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International Connection, Domestic Radicalization: The Connection Between East Asia and Black Radicals

A Thesis by

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Orange, CA

Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in War and Society

May 2022

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April 2022

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“My poetry’s living like The God that I fall back on, and all praise is due to Allah for such an illustrious platform.” -Jay Electronica

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ABSTRACT

International Connection, Domestic Radicalization: The Connection Between East Asia and Black Radicals
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Utilizing newspapers, journals and pamphlets, this thesis examines the ways that the Black Power movement, primarily in the 1960's connected with East Asian countries. Differentiating between the Black Power and the Civil Rights groups, this thesis will show why and how the Black Power movement needed international allies such as China and Vietnam. Showing that the connection between the East Asia and Black Power groups was due to racism, imperialism, and Maoism, I argue that Black Power individuals/groups were influenced by East Asia and saw these countries as a blueprint for revolution in America. This thesis also analyzes the significance of this connection amidst the Cold War and the Soviet-Sino split. Furthermore, this thesis will prove that without the connection to East Asia, the Black Power movement would not have been as successful as it was.

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Introduction

When Karl Marx published the “Communist Manifesto” in 1848, he never knew that his work would change the world for centuries to come. Stating that there should only be one class of people, the working class, and that private property should be abolished, Marx brought to the world a new philosophy. His most basic message was that workers of the world could unite against their bourgeois oppressors and overcome them in a revolution that would result in a dictatorship of the working class. Communism, as it would be called, proved to be highly favored by the lower class and oppressed members of society and proved fatal for the bourgeois and capitalist. The reason for the appeal was because communism gave lower class people a way to overcome their plights. Marx’s ideology mainly revolved around class conflict and how the proletariat could overcome their bosses and throw off the chains of oppression.¹ Marx may not have known his philosophy would motivate so many people to revolutionize against their oppressors and later cause international splits in its interpretation, but his intentions for the working class rising against their masters was well received.

In August 1970, Huey P. Newton was released from prison on bail. He was accused of voluntary manslaughter in the killing of a police officer in October 1967. By September 1968, he had been found guilty only to have the conviction overturned in August 1970. The day he was released, over ten thousand supporters showed up at the courthouse in support of his release and to catch a glimpse of him.² The face of the Black Panther Party (BPP) had spent most of his jail

¹ For future reference in this thesis, Communism will refer to the actual economic system in which common ownership is the goal and capitalism is the enemy. While, Marxism, will refer to the ideas of Marx and those ideas being molded to certain situations.

² Muhammad Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975* (Chicago, IL: Charles H. Kerr, 2008), 202.

time in solitary confinement and with heightened security.³ Within a month of making bail, Newton released a statement which had an everlasting effect on the Black Power movement and changed the way black revolutionaries were viewed by the world. Newton told readers, “In the spirit of international revolutionary solidarity the Black Panther Party hereby offers to the National Liberation Front and Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam an undetermined number of troops to assist you in your fight against American imperialism.”⁴ Newton’s confidence in this statement was not just his own sentiment, rather his confidence and the proposed action in this statement came from the confidence that Newton had in the shared connection that the BPP had with China and their current president, Mao Tse-Tung and wider East Asia. For years leading up to this point, black revolutionaries had been influenced by China, Vietnam, and North Korea and built connections with their comrades across the world. By the fall of August 1970, Newton’s statement revealed that he was ready to send members of his party to East Asia to bring that influence and connection to a zenith. This thesis examines the influence of East Asia on the Black Power movement and how this movement established such a strong connection with East Asia. It argues that Maoism played a fundamental role in the development of the Black Power movement through its role as a guide to revolution within the United States. Further, it demonstrates how the influence of and connection to East Asia allowed the Black Power movement to become an important actor in the ongoing Cold War.

³ J. Herman Blake, “The Caged Panther: The Prison Years of Huey P. Newton,” *Journal of African American Studies* 16, no. 2 (2011): pp. 236-248, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-011-9190-1>, 237.

⁴ Huey P. Newton, “Letter to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam,” Letter to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, accessed December 13, 2021, <https://web.viu.ca/davies/H324War/letter.HueyNewton.Vietnam.1970.htm>.

