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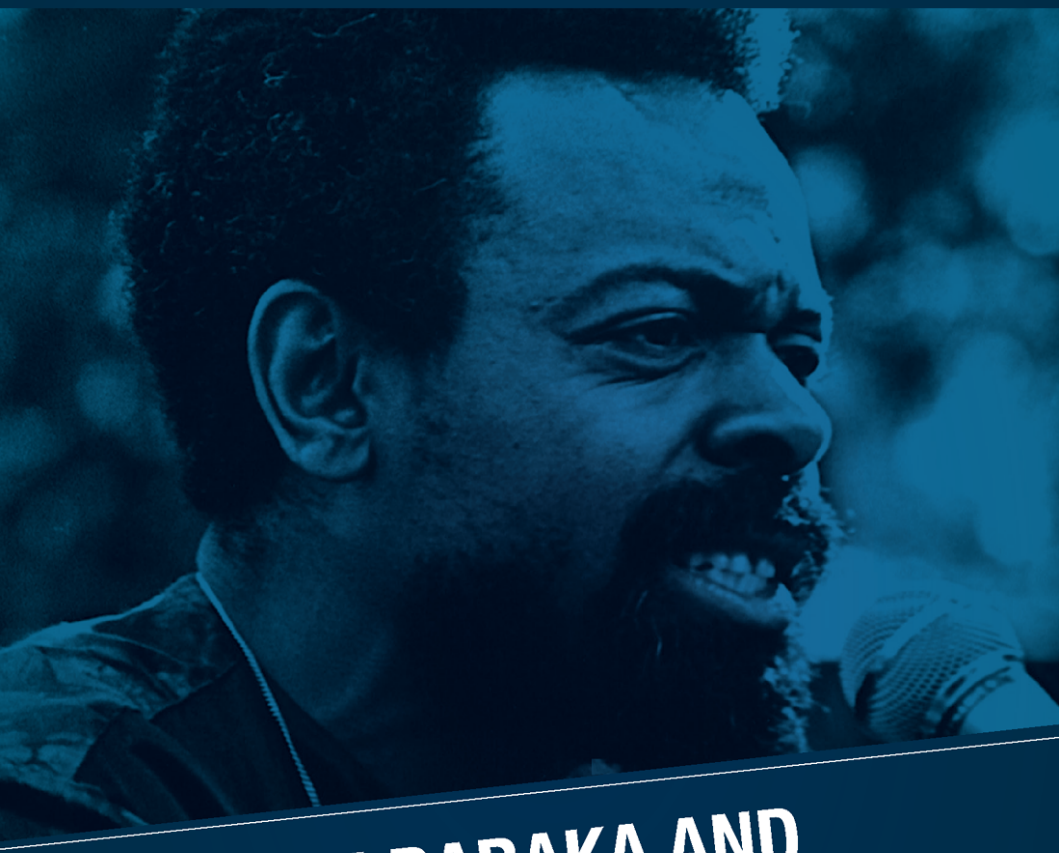

AMIRI BARAKA AND THE CONGRESS OF AFRICAN PEOPLE

HISTORY AND MEMORY

MICHAEL SIMANGA

Contemporary Black History

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Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People: History and Memory
By Michael Simanga

Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People

History and Memory

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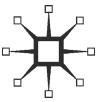

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For the women and men of the Congress of African People

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As in all things that travel from the mind—as an idea into the world, as an actual thing—this work required many hands to get this book to you the reader. I am grateful for the help of all of those I'm about to name and for many more whose names aren't called here.

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Leader. As a precocious teen activist/poet, I wrote Imamu Amiri Baraka and asked if I could come to Newark to study with him and the Congress of African People. He said, "If you can get here, you can be here." I went with the intention to stay but Imamu asked me to go back to Detroit and work there and in the midwest building CAP. That was the beginning of more than 40 years of leadership, consul, teaching, friendship, and inspiration from Amiri Baraka. He was my spiritual, artistic, and intellectual leader and friend. As I fought alongside him, learned from him, and often protected him, I was privileged to witness and experience his deep humanity, love of his people, his family, and friends, and his absolute and unshakeable commitment to devoting every ounce of his incredible intellect, creative capacity, and life to serve the people. He gave us all he had and even though he left a legacy of writing, art, speeches, music, and consciousness, his physical presence, his wit and laughter, his insight, keen political analysis, and his gentle care of all of us is missed beyond measure. I am a writer because

of him. Because of him I am a writer born of the Black Arts Movement, who believes art is a weapon and tool to change the world.

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Abbreviations

ALD	African Liberation Day
ALSC	African Liberation Support Committee
ATM	August 29th Movement
BPP	Black Panther Party
BSU	Black Student Union
BWUF	Black Women's United Front
CAP	Congress of African People
CFUN	Committee for Unified Newark
COINTELPRO	Counter Intelligence Program
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
DRUM	Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
IPE	Institute of Positive Education
IWK	I Wor Kuen
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
LRBW	League of Revolutionary Black Workers
LRS	League of Revolutionary Struggle
M-L-M	Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tse-Tung Thought
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NBA	National Black Assembly
NBUF	National Black United Front
OAAU	Organization of Afro-American Unity
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PAC	Pan-African Congress
RAM	Revolutionary Action Group
RCL	Revolutionary Communist League

RNA	Republic of New Africa
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SOBU	Student Organization for Black Unity
YOBU	Youth Organization for Black Unity

Introduction

The Congress of African People (CAP) was a critically important political formation in the Black Liberation Movement. It was founded in 1970 in Atlanta as a revolutionary Nationalist/Pan-Africanist organization and continued throughout the 1970s. Beginning in 1974 it began to shift ideologically to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought and in 1976 changed its name to the Revolutionary Communist League (Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tse Tung Thought). In 1980 it merged with the League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS), a Marxist-Leninist organization made up mainly of Asian American and Latino American activists. The merger with the LRS signaled the end of the official life of CAP. However, the ideas and practice of CAP have persisted through its historical influence and the continued work of its many members and supporters who are still engaged in the struggle for self-determination, human rights, and a just democratic society. As new generations of African American activists emerge, the experiences of CAP and other black revolutionary organizations provide valuable lessons for organizing new movements.

This first-hand narrative of my participation in and observation of CAP is a part of a broader movement to document and analyze the Black Power stage in the African American Liberation Movement from the 1950s through the 1970s.

CAP was instrumental in several important political initiatives in the 1970s. However, because of the prominence of CAP leader Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) media coverage was often limited to the fascination mainstream media had with Baraka's perceived artistic and political changes. As a result CAP was often not covered in the press

as a serious, influential organization whose ideas and agenda have had a lasting impact on black American political and cultural life.

CAP's continued influence is perhaps most readily seen in the African American national community in the form of the heightened awareness of the relationship to and importance of Africa; art and culture as unifying and transformative; African American self-determination and electoral politics; united front as critical instrument of the struggle; work and study as foundation of revolutionary movement. CAP was not the first or the only organization that promoted what has come to be known as an African centered worldview or viewing the world through the lenses of African (continental and Diaspora) history, culture, and experience. However, from its inception and throughout the years of Nationalism and Pan-Africanism, CAP was an active and persistent national voice in promoting the ideas of cultural nationalism, which included practicing the African American holiday Kwanzaa and its values. CAP was also influential in extending the impact of the Black Arts Movement as a result of its strongly held belief in the promotion of African American art, culture, and identity as a principal element of the liberation struggle. It was also heavily populated with artists/activists including leading Black Arts Movement poets Amiri Baraka, Haki Madhubuti (Don L. Lee), and others. CAP was in some ways the embodiment of the two major components of the Black Liberation Movement of the times, Black Power and Black Arts.

CAP began as a united front organization and became a major influencer of national and local united fronts during its intense but short life. CAP was critical to the success of African Liberation Day, the African Liberation Support Committee, the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, the National Black Assembly, the Black Women's United Front, and others. It also participated in a number of local united fronts around several key issues. The united front was a key strategy employed by CAP.

Another major component of CAP's program was the development of independent African American owned institutions controlled by progressive African Americans. This aspect of the program inspired the development of theaters, publishing companies, schools, cultural

centers, student organizations, and others. Evidence of the impact on education can be seen in the proliferation of African American studies in colleges and universities and the continued existence of the black independent schools movement across the United States, which has not only sustained its institutions but also influenced the local and national discussions on education in the black community.

Additionally, CAP's persistent practice of engaging in electoral politics and advocating that progressive African American organizations engage in the electoral process as a method of seizing and consolidating power to provide services and development for African American communities has continued to be a point of discussion and debate within progressive organizations. There have also been numerous and continued attempts since the late 1970s to emulate CAP's success in organizing coalitions and political conventions and agendas. Prominent among these is the State of the Race Conference, organized by Dr. Ron Daniels and the Institute of the Black World 21st Century, held as recently as 2013.

CAP's impact upon the Black Liberation Movement during the Black Power period is indeed substantial. Within the area of Black Power Studies, a number of recent works are illuminating the role that CAP played in building, leading, and impacting the Black Power Movement. Those works include: Komozi Woodard's *A nation within a nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power politics*; Robin D. G. Kelley's *Freedom dreams: The black radical imagination*; *Fighting for US* by Scot Brown; two works by Peniel Joseph, *Waiting til the midnight hour* and *The Black Power movement*; Rod Bush's *We are not what we seem*: *Black nationalism and class struggle in the American century*; Lita Hooper's *Art of work: The life and work of Haki Madhubuti*; James Edward Smethurst's *The Black Arts movement: Literary nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s*; and Robert C. Smith's *We have no leaders—African Americans in the post-Civil Rights era*. Emerging in this literature is historical information and a viewpoint that situates CAP as an influential national African American revolutionary organization between 1970 and1979.

Led by a council of local and nationally influential leaders including its most famous member Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), the members of

CAP, a dedicated group of young revolutionary activists, worked in a wide range of areas including electoral politics, African development and liberation support, education, housing, arts and culture, social justice, economics, and institutional development in the African American community. Perhaps CAP's most impressive, albeit short-lived, accomplishment was its unique ability to unite, galvanize, and lead a diverse Black Nationalist–Pan-Africanist community across the nation in pursuit of broad political and social goals.

As a member and leader in CAP, I participated in, impacted, and witnessed the internal development of the organization ideologically; the planning, preparation, and implementation of its work; the internal struggles around ideology, methodology, and objectives; and the external relationships CAP fostered with other African and African American organizations and leaders, as well as its relationships with the new Marxist-Leninist Movement of the 1970s.

CAP was headquartered and most developed in Newark, New Jersey, where it held its largest membership and where Imamu Amiri Baraka, its leading theoretician and political leader, lived and worked. Baraka (October 7, 1934–January 9, 2014) was a famous and influential personality in African American Arts and Letters, American literature, and black radical politics of the last 50 years. He wrote extensively about his ideas and life, and there are numerous studies, articles, and books about his work as an artist and a leader in the Black Liberation Movement. Due to his unique position in the organization and the movement, this book will necessarily highlight his leadership and influence in CAP. But this is not a study of Baraka. Instead, it is meant to present a guide, a map, of the tremendous ideological journey undertaken by a group who thought of themselves as American revolutionaries emerging from the turbulent 1960s and who influenced the political life of the 1970s and beyond. The purpose is to contribute to literature on CAP to ensure that the voices of those dedicated young activists, determined to change the world, are heard and that the history of the times is recorded and understood.

This book is concerned with presenting the process of ideological development and internal transformation within the context of the Black Power Movement. Toward that end, I will discuss the goals,

ideological influences, work style, leadership structure, critical issues within CAP, and the broader Black Liberation Movement—its development and demise, and CAP's enduring legacy.

This work is titled Amiri Baraka and The Congress of African People: History and Memory. It is written through my experience and documented through the papers of the organization. There are many others who were involved in the organization and movement and my hope is that they too will tell this story through their experiences so that the picture becomes clearer and the scope of the impact and influence of CAP is not only known but used as a reference for those making change today and tomorrow.

The story of CAP intersects with so many other major stories in US political and social history, especially as it relates to African American development and the Black Liberation Movement. CAP is most closely connected to the Black Power story and the rise of revolutionary black organizations out of the experience, successes, and limitations of the Civil Rights Movement. CAP can be counted among that group of black organizations that includes SNCC, the Black Panther Party (BPP), the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW), the Republic of New Africa (RNA), the Us Organization, the All Afrikan Peoples' Revolutionary Party, the Black Liberation Army, and hundreds of local, Black Nationalist and Pan-Africanist revolutionary organizations.

It is also connected to the story of black women within the Movement and their persistent fight to be equal partners in the struggle, in life, and in society. CAP, like other organizations, wrestled with reconciling its stated revolutionary beliefs and objectives and its often nonrevolutionary views and practices regarding women. Within CAP and other black radical organizations and the Black Liberation Movement as a whole an internal (within the men and within the organizations) struggle was occurring parallel to the external struggle to change society. The internal struggle was as intense as the external and ultimately led to changes in beliefs and thought, behavior and organization, objectives and strategies. While change did come about when women and their male allies fought for it, the struggle continues to this day.

CAP is connected to the story of the rise of black political power in the 1970s. As the central national Black Nationalist organization advocating and engaging in electoral politics as a strategy, CAP influenced and was involved with the new wave of black politicians on the local and national levels, including organizing the historic National Black Political Convention in 1972. As evidence of the enduring legacy of CAP, several progressive and in some cases radical black activists have been elected to public office on platforms of progressive change. The most prominent recent examples are two who came directly out of the Black Liberation Movement legacy. First, Chokwe Lumumba was elected mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, in 2013. Lumumba was a human rights attorney with a long history of activism and leadership in the Black Liberation Movement. He was a founder of the Republic of New Africa and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. Unfortunately, after initiating a significant transformation of Jackson politics, Lumumba died suddenly less than a year in office. The second, Ras Baraka, the son of Amiri and Amina Baraka, was elected mayor of Newark in 2014. Ras Baraka's election came 44 years after his father led the successful campaign to elect Newark's first African American mayor, Ken Gibson, in 1970.

CAP is connected to the story and played an important role in the resurgent Pan-African Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. It was a key force in the broad united front to establish African Liberation Day and the African Liberation Support Committee. CAP was in the anti-apartheid movement, supported progressive African nations and movements, and African liberation from colonialism. CAP was also a leading force in the struggle of African American Pan-Africanists to win public support for African liberation and influence US policy toward Africa and the diaspora.

Further, CAP was also connected to the rise of a new wave of communist organizations and revolutionaries who were in opposition to the old Communist Party USA and who were much more influenced by China and Third World revolutions than the Soviet Union. This new group of young communists sought to establish a new party in the United States that would include a significant number of activists from communities of color to reflect the changes in US society and the

need for change in revolutionary practice in the United States. CAP both influenced and was influenced by the ideas of this movement.

CAP features in all of these stories. And CAP was in them with interconnected pieces that include organizational, ideological, and programmatic aspects of the life of the organization. This is a complex interwoven tale of American history and political life in the last half of the twentieth century and it is also a very personal story of my own journey through those times.

CAP held an important role in the Black Liberation Movement and hopefully will be the subject of many more scholarly studies and personal histories, which will help convey the depth and breadth of the organization and its influence. In preparing to write this book, it became clear that I had to choose a way of telling the story, a path into the story so to speak, that would allow the reader to gain some insight into the history, development, and impact of the organization and at the same time allow me to condense the telling into a useable form. After considering several approaches, I decided that tracing the ideological development of CAP would be the most efficient way to meet my objectives. By following the ideological progression of the organization I sought to look at the historical forces that created the basis for CAP's founding; the political forces that influenced its programmatic thrust; and the ideas and conditions that shaped and molded the organization's ideology.

1

Born into the Storm

I grew up in Detroit, but because my father was in the Air Force I was born on an Air Force base in Chicopee, Massachusetts. It was 1954, the same year that the US Supreme Court ruled against "Separate but Equal," the purported theory underpinning legalized segregation in the south in the case of *Brown v Board of Education*. This major legal victory was the culmination of almost 100 years of struggle against Jim Crow, the wicked child of slavery. Within a few months of my birth, the political landscape of the United States erupted into a battlefield as the impact of that Supreme Court decision provided the contemporary context for the African American national community to accelerate and intensify confrontation with the racist legacy of slavery. I was raised in the storm that would follow. My development as a child was influenced by the social changes that were occurring throughout the country and especially in the developing political consciousness of black people.

Within a year of that ruling and my birth, Martin Luther King and the African American community of Montgomery, Alabama, had inspired a new wave of activism devoted to confronting and dismantling the laws and social codes of injustice and oppression in the south. At the same time, Malcolm X, a fiery young ex-convict and convert to the Nation of Islam (an African American form of Islam), was traveling the country preaching a philosophy of black pride, self-help, self-defense, and separation from white people. These developments and others created a social and political storm not seen in American political and social life since the Civil War. Students began to organize

and confront segregation in public accommodations and businesses. As one of many black armed resistance groups, Robert F. Williams organized armed self-defense against Ku Klux Klan (KKK) terrorism in Monroe County, North Carolina. All over the south, movements emerged to challenge and defeat the injustices of segregation, racism, and the lingering legacy of slavery.

For the next 25 years an intense period of social change would occur throughout the country as various marginalized segments of the United States, including women, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and white college youth, questioned, debated, challenged, and transformed the political and social landscape. The story of ordinary people—citizens of the United States—engaged to change the world is my story, too.

I come from working-class black people who migrated from the south to Detroit to find work and to escape the violence and humiliation of southern segregation like hundreds of thousands of black people. My maternal grandfather was from Kentucky, one of the black Appalachians. The story goes that after a confrontation with a white man who wound up mortally wounded, my grandfather walked to Detroit on back roads at night to escape and avoid capture. During my childhood, I didn't see him much because he was a porter on the trains. When he was home, he often worked as a card dealer in illegal gambling joints around Detroit's black neighborhoods.

My maternal grandmother was from Dayton, Ohio. An artistic and adventurous young black woman, she left home at 16 to go dance at the Cotton Club in New York. She eventually made her way to Detroit where she and my grandfather married and raised five girls. She did not have a high school education but spoke French, was well read, and culturally very sophisticated. She was one of the thousands of black domestic workers in the homes of affluent white families in Detroit.

My paternal grandmother came from a large family in Anderson, South Carolina. She moved to the Detroit area as a teenager with her family, settling in Inkster, Michigan, the mostly black working-class enclave outside of Detroit. Her memories of growing up in the segregated south were so bitter that she refused to talk about them until she was well into her eighties. She came from a long line of root workers,

women who purportedly knew ancient healing and magical secrets brought by enslaved Africans and passed down from generation to generation. When she finally discussed her childhood in the south, she told me about the two Anderson families—the black one and the white one—both with a common patriarch.

My paternal grandfather was a very dignified black man from Montgomery, Alabama. He too came north as a teenager during the Great Migration. He sold copies of Marcus Garvey's newspaper on the streets of Detroit, joined the police force in Inkster, and became one of the first black detectives in Michigan. He eventually became deputy chief and ran the department. Everyone in the black community and all the officers in the town called him "Chief," even the white officers. They knew that had he not been black, he would have been the chief of police instead of the less qualified white man who wore the title and cashed the check.

When I was a child my life was shaped by all that was going on outside my door and an accompanying, continuous narrative and action going on within my house. My mother and father were intensely aware of and involved in the fight to liberate black people. They were also among the young African American adults who were transitioning from their working-class roots into the middle class through education and increased opportunity.

For several years, my mother dragged my brother and me to the University of Detroit where we would sit outside her classrooms with books, puzzles, or games and wait for her. I was nine when she finally completed her degree and became an educator in inner-city Detroit high schools. In response to the lack of classes and educational materials on African American literature, my mother wrote the first black literature curriculum for the Detroit school system. My father had a year or so of college but never obtained his degree. He was recruited to play football at Michigan State University, but joined the Air Force after his second year, to support my mother and brother. After returning from the Air Force and working a variety of jobs in auto factories and at the juvenile detention center, he became a community organizer and social worker, building programs in the most impoverished neighborhoods of Detroit to rescue black youth. Until his death from

cancer at 48, he worked to improve the environment and life of young people in Detroit. By then, he had created a nationally recognized youth program for the city of Detroit.

Their new positions as teacher and social worker not only elevated their economic status, but gave them direct channels to organize around important issues in the black liberation movement. They were among the African American middle-class activists and intellectuals whose long tradition of supporting black causes had earned them the terms of respect, "Race Woman" and "Race Man."

As a young couple, my parents were also involved in a variety of organizations and activities to support the southern freedom movement. As a result of their involvement, our house was often filled with activists, artists, politicians, and other guests, who drank beer and liquor, held loud, intense discussions, danced to soul music, listened to jazz, laughed, smoked cigarettes, and understood that they lived in historic times and were a part of making history.

My parents' parties were legendary, full of excitement generated by diverse groups of old friends and new faces. There were men who worked in factories (some with missing fingers, a common sight in our neighborhood); women who worked as telephone operators; newly graduated teachers; professional gamblers (including my father's friend a white cat named Jerry who did card tricks for the kids and took money from the adults); and members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality, and more radical elements of the community. Most were young adults, some were older, and a few were gay, like my parents' high school friend we called Uncle Eddie. There were some veterans of the Korean War, like my uncle, and some of the men had been locked up in prison for offenses no one ever discussed. A parade of characters floated in and out of our house bringing with them a world of new ideas and news from the frontlines of the movement. It was much later in life when I realized that as much fun as those parties were, my parents also used them to organize people and to raise money to support the movement. It was a technique that I would turn to many years later.

In the midst of all that was going on in society and our house, we had a very normal childhood. My brother and I did chores around the

house, earned money cutting grass in the summer, raking leaves in the fall, and shoveling snow in the winter. Our all-black neighborhood was a place where we felt safe and loved and where we played sandlot baseball and football with our cousins and friends. We rode our bikes around a wide roaming area and explored the railroad tracks that ran nearby; caught frogs and minnows in the pond behind the tracks near the library; climbed trees, had fights, and went swimming in the neighborhood recreation pool in the summer.

My mother took primary responsibility for our formal education, and her most enduring gift to us is reading. Every week she would walk with us about a mile to the community library where we selected and checked out books. At home we were required to read and discuss them before we walked back a week later to repeat the process. She took us to free European classical and jazz concerts, plays, the museum, and every other cost effective cultural experience she could find. She exposed us to the great canon of African American literature from the slave narratives and poetry of Phyllis Wheatley, to the Harlem Renaissance and writers such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neal Hurston, W. E. B. DuBois, and Paul Lawrence Dunbar. She exposed us to works by Ida B. Wells, Gwendolyn Brooks, James Baldwin, Richard Wright, and so many others. She read us plays and stories, had us recite poems like Claude McKay's "If We Must Die" and Margaret Walker's "For My People," and told us about the African origins of the stories she read us from Joel Chandler Harris' "Uncle Remus" tales. She also took us to see plays by Shakespeare, and to films and lectures that we couldn't quite understand.

My father gave us other parts of our education. He taught us how to box, how to shine our shoes, be gentlemen, throw a ball, and swing a bat. He showed us how to secure the house when we went to bed, how to count money, and to avoid fights if you could and to fight fiercely if you couldn't. He also took us along when he went to meet his friends in bars and after-hours joints and taught us to trust our instincts and what to do in certain situations. When we were older, he also taught us to shoot.

My brother and I went to a neighborhood elementary school named after the infamous General George Armstrong Custer. I was

particularly offended by the name because in the third grade I spent a whole summer reading biographies of great Native American leaders. I read about Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Geronimo, and others and found myself siding with the Indians. I loved Western movies and always hoped the result of the staged battles would end differently, but they never did.

I did moderately well in elementary school, mainly because of my reading skills. My problem, as my teachers told my mother, was my overactive imagination. It was a characteristic that as an adult I came to understand was not a problem, just the way my brain worked as an artistic person. Our school was full of dedicated, old-fashioned black teachers who expected us to work hard, to strive for excellence so we could uplift ourselves and the race, and to behave ourselves so we would not embarrass our family or black people when we were in public.

At Custer Elementary, one of my favorite teachers taught music. He was a gentle and quiet man from Poland and a brilliant musician and teacher. He was also the first of several Eastern European Jews I met growing up. One of the things that in my young mind seemed odd about this teacher was the numbers tattooed on the inside of his wrist. Later, I would understand the horror of what those numbers represented. My teacher was a Holocaust survivor. Under his guidance I became a very good trumpet player and his top student. I also sang in the chorus and took private voice lessons from a teacher who was from France. I acted in school plays and loved doing anything creative. In the third grade I also wrote my first book. A friend illustrated it, and I sold it to my grandparents for a quarter. It was a story about a dinosaur.

During this time, I became engaged in my first action as an activist. My brother was in the local boy scout troop that met at Custer Elementary, and I used to tag along with him to the meetings. The scout leader was also the Michigan field coordinator for CORE and spent part of the meeting doing normal scout things. During the other half of the meeting he would talk to us about the Freedom Rides and the struggle taking place in the south. He would conclude by giving us literature to distribute in our neighborhood and the assignment of

getting our parents and neighbors to come to one of the many informational and recruitment meetings he held to raise money and support for the struggle. I became an enthusiastic organizer. I'd knock on my neighbors' doors, hand them the literature and almost demand in my childlike way that they come to the meeting to "help us get freedom."

In the fifth grade my sister was born and I became a big brother. Shortly afterward, one of my mother's sisters died and my younger cousin came to live with us. A year later my youngest sister was born. A year after that we moved from the neighborhood and the people I'd known to northwest Detroit, where black families were just integrating the area. I had a difficult time adjusting. The community didn't feel safe to me and the people were foreign and strange to me because up until that time I had not had to interact with white people except those who owned stores or the few white teachers I had at Custer Elementary School. As it turned out, this experience was critical for me in two very important ways.

The area and the school that I first attended were not only white, but included a large Jewish population. I became friends with some of my classmates and fascinated with the difference between their lives and mine. My interest was especially aroused because of the systematic perpetuation of Jewish culture and the teaching of Jewish history. Prior to moving to the area, I had no knowledge of the Hebrew schools, bar/bat mitzvahs, temple, Jewish holy days, or other rituals.

My new friends took me to the Jewish community center where they had a huge indoor swimming pool, basketball courts, and all kinds of meeting rooms and extensive equipment. This facility was so much better than the public pools and recreation centers I was used to in the inner city neighborhood I'd moved from. They explained that it had been built with money donated from their community. They took me to the Hebrew school they attended a few days a week after school where they learned Jewish history and culture, studied Hebrew, and did service work. This learning broadened my understanding and appreciation for the process of cultural identity preservation and perpetuation.

This exposure to the Jewish community happened between 1965 and 1966. In those two years, the community was turning over fast. By 1967 it was more than half African American. Our new house was no

different than our last one in that it was still a center of meetings and discussion about the movement. My family followed closely what was going on in the rest of the country and the growing nationalism in the African American community was felt strongly in our house. As much as my parents loved and followed Martin Luther King, they were also heavily influenced by Malcolm X. I can remember the weight of the grief that engulfed them and many of the adults I knew when Malcolm was assassinated in February 1965. It was a different grief then the pain they expressed when Medgar Evers was assassinated or when Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner were murdered in Philadelphia, Mississippi, or any of the attacks upon the Freedom Riders or the Civil Rights Movement. Violence against the movement was constant; I heard firsthand accounts in our house and we watched footage on the news. The killing of Malcolm was different and I remember hearing the adults lament that it was probably a matter of time before King would be assassinated.

A few weeks after Malcolm's death, Viola Liuzzo, a white woman from Detroit, was murdered by the KKK in Alabama where she had gone to volunteer during the historic march from Selma to Montgomery. My mother used this as another lesson for us when she pointed out that there are people who will fight and even die for justice and it didn't matter what they looked like, where they came from, or what religion they were. It affected her deeply, which also moved me because it was in the wake of her grief for Malcolm X.

Also, in that summer of 1965 the African American community of Watts ushered in a period of urban rebellion and riots. Out of the Watts upheaval in Los Angeles a little known scholar and community activist named Ron Karenga began to assume a position of leadership among nationalists in the area. Up the road in the Bay Area the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) was founded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale the next year. All of these events and the personalities emerging around them were being talked about in our house and in the Detroit black community.

Detroit was a political city that had hosted the precursor to the historic March on Washington. Tens of thousands marched through downtown to support the Civil Rights Movement and heard Dr. King

deliver an early version of his "I Have a Dream" speech. My parents were among those marching. Reverend Albert Cleage, a fiery preacher and contemporary of Malcolm X, was preaching a new black nationalist theology. Motown was the sound pouring out of transistor radios and juke boxes. The Black Arts Movement in Detroit as in New York and other cities was redefining the black aesthetic through institutions like Concept East Theater and Broadside Press, and the black pride movement was in full effect. We were inundated with cultural resistance and change, political ideologies and political organizations, and the ebb and flow of a movement literally on the move.

I began hanging out around the Black Arts community and became a protégé of the great Detroit playwright Ron Milner. I wrote and performed poetry (although my precociousness at the time prevented me from understanding that it was not very good), and I read everything I could get my hands on about the movement locally and around the country. It was also around this time that through the convergence of ideas, actions, literature, and the television that I began to take more of an interest in Africa.

Detroit, like dozens of other northern cities with large African American populations, was a powder keg as a result of poverty and alienation, the lack of political representation, and the often antagonistic relationship between blacks and the white merchants who controlled most of the commerce in the black community. The most volatile relationship was between the black community and the police force, which was predominantly white and considered racist, hostile, and violent toward black people.

Historically, Detroit had strong nationalist and revolutionary tendencies. It was one of the last stops on the US side of the underground railroad. It was a central location of the American Labor Movement and had a large black industrial working class. The Nation of Islam began there as well as many lesser known Black Nationalist local organizations. The growing nationalism, the rise of Black Power as a concept and objective nationally and locally, the anger and the supercharged political climate created a boiling hot situation in the city.

Two things happened to me in 1966 that would drive me further onto the path I would travel for the rest of my life. The first incident

took place a couple of weeks before Thanksgiving. I was supposed to meet my mother downtown to go shopping. There was a miscommunication and we didn't arrive at the meeting place at the same time. After waiting for her, I called home and was told by my father to get back on the bus and come home, which I did. I fell asleep on the bus and when I awakened I was the last passenger and deep inside a white working-class suburb outside of Detroit called Redford.

The white bus driver laughed when I asked him where I was and questioned him about letting me sleep when clearly I was way past my stop since no black people lived that far out at the time. He ordered me off his bus and told me to stand in front of a diner across the street where another bus would be coming soon. He was obviously amused by his actions and to this day I am convinced he purposely put me in a dangerous situation. I was cold and it was dark since there were no street lights that far out. I could see lots of young white people in the diner, but I tried to stay focused on looking for my bus. I was scared and acutely aware of how vulnerable I was. After about 10 minutes, a group of young men came out of the diner and began to yell at me. I ignored them and hoped the bus would come. They became more belligerent, calling me nigger and monkey and monkey nigger and curses followed by an occasional bottle or rock thrown from across the parking lot where they were standing to the street where I stood. I began moving further down the street to get away from them and that triggered a violent reaction: they began to chase me hurling more missiles and threats of violence and murder. As I ran down the street, I could see them gaining ground and also saw the lights of the bus. When the bus was close I ran out into the street and the bus driver seeing what was happening, stopped quickly and opened the doors. I jumped on and he drove away fast as the bus received a barrage of stones and other projectiles. The bus driver asked if I was all right and I told him yes. We rode in silence the rest of the way but periodically he would look my way to check on me and out of the corner of my eye I'd see him shaking his head in disgust while mumbling what sounded like a prayer. When he got to my stop he offered to walk me the block and a half to my house. I declined, pulled the hood of my coat up around my head and walked home, thinking of the difference in the kind face

of that white bus driver and the hate filled faces of those young white men who wanted to do violence to a twelve-year-old American kid who had simply stood on an American street waiting for a bus.

The last day of school before the Christmas/Hanukkah holiday break, my white classmates were exchanging gifts. I was one of two or three black students in the class and we discovered that the white kids had drawn names secretly and that neither I nor the other black students would be the recipient of any gifts. As school was being dismissed and I was retrieving my coat from my locker, one of my classmates, a Jewish girl named Ruth, handed me a gift and said "Merry Christmas," then she turned and walked away. It was a moving and confusing moment. I could not discern whether it was an act of kindness or pity. I never saw her again because her family and many others moved out of the neighborhood during that break. It was the first and only Nancy Drew novel I owned or read.

The year 1967 changed the city forever. In June a few days before school was going to break for the summer, I learned a second important lesson about cultural preservation and perpetuation when the war broke out in the Middle East between Israel and its Arab neighbors—Syria, Egypt, and Jordan. The Jewish community that still lived as our neighbors, the Jewish teachers and students at my school, the Jewish merchants and professionals who owned businesses in the community responded to news of the war by organizing support for Israel (by then I had learned they considered it the homeland of all Jews). They did this on every front. They raised and sent money. The Jewish teachers thoroughly discussed their point of view of the issues related to the war in the classrooms and gave the students information and instruction that it was their obligation to support Israel in the war. They lobbied the local, state, and national government to support Israel.

Previously, I had witnessed my parents and people in our community support the southern civil rights workers but not with this kind of immediate urgency and efficiency, and not in support of a cause across the ocean on another continent. I had read Garvey and DuBois and knew about Nkrumah and Lumumba and other African leaders in the anticolonial movement in Africa. I believed, to the extent that I could understand at 13, in the idea of Pan-Africanism. But I also knew that

the US African American community did not have the same level of support for their brothers and sisters in Africa as the Jewish community did for Israel. The effectiveness of their organized support taught me a lesson that became valuable a few years later when I became more engaged in African support work.

