

[from *Socialism and Democracy* #55 (Vol. 25, no. 1, March 2011)]

Africana Studies and the Decolonization of the U.S. Empire in the 21st Century

Rod Bush

Introduction

Following Melanie Bush's "Un-Pledging Allegiance: Waking up from the 'American' Dream" (M. Bush 2008), I argue here that the central task of Africana Studies in the 21st century is to engage its faculty, its students, and its various publics in the intellectual and political task of decolonizing the nationalism of empire within the United States, and thus moving toward solidarity with the billions of oppressed people in the world-system whose lives are constrained by the overarching power of the US hegemon. Utilizing Malcolm X's observation about the "chickens coming home to roost," I will argue that the nationalism of empire within the US has been undermined by its historical constitution as an imperial nation which colonized numerous populations and incorporated them as either second-class citizens or non-citizens. These internally colonized populations (among which African Americans have been prominent) articulated their own sense of peoplehood, cross-cutting the nationalism of empire on which social and political stability depended, and thereby becoming the empire's potential gravediggers.

The demand for African American Studies and Africana Studies did not simply emerge like Athena from the head of Zeus in the late 1960s. It was an outgrowth of the civil rights and Black Power movements which themselves had their origins in the much larger history of African people in the United States.

Though various forms of Black Nationalism and Black solidarity had been a constant throughout US history, they would be dramatically ratcheted up and internationalized at the Pan African Conference of 1900, where W.E.B. Du Bois announced that the problem of the 20th

century would be the problem of the color line. Du Bois's liberal anti-colonialism was soon to be overtaken by a new and more radical force. The urbanization and concentration of Blacks during the first Great Migration created the social conditions which, along with World War I, gave rise to the New Negro. The New Negro clearly articulated both the interdependence and the tensions between Black internationalism and Black nationalism. (Black Nationalism or nationalist consciousness arises from the experience of African-descended people *within* the United States.)

Since elite white men have always controlled the structures of knowledge in the US, people of African descent have continuously elaborated counter-hegemonic discourses and epistemologies that have been variously called a Black perspective, cultural nationalism, Ethiopianism, Afrocentrism, Pan Africanism, and Black internationalism. These interventions in the structures of knowledge have sought to counter the Eurocentric perspective which presents itself as universal and supposedly objective or scientific. Since Eurocentrism is much more visible from below than to those whose experiences it valorizes, one must tread carefully in order to get the message across. This has been a most difficult passage. Understanding why requires unpacking the social dynamics which tend to camouflage what is happening.

Resisting Racism and Undermining Empire

Since both the honor and the social position of the white US American world has always been dependent on the invidious distinction it made with African peoples and other people of the Dark World, our freedom fighters had to adopt a variety of postures in addressing the issues involved. Behind what might seem to be merely a matter of dealing with individual personalities, is the issue of US American nationalism, which has always been the nationalism of empire. Asserting the humanity of the "inferior peoples" as victims of conquest thus clashes irreconcilably with the white nation's image of itself. Only a relatively small minority of the white nation at any given time has been willing to face the full implications of its racialized social system.

Confronted with this racial system, some did not challenge it at all but only sought to assimilate into it; some challenged it indirectly by focusing on the class system, thought to be the foundation of the racial system; and some sought a direct counter-hegemonic strategy to separate from the white nation and be self-determining. But the latter approach presupposed a defined

territory that met the economic, demographic, and psychological requirements of being a nation. And then on top of that, it would require its own strategy of implementation. This is what Marxists posed as the national question. Dr. Du Bois, the most brilliant among us, tried for seventy years and finally gave up on what he could accomplish within the United States.

The New Negro radicals who saw themselves as outcasts in the land of their residence were products of an intellectual tradition pioneered by Du Bois. But as products of an insurgent period in world history, they soon came to view themselves politically as part of world anti-colonial forces – consisting of revolutionary organizations primarily located in the semi-colonial (Russia, China, Mexico), colonial, and dependent zones of the world economy. Although they came to prominence during the first great migration (1910-30) in a political community dominated by the towering figure of Du Bois, they increasingly identified Du Bois with the “Old Crowd Negroes.” However, New Negro radicalism was eventually incorporated into Du Bois’s own worldview, as indicated in *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), *The Negro* (1915), *Darkwater* (1920), *Dark Princess* (1928), and *Black Reconstruction* (1935). In May 1919 Du Bois himself was moved to say that a “new radical Negro spirit had been born in France, which leaves us older radicals far behind.”¹ Though the tension between “race first” and “class first” was not alleviated, this radical spirit would prevail in the social thought of the activist intelligentsia of both the interwar and postwar periods.

The evolution of US Black social thought is more complex than is indicated here, but despite the continuing ideological struggle over class vs. race, and over Marxism vs. liberalism vs. social democracy, the main currents of the Black Left and Center Left established a broad progressive front during the 1930s and 40s which re-emerged in the 50s and 60s in the midst of a withering repression of the Left. The groups that had arisen during the first great migration and the Great War thus transformed radical politics in the United States, to the extent that the re-emergence of radical forces since the late 1940s should not be surprising.²

The Black Popular Front of the interwar years was part of a nationwide transformative

¹ Quoted in Harding 1982.