The story about the connection between the Black Power movement in the U.S. and Eastern Asian countries during the Cold War, specifically the 1960's, is a story that needs to be told. When thinking about allies among nations, it tends to be in the context of shared interest. Yet, the same concept can be applied to the Black Power movement and Eastern Asian countries during the early decades of the Cold War. Eastern Asian countries such as China, North Korea and Vietnam in the 20th century drew from a shared understanding of anti-imperialism with Black Power ideology, where both groups saw the United States as a perpetrator of imperialism. During the 20th century, wars of liberation in East Asia and elsewhere were being fought against imperialism and for liberation. And for blacks Americans in the 20th century, citizenship appeared on paper. In the U.S., black Americans were treated as second class citizens and subject to extreme racism and oppression in the form of Jim Crow.⁵ Blacks in America fought their own war against not only Jim Crow laws, but a Jim Crow culture as well.

For purposes of this thesis, the Black Power movement will refer to those who sought to govern themselves outside of American democracy. And this thesis focuses particularly on these members of the Black Power movement who were radical. Radical referring to those who used violence as a means for advancement and sought to defend themselves and their communities with weapons. They were interested in militant tactics, guerilla warfare and other means of formidable resistance to further their own cause. And their needs and wants revolved around

⁵ At the end of the Civil War, American codes and laws dubbed, "Jim Crow" sought to place blacks in inferior positions to whites in all forms of life. Jim Crow laws represented legal racial discrimination and became part of life in America all the way through the mid-1960s. David Pilgrim, "What Was Jim Crow," Ferris State University, September 2000, <https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/what.htm>.

wanting to be in control of their sovereignty and having the power of self-determination for the future of their communities.

Part of the appeal to communism, particularly to East Asia, was black radicals seeing East Asia as a blueprint for revolution and setting up a state (not state in the context of an American state, but the political context of community, land, and shared ideology). By 1949, utilizing violent revolutionary tactics, the Chinese had ousted British and Japanese occupation. Mao sought to bring China into the international sphere as an independent nation worthy of international recognition. Vietnam was not far behind regarding their independence. By 1955, the Vietnamese had also used violent revolutionary tactics to oust French and Japanese occupation. Seeking to be recognized as an independent nation, the Vietnamese were prepared to defend themselves against the eventual invasion by the U.S. Understanding the importance of being recognized internationally and the ability to be an independent nation, black radicals viewed the actions by China and Vietnam as a path to liberation and independence. In the eyes of many Black Power supporters, democracy in America had failed them and communism appeared to better support the needs and wants of black people.

Communism also appealed to black radicals because on paper, communism is egalitarian. It is a system in which the workers (no matter what race) are equal because they are workers. But a benefit for black radicals in adopting communism versus adhering to strict black nationalism, was the adoption a system that millions of people were already following. And those millions mainly came from East Asia. It was also understood that these millions of people would support black radicals because of the international coalition that communism had at the time. For individuals like Robert F. Williams, who started off as a black nationalist, coming into communism was a process that aligned him not only with Mao, but with the entire country of

China. And most Black Power supporters eventually followed this same path. If black radicals had limited themselves to just black nationalism, there would have been too many nuances amongst themselves to figure out how black nationalism could work for liberation in the U.S., and they would have been limited in support only from black people. But by adopting communism, black radicals were theoretically and symbolically supported by the millions who were already communist.

By 1955, the world's most powerful communist countries were the Soviet Union and China. Despite both being communist countries, Marxist ideology was practiced in different ways between the two and Black Power supporters were aware of this. If adopting a communist ideology was a way to resolve the problems of blacks in America, black radicals would have simply become communist without looking at the Soviet Union or China. Yet, black radicals were overwhelmingly attracted to Chinese Communism as framed under the leadership of Mao Tse Tsung for various reasons that will be explained later. For black radicals coming into the 1960's, communism was the way to topple capitalism and racism in the U.S. The best way for black radicals to bring communism in was to fall in line with East Asia and seek East Asian countries as international allies. Even though democracy had failed them, and communism was eventually adopted by various black radicals, the Black Power movement did not immediately see communism as a way to combat the shortcomings of democracy. This concept will be explained in length later.

Within the study of war and society, an investigation into the relationship between the Black Power movement and Chinese Communism provides scholars an additional way to understand the struggle of democracy battling against communism in the years following World War II. After WWII, the world experienced heightened tension of anti-imperialism, and that

tension became part of domestic politics and social justice debates linked to racism occurring in America. The Black Power movement understood experiences with racism in the U.S. as a domestic form of imperialism. More than simple segregation of facilities, blacks in America had long been subjected to mob violence at the hands of white people, harassment and police brutality. To combat this, black radicals within the Black Power movement took their fight beyond their own communities and domestic borders. In the black radical's struggle to fight racism, they sought China as an international ally because, Mao's communist revolution appeared to have the answers for the domestic imperialism that blacks faced in America. As the reader will see, for many black radicals, Chinese communism was brought to America's front door by its own democratic failures to rectify racism in America. The Black Power movement not only emulated the political ideology of East Asia, but also the militancy of liberation. This led to the need for weapons to combat invading police forces and the need for an international coalition with other oppressed groups around the world.

