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### African Agenda, July & August 1973

African American Solidarity Committee

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# AFRICAN AGENDA

A Voice Of Afro-American Opinion

Vol. 3, Nos. 7-8

July-August, 1973

Double Issue 20 cents

## Special Issue Devoted To Black America

### Editorial

### Solidarity!

The 10th World Festival of Youth and Students against imperialism starts on July 27 and ends on August 5, 1973 in the German Democratic Republic. The importance of this festival for Afro-American youth and other progressive forces in the U.S. is highlighted by the fact that the festival's main concern is building solidarity among youth against imperialism, racism and exploitation. Over 20,000 delegates from 100 countries will attend workshops, sporting and cultural events. Many of the African Liberation movements including the A.N.C. of South Africa, FRELIMO of Mozambique, PAIGC of Guinea-Bissau, MPLA of Angola, SWAPO of Namibia will be represented along with youth from other African countries. The U.S. delegation will contain close to 300 people including representation from the African-American Solidarity Committee.

The mobilization of youth, especially Afro-American young people, and other youth in the fight against imperialism and colonialism is an important aspect for the development of anti-imperialist consciousness and for consolidating the world revolutionary struggle against exploitation and racism. The struggles of Afro-Americans and African youth is not separated from the struggle of other youth in other countries against U.S. imperialism and neo-colonialism. Our struggles for freedom and self-determination is the same struggle, but on a different front than progressive forces in Africa, Asia and Latin America are waging. If we view our struggle as special and unique, and without the support of the world progressive forces, then in effect, we are degenerating the Black liberation movement to separatism and isolation.

Afro-American support for other struggles in the world objectively aids our struggle since we are part of the anti-imperialist front. The world wide peace movement, which included the participation of Afro-Americans, morally and materially helped the national liberation movement in Vietnam and played an important part in bringing the first stage of the war in Vietnam to an end. The world wide anti-apartheid movement, expressed in various boycotts and United Nations sanctions against the Republic of South Africa, the African Liberation Day demonstration of over 100,000 Afro-Americans and the different world-wide sports boycotts have exposed and isolated the fascist South African government, and brought moral and material aid to the African liberation movements.

An outstanding example of the world-wide anti-imperialist movement in supporting Afro-Americans was the support given to sister Angela Davis. Demonstrations were held in the Socialist countries, Europe, Asia, Latin America, in Tanzania, Guinea, Egypt and in other Africa countries in support of Angela Davis freedom. Arab women sent letters of support. The African liberation movements such as the ANC reported and published the Angela Davis case to millions of Africans. Because of this support from Africa and other progressive countries, the Angela Davis case became a focal point for millions of people in the world against political repression in the U.S.

The struggle of Afro-American youth and students in alliance with the working class, for better schools, jobs, health facilities, etc. is a component part of the spirit of proletarian internationalism, of world-wide working class solidarity. The staff of the *African Agenda* and the African-American Solidarity Committee fully support the 10th World Festival of Youth and Students against Imperialism.

### Racism In The U.S. Historical Views 1776-1910

Racism, as expounded by American bourgeois ideologists, has been a doctrine which purports the biological inferiority primarily of non-white peoples. Since the inception of the republic in 1776, it has been used by the capitalist class to facilitate the exploitation of the working class and to justify the social inequalities which exist between white and non-white as well as between rich and poor in the United States.

The principal aim of the 1776 bourgeois revolution was to expedite the formation of a national economy, but it also established the objective conditions for the realization of democratic rights. These rights included enfranchisement, the right to participate in trade unions and emancipation of slaves. They were not formally achieved by the entire working class until the twentieth century and as yet virtually none have been conceded in practice by the bourgeoisie.

Following the 1776 revolution the bourgeoisie consolidated its political gains in the 1787 constitution which merchants and planters wrote with the intention of protecting their own class interests. Planters, for instance, needing a great deal of land, advocated government appropriation of all territory east of the Mississippi River including land occupied by American Indian tribes. The slave mode of production adopted by planters to cultivate the cash crops of the southern United States required a large, inexpensive and enduring labor force. Planters consequently insisted that the Constitution not only sanction but also prescribe measures to protect the institution of slavery.

Slaves were commodities just as were hoes and mules. Like these instruments

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## Triple Threat Against Black Workers

by Carl Blouie

The following article is from the journal *Political Affairs*, April, 1972. Part one of this two part series is printed below.