² This has increasingly been recognized by scholars and activists in the last twenty years. For details see Turner & Turner 1992, Von Eschen 1997, W. James 1998, Solomon 1998, Maxwell 1999, Woodard 1999, R. Bush 1999, 2009, Baldwin 2002, Biondi 2003, Singh 2004.

project with international connections that moved US political culture dramatically to the left.³ It was undercut, however, by the emergence of the Project for the American Century which came to replace the New Deal Left's notion of a "century of the common man."⁴ While the American Century was the framework for the social-democratic compromise in the core states of the world-system (the US, Western Europe, Japan, and Canada), the changes in the relations of force entailed in this compromise so threatened the power of capital on a world scale, that the trajectory toward social democratization within the United States had to be curtailed. The domestic weakness of this American Century project – which Piven and Cloward call the "American Social Compact" – stemmed in part from the fragility of the political coalition which constituted it (including a powerful bloc of Southern Democrats) and the abandonment of the transformative "race first" radicalism of Du Bois, Harrison, Briggs, McKay, Moore, and others.⁵

I will concede that my claim of a downward US trajectory – from underwriting the golden age of capitalism, to the twilight of the American Century just thirty years later – is counter-intuitive. Let me explain. Although some argue that capitalism was not as moribund as V.I. Lenin thought in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, the evolution of world capitalism in the 20th century seems to vindicate his analysis. Du Bois seems to have had the same sense when in *Darkwater* he juxtaposed the arrogance of pan-European power with the lowly oppressed pointing to their feet of clay. The social compact or social democratic compromise of the interwar and postwar period was a consequence of the struggles of the oppressed, which enlarged the space for possible future concessions. The civil rights movements, Black Power, Native American, Puerto Rican, Chicano, and Women's movements; the student movement and anti-war movement, the Gay and Lesbian movements within the US were all agents that expanded the scope of democracy and, with the later New Communist Movement, sought active allegiance with world revolutionary struggles as Malcolm X had called for.

But the logic of concessions and compromise extended to the third world, where it took the form of neocolonialism. All of this led to a certain unruliness, as Giovanni Arrighi (1982)

³ See Denning 1997.

⁴ In the late 1940s embodied in Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party.

⁵ I am aware that Du Bois is not considered to be part of the Race First radicals of the New Negro movement. But I argue above that he adopted Race First radicalism in his writings from 1910-1935 and never turned back. There is an extensive literature on the New Negro Movement and on the Black Popular Front. I started my own investigation (R. Bush 1999) with Vincent (1971, 1973), Foner (1978), Hill (1987), and Garvey (1969). Since then, interest in the New Negro and the Black Popular Front has grown.

argues, following Malcolm. The American Century then encountered the pushback of the extra-European world, joined by the internally colonized social strata. In the same year that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made his "I Have a Dream" speech, Malcolm X argued that we had arrived at the end of white world supremacy. King had his eye on the upward swing of democratization within the United States. Malcolm X had his eye on the multiple crises confronting white supremacy around the world. These intersecting trends demonstrate Wallerstein's (2010) observation that concessions can be made to tens of millions of oppressed people in the core of the world-system, but not to billions in the periphery. That would create a profit squeeze that is not acceptable for capital; it would strengthen the bargaining power of the oppressed and would dramatically tilt the balance of power on a world scale.

With the rise of US imperialism to dominance of the world economy, the Black Left intelligentsia who had played such an important role from 1900 to the 1950s were sidelined by the centrist leadership of the NAACP, which abandoned the human rights strategy of the Black Popular Front (later revived by Malcolm X) for an assimilationist stance that used anti-communism as a bargaining chip with US elites. However, the postwar sweep of African liberation would revive the radical forces within the Black Freedom struggle, while the larger arc of world revolution shattered the ideological conformity that was established during the late 1940s and 1950s. Some African Americans came to interpret these events as a sign of the increasing vulnerability of white power, not only in the wider world, but at home.

In the decade prior to the April 1955 meeting of 29 nations at Bandung, Indonesia, millions of people emerged from the shadow of European colonialism through the pursuit of anticolonial social struggles. India, Burma, Indonesia, Egypt, and China were among those who achieved independence during this period. The 29 countries meeting at Bandung represented over half of the world's population at that time, 1.4 billion people (Layton 2000:70). In Africa independence victories followed swiftly – Nigeria in 1957, Guinea in 1958; in 1960: Cameroun, Central African Republic, Congo, Dahomey, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Malagasy Republic, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Togo, Upper Volta; in 1961, Sierra Leone and Tanganyika (Wallerstein 1961:169).

The vulnerability of empire was a truism which Malcolm X presented so powerfully that he revived some of the radical forces which had been sidelined by the NAACP leadership, and

won the support of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the left wing of the civil rights movement. Malcolm had attracted the attention of an entire cadre of organic intellectuals who formed the backbone of the Black insurgency of the 1960s and were variously associated with the Freedom Now Party, *Liberator Magazine*, and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). There was also a group of intellectuals associated with the journal *Freedomways* and the Black Popular Front of the 1930s and 1940s who were important in transmitting the lessons of that period to a new generation. The latter group was less nationalistic than the former, and included some who were anti-nationalist in the “class first” sense that I discuss at greater length in *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (2009).

