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Comparing the African American And Oromo Movements in the Global Context

Asafa Jalata

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN AND OROMO MOVEMENTS HAVE BEEN ANTICOLONIAL struggles, and they have aimed to dismantle racial/ethnonational hierarchies legitimated by the ideology of racism in the hegemonic state of the United States and the peripheral and imperial state of Ethiopia. The African American and Oromo ethnonational minority groups are similar in numerical size, and different in political strength. Each population numbers about 30 million. However, African Americans constitute only 13% of the U.S. population of 270 million, while Oromos make up about 50% of the Ethiopian population of 60 million. As the African American movement developed in opposition to American slavery, racial segregation, and underdevelopment, the Oromo movement emerged to fight Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions, and underdevelopment. The two movements emerged in opposition to colonial domination, a racial/ethnonational hierarchy, economic and labor exploitation, cultural destruction and repression, and the denial of individual and national rights. The capitalist world-system that produced modern slavery, colonization, genocide or ethnocide, cultural destruction and repression, and continued subjugation also facilitated the emergence and development of the African American and Oromo movements.

Initially, African Americans and Oromos resisted slavery and colonization without systematically organizing themselves. Their cultural and political resistance continued after their enslavement and colonization because in Ethiopia and the United States, these two peoples were assigned the status of slaves and colonial subjects and second-class citizens. Moreover, since the early 1950s the United States has sided with the Ethiopian state to suppress Oromo society (Jalata, 1998;

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1999). Although the national struggles of these two peoples represent a continuation of previous resistance, they emerged from certain social-structural, historical, and sociological factors. This comparative essay historically situates the emergence and development of these two movements and elaborates on the gradual transformation of resistance to slavery, racial segregation, colonial domination, and underdevelopment into the African American and Oromo movements — their phases and objectives, similarities and differences, and successes and failures. By using a comparative-historical approach, we critically and comparatively examine the causes, processes, and outcomes of the African American and Oromo movements.

The African American Movement

The African American movement developed as a mass movement during the mid-20th century. A cultural, intellectual, ideological, and political movement, its purpose was to achieve civil equality, human dignity, and development by overthrowing white racial and colonial dictatorship. This development was facilitated by the cumulative struggles of the previous generations and social changes and conjunctures. Various forms of individual and group resistance struggles and proto-nationalism existed in African American society before the 20th century. The ancestors of African Americans, individually and in groups, resisted enslavement in Africa and fought against slavery on slave ships and later on American plantations. They fought culturally and some ran away, while others engaged in mutinies and armed resistance. Clarke (1976: 41) notes that African culture "sustained the Africans during the holocaust of the slave trade and the colonial system that followed it.... African culture, reborn on alien soil, became the cohesive force and the communication system that helped to set in motion some of the most successful slave revolts in history." There were about 250 slave rebellions in America between the 17th and 19th centuries (Colston, 1979: 234). About 50 maroon communities were formed by thousands of runaway slaves and their descendants between 1672 and 1864 in the forests and mountains of Southern states (see Aptheker, 1947; 1979).

African Americans influenced North America culturally through their resistance struggle, which aimed at retaining an African identity and restoring their freedom (Drake, 1967). American racial slavery absolutely denied human freedom to the ancestors of African Americans. During slavery, African American peoplehood developed from the enslaved Africans of various ethnonational origins. "As products of African amalgamation (Hausa, Asante, Yoruba, Ewe, Ibo, Wolof, Mandingo, Congo, and a hundred other ethnic groups) and the American crucible we have become a new people unknown prior to the 15th century," Asante (1989: 59) writes. "Our perspectives, attitudes, and experiences are peculiarly fitted to change the frame of reference for African people." This peoplehood developed from past African cultural memory, collective dehumanization of slavery, and the hope for survival as a people in the future. African Americans never accepted slavery and its ideology, and continued to resist depending on the conditions in which they found themselves. Further, some former slaves, with the support of a few antislavery whites (see Roediger, 1991), relentlessly struggled to liberate their fellow Africans from racial slavery. After the collapse of radical reconstruction, African Americans fought to eliminate racial segregation by building institutions and organizations.

These and other forms of ideological and cultural resistance established a strong social foundation from which cultural memory and popular historical consciousness emerged to facilitate the development of African American nationalism (see Bethel, 1999). Freed and segregated African Americans in the urban North established autonomous self-help and fraternal associations, churches, schools, small businesses, media outlets, and cultural centers. According to Moses (1996: 1), "classical black nationalism originated in the 1700s, reached its first peak in the 1850s, underwent a decline toward the end of the Civil War, and peaked again in the 1920s, as a result of the Garvey Movement." Freed Africans and their children nurtured an emergent Black nationalism between the 1770s and the 1860s, but the persistence of racial slavery, denial of education, the repression of African culture and the imposition of Euro-American culture, and the absolute denial of freedom to African Americans delayed its development. Nevertheless, invisible institutions promoted proto-Black nationalism when European culture was not accessible to the masses of African Americans.

Black indigenous institutions later provided "a favorable structure of political opportunities" for the African American struggle (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zaid, 1988: 697). Antebellum freed African Americans developed an "organizational infrastructure" that evolved from these indigenous organizations and institutions, helping to develop the African American movement during the first half of the 20th century. McAdam (1997: 178) argues that "the ability of insurgents to generate a social movement is ultimately dependent on the presence of an indigenous 'infrastructure' that can be used to link members of the aggrieved population into an organized campaign of mass political action." Antebellum African American scholars wrote several books, magazines, newspapers, and journals that later helped to build Black cultural memory and popular historical consciousness. While fighting against racial slavery and segregation, these scholars and activists also attempted to capture intellectually the past African cultural experience, evaluated the negative and positive experiences of Africans in the New World, and rejected American racist cultural elements and structures. Through reconnecting African Americans to the African cultural past and showing various African civilizations to the world, they challenged white supremacy and Eurocentric historical knowledge that claimed that Blacks were backward, primitive, pagan, and inferior intellectually to whites.

By explaining that African civilizations and cultures before the 16th century were equal to and in some respects more advanced than those of Europeans, they refuted the claim of the natural superiority of white people. Although these scholars sometimes manifested elitist and "modernist" positions, they produced an alternative knowledge that laid the foundation of an Afrocentric scholarship, the paradigm that promotes the idea of multicultural society. Bethel (1999: 96) asserts that during this period, "African Americans fused two disparate elements of identity: an increasingly remote African ancestry and cultural heritage, and a popular historical consciousness shaped directly by a corpus of New World experiences." Freed and freeborn Blacks struggled to free their brothers and sisters from slavery and to gain civil equality, and consolidated the cultural and ideological foundations for African American political consciousness and nationalism between the 18th and 19th centuries. Politically conscious freedmen and their children used different platforms to fight against racial slavery and to promote civil equality. For instance, Thomas Paul and Samuel Cornish established the nation's first African American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, in 1827. The editors of this newspaper provided a critical social, political, and cultural commentary that "invoked the common African ancestry on which the earlier pamphleteers had drawn to shape a moral community. Yet the African American press pursued an explicitly political rather than implicitly moral agenda, manipulating the symbolism of common ancestry to unify public opinion and mobilize collective action" (*Ibid.*: 172).

Similarly, in 1829 David Walker published *The Appeal*, in Four Articles, declaring, "the greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears," and demanded that white Americans "make a national acknowledgment to us for the wrongs they have inflicted on us" (quoted in Bethel, 1999: 78). Bethel (*Ibid.*) comments on the essence of *The Appeal* as follows:

> Reverberating with passionate energy, setting aside the civility previously used to address white audiences, no longer needing to mask their frustration and anger with a veneer of rhetorical reserve, within the freedom movements African Americans spoke to each other in a vocabulary of race unity and cultural autonomy; and from those movements an ethnic identity grounded in a common mythic African heritage welded from a blend of autobiographical and generational memory emerged and crystallized.

In his manifesto, David Walker demanded civil equality and cultural integrity by condemning racial slavery, white racism, and the corruption of Christianity and other institutions. William Lloyd Garrison also founded a magazine, *Liberator*, on January 1, 1831. Gradually, politically conscious elements started to build a collective movement. At the suggestion of Hezekiah Grice, a Baltimore ice dealer, Richard Allen convened a clandestine meeting of 40 self-selected delegates in September 1830 in Philadelphia and founded the National Convention Movement, the first civil rights movement in the United States. This movement met only twice, in 1830 and 1835, and shaped the future African American political agenda:

> At the same time, and complementing the focus on citizenship and the improvement of the status of free African Americans, the movement aimed to eradicate structural and legal sources of racial oppression. In this way it foreshadowed the political and economic agendas both of post-Civil War Reconstruction in the Southern states and of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement (Bethel, 1999: 83–84)

The Free African Movement, the AME and AME Zion Churches (later known as the Freedom Church) also struggled for African American civil rights. Further, the Haitian Revolution that led to the formation of a Black republic in 1804, "extended African American consciousness beyond the borders of the United States" (Bethel 1999: 92–93). According to Bethel (1999: 93–94), "foreshadowing the anticolonialism, cultural unification, and self-determination of 20th-century pan-Africanism, the Haitian Revolution and the republic created and ruled by peoples of African descent offered a resonant *lieu de memoire* for African Americans during the antebellum period. While the African American mandate for racial unity hinged on the mythic common ancestry forged from African environments of memory, the Haitian lieu inspired African American visions of a civic culture and a democratic future." The dehumanizing experiences of racial slavery and the struggle for freedom and civil equality were reflected in personal and cultural memories of antebellum African American scholars:

> The welding of past to present and the crafting of a political agenda informed by that union took place at a revolutionary intersection of social movements and demographic shifts in antebellum America. In particular, the numerical growth of the free African American population in the Northern states, and the expansion of a literate public within that population, combined with two great civil rights movements — the (biracial) antislavery movement and the (African American) Convention Movement. The resulting political climate nurtured an intellectual and literary tradition... (Bethel 1999: 168).

This intellectual and literary tradition "redefined the boundaries as well as the content of a collective past by grounding that in historical consciousness rather than autobiographical memory and by subordinating the particularized and individualized to larger explanations of events and processes" (*Ibid.*). The emergence of a few intellectuals helped to lay the ideological foundation of African American nationalism by developing African American collective consciousness from politicized collective grievances and personal experiences expressed through autobiographical and cultural memory. "The popular historical consciousness that resulted from these *lieux de mémoire* — a body of shared beliefs, myths, and images — connected a New World past to an American present and validated a vision of the future that would inform the African American political and cultural agenda into the twentieth century" (Bethel, 1999: 194). The struggle of freedmen attracted sympathizers and supporters in white American society. The antislavery movement was a biracial movement that brought together Black activists and white reformers to fight against American slavery. White abolitionists were inspired by religion and by the political ideals of the natural rights of man, although most whites were proslavery. The Quakers were the first religious group to oppose slavery. Some Quakers became slave owners, but most opposed slavery. For instance, two Quakers, Benjamin Lay (1677–1759) and Ralph Sandiford (1693–1733), characterized slavery as "the epitome of evil" (Dillon, 1974: 7). Quakers dominated the antislavery movement until the 19th century by providing a large membership and effective leadership (*Ibid.*: 8–9).