Of the nine million Black men and women in the work force of the United States—2,700,000 of them in basic industry—2,004,000 are classified as "operatives." This heading covers all those involved in assembly line, drill press lift and other machine operations. In the steel, auto, rubber and meat packing industries, taken as a whole, nearly one out of every six operatives is Black. These are the basic production workers in industry, employed at the very heart of the production process.

In terms of pay and skills needed to perform their tasks, there are two other classifications ranged below operatives—laborers and service workers. While definitions vary from industry to industry, generally operatives are classified as semi-skilled, while the last two classifications are regarded as unskilled.

In industry after industry, when the three categories—operatives, service workers and laborers are taken by themselves, the percentage of Black workers is double or even triple what it is for the industry as a whole. In the automobile industry, for instance, Blacks make up 13.6 per cent of the total work force, but when the three lowest categories are separated out, the proportion climbs to approximately 21 per cent.

Companies and locations differ. Many auto plants in Michigan have from 30 to 50 per cent Black workers or more. In 1966, a full 23.1 per cent of the total Chrysler Corporation work force was Black. A similar situation exists in the steel industry, where in 1966 12.8 per cent of the entire work force was Black, while in the operative, laborer and service categories the proportion was 21 per cent.

In the petroleum industry the Black workers are 3.9 per cent of the total, while in the three classifications they are over 9 per cent. In aerospace, the overall figure 3.1 per cent rises to nearly 13 per cent. In the rubber industry the figure for operatives, service workers and laborers is approximately 14 per cent as against 8.3 per cent overall. Similar statistics can be cited for other industries.

We do not look upon this concentration of Black men and women at the focal point of industrial production as a sign of weakness in the struggle for liberation. Rather, our starting point is to see in the working masses of Black peo-

ple a source of strength due to the fact that, unlike most oppressed peoples in the world, we have a large industrial work force—a strength that flows from being strategically placed, in concentrated numbers, at the very center of the productive mechanism of the system.

The problem most of the working people of the world confront is making the adjustment to new technological realities. The skills, talents and physical qualities necessary in one stage of industrial development are not adequate for the next. To a lesser or greater extent, depending on the nature of the social and economic system, men and women are being prepared for functioning under new conditions. The question is: Can the same claim be made for Black workers in the U.S.? Are they part of the transformation to a work force of a new type, or are they in danger of moving backward to a marginal if not superfluous status in the economy? How real is that possibility and what should be our response?



Also to be considered is the fact that we live in a society which is in a state of serious economic crisis. It is not the most opportune time to confront the above problem, for it is clear that the "last to be hired and first to be fired" are also the last to be consulted and the first to be victimized by those who control the economy.

What confronts us today is a question of a serious nature. The very proletarianization we have been describing is under attack. At a time when tremendous alterations are being made in the system of industrial production and the material basis is being laid for an expansion of affluence and the raising of manual labor to a qualitatively higher and more rewarding and creative level, the forces of production and finance under capitalism are being pitted against the Black worker and thereby against all Black people. Since 94 per

cent of all Black people in the United States are workers, what we are confronted with might be called the steady "lumpenization" of a people.

The threat comes from many sources and is reflected in many areas of social activity. Here we shall deal with only three: 1) the challenge to Black people presented by the rapidly expanding scientific and technological revolution; 2) the growing concentration of finance, the growth of the multinational corporations and the appearance of huge diversified conglomerates; and 3) governmental policies designed to preserve a high-profit financial system which, it shall be demonstrated, acts adversely on Black people.

There is ample evidence that the ebb and flows of the U.S. economy have had, and continue to have, dramatic effects on Black people. Whenever the economy has been in a state of growth and the job market has expanded, Black people—Black workers in particular—have made advances in terms of employment and income. In times of stagnation or recession, Black people awake to find the previous gains erased. Thus, when thousands of workers were laid off due to the downturn in the auto industry in 1967, an estimated 80 per cent of them were Black. However, it is not, as we shall seek to show, the general economic situation and the health of the industries involved that account for the thousands now being laid off in the steel industry or the thousands out of work in auto. Rather, it is radical changes in the nature of the production process that pose the greatest threat to the Black worker today. The significance of this lies in the fact that losses through the ups and downs of the economy are generally temporary, and, as in the past, can be recouped, but damage resulting from extensive structural changes are permanent.

### *The Scientific-Technological Revolution*

In most of industry, the scientific and industrial revolution is reducing the number of jobs available and producing unemployment and permanent work force dislocations. The jobs affected are, in the main, in those sections of industry where Black workers are concentrated. While it is not always possible adequately to determine the cause of a decrease in employment in an industry, few would contest the fact that a major portion of the job loss in basic industry today, and over the past two decades, has been due to technological

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## Black Workers

change. Because of the nature of such changes and the places where they have occurred, Black people have been especially affected.