But the turmoil of that period would gradually undermine the prospects for social change. The incorporation of Blacks into the various social compromises led to the mobilization of other sections of the population (Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Asians, Women, Gays And Lesbians, Youth). It was during this period that the long-standing demand to remedy the “mis-education of the Negro” (expressed by Carter G. Woodson in 1923) was echoed by all of these oppressed groups. The liberal politics of the time sought to incorporate this demand, and thus co-opt these forces. But there were many who called for the decolonization of knowledge, and were thus reinforcing the demand to push back the ramparts of the US power structure. The increasing radicalization of social movements composed of or allied with oppressed social strata – within both core states and the periphery – loomed large. At the same time the window for concessions was beginning to close by 1967-73, when the US could no longer afford the global liberalism of the postwar order.

The US form of empire differed from that of Europe in that, with the exceptions of Puerto Rico and the Philippines, it was neocolonial, i.e. it did not seek direct political control of a territory. The US could thus present itself as a friend of nationalist movements, citing its own independence fight against Britain. Neocolonialism constituted a social compact similar in logic to the social democratic compromise in the core states, but as Wallerstein had noted, it was not viable on a global scale. But the neocolonial deal was on the table because of the dramatic upward surge in social power of the oppressed in the third world. The radical national liberation movements that had seized power found that they did not have as much control over economic matters as they had anticipated. With the neocolonial deal, dominant capital externalized its problems in such a way as to give the appearance that the problems lay within the periphery

itself.

In the 1970s a strategy for the world bourgeoisie was presented to the Trilateral Commission in a report entitled *The Crisis of Democracy*. Samuel Huntington's section of the report argued that the contemporary world suffered from an excess of democracy, as ordinary people were having too much input into governance. Earlier, in response to the perceived US crisis in "race relations," Daniel Patrick Moynihan counseled President Nixon that the race issue could benefit from a period of "benign neglect" in which Negro progress continues and racial rhetoric fades. Moynihan argued that the race issue "had been too much talked about and taken over by hysterics, paranoids, and boodlers on all sides" (O'Connor 2004: 370). The biggest threat to Black progress, he argued, is the Negro lower class, which must be dissolved by creating a stable working class. But Moynihan did not think that this could be done by government policy. Better to deescalate the rhetoric of crisis on such issues as crime, de facto segregation, and low education attainment. In the meantime the administration could seek to restore confidence in a wide range of nongovernmental institutions – family, church, civic groups – as a means of pacifying the ghetto.

Alice O'Connor argues that Moynihan's prescriptions were not only a recipe for policy retreat but also a strategy for putting a conservative spin on the race issue by framing it as a phenomenon of Black social pathology rather than of white racism. But I would argue further that this was a tactic for defusing and overturning one of the central forces for democratizing the US system. President Ronald Reagan would later exemplify this agenda by disingenuously using the rhetoric of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech – that one day his children would not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. Reagan, who had long opposed anti-racist measures, argued that King's dream had been achieved and that racism was a practice of fringe elements, including people of color and their liberal allies who (unlike King) advocated color-conscious policies which discriminated against white men.

It is most important to understand that this was part of a far-reaching counterrevolution against the struggles of the postwar period to extend the social compact to previously excluded populations. The liberal establishment had tried to co-opt the challenge. But since liberals no longer had the upper hand, conservatives sought to shout them down in the public arena, reviving the discourse of white supremacy, harking back at least to Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard,

and revealing a deep chasm in US political culture. It was in this environment that the redistributive logic of the postwar reforms was replaced by an emphasis on diversity. While some argue that this is all that we can realistically expect, we should be clear that it implies a rejection of the direct attack on structural inequality and white supremacist ideology which gained support during the 1960s and 1970s.

Diversity discourse was a retreat, aimed at saving at least some of the postwar concessions. But the triumphant neoliberal strategy subsequently lost much of its sheen, and we can now return to a transformative strategy. We are in an era of transition: capitalism, US hegemony, and white world supremacy have entered a twilight period. Our efforts may once again bear fruit. But to be successful, we must examine the longer-term trends of the system. We must overcome the post-1979 counterrevolution of neoliberalism, which shook the confidence of the Left in the core states even as neoliberal economic strategy was causing economic disasters everywhere. In such times of structural crisis, agency is important, and here the structures of knowledge must play a role.

Black Revolution, Social Revolution and African American Studies

What the anti-colonial Left of the 1960s referred to as the Black Revolution was viewed by them as an integral part of a “world revolution,” in which oppressed strata everywhere seemed to be on the march. During this “world revolution” of the 1960s, militants in the imperialist countries used the phrase “belly of the beast” to describe their social location. The rise of the colonized, semi-colonized, and internally colonized masses had reversed the longstanding presumption that the so-called backward and less civilized parts of the world would be given the gift of freedom by the victorious proletariat of the so-called advanced industrial societies. The language of liberation had passed from revolutionary centers in Ghana, Guinea, China, Cuba, Algeria, Indonesia, and Vietnam to young people in the imperialist countries, including Pan-African social strata who overlapped with what some called a “third world within” the imperialist countries, especially the United States.