However, some abolitionists were racists and wanted to get rid of freed Blacks: "In 1816, a group of reformers who sought the end of slavery as a great evil — but who at the same time rejected as a similar evil the prospect of the Black's remaining in America — formed the American Colonization Society" (Dillon 1974: 19). Although early abolitionists largely failed, they succeeded in persuading Congress to pass gradual emancipation laws in the North and to end the foreign slave trade in March 1807 (*Ibid.*: 22). Dillon (1974: *xiii*) argues that these abolitionists' "great moral courage and independence of mind ventured to subvert the dominant practices and values of their age." The role of African American human agency and the struggle of the antislavery movement cannot be adequately understood without linking them to social-structural factors, processes, and conjunctures, and critically examining the dialectical connection among these social forces. During this period, complex social-structural changes were taking place in the United States: from an agrarian to an industrial economy and from a semi-periphery to a core country. How did these changes affect racial relations in the United States?

During the confrontation between the North and the South over political, economic, and strategic issues, abolitionists provided ideological ammunition to a Northern leadership that wished to establish its class hegemony by developing core capitalism. To do so required removing the obstacles created by the planter class, which strived to maintain racial slavery. The emergence of core capitalism in the North and the persistence of peripheral capitalism in the South led to contradictions in the national development strategy that precipitated class struggle in the antebellum United States (Chase-Dunn, 1980: 189–230). Core capitalists and their allies contended with peripheral capitalists over control of federal power. This gradually resulted in civil war. How? The South's control of the federal state crumbled when the alliance between farmers in the West and planters in the South was broken, the Northern and Southern Democrats were divided, and the Republicans captured the federal state with the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in 1860 (*Ibid.*: 221). According to Chase-Dunn,

> The crumpling of this alliance provoked the Civil War even though the Republicans never advocated the abolition of slavery, but only prevention of its expansion to the West. Southern peripheral capitalism was expansionist because of its extensive nature and the quick exhaustion of the soil, but this was not the main reason why the South desired the extension of slavery to the West. The main issue for the South was control over the Federal state. Planters opposed the creation of free states because the alliance with free farmers was tenuous and they felt they would have less and less power in the Federal state (1980: 221).

The Civil War was initiated by the slave-owning states that seceded from the federal union, and the Northern core capitalists and their allies entered into the war to maintain the union and to impose the strategy of core capitalist development (*Ibid.*: 222–223). The United States achieved upward mobility from semiperiphery to core through the alliance among the classes of Northern core capitalists, some workers, and farmers who opposed the expansion of slavery into the West:

> It was not slavery that was the main issue but the question of who would dominate the Federal state. Free farmers and workers found themselves at odds with the interests of the peripheral capitalists of the South on the issue of the frontier, and so cast their lot with core capital. In so doing, they destroyed the plantocracy and created a strong core state. The Civil War and reconstruction firmly established the hegemony of core capitalism and core labor over the Federal state (Chase-Dunn 1980: 223).

According to Dillon (1974: 254), "slavery must be abolished then not so much because it was the just course to follow, as because it was the most direct way to destroy the power of planter class." Challenging the misconception that the American Civil War was fought to end slavery, Dillon (1974: 254–255) asserts that the issues of slavery and the welfare of African Americans were secondary:

> Such motives for abolition bore slight resemblance to the moral and religious imperatives that had inspired abolitionists during their long crusade. The new kind of antislavery had little to say about the rights of black people and about justice for freedmen. It was, finally, an emancipation policy derived from enmity generated by the strategic errors of slave holders rather than from a recognition of the evils inherent in slavery itself.

Abolitionists may have had an impact on some leaders, but emancipation for the Lincoln administration, declared after the Civil War had began, was politically designed to weaken the Confederacy by depriving it of Black manpower, to deny English and French support to the South, and to gain support from congressional Radical Republicans (Dillon 1974: 256; Chase-Dunn, 1980: 222). Although Black and white abolitionists made an ideological contribution against slavery, the institution of racial slavery was dismantled mainly because of the contradictions between core and peripheral capitalism, the strategic error of the South, and the alliance of some workers and farmers with core capitalists for control of the federal state. Most of these forces were not abolitionists, but indirectly contributed to the abolition of slavery for political and economic expediency. Also important is the agency of the enslaved, who left the plantations to join the Union Army, thus forcing an issue that Lincoln and some generals wished to avoid. These social-structural factors and conjunctures created a new condition for former slaves, the outcomes of which gradually contributed to the development of Black nationalism. It undermined the control slave owners exercised over enslaved Africans. In short, the Civil War, the defeat of the planters, and the abolition of slavery transformed the nature of the African American struggle and set the stage for the great migration of Black folk to Northern and other cities. "Push" factors included Jim Crow laws, racial dictatorship and oppressive social control mechanisms, lawlessness, denial of political and cultural rights, poverty, and lack of education and other opportunities, while "pull" factors from the North were the availability of jobs and the possibility of freedom.

This mass migration transformed African Americans from rural and agricultural workers to industrial and urban workers. As a result, they formed communities, associations, fraternities, churches, mosques, schools, organizations, and other kinds of urban relations. The educated class and other activists who were previously isolated from the slaves found a fertile social ground in which to sow their ideas of social change and struggle. African American activist intellectuals, such W.E.B. Du Bois, politicized collective grievances and mobilized white activists and reformers who participated in the antislavery movement, along with their children and others. Some white reformers and radicals supported the struggle to legally dismantle racial segregation. This struggle received some white assistance from foundations, clergy, and student volunteers. Jenkins and Eckert (1986: 812–815) call these supporters "conscience constituencies." At the turn of the century, several African American organizations, such as the Niagara Movement, the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People (NAACP, founded 1909), the National Urban League (1911), and others were expressions of the African American movement. Social-structural factors, processes, and conjunctures such as war, migration, economic and political changes in American society, urban community formation, and human agency through the consolidation of the activist intellectual bloc politicized political grievances.

The formation of independent institutions and organizations facilitated the development of Black nationalism in the first half of the 20th century in three

forms: cultural nationalism, the Civil Rights Movement, and radical nationalism. Despite difficulties in drawing boundaries, these three forms can be analytically separated and explained. The African American movement attempted to redefine a Black cultural identity that was distorted by racial dictatorship, to liberate Blacks from the racial caste system, and to introduce a fundamental social transformation in the Black community. White society forced upon African Americans cultural assimilation while denying them primary and secondary assimilation to maintain racial boundary mechanisms (see Semmes, 1992; McLemore, 1991). Black cultural nationalism emerged in opposition to racist discourse and white cultural hegemony. Meier and Rudwick (1985: 299) note that the period "from about 1880 to 1930 witnessed the flowering of a clear-cut cultural nationalism. It was evident particularly in a rising self-conscious interest in the race's past and in efforts to stimulate a distinctively black literature." The "New Negro" movement promoted the principles of ethnonational self-help, cooperation, ethnic heritage and pride, militancy, and determination to struggle for constitutional rights (see Meier and Rudwick, 1985: *xix*).

Starting from the era of racial slavery and segregation, African Americans struggled to build their historical continuity and humanity through developing their peoplehood and cultural identity. "African Americans, slave and free," Semmes (1992: 14) mentions, "began to rediscover symbolic foundations for a redemptive African-centered consciousness." Black cultural nationalists gradually challenged the negative images of Africanness and Blackness by refuting the false claim of a Western-world racism that inflated the values of "Europeanness" and "whiteness" in the areas of civilization and culture. As a result, African Americans reclaimed and retrieved their African heritage and accepted Blackness as a mark of beauty by rejecting terms such as "Negro," "Nigger," and "colored" imposed upon them by white society, and replacing them with "Black" or "African American." The three ideological movements that reconnected African Americans to Africa were Garveyism, the Harlem Renaissance, and Pan-Africanism (see Magubane, 1989: 127). According to King (1964a: 33), Garvey's "movement attained mass dimensions, and released a powerful emotional response because it touched a truth which had long been dormant in the mind of the Negro. There was reason to be proud of their heritage as well as of their bitterly won achievement in America." The Garvey Movement was a component of the New Negro Movement, as was the African Blood Brotherhood, the Messenger Group, the Harlem Renaissance, etc. The Harlem Renaissance reconnected African Americans to Africa, cultivated Africanization in art, and made the Black artist turn to his or her African heritage (see Huggins, 1971).

The regeneration of Black culture and the ideological connection to Africa through these ideologies manifested cultural, national, and international characteristics of the emerging Black nationalism. The maturation of Black nationalism in the form of a cultural awakening started in the first two decades of the 20th century. Prominent Black activist scholars, artists, and literary figures moved to Harlem and made it a center of African American cultural and intellectual discourse (see Huggins, 1971; Bontemps, 1972). Smith (1991: 99) asserts that an ethnonational "identity comprises both a cultural and political identity and is located in a political community as well as a cultural one." The Civil Rights Movement evolved from the African American cultural, ideological, intellectual, and political experiences that emerged in urban America. Organized voices of the African American freedom movement, supported by white reformers, started to articulate the Black problem at the turn of the 20th century. The support of white reformers was very important, but the influence went both ways. The Black movement of the post-World War I era was much more a mobilizer and its influence on white reformers was usually noted. This influence was decisive for the movement. The migration of Blacks to urban areas, new allies, and the development of institutions and organizations facilitated the development of the civil rights struggle (see Oberschall, 1973).

During the first half of the 20th century, civil rights activists and their supporters formed various organizations to marshal Black human, financial, intellectual, and ideological resources to fight for Black freedom by dismantling American apartheid. As movement scholars explain, "the level of infrastructure in a given population is itself shaped by the type of macro factors.... Broad macro-processes, such as industrialization, urbanization, mass migration, and the like, largely determine the degree to which groups in society are organized and the structure of that organization. The extent and structure of that organization in turn imply very different potentials of collective action" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zaid, 1988: 711). Most Blacks moved to cities and became members of the urban working class during this period. This created conditions conducive to the development of Black institutions and organizations. African Americans began to be linked through social networks, the media, transportation, communication networks and technologies, etc., by overcoming their dispersion in rural areas. Geographic concentration in cities increased the density of interaction among them and facilitated recruitment in various movement organizations. Therefore, urbanization moved African Americans to the center of the nation's attention and provided them with a central social location. Indigenous institutions and organizations became the foundations of professional social movements and political organizations. According to McAdam, McCarthy, and Zaid (1988: 709), "the key concept linking macro– and micro– processes in movement emergence is that of the *micro-mobilization context*. A micro-mobilization context can be defined as any small group setting in which processes of collective attribution are combined with rudimentary forms of organization to produce mobilization for collective action."

The African American movement blossomed and galvanized the African American people and their supporters for collective action in the urban setting.

Explaining how urbanization and collective action were related in African American society, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zaid (1988: 703) explain that "the rural to urban migration of blacks within the South greatly enhanced the prospects for collective action by transforming an impoverished, geographically dispersed mass into an increasing well-organized urban population." As the main national organization, the NAACP was engaged in legal struggle to challenge Black disfranchisement and racial segregation. It expanded its branch offices to the South in 1918, linked its activities to the Black church, and fought against lynching, segregated education and transportation, and political disfranchisement (see Morris, 1984). The NAACP provided organizational and management skills for the Black national struggle by recruiting and training ministers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, union organizers, and other activists and taught them how to organize themselves and establish working relationships among themselves (*Ibid.*). NAACP lawyers successfully challenged the legality of school segregation, and the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* v. *Board of Education Topeka, Kansas*, decision ruled against the segregated public school system. Although the national NAACP bureaucracy discouraged the participation of the Black masses in their struggle for freedom, the organization undertook serious preparatory work for the struggle of the 1950s and 1960s. Due to the legal successes, in the 1950s white racist and terrorist groups such as the White Citizens' Council, the American States Rights Association, the National Association for the Advancement of White People, and the Ku Klux Klan intensified their organized attacks on the NAACP, with the tacit acceptance of Southern states, and weakened it by creating an organizational vacuum for the Black struggle in the South (*Ibid.*: 28–30).