Employment in the rubber industry peaked in 1946 at 143,000 and hit a low of 97,370 in 1963. Some 75,000 production workers were the hardest hit by the industry's employment downturn. In 1952, production workers were 81 per cent of the work force, in 1967 only 68.2 per cent. Since Black workers in the industry are overwhelmingly concentrated in the production areas, they have felt the brunt of the shift to new types of production. Herbert R. Northrup has observed that these changes were brought on by "an intense mechanization, automation and methods improvement program." (Herbert Northrup, *The Negro in the Rubber Industry*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1969.)

In the petroleum industry, as the size of the work force has declined over the past two decades, the percentage of Black employment has not decreased, but the absolute number of Black blue-collar workers has gone down. While technological change has had only a minimal effect on certain sections of the petroleum industry, as in sales, where Blacks are not involved to any appreciable extent, employment in everything from drilling to refining (where Blacks are concentrated), after reaching a peak in 1953, has gone downhill ever since. The fact that during the two-year period 1966-68, 182 Black workers acquired jobs as craftsmen in the 17 largest oil companies and additional Black women were hired for clerical positions might be considered an advance in terms of upgrading. But Black blue-collar employment fell by 112 in the same period.

The auto industry is said to be the largest single employer of Black labor in the country. In both this and the steel industry Black workers have not experienced the same decline in the work force as in the other industries surveyed. In steel, the percentage of Black workers in the work force has remained pretty steady over the past ten years. In auto there was a significant increase in Black employment from 1950 until the present. But the statistics do not take into account those laid off currently in the two industries nor the number who only work part of the year due to periodic layoffs. What's more, the full impact of contemplated technological changes in the industries has yet to be registered.

Some indication of what might lie

ahead in steel and auto is shown by the situation in the steel industry. While the number of Black operatives increased from 29,557 (17.1 per cent) in 1963 to 30,719 (17.7 per cent) in 1966, the number of laborers remained about the same—19,093 (27.0 per cent) in 1963 and 19,356 (27.7 per cent) in 1966. In contrast to overall growth in industrial employment during this period, there appears to be a decline in the unskilled work force in steel production. Richard L. Rowan says it is not likely to pick up because "the increasing use of high pressure blast furnaces and basic oxygen furnaces, oxygen in open hearth and electric furnaces and continuous casting equipment" will result in greater operating efficiency and slackening in the demand for unskilled employees.



However, much bigger things are on the drawing boards. Totally automated steel mills are technically feasible and are already in operation in parts of the Soviet Union. As the point is reached where the introduction of new equipment is as profitable as the current usage of labor, such advanced techniques can be expected to make an appearance. The Nixon Administration's drive for higher productivity and the tax inducements to spur it will no doubt

bring about a situation in the auto industry where it is possible to build what is in effect an auto assembling machine. Already the Ford Motor Company has constructed in Britain a parts warehouse which requires no personnel to fill and deliver orders, this being accomplished by a computerized system involving unmanned fork lifts.

The introduction of an automated process takes place when it becomes impractical or impossible to raise the rate of exploitation of the current work force, when the cost of job-destroying machinery is lower than the wage bill for the workers to be made redundant. One reason the auto industry has not felt the full force of automation is that it has been staved off by a particularly cruel and intense form of exploitation affecting primarily Black workers.

A Black caucus organizer in Detroit has referred to this form of superexploitation as "nigger-mation." John Watson, formerly of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, described the process as hiring "one Black man to do the job that was previously done by three or four white men." He said:

There is a constant struggle which is going on inside the automobile plants in which the foreman and the supervisor are constantly attempting to work the men harder. They are constantly attempting to speed up the production line. They are constantly attempting to cut down the number of people who work the lines. ("Revolutionary Black Workers: An Interview With John Watson," *Fifth Estate*, June, 1969.)

Watson's contention is dramatically born out by Chrysler Corporation statistics. In 1956, when there were far fewer Black workers employed at the company, it produced 962,000 cars. In 1967, the production figure had grown to 1,576,000 cars. The same number of workers, 94,000 worked for the company during both years. The intervening years saw a big influx of Black workers between the ages of 19 and 24. In 1956 Chrysler profits were \$42.5 million and by 1967 they had risen to \$355.7 million.