Nkrumah, Mao, Lin Biao, Fanon, Rodney, Nyerere, Che, Césaire, Cabral, and Touré all spoke eloquently about the forces within the “belly of the beast” that implacably opposed imperialism, not simply as solidarity movements, but as part of the revolutionary wave sweeping

the world-system. Huey Newton spoke of the Black Panther Party as being drawn from a group of “implacables.” Muhammad Ahmad and members of RAM⁶ characterized this worldwide social force as the rise of the Black Underclass.⁷ Some viewed the social practices and political thought of these anti-colonial militants as “ultra-Leftist,” but they appealed to the romantic revolutionary notions of a section of the white Left. The subsequent institutionalization of Black politics within a liberal polity shifted the terrain of political discourse to such an extent that by the middle of the 1970s the forces on the Left began to question themselves. The Black Liberation Movement and its Puerto Rican, Chicano, and Native American counterparts were all said to have gone too far. There was now a sense among some that the militants had brought much of the drama of state repression upon themselves. Their adventurism and their elevation of identity politics to a principle, had brought us to the “twilight of our common dreams” (Gitlin 1995). Blauner (2001) argues that the social practices of the Left during this period so polarized US society that the Left broke away from its liberal allies, which had always been the foundation of its viability.

Looking at this history from a somewhat different vantage point, I am not so inclined to assume that it was the radicals who broke the alliance. Rather, some liberals were unwilling to confront the realities of the US role in the world. After all, it was in 1963 that FBI director J. Edgar Hoover argued that United States was in the midst of a social revolution with the racial movement at its core. He decided that the trajectory of the civil rights movement had to be radically altered or else simply stopped, in order to forestall that revolution. This declaration of war on the civil rights movement coincided with the renunciation of liberalism by a group of intellectuals who came to be called neo-conservatives, who now viewed their past sensitivity to the needs of the disadvantaged as a perversion of human nature, which is to guarantee one's own welfare above all others. While the neoconservatives asserted that they were the true liberals who supported the civil rights movement when its demand was that we be judged by the “content of our character,” some were providing information on Dr. King to the FBI (Hilbink 1992).

The conservative backlash was a mounting counter-insurgency against the challenge of

⁶ The Revolutionary Action Movement arose in the context of Robert F. Williams’ 1963 confrontation with the Ku Klux Klan, which is discussed below. See Ahmad 2007 for details.

⁷ This usage of the term underclass (dating from the 1980s and 90s) should not be confused with the way the same term was deployed, along with “culture of poverty,” in the 1960s – first by liberal intellectuals such as Oscar Lewis and Daniel Patrick Moynihan and later by conservatives such as Edward Banfield – in culture wars against Black and Latino youth.

people of color (within and outside our borders), anti-imperialist and national liberation movements, insurgent workers, and the women's movement. This conservative counterrevolution included the ever class-conscious capitalist elites, a class-conscious and ideologically sophisticated intelligentsia based in the white middle strata, and a large number of working-class whites who sought to defend their racial and economic interests from what they perceived as the challenge from people of color. The genius of this movement is that the backlash was conceptualized in such a way that it seemed to derive naturally from the values of ordinary (white) people. This was a stroke of "genius" since it enabled those forces that opposed the country's egalitarian drift to restore major elements of the "racial" status quo while maintaining a sense of their own virtue and rectitude, and to transform the egalitarian spirit into a concern about interfering with the rights of individual white men.

In contrast to this attempt to turn back the clock on Dr. King's challenge, I hold that the wave of revolutionary struggle that started in the mid-1960s constituted a break from the reformist-liberal geoculture of the period 1848-1968. In response to the struggles of the 1840s, when implacably anti-capitalist working-class movements came to the fore, the ruling classes of the world-system evolved a strategy of compromise with these movements, making concessions designed to draw them back into the logic of the system. Such concessions were made only when movements were so strong that simple repression would backfire. The strategy of cooptation, or what some have called the social democratic compromise, has meant that movements which rose from an anti-systemic logic would function, once in power, to maintain the existing system rather than transform it (Depelchin 2007).

What then is the role of Africana Studies in the transformation of this system of capitalist/colonial racism? Is not the task of the 21st century to overcome the 500-year pillage of the majority of the world's peoples? The militants of the 1960s and 70s, caught up in the revolutionary wave of that period, imagined that the time had come, that US and Western imperialism had met its Waterloo. One can understand the urgency these militants felt about building structures of knowledge adequate to what they viewed as the transformative epoch in which they were living. They disagreed with Marx and Engels' contention that the transition to socialism would take place where capitalism was most developed (advanced). For them the clear lesson of the 1960s and 70s was that the revolutionary break with capitalism was not a gift of the workers' movement of the pan-European world to the dominated peoples and areas, but stemmed

from a dramatic acceleration in the rise of the dark world – whose pushback had been underway since the 19th century – against the 500-year history of white world supremacy.