Black people were further disillusioned and frustrated in the 1940s and 1950s since white society opposed these legal actions. As a result, African Americans believed that court actions alone could not destroy racial segregation, making protest and militant action necessary. As King (1964a: 80) noted, "we know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." The founding of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942 by Black students and elites, white socialists, liberals, and pacifists contributed to the development of the nonviolent direct-action strategy to fight racial segregation in public facilities (see Farmer, 1985). Also significant were the tactics of the Communist Party and its African American revolutionaries in the 1930s and later. A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Movement during 1942 and 1943 was important as well. The direct action of CORE included sit-ins and freedom rides to desegregate the public transportation system. In the 1950s and 1960s, CORE's nonviolent struggle teamed up with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (*Ibid.*). The Black church became the center of liberation struggles in the Southern states because of the independent leadership of its clergy, financial resources, organized mass base, and cultural and ideological foundation. African Americans initiated what Morris (1984: 28–30) calls movement centers in the South. The SCLC was formed by these movement centers in 1957 as "the decentralized political arm of the Black church."

Martin Luther King, Jr., emerged as the charismatic and sophisticated leader of the SCLC and the Black struggle of the mid-20th century; he combined the social and otherworldly gospel in leading the struggle. King criticized the white church for ignoring its social mission and sanctioning the racial cast system, colonialism, and imperialism (see Zepp, 1989; King, 1964a: 6, 14). King understood the vital roles of the masses and elites in bringing about progressive social change, and developed with his colleagues the political strategy of involving both groups in mass direct action through boycotts, demonstrations, and marches. This visionary and democratic leader dreamed and struggled to create a just multicultural society, where all peoples can live together as brothers and sisters, and every person "will respect the dignity and worth of human personality" (King, 1968a: 15). SCLC, SNCC, CORE, and other organizations led effective desegregation campaigns. King used religion, the media, nonviolence strategy, and mass mobilization and participation in challenging American apartheid. With the blossoming of the Civil Rights Movement, two important laws were passed: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Recognizing that these laws would not fundamentally change the condition of the Black majority, King started to expand the scope of the Civil Rights Movement. He raised human rights issues and aimed to create an alliance with all poor people and the working class in the United States (Allen, 1983: 323). As a very complex religious and pragmatic leader, he challenged the racist capitalist system on its territory by developing different strategies and tactics of struggle.

After passage of the civil rights laws, King (1969a: 4) started the Poor People's Campaign. He called upon white and Black churches to challenge the status quo and to change an oppressive social order; he condemned racism, economic and labor exploitation, and war as the three primary evils in American society (see Zepp, 1989: 54). King's idea of integration was complex; he struggled to eliminate or reduce poverty by linking political power, wealth, and poverty. In 1968, he was assassinated, just as another Black leader, Malcolm X, had been in 1965. As Marable (1991: 105) notes, "King's unfinished search for more radical reforms in America may have been the central reason he was killed." Without doubt, his ideological and intellectual maturation and commitment to the emancipation and development of all oppressed groups shortened his life. "Martin Luther King and Malcolm X were both assassinated," Allen (1983: 322) writes, "at precisely the point at which they began working actively and consciously against the racism and exploitation generated by the American capitalist system, both at home and abroad." The assassination of these two prominent leaders increased the frustration of Black people and increased their militancy. Dr. King and Malcolm X, despite taking different routes to lead the Black struggle, recognized the inability

of existing organizations to accomplish the objective of the Black movement. According to Sales (1994: 42), both leaders "recognized that further development of the movement required new organizational forms and for their supporters to relate to each other in new and different ways. King's 'Poor People's Campaign' represented this search while Malcolm X created the OAAU."

As Malcolm X gradually evolved into a militant leader, his understanding of the Black question went beyond the comprehension of other leaders of the Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam emerged as a religious-national movement in the 1930s, and appealed to the Black masses in the 1950s and 1960s as the Garvey Movement had done in the 1920s. This movement produced Malcolm X, who after his death "quickly became the fountainhead of the modern renaissance of black nationalism in the late 1960s" (Marable, 1991: 92). Because of his views and militancy, he was expelled from the Nation of Islam. He first created the Muslim Mosque and then formed the Organization of African American Unity (OAAU) in 1964. The revolutionary position of Malcolm X threatened other leaders in the Nation of Islam by causing trouble with Elijah Muhammad and their privileged position. Black revolutionary nationalism focused upon the fundamental political, economic, cultural, ideological, and social transformations in Black America. Black revolutionary nationalists were anti-racists, anti-capitalists, anti-imperialists, and "opposed Jim Crow laws and simultaneously advocated all-Black economic, political, and social institutions" (*Ibid.*: 55). They believed that change in racist American capitalist society must come mostly from outside the system. Explaining how African Americans struggled for human dignity and true equality, Malcolm X stressed that "our people want a complete freedom, justice and equality, or recognition and respect as human beings.... So, integration is not the objective nor is separation the objective. The objective is complete respect as human beings" (in Sales, 1994: 80). Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), and other revolutionary leaders forcefully articulated the position that to fundamentally transform itself, Black America must control its political-economy, life, and culture (see Malcolm X, 1966; Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967). The OAAU, SNCC, the Black Panther Party, and other revolutionary groups fought to bring about fundamental social change in American society. The new Black revolutionaries believed "that black dignity and liberation are not possible in the United States without profound changes in the system" (Marine, 1986: 23).

The Black Panther Party developed a 10-point program in 1966, which included demands for political power, self-determination, full employment, decent education, housing, food, social justice to end police brutality and unfair trials, and economic development (*Ibid.*: 35–36). Another expression of Black revolutionary nationalism was the formation of the Republic of New Africa in 1967, which sought to create an independent African American state in the Deep South. Some revolutionary organizations attempted to engage in armed struggle. The massive urban Black rebellion from 1964 to 1972 was an integral part of Black militancy, one that the white establishment could not tolerate. Using civil rights laws, the government integrated Black reformist elites, but suppressed the Black masses and revolutionaries. As a result, hundreds of African American participants in a series of rebellions, as well as revolutionary leaders, were killed, imprisoned, or went into exile. The Black struggle had a structural limit. Reformist approaches constrained the capacity of the struggle by preventing fundamental social change, while revolutionary approaches invited repression from the white establishment. Although the Black movement legally defeated the institutions of the racial caste system, in practice, individual and indirect institutional racism has remained intact. Due to the white establishment's opposition and the lack of a long-term political and cultural strategy, most Blacks remain poor and at the bottom of American society. Nevertheless, the change that took place transformed the mentality of Black Americans and white society. The struggle of African Americans also resulted in a significant growth of the Black middle class.

The objective of fundamentally transforming Black America did not succeed. Hence, the majority of African Americans still lack meaningful access to the country's political, economic, and cultural resources. The African American movement introduced a multiculturalist agenda, but the struggle for cultural identity and multicultural democracy has yet to achieve its desired goals. Perpetuating the underdevelopment of Black America have been the suppression of revolutionary nationalism, the denial of self-determination for the Black community, and the imposition of the politics of order on the Black masses and revolutionaries. Due to the absence of a national organization capable of effectively mobilizing and organizing Blacks to articulate the demands of the Black majority, existing civil rights organizations and Black elites have been unable to obtain adequate goods and services for the Black community. Thus, many African Americans remain in ghettos, where they are exposed to social ills from police brutality, poverty, illiteracy, disease, unemployment, crime, and drugs, to urban crises. Let us now turn to Oromo nationalism, and explain how it developed.

The Rise of Oromo Nationalism

Oromo nationalism developed into a mass movement in the early 1990s (see Jalata, 1997). This development occurred after a long period of resistance. Like African Americans, Oromos initially resisted slavery and colonization without systematically organizing themselves. Their cultural and political resistance continued after their enslavement and colonization because they were assigned the status of slaves, colonial subjects, and second-class citizens by the Ethiopian state. Due to the seriousness of Oromo resistance to slavery and colonialism, it took over 30 years to establish Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions in various Oromo regions. Oromo groups continued to challenge Ethiopian settler colonialism in attempts to regain their freedom and independence. In different parts of Oromia, numerous local uprisings took place; at times, these local groups expelled the Ethiopian colonial settlers from their country (Jalata, 1993: 152–153). Some Oromo groups tried unsuccessfully to use European powers, such as Italy and Great Britain, to regain their independence by ejecting Ethiopian colonial settlers from Oromia (*Ibid.*: 153). In 1936, the Oromo search for freedom and decolonization moved forward when 33 Oromo chiefs held meetings and decided to establish the Western Oromo Confederacy. The document they signed expressed the desire of the people of Western Oromia to become a League of Nations protectorate with the help of the British government until the Oromo could achieve self-government (*Ibid.*).

Despite these resistance struggles, Oromo nationalism developed slowly. Nationalism emerged in different parts of colonial Africa between the 1920s and 1950s. Oromo nationalism was delayed, however, by the denial of formal education, political repression, and the brutality of Ethiopian colonialism and its structures, which kept almost all Oromos in rural areas, thus limiting economic participation to agriculture. The Ethiopian colonial state and its institutions prevented the emergence of an Oromo leadership by co-opting many of the intellectual elements, liquidating the nationalist ones, suppressing Oromo autonomous institutions, and erasing Oromo history, culture, and language. According to Hassen (1998: 194), "from the 1880s to the early 1960s, the Oromo suffered a great deal from the lack of central leadership. It should be remembered that in the 1880s during the conquest and colonization of Oromo territory, a large number of the Oromo people, together with their leaders, were decimated.... Other Oromo leaders were co-opted into the Ethiopian political process. The basis for independent Oromo leadership was destroyed." Although individuals and various Oromo groups resisted the combined forces of Ethiopian settler colonialism and global imperialism, only in the early 1960s did a few elite and urban Oromos begin to develop and manifest Oromo collective consciousness and nationalism.

The destruction of "Oromo national leadership, the tight control of the government, the meagerness of a modern educational establishment, lack of transport and communication systems and mass media, the absence of written literature in the Oromo language, and the limited nature of interaction among the Oromo in different regions...may have contributed to retarding the growth of an Oromo national consciousness before the beginning of the 1960s" (*Ibid.*: 193). For a considerable period, Oromos lacked formally trained and culturally minded intellectuals. Onesimos Nasib, a Christianized Oromo former slave scholar trained in Europe, his team consisting of Aster Gano, Lidya Dimbo, and Feben (Hirphee) Abba Magaal, as well as another religious scholar, Sheik Bakri Sapalo, pioneered the production of written literature in *Afaan Oromo* and tried to introduce literacy to Oromo society in the first half of the 20th century (Bulcha, 1997; Hassen, 1993). To deny education to Oromos, the Ethiopian colonial government and the Orthodox Church suppressed these scholars' efforts. The Ethiopian government and its international supporters were not alone in hindering the progress of Oromo society. Somalia's opposition to Oromo interests contributed to the slow development of Oromo consciousness and nationalism. The state that emerged with the liberation of Somalia in 1960 tried its best to "Somalize" some Oromos and incorporate a part of Oromia into Somalia. Although Ethiopian elites feared that Oromo nationalism was "a major threat to the disintegration of the Ethiopian Empire, Somali ruling elites regarded it as a dangerous movement that would abort the realization of the dream of greater Somalia" (Hassen, 1998; 189). These obstacles hampered the development of Oromo nationalism for some time. The Oromo people's national struggle was a continuation of previous resistance, but it emerged from specific social-structural, historical, and sociological factors.