In July 1967 the growing alienation, anger, and frustration of African Americans in northern urban areas exploded again. On July 12, Newark, New Jersey, went up in flames. This was followed by the worst of the urban uprisings of the 1960s, Detroit on July 23. The news of the Newark rebellion and riot heightened the discussion of a black revolution. The Watts uprising, the founding of the Black Panthers, Black Arts Movement and the growing black consciousness movement, the victories and struggles of African and Caribbean nations against colonialism all increased a sense of being part of a revolution that was sweeping through the inner cities.

Someone my paternal grandfather knew had given him a weekend vacation package to the World's Fair in Montreal. He and my grandmother took my brother and me with them by train. We had a great time in Montreal. It was the first of many trips I'd make in my life that helped me understand that the world was not the inner city life of Detroit. The night we were riding the train back, the Detroit uprising began just a couple of blocks from my maternal grandmother's apartment. The next few days would burn images in my mind that I will never forget.

Early in the morning we reached the train station in Windsor, Ontario, and got off the train. From across the Detroit River we could see smoke, big plumes of smoke rising from the city. We waited for an hour or more and finally I saw my father drive up. He came to us and pulled my grandfather to the side where I watched them have a brief but highly focused conversation. My grandmother kept her eye on them while distracting us with some candy that she always kept in her purse. Finally, when the two men, father and son, came back over to us, my father told us we were going home but we'd have to be very careful and if they told us to get down we were to immediately jump onto the floor of the car. While he explained this to my brother and me, my grandparents conferred.

We loaded our bags into my father's car and drove to the tunnel that connects Detroit to Canada where the border agent asked us a lot of questions and cautioned us about returning to the city at that moment. When we emerged from the tunnel into downtown Detroit it was completely empty. My grandfather laid his .38 caliber police issue pistol on the seat. The always-bustling downtown area was vacant, eerily vacant as if there had been some kind of apocalyptic event. As we drove through the streets toward the expressway, we passed a staging area for the police. There were large groups of officers preparing to go into battle. Most ignored us. Some watched us cautiously as we passed by.

As strange as it was to be in a vacant downtown, it was even stranger to be the only car on the expressway. I don't remember seeing another vehicle for miles. My father drove uncharacteristically slow. My grandfather rode in the shotgun seat, scanning the streets above us. My grandmother sat with us in the back and I could feel her anxiety as we passed through the area where the fighting and looting was most intense. We could hear the gunfire and smell the burning buildings. The air was filled with smoke, but because we were down in the expressway, we couldn't hear much other than sirens, constant sirens and gun fire.

We finally made our way home and other members of my family who lived closer to the streets where the rebellion was most concentrated had come to stay with us. My aunt and several cousins were there. My mother greeted us with understandable relief. This was decades before the cell phone era, so for hours she had no word of what was happening with any of us.

After we had been home for a few hours, my father called my brother and me into their bedroom; he sat on the bed with his pistol and a box of bullets next to him. He explained that he had to go back down into the streets where the most intense action was going on. It was the area where he worked and he was part of a team of community workers who were out in the streets assisting people, negotiating with the police, getting the wounded to the hospital, and everything else they could do. He calmly had us load and reload the gun and we each dry fired it, holding it the way we had been taught. Then he gave us the

instruction. If anyone attempted to come into our house we were to shoot them and not hesitate. It was a moment when I knew my father expected us to grow up and become men. I was 13 and my brother was 14. I included a fictionalized version of this incident in my first novel, *In the Shadow of the Son*.

For the next several days we saw little of my father. He occasionally came home, slept for a couple of hours, showered and changed clothes, and then returned to the streets. As the fighting became more intense, the National Guard and then the 82nd Airborne Division of the Army were called in to suppress the violence, which began with burning and looting and escalated into sniping and guerilla warfare tactics against the police. The children of my neighborhood watched as army jeeps with big machine guns mounted on the back patrolled our streets often pointing their guns at us and while calling us names.

Detroit was a center for black revolutionary nationalism with a variety of organizations operating in the city including RAM (Revolutionary Action Group), the Black Panthers, and others. Many of their activists were suspected of fighting in the rebellion and it was never clear to me what my parents' relationship was with many of those activists because some of them had been in our house. I am certain that my father could not have survived in the center of the worst urban uprising in the country without some assistance from the revolutionaries in the area. Eventually the fighting stopped. The quiet came and news of the damage in lives and property was devastating. Forty-three people were dead, whole neighborhoods reduced to ashes, hundreds wounded, and thousands under arrest. Detroit would never be the same. White flight set in at a highly accelerated pace. When I returned to school in the fall, the majority of my white classmates were gone. Four years later when I graduated from high school, there were only a handful of white students who graduated with me.

That fall, after the summer of 1967, I considered myself a young revolutionary. My study of revolutionary history and theory intensified. I became a serious student of Malcolm X, reading and listening to his speeches. I became an active organizer of black students in my junior high and then high school. I was aware of and followed intensely the developments around the BPP and the deliberations at the Newark

Black Power Conference, the second of four such conferences that would lead to the founding of the Congress of African People (CAP) in 1970. There is a famous picture of the news conference for the 1967 Newark Black Power Conference that shows Ron Karenga, H. Rap Brown, and Amiri Baraka and in the forefront a bearded "unidentified man." The man was Frank Ditto, a Detroit black power activist whom I'd met through my father.

March, April, and May of 1968 brought significant elements to the movement landscape. In March, along with a few hundred others, I attended the founding conference of the Republic of New Africa (RNA) where Robert F. Williams was elected president in exile. The founding of the RNA assembled several hundred black nationalists from around the country with the intention of building a liberation movement centered on the fight for a national territory for African Americans in the black belt south. Their specific program called for the establishment of an African American nation, the Republic of New Africa, in the five states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. Their program was heavily influenced by Malcolm X and part of their plan was to take their case to the United Nations and demand a UN supervised plebiscite on the issue.

A few days later, on April 4, Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated and scores of cities exploded, but not Detroit. His death seemed to close the chapter of his style of movement politics because by then, especially in Detroit, the Black Power phase of the movement was dominant.

In May the formalization of a serious black worker movement in the automobile plants happened with the founding of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM, which was based in the Dodge Hamtramck factory). It would expand to include other RUM movements and lead eventually to the creation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW). The RUM movements and the LRBW were more engaged in the study of and debate around Marxism Leninism than other black nationalist organizations and had ties to the growing student radicalism on Wayne State University's campus. Led by worker-activists like General Baker, they were also influenced by Left theoreticians such as James and Grace Boggs.

As I entered high school in the fall of 1968 all of these elements impacted the emerging black student movement locally. In addition there was an expanding black student movement throughout the country that also informed our consciousness. By 1970 I became the head of the Black Student Union (BSU) and the Student/Parent/Faculty Council at Mumford High on Detroit's west side. Our main struggles were around redesigning the curriculum to make it more inclusive of African and African American people; community control of the schools; and hiring of more black administrators and teachers. In addition, as a leader of the BSU at Mumford, I participated in what was called the City-Wide Black Student United Front, which gave support to the LRBW and other adult organizations in the city.

I visited the Panther office in Detroit and attended some of their political education classes. I also had regular contact with activists and leaders of the RNA, especially a brilliant young law student named Chokwe Lumumba, whose sisters went to school with me and were active in the BSU. In the 1970s and 80s Chokwe would gain a lot of publicity for his legendary defenses of members of the Black Liberation Army and his grassroots organizing in Mississippi where he was elected mayor of Jackson in 2013. I followed what was happening on the national scene, especially the work of the BPP and the government assault on them. I was also aware of the growing influence of ideas emanating from the Los Angeles organization Us and their leader, now known as Maulana (master teacher) Karenga.

In Detroit we were well aware of the growing tension and conflict between the Panthers and Us and in 1969 the news that two young Panthers had been killed by members of Us on the campus of UCLA reverberated through the movement. After that incident movement activists began to take sides and the talk of revolutionary nationalist versus cultural nationalist heightened and a dangerous tension hovered over the movement providing a perfect climate for the FBI to foment conflict, confrontation, and violence within the Black Liberation Movement through a government program known as COINTELPRO.

Around that same time in the fall of 1969, my father came and signed me out of school one day and took me to witness the return

of the much celebrated black revolutionary Robert F. Williams as he arrived in Detroit, returning from exile after years abroad in Cuba, Viet Nam, Africa, and China. Brother Rob as we called him was a giant figure in the Black Liberation Movement and I knew of his leadership in the NAACP and his struggles in Monroe County, North Carolina, where he had led the black community in armed defense against the terrorist organization the KKK. I admired his courage and principles. My parents read his newsletter *The Crusader*. His attorney was Milton Henry, one of the two brothers who were founders of the RNA. A few years later I would have a role in William's return to North Carolina to face the charges that had led to his exile. I stayed in touch with him when I moved to Atlanta in the 1980s and brought him in to speak and introduced him to a new generation of activists.

I first became aware of Amiri Baraka through his poetry, written when he still went by the name LeRoi Jones. My mother had some of his work and I had read it, though not fully understanding it, when I was in the 5th or 6th grade. As he grew in stature in the Black Liberation Movement I was drawn to his creative energy and output and the impact of the Black Arts Movement on the political movement as more details about the successful electoral political campaigns being waged by nationalists in Newark were being reported.

I began writing to him somewhere around early 1970, seeking advice and information about being a poet, community organizing, and nationalist theory. I met him once or twice on his visits to Detroit for speaking engagements and around the same time I met another Black Arts Movement poet out of Chicago, Don L. Lee (soon to become Haki Madhubuti) and also somewhere around that time, the poet and organizer Sonia Sanchez. Whenever I'd see Baraka he was fully immersed in African culture, wore African clothes, and traveled then with young men who guarded him. He was always open and curious about the work I was doing. Those encounters were brief but meaningful because he did something that became a constant in our relationship over the years. He always asked me if I'd read certain books or authors and then he'd say, "You should read…" I'd find the book or author he recommended as soon as I could. On occasion he would give me a copy of a book he'd just read. Baraka gave me my first

copy of Walter Rodney's seminal work, "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa."

In 1970 CAP was formed in Atlanta, Georgia. My connections to them began to grow as I met more of the organizers associated with Baraka's local organization in Newark, the Committee for Unified Newark (CFUN). I didn't attend the founding conference, but followed it closely and the rhetoric of the Pan-African Nationalist movement became more constant in my organizing language among students. During this time I also spoke out and helped organize (principally to increase more African American student involvement) in the antiwar movement. I wrote Baraka asking if I could come to Newark to study. He welcomed it but it would be another year before I went.

In 1971, I was one of the leaders of the first black high school takeover in the country. I graduated that year and went to work in a Chrysler stamping factory where I set about the work of organizing black workers there. I was active in the city as a poet, cultural worker, and speaker. In an Episcopal church basement, with other young activists, I started the Ujima School and Organization a few blocks from where the 1967 rebellion began. Through the school we held Saturday classes, after school programs, and summer camps where we tutored community children, taught African American and African history and culture and martial arts, and engaged in organizing the community around education. Through the organization we conducted voter education and registration and other programs. I made a trip to Newark to receive training at the Political School of Kawaida with the idea of possibly working in Newark, but at Baraka's direction I returned home to begin organizing for CAP. I was 17 and had grown up fully engaged in the Black Power Movement as a young revolutionary.

2

Black Power: The Context of CAP

In 1968 the US Commission on Civil Disorders described "Black Power" in the following terms: "Black Power first articulated a mood rather than a program—disillusionment and alienation from white America and independence, race pride, and self-respect, or black consciousness. Having become a household phrase, the term generated intense discussion of its real meaning, and a broad spectrum of ideologies and programmatic proposals emerged.

> In politics, Black Power meant independent action—Negro control of the political power of the black ghettos and its conscious use to better slum dwellers' conditions. It could take the form of organizing a black political party or controlling the political machinery within the ghetto without the guidance or support of white politicians. Where predominantly Negro areas lacked Negroes in elective office, whether in the rural Black Belt of the South or in the urban centers, Black Power advocates sought the election of Negroes by voter registration campaigns, by getting out the vote, and by working for redrawing electoral districts. The basic belief was that only a well-organized and cohesive bloc of Negro voters could provide for the needs of the black masses. Even some Negro politicians allied to the major political parties adopted the term "Black Power" to describe their interest in the Negro vote.
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> Throughout, the emphasis was on self-help, racial unity, and among the most militant, retaliatory violence, the latter ranging from the legal right of self-defense to attempts to justify looting and arson in ghetto riots, guerilla warfare and armed rebellion. Phrases like "Black

> Power," "Black Consciousness," and "Black is Beautiful," enjoyed an extensive currency in the Negro community, even within the NAACP and among relatively conservative politicians, but particularly among young intellectuals and Afro-American student groups on predominantly white college campuses. (US Commission on Civil Rights, 1968, pp. 232–233)

The report, written after several years of inner-city uprisings in several cities, acknowledges the widespread use of the term black power during the period and how it might have different meanings for different constituencies in the African American community. It also notes the relationship between the growing identity consciousness and the demand for black power. The report attempts to explain the reasons behind the uprisings and the relationship, between the demand for black power and the explosiveness of what they perceived as the call for Negro control of the black ghetto.

The study of black power has evolved since that report was first released. The primary way in which it has evolved is in the emerging scholarship on the black power phenomenon, especially in the presentation of the viewpoint of those involved in the movement and in the critical discourse that is unfolding.

The call for black power as a slogan has been attributed to Willie Mukasa Ricks and Kwame Ture (then known as Stokley Carmichael) of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the 1966 Medgar Evers March in Mississippi. Joseph (2006a, p. 2) recounts:

> In the sweltering Mississippi heat, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activist Willie Ricks regaled his friends with tales of the growing militancy of southern blacks. Rick's assignment had been to sprinkle the march route with SNCC's new slogan—"Black Power"—while downplaying the King-led Southern Christian Leadership Conference's more mainstream "Freedom Now." On June 16, reacting to police harassment against demonstrators, Carmichael introduced the slogan "Black Power" to the black freedom struggle…What we gonna start saying now is Black Power! As the crowd chanted "Black Power" in unison, the rhythmic call and response between speaker and audience electrified some, frightened others,

> and marked a turning point for the African American freedom movement . . . or many journalists and political analysts the Meredith March represented a stark line between civil rights and the coming Black Power Movement (BPM).

However, it is interesting to note that Martin Luther King recalled the incident somewhat differently:

> As we approached the city, large crowds of old friends and new turned out to welcome us. At a huge mass meeting that night, which was held in a city park, Stokely mounted the platform and after arousing the audience with a powerful attack on Mississippi justice, he proclaimed: "What do you want?" The crowd roared, "Black Power." Willie Ricks, the fiery orator of SNCC, leaped to the platform and shouted, "What do you want?" The crowd roared, "Black Power." Again and again, Ricks cried, "What do you want?" and the response "Black Power" grew louder and louder, until it had reached fever pitch.
>
> So Greenwood turned out to be the arena for the birth of the Black Power slogan in the civil rights movement. The phrase had been used long before by Richard Wright and others, but never until that night had it been used as a slogan in the civil rights movement. For people who had been crushed so long by white power and who had been taught that black was degrading, it had a ready appeal. (1968, p. 34)

Whether that moment represents the shift from civil rights to black power or not, by the mid-1960s the organized movement for African American liberation had already taken on an increasingly radical stance from the established civil rights leadership and organizations. In cities throughout the country, especially in the northeast, midwest, and west, community organizations were taking on the demands for power and justice, aligning themselves with African and Third World struggles and calling for fundamental structural change. It was even reflected in Dr. King's growing opposition to the war in Viet Nam and the systemic poverty he saw in black communities and among the working poor.

Conceptually, black power is the logical extension of the demand for and acquisition of civil rights. As the movement dismantled the Jim Crow system, removing barriers to full participation in society on the local, state, and national levels, the demand for black power was

a natural assertion of the newly won rights. The success of the movement for civil and democratic rights came with an emerging group consciousness of national identity that then reinforced the necessity to independently assert those newly won rights while also seeking to expand those rights. Where African American communities had been denied political, economic, and social power in the north, the extension of the success that the movement achieved in the south could only be obtained by an organized effort to transfer power to those communities. This occurred in the face of increasingly white resistance to further, more substantial structural changes. "Cries of Black Power and riots are not the causes of white resistance; they are the consequence of it" (King, 1968, pp. 13–14).

The success of the African and African Diaspora independence movement in defeating European colonialism was a further influence on the consciousness of young African American activists demanding black power. The ancestral connection, the commonality of oppression, the need for cultural assertion and reclamation contributed to the impact of Africa on the emerging Black Power Movement. There had been a long history of advocacy extending back to the era of the enslavement for strengthening the political, social, and economic relationships between African Americans, Africa, and the Diaspora. Leading up to the 1960s the largest mass movement organization of African Americans had been Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association and its program built on the following concept: Africa for the Africans, those at home and those abroad. W. E. B. DuBois was one of the founders and organizers of five Pan-African Congresses. The most prominent and vocal advocate of the importance of the African relationship in the 1960s was Malcolm X and subsequently the Pan-African relationship became a programmatic and cultural imperative for progressive black organizations.

The Black Power Movement was heavily influenced by the work and words of Robert F. Williams who advocated armed self-defense against racist violence in the south. As a leader of the Monroe North Carolina NAACP and a military veteran, he organized members of his community to prevent, by force if necessary, the KKK terrorists from attacking the black community. He also advocated empowering the community

and making connections between the African American struggle, Africa, and other Third World movements. Though Williams underlined the fact that "both sides in the freedom movement are bi-racial," his emerging philosophy reinvigorated many elements of the black nationalist tradition, whose forceful emergence in the mid-1960s would become known as Black Power. Williams stressed black economic advancement, black pride, black culture, independent black political action, and what he referred to as armed self-reliance. He connected the southern freedom struggle with the anticolonialism of the emerging Third World, especially African nations (Tyson, 1999, p.191).

Williams spent a great deal of the 1960s in exile after he was falsely accused of kidnapping a white couple during a confrontation between the black community and the KKK. His influence continued due to the wide distribution of his book *Negroes With Guns*," his newsletter The Crusader, and his radio broadcasts from Cuba on what he called Radio Free Dixie.

What many emerging Black Power advocates and nationalists talked about, they saw that Williams had done. He was a successful organizer, with victories against the KKK. He was sophisticated in his analysis of the problems the movement faced and he was considered to be a great agitator and propagandist who stood tall on the world stage, taking the Black Liberation Movement into the state houses of Cuba, China, Tanzania, which were perceived as revolutionary countries. In short, he connected the struggles of African Americans to the revolutions and independence movements of the Third World.

Although Williams was seen as a heroic figure and model of the developing revolution, it was Malcolm X who was the most influential figure in and to the movement. Malcolm had captivated the imagination of the young militants of the movement and his Muslim ministry also provided a spiritual counter to Martin Luther King's Christianity. But it was his programmatic approach that most encapsulated the ideas of the burgeoning Black Power movement. Robert L. Allen (1970, p. 246) points out:

> The basic ideological foundation of the militant black movement was laid by Malcolm X. He sought to establish an intellectual framework

> for revolutionary Black Nationalism by weaving into an integrated whole a series of disjointed ideas. He pointed up the necessity for psychological liberation and black pride. He demanded black control of black organizations and communities and he was an advocate of self defense for those communities. Malcolm was an unrelenting opponent of the white, capitalist power structure and its political vehicles, the Democratic and Republican parties. He identified this power structure, rather than the white population as a whole, as the primary agent of black oppression. To counter this power structure he called for independent black political action. Finally Malcolm identified the condition of black people in the United States as domestic colonialism, explicitly calling for an aggressive internationalism among all colonial peoples if any of them are to be truly liberated.

Many local and national Black Power organizations attempted to implement Malcolm's strategy. CAP emerged in 1970 as a leading and influential organization in its attempts to come close to it by building its program based upon Malcolm's concepts of Self-Determination, Self-Defense, Self-Respect, and his strategy of a black united front.

3

The Founding of CAP and Emergence of Amiri Baraka as a National Political Leader

As a way of strengthening ties between activists and nationalist groups who were working in cities across the United States, a series of Black Power conferences were held once a year for four years beginning with the Black Power Planning Conference in 1966 in Washington, DC; 1967 in Newark, NJ; 1968 in Philadelphia, PA; and 1969 in Bermuda. These meetings convened activists from various political perspectives who sought ways to define the goals and advance an agenda for Black Power. The most significant meeting happened in Newark, New Jersey, for several reasons.

First, it came just days after the Newark and Detroit uprisings, which meant that it would receive significant media coverage, giving a national and an international platform to many of the radical voices assembled. These included the newly elected chairman of SNCC, H. Rap Brown; Ron Karenga, an emerging nationalist theoretician and organizer from Los Angeles; and the poet LeRoi Jones, soon to be known as Amiri Baraka, who had been beaten by the police during the Newark uprising and appeared at the conference with his head still bandaged from the beating.

Second the central debate at the conference became whether the movement should be seeking reform or revolution. This debate had been going on prior to the conference and extended for years beyond the conference. Those on the reform side advocated an agenda based

on the premise that the US economic and political system could possibly function positively for African Americans if they were able to access, change, and work within the system. Those advocating revolution believed that the system was inherently unjust and could not be reformed. For the revolutionaries it had to be replaced and society restructured. "At the Newark Black Power Conference, the key debate revolved around the choice between reform or revolution. Both trends were evident at the sessions. Seeking a representative meeting, the conference drew a body reflecting the diversity within the black community, including both civil rights leaders and black militants" (Woodard, 1999, p. 85).

Third, LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka was emerging as not only an artist and creative voice but also as a political leader as he set about organizing what would become a highly effective political organization in Newark and eventually nationally. According to Woodard (1999, p. 87), "the call for Black Power and a black united front helped galvanize a new set of organizations in Newark, New Jersey. Finally, the relationship between Baraka and Karenga became serious as Baraka sought more information and eventually tutoring and training in Karenga's new nationalist Pan-African ideology called the Doctrine of Kawaida.

Invigorated by the conference and the political climate in Newark and the country, Baraka engaged in a concentrated and sustained effort to organize Newark's black community into a political force. With other local activists he helped form CFUN out of an alliance between United Brothers, Black Community Defense and Development, and his own group of artists/activists at the Spirit House. CFUN would begin to plan and engage in electoral campaigns for the office of mayor and to capture several city council seats in order to take power in Newark city government. Within three years, by 1970, the result was the election of Ken Gibson as the city's first African American mayor. That achievement, a Black Nationalist engineered election of a mayor of a major city, catapulted Baraka into a unique leadership role in the Black Power Movement and the national black community. At that time, no other openly avowed Black Nationalist had been the driving force of a successful election campaign in a major US city.

The Ken Gibson victory was widely acknowledged within the movement as having been achieved to a great degree by Baraka's ability to forge alliances with a broad cross-section of the African American community and with other disenfranchised communities, especially the Puerto Rican community in Newark. The building of CFUN into a potent political force and the successful campaign to elect Gibson and others helped transform the perception of Baraka from a fiery poet and cultural activist to a national leader of the Black Nationalist Movement. His ability to successfully utilize art and culture in politics had been honed since his early days as a poet as well as by his role in the development of the Black Arts Movement. Baraka's reputation had been made as a brilliant poet and playwright whose main organizing skills had been in the arts and among cultural workers but he had hitherto not been known as a political leader. He was acknowledged as being one of the primary architects and theoreticians of the Black Arts Movement, often referred to as the "Father of the Black Arts Movement."

The Black Arts Movement and its relationship to the Black Power Movement are described by Larry Neal, one of the principals of the Black Arts Movement.

> The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artists that alienates him from his community. This movement is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of black America. In order to perform this task, the Black Arts Movement proposes a radical reordering of the Western cultural aesthetic. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique, and iconology. The Black Arts and the Black Power concepts both relate broadly to the Afro-American's desire for self-determination and nationhood. Both concepts are nationalistic. One is concerned with the relationship between art and politics; the other with the art of politics. (1989, p. 62)

Prior to 1967–1970, because Baraka played a key role in the Black Arts Movement, he also had credibility within the Black Power Movement, but primarily as an artistic voice, not yet as a political leader. That would come shortly and he would emerge and remain one of the most influential Black Nationalist leaders in the country. The

Ken Gibson election was a pivotal achievement in Baraka's shift from artistic to political leader because it legitimized his political organizing skills and leadership.

For several years, Baraka had been steadily developing toward a more direct political leadership role in the movement. As an artist he had established himself as voice of and activist on behalf of oppressed people, especially black people. His art became increasingly, and more directly, political as he moved to Harlem, helped found the Black Arts Repertory Theater School, and launched the Black Arts Movement. It became even more intense after he moved back to his hometown, Newark, and began to get involved in local politics.

The Newark rebellion in 1967 helped further radicalize him and by 1968 he was immersed in the process of building grassroots community organizations that could challenge the established political machine in the city. Simultaneously, Baraka's work had taken on a black metaphysical tone due to the influence of Islam and African religions like Yoruba that he had been studying and because of his lack of a coherent ideological system that appealed to his intellect, creativity, spiritualism, and politics.

Baraka's writings were being published in a wide range of black publications including *Negro Digest/The Black World*, *Soul Book*, *The Journal of Black Poetry*, and others. He was also written about in many mainstream papers, seen on talk shows, and traveled and lectured extensively. All of this activity in addition to the local organizing added to his reputation and helped expand his influence. In 1966 Maulana (Ron) Karenga visited Baraka at his home during a trip to Newark to help plan the 1967 Black Power Conference. Later Baraka would visit Karenga in Los Angeles, where he would get a full view of Karenga's Us Organization. The impressions that Baraka gained from those meetings and subsequent relationship would help shape his political future and the future of the Black Power Movement.

Baraka described his impressions this way:

> Just as I was impressed by Karenga's first appearance in my house, I was even more impressed by the images presented by this well-disciplined organization. By the seeming depth and profundity of his Kawaida doctrine. I felt undisciplined and relatively backward. Here was

> organization . . . Because I was so self-critical, especially from a black nationalist perspective, the fact of the Us organization—i.e., that it was an organization and not just a bunch of undisciplined people taking up time mostly arguing with each other about what to do, or what method to use, even about things that most agreed should be done—drew me Us and Karenga. He was quick-witted, sharp-tongued, with a kind of amusing irony to his put-downs—of white people, America, black people, or whatever, I admired. Plus there was no doubt, when you were around Karenga, as to who was the leader, even if you weren't in his organization.
>
> It seemed to me the kind of next-higher stage of commitment and organization as compared to the Black Arts or what was going on in the Spirit House in Newark. There was a military aspect to it, a uniformity that I regarded then as indispensable to any talk of black revolution. Also, Karenga's doctrine, some of which had been printed, summarized and ordered an approach to the revolution we sought. (1984, pp. 253–254)

Baraka became a student and disciple of Karenga. His return to Newark saw him begin to organize what had become CFUN into a highly disciplined nationalist organization engaged in organizing the local community. As mentioned previously, beginning in 1967 after the Newark rebellion and the Black Power Conference a great deal of that organizing went toward building the broad-based coalition necessary to win the first nationalist electoral victory in a major city, the election of Ken Gibson as mayor of Newark, and several city council seats in 1970. During that three-year period of organizing CFUN, Baraka was engaged in studying Karenga's organization and ideology and began to shape his own organization into an east coast replica of Karenga's west coast Us.

Central to Karenga's philosophy was the idea of cultural revolution and reconstruction, especially the rejection of Western white values and acceptance of African values as synthesized in his Nguzo Saba (7 Principles in Swahili). He believed that the cultural liberation of African Americans would lead to the physical liberation of the black nation. According to Baraka:

> Because Karenga's whole premise was of cultural revolution, I was pulled closer. Being a cultural worker, an artist, the emphasis on

> culture played to my own biases. And no doubt in a society where the "advance forces" to often put no stress on culture and the arts at all, I thought his philosophy eminently correct. (1984, p. 254)

But it was not only the philosophical aspect of Karenga's presentation that was attractive to Baraka. It was the sense of discipline and organization that he sought in his own life and in the life of the organization he was building in Newark.

Baraka fashioned his Newark organization CFUN after Karenga's Us and the alliance between them grew stronger but only for a short while. Within two years the alliance would be strained by events that also pushed Karenga to the periphery of the Black Liberation Movement as a leader. First and most importantly the escalation of conflict between the Us Organization and the BPP that led to the serious decline of Karenga's organization after Us members killed two Panthers in a shootout on UCLA's campus in 1969. That incident and subsequent confrontations resulting from the FBI's COINTEL Program also drove many Us members underground to escape arrest or violence or both.

Second, as Karenga's influence and organization declined and he became engrossed in military preservation he also became more withdrawn from the national scene and rarely was seen locally in Los Angeles. Baraka began to disagree with some of his directives and parts of his doctrine. In addition, Baraka's political successes in CFUN in Newark had begun to eclipse the successes Karenga had in Los Angeles. In the 1970s Karenga never became the national leader that he and others envisioned, although he continued to have influence in the nationalist community due to the propagation of his ideas, especially the African American holiday Kwanzaa, which today is estimated to be celebrated by millions of African Americans and Africans throughout the African Diaspora.

By 1969 the call had gone out for the founding of CAP to be held in Atlanta in September 1970. Whereas Karenga had been a principal organizer and figure at the Black Power conferences, he had no role in organizing the largest gathering of Pan-African nationalists and Black Power activists of the era. In fact, he attempted to stop it from proceeding and was prevented from doing that by Baraka and CFUN.

> In Atlanta, Baraka was particularly concerned about the disruptive potential of Karenga's Us followers. On several occasions, Karenga had spoken to Baraka about his desire to postpone the congress. Baraka disagreed and went ahead with the Atlanta congress despite Karenga's absence from its planning sessions. Predictably, Karenga tried to disrupt the gathering. The armed Us members he sent to the congress tried to intimidate the participants. But Baraka's security measures prevented Karenga's men from trying anything blatantly disruptive. Karenga's displeasure with the Atlanta congress is curious given the intellectual deference paid to him throughout the proceedings. Indeed his desire to undermine the assemblage may have stemmed from the realization that his prized disciple had now gained greater prominence than himself. (Watts, 2001, p. 384)

According to Joseph:

> "on Labor Day weekend, as (Huey) Newton led the Panthers in Philadelphia, Imamu Amiri Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones) presided over a meeting of four thousand black nationalists in Atlanta. CAP's conference attempted to draw Black Power groups from the United States and abroad into a coalition. In the three years since being beaten in Newark during the riots, Baraka had emerged as a political activist and black nationalist theoretician, eclipsing his mentor Ron Karenga. (2006a, p. 254)

Baraka and CFUN set about organizing CAP with the political capital that three major accomplishments had afforded and that no other nationalist organization or leader could claim at the time. First, he and others had fashioned a highly disciplined, well-trained, and seasoned organization of nationalist revolutionaries in CFUN. Second, with CFUN he had successfully implemented the united front strategy espoused by Malcolm X and codified in Karenga's Kawaida, building a significant mass base by bringing together a large segment of the African American community and an important alliance with the Puerto Rican community. Third, he had been the main architect and CFUN the main organization that had successfully engineered the election of Ken Gibson, the mayor of Newark.

Going into Atlanta, Baraka was perceived by many to be the prototype of the new nationalist leader: visionary, hard-working, revolutionary but practical, and, most of all, successful in seizing power. Institutions had been built in Newark, organizations were growing, mass support was expanding, political power was being won, and at the center of all that was a nationalist movement.

As an example of the difference in the perception of Baraka's position in the movement, at the 1967 Black Power conference in Newark, he was leading the Arts and Cultural panels and workshops. In Atlanta, at the founding conference of CAP, he chaired the Political Liberation workshop. From that position he influenced the entire gathering toward pursuing an even greater united front strategy, and galvanized the national Black Nationalist community. According to historian Komozi Woodard, a participant at the Atlanta meeting:

> The Congress of African People in Atlanta, Georgia was the successor to the annual National Black Power Conferences held between 1966 and 1968 . . . Establishing a broad, working federation of black nationalists was one of the central goals of the Congress of African People in Atlanta. The Congress of African People marked a turning point in the Black Revolt in several regards. That summit signaled the introduction of the leading black nationalists into the national black political community that was just taking shape. 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 an unprecedented degree of unity in the Black Revolt, drawing as it did both civil rights and black nationalist leaders. Moreover the widespread unity of black nationalists at the Atlanta gathering was unprecedented. Finally, the Congress of African People signaled an important early step in the formation of a national black political community. (1999, pp. 162–163)

As evidence of Baraka and CFUN's influence on the founding conference of CAP, the statements and resolutions of every workshop contained elements of Kawaida as practiced by CFUN. Among the key decisions made at that meeting were the call for a national black political convention and movement toward the creation of a black political party that could work in the electoral arena as well as

other areas. This was an increasingly important issue because of the growing involvement of the African American community in political campaigns to realize and exercise black political power by electing black candidates.

Before 1967 no major US city had ever elected a black mayor until Carl Stokes was elected mayor of Cleveland, Ohio. He was followed by Richard Hatcher as mayor of Gary, Indiana, in 1968; Gibson in Newark in 1970; Coleman Young in Detroit, Tom Bradley in Los Angeles, and Maynard Jackson in Atlanta in 1973. The election of these mayors was accompanied by the election of other black candidates for city council, county commissions, sheriff, city clerks, and other posts throughout urban areas in the north and west, and semirural areas in the south. As a further example of the increasing activity and success of black electoral campaigns, in 1960 there were only 7 African Americans in Congress, by 1975 that number had more than doubled to 16 in the US House of Representatives. In the one hundred and thirteenth Congress sworn-in in 2013, there were 43 black members of the House of Representatives and 1 senator in addition to the first African American president, Barack Obama.