In addition, the employment picture for Black workers in these and other basic industries is often adversely affected by other factors, such as plant location and industry ownership concentration, which more often than not combine with the advance in technology to put the lower-paid, less skilled and Black worker in a particularly precarious position. We shall have more to say about this later.

### EDITOR'S Notes

The staff of the *African Agenda* will be on vacation during the month of August. The current double issue includes the August edition.

## New Stage In The Afro-American Liberation Movement

It is not generally known outside the United States that, throughout this country's history, Afro-Americans have always been in the forefront of struggles to advance democracy. Afro-Americans have been the most consistent democrats among all the nationalities in this multi-national country.

This historic role is not the result of some special, biological endowment, but is a result of our socio-economic position in the society. We have always been workers of one sort or another (over 97 per cent of our population are either in the proletarian class or in the industrial reserve army of unemployed workers).

Working people are usually the most consistent democrats. Moreover, Afro-Americans have always been super-exploited and oppressed workers, deprived of that material base for opportunism that characterizes certain sections of white workers in this country—the so-called labor aristocracy category. The number of Afro-American workers in the labor aristocracy is miniscule.

As is well known, Afro-American workers are the sons, daughters and grandchildren of ex-slaves, sharecroppers and tenant farmers. In fact, we were predominantly rural, super-exploited sharecroppers and tenant farmers until we were drawn into the industrial urban areas by World Wars I and II and the subsequent Cold War. Therefore, we were transferred from super-exploited farm workers living in the South (73% of Afro-American population in 1940) to super-exploited industrial workers in large cities. Today, Afro-American farmers constitute less than 4 per cent of our working rural population—an amazing social transformation.

The Afro-American liberation movement subjectively reflected the stages in the development of our socio-economic position. It was a national-democratic movement struggling to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution in this country by destroying pre-capitalist production relations—a semi-feudal, semi-slave relation in the economic base—and by extending democratic rights to an oppressed nationality in the superstructure.

That movement was given the appropriate title, the "civil rights movement." Hence, the movement was a general democratic movement for formal equality, conducted under conditions when U.S. capitalism leader of the world imperialist system, was the dominant force in history.

Of course, the imperialist system has

lost the initiative in the world with the Great October Revolution of 1917. The dominant position of the USA no longer exists. In fact, this country is now on a descending line of development that can only be reversed by a struggle of all nationalities in this country to advance democracy via the historically tested mechanism of the anti-monopoly coalition.

The call of progressive Afro-Americans for an anti-imperialist front, for example the actions of the African Liberation Day Committees, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and others, in support of African liberation is an important link in the anti-monopoly coalition that felicitously combines the pursuit of our national interests with the international movement for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism.

We see, therefore, that the Afro-American liberation movement, at this critical moment in U.S. history, is taking its accustomed role as the leader, along with other oppressed nationalities, of the mass democratic struggles in this country. This movement, national in form

and international in content, will require that the working class of the many European nationalities in this country shed their rampant racist and nationalist-chauvinist tendencies to add the necessary link—the strongest link in terms of numbers—in the struggle to advance democracy in this country. Given the level of social development in the USA, our struggle for advanced democracy must combine class, national and social tasks.

The Afro-American movement's struggle for general democracy, led from above by the petit-bourgeois strata under the auspices of the NAACP and the Urban League, ended with the historic Supreme Court decision on school desegregation in 1954—a great victory in the superstructure. However, due to the fact that we were not conscious democrats, which required massive ideological and political education of cadres and rank-and-file workers, we were gaining some political rights but losing the fight to improve economically.

This same phenomenon occurred in the post-Civil War days. Then, and now, Afro-Americans were becoming mayors, congressmen, Cabinet officers, federal and state officials while the basic economic structure of this economy was being eroded by a reactionary domestic

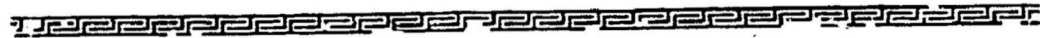




## News Briefs

Ohio — Foote Mineral Co.'s Steubenville plant is closing down because it "cannot compete with foreign markets". It is one of several US plants that have been affected by the importation of chrome and ferro-chrome from Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in defiance of United Nations sanctions. Other plants where workers have been hurt by lay-offs are Calbert City, Kentucky; Woorstock, Tennessee; Alloy and Graham, West Virginia; Marietta and Beverly, Ohio; Niagara Falls, N.Y.; and Tacoma, Washington. Recently on June 9 the International Longshoremen's Association in Baltimore refused to unload chrome from the Rhodesian ship the "African Meteor."