Three overlapping historiographic debates shape this thesis. The first explores the debate about the differences between Chinese and Soviet communism. The debates provide a clear understanding of why the Black Power movement was attracted to Chinese communism and sided with a figure like Mao Tse Tung and not the Kremlin. My work engages with this debate because it is Mao that will serve as the role model for the Black Power movement. The second examines how scholars have understood the written history on the struggles of black liberation at the hands of the Black Power movement in America. These sources illuminate the ways that Black Power movement groups attempted to stay connected with China while facing racist malevolent actions in America. The final examination explores the history of Black Power groups in East Asian countries and the importance of their presence in these spaces to understand

the relations between China and black radicals. The last two debates help prove that the Black Power movement established strong connection and communication with East Asia.

The Cold War is defined as a war of influence primarily between the United States and the Soviets. Although this is true, there was also a war for hegemony in the communist sphere between the Soviets and the Chinese which spilled over into the U.S. Both the Soviets and Chinese identified with Communist ideology as a way of governance. But the way each country viewed how best to implement communism in the world was very different. Jeremy Friedman explores this conflict in *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition For The Third World* (2015). Noting that the Cold War is often seen as the U.S.S.R vs the U.S., Friedman focuses his book on the differences between the Soviet “anti-capital” revolution and the Chinese “anti-imperialist” revolution after WWII. The competition between the Soviets and Chinese for revolutionary hegemony amongst Third World nations eventually drew black radicals into the mix. Although blacks in America did not count as Third World individuals, the struggles of Third World people were in direct relation to black Americans because they viewed their struggles as the same.

Even before the Chinese Revolution, black people in America combatted the Jim Crow laws and customs that assigned them a lower position in America. Often, these laws were enforced by local law enforcement and through custom that sought to infringe upon black people’s rights and to control their sovereignty maintaining the racial status quo. Many black radicals saw this enforcement as domestic imperialism. With police invading their neighborhoods and using weapons and violence as a means of enforcement, the Chinese “anti-imperialist” revolution appealed to black radicals more so than the “anti-capitalist” revolution. Until 1950, China had been subject to Japanese colonialism and when Mao Zedong came into

power, he eradicated foreign influence in China and utilized guerilla warfare tactics to expel Japanese and anti-Communist Chinese from mainland China. He propelled China toward a communist ideology that gave a voice to the masses of peasants in China. And unlike Soviet communism, Mao paid close attention to what race and culture meant for communism and revolution in general.

Although Friedman's work does not analyze the connection of black radicals and black people with China, his work is important because it sets the framework for why Chinese Communism appealed to black radicals. Friedman's various examples of the differences between Chinese communism and Soviet communism offer a lot in explaining why the Chinese appealed more to black radicals. For example, looking at the Vietnam War, Friedman notes that the Soviets wanted to see the war ended quickly, but the Chinese were "...leading the Soviet embassy to write that the Chinese had made clear their desire 'to fight against the Americans to the last Vietnamese soldier.'"⁶ This attitude was favored BBP leader Huey P. Newton, who said that he was willing and able to send Black Panther members to Vietnam to fight American imperialist.⁷ This is not to say that black radicals wanted the war to continue, but were in favor of seeing American imperialist crumble.

Another example Friedman provides is the considerable amount of help that China lent to African nations. "In addition to economic aid, China continued to provide arms and military training to many on the African continent."⁸ For the black radicals in America, Chinese support for African revolutionary movements was a positive statement regarding race relations. This

⁶ Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ Of North Carolina PR, 2018), 130.

⁷ Huey P. Newton, "Letter to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam"

⁸ Friedman, *Shadow Cold War*, 120.

showed black radicals that China was not afraid to help darker people across the globe. And exploring the nuclear beginnings in China, Friedman points out that "...China declared that its nuclear bomb would be the 'Afro-Asian bomb'..."⁹. These numerous examples provide more framework for my thesis.

