actions undertaken by Baraka were instructional. Nonetheless, this work is supposed to be a guiding discussion on the dynamics of black cultural nationalism based on both the ideological and practical activities at local and national levels led by one of the most important political and cultural figures in the post-World War II United States, Amiri Baraka. This work’s approach opens a new and productive area of inquiry in the concerned field.

The thesis has ultimately attempted to situate this controversial intellectual activist and artist within an historical context and assess his political legacy. The work is part of a small but growing literature that revisits the black radical politics of the sixties and seventies. It advances a debate on black cultural nationalism which is long overdue. Likewise, it addresses Baraka as a political artist and creative activist. While a number of studies examine his literary potential, until now few have considered his extensive involvement in electoral politics, protests, and community

development initiatives. The research has attempted to demonstrate how the 25 years between Baraka's emergence in the 1960s and his continual influence in the mid-1970s can also be read as a general commentary on the condition of black intellectuals and their significant influence on the dynamics of cultural nationalism.

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