Third world nationalism, like social democracy in the core states, was not a sufficient strategy for transforming the capitalist world economy. Capitalism is a world-system, and the seizure of power in a few states could not in and of itself bring world-system transformation. But what the struggles of this period did achieve was a significant change in relations of force, whereby the social power of oppressed strata increased relative to the power of the imperialist system.

On August 8, 1963 Mao Zedong responded to a request made by Robert F. Williams, the exiled former president of the Monroe, North Carolina NAACP, for support of the African American struggle against racial discrimination. Williams had fled the United States for exile in Cuba after calling for his followers to arm themselves against the Ku Klux Klan when local police refused to protect them. Mao called for the people of the world to stand in solidarity with the Afro-American people. He denounced the “handful of imperialists headed by the United States, and their supporters, the reactionaries in different countries, who are oppressing, committing aggression against, and menacing the overwhelming majority of the nations and peoples of the world”; he expressed confidence that the Afro-American people would prevail, and concluded, “The evil system of colonialism and imperialism arose and throve with the enslavement of Negroes and the trade in Negroes, and it will surely come to its end with the complete emancipation of the black people” (Mao 1964: 4).⁸

Just four months later, on December 1, 1963, Minister Malcolm X would give his last speech as a member of the Nation of Islam, focusing on the March on Washington which had also been the context of Chairman Mao’s statement. This speech was entitled “God’s Judgment of White America” though it is frequently referred to as “The Chickens Are Coming Home to Roost.”⁹ Malcolm most forcefully articulated the depths of the contradiction of that period when

⁸ When Williams later returned to the US and secured an academic position at the University of Michigan, many were disappointed that he did not assume a position at the head of the movement as some of the authorities had feared. Some then ask how this manifests the dynamics of anti-imperialism. His decision not to assume a leadership position upon his return does not diminish his role in the anti-imperialist movement of the 1960s.

⁹ This was the occasion when Malcolm X, in response to a question from the audience, made the comment about the assassination of John F. Kennedy being a case of the “chickens coming home to roost.” For this statement he was suspended from the Nation of Islam, initially for 90 days, and then indefinitely. We can see in this comment that Malcolm X had moved beyond the limits of the Nation of Islam.

the US stood poised at the pinnacle of its might and prestige, but facing a world in rebellion against white western hegemony. And while the US attempted to woo the nations of the dark world as a true friend who itself had fought a war of national liberation against Europeans, in truth it was now in a position of being the police of global imperialism. So while the United States may have been basking in the public relations glow of Dr. King's testament to the American Dream, it was Malcolm X who had his finger on the pulse of the third world rebellion against white Western hegemony, and on the pulse of many in the inner cities across the nation.

Malcolm X stripped away the veil of the liberals who he argued only pretended to befriend Black people. For Malcolm there was no doubt about where white conservatives stood. They did not pretend to be the friends of Black people. He compared the white conservatives to wolves: "they show their teeth in a snarl that keeps the Negro always aware of where they stand with them. But the white liberals are foxes who show their teeth to the Negro but pretend they are smiling." And it is precisely this confusing signal from the white liberals that makes them in Malcolm's view more dangerous than the white conservatives. "They lure the Negro, and as the Negro runs from the growling wolf, he flees into the open jaws of the 'smiling' fox" (Malcolm X, 1971: 137).

Malcolm X was a master of the word. He explained that the Negro "revolution" is controlled by those foxy liberals who he pointed out had not only manipulated the March on Washington, but had openly cautioned their white publics that they had to respond to the moderate Negro leaders in order to enhance their image in the eyes of the Black masses, and to keep them from turning to the Black "extremists." But unlike the "Negro Revolution" the Black revolution was not under the control of any section of the white population. Malcolm X pointed out that the "Black revolution is the struggle of the nonwhites of this earth against their white oppressors. The black revolution has swept white supremacy out of Africa, out of Asia, and it is getting ready to sweep it out of Latin America" (Malcolm X 1971: 137).

Shortly after his declaration of independence from Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X gave his famous presentation on "The Ballot or the Bullet." In this speech he called for Blacks to do away with all illusions. How could we call ourselves American if we are not sharing in the benefits of citizenship? The 22 million Black people in this country are victims of Americanism. And as one of those victims of the disguised hypocrisy which is presented to

the world as American democracy, he did “not see an American Dream,” but “an American nightmare” (Breitman 1966: 26).

The Radicalism of Africana Studies

Malcolm X was the pivotal figure who linked the radicalism of the 1910-1950 period to the 1960s generation.¹⁰ In a 1964 speech at Harvard University, he captured the intellectual/philosophical mood of African American communities as it related to structures of knowledge. He told the audience, "the oppressed is not looking to the oppressor to give him some system or form of logic or reason. What is logical to the oppressor is not logical to the oppressed. And what is reason to the oppressor is not reason to the oppressed. The black people in this country are beginning to realize that what sounds reasonable to those who exploit us doesn't sound reasonable to us. There just has to be a new system of reason and logic devised by those of us who are at the bottom, if we are to get some results in this struggle..." (Epps 1968: 133).