Mozambique — The Portuguese colonialists taking a cue from Nixon's Guam Doctrine of "Asians fight Asians" is now increasingly Africanizing its colonial army in Mozambique. Already the army is 58 percent African, and sixty percent is the goal for the end of the year. Most of the Black soldiers have not seen any action and are stationed in southern Mozambique. FRELIMO (The Liberation Movement in Mozambique) has also acquired 122mm Russian made rockets similar to the kind used in Vietnam to destroy U.S. planes. Already Portugal is having difficulty maintaining its supremacy in the air.



program of socio-economic reforms. And in both instances, a reactionary foreign policy—nascent imperialism in the past and the Cold War policy of the present—undermined the struggle to advance democracy.

During the last 20 years, the New Deal program has been emasculated in the fields of tax legislation, labor law, land policy, regulatory controls of monopoly capital, agricultural legislation, ad nauseam. Even the Post Office has been denationalized!

This is not to say that the victories in civil rights were unimportant, but that they were limited in scope because they were the social product of a movement under the influence of the liberal credo.

What happened during the last 20 years? The welfare rolls rose from 3½ million recipients to 8½ million at the time of Nixon's inauguration in 1968. Today the welfare rolls are over 15 million and would be larger if eligible recipients were not being forced off of the rolls. Afro-Americans constitute 44% of the eligible welfare recipients—30% of our population.

The educational level of the Afro-American community is lower than it was in 1950. Even our average life span is dropping sharply! A Dept. of Agriculture study of 20 years of land utilization duly noted that millions of acres of land tilled by Afro-Americans were removed from cultivation in the Southeast, while millions of acres of land tilled by super-exploited Mexican-American workers were brought into cultivation in the Southwest.

In a word, in the material base of our existence, we have been going backward for 20 years.

Thus, the struggle in the 70's and 80's must be fundamentally different than in the past. We will have to discard worn-

out slogans that have not engendered ideological and political actions that could reverse this backward motion. Of course, the correct slogan for the general movement is the slogan "proletarian internationalism"—indeed, it is the correct slogan for the epoch.

Since 1954, the Afro-American liberation movement has taken the form of mass democracy. It was predominantly centered in the South among peasants and semi-proletarians and led by Martin Luther King and others. This movement culminated in the switch of King's focus of political action from the rural areas to the large urban centers where he began to focus on the truly revolutionary class—the industrial proletariat.

In addition, he moved beyond civil rights to the question of human rights. He moved early into the struggle for peace in Viet Nam and broadened the human rights struggle to include poor whites and other oppressed nationalities.

But as Lenin once said, at a time when his country was in a deep crisis, in a book appropriately entitled, *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Avoid It*, "Can we advance democracy, if we fear to advance towards socialism?" Of course not.

Advanced democracy is the form of transition to socialism for metropolitan countries and, in a multinational state like the United States, one of the component parts of advanced democracy is the exercise of the right to self-determination of all nationalities.

Advanced democracy can *only* be the transitional form to the social revolution if ideological relations are brought into the Afro-American liberation movement, the trade union movement, peace movement, student movement, etc., through mass political education.

We can no longer advance democracy by worshipping at the throne of spontaneity in our domestic variety of "tactics as process"—a notion that people will stumble into socialism simply by being put into motion in the streets or by signing countless petitions.

The ruling class also recognizes that this country is at a crisis point in its history, and that class is seeking out the forms of transition to the capitalist counter-revolution. Their agents are bringing ideological confusion into the mass movements to thwart the unity of working class nationalities in this country. They are promoting retrograde forms of nationalism among white ethnics, Afro-Americans, Jews, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, Asians and others. Lenin was correct when he said of the national program of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, that if progressives vacillate on the national question, the ruling class will bring it up and use it against the working class movement.

This writer feels that after the assassinations of the progressive nationalist Malcolm X and the great revolutionary democrat Martin Luther King, the ruling class consciously instituted policies aimed at preventing the Afro-American movement from advancing beyond mass, spontaneous democratic struggles by injecting ideological confusion into it.

The Afro-American movement will have to achieve clarity on the following questions in the next decade:

1) Why is it necessary in the all-class movement for Afro-American liberation for the Afro-American workers to gain the leading role in unity with other stratas?

2) How can we move the nationality question beyond general, nebulous phrases with provisional forms of implementing the democratic principle of self-determination?