While Friedman's work focuses on the connection between China and Africa, he does not make similar connections between China and black radicals. This is because he is not focused on individual connections, rather he is focused on the competition for the Third World between the Soviets and Chinese. My work builds on the conversation regarding the differences between Soviet and Chinese style communism by revealing the important connections between China and black radicals in the U.S.

Until the publication of *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (2012) a full narrative history of the BPP did not exist. According to its authors, Waldo Martin and Joshua Bloom, *Black Against Empire* did not seek to tell a one sided story or categorize the BPP as only a domestic group but to reveal the entire history of the BPP and how they were an international force. The book presents once unseen views of the Panthers and gives readers an insight to the challenges the Panthers faced internationally.

Opening the book with Huey P. Newton's trip to China, throughout the book, the authors, give detailed accounts of the international influence of the Panthers. Martin and Bloom add to the historiography on Black Power internationalism by showing the strength of the Panthers international connections. This ties directly into the discussion of the relation between black radicals and China by showing that the Panthers were not just a domestic group. Too often their

⁹ Ibid, 198.

efforts have been regulated to domestic affairs and focusing solely on problems within the United States. Adding to this sense of internationalism, *Black Against Empire* shows the distinct ways that the Panthers helped the anti-Vietnam War rhetoric.¹⁰ Expanding on East Asian relations, the authors state “...they were welcomed as official guests of the governments in North Vietnam, North Korea and China.”¹¹

The only shortcomings of this work might be the way in which certain BPP members have been portrayed in terms of their character, but the book was given a very favorable review by Bobby Seale which shows that it does do justice to the Panther party. My work builds on Martin and Bloom by examining the relationship between multiple black radical groups and individuals and China and not just BPP history. Further, this thesis expands the discussion on how the Black Power movement would not have been as successful as it was without East Asian influence and connection by providing examples of black radicals and black radical groups that benefitted from the connection with East Asia.

Radio Free Dixie (1999) by Timothy Tyson is a biography of black radical, Robert F. Williams. Detailing Williams life and his struggle with black nationalism, Tyson writes a detailed portrait about how Williams became one of the most feared black men in the U.S. during the Cold War era. This book focuses primarily on the struggles William faced domestically in his fight for nationalism. The biography serves its purpose but does not convey much of what Williams meant to black radicalism in the Cold War society. Instead, Tyson details things about Williams day-to-day operations and the literal set-up of his home. Tyson refers to Williams’s

¹⁰ Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 102-104.

¹¹ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 319.

memoir, *Negroes With Guns* as a source for the book but does not detail the actual firefights Williams had with Ku Klux Klan members that is described in *Negroes With Guns*.

What Tyson does succeed in, is showing why Williams turned to China as an international ally. Williams initial experiences with Soviet-style communism led him to believe that communism had no place in racial struggles.¹² Mao in contrast recognized the importance of culture and race in revolution, Mao's version of communism used race and culture as their main principles of revolutionizing, instead of seeing revolution solely from the perspective of class. Williams was not representative of all black people, but his experiences with white America reflected the overall experiences blacks had with white America. Furthermore, the book highlights the frustrations Williams had with mainstream civil rights groups such as the NAACP. Passive and nonviolent, the NAACP shunned Williams for advocating violence in the face of oppression. Once more reflecting an overall experience, Williams and black radicals needed a much bigger apparatus to support them, and China was this apparatus. Thus, Tyson's work helps to frame the personal experiences of black radicals such as Williams to understand the development of the relationship between the Black Power movement and East Asia.

Robeson Taj Frazier explores the connection of black leaders, and China in *The East is Black: Cold War China In The Black Radical Imagination* (2014). Frazier uses journalism as a way of reporting the solidarity that was felt by certain black American leaders in connection to China. Part of what Frazier seeks to do is rewrite the way Cold War politics have been seen and how certain black radicals utilized media to show their close relations with China. Focusing primarily on W.E.B Du Bois and Robert F. Williams, Frazier shows how China was a spiritual

¹² Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & The Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 206.

and physical refuge for black radicals. “In the aftermath several of these Americans even opted for political refuge in China to escape the intellectual and physical repression of U.S. racism and anticommunism.”¹³ Utilizing propaganda posters that included black people and Chinese people marching forward or fighting the same oppressor, Frazier’s work shows how the relationship between blacks and China was portrayed.

Frazier details much of Williams’s trip to China unlike Tyson. Speaking to Williams political achievements in China, Frazier states Williams was able to “...make several recommendations to Chinese officials about how China could increase its influence among U.S. black activist and was periodically included in government meetings with foreign residents about shifts in U.S. foreign policy...”¹⁴ In China, Williams was respected as a man of intelligence and seen as a political all. This, as this thesis will show, was an international sign to radical blacks that the entire nation of China stood with them in their struggle against racism and would accept the input of blacks in international talks.