Sylvia Winter holds that the Black Studies movement emerged as a challenge to the mainstream order of knowledge; it was inseparable from the Black Aesthetic Movement (Black Pride) and the Black Arts Movement, and was an analog to the Black Power stage of the civil rights movement. For Wynter these three movements rose to commanding heights as a consequence of the murder of Dr. King in 1968 and the massive rebellions of inner-city residents across the nation in its wake. University officials evidenced a new willingness to accede to the demands of student activists for the establishment of Black Studies programs and departments. This allowed some of the major figures of the then much more powerful Black Aesthetics and Black Arts Movement to gain entry into the academic mainstream. As a consequence of this entry, they found their original transgressive intentions defused and their energies rechanneled as they came to be defined or actively chose to redefine themselves in "new multicultural terms" (Wynter 2006: 108f).

The increase in social power that had opened those doors was dissipated as the social uprising subsided and as the Black middle class was incorporated into the US American

¹⁰ This is not to deny that some members of Black Popular Front of the 1940s also played an important role within the civil rights movement. See Wilkins 2006 and Rocksborough-Smith 2003.

mainstream. The consequent separation of the integrationist goals of that stratum from the ongoing struggles of the Black lower strata created a mood of quiescence and defensiveness which encouraged a rightward backlash.

Henry Louis Gates stepped into the breach thus established by the decline of the Black Aesthetics and Black Arts Movement. While the movement had sought to "unfix the notion of Blackness from the traditional color symbology of the West" and to challenge the "Western equation of Blackness" with ugliness, evil, corruption, and death," Gates accused it in Derridian terms, according to Madhu Dubey, of posing a metaphysical concept of "blackness as presence" instead of displacing an essentialist concept of identity. For Gates, the Black Aesthetics and Black Arts Movements were "entrapped in racial essentialism" and had come to depend upon "the absent presence of the Western framework it sets out to subvert" (Dubey 1994: 28f). Though Gates's own enterprise is held to depend upon the very same "absent presence" of the very same Western framework, it was extremely functional in pacifying a movement that had electrified and energized an entire generation literally bristling with the sense of possibility conveyed in the writings of Stokely Carmichael, Eldridge Cleaver, Amiri Baraka, Don Lee, Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, Maulana Karenga, Hoyt Fuller, and Addison Gayle (Wynter 2006: 111). Dubey argues that the Gates framework sought to reconstitute a pacified, ethnically re-christened *African American* Studies in place of the powerful dynamism of the original 1960s conception of Black Studies. This new framework served as a complement to the Euro-American framework and its hegemonic space in the US public sphere.

The institutionalized production and reproduction of our long-standing system "of asymmetric disparities of power, as well as of wealth, education, life opportunities, even mortality rates between blacks and whites..." is the foundation of systemic black self-alienation, and of the correlated powerlessness of African-descended populations at all levels of the contemporary world order that followed the erasure and displacement of the movements of the 1960s (Wynter 2006: 118).

J. Edgar Hoover's 1963 claim that the nation had entered a period of social revolution with the racial factor at its core was not an exaggeration. Within the US the racial factor had been the principal challenge to white supremacy, had mobilized large sections of the US population against the imperial role of their government in the world arena, and had argued for

an increase in the democratic and egalitarian character of US society. These attempts at expanding the US American social compact were met by efforts at silencing these forces via a neoliberal closing down of the welfare state, ending the discussion about racial justice via the argument for a color-blind society, and blaming the poor for their own poverty via a discourse about the underclass and a culture of poverty. These closings were punctuated by the withdrawal of the state from inner-city sites of concentrated poverty inhabited by internally colonized populations, and its replacement by a carceral state. The professional managerial strata from those populations are incorporated into the class structure of the larger system through affirmative action and programs of diversity, producing limited integration or assimilation into the larger society. The whole process points to the need for a fuller study of the internally colonized within the United States – a topic which calls for larger discussion within Africana Studies.

The Relevance of Internally Colonized Populations within the United States

Colonialism is generally considered to be the extension of a nation's sovereignty over territory beyond its borders. In the modern world-system, the model of colonialism is the extension of European dominion over almost all of the world's people in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Islands. In some cases enslaved people were moved to another territory, or states actually expanded their territory to encompass territory formerly controlled by other populations, thereby forming what some have referred to as internal colonies. Many indigenous populations fit this category as do formerly enslaved Africans in territories dominated by descendants of settler colonist from Europe.

Colonialism has tended to be conceived in geographical and geopolitical terms. What I intend to do here is to view the concept of internal colony more in structural terms, and assess the impact of such structural relations on the development of hybrid cultures among the internally colonized populations and consequently on how these populations come to view themselves as agents of change. The political psychology of these populations is often the soil in which a counter-hegemonic dual consciousness emerges which provides insights on the society less available to those whom it valorizes. In his *Darkwater* essay “The Souls of White Folk,” Du Bois writes:

High in the tower, where I sit above the loud complaining of the human sea, I know many souls that toss and whirl and pass, but none there are that intrigue me more than the Souls of White Folk. Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language....

Mine is not the knowledge of the traveler or the colonial composite of dear memories, words and wonder. Nor yet is my knowledge that which servants have of masters, or mass of class, or capitalist of artisan. Rather I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails (Du Bois 1999: 17).