The development of colonial/peripheral capitalism in Oromia, the emergence of conscious Oromo intellectuals and bureaucrats, the cumulative experiences of struggle, and politicized collective and individual grievances — all facilitated the development of Oromo nationalism (Jalata, 1993; 1998). In the 1960s, some Oromos moved to cities where colonial settlers were concentrated. The flow of Oromos from rural areas into cities precipitated changes in urban areas. A few Oromos became successful petty traders, but most became laborers, semi-laborers, or were unemployed. These groups and students contributed to the survival of the Oromo language and culture in urban areas. For example, musical groups formed, such as the Arffan Qallo and Biftu Ganamo, in Dirre Dhawa (Jalata, 1993: 161). Ethiopian colonizers mistreated the Oromo masses, and Oromo elites who joined Ethiopian colonial institutions were not treated as equal citizens. "Since the colonial government ignored them, those few Oromo individuals who joined colonial institutions (such as schools, parliament, the army, and the administration) and Oromo merchants began to think about ways to improve the Oromo living standard. Despite their relative achievements, these individuals had inferior status to Ethiopians due to their Oromo national identity" (*Ibid.*: 155).

Paradoxically, Oromos educated to be members of an Ethiopianized Oromo collaborative class, but who were not treated as equals by Ethiopians, initiated Oromo nationalism and the idea of developing the collective consciousness of Oromos. "Exclusion breeds failed assimilation," Smith (1982: 31) writes, "and reawakens an ethnic consciousness among the professional elites, at exactly the moment when the intellectuals are beginning to explore the historic roots of the community." Given the fundamental contradiction between the interests of Ethiopian colonizing structures and the colonized Oromos, Ethiopian society could not culturally and structurally assimilate the Oromo elites. The formation of the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association in 1963–1964 marked the public rise of Oromo nationalism. Since the Ethiopian Constitution did not allow the establishment of political organizations, emerging Oromo leaders formed this group as a civilian self-help association in accordance with Article 45 of his Imperial Majesty's 1955 revised Constitution and Article 14, Number 505, of the Civil

Code. Oromo elites, in forming this association in the capital city of the Ethiopian Empire, Finfinne (Addis Ababa), articulated the collective grievances of the Oromo people and formulated programs to solve the economic, social, and educational problems of Oromo society. The association was open to all interested ethnonational groups; thus, in Ethiopia it embraced the principle of multicultural diversity. Members of colonized ethnonational groups, such as the Sidama, Wallaita, Klu Konta, Issa, Gimira, Gamo, Bella Shangul, and Adare, joined the association; non-Oromos held 26 positions in different committees of this association (Zoga, 1993: 75–77). According to Hassen (1998: 183), within a short time, the association "transformed itself from a self-help development association in Shawan administrative region, into a pan-Oromo movement that coordinated peaceful resistance, and in turn gave birth to Oromo political awareness. This means that since their conquest in the 1880s, the Oromo developed a single leadership...for two interrelated purposes: economic, educational, and cultural development and to establish the political equality of the Oromo with other peoples of Ethiopia."

Although Oromos provided resources to build Ethiopian infrastructures and institutions, they were denied access to social amenities. In May 1966, the association reflected on this reality at its Itaya meeting: "(1) less than one percent of Oromo school-age children ever get the opportunity to go to school; (2) ...less than one percent of the Oromo population get adequate medical services; (3) ...less than fifty percent of the Oromo population own land; (4) ...a very small percentage of the Oromo population has access to [modern] communication services. [And yet] the Oromo paid more than eighty percent of the taxes for education, health, and communication" (in Hassen, 1998: 205–206). The ongoing mistreatment of Oromo elites by the Ethiopian government and elites, the conspiracy to deny Oromos educational and professional opportunities, and the attempt to destroy the association's leadership led its charismatic leader, Brigader General Taddasa Biru, to intensify their struggle (Zoga, 1993: 118–133). Nationalist Oromo elements recognized in the 1960s that:

> The one aim is to be noticed; it is a search for identity, and a demand that identity be publicly acknowledged.... The other aim is practical: it is a demand for progress for a rising standard of living, more effective political order, greater social justice, and beyond that of "playing a part in the larger arena of world politics," of exercising influence among the nations (Geertz, 1994: 30).

The Ethiopian colonial state and Ethiopian settlers in Oromia did not tolerate any manifestation of Oromo consciousness. Haile Selassie's government banned the association in 1967, and its leaders were imprisoned or killed. Since the association articulated "the dissatisfaction of the Oromo with the government and particularly with their position in society," it was not tolerated (Wood, 1983: 516).

The Ethiopian government even banned musical groups like Arffan Qallo and the Biftu Ganamo because they expressed themselves in the Oromo language. Similarly, the Bale-Oromo armed struggle that started in the early 1960s was suppressed with the assistance of Great Britain, the United States, and Israel between 1968 and 1970 (Gilkes, 1975: 217–218). Thus, global capitalist structures helped to subordinate Oromia to Ethiopia. Banning the self-help association and the musical groups, along with suppression of the armed struggle, forced Oromo nationalism underground. The Macha-Tulama movement was crucial to the growth of Oromo nationalism in the 1970s, and the experience "taught the Oromo elites that they needed a liberation movement that would marshal the resources of their people, harmonize their actions, and channel their creative activities and innovation against the oppressive Ethiopian system" (Hassen, 1998: 196).

Suppression of reform nationalism forced some Oromo nationalists underground in Oromia, and others went to Somalia, the Middle East, and other countries to continue the Oromo national movement. When Oromos were denied the right to express themselves in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a few Oromo militant elements produced political pamphlets, such as *Kana Bekta* (Do You Know This?), and historical documents, such as *The Oromos: Voice Against Tyranny*. For the first time, the original name of this people, Oromo, was used in this publication by rejecting the derogatory name, *Galla*. *The Oromos: Voice Against Tyranny* (*Horn of Africa,* 1980: 23) raised the Oromo question as a colonial issue and defined the future direction of the Oromo national struggle:

> for an Oromo worthy of the name...there is one and only one way to dignity, security, liberty, and freedom. That single and sure way is to hold a common front against his oppressors and their instruments of subjugation. In this, he [or she] is ready and willing to join hands in the spirit of brotherhood, equality, and mutual respect with oppressed nationalities and all persons and institutions of goodwill, he is equally ready and prepared to pay any sacrifice and oppose any person or groups that in any way hinder his mission for liberation from all forms of oppression and subjugation. An Oromo has no empire to build but a mission to break an imperial yoke; that makes this mission sacred and his sacrifices never too dear.

The denial of individual, civil, and collective rights, and the suppression all forms of Oromo organizations and movements forced Oromo nationalists to pursue their objectives clandestinely. Accounting for the formation of the Ethiopian National Liberation Front (ENLF) in 1971 and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in 1974, Holcomb and Ibssa (1990: 299) note that "intellectuals who had survived the banning of Macha-Tulama had gone underground to find a new approach. Those who had been able to leave the country were also searching together for alternative tactics and strategies to achieve the objective they had espoused and to find a new model for effective organization."

The ENLF's main objectives were to reform Ethiopia, introduce democracy, and bring civil equality for all peoples by removing Ethiopia's imperial character (Jalata, 1994: 5–7). However, most Oromo nationalists did not endorse these objectives, which recognized the nature of the Ethiopian elites. Rather, they were determined to develop a revolutionary nationalism that attempted to dismantle Ethiopian settler colonialism and to establish a people's democratic republic of Oromia. Left open was whether the republic would be independent or an autonomous state within a federated multicultural democratic society (see OLF Program, 1976). This organization also recognized the significance of creating a multinational democratic state through voluntary association by dismantling colonial, dictatorial, and racist structures. The more that Oromos intensified their national struggle, the more the crisis of the Ethiopian state and its terrorism increased.

The underground political movement transformed reform nationalism into a revolutionary one after the Ethiopian colonial government systematically denied Oromos any channel through which to express or pursue their individual and collective interests. These revolutionary elements understood the significance of the reconstruction of Oromo culture and history for the survival of Oromo national identity and the development of Oromo nationalism. Revolutionary Oromo leaders produced political pamphlets and expanded their sphere of influence by organizing political circles in different sectors of Oromo society, such as students, professionals, workers, farmers, soldiers, students, and the army. Oromos who fled to foreign countries and received military training returned to Oromia to initiate armed struggle. The group that initiated the Oromo armed struggle in 1973, along with other revolutionary elements, created the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in 1974. As soon as the OLF began to challenge Ethiopian colonial domination ideologically, intellectually, politically, and militarily, the Ethiopian state initiated terrorism against Oromo nationalists and the Oromo people. Due to the lack of international support and sanctuary, Ethiopian terrorism, and Somali opposition to Oromo nationalism, Oromo nationalism grew slowly in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the late 1970s, almost all members of the OLF executive committee were wiped out on their way to Somalia to attend an important organizational meeting. The Ethiopian military regime targeted prominent Oromo nationalists and arranged for the assassination of veteran leaders like Tadassan Biru and Hailu Ragassa. In 1980, it imprisoned or murdered top OLF leaders and activists. Because of all these factors, the Oromo movement played a less significant role in overthrowing the Ethiopian military regime headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam in May 1991. With the demise of the military regime, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), came to power with the support and endorsement of the U.S. government and later established a minority Tigrayan-based authoritarian-terrorist government. To obtain political legitimacy, the new regime initially invited different liberation fronts, the most prominent of which was the OLF, and other political organizations to join it in a transitional government. The new regime persuaded them that it would prepare the ground for the formation of a multicultural federal democratic government in Ethiopia. However, in less than a year, this regime expelled all coalition partners and used intimidation, terrorism, and war to establish an ethnic-based party dictatorship; there was no opposition from the U.S. or Western countries (Trueman, 1997; Pollock, 1996, 1997). Despite systematic intimidation and outright terrorism, the U.S., other Western countries, and the Organization of African Unity called this regime's elections, held to legitimize its power, satisfactory, fair, and free (see *Reuters Business Briefing*, 1994; Reuters, 1995).

Ethiopian State Terrorism and the Oromo Movement

During the transitional period, Oromo nationalism was transformed from an elite to a mass movement. Development of the Oromo national movement, which represented the largest ethnonational group in the Ethiopian Empire, prevented the Tigrayan-led regime from establishing hegemony. Oromos thus became the main target of Ethiopian state terrorism. State terrorism is a systematic policy of governing, with massive violence imposed upon a given population group to change their patterns of political struggle or resistance (see Oliverio, 1997). Such states assume that they can control the population by destroying their culture of resistance and leaders. States such as Ethiopia that fail to establish ideological hegemony and political order are unstable and insecure; hence, they engage in terrorism (see Oliverio, 1997; Gibbs, 1989). The Tigrayan-led government accepted state violence against Oromos and others as a legitimate means of establishing political stability and order. Oliverio (1997: 52) explains how state terrorism is associated with the control of territory and resources, as well as the construction of political and ideological domination:

> First, the state reinforces the use of violence as a viable, effective, mitigating factor for managing conflict; second, such a view is reinforced by culturally constructed and socially organized processes, expressed through symbolic forms, and related in complex ways to present social interests. With increasing economic and environmental globalization, gender politics, and the resurgence of nationalities within territorial boundaries, the discourse of terrorism, as a practice of statecraft, is crucial to the construction of political boundaries.