The call at the CAP founding conference for a national black political convention and movement was an attempt to ensure that the nationalist community would influence the ideas, policies, and practices of the new wave of black politicians and create a structure capable of conducting and winning campaigns. The overall political perspective to come out of the 1970 gathering was consistent with the general tone and substance of nationalist revolutionary ideological and programmatic objectives within the Black Power Movement of the time. As an example, CAP's founding ideological document states among its objectives: Self-Determination, Self-Sufficiency, Self- Respect, and Self-Defense. The BPP in its 1966 Programmatic Statement states essentially the same goals: Freedom, the power to determine our own destiny, education, housing, land, and self-defense. The Republic of New Africa's 1968 Declaration of Independence also calls for self-determination and self-sufficiency for black people.

A very broad cross-section of the national black leadership attended and participated in the founding conference of CAP. Included among

the speakers and participants were Richard Hatcher, the mayor of Gary, Indiana; the Urban League's Whitney Young; Ralph Abernathy of the SCLC; Julian Bond; Louis Farrakhan; and newly elected Newark mayor Ken Gibson.

Some 4,000 people and scores of local organizations from across the United States participated in the founding meeting of CAP. The conference ended with CAP as a new national formation on the black political landscape. Hayward Henry from the Unitarian Church and a local activist from Boston was elected chairman of the new organization, and Baraka was elected the political organization chair. Even though Henry was the elected chair, the successful organizing, securing, and direction of the gathering had been made possible by Baraka and CFUN. It was clear to the delegates and the national black community that Baraka was not only the leader of the new local organization, but had become a leading political and cultural figure in the Black Nationalist Movement and a significant player on the national black political stage. The success of the Atlanta congress further solidified his reputation on the national stage as a political leader capable of advancing a nationalist agenda. He was no longer just an artistic personality. He was seen, especially among cultural nationalists and other activists, as a revolutionary thinker, organizer, and leader constructing and shaping a national organization and movement.

His position did not go unnoticed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which at the time was heavily engaged in what was later revealed to be their Counter Intelligence Program or COINTELPRO, a program designed to disrupt and destroy black organizations and leadership. Obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, a memo on Everett Leroy Jones (Baraka) from the FBI field office in Newark to the director of the FBI stated:

> In view of the prominence of Jones at the Congress of African Peoples (CAP) in Atlanta, Georgia, in September, 1970, this investigation must be intensified. Target informants on the activities of Jones . . . investigation necessary to determine in detail his current activities. Jones has been almost unanimously described by sources who attended the CAP as a very important person at that Congress and as the person who will probably emerge as the leader of the Pan-African movement in

> the United States. One source said Jones was regarded as the "Black Messiah" at the CAP. Submit reports in this case as often as necessary, depending on the extent of Jones' activities, but at least quarterly. This case should receive aggressive, imaginative attention.

In 1970 CAP was called for and conceived as a united front–type organization with broad participation and member organizations based in local communities but not necessarily with a singular ideology, structure, or leadership. By the following year, Baraka and CFUN/Newark CAP were the main forces driving CAP. As with the Newark experience, Baraka felt that the national organization could not achieve its goals if it stayed a loose association of community organizations. He set out to remake it into a national replica of the force that had been built in Newark, turning it into a national revolutionary organization with highly disciplined well-trained activists in cities throughout the country.

According to Woodard, "by the Second International Assembly of the Congress of African People in San Diego on Labor Day, 1972, CAP was the most formidable black nationalist organization in the country" (1999, p. 219).

It was at that second national conference of CAP that Baraka was formally elected chairman. Woodard states:

> In the election of the second national chair, Imamu Baraka's leadership in the mobilization for the National Black Political Assembly and for African Liberation Day was a major consideration. Furthermore, Baraka led in the development of a number of institutional "prototypes" that would serve as models for other branches of CAP. Many leaders of the new branches were trained in Newark at the Political School of Kawaida. Consequently, at the second general assembly of the Congress of African People, with black nationalism at its zenith, Baraka was elected its national chairman. As the chair, Baraka began fashioning the loose federation structure into a new national vanguard organization, drawing from his own reading of the experience of CFUN as well as those of African liberation movements. (1999, p. 219)

Within that short span from the founding in 1970 to the second assembly in 1972, the organization had moved to the center of two of

the most important black political developments in the United States. One was the drive to forge a political structure encompassing black radical and moderate forces to work in the area of electoral politics. This concept was growing from the Black Power conferences of 1966–1969 to the large gathering of diverse personalities, ideologies, and objectives at the Atlanta founding of CAP, and the experience with electoral politics in Newark. Baraka came out of the Atlanta meeting determined to create such a political structure. He described a series of meetings to organize the national black political convention:

> At a conference in 1971 at the East in New York, I had introduced, as Political Liberation Chairman of the Congress of African People, a paper called, "Strategy and Tactics of a Pan African Nationalist Party." The paper called for the formation of a Black political party based on a succession of alliances and coalitions and operational-unity structures. Alliances between nationalists and nationalists, and nationalists and other legitimate Black movements, including Black elected officials progressive enough and independent enough to understand the main needs of the Black community over and above their presumed commitments to the Democratic or Republican parties.
>
> In 1970, in Atlanta, at the Congress of African People's operational unity assembly, we had introduced a paper in the political liberation work council that called for the eventual establishment of the "World African Party," able to move in all four areas of political power, i.e., public office; community organization; alliances and coalitions; and disruption, threatened or actual. And to be sure, this is the mandate and goal, at one level of the movement called the Congress of African People, to see a World African Party, a true Pan-African Party, evolve and develop.
>
> The presence of these ideas was very strong in the Northlake conference, and some of the papers read expressed the need to counter the Black-party ideas, for whatever reasons. However, the idea advanced by this writer at the Northlake meeting concerned the need for a National Black Convention, somewhat like the Atlanta conference, but bigger and particularly oriented toward Black political development. This idea had also been mentioned at the D.C. Black Leadership Conference, as well as in a follow-up meeting to that conference in Greensboro, N. C. The convention would try to bring all the tribes of Black people in America

> together to talk about our political priorities. Certainly about 1972, and what an American Presidential year meant to the national Black community; but also what kind of continuing priorities should be sounded for Black people. And, as always, we hoped that there would be some talk of a continuing mechanism, some structure upon which to build what we still feel is the absolute sine qua non of Black political movement, i.e., a permanent structure, or party. (1972, pp. 6–7)

The unrelenting focus and involvement of Baraka and CAP led to the successful convening in March 1972 of the National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, where over 8,000 activists, elected officials, labor leaders, civil rights organizations, and revolutionaries gathered. This convention led to a quasi-party structure, the National Black Political Assembly. It was yet another success that further solidified the perception of Baraka as the leading black nationalist theoretician and strategist of the era. The Gary Convention and the capacity of CAP to put its ideas into action in 1972 is perhaps the pinnacle of Baraka's leadership as a Black Nationalist.

According to William Clay, US representative from Missouri who attended the Gary Convention as a representative of the Congressional Black Caucus and as one of several dozen newly elected black elected officials in attendance: "The 5,000 delegates and several thousand guests attending the convention represented all walks of life in black America. They were Democrats, Republicans, independents, separatists, revolutionists, and reformists" (1992, p.102).

Historian Peniel Joseph evaluates the importance of the convention in his recent study of black power movements:

> It was perhaps the most important political, cultural, and intellectual gathering of the Black Power era, chiefly because of its scope and the diversity of its attendees . . . Black Power came of age at Gary, temporarily displacing civil rights as the representative movement for social and political progress. The presence of major civil rights organizations at a convention organized by black nationalists attested to this changing of the guard." (2006a, p. 277)

CAP was impressive at the convention and it is generally agreed that the success of the convention was due in large part to the disciplined,

skilled, competent activists who functioned as the main staff, the security forces, and key organizers and leaders in state delegations. Baraka and CAP were especially impressive in holding the convention together and moving through a complicated and contentious agenda. As Smith states: "By all accounts the key figure in the resolution of these contentious opening day problems (both behind the scenes and as presiding officer) was Baraka, in part because of the sheer force of his personality but also because his CAP organization provided him loyal and competent staff" (1996, p. 46).

Out of that singularly unique gathering of the broad cross-section of black America came what was called the "National Black Agenda." This document contained historical analysis of the relationship of African Americans to the US political process and its parties; it was a statement of policy on domestic and international issues; and it was a call to measure the wave of newly elected politicians and those seeking public office by a standard set by the black community, including a written pledge asked of those seeking office.

The Gary Convention was the largest extension of what had become the hallmark of CAP's organizing methodology, the united front infused with nationalism and Pan-Africanism.

From its inception CAP was a force to promote the concept of Pan-African unity. "Another important basis for the gathering at Atlanta was the nationalist principle of black unity, especially as expressed in the then growing influence of Pan Africanism—the unity of all African peoples everywhere" (Smith, 1996, p. 35).

As a Pan-African organization an important part of the CAP agenda was to establish itself as a contemporary and supporter of African Liberation Movements and ally to progressive, new African states. Toward that end, CAP started a program to recruit skilled African Americans and others to go to Tanzania to aid in development. CAP established relationships with African liberation movements, hosted African delegates to the United Nations in an annual reception, and raised money to support African liberation. CAP was also a principal organization in and put its considerable experience and organizational resources behind the first African Liberation Day March in 1972, and the united front that emerged from that effort, the African Liberation

Support Committee (ALSC). ALSC was perhaps the most important organization encompassing the most progressive forces in the black liberation movement that engaged almost exclusively in making support for African liberation a mass issue in the black community.

While Baraka infused his writings, organizing techniques, and rhetoric with various points from Karenga's doctrine, his teaching and practice of it was distinctly different from Karenga and Us Organization's interpretation and practice. One early difference was the rejection of polygamy as an acceptable practice in the organization. This rejection was not the result of the innate progressiveness of the men in CFUN on the question of women's equality. It was the result of intense struggle, debate, and discussion within the organization initiated and led by Amina Baraka, Amiri's wife, and other women in the organization. The struggle for equality within CFUN would extend into CAP and continue throughout the existence of the national organization.

Another key area of growing disagreement between Baraka and Karenga was the emphasis on the metaphysical aspects of Kawaida and the teaching of the doctrine as a mystery system that doled out information as if in some secret society. Baraka and the leadership of CAP accepted a Pan-Africanist ideology, and they were increasingly determined to align CAP with the African and Third World liberation movements organizationally and ideologically. The constantly expanding relationship of CAP to the African Liberation Movement and the support for progressive emerging African nations also served to move the organization away from a romantic relationship with Africa to a more contemporary political view. This expansion of the work of CAP internationally also influenced the organization's desire to be seen as a legitimate liberation movement on the global stage.

There had already been a growing gap between Kawaida on the west coast and Kawaida on the east coast with Baraka's organization and influence expanding while Karenga's was contracting. A formal break between the two organizationally had already occurred at the Atlanta gathering in 1970. Because of CAP's successes on the national stage and Baraka's influence as a writer and leader, he was increasingly seen as the leading theorist and practitioner of Kawaida, overshadowing

for a time Karenga's role as the creator of the doctrine. To distinguish between the two, the followers of Baraka and practitioners of Kawaida on the east coast eventually called their interpretation of the doctrine, "Revolutionary Kawaida." That distinction was critical because it gives some insight into the development of theory and ideology within CAP and its work.

4

The Black Arts Movement and CAP

In his seminal essay on the Black Arts Movement, Larry Neal wrote:

> The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artists that alienates him from his community. Black Art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America. In order to perform this task, the Black Arts Movement proposes a radical reordering of the Western cultural aesthetic. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique and iconology. The Black Arts and Black Power concept both relate broadly to the Afro-American's desire for self-determination and nationhood. Both concepts are nationalistic. One is politics; the other with the art of politics.

The Black Arts Movement was an important influence on the development of the theory and practice of CAP. Of all the national Black Power organizations, CAP is the formation that most clearly and intentionally embodied the two concepts, Black Power and Black Arts. CAP was both a Black Power organization and a Black Arts organization. In CAP's theory and practice and through all of its ideological changes, there was no distinction between the two. Even during its Marxist-Leninist period, CAP continued to place emphasis on the importance of art and culture. CAP's politics were influenced by art and culture and its art and culture were influenced by its politics, and both were consistently based on the demand for and realization of African American self-determination.

CAP's leader, Amiri Baraka was widely considered the most influential African American artist of the time. He was often described as the "father of the Black Arts Movement" because of his work with Askia Toure, Sonia Sanchez, Larry Neal, Haki Madhubuti, Carolyn Rodgers, Ed Spriggs, Jayne Cortez, Ron Milner, Woodie King, and many others in advancing the theory of Black Arts and creating a network of institutions that advanced the practice. Baraka was instrumental in founding the Black Arts Repertoire School in Harlem and Spirit House in Newark. He was an extraordinarily-productive artist producing work that included poetry, fiction, drama, and music. He was also a cultural theorist expanding the ideas of the Black Arts Movement through articles and essays in various publications and in his books. In addition he was a leading figure building and advocating for the construction of Black Arts institutions that included theaters, publishing companies, galleries, museums, production companies, and schools. His leadership in CAP was notably influenced and guided by his commitment to and understanding of the role art and culture play in the struggle for human rights and self-determination.

But CAP was not a Black Power and Black Arts organization solely because of Baraka. It was also a time of heightened cultural awareness and the ideas of the Black Arts Movement had penetrated and influenced popular culture where an increasing number of popular African American artists, especially writers and musicians, began to demonstrate a more overtly political point of view in their work. Among activists across the political spectrum there was a higher level of consciousness about the historic, cultural, and political relationship between Africa and African Americans. The demand for Black Studies programs expanded and the struggle for those programs was occurring on college campuses all across America. Poetry had become a major tool of the struggle and its presence was everywhere in almost every public program I saw or was a part of. There was also an outpouring of articles and essays on black art and culture in black newspapers and publications like *Ebony*, *Jet*, *Negro (Black) World* and others. Within the Black Liberation Movement there was an expanding debate on the role of art and culture in the struggle and more importantly in the development of revolutionary theory to guide the

struggle. One subject of the debate was the unfortunate distinction between "revolutionary nationalism" and "cultural nationalism."

In addition to the climate of black consciousness and the important impact of the Black Arts Movement and Amiri Baraka, CAP was heavily populated in its leadership and chapters with artists and cultural workers. Most prominent among them was Haki Madhbuti of Chicago CAP who was also on the national leadership council and was the midwest coordinator. In Chicago, Haki and others founded the Institute of Positive Education (IPE), Third World Press (to publish African American poets and writers), and African centered schools among other work. Within CAP, Chicago was second only to Newark in the level of organization and in its production and influence culturally. Several of the institutions, including the press and schools, continue to exist and produce to this day.

In addition to Amiri Baraka, many in Newark CAP were also artists including Amina Baraka who was a poet, dancer, and singer. Newark CAP members Ngoma, Jaribu and others wrote and performed individually and as part of cultural groups like the Boot Dancers and the Malaika Singers. Newark also benefited from Baraka's relationships within the national Black Arts community and a steady stream of successful, well-known musicians, painters, poets, writers, actors visited CAPs headquarters and performed, lectured, and made appearances in the community.

In Pittsburgh, Sala Udin and the local CAP chapter were involved in community theater and poetry. Sala was one of the key figures in Black theater, along with Rob Penny and they had befriended and mentored a young poet/playwright named August Wilson. In Detroit, I was an active poet/writer with the good fortune to have the Black Arts Movement playwright Ron Milner as a mentor. Ron was a cofounder with Woodie King, Jr. Concept East Theater. We always remained close and until his death in 2004 I still sent Ron early drafts of my writing for his feedback and brutally honest critique. Other members of Detroit CAP like sister Sharifa were working actors or writers like brother Karega who called himself a working-class poet. St. Louis CAP included several talented musicians including its leaders Kalimu Endesha and Johari Endesha and the writer Jamala. Houston CAP

members had founded the SHAPE Community Center (still functioning today) and were active in promoting African culture and local black artists. Many other chapters had active poets, musicians, and other cultural workers. CAP also had extensive relationships with a variety of artists in all of its cities and they regularly performed and participated in CAP programs.

It is through both the national and local leadership and chapters that Black Arts Movement and Black Power concepts formed the consistent basis of CAP's ideology and practice. From the early stages of CAP, when Maulana Karenga's cultural nationalist ideology was particularly appealing to an organization with so many artists and cultural workers, to CAP's final stages when it had embraced Marxism-Leninism the importance of art and culture was never abandoned, and to this day former members of CAP continue their artistic practice and work as cultural workers.

5

Ideology and Ideological Development

Historically Detroit had been, and certainly was during my youth, a hotbed of various revolutionary activities, organizations, and theories. Although I had been exposed to many of them and knew several leaders and members of different organizations, I had not joined any of the existing nationalist revolutionary organizations beyond the Black Student Union (BSU) and Black Student United Front, though I had respect for the contributions they were making to the movement.

The BPP was declining organizationally in the area as the party nationally and locally was under siege by various federal and local police agencies as a result of the FBI's COINTELPRO assault on them and the Black Liberation Movement. They were also going through internal changes in their leadership. In addition, their theory on the lumpen-proletariat being the vanguard of the revolution did not sit well with me in the midst of the deadly explosion of heroin trafficking and the rise of crime, which was devastating the black working class. The RNA was shifting its operational emphasis to Mississippi and was also under serious attack by the government. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) had dissolved, and its members had created other semi-clandestine organizations and small Marxist-Leninist groups like the Black Workers' Congress. Other leaders of LRBW like the legendary General Baker cofounded the Communist League. There were also dozens of local small nationalists, Marxist, radical

organizations. None of the existing groups appealed to me although I respected the contributions they were making to the struggle.

I was not sure of the form my activism would take after high school but I was drawn to cultural nationalism because of my interest in culture, Africa, and self-determination. My greatest political and intellectual influence was Malcolm X and I also knew that organization was an indispensable tool for the liberation struggle.

Another organization had also emerged in Detroit, the Pan-African Congress (PAC), and its main focus was on Africa. Their work was important to the liberation support work that all the nationalists in the community did and they were larger and better financed than most. Even though I considered myself a Pan-Africanist, I was rooted in work in the local community and in the factories. PAC's focus was much more Africa centered; I believed the main focus of our struggle was here even though we were in solidarity with other African peoples.

The work of Ujima, the local organization I had founded, was going well, but I knew that a national organization was needed and Ujima was primarily youthful activists who needed training. I was 17 and I don't think any of the others were over 22 at the time, although we had a group of older advisers and supporters around us. Throughout this period I had been following closely the developments in Newark and Baraka's work as an artist and cultural theorist. I had spent many evenings discussing the Black Arts Movement with playwright and Black Arts Movement theorist Ron Milner and others in Detroit, always making it a point to attend any lectures or performances of Baraka's when he came to town. I became convinced that out of all the organizations I'd seen, none were as capable of delivering a comprehensive and transformative program like the emerging national organization—CAP.

In late 1971 I took time off from work and went to Newark for a couple of weeks to the Political School of Kawaida (a training academy set up to teach organizing from the Kawaida perspective) for my first formal training in the techniques and tactics that had been successful in Newark. Just as Baraka had been impressed with his first visit to Karenga's Us Organization in Los Angeles, I was equally if not more impressed with CAP in Newark.

They were clearly on an organizational level far beyond anything I'd witnessed in other black nationalist organizations with the exception of the Nation of Islam. They had well-run operations and institutions including the Afrikan Free School, a bookstore, two buildings for classes, training and administrative work, hundreds of activists involved in all aspects of community organizing, a regular newspaper (*Black NewArk*), and a large mass base of community support. They also held weekly Sunday Soul Sessions, which was like church for black nationalists, complete with music, poetry, dancing, and a speech/sermon by Baraka or another leader in the organization. Soul Sessions were inspiring and impressive because of the content, energy, and community attendance.

Members of the organization were called advocates, as in advocates of Kawaida, revolution, change. They were disciplined, rising early in the morning, and expected to begin working by 7:00 am and work a 12-hour day, ending (if you were lucky) at 7:00 pm. The 7:00 time also implied spiritual connections to ancient African mystery systems. The advocates were polite and serious, and they were in good shape from physical training and a lean diet devoid of meat but containing fruits, vegetables, and fish. They didn't drink, use drugs, or smoke. It was explained to me that to make revolution we had to also change our negative behaviors and resist detrimental practices like drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. This was a carryover from Karenga's Us Organization, which Karenga had modeled after the Nation of Islam with its strict dress, diet, and code of behavior. These practices in CAP would become a source of debate by 1974.

My training in Newark consisted of group classes in the doctrine of Kawaida and black revolutionary nationalist theory, physical training, brotherhood classes, Saturday morning inspection, and work in various departments of the organization. In addition, I met different leading members to discuss strategy and tactics, political theory, organizing technique, communications, and security.

Doctrine classes consisted of lecture, study, memorization, and discussion of certain points of Kawaida. The word Kawaida means tradition in Swahili. For our purposes it was described as the unity of tradition and reason. For instance, we were instructed that we use

and advocate the use of Swahili as a common Pan-African language because it is the only nontribal African language, and that Karenga chose it to emphasize the importance of African, not tribal, unity, thus the use of a traditional African language but within the reasoning of Pan-Africanism and the unity of African people we sought.

Kawaida was not just a political philosophy or organizing methodology. It was also seen as a religion and propagated as such by Karenga and his followers in Los Angeles. In Newark, the introduction of Kawaida was also as a religious and political ideology. As a religion it had been officially recognized as such by the local and state governments. This religious connotation had both a spiritual and practical benefit. Spiritually it allowed for a nationalist organization to appeal to the deeply spiritual nature of the black community by posing an alternative to both Christianity and Islam. It also allowed that same community to continue their own religious beliefs but accept the advocates of Kawaida as essentially spiritual, too.

The more practical aspect of the religious designation was that there were a group of advocates who were officially priests of the Kawaida faith (Kasisi, priest or Imamu, high priest in Swahili). This allowed them to have ministries in prisons where they taught the doctrine of Kawaida, inmates were trained to become advocates of Kawaida, and the organization had direct access to people they viewed as revolutionary and progressive men and women behind bars.

As a quasi-religious philosophy, the Doctrine of Kawaida also had various rituals to accompany its message. There was a wedding ceremony and a burial ceremony as well as processes for naming children and other rituals. But the emphasis in Newark was on the political and organizational instruction formulated into a series of lists or doctrine points. Most of the doctrine points that we studied at the political school were of a practical political nature although there was a fair amount of lifestyle doctrine points mixed in. At the core of Kawaida was the Nguzo Saba (seven principles) around which the rest of the doctrine was constructed. We were expected to know and to become advocates of this new value system.

The Nguzo Saba was described and advanced as a value system, a black or African value system that was necessary to break with white,

Western values in order to achieve cultural and psychological liberation. The seven principles were meant to work as a whole, interdependent system of behavior and a worldview and were touted as being based on pre-European invasion African belief systems. The seven principles are Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith).

One of the texts we studied was an essay by Baraka on Kawaida and especially the centrality of the seven principles and the idea of a new black value system that would help to liberate African Americans morally, psychologically, and culturally. Baraka explains:

> So that Maulana Karenga's doctrine is first a value system. It sets forth a value system, to be followed, called Kawaida, literally ("that which is customary, or traditionally adhered to, by Black people"). A nation is only as great as that set of values it actually practices . . . no matter what it says e.g., witness America (white and negro) the value system is how you live, to what end. And Kawaida is, as doctrine teaches, "a weapon, a shield, and a pillow of peace." (1972b, p. 12)

Not only did these principles form the basis of the new black value system as preached by Karenga and Baraka, they were also the principles that the new African American holiday, Kwanzaa, was based on and organized around. Kwanzaa was initiated by Karenga to give African Americans a nonreligious but culturally rich holiday that would emphasize the Nguzo Saba, family and community; African and African American history and heritage; and social activism. During 1966–1970, Kwanzaa had been a relatively unknown holiday practiced mainly in Los Angeles among followers of Karenga. Once CAP was organized, the holiday became widespread due in large part to the efforts of CAP to teach the holiday in all the cities where it existed, using it as an organizing tool to also teach the seven principles and spread the doctrine of Kawaida. In Detroit, like the other CAP cities, we went into schools, libraries, churches, and jails to teach the practice of Kwanzaa and the seven principles. We also organized large city-wide Kwanzaa gatherings, forming Kwanzaa committees with other black organizations to create bigger celebrations with other nationalist and community groups.

Mayes explains:

> CAP institutionalized Kwanzaa in the United States. Over a hundred groups from more than twenty-five cities attended the 1970 meeting, most leaving as local CAP affiliates. A CAP report explained the importance of local organizations: "the base of the CAP operation has been the Local Organizations. Leadership, kazi (work), and policy have all emerged from local activities. These bodies based in African communities around the western hemisphere will be carrying out the daily work of CAP. To local folk, these groups represent the CAP message." Part of this message to local affiliates was to return home and promote Kwanzaa in black neighborhoods. (2006, p. 240)

According to the *New York Times*, it is estimated that more than 18 million African Americans celebrate Kwanzaa and it has entered the American mainstream, including having an annual Kwanzaa stamp issued by the US Postal Service.

In addition to the study of the doctrine of Kawaida, we also read and discussed other essays by Baraka as well as African leaders such as Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, president of Tanzania, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Sekou Toure of Guinea. Baraka's essays were mainly focused on teaching the doctrine, including his essay called "A Black Value System." The other papers were speeches or writings on the African revolution and in particular the African form of socialism.

Physical and military training consisted of martial arts (called by the Swahili word, Yangumi), some weapons (mostly hand weapons like sticks), and study of military science, mainly histories of guerilla warfare in various Third World countries. As with most of us who had been in the movement for a while, I was already heavily engaged in this type of training in Detroit. We all knew that we were doing dangerous work and that attacks could and often came from any number of sources including the FBI, local police, gangsters, white supremacists, and even other black revolutionary organizations. Later we found this to be true of many of the New Left Marxists organizations as well, though they were usually much less dangerous and experienced in violence than those other groups.

In brotherhood classes we discussed the doctrine of Kawaida, readings of black revolutionary theory, security, issues related to the men,

and generally built upon the camaraderie that was being forged in the day to day grind of the work we were doing. I met and worked with some remarkable brothers, many who have remained close friends over the years. I learned during those first couple of weeks of my training that those weekly meetings were important because it helped to reassure us that we would not be standing alone when a fight came. And when those confrontations came, we never were.

Inspections were Saturday morning training sessions, usually in a park if the weather permitted or in a gym. They consisted of running, calisthenics, and Tambura, an African influenced dance-like drill that we did. It was very much like any other early morning gathering of an army platoon except with a whole lot of soul.

The rest of my time, the first two weeks in Newark, was spent in different departments. Although a lot of time was spent in all-male settings such as brotherhood classes (there were also sisterhood classes) and Saturday morning inspections. Within the various departments there were always men and women working side by side.

I toured the Afrikan Free School, a full-time educational institution founded by Baraka's wife Amina and other women in the organization. I worked at the two buildings known as Hekalu Umoja (temple of unity) and Hekalu Mwalimu (temple of the teacher) with women and men doing work around communications (newspaper, press releases, flyers, posters, radio, and television). I also spent time with the economics department as they operated the organization's businesses and planned budgets and fundraising. I was taken by activists in the political department to meetings at City Hall and the Board of Education and to various community organizations, where I learned about the relationship between the organization and the community groups and how they worked together. I also spent time with members of the organization working around the international programs of the organization, which was heavily focused on the mobilization for the upcoming National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, in March and African Liberation Day in May 1972.

On two occasions during that first trip in 1971, I had private conferences with Baraka in his office, once at Hekalu Umoja and the second time at Hekalu Mwalimu. Oddly enough, even though the organization

was formally committed to Kawaida as its official ideology, Baraka did not bring it up at all in either of those meetings held approximately ten days apart. In our very first meeting in his office, he asked about the work I was doing in Detroit, the young activists involved in the organization, what was going on around African Liberation Day, and the organizing in Detroit for the National Black Political Convention, both of which were just months from happening. Then he began to talk philosophically. I listened and asked questions. Among several other ideas, he talked about the need to study and understand dialectics, not just as the Marxists discuss it but as an ancient African system of discerning the truth. Imamu (as we all called him then) was extremely busy and the whole conversation took no more than 15 or 20 minutes, but it left a huge imprint on me.

I couldn't understand everything he was saying. I didn't have the background or the analytical tools at the time. But his words resonated with me even as I wondered whether he had said it because he knew I had been influenced by the black workers movement in Detroit. And because of that, he would know that I had some familiarity with Marxist dialectical theory; therefore he felt a need to pull me toward the "black" truth. The more lasting thought was not the question of why he said it, but the feeling that I got that he too was searching and that the whole conversation was both self and group instruction: discern the truth.

His comments also led me to intensify my own study of international revolutionary thought, especially from Africa and the Third World. I studied philosophy more consistently, which was already an interest of mine from my early days of seeking spiritual understanding within and outside of my Christian upbringing.

Our second meeting came a day or two before I was scheduled to return to Detroit. After being in Newark and seeing the high level of organization and commitment, I wanted to stay or at least to relocate there soon. I'd mentioned this to several of the advocates I had been working with, and they all smiled politely and said something about being where the organization "needs you to be." On my last meeting with Baraka, he asked about my general impressions during the time I'd been there, specific questions about the quality and content of my

training and what my plans were. I repeated my intention to relocate to Newark to work in the organization.

He did not tell me no. Instead he talked about the vision for the organization as a political party that could lead the struggle. He gave a quick survey of the movement and then talked about the critical position that Detroit held and why it was important as a majority black urban industrial center with a rich history of black consciousness. His final words on the subject were that I would be useful wherever I was, but right then the organization really needed me to build a CAP chapter in Detroit. I left Newark and set to work on that.

One of the strongest characteristics of the organization, and one that appealed to me as a young intellectual, was its emphasis on work and study. Study of the doctrine of Kawaida was bolstered by the study of revolutionary thinkers and practitioners, and scholars and historians of African American life, culture, and politics. This was driven by Baraka and the intellectual hunger of a group of young revolutionaries, many of them current or former college students. This was not a casual occurrence or voluntary aspect of participation in the organization. It was mandated. Members of the organization were required to work at a high level and to engage in developing an ever greater understanding of revolutionary theory. This was done formally through class and study group settings, lectures, and discussion. It was also done informally through independent reading and discussion. There was also the expectation that we would learn and memorize doctrine points. These points were contained in various phases in the doctrine of Kawaida.

In addition to the study of the Nguzo Saba (seven principles) and its importance to cultural transformation, there was also a major emphasis on three other doctrine points, which were easy to teach and grasp as organizing principles.

Four Areas of Political Power (Public Office, Community Organizations, Alliances and Coalitions, Disruption)

Four Basis of a Movement (Ideology, Organization, Communication, Resources)

Four Ends of Black Power (Self-Determination, Self-Sufficiency, Self-Respect, Self-Defense)

While there was growing ideological and practical disagreement between Karenga and Baraka, Kawaida remained an effective organizing system in the early years of CAP because of its simplicity, organization of concepts into learnable units, and its teachability to diverse elements of the black community. In Detroit and other CAP cities we taught these concepts in schools, churches, communities, and organizations. Like the documents of the founding conference of CAP published in the book *African Congress*, edited by Amiri Baraka (1972a), Kawaida principles were used in our daily work without others knowing that is what was being taught.

Interestingly, Karenga had not published or made public the doctrine or much else in terms of revolutionary theory, with the exception of a few articles. There was a small pamphlet circulating, *The Quotable Karenga*, that had been published by the Temple of Kawaida, Us Inc., in Los Angeles. It contained thoughts and sayings from Karenga and included some of his doctrine points such as, "The Seven-fold path of Blackness is to Think Black, Talk Black, Act Black, Create Black, Buy Black, Vote Black and Live Black" and "The Seven Criteria for Culture are: 1. Mythology; 2. History; 3. Social Organization; 4. Political Organization; 5. Economic Organization; 6. Creative Motif; and 7. Ethos (1967, p. 14). The pamphlet also had comments on culture and cultural nationalism, history, politics, and a section on women.

The pamphlet was seen by Karenga's followers as a kind of black nationalist alternative to the Red Book, the Chinese pamphlet containing quotations from Mao Tse Tung, which had been popularized in the Black Liberation Movement by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale of the BPP. It also perpetuated the idea of Karenga as a supreme leader in the Black Liberation Movement and Kawaida as the supreme ideology. Imamu Halisi, in the preface to the second edition, states:

> The quotes contained in THE QUOTABLE KARENGA are only an infinitesimally small representation of Maulana Karenga's total Black ideology of change known as Kawaida, yet are a very beautifully representative glimpse at the conceptual power of Afroamericas's most articulate proponent of revolutionary cultural nationalism. The years 1966–1967 were years when nationalism was rapidly being used as an

> alternative to the apparent failure and false aspirations of the Civil Rights movement. It was during these years that Maulana Karenga began to gain a wide notoriety as a leading nationalist spokesman. (As cited in Karenga, 1967, p. 2)

At the time, with the exception of that pamphlet there had been no real published production of expository writing on Kawaida from Karenga, even though he was an academician. The only way to learn Karenga's doctrine was to be taught by him or one of his leading practitioners, especially those who had reached the level of Kasisi/priest. This contributed to the sense of Kawaida as a kind of mystical, mystery system that was to be taught a little at time so that as one progressed to higher levels of understanding, your ascension within the Kawaida structure would lead you to the priesthood and eventually to the status of an Imamu (spiritual leader), although this was a designation only for men. It was reminiscent of the Masons in their quest to obtain various degrees of secret knowledge. The pinnacle of Kawaida knowledge rested with Karenga, who had assumed the title Maulana (Master Teacher) Karenga (nationalist). Karenga had tutored Baraka in Kawaida and designated him Imamu. "Sometime around 1968, Karenga gave Baraka the name/title 'Imamu,' for high priest" (Brown, 2003, p. 139).