3) What will be the new forms of democratic struggles that can grapple with and defeat the new forms of reaction manifested in the seemingly decentralized New Federalism program of the Nixon administration, a program that actually centralizes power in the hands of an even smaller number of monopoly capitalists than had ruled before?

4) How can we raise the level of ideological struggle beyond the two positions "integration vs. separation" (both of which are nationalist alternatives—the former national nihilism and the latter national exclusivity) to the necessary internationalist position of self-determination of all working nationalities in an international, socialist culture.

of production, they were considered to be part of the objective conditions of production. The purpose of the slave system was the development not of the slaves but of the plantation system. Although slaves were compelled to breed, they were purposely uneducated, ill-housed, ill-clothed, ill-fed, whipped into submission and literally worked to death. Their humanity was denied by racist apologists for slavery so that their labor power could be more fully exploited and their surplus produce entirely appropriated by their owners.

The rate of profit accruing to planters was at least as great as that enjoyed by investors in other areas of production. Planters generally pocketed a return of 4.5 to 8 per cent on investments in their agricultural operations and a return of 7.1 to 8.1 per cent from raising and selling slaves. Returns earned by hiring out slaves to perform both skilled and unskilled labor ranged from 9.5 to 18.5 per cent. These last figures were higher than those quoted for alternative investments.

On the eve of the Civil war of 1861, there were only about 350,000 planters in the southern United States. The decided majority in that part of the country was the 5.3 million poor whites. Forced to eke out a meager existence from the less fertile lands of the South and denied the right to vote, the poor whites were overwhelmed by the economic and political power of the planters which in the last analysis derived from slave labor. Most lived out their lives on the verge of starvation and were sustained largely by the rantings of southern demagogues who expounded the doctrine of "white supremacy:" his physical, moral, political and economic condition notwithstanding, a white man, just because he was white, was always better than a Black man. Because of their adherence to this dogma, poor whites did not seek to destroy the hegemony of planters during the Civil War but rather became the henchmen of prominent slave-owners who were determined to expand the slave system. They failed to understand that their interests coincided with those of the slave.

The major incentive of northern states for waging the Civil War was to realize the primary objective of the 1776 revolution. In 1860 the southern states hardly participated in the national market and had uncomfortably strong economic ties with Great Britain. Acting through their political arm, the Republican Party, northern industrialists emancipated the slaves and instituted universal manhood suffrage enfranchising poor white

men as well as freed Black men in order to crush the economic and political strength of the former slave owners.

By 1870 at least half of the plantations in the southern United States were either owned or controlled by northern industrialists and bankers. Sharecroppers, furnished the means of production and obliged to deliver as much as two-thirds of their crop to the planters, dominated the work force on these plantations. Most of them were former slaves.

The major investment of northern concerns was in railroads. These transportation facilities were constructed in order to make southern raw materials more readily available to northern industry and to speed the shipment of northern manufactured goods to the South. Northerners had used Asians since the 1850's to build railroads linking the eastern United States with the western part of the country but in the South they chose to exploit the Black man paying him incredibly low wages.



Working on the railroads was not a job fit for a white man.

Having acquired a strong economic hold on the South and anxious to embark on imperialistic campaigns, northern finance capitalists forged a devastating partnership with surviving southern planters to rule the South. Yielding to pressure from the native southern planters, northern monopolists returned control of the political machinery of the South over to them and acquiesced to the passage of laws setting literacy and property qualifications for voters. These laws effectively disenfranchised many black men. Those who were not were terrorized often at the point of a gun into relinquishing their voting rights. Spurred on by the maxims of "white supremacy," the poor whites supported these measures despite the fact that they too, being virtually landless and illiterate, had been disenfranchised. The monopolists also accented to the institution of Jim Crowism establishing segregated public facilities and to the use of lynching as a device to force Blacks to work for lower wages.

## I Have Seen

by Antar Sudan Katara Mberi

i have seen the worst  
this rich world has had to offer  
waitin at airports  
where they unloaded silver  
caskets from the war  
they lost

i have seen it all!

standin  
in Chicago  
napalmed  
in Vietnam  
kicked out  
of Washington  
shot down  
in Sharpeville  
dispossessed  
and laid to rest  
in Bangladesh  
fightin back  
in Harlem

you name it!

if its bad  
i can claim it.

but, even so  
i've seen clear skies  
in my baby's eyes  
and know  
i too seen  
the best  
this ol poor world  
as always offered

Working conditions and terrorism precipitated black migration in large numbers to urban areas in the South during the 1880's. It was at this time that blacks began to offer substantial competition to white craftsmen and wage earners. Black workers had no other choice than to underbid white workers to obtain employment. Barred from participation in trade union activities by white chauvinists, blacks were generally ignorant of the import of trade union activities and allowed themselves to be used as strikebreakers.