The Tigrayan-dominated regime, supported by global capitalist elites, practices state terrorism against Oromos because they have ideologically, culturally, and intellectually challenged Ethiopian cultural and ideological domination, and redefined the relationship between Oromos and Ethiopians. Since this regime's survival depends on Oromo economic resources, it uses terrorist actions mainly against the Oromo people. According to the Oromia Support Group (November 1997: 1), "because the Oromo occupy Ethiopia's richest areas and comprise half of the population of Ethiopia, they are seen as the greatest threat to the present Tigrayan-led government. Subsequently, any indigenous Oromo organization, including the Oromo Relief Association, has been closed and suppressed by the government. The standard reason given for detaining Oromo people is that they are suspected of supporting the OLF." This regime has systematically assassinated prominent Oromos, murdered thousands of Oromos openly and in secret, reinitiated the "villagization" and eviction of Oromo farmers and herders, expanded prisons in Oromia, forced thousands of Oromos into hidden and underground detention camps, and looted the economic resources of Oromia to develop the Tigrayan region, enriching Tigrayan elites and their collaborators (see *Seifa Nabalbal*, 1996; *Urjii*, 1994–1997; Amnesty International, 1995, 1996; Oromia Support Group, 1996 and 1997 series).

A video smuggled out of Ethiopia in 1997 shows horrifying mass graves in Hararghe, Western Oromia (Oromia Support Group, 1997). Systematic state terrorism directed at Oromos seeks to secure their lands and natural and economic resources for the use of Tigrayan elites, their collaborators, and transnational corporations (see Jalata, 1997). The Amhara elites had also systematically exterminated an independent Oromo leadership with the help of European colonial powers. Later they used "socialism" and the Soviet bloc to suppress the Oromo national movement. Currently, state terrorism manifests itself as violence against Oromos in the form of war, assassination, murder, castration, burying alive, throwing off cliffs, hanging, torture, rape, confiscation of properties by the police and the army, and forcing people into submission through intimidation, beating, and disarming citizens (see Pollock, 1996, 1997; Trueman, 1991; Amnesty International, 1995; Human Rights Watch, 1997; Survival International, 1995; Oromia Support Group, 1997).

Interviews by Fossati, Namarra, and Niggli (1996) reveal the means used in Ethiopian state terrorism. Since 1992, several thousand Oromos have been killed or arrested for suspicion of being OLF supporters or sympathizers or for refusing proposed membership in the EPRDF via OPDO. Based on their field research, these scholars report that former prisoners testified that their arms and legs were tied tightly together behind their backs and their naked bodies were whipped; large containers filled with water were fixed to their testicles. If they were women, bottles or poles were pushed into their vaginas. Prisoners were locked up in empty steel barrels and tormented with heat in the tropical sun during the day and with cold at night. Others were forced into pits so that fires could be built on top of them. Government soldiers have shot thousands of people in rural Oromia. They left their bodies for hyenas, buried them in mass graves, or threw their corpses off cliffs. Other methods of killing included burning, bombing, cutting throats or neck arteries, asphyxiation or strangulation, and burying people to their necks. Prompted by apparent hate for Oromos, TPLF soldiers killed several pregnant women and hundreds of Oromo children between the ages of 12 and 16 (Oromia Support Group, August/September 1996, 1997: 8).

The soldiers' treatment of women and girls demonstrates widespread inhumane behavior. Fossati, Namarra, and Niggli (1996: 10) report that "in prison women are often humiliated and mistreated in the most brutal fashion. Torturers ram poles or bottles into their vaginas, connect electrodes to the lips of their vulva, or the victims are dragged into the forest and gang-raped by interrogation officers." Despite these inhumane and criminal activities, U.S. officials deny the existence of torture in Ethiopian prisons or camps (see U.S. Department of State, 1993). Systematic terrorism takes place through a tightly organized party that functions from the central government to the grass-roots committee (see Oromia Support Group, May/June 1997: 18). Being misled or intentionally accepting the Ethiopian Constitution at face value, U.S. officials praise the Ethiopian government for its goal of a "decentralized system that brings justice closer to the people" (U.S. Department of State, 1997: 4) and reject the idea that "real power is retained at the center and used repressively" (*The Economist*, 1997: 36). Another form of state terrorism is economic violence. The government has confiscated the properties of some Oromos and others who have been imprisoned. Those released from prison paid huge sums in "ransom money" collected by relatives for TPLF/EPRDF soldiers and agents (see Fossati et al., 1996). The Ethiopian government attempted to destroy Oromo merchants and intellectuals by labeling them "narrow nationalists" and "the enemy of the Ethiopian Revolution" (see *Hizbawi Adera*, 1989). Hundreds of Oromo business people have been harassed, killed or imprisoned, and robbed of their properties. Several prominent Oromo journalists and intellectuals were arrested illegally.

Oromos are not allowed to have meaningful relief associations in Ethiopia or in neighboring countries. Realizing that the Ethiopian government and international organizations were paying little attention to the welfare of Oromo society, in the late 1970s a few Oromo leaders created the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) in exile as an independent humanitarian association to assist Oromo refugees in the Horn of Africa (Dibaba, 1997: 7). Assuming the political change of 1991 would allow a peaceful and democratic political resolution of the Oromo problem, ORA moved its head office to Finfinne and shifted its program from relief work to rehabilitation and settlement activities, as well as health, education, agricultural, and forestation projects (*Ibid.*). When ORA relocated its headquarters, 1,352 ORA orphans moved to Oromia from Sudan; some of them were killed by TPLF soldiers or drowned while being chased by these soldiers; others were captured and taken to the Didessa concentration camp where they were beaten, tortured, raped, or died from hunger or infection (Oromia Support Group, August/September 1996). The regime closed ORA regional offices in August 1995 and its headquarters in February 1996 and confiscated all its properties. ORA activities were banned in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya. According to Fossati et al. (1996: 3), "the only organization that for some years looked after the Oromo refugees, the Oromo Relief Association (ORA), was banned...in June 1995 by the Djibouti government at the request of the Ethiopian government." Most international humanitarian organizations did not object (see Dibaba, 1997).

Using the leverage of Western countries, the regime pressures neighboring governments to return or expel Oromo refugees from their countries. The alliance of the West with this regime has frightened neighboring countries, such as Djibouti, Kenya, and Sudan, and turned them against the Oromo struggle and Oromo refugees. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has even failed to provide reasonable protection for thousands of Oromo in Djibouti. "The Oromo refugees are generally regarded by the Djibouti authorities as unwelcome aliens or illegal immigrants, despite the fact that Djibouti is a signatory to the Geneva Convention on Refugees. Every day the refugees fear being caught in one of the frequent police raids and forced back across the border. Only a small minority has legal refugee status" (Fossati et al., 1996: 3). Oromo women refugees have been raped while crossing the border on the way to Djibouti or forced to work as slaves in Djibouti households or for the Djibouti police. Sebida Musa notes that "they take the women home and treat them as their personal property. If one of the women gets pregnant, she is mercilessly thrown out into the street, where she and her unwanted child have to try to survive by begging" (in Fosati et al., 1996: 10). Oromo refugees have been abused by the Djibouti authorities and the Ethiopian government, and ignored by international organizations, such as UNHCR. Fossati et al. (1996: 44) note that "the Oromo council of elders told us they believed they were entitled to a small portion of the international aid available to refugees, but did not even get a glass of water from the UNHCR and had been completely forgotten...." Some refugees also faced terrorism and forced repatriation.

TPLF forces entered Kenya, where they committed murder and looted the economic resources of Kenyan Oromos, who they accused of harboring the Oromo Liberation Army. Oromos have been denied sanctuary in neighboring countries, such as Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, and are denied the right to be refugees. Lacking assistance from neighboring countries and international organizations, thousands of "internal" Oromo refugees are hiding in the bush and in remote villages of Oromia and Ethiopia (Fossati et al., 1996: 36). The government and its international supporters use democratic discourse to hide the state terrorism and massive human rights violations. The intensification of state terrorism has created a very dangerous condition for Oromo and other colonized peoples.

Similarities and Differences Between the Two Movements

The specific interplay of social-structural and historical factors in the global capitalist world-system affected the emergence and development of the two movements. This includes the inability of slavers or colonizers to completely control or crush the human spirit, individual and collective resistance to colonial or racial/ethnonational domination, the immortality of certain cultural memories, economic and political changes, urbanization and community formation, the emergence of an educated class, politicized collective grievances, and the dissemination of social-scientific and political knowledge through global and local networks. The development of these movements cannot be adequately understood without linking them to ideological formation and cultural revitalization, institutional and organizational manifestations, and alternative knowledge production and dissemination.

Just as slavery and racial segregation destroyed most African American cultural elements for centuries, Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions have facilitated systematic cultural destruction and repression of Oromo culture for over a century. Cultural destruction and repression have occurred in these two societies to deny the free cultural spaces and political voices that are essential for creating and building institutions that can facilitate autonomous social development. A free cultural space is an "environment in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue" (Couto, 1993: 59). The white slave owners and American institutions during slavery and in American society during racial segregation imposed white cultural domination on African Americans. As a result, African Americans were denied access to state power and prevented from having institutions during slavery, except for a few freed Blacks in Northern cities. After slavery ended between 1863 and 1865, they were denied access to the American government and other public institutions, as well as to private institutions until the 1960s. However, they were allowed to have separate religious, economic, cultural, and educational institutions during the period of American apartheid. These institutions laid the foundation for African American nationalism.

Ethiopian colonialists and their institutions, with the support of the imperial interstate system, have attempted to destroy Oromo cultural identity by denying Oromos the freedom to have their own cultural institutions and develop an authentic Oromo culture. While dismantling Oromo cultural, religious, and governmental institutions, Ethiopian colonizing structures were established in Oromo society in the form of the *nafxanya-gabbar* system (semi-slavery), garrison cities, a collaborative Oromo class, and colonial landholding (Jalata, 1993: 62–73). Oromo economic resources were expropriated by the Ethiopian state and its agents; Oromo institutions were destroyed or suppressed and lost their economic and political significance. As a result, Oromos lost their decision-making capacity and were silenced. They were prevented from organizing themselves on central, regional, subregional, and community levels. Oromos have maintained their cultural legacy through ritual practices, and political and cultural memory. They are tightly controlled by the institutions of the state and their collaborators.

Oromo modes of communication and movement remain restricted. Oromos have been denied the opportunities needed to develop their own regional and national institutions, as well as the Oromo system of knowledge that would facilitate the transmission of accumulated cultural experiences from generation to generation. Therefore, Oromo culture and tradition survive only at the family and local levels. Oromos are denied the freedom of association, organization, and expression, as well as access to education and the media. They are denied the right to organize cultural groups and prevented from using their language in public and business arenas. Holcomb (1999: 5) explains that the institutionalization of colonialism and racial/ethnonational hierarchy occurred:

> in such a way that the identity of the incorporated peoples was erased from public life and from the formal and historical record. Abyssinia [Ethiopia] became the intermediary representative in the outside world for all peoples contained within the empire. In addition, the Oromo, an expansive and mobile people, were not only isolated from the outside world, they were isolated from one another inside the empire. Most of the sectors of Oromo society whose communications cut across geographical, religious, economic and trade categories were denied access to one another through their own channels and prevented from transferring people, information, or goods along routes that had significance for their development and self-expression. When the Oromo political system with its overarching integrative republican mechanism of public assemblies was officially dismantled and replaced by centralized Ethiopian administrative policies in Oromia, the isolation of the Oromo was complete.