Du Bois asserts that he knows their thoughts and that they know that he knows them, which makes them alternately embarrassed and furious. This special access to the dehumanizing “will to power” of the European imperial subject is a form of social power which undercuts the legitimacy of the ruling race and ruling class in a fundamental manner. For it is this special insight of the Black life-world which makes it such a threat to the claims of universalism of the white life-world. It is the insider status of the former slaves which performs such a debilitating function, one which the white life-world cannot escape, and which therefore must be silenced at all costs. It is for this reason that US American society has sought to deal with the “Negro Question” for so long, and, failing to assimilate this troublesome presence, has sought to pronounce it null and void by calling itself color-blind.

While this social dynamic is most pronounced in the United States and other former settler colonies of the Pan-European world with a substantial presence of racial colonial subjects, it is also present in all of the former Western European colonial powers vis-à-vis the migration of former colonial racial subjects to the metropolis.

But as the “third world within” continues to increase as a proportion of the population of the core states (especially in the United States), the lower and lower middle class strata will need to create an effective rainbow coalition to contend with the ideological weight of pan-European racism. Defenders of the status quo have recognized this issue since early in the 20th century, when the New Negro radicals animated a variety of organizations and movements from the Messenger Group to the African Blood Brotherhood, the Garvey movement, and the Communist Party. To the distress of the ruling interests, such movements always tended leftwards. Woodrow Wilson’s program for the self-determination of nations was a response to the threat of Bolshevik anti-colonialism, which he thought was most likely to be introduced into the United States by Blacks. Long before Cointelpro, US security forces were employed to eliminate, discredit, and harass Black leaders that they disapproved of. The list includes many, perhaps most, of the most

respected leaders and intellectuals within the African American community: Marcus Garvey, A. Philip Randolph, Chandler Owen, William Monroe Trotter, Hubert Harrison, Cyril Briggs, Claude McKay, Wilfred Domingo, Harry Haywood, William Patterson, George Padmore, W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, Elijah Muhammad, Langston Hughes, and C.L.R. James (Kornweibel 1998: 2002). During the 1960s of course we add to this list some of the main targets of Cointelpro: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., James Baldwin, Medgar Evers, Bayard Rustin, Stokely Carmichael, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Fred Hampton, and Bunchy Carter (O'Reilly 1989; Churchill & Vander Wall 1988).

In response to the revolutionary mobilizations of the late 1960s and early 70s, US elites proposed a liberal model of multiculturalism to restore the momentum of an assimilationist rather than an oppositional movement among the internally colonized. But the US model of multiculturalism conceded “culture” while maintaining “epistemology.” In Latin America, which was one site of radicalization in the 1990s, Andean intellectuals introduced the term “interculturality” as a means of claiming epistemic rights (Mignolo 2007: 62). The Argentine scholar Walter Mignolo argues that the struggle for epistemic rights is fundamental to any strategy for transformative social change because it is this struggle that will determine the “principles upon which the economy, politics, and education will be organized, ruled, and enacted” (65). These principles will allow many worlds to coexist. Aimé Césaire has tirelessly argued the need for such a framework to allow for the unfolding of a universalism that is rich with all of the particulars.

Since the oppressed are not looking to the oppressor for a system of thought, it will be in this context that the internally colonized will be able to come into the light and be fully acknowledged. The long history of the development of counter-hegemonic ideas among the Black intelligentsia even before the institutionalization of Africana studies suggests that despite the gains of professional managerial strata within the African American population since the 1970s, there remains a significant section of the intelligentsia which is scornful of the assimilationist option, and who will likely in time come together with the oppositional culture of the youth and the older organic intellectuals of their communities to espouse and develop a decolonizing option. This will enable them to ally with and draw sustenance from similar movements in the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Central Europe, to fundamentally challenge the system of white world supremacy which was a

constitutive feature of the founding of the Americas and the establishment of the capitalist world-economy.

While the capitalist world-economy itself is entering into a structural crisis, the past inability of workers' movements and national liberation movements to transform capitalism will be surmounted by populations who will not accept the gift of assimilation but will seek to overcome not only capitalism but its coloniality of power, of knowledge, and of being.

The Modern/Colonial/Capitalist World-System: The Chickens Come Home to Roost

The old order is now in a period of transition, and the delinking of these internal colonies from the centers of power will significantly transform the old structures of power, knowledge, and being. In the new situation, we will be less likely to have a system with global designs. Instead, there will be a plurality of centers, where there is a genuine right of difference. The basis for such diversity of power-centers is becoming evident as the working class within the imperialist countries increasingly includes what Grosfoguel (2008) calls colonial/racial subjects of empire (African Americans, Caribbean Americans, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Filipinos, Asian-Americans, and other Latin Americans).