It was not until the onset of the world wars, however, that blacks began to move out of the South to man the industries of the north-eastern and mid-western United States. Cities in these sections of the country absorbed 70 percent of the black migrants. It was during this period that Blacks became an urban people. In 1910 40 percent of the Black population lived in cities. The percentage had increased to 70 percent by 1960.



## National Anti-Imperialist Conference In Solidarity With African Liberation

On July 7, 1973, the steering committee for the National Anti-Imperialist Conference in Solidarity With African Liberation met to continue the work of the June 16, 1973 planning meeting. The June planning meeting called for a national conference to be held September 28, 29, 30 in Chicago.

As reported in the last issue of the *African Agenda* the projected fall conference will serve as a basis for crystallizing the anti-imperialist sentiment of many Afro-Americans into a national movement. This movement will be centered in the Black community, and will focus on developing actions of solidarity with the struggles for national liberation on the African continent.

The steering committee acted on proposals from its Labor, Editorial, and Educational subcommittees. Plans were

made to seek the support and participation of all segments of the Black community and, most importantly, Black workers. The Call for the fall conference was reviewed; copies of the final draft will be circulated throughout the communities.

A speakers bureau designed to inform people about the upcoming conference was established. A staff was elected to publish an information bulletin that will publicize the fall conference.

The steering committee will extend an official invitation to African liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity as well as to numerous independent African nations to attend the conference. Anyone interested in attending the conference or would like more information should contact the *African Agenda*...

sex and race category.

Furthermore, Black women workers are more likely than white women workers to be relegated to low-skilled, low wage jobs. In 1971, almost 59% of minority women in the labor force aged 16 years and over were employed as service workers, private household workers or operatives (factory workers) as compared with 32% of White women

The job category with the greatest percentage of Black women in 1971 was service workers (27.0%). The job category with the greatest percentage of White women was clerical workers (35.6%).

Also, minority women are more likely than White women to be in the labor force, to be working wives and to be working mothers

In 1973, there are only three Black women in the U.S. Congress (a fourth was elected to replace her husband who was killed in a plane crash). None of them are in the U.S. Senate. There are very few Black women judges in America, none of whom serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. There are no Black women in the Presidential Cabinet. Neither the Republican nor the Democratic Party have ever run a Black woman or man for President or Vice-President of the U.S. Only the Communist Party, U.S.A. has done so (Charlene Mitchell was their Presidential candidate in 1968). Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to wage an independent bid for the Presidency within the Democratic Party, lost at the 1972 Democratic Convention. In essence, there are no Black women in the decisive national bodies and positions in America. This is "equality" under American capitalism 110 years after "Emancipation" of the slaves.

It is no wonder that Black women, from Phillis Wheatley to Angela Davis and others triply oppressed in America, have historically been involved in struggles for progress from slavery to the present.

### Class Oppression Is Primary

Of the three kinds of oppression that Black women are subjected to, class oppression is the primary one to be destroyed. To bring an end to class oppression would eliminate the foundation of racism and sex exploitation. What is class oppression?

A class society is divided into antagonistic groups that have opposing socioeconomic interests. The basic reason for their irreconcilable socioeconomic interests. The basic reason for their irreconcilable socioeconomic differences is that one group (class) maintains private

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## Oppression Against Black Women

Generally speaking, the masses of Black women in the U.S. share three such circumstances. We experience extreme exploitation as members of the working class, as members of the Black national minority, and as females. Class, race and sex oppression have been the historical experience of Black women from slavery to the present. The triple oppression of Black women persists today even though laws have been passed "guaranteeing" equality. The fact is that capitalism in America combines equality before the law with economic, social and political inequality in practice. Even the conservative socioeconomic data issued by the U.S. government documents the triple oppression of Black women. According to "Facts

on Women Workers of Minority Races" issued in June 1972 by the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Dept. of Labor, the median wage or salary income in 1970 was:

- \$8,254—White Men
- \$5,485—Minority Men  
(the vast majority are Blacks)
- \$3,870—White Women
- \$3,285—Minority Women  
(the vast majority are Blacks)

Not only do Black women have the lowest income on the average of any other group, but we also experience the highest rates of unemployment. As shown in Table A, unemployment among minority women continued to increase in 1971 and was the highest in every age,

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, BY SEX, RACE, AND AGE, 1970 AND 1971