However, Ethiopian colonialism was less effective in destroying Oromo cultural elements than was American racial slavery. During slavery, African Americans were forced to abandon their various African cultural elements, religions, and worldviews, and to accept the English language, Christianity, and, to some extent, European worldviews, although they sometimes used these imposed cultural elements for resistance.

Although the Ethiopian colonial government imposed its Orthodox Christianity on Oromos, few Oromo groups accepted it. The majority accepted Islam and other forms of Christianity in opposition to the Ethiopian colonizing structures. Even though Ethiopian colonizers tried to impose their language on Oromos, most Oromos still speak their own language. An Oromo collaborative class was compromised by Ethiopian colonialism by abandoning Oromo interests, culture, and the language. Cabral (1973: 5) asserts that oppressed, "persecuted, humiliated, betrayed by certain social groups who have compromised with the foreign power, culture took refuge in the village, in the forests, and in the spirit of the victims of domination. Culture survives all these challenges and through the struggle for liberation blossoms forth again." Although there were house slaves and field slaves and later a few African elites who compromised with the worldview of the white establishment, American society could not until recently produce an effective collaborative class such as the one produced by Ethiopian colonialism. Due to phenotypic similarities between Oromos and Ethiopians, the racial boundary between them is less rigid than is the one between Black and white Americans. As a result, the passing of certain Oromos as Ethiopians has been possible. Through domesticating Oromo war captives, political marriage, cultural assimilation, and other mechanisms, Ethiopians have created and consolidated an Ethiopianized Oromo collaborative class that worked against the Oromo national interests. In contrast, the American racial caste system outlawed marriage between Blacks and whites and prevented all Blacks from having access to institutions until the mid-1960s.

The organized destruction and repression of the cultural elements of these societies could not prevent the struggle for cultural revival and nationalism. According to Bethel (1999: 78), based on the collective struggle of former slaves, "an ethnic identity grounded in a common mythic African heritage welded from a blend of autobiographical and generational memory emerged and crystallized. For African Americans, that identity anchored a cultural world separate and apart from the nation that oppressed them." When most African Americans were slaves, the few that achieved half-freedom in the urban North crafted "a metaphorical homeland within the nation of their birth and [constructed] a civic culture that buttressed the daily realities of social, economic, and political oppression" (*Ibid.*: 54–55). Similarly, Oromo urbanites formed self-help associations and musical groups in the 1960s that reflected Oromo collective grievances and cultural memory. The idea of developing Oromo political consciousness and nationalism appeared subsequent to the 1960s, with the emergence of Oromo political and cultural organizations.

Short of killing the colonized or enslaved population, the dominating force cannot exercise total control over the spirits and minds of the subordinated population. This population maintains its existence through cultural memory, popular consciousness, and the hope of freedom. Couto (1993: 60) suggests "the community of memory nurtures individuals by carrying on a moral tradition that reinforces the aspiration of their group.... The test of community is its sense of a common past...[and] stories of suffering 'that sometimes create deeper identities....' These stories approximate a moral tradition and turn community of memory members 'toward the future as communities of hope.' Such communities of hope sponsor transforming social movements...." Subjugated peoples, such as African Americans and Oromos, have faced tensions between a lost past and an uncertain future that forced them to forge popular historical consciousness through common forms of ritual, symbols, historical sites, etc. The lost past is remembered from ancestral memory preserved in skills, rituals, habits, religion, and other forms of cultural memory. Torn away from their ancestral past, African Americans and Oromos have constructed and celebrated a mythological past by imagining pre-slavery and a pre-colonial era.

African Americans forged an ethnonational identity from common myths of African heritages, collective grievances, and autobiographies and memories passed from generation to generation mainly through oral discourse. Freed African Americans and their descendants in Northern states organized local churches, schools, and mutual aid and fraternal societies by proclaiming their mythological ancestry in the name of their institutions and organizations, such as African churches, Free African schools, and African Benevolent Societies, when the majority of their sisters and brothers were suffering under racial slavery in the South. In 1830, 40 self-selected delegates from these elements of African Americans met at Bethel Church, Philadelphia, and formed the National Convention Movement, the first civil rights movement in the U.S. Explaining how African Americans survived under racial slavery and segregation, Levine (1978: *xi*) states that "in the midst of the brutalities and injustice of the antebellum and postbellum racial systems, black men and women were able to find the means to sustain a far greater degree of self-pride and group cohesion than the system they lived under ever intended for them to be able to do.... Human beings are more resilient, less malleable, and less able to live without some sense of cultural cohesion, individual autonomy, and self-worth...."

By systematically examining African American folk tales, proverbs, songs, aphorisms, jokes, verbal games, and narrative oral stories and poems, Levine (1978: *xi*) demonstrates how this people developed their culture through maintaining kinship networks, love and marriage, raising and socializing children, and building religion and nurtured a rich, expressive culture to articulate their feelings, pains, dreams, and hopes. In African American and Oromo societies where the rights of political expression and protest were denied, songs, proverbs, stories, and other means of expression were used to articulate the dehumanization of collective oppression and exploitation and the aspiration to freedom. Tolesa (1999) explores how Oromos use their expressive culture, like *geerarsa*, to explain their conditions under Ethiopian colonialism and to remember their past glory under the Oromo democratic tradition, which they wish to reinvent with their liberation. The cultural memories and popular historical consciousness of these two peoples have emerged from their respective cultural foundations. Such memories and consciousness pass from generation to generation. "The soul of each generation...emanates from the soul of the (collective) 'body' of all the preceding generations," Dubnow (in Smith, 1981: *viii*) writes, "and what endures, namely, the strength of the accumulated past, exceeds the wreckage, the strength of the changing present."

Cultural revival and nationalism help the dominated group to use its suppressed cultural elements and popular historical memory to organize and struggle for its liberation. This group develops a nationalist ideology that promotes the idea that its culture and peoplehood are everlasting by surviving the onslaught of slavery or colonialism. "Anchored in the assurance of the immortality of the community and sustained by the beliefs and traditions of its culture," Maciver (in Isaacs, 1975: 115) notes, "the individual members share an inner environment that blankets them." A dominated population develops its human agency based on its cultural traditions and popular historical consciousness to dismantle the structure of domination. The struggles of African Americans and Oromos demonstrate this reality. The demand for the freedom of the colonized or enslaved "included the right to worship in dignity and the right to an identity that incorporated memories of a lost homeland and imaginings of life freely lived. Claims to spiritual and psychological autonomy were inevitable parallels to physical freedom" (Bethel, 1999: 26).

Bethel (1999: 27) explains how former slave Africans in northern and western states consolidated their collective identity between the American Revolution and the Civil War based on their collective grievances, cultural memories, and popular historical consciousness:

> Torn away from an ancestral past, African Americans constructed, preserved, and celebrated a mythological past. Prevented from exercising the full prerogative of citizenship, and lacking the material and symbolic resources to develop viable pressure groups that might penetrate the formal machinery of politics, African Americans forged a cultural identity and an agenda for community action that blocked or at least softened the disadvantages of race. The infrastructures of African-American material communities revolved around helping each other and combating the seemingly impenetrable wall of American racism. Both had become defining features of African-American identity.

This marginalized group of Africans, neither slave nor free, developed an African American ethnonational identity based on their collective past that influenced their aspirations. Bethel explores how the transition from individualized and autobiographical memories laid the foundation for this identity through forming a movement, celebrating festivals, and participating in different public events to reshape and develop a politicized collective identity.

With the help of the imperial interstate system, the ill-equipped Ethiopian state has tightly controlled the Oromo by denying them educational, cultural, and economic opportunities. Denial of education prevented Oromos from developing an educated class with the skills and knowledge necessary for building strong national institutions and organizations. Thus, they failed to develop the organizational capacity to transform their cultural heritage into Oromo political and cultural consciousness. Like African Americans, Oromos needed urbanites and educated elements, political and cultural organizations, and political opportunities to develop Oromo nationalism and to struggle to dismantle Ethiopian settler colonialism. Despite shared values and culture among Oromos, the Ethiopian political system forestalled the development of the national institutions needed to consolidate an Oromo national movement. The denial of autonomous educational, economic, cultural, and political institutions, as well as of free expression and association, delayed the development of Oromo nationalism when compared with other African nationalisms. African Americans under slavery were also unable to develop autonomous institutions, but free Blacks established them despite segregation. After the abolition of slavery, African Americans were able to develop segregated autonomous cultural, educational, religious, and economic institutions. Internal colonial domination prevented these institutions from developing fully, but the free space enabled them to contribute to the development of Black nationalism.

Smith's (1991: 71) analysis of culture and nationalism correctly reflects the conditions under which African American and Oromo nationalisms emerged: "If nationalism is part of the 'spirit of the age,' it is equally dependent upon earlier motifs, visions, and ideals. For what we call nationalism operates on many levels and may be regarded as a form of culture as much as a species of political ideology and social movement." The emergence of Oromo nationalism facilitated the demand for restoration of the Oromo democratic tradition known as *gada* (Jalata, 1998: 27–49). According to Ben Barber (1994: 1), an American photojournalist, "Oromo — with its unique *gadaa* [*sic*] system of organized social responsibilities according to distinct age groups [and generation sets] — is coming back to life." Oromo nationalists have refuted the ideologies of colonialism and racism by returning to their rich cultural traditions. Despite being torn away from their African roots for several centuries and although the restoration of their African heritages has been mainly symbolic and ideological, African American peoplehood and nationalism have been historically and culturally grounded in their African historical memory and their experiences in the United States.

The African American experience of nearly three and one-half centuries of racial slavery and segregation is paralleled by Oromos suffering under Ethiopian settler colonialism, which practiced slavery, semi-slavery (the *naftanya-gabbar* system), tenancy and share cropping, forced villagization, and collectivization for just over a century (see Jalata, 1993). In the capitalist world-economy, only peoples with state sovereignty or meaningful access to state power enjoy political, economic, and cultural advantages. They are recognized internationally and regionally by the imperial interstate system and by multinational organizations and corporations. Business and state elites, who benefit from the resources these linkages afford, suppress colonized peoples and deny them meaningful access to state power (Enloe, 1986: 39). Under slavery, African Americans were totally controlled by plantation and slave owners, as well as the white government and its various institutions. After slavery was abolished, white society, their government, and other institutions exercised such control. Ethiopian colonial settlers, their government, and other institutions have similarly dominated Oromos.

The incorporation of Oromia into Ethiopia made Oromos invisible to the world. Oromos were identified with the Ethiopians colonizers and the existence of Oromos and their national liberation struggle were largely hidden until the early 1990s (Jalata, 1998, 252–290; Lata, 1998: 125–152). The situation of African Americans differed in that their enslavement, segregation, and struggle were widely known to the world. In particular, the Soviet Bloc, China, and almost all revolutionary countries exposed the fallacy of American democracy by citing the condition of African Americans. The world media paid attention to the plight of Black people because they struggled against the United States, one of the hegemonic world powers. Despite the racist system, African American organizations and leaders became known nationally and globally due to American "democracy" and the media. In Ethiopia, the racist dictatorship and its media tried its best to hide Oromo organizations and leaders, the better to destroy them. Nearly half a century passed before Oromo organizations and leaders were known even to the people they were attempting to liberate. Meanwhile, African Americans enjoyed sympathy and support from oppressed people and revolutionary and democratic forces. The American media, which spread racist stereotypes, contributed to the recognition of the African American movement. Until recently, the world media did not recognize the existence, much less the struggle, of the Oromo people. Even today, Oromos in the Diaspora have trouble in introducing themselves and their peoplehood to the world. The lack of television and newspaper coverage and the absence of communication technologies (telephones, direct mail technologies, etc.) negatively affected the Oromo movement, while for African Americans, they played "an important role in movement efforts to attract members, discredit opponents, and influence...the general public" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1998: 716).