I remember only three such designations: Imamu Baraka in Newark, Imamu Sukumu in San Diego, and Imamu Halisi of the Us Organization in Los Angeles. Imamu Sukumu can be seen in the 1973 feature film *Five on the Black Hand Side*, conducting an Arusi, the Kawaida wedding ceremony.

With that designation, Karenga expected Baraka to function as his representative, teaching and promoting the doctrine. However, the student–teacher relationship was short-lived. Baraka achieved far more national success with the doctrine than Karenga, especially after the UCLA shootings and the subsequent ongoing violent conflict between Us and the BPP and Karenga's retreat from the national stage and his eventual incarceration.

In late 1971, when I began my formal association with the organization at the Political School of Kawaida, what I was being taught of the doctrine would eventually be designated, "Revolutionary Kawaida."

This designation was to differentiate between Kawaida as taught and practiced by Maulana Karenga on the west coast and Kawaida as taught and practiced by Imamu Amiri Baraka on the east coast. By the time I came into the organization, Us had contracted in terms of size and influence under the weight of the conflict with the Panthers; the intense scrutiny, surveillance, and infiltration by the FBI and police; the necessity of some Us members to go underground; but most of all by the decline and imprisonment of Maulana Karenga.

Again, the defining moment in this rapid retreat from the potential position as an influential national leader happened on the campus of UCLA in 1969. For months a crisis had been brewing on the west coast between the growing influence of two different organizations, representing two different aspects of the Black Nationalist Movement. The BPP and its leaders, especially Huey Newton, had grown in stature as a black revolutionary organization. Karenga had been successful at building his Us Organization in Los Angeles and was now projecting himself onto the national stage through the Black Power conferences and through his mentorship and association with Amiri Baraka in Newark. The Panthers and Us had previously worked together in several local united fronts including the Black Congress but were also vying for leadership in a number of areas in the black movement and community in Los Angeles. This contest was becoming more confrontational and potentially violent with the help of the FBI's COINTELPRO, and had moved among other places into the campus of UCLA and a struggle over control of the BSU.

Brown explains:

> By late 1968 and early 1969, the UCLA Black Student Union became a major forum for both groups to compete for influence. A very contentious issue ensued relating to the selection of the director for a forthcoming Black Studies program. Many in the BSU regarded Karenga as the dominant member of a university Community Advisory Committee, which selected Charles Thomas, a psychologist and the education director of the Watts Health Center, as the candidate for the position, without getting adequate student input or representation. The students' perception that Us was attempting to muscle its own self-selected candidate into the position was intensified by a confrontational meeting

> with Karenga—accompanied by a large and intimidating contingent of Simba—and members of the BSU on January 15. Elaine Brown recalled the sense among the students that Us was attempting to bully them, even though Karenga came as a representative of the advisory board. Brown, Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter, and a host of other students, openly challenged Karenga. The Black Panther Party took the position that the process was a breach of students' right to self-determination; the BSU responded by setting up its own committee on the Black Studies program which included party members John Huggins and Elaine Brown. Efforts to resolve these tensions took a tragic turn moments after the adjournment of a student meeting on January 17. In a fracas that ensued after the meeting, Bunchy Carter and John Huggins, both leaders in the Black Panther Party, were shot to death, and Larry Watani-Stiner sustained a gunshot wound to the shoulder. (2003, p. 95)

This incident reverberated throughout the Black Liberation Movement. In the circle of student revolutionaries that I worked with in Detroit, we were affected like everyone else but also I think more confused. Because we were young and idealistic, we had an innate affinity for the brash and defiant persona of the Black Panthers, many of them teenagers like us or young adults. We were also heavily influenced by the section of the movement represented in Detroit by the RNA and other organizations that seemed closer to the ideological positions of Karenga, Baraka, and what was called the cultural nationalist wing of the movement. Most importantly we were confused because there had been a general sense that we could unite across ideological lines to create a movement formidable enough to win liberation. That idea was shattered by the UCLA incident and the aftermath.

The confusion created by the violence of the incident was exacerbated by the vitriolic characterizations of both organizations that exploded into the movement and in many ways demanded that sides be taken. Fortunately, Detroit's movement had such an eclectic history and the black revolutionaries were so well connected to each other that the Panther/Us conflict did not reach into the relationships in the way it did in other cities. But there would be times over the next few years when it would come up in public and private gatherings.

I remember at one of the weekly forums of the PAC, a brother stood up to denounce the "police informant Karenga." As the representative

of CAP and an advocate of Kawaida, I spoke against his characterization and called for the movement to cease these kinds of divisive personal attacks. The leaders of the PAC and others in the audience spoke in support of my comments, followed by applause from the audience. Many of us had pretty much accepted by then that much of the conflict was being fueled by the FBI and COINTELPRO, their operation to disrupt and destroy the Black Liberation Movement.

In a memo from J. Edgar Hoover, the following is stated:

> Officers receiving copies of this letter are instructed to immediately establish a control file . . . and to assign responsibility for following and coordinating this new counterintelligence program to an experienced and imaginative Special Agent well versed in investigations relating to black nationalist, hate type organizations . . .
>
> The purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership and supporters, and to counter their propensity for violence an civil disorder. (As cited in Van Deburg, 1997, p. 134)

While CAP had clearly broken with Karenga and had been distanced from his organization and practice, we continued to hold him in some esteem as a fellow revolutionary and as a revolutionary thinker and we still felt a connection to him as advocates of Kawaida, the doctrine he founded and that we followed in its modified version. There would be many times over the years following the UCLA incident that advocates of Kawaida, even those who did not directly follow Karenga, would defend him as a leader in the movement, even though the 1969 shootings and later charges that he tortured women made defending him uncomfortable at best. Those and a series of other issues were the beginning of his diminished role as a potential national leader.

Karenga was with Baraka in Harlem at a fundraiser when he received news of the incident at UCLA. Baraka described Karenga's reaction this way:

> Karenga was frozen by what he heard on the phone. He was scheduled to speak very shortly and it was obvious he could not. His eyes seemed

> to dart around in his head, glassy with fear. He said he wouldn't speak, but I began to try to convince him that he must speak, that all the people sitting out front were waiting for him. But he was extremely paranoid, thinking that perhaps the word had already reached East about what had happened. He thought maybe Panther sharpshooters were sitting in the audience. Finally, he did go out to speak, surrounded on all sides by the security, the LA brothers and our own people. (1984, p. 278)

The UCLA incident was followed by other incidents of violence between the Panthers and Us in the midst of an intense political, legal, and physical assault upon the BPP across the country, as well as growing repression against the Black Liberation Movement overall.

In December of the same year, 1969, Fred Hampton, the dynamic young leader of the Chicago Panther office and another young BPP leader Mark Clark were killed as they slept, by members of the Chicago police force. The following year the Attica Prison uprising occurred and incidents of confrontations, arrests, activists fleeing the country into exile in Africa or other parts of the Third World were common. Angela Davis was hunted and captured by the FBI and faced charges related to an attempt to free George Jackson and the Soledad Brothers. As mentioned earlier, the rising strength of CAP in the midst of the diminishing capacity of other organizations is one of the factors that drew me to the organization.

When I began working with CAP, Newark CAP/CFUN had gone through a two-three year period of breaking with Karenga and his teaching of the doctrine of Kawaida. The emphasis was shifting quickly away from the rigid adherence to espousing a set of doctrine points and the kind of didactic proselytizing of it as though it were the gospel. Instead the organization was engaged in the study of Kawaida and its sources, although they were not identified as such directly in Karenga's presentation of many of the Kawaida concepts.

In his *Autobiography*, Baraka explains his retrospective view of Karenga's doctrine.

> Karenga's doctrine, as I found out after following it politically and socially for eight years, was very eclectic. He had borrowed and copped from everybody. Not only Elijah Muhammad, but Nkrumah, Fanon,

> Toure`, Nyerere, Garvey, Malcolm all ran through his doctrine, plus Mao and even Lenin and Stalin and Marx. Though Karenga hid the bits and pieces he had taken from the white revolutionaries. Even today I think that there is much in Karenga's doctrines that is valid. Certainly the idea that oppressed people practicing and believing in the values of their oppressors cannot free themselves is true and unchallengeable. But what are those values that will oppose black oppression and where do we find them? The idea that somehow we had to go back to pre-capitalist Africa and extract some "unchanging" black values from historical feudalist Africa, and impose them on a 20th-century black proletariat in the most advanced industrial country in the world, was simple idealism and subjectivism. Cultural nationalism uses an ahistorical unchanging never-never-land Africa to root its hypotheses. The doctrine itself is like a bible of petty bourgeois glosses on reality and ratification of certain aspects of history to make a recipe for "blackness" that again gives this petty bourgeoisie the hole card on manners to lord it over the black masses, only this time "revolutionary" manners. (1984, p. 253)

That view was stated in hindsight, years after CAP had ceased to exist. To get to that point, Baraka and the organization went through several years of ideological change, turmoil, and even self-doubt.

The contact I had with the organization prior to going to Newark to attend the Political School of Kawaida helped in many ways to solidify my own growing identification with the idea that it was necessary for the sake of liberating black people that I reject Western values and become more "African" in my beliefs and practice. Like many of the young nationalists, I'd begun wearing African clothes, had been given an African name, Pili (second child) Sababu (one who takes the cause of the struggle upon himself). I also studied, even prior to going to Newark, the aspects of Kawaida that were available to me. I was celebrating Kwanzaa with my family and the members of Ujima, and I was learning Kiswahili. I was a part of the growing nationalist movement that was engaged in organizing efforts that would shape the national black political landscape for some time.

By 1972 I was working full-time organizing the Detroit chapter of CAP and continued working in a Chrysler factory on the midnight

shift. I took frequent trips to Newark, often driving from Detroit right after my shift ended on Friday morning and driving back to report for work on Sunday night. We also developed and maintained contacts with other CAP chapters in the midwest. Ujima had become the Detroit CAP and we often drove back and forth to Chicago to confer with Mwalimu (Teacher) Haki Madhubuti (formerly Don L. Lee), to attend meetings and study sessions, and to observe how they were organizing. We visited other midwestern CAP cities including, Gary, Indiana, South Bend, Elkhart, St. Louis, and Cleveland to strengthen our organization, to support their local initiatives, and to learn. This was also the year of three of the most significant national meetings in the Black Liberation Movement of the era.

In March 1972, the convention that had been called for at the first CAP gathering in Atlanta was finally organized. This was the National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, hosted by Gary's first black mayor, Richard Hatcher. This assembly was more than twice as large as and more diverse than the Atlanta CAP gathering in 1970 and was the culmination of a series of meetings, local and regional political conventions, and the rising number of successful local elections of black officials.

In May, African Liberation Day was held in Washington, DC, attracting more than 50,000 activists who came from all over the country to support the African Liberation Movement, especially those in what were then Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissau as well as the southern African struggles of Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. Thousands also marched in San Francisco and Toronto and there were demonstrations and programs in local cities. Out of this organizing effort emerged the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), which continued and expanded this work over the next couple of years. Later ALSC also became a focal point of the ideological struggle that would erupt within the national black nationalist community.

In September, the second national CAP gathering was held in San Diego. As previously mentioned, at this meeting, Baraka was elected chair of the organization but not without further confrontation with Karenga and his organization Us. The break with Karenga's brand

of Kawaida was clear and further articulated by Baraka in a series of ideological papers and speeches. The organization was also in the last stages of being transformed from a coalition or united front–type organization to the intended revolutionary vanguard organization of the Black nationalist movement.

The ideological development and position of CAP were in constant transition because the leadership and activists of the organization considered themselves revolutionaries, and as such there was no permanent fixation on the infallibility of any particular ideology. Although at varying points in the life of the organization, there seemed to be a belief that the ideology of the day was a gospel-like truth. This is especially true of the early Kawaida period and the Marxist-Leninist period.

Throughout the organization's short existence it was necessary to develop ideologically in the midst of intense political work and pressures. Ideologically CAP evolved through five distinct but interrelated periods. It went from Kawaida as a religious-cultural philosophy to revolutionary Kawaida emphasizing nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and socialism, to African socialism, to Black Marxism, to Marxism that upholds black self-determination, all within the span of eight years. Within that time, the accelerators of ideological change were varied.

6

Maulana Karenga, Amiri Baraka, and Kawaida

In the first period, about 1967–1970, Maulana Karenga was a major direct ideological influence on Baraka and by extension CFUN/CAP, beginning with their meetings in Newark during the planning for the 1967 Black Power conference. Karenga had gained a reputation as a nationalist leader in Los Angeles through his community organizing efforts after the 1965 Watts riots and the establishment of his organization, Us. When he came to Newark, Baraka had been situated within the community as an artistic voice, cultural leader, and critic who had gained national stature in the Black Nationalist community because of his work in the Black Arts Movement. Like many others, Baraka was influenced by Malcolm X both politically and spiritually and engaged in the study of Islam and also other African religious systems. Baraka's view was eclectic, not systematic or scientific in its analysis, which made him even more susceptible to Karenga's influence.

Baraka, as previously cited, saw Karenga's Doctrine of Kawaida as appearing organized and a seemingly comprehensive blueprint for Black Nationalism. In addition, its cultural aspects had a tremendous appeal to Baraka, an artist and cultural worker. The quasi-religious elements were also a substitution for Islam and his other religious studies.

By this time the Black Liberation Movement had delineated itself as being either revolutionary nationalists or cultural nationalists, with the BPP seen as the strongest example of the former and Karenga's Us

Organization being an example of the latter. Clayborne Carson writes about the detrimental impact of this split:

> The Us/Panther split represented a lost opportunity for merging the two major elements of African-American resistance to racial oppression. The Black Panther Party made important contributions to the African American tradition of militant political struggle, while Us made a similarly important contribution to the tradition of psychological and cultural struggle. Both traditions were necessary components of our liberation, but they have unfortunately often been competing traditions. Like the verbal sparring that marred relations between Malcolm and King, the Us/Panther conflict weakened the modern African-American struggle and spawned divisive ideological conflicts that continue until this day. (As cited in Brown, 2003, p. x)

The cultural nationalists were often mischaracterized as being only concerned with recapturing the stolen African legacy and in reclaiming their right to be African even in the context of the United States and not as engaged in the day to day struggle of the black masses. Karenga's approach appealed to many cultural nationalists, including Baraka, because the emphasis on culture included all aspects of life. In the *Quotable Karenga*, Karenga states:

> Everything that we do, think, or learn is somehow interpreted as a culture expression. So when we discuss politics, to Us that is a sign of culture. When we discuss economics, to Us that is a sign of culture. When we discuss community organization, that to Us is a sign of culture. In other words, we define culture as a complete value system and also means and ways of maintaining that value system. (1967, p. 15)

The centrality of culture within Kawaida, rejecting Western values, uplifting new values rooted in African culture and custom, and organizing for political power within the context of the United States, seemed to fulfill the need for a cohesive cultural nationalist ideology. In the emerging CFUN and Amiri Baraka, the shift to Kawaida and the discipline demanded to emulate the Us Organization in Los Angeles helped to build the type of organization and local movement necessary to galvanize the nationalist community into a potent political force. CFUN became the

prototype organization and the most successful cultural nationalist organization in the nation heading into the founding of CAP.

But the religious aspects of Kawaida were problematic, especially its emphasis on cult-like devotion to Maulana Karenga, which was reminiscent of the Nation of Islam and its devotion to Elijah Muhammad as the prophet. Some of CAP's early practices emulated the infallible leader cult with Imamu Baraka being held up as such. As CAP went through ideological and organizational changes, the cult of personality and other such practices in Kawaida were criticized, rejected, and abandoned.

Another challenge was the ongoing differences over the view of women, which contributed to the inability of Karenga's Kawaida teaching and practice to remain dominant in CFUN. The women of CFUN/CAP led by Amina Baraka fought constantly against male chauvinism, even when it was dressed up in African clothes.

In addition, Baraka and the young activist-intellectuals, seasoned political veterans, and savvy community organizers in the organization were seeking answers to questions that rose up from the work they were engaged in. Those answers could not be found simply in memorizing and reciting doctrine points as laid out in Kawaida or Karenga's cultural-religious ideological perspective. They demanded real and systematic study, so CAP began to put more emphasis on studying revolutionary African and Third World theory and less on just memorizing the doctrine points of Kawaida. In a conversation I had with Amiri Baraka a year before his death, we discussed the effectiveness of Karenga's Kawaida as a tool because many of the doctrine points such as the Value System/Nguzo Saba (7 Principles) or the 4 Ends of Black Power were easily taught and organized around. Over the years other former members of CAP have also acknowledged this.

A particularly problematic area was Karenga's Kawaida positions on women, which created a critical point of dispute and dissension that helped move CFUN/CAP away from the strict adherence to Karenga's teaching. Baraka recounts the rejection of Karenga's views on women and the personal and organizational struggle against those views:

> The doctrine was organized so it dealt, presumably with every part of life. And even though I was heavily influenced by Karenga and

> Kawaida, there were certain parts of his doctrine which made no sense to me, so I did not impose them on the Newark people. This was especially true of the parts of the doctrine dealing with women. The heavy male chauvinism that I suffered from already was now formally added to. Karenga's doctrine made male chauvinism a revolutionary legitimacy. The doctrine said there was no such thing as equality between men and women, "they were complementary." Karenga also had wild stuff in his doctrine about how women ought to dress and how what they should wear should always be "suggestive." He said they should show flesh to intrigue men and not be covered up so much…In LA, Karenga even sanctioned "polygamy" and was rumored, himself to have pulled many of the women in the LA organization. "What stopped us from getting too far out in Kawaida was my wife, Amina, who not only waged a constant struggle against my personal and organizational male chauvinism, but secretly in her way was constantly undermining Karenga's influence." (1984, pp. 275–276)

Within the Black Liberation Movement, male chauvinism was pervasive, in perception, in language, and in practice, although it was never unchallenged. At every stage and in every organization, ideas and practices that diminished women, denied them leadership, or perpetuated an inferior position for them in the movement and society were challenged mostly by women and sometime by the more progressive among the men. Within CAP, one had to get past the codification of chauvinistic ideas and practices in the Black Liberation Movement in general but especially within the emerging Kawaida movement as envisioned by Maulana Karenga.

Historian Scott Brown discusses Karenga's view of women:

> Karenga's own patriarchal conception of the Black family, as exemplified in the social relations of Us advocates, was modeled after an interpretation of traditional African social relations. Yet, the historicization of male dominance, in this context, revealed a closer affiliation with reactionary trends in the gender politics of the day than a proximity to traditional African customs. "We say male supremacy is based on three things," Karenga stated, "tradition, acceptance and reason." The call for restorative male dominance, as justified by a connection with Africa, resonated with preexisting American patriarchal sensibilities

> and was reinforced by themes prevalent in liberal, nationalist, and Christian thought. (2003, p. 32)

Within Kawaida the role of women had been defined based upon Karenga's African influenced social organization and personal proclivities. For instance, specific doctrine points gave instruction on not only what women should do, but also how they should be. The doctrine stated that there are three traditional roles for women:

1. Inspiration: Providing motivation and support. Represents security and at the same time, challenge. 2. Education: Cultural education in terms of the 7 Criteria for Culture. 3. Social Development: Seeks to make the community more beautiful than before in terms of social service, social organization, styles and fashions, and development of institutions.

In *The Quotable Karenga* one can find even more examples of the pervasive chauvinism in Karenga's ideas: "What makes a woman appealing is femininity and she can't be feminine without being submissive. The man has any right that does not destroy the collective needs of his family. The woman has two rights of consultation and then separation if she isn't getting what she should be getting" (Karenga, 1967, pp. 37–38).

Within these restrictions the women of the organization did their work and also constantly pushed to expand beyond those limitations. As a result, the major institutions that emerged within most cultural nationalist organizations, especially those influenced by Kawaida, were created by and usually led and managed by women. These included the schools, youth programs, and internal organizational institutions. But even with some success and progress, the limitations of those boundaries could be seen and felt.

For instance, out of the eleven workshops held at the founding of CAP in Atlanta, 1972, only one was headed by a woman, Amina Baraka, and the workshop was on social organization, consistent with the role of women as defined by Kawaida. Woodard notes:

> In keeping with the new collective leadership of the Congress, the Pan-African gathering held eleven workshops to determine the character of the black programs for the 1970s. These sessions were led by an impressive array of scholars, writers, and activists: religion coordinated by

> Rev. James Cone and Bill Land, history by John Henrick Clarke and Yosef Ben-Jochannan, 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. McClaurin, social organization by Bibi Amina Baraka, and political liberation by Imamu Amiri Baraka. 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; the resolutions were the beginning of a "Black Agenda" for the 1970s. (1999, p. 167)

Both the lack of women in leadership roles at the first Congress and the adherence to the Kawaida line are surprising to some observers because of the well-known and often documented objections to male chauvinism from Amina Baraka and other women in the movement. Smethurst observes this odd adherence to Kawaida doctrine at the founding CAP meeting

> where Amina Baraka (Sylvia Robinson), a woman who did not generally hesitate to argue against gross sexism within the movement, approvingly quoted Karenga in the coordinator's statement to the Social Organization workshop: "As Maulana points out, What makes a woman appealing is femininity and she can't be feminine without being submissive." She goes on to add, "Defining submissiveness in the role of the Black woman we are talking about submitting to your natural roles, that is understand that it will take work and study in areas that deal specifically in the things that women are responsible for. Such as Maulana teaches inspiration, education and social development of the nation." (2005, pp. 88–89)

One benefit to the existence of the Social Organization Work Council was that it gave women a seat on the CAP national leadership council because without it there would only have been men. During 1970–72, Amina Baraka was the only woman involved in the deliberations of CAP at its highest organizational level. She also was in the forefront in CAP and in the nationalist movement fighting the rampant ideas and practices of male chauvinism. Joseph contends:

"Women in the movement fought back; Baraka's wife, Amina, led political struggles challenging CFUN and the larger black nationalist movement on charges of sexism. Global considerations also fueled reassessments of gender politics. Over time, the role of women in the movement would undergo extensive debate, dialogue and transformation" (2006a, p. 255).

After my first visit to Newark and my return to Detroit, I met with the members of Ujima to discuss my observations and share what I had learned of Kawaida and the process of becoming a chapter of CAP. Upon my recitation of the doctrine points that outlined women's position, the young women of the organization argued furiously against any sort of secondary role or chauvinistic view of women, and objected especially to what they considered the ridiculous notion that a woman only had three roles. It was such a contentious issue that it almost derailed my intention to transform Ujima into the local CAP chapter. After weeks of readings, discussions, and eventually a visit to Newark by several of us including some of the leading women organizers in Ujima, we were able to reconcile.

The reconciliation came not because the national organization had overcome the patriarchal positions espoused in Kawaida, but because we were able to see that the debate was ongoing and that women were working in every aspect of the organization. Another observation that helped us move forward was that the women in Newark CAP that we encountered were by no means submissive; they were strong, intellectual, analytical, and seasoned organizers. This left a lasting impression on the women from Detroit and challenged us, the men, to rise above the chauvinism we had dressed up and espoused as African tradition.

By then the national organization had formerly broken with Karenga and had rejected many of his theories, but the idea of male supremacy and even more so the idea of a necessary black male supremacy was still lingering and influencing the organization. It would be several years before a major change occurred in the organizational structure and culture that significantly changed the relationships and thinking on women. However, this question was one of the principal catalysts in propelling the organization away from the original embrace of Kawaida.

7

Amina Baraka and the Women in CAP

Women have always played a major role in the Black Liberation Movement, its organizations, strategies, ideological development, campaigns and successes. Too often, as in other institutions within the African American community like the black church or educational institutions, women are frequently seen as mostly responsible for the day to day functioning and organizing of the institution while men are typically viewed (internally and externally) as the publicly known leadership. This consistent feature of black institutions has also been the cause for debate, struggle, and change. Despite revolutionary ideas, programs, and practices, CAP had developed and accepted an organizational model that was similar in structure and practice to those other institutions in the community. However, several factors contributed to the internal challenge to that model and the eventual transformation of organizational and individual ideas and practices.

In the history of the Black Liberation Movement, Amina Baraka is often mentioned as the wife of revolutionary poet, playwright, and political activist Amiri Baraka, the dynamic leader of CAP. Sometimes a brief biographical statement includes reference to her independent artistic life. To date no comprehensive study of her significant contribution to the Black Liberation Movement, especially as a leader in CAP, has been written. This lack of scholarship on her work and contribution and that of other women in CAP deprives us of a complete view of the important role they had in CAP and the movement.

Known as Bibi Amina Baraka during the Kawaida phase of CAP, she was a complex woman with many talents and responsibilities. She is a writer, artist, dancer, singer, and poet. While in CAP she was also a mother, and wife.

The common misconception of Amina and the women in CAP is that they were submissive to men based on the cultural nationalist ideology, Kawaida. Additionally, they have been depicted as passive participants in their personal and political relationships and worked mostly in support roles with minimal leadership roles. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Amina Baraka was a serious and influential leader in CAP who contributed to its ideological, organizational, and programmatic development. As the only woman on CAP's Executive Council for several years, she was also the only voice on that body advocating for significant change in women's roles in the organization including diversifying the leadership to involve more women on all levels. In addition to her voice for women on CAP's highest leadership body in its initial years, there are several other key areas where Amina Baraka's leadership had a direct and transformative impact.

In CFUN, CAP Newark, and CAP nationally, Amina Baraka focused her efforts on not only expressing the need to address the issue of equality for women in the organization and movement, but she also focused on organizing the women into a formidable force for change in the organization, community, and movement. To accomplish that goal, she fought to ensure that their ideological and political development was comparable to the men through consistent education and study on the same level, with exposure to the same ideas, theories, literature, experiences, and teachers. It also meant a consistent and visible presence in the internal and external work of the organization. Women were trained and worked in advanced politics, communications, security, community organizing, economics, education, art and culture, and every area that men were being trained in.

CAP attracted a group of highly motivated, smart, committed, and creative women from all over the United States. Many of them were college graduates or college students and several had prior movement experience in other organizations. Amina cultivated a group of

women from Newark and other chapters as leaders among the women and in the organization overall. The women of CAP were involved in every major campaign, stood on the same picket lines, marched in the same demonstrations, and fought side by side with the men to protect those programs. Despite their lack of official leadership status within the Kawaida community, because of Amina's advocacy and organizing of the women, she effectively moved women into leadership within the organization. Even while their training included learning Kawaida doctrine, which emphasized a submissive and secondary position, the women of CAP simultaneously debated and discussed those elements of it that deprived women of equality in the organization, the movement, and society. Their challenge to those ideas and practices did not remain within the women's circle. It was a consistent and growing internal movement that demanded and caused change throughout the organization. This challenge to the ideology and practice of the organization was encouraged and led by Amina Baraka, who was also waging the same struggle in her own marriage with the organization's leader Imamu Baraka.

In smaller CAP locals outside of Newark and Chicago, the lack of personnel often superseded the male chauvinistic idea because the work had to be done and decisions were often made based on who was available and not on gender. This did not preclude men in the organization from attempts to impose black male supremacy within the organization. Nor did it prevent the women in the organization from fighting male chauvinistic ideas and practices. The dynamic of change was always present within CAP and it was most obvious in the increasingly visible changes in women's roles and men's attitudes. In the locals the women were heavily influenced by the example being set by the women in Newark and encouraged by the structural changes being made within the national organization that brought more women into leadership. Their own practical experience in the struggle, the history of women leaders and organizers, and the study of revolutionary theory and practice contributed to the women of the organization becoming more assertive and successful in their demand for change and to men becoming more progressive in their ideas and practice.

Institution building for CAP was an important programmatic expression of the principles of self-determination and self-sufficiency. In Newark, Amina Baraka led the women in developing key institutions. The most prominent being the Afrikan Free School, which became a model for other nationalists developing independent black schools. In Chicago, Safisha Madhubuti and other women leaders led equally successful efforts in developing educational institutions, and contemporary versions of those schools continue to operate today. In Detroit, what started as Ujima School evolved into the Aisha Shule (School of Life) and Timbuktu Academy. Ujima was the afterschool, Saturday, and summer education institution that I and others founded. My mother Mama Imani Humphrey and my aunt Mama Malkia Brantuo were both on the board of Ujima School. As the founders of Ujima focused on building the Detroit CAP, my mother and aunt went on to found the two Afrikan-centered schools, which have operated a combined 50 years.

The Newark CAP women also created innovative ways with which to provide childcare for families that were often away for long hours doing organization work; methods of providing collective meals for the members of the organization; and businesses to generate revenue and create employment. Modified versions of these ideas were often incorporated in the other locals. On the numerous trips to Newark for national meetings, training, or other gatherings, the women from the local chapters of CAP were able to exchange experiences and lessons with the women of Newark CAP as a way of constantly and consistently strengthening women within the organization.

As Amina advocated for women in the organization she also advocated for broadening the theoretical basis of our revolutionary study. CAP was clearly growing closer ideologically to the African and Diaspora Liberation Movements, which were allied with socialist countries and influenced by their ideologies. Amina was among those in the organization who not only welcomed but encouraged the direction in which CAP was moving. As we went through changes Amina became an even more vocal proponent of moving faster and further to the Left, which caused some tension within the organization.

Her work in organizing the women in CAP into a formidable force was also on full display during the major united front work that was

undertaken during 1970–1976. It has been widely acknowledged that CAP was the only nationalist group during that period with the capacity to provide primary staff and management of the major united front events that were occurring in rapid succession. Central to this capacity were the women of CAP who functioned with professionalism, discipline, organization, intelligence, and a high level of commitment to the cause of Black Liberation. Their effective and efficient work, their calming and professional demeanor in the midst of crisis, and their political savvy ensured that the events did not collapse internally. The women in CAP were instrumental in the success of the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, African Liberation Day in Washington, DC, the National Black Political Assembly, the African Liberation Support Committee conferences, the African Women's Conference, and the 1974 National Black Political Convention in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Amina Baraka's organizing of women in CAP was always coupled with her challenge to us, the men, to elevate our consciousness, understanding and commitment to equality and true partnership. Even when there was resistance or slow change, she never wavered in pointing out the necessity to have our ideas and practice align and become consistent with our view of transforming the world so all of us can live as full human beings.

Amina had an obvious influence on her husband Amiri Baraka. While adhering to organizational policy she also expressed her point of view. She often disagreed with Amiri and sometimes their disagreements spilled into the organization's meetings. It was not always comfortable for us because we held them both in such high esteem. But we came to understand that Amina had to fight like the rest of the women to be heard. She had always been her own person with her own views. As the organization became less focused on the prophetic leader and tried to transform itself into a revolutionary democratic organization, it was important that all of us felt confident in expressing our views honestly. Amina was not exempt from this. She too had to be free to express her views, and she also advocated for that right for all women *and* men. She was also a politically savvy revolutionary and was quick to spot and arrest attempts to use her disagreement with Amiri as a way to drive a wedge between them or within the organization.

Amina was an early critic of Maulana Karenga and some of the practices built into Kawaida. She refused to accept polygamy and any role that limited women. Her work led directly to the call for an African Women's Conference and to the formation of the Black Women's United Front. She did not take a leadership position in either. Instead she remained in the background while the women she'd trained and encouraged became leaders in both of those united front activities. It is another example of how she expanded the participation of women in the movement and the organization.

Amina's work helped push CAP to address questions in our ideology and practice. She was a transforming personality in CAP. As stated earlier, a major study of her work and influence is needed. Without it there is a gap in the knowledge and understanding of the Black Liberation Movement during the last half of the twentieth century.

8

Revolutionary Kawaida

In the internal CAP paper "The Meaning and Development of Revolutionary Kawaida," Baraka explains how and why the break occurred with Karenga's Kawaida and in so doing also indicates the course that CAP was on in terms of ideological development. Baraka (1974a) states:

> We wanted our movement in tune with reality, and therefore able to change it. And so for instance within our practice of the extended family we rejected polygamy as unworkable and elitist. We rejected the feudalism which sought to make our women beautiful African objects, and embraced world revolutionary theory and practice which sees women as equals in struggle. We rejected the cultism which mystified our thoughts and made many of our actions irrelevant and removed from the masses, and finally we rejected the inaccurate interpretation of Kawaida as a doctrine which dictates that only Afrikans have said anything of value in the world. That is we rejected the interpretation of Kawaida as a form of reactionary chauvinism either racial or sexual. (1974a, p. 5)

In the second ideological period, 1972–1974, three key events moved the organization toward change ideologically. First, the acceptance of Imamu Amiri Baraka as the political and spiritual leader of CAP and the national cultural nationalist movement solidified the change in the direction of the organization. Second, to consolidate the national organization politically necessitated its unification ideologically. And third, the influence of other African American

Pan-African organizations and leaders. This period became defined by the de-emphasis on the doctrine of Kawaida and the increasing emphasis on defining CAP's ideological position as Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and African Socialism. The designation of CAP ideology as Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and African socialism is a critical moment in the organization's development. Prior to that its ideology and practice had and could only be viewed in relationship to Karenga as a supreme and supremely wise leader in the black tradition of prophetic religious leadership.