Despite the detailed documentation of visits to China by certain blacks, Frazier does not write about Huey P. Newton’s trip to China in 1971. Newton was a cofounder of the Black Panthers and by 1971, was a monumental figure in the black power movement known worldwide for his revolutionary actions. Although Frazier does not document Newton’s trip, his argument is still persuasive because he shows how relations between China and black radicals changed through the acceptance of these black radicals in China. My work will expand on Frazier’s by emphasizing the media portrayal that black radicals like Williams published in East Asia. The

¹³ Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East Is Black Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 30.

¹⁴ Frazier, *The East Is Black*, 147.

media that was published in East Asia played a fundamental role in strengthening the relationship between black radicals and East Asia. Further, my work will not focus on black radicals prior to WWII, my work is strictly on black radicals of the Cold War era and their relations with China.

“From Peace to the Panthers: PRC Engagement with African-American Transnational Networks, 1949–1979”, written by Matthew Johnson, “...focuses on an overlooked chapter in the history of Cold War contact between the US and the People’s Republic of China—trips to the PRC made by African-American dissidents, peace activists, and black nationalists and internationalists during the 1950s and 1960s.”¹⁵ This will contribute to my thesis by showing the more direct liaisons that blacks and Chinese personnel shared. Johnson breaks his article down into two questions, the first one being, “...how contact between African Americans and the PRC took place—that is, how it was arranged, with what frequency, and to what stated ends.”¹⁶ Answering his first question directly, Johnson states, “...the types of transnational contact which connected the PRC and US involved multiple, overlapping networks of individuals and media.”¹⁷ With this type of effort to stay connected during the Cold War years shows a great connect and relation of the same struggles both parties were facing, imperialism and racism. The author continues, “These included Chinese labour organizations within the US, the postal service, the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), members of the journalistic profession, former ‘friends of China’ with ties to foreign nationals living in Beijing, African-American dissidents, and the anti-war movement.”¹⁸ Johnson is showing that the connections between the blacks and

¹⁵ M. D. Johnson, “From Peace to the Panthers: PRC Engagement with African-American Transnational Networks, 1949-1979,” *Past & Present* 218, no. suppl 8 (January 2013): pp. 233-257, 233.

¹⁶ Johnson, “From Peace to the Panthers”, 235.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 235.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 236.

Chinese were not surface level relations. Going back to his thesis, Johnson states very clearly how the PRC was able to maintain contact directly with black delegates. These relations prove there was more than just symbolic interactions going, that the masses of oppressed blacks in America clearly looked to China for help.

Second, Johnson ask, "...how in the course of the mutual engagement which took place, the two 'sides' in this relationship perceived one another."¹⁹ A cynical reason is revealed for the Chinese to keep tight relations with blacks. With America claiming to be the forerunners of democracy and advocating for the liberation and growth of other Third World countries and still having a huge race problem at home, the Chinese government knew that it could tarnish America on the international level by exposing this. Johnson illustrates this, "Bitter conflict in the US over civil rights for African Americans...appear to have convinced CCP elites that African Americans represented a key source of opposition to the US government, and one which could potentially be further mobilized for political ends."²⁰ Johnson ultimately concludes that the race relations presented by the PRC proved to be more of an alternative to Soviet Marxism versus an actual viable solution for blacks and thus it is easier to see why blacks gravitated towards the PRC in a desperate time of need. I will add to this by unfolding the exact ways that black radicals emulated the CCP (Chinese Communist Party).

"Solidarity in Three Acts: Narrating US black freedom movements in China, 1961-66", by Ruodi Duan, is an article that shifts the vantage point away from the nuances of US diplomacy and politics, and centers on the domestic sphere of the China as it recast the images

¹⁹ Ibid, 235.