Race and age	Women		Men	
	1971	1970	1971	1970
<b>Minority:</b>				
Total 16 years and over	10.8	9.3	9.1	7.3
16 to 19 years	35.5	34.4	28.9	24.9
20 years and over	8.7	6.9	7.2	5.6
<b>White:</b>				
Total 16 years and over	6.3	5.4	4.9	4.0
16 to 19 years	15.2	13.3	15.1	13.7
20 years and over	5.3	4.4	4.0	3.2



## Recommended Books

(continued from page 7)

1. *Strategy for a Black Agenda*, by Henry Winston. An excellent book on issues that affect Africa and Afro-Americans. International Publishers, N.Y. Price, \$2.25.
2. *Africa: Politics, Economy, Ideology*, by A. Iskenderov. An analysis of the changes in social, class and political forces in Africa. Imported Publications, Chicago, Price, \$1.00.
3. *Puerto Rican Bibliography*, Enrique Bravo. This annotated, bilingual bibliography lists over a thousand publications on the Puerto Rican in all aspects of life. Urban Center of Columbia University, N.Y. Price, \$5.00.
4. *Native Americans*, by William Meyer. A good account of the Indian resistance movement in the U.S. today. International Publishers, N.Y. Price, \$1.25.

## Black Women

and subsistence (land, natural resources, machinery, factories, etc.) and exploits the other class (working class) to keep this control. The other class do not own the means of production and, therefore, are forced to work under exploitative conditions in order to live and support their families.

In early America the plantation economy required productive land and slave labor. The plantation owners were a very small class, owning the means of production, while the vast majority of southerners were slaves. The slave economy existed on the basis of the exploitation of Black labor without regard for the life or social relations of the slaves.

In American slavery, not only were Black women, men and children forced and driven under brutal and inhuman conditions to create tremendous profits for the white slaveowners, but also most Black women slaves were sexually abused against their will. Not only did the slaveowners want to produce more slaves, but they also attempted to break the will of the slave community to struggle by abusing the Black women and severely punishing any Black person who tried to intervene. Angela Davis relates this in *The Black Woman in Slavery*. "In its political contours, the rape of the black woman was not exclusively an attack upon her. Indirectly, its target was also the slave community as a whole. Clearly the master hoped that once the black man was struck by his manifest inability to rescue his woman from the sexual assaults of the master, he would begin to experience deep-seated doubts about his ability to resist at all. Yet, it could not succeed in its intrinsic aim of stifling the impetus towards struggle." It was on the foundation of the American slave economy that capitalism in America was built.

According to Donald L. Noel in *The Origins of American Slavery and Racism*, racism in America was far more a product than a cause of the class formation of slavery. "Exploitation alone is not a sufficient cause of racism. Exploitation and slavery have existed without racism. Racism arose, in response to slavery, as a means of justifying the extreme economic exploitation of blacks which was the crux of slavery. . . . In

the case of American slavery, the material fact of gross exploitation combined with an egalitarian value system to produce racism. The American egalitarian creed . . . the values of equality, brotherhood and justice were of increasing significance in colonial America. The sharp inconsistency—indeed, the blatant clash—between slavery and these values necessitated a racist ideology to justify and thereby assume the preservation of a profitable institution which overtly denied these central values." The emergence of an antislavery movement in the last quarter of the 16th century in turn triggered the necessity to create a rationale to justify or defend slavery. "Eventually racism became an autonomous value complex with a significance of its own apart from the institution which generated . . . It was institutionalized in the eighteenth century."

American capitalism is now in its monopoly stage. There are primarily two classes in America today, the ruling class (bourgeoisie) and the working class (proletariat). The ruling class is a small group of extremely wealthy white corporation and banking executives and military-industrial giants who maintain private monopoly ownership of the means of production (factories, land, natural resources, utilities, etc.) The ruling class is primarily interested in making profits and maintaining their control by any means necessary. They exert tremendous pressure on the state (U.S. government) to protect their class interests.

On the other hand, the working class is the multi-national majority of the American people. They do not own the means of production but provide the labor power that creates the surplus value (profits) of the ruling class.

Certainly, Black people are a part of the working class, but are super-exploited due to the nature of racism in America. As pointed out above, Black women experience class, race and sex exploitation. Racism and sexism are perpetuated by various means by the ruling class to divide and weaken the potentially strong working class in an effort to maintain the exploitative status quo. Only when class exploitation is eliminated thereby negating the material bases for race and sex exploitation will Black women share true equality with men in society.

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