Although the break with Karenga occurred by the time of the founding of CAP, the Kawaida supreme leader model persisted within the organization for several years with Baraka replacing Karenga as the prophetic supreme leader. An example of this was the elevation of Baraka's birthday, October 7, as an organizational spiritual holiday after the break with Karenga. As CAP moved further away from Kawaida and Karenga's organizational influence, it also dismantled many of the cultural practices that reinforced the religious elements of cultural nationalism.

Evidence of this shift can be seen in a 1974 organizational memo that sought to deemphasize the religious and or mystical nature of Baraka's birthday: "*Leo Baraka: Reasons for the Continued Celebration of Leo Baraka*. The Chairman has introduced 3 Basic Principles to the Congress of African People in waging struggle in the United States. 1. Concept of Activists… 2. Use of Scientific Socialism—Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse Tung Thought… 3. Struggle Against Male Chauvinism and Equality of Women Activists."

It took several years after the break with Karenga in 1970 for the organization to completely break with the prophetic leader model. The old model lingered even though there was a consistently strong and definite mandate within the organization for all activists to study theory and contribute their best thinking to the organization and the struggle for black liberation. The organizational emphasis on study and intellectual development contributed to the success of CAP's organizing efforts. It also accelerated the move to Marxist theory because the evidence of Marxism kept showing up in the readings of African and Third World revolutionary theorists and leaders.

The shift in CAP was occurring at a fast pace. From my first visit to Newark in late 1971 to the second CAP national meeting in San Diego in the fall of 1972, the ideological changes were significant. In the "Ideological statement of the Congress of African People 1970," Baraka (1970b) states:

> The congress itself represents African Nationalists of diverse description but all of the members of its Executive, Legislative, Coordinating and work councils agree that what the congress must provide is a functioning methodology for reducing the contradictions and artificial diversity of Pan-African Nationalist theory.
>
> Basic to the concept that animates the congress is the idea that ultimately all valid concepts of Pan-African Nationalism will one day come together as a practical, achievable body of effective human accomplishment throughout the Black world. That is, one day we will have unity, or we will cease to exist; even in disunity. Thus it is imperative that we join our brothers wherever they are and move beyond merely rapping about *Black Power* to an understanding of what we finally want to achieve with *Black Power.*
>
> A. Self-Determination: To govern ourselves rather than be governed by others. That means politically, economically and socially, whatever we see as necessary in terms of how we define necessary, we do as a free people. We will therefore build and develop alternative political, social and economic institutions locally, nationally and internationally, viewing each of these levels of activity as part of an organic process each complementing the other.
> B. Self-Sufficiency: To provide all the basic necessities for sustenance and growth and survival of our people, i.e., food, shelter, clothing, etc., based on the principle of UJAMAA (cooperative economics).
> C. Self-Respect: To build and develop a worldwide revolutionary culture and appropriate values, images, and forms that legitimize our thoughts and actions. Only when we have a revolutionary culture that affirms before the world our legitimacy can we respect ourselves.
> D. Self-Defense: Acceptance of the common sense policy to struggle against those who struggle against us, and to make peace with those who make peace with us.
>
> *These Four Ends of Black Power* we see not only as the priorities of Africans on the American continent, or in the Western Hemisphere,

but we recognize these four points as major priorities for Africans all over the world. By direct extension of this reasoning, we move to the position that finally all Black people are Africans, and that as Africans, we are bound together Racially, Historically, Culturally, Politically, and Emotionally.

A. Racially: To say Black is to say *African*. We are African and Black, and Black and African from the same biological roots.
B. Historically: Our history relates to Africa as white American's relates to Europe.
C. Culturally: Common generic attitude toward life. Common creative motif and soul.
D. Politically: Garvey, Du Bois, Padmore, Nkrumah, Nyerere and others' concept of Africa as a unified power base to demand power and respect for Black people the world over, i.e., Pan-Africanism. Wherever African people are, we have a commonality based on common struggle.
E. Emotionally: Africans (i.e., Blacks) feel for Africans as a common people and identify with each other.

Basically when we speak of Pan-African Nationalism, we mean simply the knowledge that we are an African people, despite our slavery or colonization by Europeans or dispersal throughout the countries of the world. *Pan-Africanism is thus the global expression of Black Nationalism*. We believe our destiny as free people can only be realized as politically, economically, socially self-determining people conscious of the fact that what we will have brought to power is what Nkrumah and Sekou Toure have called "The African Personality," i.e., African Culture: *our way of life* as a free people. We recognize the central importance of the African Continent to Black struggles for National Liberation; however, we likewise recognize the necessity to build collective political and economic power in order to be a functional ally to African and Third World peoples. Although it is absolutely necessary to have a unified and independent Africa, we must simultaneously move to design viable institutional alternatives wherever we are, in which a meaningful (non-romantic) Pan-Africanism can be practiced.

By the 1972 Congress meeting, Baraka had moved the emphasis from a less vague and broad description of CAP's ideological position to a more defined ideological perspective:

> According to Maulana Karenga, 4 Things Necessary for a Movement are Ideology, Organization, Communications and Resources. The Congress of African People, since 1970 has moved not only to focus on and state its ideology, but it has through the African dialectical process re-conceptualized certain aspects of that ideology.
>
> Stated simply that ideology says that we are working for the world liberation of African People to Self-Determination, Self-Respect, Self-Reliance and Self-Defense. We believe, as Kwame Nkrumah has stated, that the objectives of African Liberation are 1) Nationalism 2) Pan Africanism and 3) Socialism. We also believe, as Mwalimu Nyerere, whose progressive government of Tanzania is a living model of positive development that Black People all over the world can learn from, that socialism is an "attitude," a way of addressing the world, and that our address to the world is as African People, and so we speak of Ujamaa, or cooperative economics, because we understand that at the base of any people's development is their cultural awareness, that is their understanding of who they are (how they live) and what such knowledge means a social definition and responsibility. So we say: Nationalism, PanAfricanism and Ujamaa (African Scientific Socialism). (1972c, pp. 1–2)

Within this speech are several issues that mark the ideological debates and changes CAP was going through and would go through within the next two years. The first issue is the continuing influence of Kawaida as the nationalist ideology that had been so influential in CFUN and CAP's early years despite the break with Karenga politically and organizationally. Baraka begins his speech with a nod to Karenga as an indication that Kawaida still has validity. This acknowledgment is significant because at the time, Baraka was perceived as the national leader of the Kawaida movement due to Karenga's diminished role. Baraka's speech is peppered with Kawaida doctrine points including his reiteration of the need for a black value system and his recitation of the Nguzo Saba. It was an explicit signal to the nationalist community that while Karenga (even during his incarceration) still warranted a place in the nationalist community as a theoretician, Baraka was clearly the national political and spiritual leader of Kawaida and the cultural nationalist movement having built a national organization (CAP) of advocates of Kawaida. It was also an acknowledgment of a political reality, the Us/Panther conflict was continuing with

devastating results for both organizations and the Black Liberation Movement. That the speech was given in San Diego where adherents to Karenga's Kawaida were still entrenched made Baraka's references to Karenga even more of a signal to those loyalists that Baraka had not turned his back on Kawaida.

The shifting of the ideological emphasis from the rote memorization of Kawaida doctrine points to the more complex discussion of the interrelated concepts of Nationalism (domestic focus), Pan-Africanism (global African focus), and Socialism (global oppressed peoples focus) meant that the organization was going to move in a direction more closely aligned to other African and Third World liberation movements.

Between the San Diego Congress in the fall of 1972 and 1974, CAP continued to grow in influence and in organizational capacity. Ideologically, the organization was still in the second period, the period of "Revolutionary Kawaida," but change was happening rapidly. The process of learning and understanding Karenga's doctrine had been taught in stages through sequential phases of knowledge. By late 1973 Baraka had ordered the reproduction of a great deal of the doctrine (10 Phases) and had them distributed throughout the organization, ostensibly to take the mysticism out of it. This was also done as the entire organization was heavily engaged in studying and discussing international revolutionary theory and political thought on a level not previously reached by the rote memorization of doctrine points as the main ideological source.

In an internal document titled, "The Meaning and Development of Revolutionary Kawaida," Baraka explains:

> In the past, many of us who practiced Kawaida did so from a vague and almost metaphysical attachment to a 'doctrine' that most us had no real objective knowledge of. Groups were known to have a snatch or fragment of the doctrine, and in the odious spirit of priest craft, reports of still more profound and still later phases of the doctrine were constant. Even worse was the fact that since the doctrine was more legend than material various subjective interpretations of it grew, that had no correspondence with objective reality, or revolutionary

> necessity. This in turn led to fragmentation and splintering of groups trying to develop from Kawaida, based on a myriad of interpretations rather than focus on a single known ideological entity. For this reason the Chair of C.A.P. initiated the printing of a standardized collection of "10 Phases" of some of the best known material from the doctrine-writings of Maulana Karenga. The overall purpose of this collection is to make the doctrine a concrete standard entity which could be collectively studied and collectively interpreted. And so that objectivity and science could enter into the development of our revolutionary ideology and so metaphysics, priest craft, and subjectivism could be defeated. (1974a)

The distribution of the previously mysterious doctrine of Kawaida signaled a change in organization practice. Before, even with the consistent contributions of the best thought of many in the leadership and in the organization, there was an expectation that CAP's ideological and political direction would be charted by the supreme leader. It was an old model of leadership seen throughout the African American community in churches, but also in the Nation of Islam with the "Messenger" Elijah Muhammad and in Karenga's Us Organization, which had been replicated in Newark and to an extent in other CAP cities around the country. It also mirrored to a degree the cult like elevation of leaders of socialist countries that politically and structurally influenced Black Liberation Movement organizations, especially China's Mao Tse Tung who had become not only legendary, but mythological.

With the doctrine in the hands of all CAP activists, there was an even greater expectation that each person would be committed to ideological development beyond the memorization of Kawaida doctrine points. It was also a call for an intensified debate within the organization about ideology even though Kawaida was still seen as the unifying framework of the organization's ideology. The mandate was clear, as was the call for moving away from previous practice:

> It is absolutely critical for the Congress of Afrikan People to begin to be a unitary, ideologically disciplined organization, so that we can begin to replicate dynamic activists all over the United States, and elsewhere

> in the world. We welcome open discussion, and criticism in the spirit of Unity-Criticism-Unity. We are here to win the ultimate revolutionary struggle not hold on to incorrect lines and theories, and irrelevant practice. (Baraka, 1974a)

Within CAP local chapters there was intense discussion and debate as we dug into the doctrine and also studied more deeply revolutionary thought from throughout the Third World. We were especially drawn to the ideas of the African Liberation Movement leader Amilcar Cabral, and in many ways his writings paved the way to the transition to Marxism. Baraka stated: "The theories and practice of Amilcar Cabral stand out above all the others, and for this reason his classic essay THE WEAPON OF THEORY is used as our reference that world revolutionary theory can be utilized by Afrikans with no detriment to the Afrikan revolution. As well as his other works, particularly "National Liberation and Culture" and "Identity and Dignity" (1974a).

9

CAP and the United Front

As stated earlier, the central slogan of CAP was "Kazi Is the Blackest of All." Kazi, the Kiswahili word for work, was what we felt was the distinction between those who talked black revolutionary change and those who made it. The slogan seemed necessary at the time because of the tendency in some movement quarters to question who was the "blackest" or most legitimate. CAP's answer was simple, "Kazi Is the Blackest of All." My experience in and study of CAP is an absolute affirmation of the belief within the organization that our commitment to liberation was demonstrated by our willingness to work harder than anyone else or certainly not any less. We also felt that to work on behalf of our people was a sacred obligation. The principle of Kazi was especially demonstrated in the tremendous value we placed on building and sustaining a series of local and national united front organizations. We saw the united front as the tool for unification around common interests and that unification would move our struggle forward.

CAP became skilled at and experienced in united front building. CAP was in the leadership of some of the most important national united front formations in the early 1970s, including African Liberation Day and the African Liberation Support Committee, the National Black Political Convention (Gary, Indiana 1972), the National Black Assembly, the Black Women's United Front, and the 6th Pan-African Congress. CAP was also involved in many local united fronts in the cities where there were CAP chapters.

The united front work CAP did between 1970 and 1975 was the most important work done by the organization to unify a national fractured

movement into an effective political force. CAP's capacity, experience, and influence during that period shaped the national debate and a national agenda among Black Nationalists and Pan-Africanists and contributed to creating structures for those forces to function together alongside others with varying degrees of radicalism. While the united front was our most important work, abdicating our responsibility to them as we embraced Marxism-Leninism was our most critical error.

CAP itself began as a united front. It emerged out of attempts by various Black Nationalist and Pan-Africanist organizations and leaders to create a national black united front that could expand and maximize the organizing efforts of the varied entities advocating self-determination. CAP itself was initially conceived and constructed as that national united front structure that was called for during the Black Power conferences held during 1966–1969. At its 1970 founding, CAP was seen as the beginning of a new era of cooperation and coordinated national movement around Nationalist and Pan-African concepts and objectives.

Through experience and study we learned several lessons. The united front requires conscious decisions and deliberate actions taking all interests into account in order to unify. Unity could only be achieved around specific objectives. Those objectives must be tangible goals that the work can be organized around, increasing the power of the united front and building unity from the learning process that occurs as part of the work that will move the people's struggle for freedom forward. It also requires a level of political maturity, commitment, and discipline to hold together a diverse group of activists with similar ideas but also with varied ideology, leadership, religion, experience, strategies, and tactics. It is a necessary and complex tool that has been a key strategy and practice within the African American Freedom Movement, with varying success.

During the Civil Rights Movement the united front of black ministers and churches, students and youth, artists, local community leaders, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), SNCC, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), trade unions, and many others successfully formed a united front and challenged and defeated

local, state, and federal laws and to some degree custom that denied equality and full citizenship to African Americans in the south. During this same period in the north and west the fight for quality and community control of education, political empowerment, ending discrimination in hiring and housing, justice in the courts, and ending police violence against black people were critical issues that gave birth to united front organizations and movements that included black nationalists, civil rights activists and organizations, unions, community leaders, ministers, Marxist organizations, and others. In the south, north, and west, the united front was most successful when the Black Liberation Movement forces aligned, shared, and focused their resources and experience to achieve common goals.

The Black Liberation Movement in the middle to late 1960s had given birth to a number of organizations whose main ideological influence was Malcolm X and his relentless call and work for a united front among black people. After leaving the Nation of Islam and prior to his murder in 1965, Malcolm articulated the need for a united front of black people regardless of ideology, geography, religion, or affiliation. The united front became the central strategy of his intention to build an effective, politically active, and broad movement based around principles of Nationalism and Pan-Africanism.

Malcolm advocated unification of the African American movement and people around core issues inside a structure similar to the Organization of African Unity. In addition to repeated references to the need for a united front in his speeches, his newly formed Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) modeled itself after the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which was formed to provide an African continent-wide united front of African governments and liberation movements to address Africa's agenda and challenges. In addition to the inspiration of the OAU, the founders of OAAU used their knowledge and experience in the black freedom movement to express the need for unity:

> Sincerely believing that the future of Afro-Americans is dependent upon our ability to unite our ideas, skills, organizations and institution. We, the Organization of Afro-American Unity pledge to join hands and hearts with all people of African origin in a grand alliance

> by forgetting all the differences that the power structure has created to keep us divided and enslaved. We further pledge to strengthen our common bond and strive toward one goal: freedom from oppression.

Activists in the Black Liberation Movement were also inspired and instructed by their study and increasing relationships to liberation movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These movements, especially those that had achieved liberation from their former colonial oppressors, were often examples of the successful deployment of united front strategy and tactics. Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Tanzania, Viet Nam, Cuba, China, and others became case studies of liberation movements that influenced the Black Liberation Movement theoretically. In 1955, the first major Afro-Asian conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, and often referred to as the Bandung Conference remained throughout the 1960s an international example often cited by Malcolm X and others as a united front of people of color to face a common enemy: white supremacy, imperialism, and colonialism.

The Black Arts Movement must also be counted as a critical force in developing revolutionary black consciousness and commitment to unification within the African American community. Its emphasis on defining and expressing African American identity and unleashing the black voice of resistance and freedom; restoration of the cultural and political connection with Africa; and the call for artists to accept their political responsibility to use their art as weapons and tools of liberation fueled an outpouring of poetry, music, film, visual art, dance, and theater that called upon the national black community to rise up and assert its right to self-determination, self-respect, and self-defense. Through the Black Arts Movement journals, publishing houses, theater companies, cultural centers, dance companies, and other institutions were created that disseminated cultural and political thought and practice often emphasizing unity and united front throughout the national black community. Those institutions were also organizing centers and gathering places for activists and communities to meet and organize. Additionally, the Black Arts Movement had a profound impact on popular culture and moved many major African American

artists to create and perform work that was decidedly on the side of the revolution taking place in the black community.

In addition to the ideological influence of Malcolm X and the theoretical influence of other struggles in the nations of color, there was most importantly several years of intense organizing experience that had been gained and was being gained in the struggles in communities throughout the country. In those struggles, to assert self-determination in politics, culture, education, and economics and also against segregation, discrimination, racist violence, and disempowerment, activists learned valuable lessons on how to forge coalitions, alliances, and broader united fronts. During the period after Malcolm, small and large urban rebellions exploded as expressions of both discontent and anger among the masses of black people and also growing revolutionary consciousness. In this period a few revolutionary organizations emerged whose ideas and practice represented distinct trends in the nationalist movement and influenced the national ideological development and program of the Black Liberation Movement. These included the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) 1963, Us Organization 1965, Black Panther Party (BPP) 1966, Republic of New Afrika (RNA) 1968, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) 1969. Interestingly three of these organizations (RAM, RNA, LRBW) were in the north and the other two (Us, BPP) were on the west coast. This shows the dramatic shift in the national movement from the southern focus of the civil rights struggle and its strategies and tactics. This shift is again a result of the influence of Malcolm X, the rise of Black Power, and revolutionary consciousness among urban African Americans. It is also important to note that as a group the most experienced organizers in the national African American community were associated with SNCC. As they became engaged with various organizations outside of the south and after their embrace and propagation of Black Power, their experience provided important lessons for the organizations they joined, including CAP.

Each of these new organizations was an expression of and impacted the development of key streams of thought and organizing in the Black Liberation Movement. RAM: building revolutionary party, armed self-defense and struggle, self-determination. Us Organization: self-determination, black nationalism rooted in cultural reclamation and

development, electoral politics, institution building, united front based on their theory of operational unity. BPP: self-determination, black nationalism, Mao Tse Tung version of Marxism, community empowerment, service, self-defense, alliances with white radical formations and other people of color. RNA: nationalism, self-determination expressed as a nation based on the land where New Afrikans emerged, human rights, petitioning the United Nations. LRBW: nationalism, socialism, political struggle for the rights of black working families.

Malcolm's assassination in 1965 did not kill the quest for unity or building a united front; it strengthened and accelerated it within the Nationalist/Pan-Africanist community. Key to this 1960s motion toward unification was what historian and former member of CAP Komozi Woodard calls the Modern Black Convention Movement. This movement was a series of local, regional, and national conferences of various organizations and activists discussing, promoting, planning, and engaging in the process of building unity around issues and creating structural forms to work together. Central to these efforts on a national level was the formation of the Black Power Planning Conference in September 1966 just one year after Malcolm's death. This was followed by the Black Power Conferences in Newark 1967, Philadelphia 1968, and Bermuda 1969 (although actions of the Bermuda government negatively affected the success of the conference there). The Black Power conferences culminated in the creation of CAP Labor Day weekend 1970.

CAP was formed as a united front organization initially composed of thousands of Nationalist Pan-Africanist activists in scores of organizations. The most successful organizing tool of CAP was also the united front. It was at the center of CAP's organizing strategy and the hallmark of its work especially from its founding in 1970 through 1976. During that period CAP developed a high level of skill at building relationships with and platforms for cooperation among diverse groups and individuals in the Black Liberation Movement. From nationalist organizations to black elected officials, CAP emphasized the need for cooperation around key issues in the African American community while also developing and supporting structures to facilitate organizing efforts around those issues. During the period 1970–1974, CAP

was involved in leading roles in several major national united fronts including African Liberation Day/The African Liberation Support Committee; the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana; the National Black Political Assembly (the political structure that emerged out of the Gary Convention); the 6th Pan-African Congress; the African Women's Conference; the Black Women's United Front (the political structure that emerged out of the African Women's Conference).

Maulana Karenga was an early influence on CAP's united front strategy. His doctrine of Kawaida placed heavy emphasis on building united front structures around the concept of "Unity without Uniformity" and seeking programmatic influence in those structures. His techniques had been successful in various Los Angeles based organizations and he was also a key force behind the organization of the Black Power conferences. In his early association with Amiri Baraka, Karenga emphasized the importance of nationalists mastering the united front in electoral politics. As a result of his study with Karenga and his own independent study, experience, and capacity Baraka set out to build a more potent nationalist organization, CFUN and the broad black and Puerto Rican coalition that transformed Newark politics and elected its first black mayor. In other cities, nationalists were also seeking unity and power. That spirit and the lessons and experience from the work and study were brought into the CAP founding conference, with the highest level of success to date being the Newark experience. Imamu and Bibi Amina Baraka and the women and men in CFUN came to Atlanta to teach and deploy those lessons in the work of CAP on a national scale.

From its very beginning, the united front was the critical strategy of CAP. In the next four years, important united front structures were built from the lessons CAP organizers had learned and successfully implemented. During the transition to Marxist-Leninism Mao Tse Tung Thought, CAP veered sharply away from those lessons and negatively impacted the united fronts and the Black Liberation Movement as we embarked on a campaign to embrace and impose an ideology and practice that caused a major break with our allies, comrades, and friends.

10

Transition to Marxism

The third period of CAP ideological development is the transitional period between Revolutionary Kawaida and Marxism. This period is characterized by CAP's open embrace of socialist theory, albeit delivered through African revolutionary intellectuals primarily and other Third World revolutionaries secondarily, while also continuing to delineate itself as a Black Liberation organization with an indigenous ideology. This period is relatively short and occurs mostly within 1974.

There are several key moments in 1974, which publicly pushed and pulled CAP away from the cultural nationalist position found in Kawaida and toward Marxism-Leninism. Those public moments in 1974 are precipitated by four intense years of practice that was the underlying catalyst of the accelerated ideological transformation of the organization. The year 1974 was declared by Amiri Baraka and the leadership of CAP as the "Year of Ideological Clarity." In a 1973 internal paper entitled "Creating a Unified Consciousness" Baraka states:

> As we move toward the Afrikan Women's Conference of July 1974, which must be a landmark of ideological development, all focus must be in preparation for production at high levels by revolutionaries and the beginning of our general influence on the masses of Black women in this land. And as we move towards the 3rd Bi-Annual International Assembly and Delegates Reception in Washington, D.C., we should be willing to enter into ideological struggle if necessary utilizing the principle of unity-criticism-unity, that is, seeking unity, criticizing our deviation from the values and the ideology, and at the end

> of our discussion seeking unity again, because it's obvious that if we are going to make real progress it must be done through a continuing commitment to struggle. But one thing is obvious, we must move for constant and unified consciousness. We must have ideological clarity before we move on the next higher level of development, which is true NATIONAL MOVEMENT. If we are serious and involved actually with revolution we will do what we must to see that these things come into being. (1974e)

In the four years since the founding of CAP there had been a never ending and ever-expanding scope of work that in hindsight is staggering. On a national level, CAP was principally responsible for organizing the historic National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, in 1972 and the subsequent second convention in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1974. From the Gary convention CAP set about ensuring that the National Black Assembly, the political formation that grew out of that convention, would become a viable organization. CAP worked toward forming and developing locally based delegations, doing policy research, and development and organizing the local, state, and National Black Assembly meetings in addition to mass actions related to the positions of the National Black Assembly.

Also in 1972, CAP put its considerable resources behind the first African Liberation Day (ALD) march in Washington, DC, which drew more than 50,000 people. In every CAP city, the organization was involved in the local National Black Assemblies and the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), the united front formations that emerged from ALD. As an example, CAP held the key leadership position of secretary general of the National Black Political Convention and National Black Assembly, and similar positions on the state and local levels. At one point I was secretary general of the Michigan Black Assembly.

In addition a major effort was made to consolidate and galvanize the Black Nationalist community through a series of meetings, forums, Kwanzaa celebrations, smaller conferences, and cultural events. The effort paid off with the large participation of nationalist organizations and activists who aligned themselves with CAP's strategy. It also contributed to the hundreds of activists who came to CAP for training and who joined the ranks of the organization.

As noted in the Political Liberation report at the 1972 San Diego CAP Conference:

> In Political Liberation, nationally, we have moved according to the outline provided at Atlanta and at later regional meetings. Since 1970, Political Liberation met with and formed CAP chapters in Boston, Massachusetts; Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; New Haven, Connecticut; D.C.; Brooklyn, New York; Youngstown, Ohio, South Bend, Indiana; Detroit, Michigan; Elizabeth, Freehold, Jersey City, Camden, New Brunswick, Trento, Hillside, Plainfield, Paterson, Woodbridge, Morristown, East Orange and Newark, New Jersey. Sent Materials. Sent Organizers.
>
> 1. Organized the Political School of Kawaida to deal with developing activists. We propose Political School of Kawaida as a prototype for a National Ideological and practical political training center.
> 2. Sponsored Black Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. June 26, 27 1971 as direct follow up to Atlanta mandate continuations meeting in Greensboro.
> 3. Northeastern Regional Congress of African People, September 2–6, 1971 Newark, New Jersey.
> 4. Other significant meetings in 1971 around Black Strategy in formation of Party
>   A) The East July 3–5
>   B) Northlake, Illinois September 24
>   C) Black Caucus National Black Elected Officials Convention Washington DC November 18–20
> 6. Co-Convened National Black Political Convention: Gary, Indiana. Since then worked to bring National Black Assembly into existence through meetings with Steering Committee of Black State Chairmen. Meetings in D.C., Greensboro, Las Vegas, and final elections to National Black Assembly by August 31, 1972. Final Steering Committee meeting September 16, 1972 Newark, New Jersey.
> 7. Seating of National Black Assembly in Chicago October 20–21, 1972. (As cited in Baraka, 1972c)

On an international level, by 1974 CAP had applied for and received NGO status at the United Nations and held an annual Delegates Reception for UN representatives from African States and Liberation Movements for four consecutive years. In addition, CAP developed the

Tanzania Recruitment Program to enlist skilled Americans, with an emphasis on getting African Americans to go work in Tanzania to help develop the country. The organization was heavily involved in supporting African Liberation Movements through organizing and supporting boycotts and demonstrations in support of African liberation and lobbying on the local, state, and national levels around issues of importance regarding African liberation and development. CAP was also active in organizing the upcoming 6th Pan-African Congress in June 1974.

Called the 6th Pan-African Congress because it was organized as an extension of five previous Pan African Congresses held in 1919, 1921, 1923, 1927, and 1945 with Dr. W. E. B. DuBois as a principal convener. Due to colonial repression, those congresses were all held outside of Africa, but were attended by DuBois, George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, and other activists and future heads of state of liberated African countries. The 6th Pan-African Congress was the first to be held in Africa. It took place in Tanzania, a newly independent African nation, led at the time by President Julius Nyerere, an African intellectual who had been a leader in the liberation movement and was widely respected and studied by African American Pan-Africanists.

The organization also supported progressive movements in the Caribbean. One example of this was a speaking tour we arranged in CAP cities with a fiery young lawyer named Maurice Bishop who was organizing opposition to what he described as the neocolonial government of Grenada. Several years after we drove him across the northeast and midwest to tell his story and solicit support, he and others had successfully organized the New Jewel Movement, taken control of the country, and became prime minister of Grenada until his overthrow and assassination.

On a local level, the chapters were engaged in electoral politics, developing schools and education programs, and organizing around a wide range of local issues from housing to education, community development, and issues of justice. All of this, local, national, and international work, was being done while recruiting and training activists and building the organization.

The intense work coupled with the intense study became twin catalysts of sharper debate around issues of class. CAP's political work

was revealing deeper divisions within the black community based on class position and perspective. The growth of a class of black elected officials who campaigned as progressive champions of the people and once elected began championing other interests caused increasing conflict between the nationalist community and some elected officials. This phenomenon was also growing across the African world with the emergence of those Kwame Nkrumah called neocolonial leaders, who became more and more common as the anticolonial revolution in Africa and the Diaspora was betrayed by newly elected African leaders. CAP's political and ideological study was increasingly focused on Marxist derived class analysis in Africa, Asia, and other parts of the Third World. CAP's ideological perspective began to move further away from the race-based cultural nationalist perspective and to one that looked at capitalism and imperialism as the material basis for the condition of black people and class within the African American community that the organization and the Black Liberation Movement faced as it set out to transform black communities.

This ideological debate was exacerbated by the increasing direct contacts with African liberation movements and their leaders who openly declared themselves anti-imperialist, spoke about class struggle, and stressed the need for a revolutionary political party to lead the struggle, more specifically a Marxist-Leninist party. In addition, leading members of the ALSC, especially those who had been involved in the Malcolm X Liberation University and the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) were moving quickly to a Marxist-Leninist position and pushing for an open debate within the Black Liberation Movement. They called for a more direct anti-imperialist stand, deeper class analysis, and ultimately a position on Marxism-Leninism as the ideology of black revolutionaries.

Three public speeches by Baraka representing CAP became the focus of the debate over Marxism within the Black Liberation Movement. Those speeches also propelled CAP further down the path of becoming a Marxist-Leninist organization, a development that had profound impact on the Black Liberation Movement.

The first speech was delivered in Chicago at the Midwest Regional Congress of African People meeting, on March 31 and April 1, 1974.

In that speech, titled "Revolutionary Party: Revolutionary Ideology," Baraka directly criticizes many of the tenets and practices of cultural nationalism from the mysticism of the religious aspects of Kawaida and other cultural nationalist ideologies to the strict diets, the wearing of African clothes, and the fascination of some with ancient Africa. He goes on to quote from Marx and Lenin among others and as he had over the last four years, he made his call again for the creation of a revolutionary party. And then came the bombshell. In his call for the formation of a black revolutionary political party he stated:

> It will be a Black Liberation Party because it will be waging a National Liberation Struggle in North America, and this Black Liberation Struggle is key to socialism! It must be a Marxist influenced party in that it utilizes political-economic analysis critical of capitalism to understand the system which threatens to absorb and destroy us! It must be a Leninist influenced party in that it emphasizes practice as well as theory, and the unity of theory and practice, and is committed to struggle rather than compromise. It must be a Maoist party in that it uses world revolutionary theory as well as its own peoples' history, and an analysis of current world conditions to create an indigenous ideology of National Liberation and Socialist Revolution. It must be an Nkrumahist party in that it is based on Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Socialism. It must be a Nyerere influenced party in that it will recognize the teaching of Ujamaa, and its emphasis on transformation of the mental attitude (to a needed mental attitude that is both traditional and advanced) like Mao's "remolding of world view," and by embracing Ujamaa, familyhood, we are calling for the overthrow of competitive, exploitative, individualistic, capitalist social relationships, between governments and people, men and women, workers and management, nations, races and the creation of cooperative, communalistic, socialistic relationships. It will be a Toure party in that it will be constant in analyzing the cultural aspect of the Afrikan revolution and relating that to the struggle for New Revolutionary Culture and a Scientific Afrikan Socialism. It must be a Cabral inspired party, armed with his indomitable Weapon of Theory, relating world revolutionary practice in its general aspect to the specific conditions of the National Liberation struggles of Afrikan peoples. It must be a Maulana Karenga influenced party because it bases its developing economic and political

> analysis on an Afrikan cultural framework objectified by the Nguzo Saba, the 7 Principles of Kawaida, a value system necessary to transform our reactionary neocolonialist culture into a struggling revolutionary culture. (Baraka, 1974b, p. 6)

This was the first time in a public speech that Baraka elevated the theoretical concepts of Marxism above those of African American and African theorists. This speech was given at a public program during the last evening of a two-day conference of CAP chapters, those in the process of organizing CAP chapters, and many who were supporters of CAP in the midwest. It had been a long weekend with the Executive Council meeting for hours on both days, and there had been ongoing workshops and training sessions for activists and community.

Chicago CAP was the host for the Mid-West Regional Conference. It had special significance in the national organization because it was the largest CAP organization outside of Newark and was headed up by Haki Madhubuti (Don L. Lee), a major figure who emerged from the Black Arts Movement. The Chicago chapter had a publishing company (Third World Press), a school, and several other viable institutions and a substantial number of activists including Safisha Madhubuti, who was the driving force of their educational programs and is today one of the leading educators in the United States.

One of the distinguishing features of the Chicago CAP organization was that they advocated a diet more strict than the one most of us adhered to. Although we didn't eat meat, most of us ate fish, but in Chicago they advocated a strict vegetarian and for some, a vegan diet. This had not been particularly relevant politically. It became a point of criticism and debate within CAP.

The night Baraka's speech was delivered I was responsible for security at the conference and as such moved around throughout the auditorium, the building, and its perimeter, checking on the men and women who were at security posts. I was inside the auditorium when the tension in the room was rising as Baraka spoke of class struggle, imperialism, and then his call for CAP to become a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist influenced party. The tension was mostly political but there were rumblings that were personal from some in the audience who not

only disagreed with what he was saying but felt betrayed. This concerned us because of all the violence that had occurred in the movement between Us and the BPP and because we knew most of those brothers in the audience who were grumbling and understood some of them to be potentially dangerous. As Baraka finished his speech, the audience rose to applaud even though there was noticeable concern on the faces of many of the CAP activists who had just heard this new ideological direction for the first time.