²⁰ Ibid, 242.

and stories of US campaigns for racial equality.²¹ Duan's article is broken down into three parts. First, she touches on the Chinese press consistently reporting about the racial tension that was occurring in America. "Since 1949, the PRC had utilized media and press to advance its own vision and interpretation of African American history and social movements."²² Aside from exposing the racial hatred of America, these news outlets were also showing Chinese people that they were not alone in their struggles against imperialism. And with Mao personally releasing a statement about Robert Williams in 1963,²³ the blacks in America were becoming viewed as people in need of Mao. The clarification must be made, blacks were not in need of their own version of Mao, they needed Mao himself. By showing blacks as a people struggling against the same imperialist actions and the Chinese media consistently crediting Mao as being the sole leader of China, the people had to follow him out of the hands of imperialism. This is what Duan means by showing this media relation. In addition to this, Duan points to China exposing the détente relations between the Soviets and America. "...The CCP employed the issue of US racial oppression as an instrument to highlight the sharp dichotomy between its own deep, informed desires for African American freedom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)'s behind-the-scenes, callous collusion with the US empire."²⁴

Second, Duan goes into how China openly embraced black activist such as Robert Williams and Huey P. Newton. Relating to her thesis statement, "as it construed and recast the images and stories of US campaigns for racial equality,"²⁵ Duan brings to light how China was

²¹ Ruodi Duan, "Solidarity in Three Acts: Narrating US Black Freedom Movements in China, 1961–66," *Modern Asian Studies* 53, no. 05 (2019): pp. 1351-1380, 1353.

²² Duan, "Solidarity in Three Acts", 1358.

²³ Ibid, 1351.

²⁴ Ibid, 1360.

²⁵ Ibid, 1353.

able to cast its idea of a utopia on black activist visiting the country, more specifically on Williams. For his visits, “Chinese officials meticulously arranged the sights, meetings, and activities for them down to the minute details.”²⁶ By showing that China obsessed of the visit of black delegates, the CCP was pushing its ideal utopia on blacks in hopes that black delegates would take this back to America and push this same ideal on its people and disrupt the ideal American society. While this may sound like stereotypical Communism, the reader must wonder whether this came from a place of good intentions on behalf of Mao. Mao was the leader of the CCP, and it was his vision that China was following. Taking the masses of peasants in China and setting them up for what he thought would be the best route, Mao must have saw the blacks in America in this same predicament. Without an international leader, Duan shows that China took in various black delegates to paint an image of what blacks in America could have, if they followed the Chinese model. “The PRC enthusiastically complied with Williams’s request to tour areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, eager to highlight parallelism between their striving in pre-revolutionary China and that of present-day African Americans.”²⁷

Duan’s final point brings attention to the rallies and public meetings in China that endorsed the struggle of blacks in America. At these rallies, “...local citizens of different revolutionary stripes and backgrounds—especially women, students, factory workers, and ethnic minorities—declared their empathies with black activists in the United States of America.”²⁸ In the same manner that blacks in America held their own rallies, often with a blending of other races, the Chinese further pushed the agenda of identifying with blacks at their own rallies. By successfully showing Chinese people of all backgrounds, the Chinese employed the class

²⁶ Ibid, 1366.

²⁷ Ibid, 1368.

²⁸ Ibid, 1372.

diversity that they had to show blacks in America that despite class, all the Chinese were under the same umbrella and had one goal, to beat imperialism. As Duan mentioned, the Chinese sought to recreate racial imagery across the board by casting various images of their fight for blacks in America to see. This would inevitably capture the attention of blacks in America and thus spawn their attraction to China even more.

By exploring the romantical imagery of international communism that China sought to push on American blacks, Duan gives a convincing argument about China recasting racial imagery throughout the world, specifically in the U.S. By showing the role of China's media in exposing the racism of America, Duan proves that the CCP sought to show the evils of the America's imperialist agenda. Then addressing their orchestrated utopia for black delegates, Duan ends with the discussion of the rallies that the CCP held in favor of blacks in America. In recasting race imagery, the CCP used one of their best weapons to do this, propaganda. The CCP casted an image of China to blacks through the lens of Mao's vision. This former point but this was not explored by Duan in depth. I would go so far as to say that because of the way Marxism was projected by Mao, he wanted to set himself not only as a host of blacks, but as a savior of blacks as well. Duan does not make this conclusion, but I think this conclusion is worth examining in the relation of blacks and China during the Cold War and will be explored in my thesis.

Although I did not read this book in its entirety, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* by Qiang Zhai, serves my thesis with his exploration on the direct relationship between Vietnam and China. Insight such as this helps to illuminate the relationship both countries shared and how this relationship was received by the world, particularly the U.S. But another aspect explored here is the how Mao's leadership played out in Vietnam and how this affected Vietnam on the

world stage. Because of China's aid to Vietnam, the Vietcong were able to defeat American troops and thus were viewed by black radicals in admiration. Ultimately Zhai's work helps prove that without Mao and the CCP, black radicals may not have looked to Vietnam with admiration.