Within white and Ethiopian societies and their institutions, racist discourses have justified the hierarchical organization of peoples and the total control of African Americans and Oromos (Jalata, 1999). Thus, the two movements are properly comparable. As white Americans used to derogatorily refer to African Americans as "Niggers," Ethiopians called Oromos "*Galla*," which negatively characterized them as slaves, pagans, and backward. The African American and Oromo movements were produced by similar social-structural and conjunctural factors, including politicized collective and individual grievances, cultural memory, economic and social changes, migration, urban community formation, elite formation, the production and dissemination of liberation knowledge, cognitive liberation, and the development of institutions, organizations, and human agency. According to McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1998: 709), "while broad political, economic, and organizational factors may combine to create a certain 'macro potential' for collective action, that potential can only be realized through complex mobilization dynamics that unfold at either the micro or some intermediate institutional level. At the same time, these mobilization processes are clearly collective, rather than an individual phenomenon." Comparable conditions facilitated the emergence and development of these two movements. However, the duration and the way these two societies developed their collective identities, political consciousness, nationalism, human agencies, and outcomes varied because of their respective social and political environments.

American racial slavery absolutely denied human freedom to the ancestors of African Americans for almost two and one-half centuries; during this period, African American peoplehood developed from the enslaved Africans of various ethnonational origins. The resistance struggles of enslaved Africans in different forms reflect this reality. The foundation of African American consciousness and nationalism was laid by former slaves and their freeborn children between the American Revolution and the American Civil War. But, for African American nationalism to develop fully, new historical conditions that would change the status of enslaved Africans were required. As noted, the Civil War created conducive social-structural and conjunctural factors that helped to change the conditions of African Americans and contributed to the development of African American nationalism. Although former slaves began to build independent institutions such as churches, schools, self-help associations, movements, and the media during the 18th and 19th centuries, it took almost three centuries for African American nationalism to develop. When freed Africans and their children helped Black nationalism to emerge between the 1770s and the 1860s, the persistence of racial slavery, denial of education to slaves, destruction of African cultures, the imposition of Euro-American culture, and the absolute denial of freedom delayed the development of African American nationalism.

Oromos have been under Euro-American-sponsored Ethiopian settler colonialism for over a century. Oromo nationalism developed more quickly than that of African Americans. However, the development of Oromo nationalism lagged behind that of other Africans colonized directly by European powers at the time Oromos were colonized. Minority settlers, who aimed to destroy Oromo peoplehood through genocide, ethnocide, or selective assimilation, colonized Oromos. The Ethiopian colonial government liquidated half the Oromo population (five out of 10 million) and their leadership, and assimilated some collaborators during the last decades of the 19th century. Although the settlers succeeded in gradually co-opting some Oromo elites and in destroying Oromo political, religious, and cultural institutions, they could not totally destroy Oromo culture and language. Nevertheless, the development of Oromo culture and language stagnated and the effective imposition of colonial institutions hindered the development of Oromo nationalism until the 1960s.

The Ethiopian colonial settlers established their main geopolitical centers in Oromia. Through them, racist and colonial policies have relegated the majority Oromos to the status of second-class citizens and exploited their economic and labor resources by denying them access to state power. These policies suppressed the Oromo ethnonational proletariat, which has the capacity to bring about societal transformation. Such garrison cities are surrounded by the Oromo rural masses, who are denied health, educational, and other social services. In the early 1990s, less than 0.01% of Oromos received modern education out of an Oromo population of about 30 million (Baasa, 1994: 30). Garrison cities are geopolitical headquarters from which Ethiopian soldiers have been dispatched to impose colonial rule through enslavement, subjugation, and expropriation of the basic means of production, such as cattle, land, and other valuables. Through them, expropriated goods flowed to local consumers and to the international market (Jalata, 1993: 62). The settlers' *nafxanya-gabbar* system (semi-slavery) was used to divide Oromo farmers among colonial officials, soldiers, and their collaborators to produce agricultural commodities; farmers were also coerced to work without payment for the settlers, intermediaries, and the colonial state for a certain number of days every week.

The Ethiopian state introduced forced recruitment of labor via slavery and the *nafxanya-gabbar* system. "The gun (from Europe) and the gun carrier (from Abyssinia) arrived in the colonies as one unit," Holcomb and Ibssa (1990: 135) note, "and this unit basically expresses the political alliance that created the neftenga-gabbar [*sic*] relationship, the relation that lay at the heart of the emerging Ethiopian colonialism." Whenever Oromo farmers and other colonized peoples failed to provide services or pay taxes or tributes, the settlers enslaved their children or wives. During the colonial wars, millions of Oromos and other colonized peoples were sold (Jalata, 1993: 67–68; Schmitt, 1994: 32–34; Bulcha, 1997: 19–33). The Ethiopian colonialists continued to depopulate Oromia through the slave trade until the 1930s, when the Italians abolished slavery to recruit adequate labor for their agricultural plantations in the Horn of Africa. Emperor Menelik, the founder of the Ethiopian Empire, and his wife at one time owned 70,000 slaves and he was considered "Ethiopia's greatest slave entrepreneur" (Pankhurst, 1968: 75; Marcus, 1975: 73).

Colonialism does not exist for long without collaborators from the colonized population. The Ethiopian state destroyed the Oromo leadership that had resisted Ethiopian colonialism, and co-opted submissive Oromo leaders who accepted the role of intermediary (*balabbat*) in the Ethiopian colonial system. After expropriating three-fourths of Oromo lands, the settlers gave the remaining one-fourth to Oromo intermediaries who were integrated into the colonial system and acted against the interests of the Oromo majority. As a result, most Oromos became landless *gabbars*, tenants, and sharecroppers. The local *balabbat* system sought to maintain and reproduce the Ethiopian colonial system, but its immediate purpose was to facilitate a continuous supply of grain, labor, and other necessary materials for the settlers (Jalata, 1993: 68). Those who gave up their Oromo identity were Ethiopianized (Amharized) collaborators and served the interests of their classes and that of the settlers. Such collaboration by African Americans was not possible since the racial caste system prevented the crossing of racial boundaries until the 1960s.

Just as the American Civil War created new conditions for the African American struggle, conditions in Ethiopia under Italian fascist colonialism between 1935 and 1941 became more conducive by removing all the archaic Ethiopian institutions of slavery and *nafxanya-gabbar*. By abolishing these institutions and introducing wage-labor and colonial capitalism, Italian colonialism created social-structural and conjunctural factors that allowed Oromos to express their grievances and ethnic identity (*Ibid.*: 83–85). The Italians sought to win over the Oromos and mobilize them against the Ethiopians by broadcasting in the Oromo language, using it in the courts and schools (Hassen, 1993: 77), and giving "many of them full rights to the land they had cultivated under Amhara landlords (*Ibid.*: 99–100). Although the British helped to restore the Ethiopian state in 1941, the economic and physical infrastructure laid down by Italian colonialism facilitated the development of colonial capitalism in Oromia. Between the mid-1930s and the 1960s, colonial capitalism produced structural and conjunctural factors for the emergence of Oromo consciousness and nationalism. Newly emergent social forces, including an Oromo movement, began to challenge the Ethiopian state and its archaic ideology.

Despite great obstacles, in the 1960s Oromia began to produce a centralized leadership that was somewhat linked to a farmer rebellion. Although African Americans and Oromos suffered under globally imposed systems of modern slavery and colonialism, the circumstances under which they struggled were shaped by their local conditions. The classical African American nationalists of the 18th and 19th centuries had the right to develop segregated religious, economic, and cultural institutions in urban areas, although they did not have access to state power. They were not allowed to influence the slave population. America's racial and sexist democracy did allow free Blacks and their children to develop separate institutions. Antebellum freed African Americans developed an "organizational infrastructure" that evolved from these indigenous organizations and institutions, such as Black churches, colleges, and fraternities from which the African American movement developed during the first half of the 20th century. These bodies would provide political opportunities for the African American movement.

Oromos have been prevented from developing autonomous institutions under Ethiopian colonial rule. The Ethiopian colonial government allowed Oromo elites to establish a self-help association in 1963, but banned it in 1967 when the association tried to provide educational and health services to Oromo society and openly expressed the collective grievances of the Oromo. Oromo society still lacks organizational infrastructure because their indigenous institutions and organizations have been suppressed and denied freedom of development. In contrast, for African Americans, "the strength and breadth of indigenous organizations [is] the crucial factor in the rapid spread of the movement" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1998: 49–66). State violence and tight control have disabled Oromo society by maintaining what McCarthy (1987: 49–66) calls "infrastructure deficits." Like the African American classical nationalists and white abolitionists who were prevented from having access to the slave population, Oromo activists have been prevented from educating and helping the Oromo masses. Black classical nationalists had the right to organize themselves, but Oromo nationalists are still denied the right to openly organize. Since Oromo society has been penetrated by Ethiopian agents and spies, their informal groups or associational networks, which "serve as the basic building blocks of social movements" (*Ibid.*: 711), have been tightly controlled. Such are the dangerous conditions under which the Oromo national movement, particularly the Oromo Liberation Front and other organizations, have struggled.

Although the U.S. Constitution was racist and endorsed racial slavery, it provided limited political opportunities to freed Blacks. During the 1950s and 1960s, African American leaders and activists effectively used the Constitution to secure rights for Black people. A few white reformers and radicals supported the struggle to abolish slavery, and later to dismantle the legal edifice of racial segregation. The African American movement received support from some white foundations, clergy, and student volunteers. According to Jenkins and Eckert (1986),

> The Kennedy administration's interventions on behalf of civil rights were rooted in at least two concerns: controlling volatile protests, and securing black votes.... Jewish support for the civil rights movement reflected both universalistic concerns about civil liberties and particularistic concerns about racial discrimination.... The United Auto Worker union sponsored civil rights activists...[as did] the National Organization for Women out of the staff's ideological commitments as well as a political stake in the left-labor political coalition.

Of course, white reformers mainly supported the Civil Rights Movement. In contrast, almost all Ethiopians oppose the Oromo national movement. Even the Ethiopian Left opposes Oromo nationalism. Almost all Ethiopians fear that Oromos will take over state power because of their numerical strength unless they are stopped by any means necessary. Oromo nationalists have thus faced a very different condition. Oromos continue to be denied individual and group rights. The Ethiopian state is racist and absolutist, and has only limited room for Ethiopianized Oromo intermediaries.

The Ethiopian state does not respect the rule of law and has liquidated most Oromo nationalists and other activists. Rarely has the international community objected. The Oromo national movement has thus been an underground movement in Oromia, while African Americans operated legally and openly. Comparatively speaking, the nature of the Oromo struggle has been more difficult and dangerous. Several hundred leaders, activists, and sympathizers have been killed or imprisoned. When he was about to be hanged in 1966, Oromo movement leader Mamo Mazamir captured this reality: "I do not die in vain. I am certain that those who sentenced me to death...will receive their due punishment.... It may be delayed, but the inalienable rights of the Oromo people will be restored by the blood of their children (quoted in Hassen, 1998: 211–212). There was widespread repression of African American revolutionaries as well. Since it was covert, little is known about it. Antebellum African American scholars did enjoy the intellectual freedom to write books, newspapers, magazines, and journals that later helped to build African American cultural memory and popular historical consciousness. These scholars laid the basis for a Black cultural nationalism, the Civil Rights Movement, and revolutionary nationalism. Fighting against slavery and segregation, they attempted to capture intellectually the past African cultural memory, evaluated the negative and positive experiences of African Americans in the New World, and rejected American racist cultural elements. They produced an alternative knowledge that laid the foundation of a broader Black radical paradigm that involves an Afrocentric paradigm, one that helped to develop Black cultural nationalism by challenging Eurocentrism. Despite some weaknesses, Afrocentric scholarship and research have challenged the racist and Eurocentric intellectual paradigm. Along with democratic or revolutionary Euro-American scholars and other intellectuals, African American cultural nationalists, civil rights activists, and revolutionary scholars played a leading role in critical cultural studies that helped to challenge the knowledge of domination. African American civil rights activists and revolutionary nationalists formed organizations during the first half of the 20th century to marshal Black human, financial, and intellectual resources to fight for freedom by dismantling American apartheid. This development occurred within urban settings.