The next day, both Haki Madhubuti and Jitu Weusi, a well-known educator and activist who headed The East, a significant nationalist organization in Brooklyn that was also the CAP chapter there, resigned and withdrew their organizations from CAP. This was the first major split in the organization involving Kawaida influenced nationalists who were also nationally known and respected activists in the nationalist community. Baraka reacted by writing a long rebuttal and rebuke of them that was both political and intensely personal. He criticized their politics because their practice of Kawaida, cultural nationalism, and general ideas were not in concert with the changes that were being made within the national organization. He criticized their diets, social practices, dress, and hurled accusations like individualism, liberalism. He also quoted Lenin and Mao to support his critique and in doing so also cemented the break with nationalism because his ultimate references were now Marxist and no longer African or African American theorists.

In the paper, Baraka states the following:

> But these resignations, in actuality, should strengthen the Congress of Afrikan People, since it should enable us to forge ahead with the work of putting together our indigenous, unitary, ideology of a revolutionary party. Hopefully, our own practice, will get stronger as a result of having witnessed and being abused by counterrevolutionary individualism and liberalism, and as Mao said, being exposed to bad ideas is like being vaccinated, it prepares you to struggle against even worse ones. (As cited in CAP, Baraka, 1974b)

The resignations were disturbing to a large segment of the CAP activists and the general Black Liberation community. Madhubuti

was a major, respected, and beloved figure in the movement. Weusi had developed an impressive reputation as an educator and institution builder. While Baraka had been careful in the past not to fuel the conflict between Us and the Panthers and not to publicly attack other revolutionaries and organizations, the personal nature of the attack on Madhubuti and Weusi caused major concern. It caused even more concern when he decided to serialize the critique in *Unity and Struggle*, the national newspaper of CAP. The series ran for a year with pictures of Madhubuti and Weusi. Madhubuti like others in CAP had also been advocating changes to the detrimental standard African American diet that was responsible for a wide range of health problems in the black community. His interest in vegetarian/vegan diets, while excessive to some, was driven by the same commitment to change as demonstrated in his art and life. In the Baraka essay it was targeted as being evidence of more petit bourgeois liberalism, individualism, and other so-called infractions. Accusations that would be heard often in the coming months of the organization and would drive many skilled, committed activists out of CAP.

The speech, the resignations and the subsequent critique caused a fissure in the Black Liberation Movement. Known mainly as a poet, Haki Madhubuti had published his first collection of essays in 1973 in a book titled *From Plan to Planet*. The essays were in many ways expositions on the ideas embodied in Kawaida. In one essay, "A Black Value System: Why the Nguzo Saba," Madhubuti writes:

> We finally recognize that we need a value system for Afrikans in America. It has become increasingly clear that this value system must take into account the political, social, economic, spiritual and emotional crisis that we face in the western world. The Seven Principles of the Nguzo Saba as given to us by Maulana Ron Karenga is the most forceful beginning toward the development of a Black Value System that cuts across known religious and political systems. (1973, p. 79)

As Baraka was leading CAP away from Kawaida, Madhubuti was writing in support of it. With the publication of *From Plan to Planet*, Madhubuti was also asserting himself as a theorist of the movement and not just an artistic voice. That assertion came in the midst of

Baraka's continued transformation ideologically away from positions espoused in Madhubuti's book. The two men who had been close as artists and as comrades in the Black Arts and Black Liberation Movement were suddenly far apart.

Madhubuti spoke of the split in an interview with Lita Hooper for her book *Haki Madhubuti: The Art of Work*:

> Our chapter of the Congress of African People sponsored the Midwest meeting of the Congress of African People and he (Baraka) got up there and said, "I'm a communist now." At that point, that was it. We split. That's when he came out with both feet jumping on Haki Madhubuti. Basically talking about nothing that had to do with politics. He talked about my diet…you know what I'm saying? It didn't have nothing to do with politics. And so we split up. By that time we had published two, three of his books. We had published, *It's Nation Time, Jello and Kawaida Studies*. And maybe one other. And so we just split at that point. Michael [Simanga] was still with Baraka at that point. And we had always been close and we never said any words against each other or anything. But it was just a very negative period in my life. Here we were going on with a Nationalist Pan-Africanist program. It was never we felt anything other than trying to rebuild these communities. (2008, p. 112)

The political and personal closeness that Madhubuti speaks of between us was also felt with others in the organization and it became a very difficult period in CAP and the movement. Those of us who stayed in the organization felt a loyalty to CAP and to what we were doing while also feeling loyal to Madhubuti and others who disagreed with us. We still respected their work and their ideas. It was the source of a great deal of discussion and disappointment that Baraka's critique was so personal and that we, CAP, a leading black revolutionary nationalist organization had chosen to publicly humiliate people who were as committed as we were. Madhubuti is correct. I and many activists refused to speak ill of him or others we considered our comrades, even if they were no longer in the organization. But refusing to call names had no bearing on the growing crack in the movement, a crack that was growing bigger by the week with each meeting of the diverse forces within the national community of black revolutionaries.

Years later, Baraka remarked on his response to the Madhubuti and Weusi critique: "While much of my criticism of them was accurate, the tone and approach were like beating somebody in the head for disagreeing" (1984, p. 306).

To his credit and as a demonstration of his character and commitment to black people, as wounded by the attack as he was, it did not prevent Haki Madhbuti from working hard to foster reconciliation within the Black Liberation Movement. It took years but he and Baraka began to heal their relationship and Haki continued to publish Baraka's books, often when no other publisher would. Madhbuti also facilitated a meeting between Baraka and Karenga for the same purposes. He later took on the task of promoting reconciliation between the Shabazz family (Malcolm X's widow Sister Betty Shabazz and their daughters) and Minister Louis Farrakhan whom they associated with Malcolm's assassination. Over the past 50 years Haki never wavered in his work to educate, uplift, and liberate African people. Third World Press, the publishing house he founded during the Black Arts Movement, is the oldest continuously publishing black-owned press in the United States.

While Madhubuti and others were continuing to uphold the development of an African ideological and spiritual system, Baraka was moving CAP away from Kawaida, Karenga, and cultural nationalism and toward Marxism-Leninism. The ideological conflict was opening up throughout the Black Liberation Movement, particularly among the nationalist sector that had been so engaged in creating national political structures such as CAP, the National Black Assembly, and the ALSC.

The second public speech came a few days later during Baraka's address to the Second National Black Political Convention in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he publicly called for socialist revolution. This was not the first time he had used the term. It was controversial because of its public nature, in a mass forum where he and CAP had been politically dominant but skillful in participating and leading these groups as Pan-African nationalists. CAP had initiated the call for the creation of a black political party and its efforts had brought the convention and Assembly into being as part of its united front strategy. The convention

and National Black Assembly were broad united front structures designed to include a diverse cross-section of the African American political community. Baraka's call for socialist evolution both confused and alienated many of the people who were there.

At the National Black Political Convention in Little Rock, Arkansas, in April 1974, Baraka's call for socialist revolution stunned delegates and observers, many of whom had been unaware of his deep disgust with the very style of progressive black nationalism and Pan-Africanism that he had helped to initiate. Little Rock was notable, as well, for the scarcity of black elected officials; presumably put off by a direction that left the National Black Political Assembly open to charges of race baiting and worse. Internal debates over Black Power's future would evolve into bitter struggles, highlighted by the Little Rock convention's refusal to support the creation of an independent political party—a stance that Harold Cruse characterized as a "betrayal of the Black militant potential built up during the struggles of the Sixties" (Joseph, 2006a, p. 289).

During this convention there was a mostly unseen drama unfolding. Two days prior to leaving Detroit with the delegation from the Michigan Black Assembly, I got a call from one of the leading activists in CAP Newark. His words were very carefully chosen to indicate to me that there was a major security situation in Little Rock. Less than an hour later I received another call from one of the national leaders out of the midwest, essentially repeating the same message. We made quick calls to others in the national organization to strengthen our delegations by bringing more CAP activists than had been originally planned. From all over the country, CAP went to Little Rock in force.

When we got to Little Rock, we discovered that Sala Udin, CAP's national representative to the National Black Assembly had been kidnapped at gun point by a group of local black gangsters who were determined to take over the convention in order to steal and embezzle the registration, hotel, entertainment, and concession monies. A negotiation was underway to get Sala Udin out of their hands while we were being instructed by the national office that CAP could not and would not let them derail or disrupt the convention. Udin was released eventually and the convention proceeded in an extremely tense atmosphere, unbeknownst to most of the participants.

For several days, while we participated in plenary sessions, meetings, committees, and cultural events we were on high alert as several confrontations happened between CAP activists and the gangsters. Fortunately, because of our overwhelming force and years of training, those confrontations did not escalate to the level of bloodshed. The convention was a success in that regard. But as hard as we worked, staffing and securing the convention, it was the last major gathering of the mass united front political process and structure called for at the Atlanta founding of CAP and brought into existence at the historic Gary convention. This was true in part because CAP's political leadership in mass united front structures was declining as we made critical mistakes in the midst of the major internal ideological transformation that was occurring at an incredibly rapid pace.

The third public speech in this short span of time came during the ALSC conference leading into African Liberation Day, May 1974. The conference was called "Which Road Toward Black Liberation?" and was held on the campus of Howard University. Presenters included Owusu Sadaukai (Howard Fuller), who was credited with initiating the call for African Liberation Day 1972; Amiri Baraka, chair of CAP; Muhammad Ahmed of the African People's Party; Kwame Ture of the All Afrikan People's Revolutionary Party; Kwadwo Akpan of PAC (Detroit); and Abdul Akalimat from People's College. It is important to note that no women gave major presentations at this conference even though it was seen as a conference of the most revolutionary organizations and activists in the Pan-African movement.

Joseph (2006a, p. 289) explains:

> At Howard, redefining the role of class struggle in domestic and international politics dominated the agenda. One group attempted to reconcile its Pan-Africanist consciousness with the brutal realities of American racism. Black Marxist, countering with a historical materialist view, argued that blacks constituted an exploited working class whose liberation lay in a global movement for Socialist revolution.

The ALSC was a smaller united front than the National Black Assembly and was generally considered the united front formation of nationalist and Pan-Africanist progressive activists. Although smaller,

because of the make-up of the ALSC, its members were generally leading an ongoing struggle to support African liberation movements and to affect US policy toward Africa. ALSC had grown out of the efforts to organize the first African Liberation Day march in 1972. That march had been initiated by Owusu Sadauki (Howard Fuller), one of the founders of Malcolm X Liberation University. A documentary film captures the success of ALD 1972, with Owusu's rousing oratory that ended the march with a quote from Fredrick Douglass' great speech "No Progress Without Struggle." The march, speech, and the film, which was shown to audiences across the United States, propelled Owusu into the forefront of the US anti-imperialist movement alongside Black Power advocates: Baraka, Kwame Ture (Stokley Carmichael) and others.

Woodard writes:

> The idea for African Liberation Day developed in the mind of Milwaukee-born Owusu Sadaukai during the period between the 1970 Atlanta Congress of African Peoples and the 1972 National Black Political Convention…In 1971, Sadaukai visited Africa, talking to leaders of the struggles against Portuguese colonialism in Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola. On his return to America, Sadaukai elaborated on plans for political education and community mobilization, which would culminate in a national demonstration on May 25, the anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)…Malcolm X Liberation University and SOBU provided the beginning of a network for such a political statement, but Sadaukai wanted to enlist the support of the various black nationalist around the nation to make African Liberation Day a major event. SOBU contacted CAP leaders early in those talks and the major Pan-Africanist agreed to give African Liberation Day (1972) their full support.(1999, p. 173)

As the ALSC grew in experience and continued to develop closer relationships with African liberation movements, it also became a hot bed of debate over the path of black liberation, Marxism, or nationalism. Members of the Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOBU), Malcolm X Liberation University, and others close to them began to push ALSC toward the Marxist position. This also had an effect on

CAP and especially Baraka, as CAP also developed closer ties to international revolutionary organizations and movements.

Woodard explains:

> Step by step, CAP developed close relationships with liberation groups from Africa to the Caribbean . . . Many of the African liberation groups toured black communities from coast to coast explaining the history of their particular countries and expressing solidarity with indigenous struggles in the United States. As CAP developed into a stronger national organization, it established national tours for visiting representatives of the African liberation groups from Zimbabwe to Angola. During the 1970s CAP became a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at the United Nations. In line with Malcolm X's strategy, CAP established cordial relations, as Malcolm X had, with not only President Nyerere of Tanzania in East Africa but also President Sekou Toure of Guinea in West Africa. Moreover, CAP established connections with numerous liberation groups in the Caribbean, Africa, and the Middle East. By the early 1970s, CAP forged ties with Maurice Bishop and the New Jewel Movement in Grenada; Amilcar Cabral of the PAIGC liberation group (Partido Africano da Independencia da Guine e Cabo Verde) in West Africa; and a number of the liberation movements in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and Palestine. (2003, pp. 72–73)

CAP's contact with and involvement in anticolonial struggles drew the organization closer to other anti-imperialist organizations and ideas. ALSC was moving even faster to the Left and as Komozi Woodard points out: "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" (1999, p. 180).

Throughout the May 1974 ALSC conference, CAP activists were at a distinct disadvantage. We were relatively new to Marxist theory outside of its exposition in the writings of African leaders. Many of the concepts being discussed and presented were steeped in traditional Marxist concepts and language. While we had been studying Cabral, Nkrumah, and to some extent Mao, and of course the doctrine of

Kawaida, many of the activists who were there, especially those from Malcolm X Liberation University and SOBU, had been studying Marx and Lenin.

We listened to the arguments for socialist revolution, to the discussions of imperialism and the material basis for racism, but we waited for Baraka to speak to bring our view into the argument. We waited to hear the view of Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Socialism, and socialism from an Africanist perspective. His speech was titled "Toward Ideological Clarity."

It began with quotes from Lenin and an exposition on the development of capitalism and imperialism. It talked about colonialism and the destruction or suppression of African culture, which was a major point to make in the context of the conference. Baraka was the only major speaker to make sure that the cultural consequences of imperialism were included in the discussion. He quoted Amilcar Cabral, whose writings had also influenced many of the activists in ALSC. He quoted Mao, whom most of those assembled were reading and revered as a heroic figure in the struggle against imperialist domination. The speech was unusually long and detailed with extensive passages from Cabral and others talking about the class struggle within the context of national liberation. In this speech, Baraka tried to explain CAP's ideological perspective as a hybrid of nationalist and Marxist theories. It is the main point of the speech. It is also the perspective that we in CAP and our allies at the conference had been waiting for. We had accepted the use of Marxist analysis by this time, but could not yet see that we could or would abandon nationalism.

Baraka explained:

> The dual aspects of our struggle are national (racial and cultural) and the struggle against capital. The national aspect of the struggle moves to create power in our community, but is insufficient as a power gaining movement because of the creation of neocolonialist, and the fact that power ultimately is in the hands of the owners of the means of production, and the still to be found mobilization of the masses of Black people, as a political class whose principal concern would be the form of government and the reorganization of the state in the interest of its

> class ideals—economic and political. Class struggle is usually intra-societal, but our national liberation movement is the further radicalization of the nationalist movement which was basically against racial oppression which sought to bring Black consciousness to our people. The movement which swept in dialectical opposition to the civil rights movement, and became a movement for self defense, which occurred at the same time FRELIMO and PAIGC and some of the other liberation movements were formed on the continent. It was the Black Liberation Movement conscious of the right and necessity, not only of gaining access to the goods and services of the society which our labor helped create, but also of self defense. The right to bear arms in our defense. The Nationalism of Malcolm X, emerging from the Nation of Islam, sought to show us that our racial oppression had to be our point of departure in struggling to make change. That we could not deny our race, but in fact had to organize ourselves in a racial organization with national consciousness to gain self determination, self respect and self defense. (1974c, p. 21)

In the speech, Baraka discussed neocolonialism within the African American and world African community as a major change in the economic-social-political reality within those communities. The attention to neocolonialism came not primarily as a result of study but because of the growing frustration felt in CAP and others in the movement as we did work in black communities that was essentially opposed and often thwarted by newly elected black officials, many of whom we managed to get elected to office. This was especially sharp in Newark where the differences between CAP and Ken Gibson and his group were growing.

What was also different in the speech was the longer than usual quotes of Lenin, Mao, and Cabral and the black Marxist theoretician James Boggs. It was clearly an attempt to situate CAP amongst Third World Marxist revolutionaries while maintaining the position of a Black nationalist revolutionary organization. The speech hit familiar CAP themes of Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Socialism as the revolutionary ideology and the necessity for broad black united fronts led by a black revolutionary vanguard party as key to the success of the Black Liberation Movement.

He ended the speech by stating:

> It is a time of ideology and it is a time of organization. Building strong disciplined organizations with the correct ideology, based on Nationalism, Pan Africanism and Socialism, an analysis of concrete conditions that are able to actively pursue concrete programs to help mobilize organize and politicize the masses of our people and to move the effectively to transform this entire society and in so doing, help alter objective and subjective conditions throughout the world. This seems priority to us, as a correct strategic program for Black Liberation at this time in history. (Baraka, 1974c, p. 31)

The speech was well received by the mostly Left-thinking black activists in the audience, but many felt it did not go far enough and that CAP, with its resources and experience, was still essentially a nationalist organization. Interestingly enough, in the speech there is only a passing reference to Kawaida and the Nguzo Saba (7 Principles). CAP was changing ideologically and it was widely known in the movement now. As one significant indication of that change, those present at the conference were aware that Haki Madhubuti and Jitu Weusi had both resigned from ALSC in the wake of their resignations from CAP and prior to the ALSC conference.

Baraka recalled the growing split in the movement, the conference, and the speech in his autobiography:

> I'm certain, however, that word of the Chicago confrontation and subsequent split in CAP as well as the Little Rock speech shot around movement circles. Baraka had moved to the left. CAP had internal struggle raised to full public pitch; split in CAP; split in ALSC. In May of that year at Howard University, ALSC held its landmark conference, "Which Way the Black Liberation Movement?" It was a conference to debate frankly and openly the "two lines" within the BLM. Owusu had suggested such a conference and it was meant to benefit the left . . . Stokely Carmichael, Owusu, Muhammad Ahmed of the African People's Party, Kwadwo Akpan from PAC of Detroit (a Pan-Africanist cultural nationalist organization), Abdul Alkalimat from People's College, and myself representing CAP, all made presentations. Unknown to most of us, some of the people in ALSC, whom we connected with Malcolm X Liberation University and SOBU and some other formations, had

> formed a Communist organization, the forerunner of the later public Revolutionary Worker's League. They were in motion to the left, but like myself, they were also making errors. The most striking of all the presentations was Owusu's, because he was saying openly he was no longer a nationalist and Pan-Africanist, that he was an anti-imperialist struggling to learn Communist theory. Owusu's presentation was met with a standing ovation. Alkalimat's was the presentation that was the most clearly based on Marxist theory, and as such was the most orderly presentation, with the most reference to consistent scientific analysis. This also was very well received, because many of us in that audience were leaning heavily in that direction. My own presentation had marched even further to the left, but it was still a mixed bag, still tried to square Marxism with cultural nationalism. It was so long and confused I had to skip parts of it and did not even read the entire paper. This convinced me and probably several other people that half-stepping wasn't solving anything. We had to go further. We had to quit bull-shitting. If we believed that socialism, scientific socialism, was the direction our people had to seek, then we should quit obstructing their progress in that direction. (1984, pp. 307–308)

The next day, several thousand people marched through the streets of Washington, DC to demonstrate solidarity with African people struggling against imperialism. After the march, I was with the security detail that accompanied Amiri and Amina Baraka as they had a quiet dinner in a small restaurant in the city. I went because Baraka asked me to meet with him after the march. In the car after dinner, he gave me a book on political economy and also directed me to go see James and Grace Boggs in Detroit when I got back home. The organization was changing, again.

One result of the intense debate within CAP centered around the "woman question" that led to a call for a major conference of black women activists. The CAP initiated and organized Afrikan Women's Conference was held in July 1974 and was a huge success:

> Over 700 black people went to Newark in July 1974 to discuss the conditions necessary 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 workplace and students in the schools,

> as well as mothers on welfare, those in prison, and even some in others women's organizations. The delegates from some twenty-eight states decided that a new organization was needed to deal with the concerns of black women on a consistent basis. (Woodard, 1999, p. 181)

Black women from across the country came to Newark for the three-day gathering. It was convened, managed, and led by the women of CAP. The men, used to being in the lead roles in organizational campaigns, were for the most part there to support the women. We provided security, acted as recorders in the sessions, and provided transportation and other services to ensure the success of the conference. And it was a major success.

Just as the founding CAP conference had been infused with the ideological point of view of Kawaida as practiced by CFUN, and the direction of the National Black Political Convention and Assembly had been influenced by CAP's Nationalist/Pan-Africanist perspective, the Afrikan Women's Conference was colored by the ideology of CAP in transition. The workshops, led by CAP women, discussed political and social issues from a class-based Marxist viewpoint as further evidence of the ideological changes in CAP. In the opening statement to CAP's Central Council meeting after the Afrikan Women's Conference, Baraka said:

> First I think we should give Jamaa-Social Organization 7 Harambees and some Halalas, for the effective and impressive Afrikan Women's Conference. It is obvious that this was one of the best organized, and most politically successful conferences ever given by the Congress of African People… What is important about the conference is I believe it marks the organization's clear evolution, with a long stride, toward becoming a vanguard revolutionary party. We have put forward progressive positions, in tune with the most progressive movements around the world, and in keeping with the most revolutionary Pan-Africanist line. That our organizational movement, and our local, national and international work, are finally all becoming related as revolutionary struggles for socialism. (CAP, 1974d)

The July 1974 Central Council meeting, held immediately after the Afrikan Women's Conference, was a meeting of CAP's leading women

and men members from across the country. It was especially significant because it was the first time in months that the organization's members stopped and analyzed the tremendous changes occurring internally and within the Black Liberation Movement. Not only had the Afrikan Women's Conference been a successful forum to continue the discussion and debate on the relevance of Marxism in the Black Liberation movement, the 6th Pan-African Congress (6th Pac) had been held on June 17–19 in Tanzania and the ideological struggle in the US Black Liberation Movement had been extended to an international stage. The CAP contingent was led by Baraka and Sala Udin as part of the US delegation and Baraka was one of the African American leaders who spoke at the gathering. The split that was occurring in the US black movement was also evident in Africa where Black Power activists split into two opposing camps over support for an anti-imperialist class-based ideology or black nationalism.

> The 6th Pan Afrikan Congress was a clear repetition on the international stage, of what the 2-line struggle that has been going on in the United States specifically within the ALSC and Congress of African People for the last year. What was also clear is our attempts at ideological clarity have placed us within the progressive group of Pan-Afrikan Revolutionaries. (CAP, 1974d)

An important indication of CAP's immaturity as a developing Marxist organization was its continued support of the liberation movement UNITA in Angola. In his speech at the 6th Pan-African Congress, Baraka mentioned CAP's support for UNITA as had been consistent with the organization's nationalist position. While the organization was moving toward aligning itself with the more anti-imperialist African organizations, in the cultural nationalist period, the lack of due diligence to understand the class, political and economic development, and alignment of the liberation movements often led to support based on the assumption that the more nationalistic organizations were inherently more progressive. The support for UNITA would soon become a source of embarrassment for CAP as UNITA's relationship to the South African apartheid government and the US government became more apparent.

This was a profound lesson for CAP, revealing the limits of race based analysis that assumed any organization with alliances with "white" nations or organizations was inherently a puppet for them. And while CAP did important work and did support others, during both its cultural nationalist stage and the transitional stage to Marxism, it still perceived the more nationalist seeming organizations as the more revolutionary.

The Central Council of CAP was now made up of the leading male and female activists from each chapter, and representatives from the chairman's office. This was another important change in the organization. Previously the organization was structured along the lines of a paramilitary organization with rankings based on your progression through the doctrine of Kawaida, your work, and your experience. However, there were ten ranks for men leading to the highest rank, Imamu. For women there were only three ranks and all focused on social organization. The national leadership consisted of the leaders of the local chapters as Central Council; a smaller group, the Political Council, included regional leaders and key organizers. Almost all of these were men. The change to a Central Council that was equally composed of men and women was a huge step forward.

In addition, where Imamu had been seen as the leader, there was now an emphasis on a leadership collective. It was a change not only in structure but in culture and would take at least a year for it to fully become more collective after the leadership began to be elected and decisions were more thoroughly discussed, debated, and decided.

At that July 1974 meeting there was vigorous discussion on the events of the last few months. We had been involved in five major events in four months: the Chicago Midwest Regional CAP meeting; the Little Rock National Black Political Convention; African Liberation Day and the Conference at Howard University; the 6th Pan African Congress; the Afrikan Women's Conference. And at each one of these gatherings the ideological debate or as it was now referred to, the two-line struggle, was not only evident but was center stage.

At the Central Council meeting we decided not to hold another CAP conference that would be open to the public, but instead to begin holding biannual General Assemblies that would be internal

gatherings of our activists. The first one would be in October 1974. Most of the discussion at the July 1974 Central Council meeting was on the ideological changes the organization was going through. The transition was accelerating.

> CAP has become estranged from the reactionary wing of nationalism, by development more than design. But now we will deliberately have to put more distance between us and them by clearly delineating the CAP line of Nationalism, PanAfrikanism and Socialism, in contrast to the reactionary skin and costume nationalism. Our line eventually will put us close to YOBU, Owusu, and even Abdul Alkalimat, than PAC Detroit, AAPRP (Stokely), AAPP (M. Ahmed). And we should be aware of this reading in ideological papers, get 4 volumes of Mao, read 4 Essays (On Contradiction, On Practice, Combat Liberalism, Study, Activists Policy, Party Discipline), Cabral, Weapon of Theory, Return to the Source; Lenin, Imperialism-Highest Stage of Capitalism. Lenin-Teachings of K. Marx, Stalin-Foundations of Leninism; Rodney-How Europe Underdeveloped Afrika; Boggs-Manifesto of Black Revolutionary Party, Awesome Responsibility of Revolutionary Leadership. The constant stream of ideological papers, which have been written because of the need for constant evaluation and clarification of our position, must be read and taught by all activistss if we are to achieve Unified Will Unified Action Unified Discipline. (CAP, 1974d)

There were some noticeable organization differences in the Central Council meeting in July 1974. There seemed to be fewer activists in Newark where the meeting was held, even though there were still a large number there. There were also fewer activists in African-style clothes, which had been a uniform of the organization. Where there had always been a kind of congenial atmosphere while studying and reciting the doctrine of Kawaida, there were now more intense discussions and debates on Marxist theory and concepts. It was an interesting change, one that members of Cleveland and Detroit CAP noted as we drove back to the midwest from the meeting.

As preparations began for the October 1974 General Assembly, in Detroit we were charged with doing all the logistical preparations for the founding conference of the Black Women's United Front, a mass organization called for at the Afrikan Women's Conference, and was

scheduled to hold its founding meeting in Detroit in a few months. Sharifa Uzuri, the leading woman activist in Detroit CAP, was the lead organizer and driving force of the efforts. In addition to the logistical aspects, she and the other women in the local chapter led the planning and execution of all aspects of the conference and the strategy for mobilizing the Detroit community to support and participate in the founding conference.

Nationally, every CAP local was organizing for the Black Women's United Front conference. This work helped to concretize the ideas that were being discussed in the organization around the "woman question." We were not only organizing a conference, we were creating databases of black women's organizations, connecting with and understanding those organizations and the issues they organized around, researching and developing positions on issues of particular importance to women, and grasping the relationship between the historical and political positions we took and the material and social conditions of women. Women throughout the organization were now involved in leadership positions in every area, not just social organization. It was a period of tremendous transformation in the consciousness of the men of the organization.

We were also organizing for the upcoming National Black Political Assembly meeting that fall. It was going to be the first meeting of the organization since Baraka called for socialist revolution at the National Black Political Convention in Little Rock. CAP was galvanizing its support for the meeting, which we anticipated would be contentious at best because there were nationalists in the Assembly who were former allies and now absolutely opposed CAP in its current ideological position as black almost Marxists. Key among our former allies who now felt compelled to oppose us was Ron Daniels. Ron had been involved with organizing the Gary convention and the National Black Assembly. He was a respected activist with a long track record in the movement. Like many of our friends, he could not condone a move to Marxism and more importantly could not support imposing it on a mass organization.

By the end of 1974, CAP was on the offensive in terms of trying to explain its ideological changes and to further distance itself from

its black nationalist ideology of the past. The following is a statement published and distributed in December of that year:

> The fact that the Congress of African People has now openly embraced Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought as the most scientific means of analyzing the Black Liberation Struggle has brought a great many reactions. There are people who are elated by this reality; there are others who are appalled. Our movement in this direction has been slow, documented, and beset by obstructions, both theoretical and organizational. (CAP, 1974b)

The transition from Kawaida nationalism to revolutionary Kawaida and Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Socialism to Marxism-Leninism was almost complete. As local CAP leaders headed back to their cities after the historic Afrikan Women's Conference and the CAP Central Council meeting, it was evident that the organization had closed one chapter of its history and was entering another.

11

Black Marxist-Leninists and the New Communist Movement

The fourth period of ideological development in CAP is characterized by the organization's willingness to openly identify itself as "Black Marxists" and to align itself with others who would be considered in that category. The additional feature in this period is the effort by CAP to make connections with and begin to understand the newly emerged antirevisionist Marxist-Leninist movement that was made up of relatively new organizations that were populated with activists from various struggles including Chicano, Asian American, student, labor, and local community organizations. All of these groups were developing similar formations moving toward Marxism-Leninism but not toward the traditional Soviet Union influenced Communist Party USA. Instead they leaned toward China and the Marxism-Leninism of Mao Tse Tung.

> The anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist movement in the U.S. has its origins in the great mass movement of the 1960's. During the late 1960's, the Black liberation movement developed into a storm that was unprecedented in U.S. history. This spearheaded and inspired the struggles of other oppressed nationalities, including Chicanos, Asians, Puerto Ricans. It was also during this period that a militant anti-imperialist movement grew in opposition to U.S. aggression in Indochina…By the early 1970's, many of the young revolutionary groups began to take up Marxism-Leninism. This was the birth of the contemporary anti-revisionist communist movement. (LRS, "Statements," 1978, pp. 5–6)

Although CAP did not at the time consider itself to be a part of that new movement of self-proclaimed antirevisionists to distinguish itself from the old communist movement associated with the Communist Party USA and the Soviet Union, it did begin to both make and receive inquiries as word spread that CAP had adopted Marxism-Leninism as its ideology. And while that was ostensibly true, there were still lingering ideas and practices of Kawaida in the organization that would not fully disappear for at least another year.

As an example of the lingering elements of Kawaida practice, the previously cited organizational holiday, "Leo Baraka," was still a practice in October 1974, even though there was an attempt to change its meaning and relevance. The 1974 observance of "Leo Baraka" was also the final one. In addition, Baraka still performed Kawaida weddings as the Imamu. My 1975 wedding to Sharifa was the last Kawaida wedding conducted in the organization and the last one Baraka ever performed. By late 1975 the remnants of Kawaida practice had been abandoned by CAP. The Kawaida title Imamu and others were discarded.

In October 1974 the CAP General Assembly was the unifying moment of the organization as a Marxist-Leninist organization, replete with a change in iconology. Upon our arrival in Newark for the meeting, some of us walked into the auditorium at the CAP national headquarters formerly known as Hekalu Mwalimu. We found ourselves puzzling over the identity of the men in the pictures on the walls. The room had always had large black-framed photographs of African American and African leaders including Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, Julius Nyerere, Sekou Toure, and others. I stood in the empty room looking at what seemed at first glance to be rather pale depictions of Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. DuBois. After more careful consideration, we realized that they were in fact photos of Marx and Lenin, in addition to Engels, Stalin, and Mao. The icons of Pan-Africanism had been removed and I was culturally and ideologically challenged to experience the drastic change.

It was called the General Assembly because it was a gathering only for members of CAP without the presence of our allies and supporters as had been the case at the CAP conferences in Atlanta and San Diego. At that first General Assembly in October 1974 there was intense

discussion and debate about the change occurring in the organization. The debate centered on questions raised by Houston CAP members, especially as it related to our mass base and the embrace of communism. They correctly raised the issue of alienating the broad support we had built over the years in our respective local communities and in the national black activist community.

While CAP was indeed a black revolutionary nationalist and Pan-Africanist organization, we had also been at the table with all elements of the national black political community including civil rights organizations and leaders and elected officials. This was a unique position that only CAP enjoyed among nationalist organizations at the time. CAP's successes and Baraka's profile in the national and international community gave the organization a legitimacy that others had not acquired. In our facilities and in our programs we had been host to numerous celebrity artists, politicians, African dignitaries, Black Power revolutionaries, writers, and others. The work CAP had done up to that point had allowed us to sink deep roots in black communities across the country, and we had strong alliances with welfare rights groups, social justice organizations, community-based organizations, educators, labor organizers, and a general, broad cross-section of the community.

Houston CAP's concerns were both practical and ideological and were debated over several months in several meetings. At the core of their questions was their belief that CAP was going beyond where the people were. There had been no real testing of the ideology and its language, iconography, and agenda among the people we'd worked with in black communities where we had organizational presence. There was no evidence that the African American community of 1975 was prepared to embrace communism as an ideology. In fact, the cultural nationalist ideas we promoted of value transformation and embracing African history and heritage had been successful in the context of the overall Black Liberation Movement and as an extension of its black pride and consciousness. There was no comparable context for the ideas of communism and certainly no cultural or organic path for the black masses to embrace the icons of Marxism-Leninism.