Another book that I did not read in its entirety but nonetheless contributes to this thesis is, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World: A Concise History*, by Rebecca E. Karl. Karl wrote this book for all readers despite their extensive knowledge or lack thereof Mao. Analyzing Mao's life in a bibliography fashion, Karl presents an unbiased picture of Mao. This is important because Mao is often represented as either a dictator who pushed China in famine or a revolutionary leader who liberated China. For black radicals, he was viewed as the latter. Although this thesis utilizes many primary sources by black radicals in which they praise Mao, it is important to explore an unbiased exploration of Mao's life and his time as a political leader to understand who he truly was and what that meant to the world.

Scholarship on Black Power individuals and organizations help show that because democracy failed to rectify racism in America, black radicals looked to Chinese communism as a means of fixing domestic issues. Post-WWII, black radicals viewed the world as a changed place. During WWII America was willing to go to war combat the atrocities committed by Japan and Germany, thus black radicals saw America send numerous troops to defeat a fascist regime overseas, but the same country would not combat the racism that was in their own land. Black radicals began to see that American democracy was not going to save them from Jim Crow laws and culture. Black radicals had to find another way. And despite both Soviets and U.S. being the superpowers after WWII, neither one offered a reasonable solution to racism in America.

Chinese communism became the way for black radicals to directly challenge the failures of American democracy. Although the relationship between black radicals and China had its

faults and was not perfect, the relationship proved to be a main concern of American law enforcement. Fearing this connection among other aspects of black radicalism, American law enforcement used brutal tactics to eradicate these individuals and groups. Despite the Cold War being a competition between American-style democracy and Soviet-style communism, Maoism infiltrated the hearts and minds of black radicals and provided black radicals a blueprint to combat to communism that challenged American democracy.

This thesis has two chapters. Chapter one investigates why East Asia and Maoism had such a mass appeal to the Black Power movement. It details the history of the Soviet Union, China and black people in America during the 20th century, and the birth of the Black Power movement, as a response by some black people to the limits of the mainstream liberal Civil Rights activism and the ongoing racism faced by black Americans. Finally, it reveals why the Soviet-style communism did not appeal to the Black Power movement, highlighting instead why East Asia and Maoism proved more attractive to the Black Power movement.

Chapter two provides a series of detailed case studies on the relationship between East Asia, China and Maoism and the Black Power movement and its participants in the U.S. These include, Robert F. Williams, Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) and the Black Panther Party (BPP). There will be an explanation for each one of these examples and how they were directly influenced by East Asia and Maoism. Furthermore, these connections will show how the Black Power movement became another fighting front for the Cold War because of its connections to East Asia. In short, this thesis explores how East Asia connected with the Black Power movement, and how this connection gave the Black Power movement the international backing that was needed for its revolutionary purposes. But in order to explain these things, a bit

of history on blacks in America pre-WWII, the Soviet Union and China must be explored. It is these conditions that will set the stage for East Asian influence in the Black Power movement.

Chapter I: Racism, Bolsheviks, CPUSA, Vietcong and the CCP

Soviet Union

For the Soviet Union (now known as Russia) and China the 20th century, proved to be a time of drastic change. Both countries experienced internal revolutions and participated in two World Wars. The first section of this chapter briefly explores the history of the Soviet Union from 1900 to 1948 and offers a historical analysis of Chinese history during the same years, to understand why Communism played a different role in Chinese affairs than in the Soviet Union. In addition to this, the reader will begin to see why East Asia appealed to black radicals.

Until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Russian Empire had been led by Tsar Nicholas II since 1894. The Tsars of Russia had ruled for centuries and although separate from the European continent, Russia considered itself culturally European. Tensions between the Russian people and the ruling family began well before the 20th century; however, for this thesis the focus will be on the years that led to the downfall of Russia, 1900-1917. Russia is a large landmass and to this day remains very rural. Despite the rural nature of Russia, the power of the Tsar(s) was felt in every corner of Russia. With economic and social conditions unfit for citizens, the Russo-Japanese War from 1904-1905 did not help Russia's current situation. Competing for hegemony in Korea and Manchuria, the Japanese launched an attack on Russia fleets stationed near Manchuria in 1904.²⁹ Imperial Russia experienced an embarrassing loss, that marked the first time in history, a European country losing a war to a non-European country. Embarrassed

²⁹ Randy Felder, *Peace, Land and Bread*. Irvine, CA. (2020), 17.

before the whole world, Russia was no longer seen as the strong country it was once viewed as.³⁰ This loss to Japan further pushed the people of Russia away from having faith in the Tsar.