Most African Americans moved to cities and became members of the urban working class during the first half of the 20th century. This created conditions conducive to the development of Black institutions and organizations. Indigenous organizations and institutions became the foundations of professional social movements and political organizations. As a result, the African American movement blossomed in the first half of the 20th century and began to galvanize the African American people for collective action. With freedom of the press, association, and access to communications, several Black leaders and organizations emerged. They openly articulated Black consciousness and nationalism and began to fight for the rights of the Black people. In contrast, Oromos are geographically dispersed and impoverished rural people, lacking the political freedom to organize and express themselves. Over 90% of Oromos are poor farmers and herders. Ethiopian settlers dominate garrison cities in Oromia, making Oromos the minority. Beyond the suppression of the Oromo institutions and organizations, these conditions created serious obstacles for the development of Oromo nationalism and collective action. Given the lack of modern communication and transportation networks, and domination of the media (television, radio, and newspapers) by the Ethiopian colonial government, Oromos have limited communications among themselves. Oromos have been denied their own independent media.

The Ethiopian colonial system did not leave a cultural space for Oromos to develop their institutions and educate their children. The few Oromos able to obtain an education were forced to be Amharized or Ethiopianized and to reject their Oromo identity. Educated elements that tried to maintain their Oromo identity and promote the interests of their people were systematically suppressed or liquidated. A few journals and magazines, *The Voice, Kana Bekta, Bakkalcha Oromo, Oromia, Warraqa,* and *Gucca Dargago*, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, were produced clandestinely. Explaining how Oromo writings about Oromos in Ethiopia could lead to death, Hassen (1998: 203–204) states: "Mamo wrote *History of the Oromo*, which was confiscated by the government when his house was searched in 1966. In addition to writing history, Mamo prepared a plan for a new government, a new constitution, and distribution of land among the landless tenants. This was too much for the ruling Amhara elites, and Mamo Mazamir was martyred for producing that document." The denial of intellectual freedom still prevents Oromo scholars and Oromo society from freely developing an alternative knowledge. The Oromo literature that started to mushroom when the OLF joined the Transitional Government of Ethiopia between 1991 and 1992 was suppressed. Oromo scholars, journalists, and musicians attempting to express themselves then and now perish in Ethiopian prisons or are targeted for assassination. Today, Oromo scholars in the Diaspora produce and disseminate an alternative knowledge that is illegal in Ethiopia and Oromia since they are not under the Ethiopian control.

In challenging the treatment of Oromos by Ethiopian knowledge elites and Ethiopia specialists, Diaspora publications on Oromo cultural and social history contest a top-down paradigm to historiography and make the Oromo subjects rather than objects of history. Studying people as subjects or agents helps scholars to avoid producing false knowledge. Ethiopian elites and Euro-American scholars who supported them erased Oromo history and culture from the world map. Therefore, until Oromos intensified their struggle between the 1960s and 1990s, the world viewed the 30 million Oromos as a people "without history" who must disappear through assimilation or other means. "The lack of critical scholarship has inadvertently distorted the human achievements of conquered peoples like the Oromo," Shack (1994: 642–643) notes, "including transformations of their social, cultural, and political institutions." Antebellum African American scholars contributed to the emergence of African American nationalism, whereas Oromo nationalism influenced several Oromo scholars and friends of the Oromos to

produce and disseminate an alternative knowledge in Oromo studies. The emergent Oromo studies in North America and Europe and the formation of the Orom Studies Association in the 1980s in the Diaspora attest to this reality (Jalata, 1998 253–292; Lata, 1998: 125–152). Unlike African Americans, Oromos have n intellectual freedom in Oromia and Ethiopia. Ethiopian colonial elites impos political slavery on Oromos and the conditions for struggle in Oromia have bee hostile and brutal.

All Black revolutionary movements in the U.S. were subject to repression, though at a different level from the Oromo. Since African Americans have been the victims of selective repression, whites and other observers tend to be much less aware of it. Nonetheless, despite segregation and oppression, freed African Americans could openly organize and engage in a "peaceful struggle" for their rights in the North. In the South, terrorist white organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan, prevented such organizing. In Oromia, the violent nature of the Ethiopian state means Oromos have no political rights. Oromo organizations are secret and cannot practice democracy internally or with one another. The idea of tolerating diverse ideologies and approaches and forming a unity of purpose is being explored in the Oromo movement abroad. In contrast, the African American struggle benefited from its ability to engage in open discussion and to establish a unity of purpose among most forces. When the movement reached its peak in the 1950s and 1960s and made legislative advances, the Oromo movement still lagged behind. The African American movement, by legally dismantling American apartheid,

> succeeded in institutionalizing significant gains during the early 1970s. Blacks became an important voter bloc, participating at higher rates than whites of the same socioeconomic status and the number of black office holders rose rapidly.... Although the socioeconomic gap between blacks and whites remained glaringly wide, significant progress against the most overt forms of racial discrimination in education and employment gradually became evident (Jenkins and Eckert, 1986: 816–817).

Moreover, a change in white mentalities deligitimated outright racist expressions and practices.

The Oromo movement has a long way to go to achieve its main objectives. However, it has succeeded in getting Oromia named and recognized within Ethiopian territory, although some territories remain partitioned and incorporated into neighboring regions. The Oromo language has been recognized and is the medium of instruction in elementary school. Unfortunately, the regime has used this language policy to deny Oromos education in other languages, especially English, the medium of instruction in higher education there. Difficulties on the part of Oromo children in passing standard exams prepared in English blocks their access to higher education. In contrast, Tigrayan children are educated in their own language and in English and have better access to higher education in Ethiopia. In addition, the regime has silenced Oromo intellectuals, politicians, and other leaders. For instance, all those connected to *Urjii*, an Oromo independent newspaper, were imprisoned or killed even though it had been officially recognized. Despite these problems, Oromos have made cultural, intellectual, and ideological advances at home and in the Diaspora. Oromia, the Oromo country and nation, emerged from a century of historical obscurity; the Oromo people have achieved a level of cognitive liberation because of the development of Oromo nationalism.

Oromo organizations have begun to officially embrace the Oromo democratic tradition known as the *gada* system. They have started to work toward a united front, the United Liberation Forces of Oromiya. By challenging Ethiopian ideological and cultural hegemony, the Oromo movement has introduced political instability into the Ethiopian Empire, which survives by sheer military force. "Generalized political instability destroys any semblance of a political status quo," McAdam (1997: 177) writes, "thus encouraging collective action by all groups sufficiently organized to contest the structure of a new political order." A landless, colonized people, Oromos lack control over their lives and over their resources, which are in the hands of Ethiopian elites, their collaborators, and the multinational corporations. At the outbreak of war, Oromos must give their lives in defense of the racist Ethiopian state. Some observers estimate that over 500,000 people, half of them Oromos, perished as mine sweepers and cannon fodder in the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea between 1998 and 2000.

With peaceful avenues to change blocked by the Ethiopian government, the only avenue now open to Oromos appears to be armed struggle. The alliance of the West, particularly the United States, and some African countries with the Tigrayan-dominated Ethiopian government has weakened the Oromo movement since 1992. Destruction of emerging indigenous Oromo associations and organizations, such as the Oromo Relief Associations, the Oromo Human Rights League, and various professional, political, and economic organizations, negatively affected the expanding political opportunities for the Oromo national movement. However, the war between Eritrea and the Ethiopian Empire created new opportunities for the Oromo struggle. Oromo political leaders and organizations have attempted to mobilize the people for collective action. The Oromo movement must recognize the importance of the diversity and unity of the Oromo people because "people who participate in collective action do so only when such action resonates with both an individual and a collective identity that makes such action meaningful" (Buechler, 1993: 228). Collective identities are not givens, but "essential outcomes of the mobilization process and crucial prerequisites to movement success" (*Ibid.*).

Through tolerance and critical, democratic discourse, African Americans maintained their diversity and collectivity by creating a unity of purpose among various organizations for collective action. This can be a lesson for the Oromo

movement. "One critical intervening process which must occur to get from oppression to resistance," Buechler (1993: 228) asserts, "is the social construction of a collective identity which unites a significant segment of the movement's potential constituency." As with African Americans, Oromo collective identity has been constructed from past cultural memory, political grievances, popular historical consciousness, and the hope for freedom and democracy. Like African Americans, Oromos have different religions, cultural and economic experiences ideologies, and class divisions. "If the social construction of a collective identity is an ongoing, never-completed task in social movements," Buechler (1993: 229) writes, "this is because movements are often composed of diverse and heterogeneous individuals and subgroups...." To a certain degree, the African American movement's recognition of the importance of collective identity and diversity contributed to its legal success during the first half of the 20th century. Until now the Oromo movement has only focused on collective identity and paid less attention to movement diversity.

Conclusion

This comparative study demonstrates that in the racist capitalist world-system the central contradictions are the racialization/ethnicization of state power and the lack of accountability and multicultural democracy. In the United States and Ethiopia, African Americans and Oromos have struggled to dismantle racial, ethnonational hierarchy, colonial domination, racial hegemony, and related institutions legitimated by the ideology of racism. The African American and Oromo movements show the necessity of constructing a legitimate state that is accountable and democratic, and reflects a multicultural society. Otherwise, colonized and dominated groups (like the Oromo) may face disastrous conditions similar to Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo. Therefore, the solution to racial/ethnonational problems in the global capitalist system lies in recognizing cultural diversity promoting self-determination, and expanding genuine multicultural democracy by eliminating the racialization/ethnicization of state power in the world. Despite the small steps taken toward these goals in the United States, mainly because of the Black movement, the forces of reaction are intent on reversing this important progress. Because of the violent nature of the state controlled by Ethiopian elites aided especially by the United States, the Ethiopian Empire is heading toward more state terrorism, crisis, and disintegration.

The Oromo movement has much to learn from the Black movement, particularly its struggle for revolutionary multicultural democracy by uniting all African American forces. Similarly, the African American movement can learn from the ongoing Oromo Revolution and tradition, as well as the experience of Oromo egalitarian democracy in challenging elitist democracy. This experience implies that African American scholars should reconsider their support of all things Black, especially the glorification of African monarchies or leaders. These African elites have engaged in the destruction of Africa by participating in the slave trade and becoming collaborative classes or "global pimps" that have contributed to the underdevelopment of Africa. Learning about Oromo society, with its complex laws, elaborate legislative tradition, well-developed methods of dispute settlement, and complex methods of raising and training children and youth, as well as about the Oromo national struggle, can present a new perspective for African and African American studies and politics. Progressive African Americans and Oromos can ally with each other at the global level by exchanging political and cultural experiences and recreating an ideology of Pan-Africanism and global solidarity based on the principles of popular democracy and an egalitarian world order.

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