In addition, Houston CAP also raised issues such as what they perceived as the cult of personality in the leadership. They also questioned

CAP's adoption of the Marxist organizational principle of democratic centralism, which meant that once a decision had been made by the collective leadership, the entire organization was expected to uphold it. Ultimately, CAP's move to Marxism-Leninism had already begun and it was a move that by the time of the first General Assembly meeting was already unstoppable, defeating Houston's cause even before they first raised concerns. Within a year, the activists in Houston CAP had resigned from the organization.

As an indication of what was to come, there was a move underway in the National Black Assembly (NBA) to kick out CAP. This was exactly what some of us anticipated, a brewing national backlash against the organization. The move was being organized primarily by former nationalist allies of ours inside the Assembly. I submitted an internal paper to the chairman on a united front strategy for our conduct at NBA meetings. It was subsequently disseminated throughout the organization and its recommendations were effectively employed to stave off the expulsion. We survived the fall 2004 Columbus, Ohio, meeting of the NBA, but not the next meeting in Washington, DC, in early 1975. We were kicked out of the NBA by an alliance of nationalists and elected officials who organized a vote against CAP. This alliance included some of our former staunchest local supporters who correctly felt that CAP was attempting to impose its newly declared Marxist-Leninist ideology on a mass organization. So strong was the backlash against us that at a meeting of the Michigan Black Assembly I was publicly reprimanded by my favorite aunt Malkia Brantuo, a leading force in the local organization. Unfortunately, CAP had been most of the administrative and organizing strength of the NBA, and without our resources and experience it weakened and slowly faded away.

The debate within the national Black Nationalist Pan-Africanist Movement was raging full-blown. It had significance both for the time and context in which it was occurring in—the 1970s, but also because it had international and historical importance. Ron Walters explained:

> Later in 1974, The Black Scholar magazine carried a representative debate initiated by Pan-Africanist poet Haki Madhubuti, who suggested

> that the Black Nationalist and closely associated Pan-Africanist movements in the Black community had come under "attack" by the "white left," but that major organizations such as the African Liberation Support Committee and the Congress of African People had been infiltrated by the more dangerous Black Marxists who were attempting to co-opt them. Madhubuti pointed to the chaos and disruption in these movements caused by the ideological conflict which ensued from the introduction of an alien European social ideology. Madhubuti went on to mine the historical roots of white supremacy as an ideology and concluded that since it predated capitalism and imperialism, white supremacy is a basic force in world history and in the United States quite without regard to the economic structure of the state. Articles in the magazine's following issue took various sides of this argument in support or opposition to the views of Madhubuti.The transformation of the views of key leaders such as Imamu Amiri Baraka and Owusu Sadaukai from Black Nationalism to Scientific Socialism was complete by 1974, as indicated. Without a detailed analysis of the substance of this ideological debate, suffice it to say, first, that what we see at this level is the Pan African side of a deeper ideological conflict taking place at the roots of Black Nationalism itself. It is a perennial conflict within the Black Diaspora which surfaces each time there is a political movement of substance. This recent conflict had its genesis with the rise of the Black Panther Party as a self-professed Marxist formation within the context of the Black Power movement. It continued gaining force with revolutionary movements in Detroit such as Drum (Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement), and surfaced in the Pan African Movement as we have suggested. (Walters, 1997, pp. 73–74)

Madhubuti's article was titled "The Latest Purge: The Attack on Black Nationalism and Pan-Afrikanism by the New Left—The Sons and Daughters of the Old Left." It served as a rallying cry for Black Nationalist forces with a scathing attack on Marxists that implied that the black Left, CAP included, was merely the puppet of the white Left:

> The Black Nationalist—Pan Afrikanist movement is now under attack from the white left, to the extent that they even come into our community pushing their program, and have infiltrated two of the most influential black organizations: African Liberation Support Committee and

> the Congress of African People. Less than four years ago, both of these organizations were Nationalist and Pan-Afrikanist. Now it is hard to tell exactly where they are. One thing is for sure, they are both pushing for the "world socialist revolution" and both feel that at some point in the future, black people in the West must align themselves with the white workers to make revolution. But the saddest part of their new thrust is that they see Black people as the vanguard for the "world revolution." That is, we must be the front line not for our own liberation, but for the liberation of the world: white people, yellow people and perhaps black people. The problem with this is that if we are the vanguard for the world revolution, we are bound to get wiped out for the interest of others and not even for the interests of ourselves. (Madhubuti, 1973, p. 45)

I understood Madhubuti's sentiment because there are historical examples where Black organizations and movements have been weakened or destroyed by the infiltration of white Left organizations. That was not the case in CAP. Our association with white Left organizers came after we had moved to the ideological positions and practices of Marxism (or what we thought we knew of it). In some ways our desire for answers, revolutionary theory, and alignment with other liberation movements caused us to adopt their ideology and proclaim it although we had minimal knowledge of it. It was like learning a new language. We declared our ideology as Marxism when we were still learning the alphabet and phonics.

The movement of Black Nationalists, including cultural nationalists and those who followed Maulana Karenga's doctrine of Kawaida, was not just broken it was shattered. CAP had basically given up its leadership role of that segment of activists in the black community who had become, under the direction of CAP, a potent force in national black politics. The result of CAP's work with nationalist coalitions on local and national levels manifested itself through: influencing the programmatic direction of the national community of black nationalists; local electoral campaigns and the election of local black officials; impact on education debate and policy in local areas leading to independent black schools and infusion of African American curriculum; community–police relations through local and national campaigns; public debate, policy, and action in support of African liberation and

development. Other local and national nationalist organizations continued this work. However, the ability of nationalists to forge national coalitions with other segments of the national black community such as Civil Rights, labor, and elected officials was never regained.

CAP moved on. It was a Marxist organization, albeit a black Marxist organization, despite what many in the nationalist movement thought. CAP was not being run secretly by a white Left group. It was struggling to define itself within the new political arena of Marxist politics and maintain a leading position as guardian and steward of the interests of black people. In "The Position of the Congress of Afrikan People, December, 1974" Baraka states:

> And while the Congress of Afrikan People is wholly committed to the theories and practice of scientific socialism, we are also wholly committed to actual struggle, and that that struggle be part of the struggle of the masses of our people and all people for liberation. But while the new communist movement practices sectarianism and is beset by opportunism and chauvinism, the old civil righters who can work together, continue to lead the people into compromise with capitalism… while we spend endless hours arguing with and undermining each other. (1974b)

While this position paper was an attempt to clarify why CAP had moved to Marxism-Leninism it also reflected several other issues that were becoming too clear to CAP leadership. One of them is expressed in the statement just cited. As CAP attempted to forge relationships with other Left, and in particular new Marxist, organizations like the October League, I Wor Kuen, the Revolutionary Union, the August 29th Movement, and others, there was increasing frustration with the amount of time spent debating the theoretical principles of Marxist ideology and considerably lesser amount of time spent actually working on issues that mattered to working class people and especially people in the black communities CAP has spent almost a decade working in.

For the first time, CAP activists across the country found themselves in the heretofore unknown environment where at meetings, people pulled out books written by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao, etc. and quoted them verbatim and shouted people down with accusations of

bourgeois thinking and collaboration with the capitalist ruling class. CAP had always worked toward specific concrete objectives. In the few years of CAP's existence it had achieved a great deal.

In almost all CAP locals, including Newark, Pittsburgh, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Wilmington, Baltimore, Detroit, Albany, Cleveland, South Bend, Indianapolis, Gary, Chicago, and St. Louis there were fully functioning community based education programs such as independent schools, tutorial programs, youth programs, cultural centers, and book stores. Additionally CAP worked in coalitions to influence education policy through school boards. The organization also created and ran local cultural organizations including theater groups, dance companies, and other cultural groups that performed regularly. The organization conducted a national campaign "Stop Killer Cops" and initiated or participated in broad community based coalitions to combat police attacks on and killings of black people in urban areas. In Detroit, we were part of the Coalition to Stop STRESS (a police undercover unit that had killed more than a dozen black men). The coalition's work was so effective that in Coleman Young's successful campaign to become Detroit's first African American mayor, one of his principle promises to the black community was that he would end STRESS, which he did upon being elected.

In all CAP cities the organization participated in local election campaigns developing strategy, building campaign organizations, and helping elect candidates. CAP conducted voter registration drives and voter education campaigns. The organization helped build the local and statewide NBA organizations. In Newark, CAP conducted a campaign to build affordable housing through the ambitious Kawaida Towers project. In other cities, CAP worked on housing issues and community empowerment. CAP also was consistently involved in supporting African liberation and development. It annually raised funds for Africa by holding the African Delegates Reception in New York for African representatives to the United Nations. CAP participated as key organizers nationally and locally for African Liberation Day, the African Liberation Support Committee, and the movement to boycott Gulf Oil for its support of Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.

In doing this work, CAP consistently used the formula it had been practicing since the Gibson campaign in Newark: With a dedicated, disciplined, highly motivated small core of activists, build a broader coalition to effect change. In none of the CAP cities outside of Newark did the organization ever reach more than 50 members. However, utilizing the united front strategy often allowed the organization to remain unseen while influencing local and national political conversations and events.

Yet in this new Left arena, CAP was somewhat bewildered by the lack of actual organizing activity and the behavior of some of the organizations. Even more so by reports we received of some organizations actually torturing their members or beating up other organizations' members who didn't agree with them. The history and reputation of CAP as a paramilitary black nationalist organization was probably the reason why our activists were not attacked physically, but they were often subjected to intense verbal assault. Those of us outside of Newark did not realize that this was also becoming an issue inside the organization.

As at the July 1974 Central Council meeting of CAP in Newark, there was a noticeable absence of some key Newark CAP activists at the October 1974 General Assembly. In subsequent meetings over the next year, membership and staff at the national office continued shrinking. Inside the organization a contingent had developed, situated primarily in Newark, that believed—like some of those who were termed the ultra-Left wing of the new movement—that there was not enough understanding of Marxism-Leninism and that mass work should be halted, the organization should be dissolved, and we should form study groups to study Marxist theory. This idea was proposed in a Central Committee meeting by Amina Baraka and some of the women who had worked with her in the Social Organization department in CAP. It was the first time that there was serious public political disagreement between Amiri and Amina Baraka in the organization, and it startled many of us and also further clarified that indeed the organization had changed.

This idea was rejected by a large majority. Yet it was clear that the organization was being drawn into these sectarian, theoretical debates

due in part because of the lack of positions on key questions in the new Marxist-Leninist movement. While Marxism-Leninism was CAP's stated ideology, it was still shaped by our experience as black people and as such the relationship to Marxist ideology was through the experience and theoretical developments in the Black Liberation Movement, not through the history and theories of the Marxist-Leninist movement.

> We say our ideology is scientific socialism, specifically, as practiced and theorized by Marx-Lenin and Mao Tse Tung, but we are rich with the experience of the black liberation movement's history, and have studied and been enriched by the struggle and practice of men like DuBois, Garvey, Malcolm X, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Toure, Cabral, without whose work, the words of Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse Tung would mean little. Our theories are also a result of our own struggle, the revelations of our own practice. No revolutionary theory is whole unless it comes to completion in practice. From what is actually accomplished. Too many comrades in the new communist movement limit their struggle to academic word wars, super militant rhetorical battles, to see who has the most correct grasp of socialist theory. And while we are not putting down theory, by any means, there can be no revolution without revolutionary theory as Lenin and Mao and Cabral have said, still they have also said that revolutionary theory must in part come from revolutionary practice, revolutionary action, issued from revelations and analyses coming from the struggle itself. For many of our comrades, especially those with middle class or petit bourgeois backgrounds, socialism has merely given them yet another academic schoolboy's relationship to reality, and they are prone to endless hours of wordy forums discussing issues which they will not struggle with in the street. (Baraka, 1974b)

This paper was aimed at an internal audience as much as at an external audience. The organization was redefining itself and the leadership was trying to shore up the support of the activists while at the same time helping them to understand the new course for the organization. Toward that end, the paper also put forth the proposition that just as we were visible, vocal proponents of Nationalism and Pan-Afrikanism, CAP was unafraid and unapologetic about being a

socialist organization and believed that the mass support it had built and enjoyed through hard work would be extended to its new ideological position and methods. Baraka (1974b) states: "The Congress of African People is involved with quite a few major projects and programs. The Congress now exists in 17 cities across the country, pushing an ideology of scientific socialism, Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tse-Tung-Thought. We are not closet socialists; we do not believe socialism will scare the masses."

Another necessary step in CAP's assertion as a Marxist-Leninist organization was to develop detailed positions on key issues of importance to the new Marxist movement (which parallel issues important to the old Marxist movement). Five internal committees were formed to research, study, and write positions on: Party Building; the Black National Question; the Woman Question; Trade Unions; and on the International Situation. This process was ongoing, but the first papers began to emerge internally and to a degree the positions they were defining were emerging externally in 1975. Although it is usually assumed that Baraka wrote all or almost all of the positions that were taken by the organization during that period, it is untrue.

For instance, Robin D. G. Kelley (1994, p. 106) states:

> Perhaps as a way to establish its ideological moorings as an antirevisionist movement, the RCL (CAP) followed in the noble tradition of resurrecting the black belt thesis. In 1977, the RCL (most likely Baraka) published a paper titled "The Black Nation," which analyzed black liberation movements from a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist perspective and concluded that black people in the South and in large cities constituted a nation with an inherent right to self-determination. While rejecting "bourgeois integration," the essay argued that the struggle for black political power was central to the fight for self-determination.

Kelley's assumption that Baraka wrote the position paper on the black nation is understandable given Baraka's stature as a writer and his imprint on the literature and ideas of CAP. But CAP was engaged in a concerted effort to reshape the organization and to diminish and eventually eliminate the semi-religious, priest type leadership that had been the model under Kawaida. I was on the National Question

Committee that was chaired by Baraka. We did extensive historical research, had exhaustive discussions and debates, and collectively wrote the paper "The Black Nation." I also chaired the Trade Union committee and led the same process in producing that paper. And still later, I became a member of the Party Building committee.

As an example of the make-up of these committees, Amina Baraka wrote in an internal report to the organization: "Chairman Amiri Baraka assigned Comrade Amina to form a committee of women comrades to put together a paper on the 'Woman Question'… The Committee members were Johari (St. Louis), Laini (New York), Jaribu (Baltimore), Sharifa (Detroit), and Jalia (NewArk)" (Amina Baraka, personal communication, 1974).

The process of public explanation and internal consolidation continued in 1974 and throughout 1975. CAP women successfully led the efforts to create the Black Women's United Front (BWUF) at the Detroit founding meeting. It was even more powerful than the Afrikan Women's Conference because the focus on creating an active organization, a progressive black women's organization to work alongside the NBA and the ALSC, excited and invigorated the activists. Woodard explains:

> The national BWUF was founded 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. 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 & exploitation. (1999, p. 181)

At the BWUF founding conference, Baraka spent almost all of the day in one of the offices with Harry Haywood, an elder statesman of black communists. Haywood had been a member of the Communist Party USA dating back to the late 1920s and had been involved in the fight within that organization to get them to recognize black people as a nation in the United States. Haywood's autobiography "Black Bolshevik" was being published by one of the new Left organizations, the October League (M-L). I sat in for some of that meeting when I

was able to. Baraka showed tremendous deference to Haywood, asking him questions about his history and communist theory while also giving Haywood an overview on the last five years of CAP and the forces in the Black Liberation Movement.

A few weeks later, also in Detroit, we organized a large community forum where Baraka came to give the first public speech since CAP's open declaration that it was a Marxist-Leninist organization. The speech, "Black Nationalism and Socialist Revolution," was aimed at nationalists and other activists who had been supporters of the organization. There were also a fair number of representatives from other Left organizations, both new Left and old Left as it were. The auditorium was packed with about 300 people. Baraka opened the speech by directly addressing the question on everyone's mind: "One question to which we must constantly respond is why did we change our ideology. We meaning the Congress of Afrikan People, but also specifically Amiri Baraka…We changed our views from cultural nationalists because we have always viewed ourselves as revolutionaries, black people struggling for national liberation" (Baraka, 1975a).

And as he had been doing for over a year in internal and external speeches and positions papers, Baraka attempted to explain the history and current structure of capitalism, imperialism, and racism. He emphasized the growing class conflict between working class blacks and their agenda and that of the growing class—the "black bureaucratic elite fixed to the structure of municipal government"—and compared it to neocolonial rule in Africa and throughout the Third World.

As adept as anyone at speaking in front of an audience, especially with the level of comfort he had with predominantly black audiences, Baraka used his experience as a teacher, his gift with language, his experience as a revolutionary leader, and the support that he had earned to give a speech that was both academic and accessible to everyone in attendance. The manner in which he spoke was careful, with the concern that the audience should understand the intention of his words and of the transformation that CAP had gone through and was going through. But as much as he delivered what was becoming his stump speech about monopoly capitalism and imperialism

and the need for a new communist party, the speech was more about the open and absolute declaration that CAP was indeed a communist revolutionary organization, and there was no more debate about it. CAP was not turning back but neither was it turning its back on the black community.

> In talking about capitalism, we are brought face to face with the major development in the Congress of Afrikan People's ideology. The Congress of Afrikan People is a revolutionary communist organization. It is also a black organization, which makes it a revolutionary nationalist organization…When people talk to us about our transition to the ideology of scientific socialism, specifically to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought, there is always apprehension, usually created by the media and by the domesticated confusion of narrow nationalists or other bourgeois nationalist or simply by lack of information. Apprehension that because we advance the ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought we have abandoned the black struggle. But nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, we have gained, as Mao said, the best of all possible weapons for the liberation of our people. But in struggling to liberate our people we have come to understand that especially in America, it is fantasy to think that we can struggle for our own liberation and be completely oblivious to all the other struggling and oppressed people in this land. Or throughout the world for that matter…Our revolutionary socialist ideology does not turn us away from black liberation, it teaches us that there can be no black liberation until capitalism is destroyed. (Baraka, 1975a)

In Detroit, the impact of this speech was immediately evident. We both lost and gained supporters. We were approached by the Socialist Workers Party, the Communist League, the October League, the Revolutionary Union, and other Left organizations. They wanted to meet, invited us to speak at their forums and programs, and sought a reciprocal response from us. Many of our former nationalist allies stopped personally inviting us into the nationalists' programs and meetings despite our shared history. Outside of their organizations' formal rejection of CAP, many activists from those organizations continued to stay in close contact.

In Detroit as in other cities a great number of our community contacts voiced their continued appreciation for the work we did but they were not as close; some were distant even as they struggled to understand what this meant. However, we continued working in some broad community coalitions around issues like education and against police abuse of citizens. Our organizing skills were never questioned. Our ideology was questioned often by different people including some of our own activists.

As an example, we had been active in the movement in Detroit to transform public education by challenging the core curriculum, governance, and policy of the school board. We were also key advocates of creating independent African centered schools and several schools were in the process of being launched or had recently opened their doors. The community organizers and educators whom we had previously been close to, began to proceed without us in the conversations and strategy sessions that took place in inner circles although we remained close personally.

During this period we lost several people in Detroit CAP. We also gained some new members, especially activists who had earlier been involved with Marxist ideology and some formerly associated with the BPP or the black workers' movement in the city. Further, we attracted a group of students from the colleges in the area. But the loss of those with whom we had struggled to build CAP was difficult. This phenomenon was occurring throughout the organization, especially in Newark, at a rapid pace.

At each meeting of the national leadership of the organization from the spring of 1974 through 1975 it was obvious that the organization was contracting. Where our reach had been expansive, in electoral politics, inside of prisons, on the African continent and in African affairs, in education, among black intellectuals and scholars, in African American culture and arts, we were losing ground. CAP had developed a method for organizing that was centered on having a skilled, disciplined, highly motivated, intelligent, and unified organization, around which it built ever expanding coalitions and united fronts that increased its influence far beyond its numbers.

The entire organization was engaged in reading several Marxist texts including "The Communist Manifesto"; "History of the Communist Party Bolshevik"; Mao's "4 Essays on Philosophy"; Lenin's "Imperialism"; Stalin's "Foundations of Leninism." We were conducting internal and external study groups, building the BWUF, trying to maintain our relationship and presence with the NBA and ALSC while losing activists.

It was becoming increasingly clear that we could not maintain the level of work that had been done previously. As a result many of our most successful mass programs were dismantled, much to the dismay of the activists. Some of our members left because they simply did not agree with the change in ideology. But some, primarily in Newark, were purged in an ongoing struggle over who was most correct and who was a petit bourgeois traitor. Inside CAP's national office, the mistakes of some of our new comrades in the new Left movement were being repeated. We lost dozens of valuable, experienced activists and it greatly diminished the organization.

At an April 1975 Central Committee meeting, Baraka as chair of the organization spoke about the purge going on inside the organization, criticizing those who were suppressing open debate and those who were being suppressed.

> The refusal by many to speak out, to debate, to struggle, to know the correct line and fight for it, also weakens us. Leaves us unclear and full of diverting preoccupations that must be squashed before we can get stronger and go forward to help lead the class. But we must be watchful of disrupters who push anti-Marxist lines whether they do this knowingly or unknowingly. But we must favor, as Mao suggested, "wide open" discussion rather than restrict…So even though some have left our ranks. Some because of our error. Others because they want America and bourgeois ideology greater than they want revolution. (Baraka, 1975c)

From the CAP General Assembly meeting in October 1974 to the Second General Assembly meeting in October 1975, CAP worked internally and externally to shed its nationalist organizational existence and to become part of the new Marxist-Leninist movement. Baraka stated:

> The Congress of Afrikan People is an organization that is known throughout the Black Liberation Movement and now increasingly throughout the Marxist-Leninist movement, both anti-revisionist and among the revisionist as well. We are slandered, characterized, attacked, and supported wrongly every hour, we must at least put out our own positions in a broad public way, that is designed at the same time to build the organization, to draw Marxists and potential Marxists. And most important to bring Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought to the Black Nation and multi-national working class. (1975b)

By the second General Assembly meeting in 1976, the central focus of CAP, as with other new Marxist organizations, was to build a new Marxist-Leninist party. Toward that end, CAP had been engaged in a year-long internal struggle to transform itself and engage other organizations in attempts at collective work around issues to develop and build relationships that it was hoped would lead to the eventual creation of the new party. Out of this work emerged the following internal document.

> THE ROLE OF THE CONGRESS OF AFRIKAN PEOPLE IN BUILDING A NEW COMMUNIST PARTY
>
> 1. To make stronger the activists that are already functioning. Study and analysis of political clarity and work done to this point.
> 2. To develop new activists in major Black northern and western areas and in Black Belt south.
> 3. Develop areas of Mass Interest and functioning CAP program e.g. Stop Killer Cops and develop other national programs with a revolutionary line for each particular program.
> 4. Put forward a general program (platform), developed by a national conference committee to work on the question of party building up until our National conference.
> 5. Build coalition and united front work, i.e., Strategy '76, BWUF, NBA, Worker Circles
> 6. Expanding Unity and Struggle distribution in all areas of CAP work and develop activists reporters to contribute to the paper consistently covering local, state, national and international issues. As well as develop a party ideological journal, put together in a popular form

> that deals with theoretical material and our popular culture. (CAP, "Building a Revolutionary Communist Party," 1975)

It was also at the second General Assembly meeting that the debate on whether CAP should change its name began. This discussion would continue over the next few months in Central Committee meetings.

12

Transformed

The fifth and final period of CAP's ideological journey occurred during 1976–1979 and is characterized by the change in the organization's name to the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL) and in its primary theoretical contribution and mission within the new communist movement: to ensure that the black nation was represented.

As CAP moved deeper into the new antirevisionist communist movement and further away from the Black Nationalist Pan-Africanist movement, it was losing its ability to influence the political direction of the Black Liberation Movement as it had done in the previous five years. CAP's diminished organizational strength also meant that wherein previously the organization had been able to bolster the often fledgling united front structures with organizers and resources, now only minimal resources were available for CAP to contribute to sustaining those structures. The additional value of CAP's leadership position in the Black Liberation Movement had been that as a national experienced organization it was able to hold together often divergent forces for the common good. In CAP's absence no other organization at the time was capable of assuming that responsibility on a national level. As a result, key united fronts fell apart, and the Black Liberation Movement in general was weakened.

In December 1975, Amiri Baraka resigned from his position as the Secretary General of the NBA. "By 1976, both the African Liberation Support Committee and the Black Women's United Front were in disarray resulting from sectarian conflicts" (Woodard, 1999, p. 254).

CAP's focus on building a new revolutionary communist party in many ways obscured the fact that the organization that had its foundation in black working-class communities was now increasingly divorced from that community. As the shift in focus continued, we also tried to find new ways to work. Based on the recommendations made in the trade union position paper, we sent several people to work in key industries. I went back to work in an auto factory as did others in Detroit, Newark, St. Louis, and Cleveland. Some of our activists in Pittsburgh and Cleveland went to work in coal mines and steel.

At the Chrysler assembly plant I was soon joined by another CAP activist brother Karega. A host of new Left organizations were also represented. Most were having little impact on the workers there, some seemed intimidated by the environment and the workers. Over a three-year period Karega and I developed a core group of workers into a regular study group, which then built an organization that successfully ran candidates for positions in the union local. We were also successful in getting most of the other Left organizers to join or support our efforts. In other cities, our activists rose into leadership positions in unions and other workers' organizations. We also began to build local coalitions around issues. We had taken the CAP method of organizing into the labor movement and while it was on a much smaller scale, usually local, we were finding success and becoming more influential.

In the fall of 1976, the famed Black Nationalist revolutionary Robert F. Williams was extradited from Michigan back to North Carolina where his story as a human rights leader began and where he had escaped both a lynch mob and the false charge of kidnapping. Baraka sent two activists from Newark to Detroit to accompany Rob and Mable Williams back to North Carolina. I was charged with organizing the press conference for him at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport prior to his departure and acted as liaison with the police and security forces there.

Even though he had been out of the public eye for some years, Robert F. Williams still commanded significant local, national, and international press attention and there were always concerns about his personal security. His quiet but strong demeanor projected the confidence

of a man who understood his place in history. With him as always was his wife Mable, the beautiful, tall, brown-skinned woman who was his best friend, advisor, and partner in life and the struggle for freedom. They were a sight to see. We all hoped that Rob and Mable would be back with us soon, and we were relieved when they were. They came back to the small semi-rural community of Baldwin, Michigan, where they lived until they moved back to Monroe shortly before Robert F. Williams' death in 1996 and Mable Williams' death in 2014.

Internally, we became extremely focused on the establishment of CAP's position on the national question. The position paper was titled "The Black Nation," and as previously noted was the work of a committee headed by Baraka. The committee eventually became the Afro-American Commission of the RCL (M-L-M). The work of developing this position occurred over a period of two and a half years, beginning in earnest in early 1976 until the publication and distribution of the paper in 1979. Extensive research was done that included: statistical analysis of black population patterns from slavery to the 1970s; migration histories; study of previous communist positions domestically and internationally; a thorough study and analysis of Stalin's criteria for a nation; the position of nationalist organizations in the twentieth century; and the history of and positions of black communists in the first half of the twentieth century. This research introduced us to Cyril Briggs and the African Blood Brotherhood, Harry Haywood, Otis Hyde, and other black communists in the 1920s and 1930s. It also brought a closer reading of the work of DuBois, Richard Wright, and Langston Hughes. We examined the leadership of Paul Robeson in the labor movement and the obscured history of black women in the labor movement and communist movement. The level of research, debate, and discussion was an indication of the importance of writing this paper.

On the sixteenth anniversary of the student sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, February 1, 1976, the Central Committee of CAP voted to change the name of the organization to RCL (M-L-M). Notes from a Political Bureau meeting in April explained this change: "Name Change 1. Removes us from identification as a narrow nationalist

organization. 2. Identifies us with anti-revisionist communist movement" (CAP, personal communication, 1976).

The change in name officially ended the organizational era previously known as CAP. Although there had been a serious attempt to distance the organization from cultural nationalism, its history and legacy were still claimed and in many ways revered by the activists. With the name change, RCL became fully immersed in the new antirevisionist movement, advocating that the organizations in that movement take a position on black liberation that included the right of self-determination of black people and other oppressed nations. Prior to both the change in name and the completion of "The Black Nation" paper, CAP's basic view on the national question was summarized in an internal memo in 1975:

> Congress of Afrikan People Position on National Question
>
> 1. We are an oppressed nation, whose homeland is the Black Belt South.
> 2. Over ½ of our people are dispersed from that homeland, and live as an oppressed national minority scattered throughout the USA though for the most part in ghetto pockets which are partial microcosms of that homeland.
> 3. Although we have the right to Self Determination, even including secession, our struggle in this epoch is to bring a socialist state to the entire land mass of the USA as part of the world socialist revolution.
> 4. Our national liberation struggle is synonymous with and must be a struggle against capitalism, which caused our national oppression in the first place, hence our struggle is for socialist revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the eventual emergence of communism. (CAP, personal communication, 1975)

During the entire political life of CAP/RCL it was consistent in its insistence on self-determination for black people in the United States, even though the meaning of that demand changed over the years. There is no other constant political demand throughout the five periods of its ideological development.

Within the context of the new antirevisionist communist movement, support for self-determination was most often stated as a right

but not necessarily a strategy. CAP/RCL in concert with the majority of new communists also agreed on the right of self-determination. But unlike the other organizations, CAP/RCL's history had been one of fierce advocacy for self-determination. That history was carried into the new movement with CAP/RCL in the familiar position of advocating for the adoption of the right of self-determination as a key standard for the new communist movement and the creation of a new communist party.

The context of the advocacy was different: CAP had previously held and promoted the position that blacks in the United States were a cultural nation, dispersed throughout the United States but concentrated in a few cities in the north and west and also still in the rural black belt in the south. CAP did not necessarily agree with the RNA, which was building its program of national independence in five states in the south (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina), but left open the possibilities of a separate nation. At the 1970 founding conference of CAP, Baraka stated:

> The South may be the great strategic battleground of the African in America perhaps; it has the food, and space, to allow a people to survive, against great odds, but whatever we would do with the people, with ourselves, actually, we must first organize. And if the struggle is raised, and of such a nature that we must all go into the South, or that we migrate constantly because of the mounting pressures that force people to that realization, then it will still be a raised level of political consciousness that permits that move. (1972a, p.116)

Part of this stand was ideology, part was geography. Although CAP was founded in Atlanta, its main strength was always in the northeast and midwest. At its highest organizational point—from the election of Baraka as Chairman in 1972 on—only one southern city, Houston, was an official chapter of the CAP. It is conceivable that the fact that CAP's work was mainly in northern urban centers more than likely had an impact on the organization's initial position on a southern black nation.

However, as the Afro-American Commission developed CAP/RCL's position on the national question, the organization moved to

the position of the black nation being situated in the black belt south. This position connected CAP to a new history in black liberation. Previously the lineage of CAP was seen as a direct line from Malcolm X, DuBois, Garvey, and other Pan-Africanists. Now CAP was also connected to groups like the African Blood Brotherhood and a black radical tradition that had been all but removed from the narrative history of the black freedom struggle and certainly had been obscure in Black Nationalist historiography in the 1970s. Briggs (as cited in Vincent, 1973, p. 71) explains:

> The land of the Black Belt rightfully belongs to the millions of Negroes who till it. These Negroes should own the land in this territory; they should rule its territory and make its laws and sit in judgment in its courts. They should have the right to determine what form of government they desire; and should they decide upon a government separate from the United States they must be free to act upon their decision.
>
> This is, briefly, what is meant by the demand raised by the Communist Party; the right of self determination in the Black Belt. The demand is part and parcel of the demand of the working class Party for equal rights. Without the right of self-determination in the Black Belt, all talk of equal rights is empty and futile.

This passage, written in 1932, was the type of history that was recovered in CAP/RCL's research. It was the discovery of early black revolutionaries like Cyril Briggs and the African Blood Brotherhood that also helped to strengthen CAP's resolve to push the line of self-determination within the new communist movement. The continuation of the struggle within the communist movement to ensure that the interests and rights of black people were not pushed to the rear was a major concern for CAP. This concern was heightened by the overwhelming sense of responsibility that was felt within the organization that as black communists, especially having moved away from black nationalism, we had to ensure that the struggle of our own people was still paramount in our hearts and minds and remained central to the new direction we'd taken. In retrospect I think it was important for all of us personally to feel that we had not abandoned the Black Liberation Movement.

In CAP's "The Black Nation" this point is made clear:

> We must show that the Black Liberation Movement, in all aspects, is part of the struggle to make proletarian revolution. The call for self-determination of the Afro-American nation is part not only of the struggle of oppressed nations and peoples against imperialism, which is the motor of revolution around the world, but is part of the international proletarian revolution. That is, in order to liberate the black nation and win democratic rights for blacks anywhere in the United States, there must be a Socialist Revolution made by the multinational working class. We must not make Black Liberation an "automaton of socialism," that is, incorrectly imply that there is no need to struggle for Black Liberation, as revisionist say, because the only struggle is for socialist revolution. Genuine communists know that the struggle to liberate the black nation is part of the struggle to destroy capitalism and build socialism, and it must not be liquidated. Narrow nationalist accuse us of asking "for black people to wait for everybody else" before black people make revolution. The fact is that the only revolution that can be made in the United States will be the result of the construction of a multinational revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Party to guide the multinational proletariat and the working masses to socialist revolution. (CAP, 1976a, p. 52)

Several of the new organizations upheld the right of self-determination for the black nation. However, the point of demarcation between them and the CAP/RCL position was the expressed support for the right of secession. This point and whether there even existed a black nation in the US black belt south had been debated in the communist movement since the mid-twentieth century. In the new movement, some organizations supported some version of RCL's position and others opposed it. Most, however, acknowledged that some form of the position was essential to achieve unity to build a new communist party and also to build unity in the working class.