During the 1970s when I belonged to a tendency in the Black Power movement that called ourselves Nkrumahists, we argued that revolutionary conditions would come to the belly of the beast as socialist and national liberation movements began to cut off the tentacles of the imperialist octopus. Later when we came under the influence of the Chinese revolutionaries we emphasized a scenario in which revolutionary movements in the countryside would increasingly surround the cities at the core of the capitalist world. Migrations from the periphery to the core may have an analogous effect. Decolonization and socialist revolution are intertwined in ways that will challenge our creativity in this age of transition. Dare I say with Malcolm that the "chickens have come home to roost"? The task for Africana Studies in the 21st century is to theorize where we go from here.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmad, Muhammad (Maxwell Stanford). 2007. *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr.
- Arrighi, Giovanni. 1982. "A Crisis of Hegemony." In Samir Amin et al., *Dynamics of Global*

- Crisis*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Baldwin, Kate A. 2002. *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922-1963*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Biondi, Martha. 2003. *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Blauner, Bob. 2001. *Still the Big News: Racial Oppression in America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Breitman, George (ed.). 1966. *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*. New York: Grove Press.
- Bush, Melanie E. L. 2008. "Un-Pledging Allegiance: Waking up from the 'American' Dream," Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Boston.
- Bush, Roderick D. 1999. *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century*. New York: New York University Press.
- Bush, Roderick D. 2008. "The Internal Colony Hybrid: Reformulating Structure, Culture, and Agency." In Keri E. Iyall Smith and Patricia Leavy, eds., *Hybrid Identities: Theoretical & Empirical Examinations*. Boston: Brill.
- Bush, Roderick D. 2009. *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Churchill, Ward and Jim Vander Wall. 1988. *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*. Boston: South End Press.
- Crozier, Michel, Samuel P. Huntington, and Joji Watanuki. 1975. *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission*. New York: New York University Press.
- Denning, Michael. 1997. *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Verso.
- Depelchin, Jacques. 2007. "Thinking Through African History in the Spirit of 1957: Never Claiming Easy Victories (ala Cabral)," presented at conference on "Black Liberation in the Spirit of 1957," Binghamton University.
- Dubey, Madhu. 1994. *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1979 [1936]. *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880*. West Hanover, MA: Atheneum.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1991 [1920]. *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*. New York: Kraus-Thomson.
- Edwards, Brent Hayes. 2003. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Epps, Archie. 1968. *The Speeches of Malcolm X at Harvard*. New York: Morrow.
- Foner, Philip. 1978. "Cyril V. Briggs: From the African Blood Brotherhood to the Communist

- Party," Presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Los Angeles.
- Garvey, Amy Jacques (ed.). 1969. *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*. New York: Atheneum.
- Gitlin, Todd. 1995. *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America Is Wracked by Culture Wars*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Grosfoguel, Ramón. 2008. "Latin@s and the Decolonization of the US Empire in the 21st Century," *Social Science Information*: 47 (4), 605-622.
- Harding, Vincent. 1982. *The Other American Revolution*. Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies.
- Hilbink, Thomas. 1992. Interview with Henry Schwarzchild. Columbia Oral History Research Office.
- Hill, Robert. 1987. *The Crusader; Vol. 1-3*. Los Angeles: UCLA Press.
- James, Winston. 1998. *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Verso.
- Kornweibel, Theodore. 1998. *Seeing Red: Federal Campaigns Against Black Militancy, 1919-1925*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Layton, Azza Salama. 2000. *International Politics and the Civil Rights Policies of the United States, 1941-1960*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lenin, V. I. 1973 [1916]. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1973.
- Malcolm X. 1971. *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches*. New York: Merlin House.
- Mao Tse-Tung. 1964. "Statement Supporting the Afro-Americans in Their Just Struggle Against Racial Discrimination by US Imperialism" (August 8, 1963). In *People of the World, Unite and Defeat the US Aggressors and All Their Lackeys*. Peking: Foreign Language Press.
- Maxwell, William. 1999. *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism between the Wars*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mignolo, Walter D. 2007, "The De-Colonial Option and the Meaning of Identity in Politics," *Anales. Nueva Epoca*, Instituto Iberoamericano, University of Goteborg, no. 9/10, 43-72.
- O'Connor, Alice. 2004: "Malign Neglect," *The Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*. Volume 1, Issue 2 (November 2004), 367-375.
- O'Reilly, Kenneth. 1989. *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972*. New York: Free Press,
- Piven, Frances Fox and Richard A. Cloward. 1998. *The Breaking of the American Social Compact*. New York: New Press.
- Rojas, Fabio. 2007. *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Singh, Nikhil Pal. 2004. *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Solomon, Mark. 1999. *The Cry Was Unity: Communism and Afro-Americans, 1917-1936*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press.
- Vincent, Theodore. 1971. *Black Power and the Garvey Movement*. San Francisco: Ramparts Press.
- Vincent, Theodore. 1973. *Voices of a Black Nation*. San Francisco: Ramparts Press.
- Von Eschen, Penny. 1997. *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1961. *Africa: the Politics of Independence*. New York: Vintage.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2003. *The Decline of American Power: The U.S. in a Chaotic World*. New York: New Press.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2010. "Structural Crisis," *New Left Review*, 62, Mar-Apr, 133-142.
- Woodard, Komozi. 1998. *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Woodson, Carter G. 1933. *Mis-Education of the Negro*. Washington: Associated Publishers.
- Wynter, Sylvia. 2006. "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being." In Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, eds., *Not Only the Master's Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.