The October League (Marxist-Leninist) was one of the larger, new communist organizations. In a resolution adopted at its third national congress, they stated:

> In conclusion, we want to emphasize that the national question is the favorite point of attack for the revisionist. The purpose of this resolution

> has been to re-state the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism on the national question and apply them to the Afro-American nation. In raising the right of self-determination, in linking this to the struggle for democratic rights and to the general class struggle, the basis is laid for digging the deepest roots among the Black masses, and forging a truly united mass revolutionary movement in the U.S. We must make a complete break with revisionism on this question. Only in this way can a truly revolutionary party be built. Only in this way can revolution be won. (October League (M-L), 1976, p. 77)

Another organization in the new communist movement, the League of Revolutionary Struggle, stated their position on the national question in its founding documents:

> The League recognizes the important and critical role of this question to the U.S. revolution. The intense national oppression, which the tens of millions of oppressed nationality people in his country have suffered, has created a powerful revolutionary potential…The demands of the oppressed peoples include the right of self-determination for the oppressed nations and equal rights for the national minorities. The right of self-determination is a right for the oppressed nations to freely decide their own political futures, including the right to secede and establish their own independent state. Self-determination may not necessarily take the form of secession, as it may take the form of voluntary union and/or a form of regional autonomy…The proletariat must uphold the right of self-determination for oppressed nations such as for the Afro-American nation in the black belt South and equal rights for the national minorities, such as the Puerto Rican and other minorities. (LRS, 1978, p. 20)

All of the new communist organizations agreed that their central task was to build a new communist party. RCL was determined that it would be built with the national question at the core of the principles and programs of any new party.

> The Afro-American National Question must be seen in the context of our central task of this period, Party Building. It is a key question that must be solved correctly in order that the black sector of the proletariat

> and advanced elements of the black nation and black oppressed nationality be drawn into the new Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. Historically an incorrect position on the Afro American National Question has blatantly contributed to the degeneration of would-be Communist movements. ("The Black Nation," 1976a, p. 53)

RCL's insistence on the right of self-determination was its greatest contribution to the new communist movement at the time. While the organization brought with it a wealth of experience in organizing, especially in African American communities, its diminished organizational capacity, caused by the tremendous loss of activists and institutions, prevented it from having a large impact, that is, galvanizing and unifying the new communist movement in the way that it had the Black Nationalist Pan-Africanist movement.

In 1979, the RCL (M-L-M) and the LRS (M-L) agreed to merge forces into one organization. This was the result of a series of meetings, discussions, and working together for more than a year that finally led to the unification of these organizations. It is interesting to note that out of all of the new communist organizations, the LRS was composed mostly of people of color because it had been born out of the merger of two organizations, I Wor Kuen (IWK) and the August 29th Movement (ATM). IWK was a predominantly Asian American organization and ATM was mainly a Chicano organization. They both had experiences similar to CAP in their respective communities, emerging as revolutionary leadership in the Asian American and Chicano movements. In their founding documents they describe the emergence of the new communist movement and of their organizations.

> The anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist movement in the U.S. has its origins in the great revolutionary mass movement of the 1960s. During the late 1960s, the Black liberation movement developed into a storm unprecedented in U.S. history. This spearheaded and inspired the struggles of other oppressed nationalities, including Chicanos, Asians, and Puerto Ricans . . . ATM and IWK were two of the Marxist-Leninist forces that originated out of the revolutionary movement of the 1960s. The two groups were among the better known, experienced and nationwide communist organizations in the U.S. Both had relatively

> long histories in the revolutionary movement. Both organizations had developed of the national movements: ATM mainly out of the Chicano movement and IWK mainly out of the Asian nationalities movements. (LRS, 1978, p. 20)

With the merger with RCL, the LRS (M-L) had the largest contingent of antirevisionist communists of color in the new movement. It was essentially a Marxist-Leninist organization of the oppressed nations and nationalities although it did have members who were white who had come mainly from the labor movement or student organizations. The meetings we had to work out the unification included a summation of the histories of the organizations, agreements on key principles like the national question and party building, and the logistics of the merger: national office, newspaper, management of funds, and other things.

For the last time as an independent organization, the leadership of what remained of CAP, a once highly influential organization, met in Pittsburgh to formally vote to merge our organization with the LRS. By this time the organization was only a fraction of what it had once been. As a result this final act of CAP/RCL was met with relief, the organization's legacy would be extended through the merger, and with sadness, the life of CAP had officially ended.

In early 1980 the merger was officially announced in *Forward* the journal of the LRS. The entire issue was devoted to the announcement and review of the history of CAP/RCL including a critique of its past mistakes. The issue concluded with "Revolutionary Poetry from the Black Liberation Movement" and poems written by Amiri and Amina Baraka; three of my poems were included as well.

> Two major Marxist-Leninist organizations, the Revolutionary Communist League (M-L-M) and the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L), have united into one organization, the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L). This is a significant step forward in the struggle for Marxist-Leninist unity and the U.S. revolution. The RCL and the League carried out a process of principled struggle for unity, a process which integrated joint discussions on theoretical question and joint practice. The two organizations also summarized their histories. Throughout the unification process, the two organizations

> desired unity, adhered to Marxist-Leninist principles, and practiced criticism and self-criticism. As a result, they were able to resolve their differences and reach unity on all major points of political line. RCL and the League had substantial political unities which in part reflected the similarity of the two organizations. Both RCL and the League have their origins in the mass movements of the oppressed nationality peoples of the 1960s, and over the years carried out extensive work among the masses. While there were also differences in each organization's development, each organization has a rich and complex history, having grown and deepened their understanding of making revolution and Marxism-Leninism through a process of twists and turns.
>
> From the beginning of the merger process, RCL and the League had unity on the national question in the U.S. Both upheld the view that the national movements are a powerful revolutionary force and a component part of the socialist revolution. Both upheld in theory and in practice the right of self-determination for the Afro-American nation in the Black-belt south and for full and equal rights for Afro-Americans in the North. RCL and the League had unity in their view of self-determination and equal rights as democratic demands that can only be won through a revolutionary struggle for political power. The two organizations also united in seeing the necessity for building a broad united front within the national movements and waging class struggle in the national movements for communist leadership. RCL and the League also were united in their view of the oppressed Chicano nation in the Southwest with the right to self-determination. (LRS, 1980, pp. 1–2)

Until the publication of Komozi Woodard's book *A Nation within a Nation* in 1999, the summation of CAP's life and work published in the 1980 journal *Forward* had been the only published history of the organization. Fortunately, there is growing interest and investigation into the role played by this organization and in the revolutionary movements that the 1960s gave birth to.

The history of CAP /RCL (M-L-M) is a revolutionary history. It is a history of the contemporary Black Liberation Movement as well as the contemporary antirevisionist communist movement. It is the history of the development and fusion of these two movements, and represents progress toward that goal. That is its most important lesson (LRS, 1980, p. 132).

13

Lessons

CAP came into existence in Atlanta in a large public gathering where thousands of African American activists participated in its founding. It formally ceased to exist in late 1979 in a quiet, very private meeting in Pittsburgh with a handful of people who had been involved in the organization for several years and had survived the many twists and turns, challenges, and confrontations that the organization had gone through in its nine year existence.

With the merger into the League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS), this journey introduced me to major aspects of American culture that was previously outside my experience for the second time in my life. The first was my introduction to Jewish American culture when I was in Junior High. The second one was the introduction to Asian American culture in general and in particular to Japanese American, Chinese American, Pacific Islander, Korean American, and Filipino American culture. I was also introduced to the struggles and cultures of Mexican Americans, Chicanos, and immigrants from Central and South America and to a greater understanding of Native American history. It was through the experience of being in this new organization that I began to understand what the United States really was.

I grew up in Detroit, a city that was essentially black and white. Being in the nationalist movement the intellectual, organizational, and cultural immersion was generally within our own culture and those that it derived from. For 15 years I had been fully submerged in the black Nationalist Pan-Africanist movement, concentrating on black American culture, history, and politics and that of Africa and the African Diaspora. But suddenly, surrounded by people who had gone through

similar experiences as Chicano or Asian American activists within their communities, being taught the history of the people and their struggles and that we had arrived at a similar place was enlightening.

At the first Central Committee meeting of the LRS after the merger, held in Oakland, California, Baraka and I and several others from CAP/RCL walked into the meeting and were met with a loud and long ovation from the gathering of activists from the many parts of American culture assembled in the room. Over the next two years, I traveled across the United States and also to China.

I was named the chair of the Black Liberation Commission of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L). In that position I led an internal struggle to have LRS focus its strategy for black liberation on the south, and toward that end I moved to Atlanta with other black activists in LRS shortly after the merger was announced. Upon our arrival we immediately began applying the organizing skills and techniques we'd learned in CAP.

In Atlanta we recruited several new activists, worked with the existing members of LRS, and engaged in a number of organizing campaigns throughout the south creating or becoming part of coalitions around issues. We were active in supporting and organizing many of the mothers of "Atlanta's Missing and Murdered Children"; worked in the Atlanta Anti-Apartheid movement; organized students on the Atlanta University Center campuses; held regular cultural programs; and became active in the local labor movement.

We also organized the Atlanta chapter of the newly formed National Black United Front (NBUF) headed by the Rev. Herbert Daughtry out of Brooklyn. We convinced NBUF, which was mainly based in the north, to support a voting rights/anti-KKK struggle in Wrightsville, Georgia that we were heavily involved in and to allow us to host and organize its 1982 national conference in Atlanta. We worked with and in working class communities both urban and rural; organized and worked with students, college professors, elected officials, lawyers, teachers, artists, labor leaders, civil rights organizations and leaders, and other new communist movement activists. We worked with the United League of Mississippi; supported land struggles; and worked in a coalition of labor and civil rights groups to support a labor strike of black women poultry workers

in Laurel, Mississippi. We also worked closely with members of the RNA and the African People's Party, led by A. Muhammad Ahmed, who was in Atlanta at the time. In the span of a little more than two years, we worked in communities in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia.

During this time I did extensive travel, doing speaking tours to build support for the communities we were working in, visiting other LRS cities to help consolidate the merger, writing for the newspaper *Unity*, and editing a new journal I started in LRS, *The Black Nation*, with Baraka as the coeditor. I was also a member of the Central Committee and had regular meetings on a range of issues including party building, theoretical issues, and organizational campaigns as well as meetings with other new communist movement organizations in ongoing attempts to develop unity.

As a part of an LRS delegation I visited China in 1980, and in 1982 I traveled to Grenada with Rev. Daughtry of the NBUF to celebrate Grenada's still young revolution. In that same year the NBUF conference came to Atlanta, and I also resigned from the LRS. The principal issue was the constant struggle within the organization to give more than theoretical support to the position on the Black Nation. With all the work we were doing and had done, I and others felt it was always a struggle to keep black liberation from being relegated to the edges of the new Marxist movement.

Upon my resignation I expected and received the requisite critique and rebuke from Amiri Baraka and it was obvious when we talked that it was painful to him. It was painful to us both, but we knew that if he was staying and I was leaving, we differed on ideological principles but not commitment to the struggle. Unlike the critique of Madhubuti and Weusi, it never got and never was personal. We had come a long way together and I had been Baraka's principal ally in the LRS since most of the Newark activists had moved on by the time of the merger, as had most of the key national CAP leadership.

Some of the people who came through CAP had a difficult time in life outside of that experience. But, most of the women and men who had been in CAP took the skills, perspective, and experience they gained into their new lives. Some joined other organizations. Some became teachers, labor organizers, and leaders; some got elected to public office

or became leaders in nonprofits; they are college professors and artists, community organizers, and entrepreneurs; business executives, factory workers, and bus drivers. And with those I remained in contact with over the years, they have had a significantly positive impact wherever they landed. And what remains common to us beyond the experience we shared is what I think we learned about ourselves and our country.

As young people born into the storm, we grew up with the profound realization that common people can make history and change a country. But that change requires commitment, study, hard work, and faith that the future will be decided by the people. Sister Jamala Rogers from St. Louis CAP and today an influential activist and author said to me recently: "People are sometimes amazed that we've been doing this work for more than 40 years. But we believed what we said when we were young. Our commitment was for a lifetime, how could we stop."

As we matured into our adult selves we understood something great about the experience of this country. It is still defining itself, shaping its national identity. We learned as Frederick Douglass said: "There is no progress without struggle." Our particular experience also taught us the critical importance of forging unity and building and maintaining the necessary united fronts to organize and mobilize the maximum number of people to achieve common goals. Our experience also taught us that we cannot make enemies of those who disagree with us. It has also taught us the importance of understanding the long arc of the struggle for self-determination, justice, and democracy.

We joined CAP to be more effective in fighting for our people. We matured and understand the interconnectedness of all peoples struggling for human rights and just societies. We were on a quest for answers and those answers came in parts and pieces. We learned that neither the questions we would ask nor the answers we discovered were static. We learned that organization is not only important but absolutely necessary to accomplish change. And for those of us who traveled along the path of the revolution occurring in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, we learned that a new generation will always emerge to define the issues, the causes, and the challenges of their times. For those of us who came of age in the Congress of African People, we hope our experiences and history will help them make the change they seek.

Appendix A

Organizations Represented at the Founding Meeting of the Congress of African People

September 1970—Source: *African Congress,* 1972, Amiri Baraka (Ed.)

California: Berkeley, California—Association of Black Psychologists: Los Angeles, California—CORE, Center for Extending American History, Watts Summer Festival, CAAAE: Palo Alto, California—Nairobi, California: San Diego, California—EOC, Southeast San Diego Communications Complex, Kuumba Foundation: San Francisco, California—Young Adults of San Francisco: Sarasota, Florida—Black Studies Association (New College):

Connecticut: Stamford, Connecticut—West Main Community Center: West Haven, Connecticut—Black Out Loud:

Delaware: Wilmington, Delaware—People Settlement Association:

Florida: Delray Beach, Florida—Citizens for a Better America: Jacksonville, Florida, Florida Black Front, UHURU-Youth for Human Dignity: Miami, Florida—Center for Urban Studies, University of Miami:

Georgia: Atlanta, Georgia—Black Unity Association, Black Methodist for Church Renewal, Institute of the Black World, SCLC, New World Development, Afro-American Police, CORE, Southern Rural Action, Urban East Housing, National Association of Black Social Workers: Savannah, Georgia—Pan-African Liberation School, Schenectady Community Action Program:

Illinois: Chicago, Illinois—PBAC, University Unitarian, BUUC, Woodlawn Experimental School Project District, Lutheran Church in America Board of American Missions, Council for Bio-Medical Careers, Chicago Defender—Pittsburgh Courier, FMO, Black Student Association, Roosevelt University: Peoria, Illinois—AFRAM:

Indiana: Bloomington, Indiana—Afro-American Student Association, IVAA Student Association:

Kansas: Kansas City, Kansas—Center for Human Dignity, Black Student Union, Kansas University: Wichita, Kansas—Black Student Union, Wichita State University, Black United Front:

Kentucky: Lexington, Kentucky—Black Student Union, University of Kentucky: Louisville, Kentucky—BSU, University of Louisville:

Louisiana: New Orleans, Louisiana—Republic of New Africa, A.A.S.U. Xavier University, International Relations Club, Xavier University, Free Southern Theater, Sons of Desire (SOUL) Xavier University, KBCPC, Dillard University, SGA, Xavier University:

Massachusetts: Boston, Massachusetts—Black United Front, Black Unitarian Caucus, Community Health Organization, Boston University Martin Luther King Jr. AA Sc., Afro-American Institute, National Directors of Faison & Norton Research, Harambee 13, Unity Bank & Trust Co: Cambridge, Massachusetts—Afro-American Committee: Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts—Tenant Management Corp: Springfield, Massachusetts—Pan Afro:

Michigan: Detroit, Michigan—Young Socialist Alliance, Association of Black Students, Pan-African Congress, U.S.A.: East Lansing, Michigan—Black United Front: Saginaw, Michigan—Poverty People's Alliance:

Minnesota: St. Paul, Minnesota—B.L.A.C. of Macalester College:

Mississippi: Jackson, Mississippi—Jackson Human Rights Project, Federation of Southern Co-ops:

Missouri: St. Louis, Missouri—National Black Liberation:

New Jersey: Bloomfield, New Jersey -B.S.O: Camden, New Jersey—BEE: East Orange, New Jersey—100 Day Care, Elizabeth, New Jersey, Organization for Black Liberation: Freehold, New Jersey—Monmouth

City Coalition for Human Relations: Central Jersey Community Co-op: Montclair, New Jersey—Glenfield Grassroots, B.O.S.S., Montclair State College: Newark, New Jersey—Urban League, Black Freedom Society, BOS, Rutgers University, Committee for Unified Newark, Soul Markets, Inc., African Free School, Jihad Productions, Spirit House Movers: New Haven, Connecticut—United Newhallville Organization, Community Progress, Inc., Black Coalition Alderman, Afro-American Inc: Patterson, New Jersey—W.E.B. DuBois Memorial Library: Vauxhall, New Jersey—Vauxhall Neighborhood Council:

New York: Albany, New York—T.W.L.F: Bronx, New York—NAAAE, Society of Black Engineers, *NYU School of Engineering & Science*, Soul Liberator, National Association of Black Students, HARYOU Act, CORE, National Black Theatre, Blackfrica Promotions: Brooklyn, New York—Juvenile Economic Progress Unit, Model Cities, New York Solidarity Council, School of Common Sense, Black Unity, Ft. Greene Community Corp., Young Warriors Party, Bedford Stuyvesant Youth, Puerto Rican Eagles, FANKO, Black Arts Alliance, Tom Skinner Association, EAST (A.S.A.), Yan Sanna Gallery, Aware Communication Network, Ocean Hill Brownsville C.E.C., BPRSC, Bushwick Hylan Community Center, Youth in Action: Buffalo, New York—Black Students Union, SUNY: Ithaca, New York—Africana Studies & Research Center, Cornell University: Jamaica, Long Island, New York—OMNI Committee: New York City, New York—Marco, Inc., African Students Organization, N.A.R.C.O. II, Association of Black Social Workers, YMCA, NABSW, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Cerberan Society, Local 1199 Drug & Hospital Union, St. Mary's Community Service, Blackfrica Promotion, Inc., IFCO, T.N.G., Urban League, Togetherness Productions, National Council of Churches: Rochester, New York—FIGHT: South Ozone Park, New York—Community News Service: St. Albans, New York—National Black Science: Syracuse, New York—People Equal Action & Community Effort, Inc.:

North Carolina: Greensboro, North Carolina—GAPP, Greensboro Association of Poor, Brothers & Sisters in Blackness, Guilford College, Student Organization for Black Unity: Raleigh, North Carolina—Africana Arts: Roxboro, North Carolina—Person County Voters League, NCCU & PTI:

Ohio: Akron, Ohio—Black United Front WANTU; Cincinnati, Ohio—United Black College Organization, B.S.U: Cleveland, Ohio—U-Jammi-Din, Black Humanist Fellowship of Liberation, Black Liberation Front, Black Action Training: Dayton, Ohio—R.N.A.: Youngstown, Ohio—Freedom Inc.

Pennsylvania: Aligruppa, Pennsylvania—AEA: Lancaster, Pennsylvania—Community Action Group: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—SCLC, UMOJA, Universal Negro Improvement Association, USTI, RNA, RTI, National Progress Association of Economic Development: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—Black Action Society, University of Pittsburgh, United Black Front:

South Carolina: Columbia, South Carolina—Blacks United for Action & Blocks: Orangeburg, South Carolina—Black Community Development Committee

Tennessee: Knoxville, Tennessee—Committee for the Development of the Black Community, O.I.C, East Tennessee Progress Association for Economic Development: Nashville, Tennessee—Afro-American Heritage Society:

Texas: Dallas, Texas—Afro-American Student Union, BLAACS: Houston, Texas—UHBSU, The Faith Essence, Africans in America for Black Liberation:

Washington D.C.: Washington, D.C.—The Washington Post Company, D.C. Veterans Association. Black UU Caucus, Freedman's Hospital, Black People's Union, Pride, Inc., Youth Pride, Inc., Columbia Heights Community Association, Nia Kuumba, People's Involvement Corp., Pan African Committee, NSF MRC, Joint Center for Political Studies, Service Corporation, Federal City College:

Wisconsin: Madison, Wisconsin—U.W. African Center, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship: Milwaukee, Wisconsin—B.S.U., University of Wisconsin:

Virginia: Norfolk, Virginia—Progress Association of Economic Development: Petersburg, Virginia—Afro Society: Roanoke, Virginia—Kuumba, Kuamka—Center for Black Education:

Surinam, South America: African Organization

Appendix B

Congress of African People Chapters in 1975

Source: ***CAP Going Through Changes***

National Office/Newark, NJ; South Bend, IN; Pittsburgh, PA; St. Louis, MO; Baltimore, MD;

New York, NY; Detroit, MI; Wilmington, DE; Albany, NY; Houston, TX; Cleveland, OH;

Elkhart, IN; Camden, NJ; Washington, D.C.; Jersey City, NJ; Philadelphia, PA; Gary, IN

Appendix C

Programmatic Statement of Black Panther Party

Source—*Black Panthers Speak*, P. Foner (Ed.)

Black Panther Party

What We Want/What We Believe—1966

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.

We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

2. We want full employment for our people.

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.

We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment

in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.

We believe that the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.

We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.

We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense.

8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.

We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the black community.

10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.

Appendix D

Republic of New Africa Declaration of Independence—1968

We, the Black People in America, in consequence of arriving at a knowledge of ourselves as a people with dignity, long deprived of that knowledge; as a consequence of revolting with every decimal of our collective and individual beings against the oppression that for three hundred years has destroyed and broken and warped the bodies and minds and spirits of our people in America, in consequence of our raging desire to be free of this oppression, to destroy this oppression wherever it assaults mankind in the world, and in consequence of our inextinguishable determination to go a different way, to build a new and better world do hereby declare ourselves forever free and independent of the jurisdiction of the United States of America and the obligations which that country's unilateral decision to make our ancestors and ourselves paper-citizens placed on us.We claim no rights from the United States of America other than those rights belonging to human beings anywhere in the world, and these include the right to damages, reparations, due us for the grievous injuries sustained by our ancestors and ourselves by reason of United States lawlessness.Ours is a revolution against—our own oppression and that of all people in the world. And it is a revolution for a better life a better station for mankind, a surer harmony with the forces of life in the universe. We therefore, see as the aims of our revolution:

To free black people in America from oppression;

To support and wage the world revolution until all people everywhere are so free;

To build a new Society that is better than what we now know and as perfect as man can make it; To assure all people in the New Society maximum opportunity and equal access to that maximum; To promote industriousness, responsibility, scholarship and service;

To create conditions in which freedom of religion abounds and mans pursuit of god and/or the destiny, place, and purpose of man in the Universe will be without hindrance;

To build a black independent nation where no sect or religious creed subverts or impedes the building of the New Society, the New State Government, or the achievement of the Aims of the Revolution as set forth in this Declaration;

To end exploitation of man by man or his environment;

To assure equality of rights for the sexes;

To end color and class discrimination, while not abolishing salubrious diversity, and to promote self-respect and mutual respect among all people in Society;

To protect and promote the personal dignity and integrity of the individual, and his natural rights;

To assure justice for all;

To place the major means of production and trade in the trust of the state to assure the benefits of this earth and man's genius and labor to society and all its members, and

To encourage and reward the individual for hard work and initiative and insight and devotion to the Revolution.

In mutual trust and great expectation, We the undersigned, for ourselves and for those who look to us but who are unable to personally fix their signatures hereto do join in this solemn Declaration of Independence, and to support this Declaration and to assure the success of our Revolution, We pledge without reservation ourselves, our talents and all our worldly goods.

Appendix E

Congress of African Peoples Ideological Statement—1970

The congress itself represents African Nationalists of diverse description but all of the members of its Executive, Legislative, Coordinating and work councils agree that what the congress must provide is a functioning methodology for reducing the contradictions and artificial diversity of Pan-African Nationalist theory.Basic to the concept that animates the congress is the idea that ultimately all valid concepts of Pan-African Nationalism will one day come together as a practical, achievable body of effective human accomplishment throughout the Black world. That is, one day we will have unity, or we will cease to exist; even in disunity. Thus it is imperative that we join our brothers wherever they are and move beyond merely rapping about *Black Power* to an understanding of what we finally want to achieve with *Black Power.*

Self-Determination: To govern ourselves rather than be governed by others. That means politically, economically and socially, whatever we see as necessary in terms of how we define necessary, we do as a free people. We will therefore build and develop alternative political, social and economic institutions locally, nationally and internationally, viewing each of these levels of activity as part of an organic process each complementing the other.

Self-Sufficiency: To provide all the basic necessities for sustenance and growth and survival of our people, i.e., food, shelter, clothing, etc., based on the principle of UJAMAA (cooperative economics).

Self-Respect: To build and develop a worldwide revolutionary culture and appropriate values, images, and forms that legitimize our thoughts and actions. Only when we have a revolutionary culture that affirms before the world our legitimacy can we respect ourselves.

Self-Defense: Acceptance of the common sense policy to struggle against those who struggle against us, and to make peace with those who make peace with us.

These *Four Ends of Black Power* we see not only as the priorities of Africans on the American continent, or in the Western Hemisphere, but we recognize these four points as major priorities for Africans all over the world. By direct extension of this reasoning, we move to the position that finally all Black people are Africans, and that as Africans, we are bound together Racially, Historically, Culturally, Politically, and Emotionally.

Racially: To say Black is to say *African*. We are African and Black, and Black and African from the same biological roots.

Historically: Our history relates to Africa as white Americans' relates to Europe.

Culturally: Common generic attitude toward life. Common creative motif and soul.

Politically: Garvey, Du Bois, Padmore, Nkrumah, Nyerere and others' concept of Africa as a unified power base to demand power and respect for Black people the world over, i.e., Pan-Africanism. Wherever African people are, we have a commonality based on common struggle.

Emotionally: Africans (i.e., Blacks) feel for Africans as a common people and identify with each other.

Basically when we speak of Pan-African Nationalism, we mean simply the knowledge that we are an African people, despite our slavery or colonization by Europeans or dispersal throughout the countries of the world. *Pan-Africanism is thus the global expression of Black Nationalism*. We believe our destiny as free people can only be realized as politically, economically, socially self-determining people conscious of the fact that what we will have brought to power is what Nkrumah and Sekou Toure have called "The African Personality," i.e., African Culture: *our way of life* as a free people. We recognize the central importance of the African Continent to Black struggles

for National Liberation; however, we likewise recognize the necessity to build collective political and economic power in order to be a functional ally to African and Third World peoples. Although it is absolutely necessary to have a unified and independent Africa, we must simultaneously move to design viable institutional alternatives wherever we are, in which a meaningful (non-romantic) Pan-Africanism can be practiced.

Thus, we have structured Work Councils which reflect major areas of Black (African) concern wherever we are struggling. Basically, the Work Councils are institution building mechanisms through which brothers and sisters gain insight and information on how to solve the problems of our people, i.e., the necessities of Nation Building. The Work Councils are thus the programmatic arm of the congress and are crucial to its operation.

1. Political Liberation—Its major role is to design, animate, and instrument, i.e., political party (and quasi political party structures), capable of systematically seizing power wherever possible—free of control from the existing political structure, although exploiting the latter for Black ends where possible. A further concern is how Black people in the colony (U.S.A.) relate to Black Liberation Struggles on the continent (Africa) and in the Islands or wherever those struggles are occurring.
2. Economic Autonomy—Black people must achieve economic self-determination. The concept of Ujamaa is our goal and the creation of mechanisms to maximize Black self-sufficiency, we must also develop ways of exchanging Black resources internationally in order to help Black people obtain economic control of their communities and countries. Of major importance is the creation of Black instruments for the funding of Black agencies in different countries.
3. Creativity and the Arts—The major role is to channel Black creative forms and images into instruments to heighten the consciousness of Black people and recreate the African personality. Emphasis is placed on a Black Value System conducive to our full growth and development into nationhood. We also work to ensure that African (Black) expressive forms can be employed

in the other institutional areas of our struggle, i.e., politics, economics, education, religion.

4. Religious System—We must reassess our spiritual beliefs, values, and modes of worship, which must be related to our history as Africans. We must determine how specific religious systems enhance or retard the Black Liberation movement, because spirituality cannot be divorced from our daily life or from our struggle as a people. Therefore, it is important to seek out religious options and new religious forms growing out of the changing demands of Black revolution.
5. Education—Its major role is to construct appropriate definitions of "education" for Black people and how they relate to our protection, survival and liberation. How we develop self-learning processes to transmit Black values and national-building skills is also of major importance. Movements such as "Community Control," "Black Studies," "Liberation Schools," and "Independent Black Institutions" must be evaluated and a method of interrelationship created. Educational forms of African people the world over are evaluated for their potential influences in any Black struggle. The Work Council seeks to establish a Black school system to remove the indoctrination of a colonized mentality and the legacy of imperialism which still lingers. Black educators and students will be brought together to devise ways in which schools and colleges in their countries can be made to deal effectively with Black needs.
6. History—To use African (Black) history as an interpretive (analytical) tool to understand the "political activity" of a people from African freedom to American captivity and western colonization. To promote cooperation on an international scale among Black historians to communicate across the world our true history which will provide us with identity, purpose and direction, rectifying the inaccuracies and distortions about us and delineating the course of human events from a liberated Black perspective.
7. Law and Justice—Develop mechanisms to survive the oppressive "legal" system that exists, and determine how we can create an alternative system (and institutions) based on justice.

[Relationships of Black lawyers to Black political activists are of central importance as well as the building of arbitration committees to negotiate conflict within the Black community.]

8. Black Technology—Brothers and sisters in the technical disciplines are being organized to formulate plans and programs to improve the technical capabilities of Black communities for any situation. The congress intends to assist in the development of the Pan-African technical potential through such mechanisms as an Institute of Black Technology.
9. Communications and Systems Analysis—Develop Black communications methods that utilize existing systems as well as design our own alternatives. New ways of controlling Black information in white media. Undertaken worldwide to perfect the generation and interpretation of Black events from a Black perspective. The congress will develop a Black communications system to express African Nationalist ideology. It will develop across-organizational information service to improve communications between Black people and Black organizations.
10. Social Organization—To evaluate and reinterpret fundamental roles and relationships among Black people, i.e., family and community in terms of Black Liberation. We will create institutions in which white definitions of Black social reality must be discarded and new definitions created out of our increased social awareness of our needs as a people.
11. Community Organization—The Work Council exchanges information and techniques of community organization and institution building at the local, national, and international level. Development of skills in fund raising, proposal writing, communications. Parapolitical and mass based organizations are taught locally, regionally, and nationally.

In each of these areas, these criteria, or aspects of the national (African) expression, we are enslaved—involved in (European) forms which themselves enslave us. In each of these areas, we must create and apply alternative forms; it is the only solution to racism, which involves us in the oppressor's forms only insofar as we are then allowed to define ourselves as capable solely of being slaves. The slave master's institutions

include us only as slaves. We must create forms, institutions, and values which themselves are examples of the liberated African personality, and move to bring about the *Liberation* of all African peoples.

But in all of the areas through which men express their lives, those criteria, for a culture, it is necessary that we find ways of making these areas relevant to our liberation, and the struggle to set up these institutions (forms), processes (organizations), is the actual struggle to liberate ourselves. In essence, this is the purpose of the congress, to move politically toward creating those liberating institutions (with the benefit of such institutions already created and in operation in the Motherland). In order to create such institutions, we must involve all Black persons and organizations capable of assisting us. Thus, the congress will move with the entire Black community and seek a unity based on *program* rather than *ideology*.

We also feel that one of the most detrimental characteristics of unsuccessful nationalism has been a tendency to "neophyte," i.e., to assume that we are the blackest souls on the planet, and to hostilize the rest of our community because we know that nobody is as conscious as we, who hold ourselves to be the most revolutionary—the most nationalistically conscious of our nation. We now understand that if we are the "most conscious," then that merely gives us the responsibility for bringing consciousness, for Mobilizing, Nationalizing and Organizing our brothers and sisters. And not to hostilize, hence alienate them, isolating ourselves, thereby allowing our enemies to eliminate us.

We feel that it is necessary to organize the largest mass of Black people possible worldwide at any given time and to move in forms that will attract and politicize the largest number and not always be talking solely to other nationalists. For this reason, we feel the congress, for instance, should make an attempt to "appeal" to as wide a diversity of Black people as possible, so that Pan-African Nationalist ideology can sooner become truly the philosophy of the people.

Adopted by the delegates in attendance at the first annual meeting of the Congress of African Peoples. September 6, 1970. Atlanta, Georgia.

Appendix F

National Black Agenda: Black Candidate Pledge 1972

Source: New Day in Babylon. Van Deburg, 1991

As a candidate seeking approval of the National Black Political Convention:

I pledge, that 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.

In regard to this pledge, I will do the following:

1. Without fear I will raise controversial issues, when the raising of such issues will serve the needs and interests of the Black Community.
2. I will constantly seek to expose the corrupt aspects of the system, as such exposure will raise the level of awareness in the Black Community.
3. I will take any steps necessary to increase power for the Black Community when such steps are not in conflict with this Convention's Agenda and the programs of its follow-up mechanisms.
4. I will support the right of the Black Community to control its own areas and the institutions thereof as this principle of

control relates to Political Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, Human Development, International Policy and Black People, Communications, Rural Development, Environmental Protection and Self-Determination for the District of Columbia.

I make this pledge in dedication to a commitment to serve the Black Community, of which I am unquestionably a part, and I do so without reservation or intimidation.

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