Dissatisfied with Imperial rule, Russian workers, many of whom began calling themselves communist, eventually revolted against the Tsar. Vicious repression was unleashed by the Russian government when people protested.³¹ In December 1905, the Russian communists attempted revolution but were put down by 1907.³² As a result of the failed revolution, Tsar Nicholas II reigned down even greater suppression on the people of Russia. But these issues ranging from suppression, poverty and war did not stop the communist Russians from organizing against the Tsar.³³ Under constant surveillance from the government, many communists were caught and executed by the government or forced to flee in exile. When Russia was thrown in WWI in 1914, turmoil ensued inside of Russia and organizing against the Tsar became easier for the communist.

Born in Russia in 1870, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, later known as Vladimir Lenin, began his political crusading in 1887 after his brother was executed for his political activism against Tsar Alexander II.³⁴ By 1903 Lenin had established the Bolsheviks and aligned them with the teaching of Karl Marx. Their main rival for power was the Mensheviks.³⁵ The biggest difference between these two groups was that the Bolsheviks recognized revolutionary armed violence as the best means to come into power and the Mensheviks saw legal process as the best way to achieve a revolution.³⁶ Facing prison and exile in 1896 and again in 1907, Lenin's leadership of

³⁰ Felder, *Peace, Land and Bread.*, 17.

³¹ *Ibid*, 18.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 13.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 14.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

the Bolsheviks was not an easy one. Through various means, such as newspaper publications and a charismatic public appearance, his teachings and orders were followed and carried out with explicit detail.³⁷ Lenin followed what he thought was strict Marxism. He believed that class was an issue that could be overcome with communism, and this would lead to a classless society. Exploitation and alienation amongst workers would become obsolete and everyone would be equal.³⁸

Yet transformation of society was not a quick process, revolution was a process that occurred when conditions were met at various stages. He had a strong belief in the power of the proletariat, not the peasant class of Russia.³⁹ The proletariats were the workers who could help centralize work and production for the state, meanwhile the peasants would have to be educated and transformed into the proletariat. Lenin's focus was therefore not on identity such as a race but on class differences. Having experienced classism but not racism at the hands of the Tsar(s), Lenin believed his main enemy was capitalism.⁴⁰ Thus, capitalism needed to end, and communism was the means to topple capitalism. The Bolshevik Party eventually toppled Tsar Nicholas II, and Lenin became the first Communist leader of a country in history in 1917.⁴¹

Although Marx had produced one of the most fundamental works of the 19th century, many questions about communism had been unanswered and were left to be answered by future communist leaders. One of these open-ended questions revolved around the ripe conditions for revolution. Were there certain conditions that had to exist already, or could the revolution start any moment amongst the oppressed? For Lenin four objectives were required, 1) capitalism had

³⁷ Ibid, 14.

³⁸ Ibid, 15

³⁹ Ibid, 15.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 16.

⁴¹ Ibid, 19.

to be present, 2) there had to be an active party seeking to implement socialism, imperialism had to be understood by the masses, and a dictatorship of the proletariat was needed.⁴² As the Soviets sought to help other nations overcome capitalism, they required these objective conditions of the other countries and each countries' revolutionary actions had to be approved by the Soviets as well. This is because the Soviets sought to instill their hegemony on these countries and make them Soviet satellites.

The Bolshevik Revolution changed the world because for the first time in the so-called modern world, communism moved beyond Marxist philosophy to a form of governance. Although a series of 18th and 19th European revolutions witnessed lower class overthrow the ruling class, Communism as a form of governance did not emerge until 1917. Despite their success at ousting the Tsar, the Bolsheviks fought a civil war amongst rival factions inside of Soviet Russia for almost three years.⁴³ Through various purges from 1917-1931, the Mensheviks were purged to solidify Bolshevik communist power in Russia. Purges by Communist parties became a repeated pattern throughout the world for the rest of the 20th century. While the violent revolution was a necessary component of the revolution, it was not seen as the main component for the fall of capitalism. Instead, the Bolshevik's focused on overcoming "...social inequality and domestic political tyranny..."⁴⁴ through a united front amongst proletariats.

Following Lenin's death in the early 1920s, Joseph Stalin became the General Secretary of Soviet Russia. Stalin, not the favored successor of Lenin, used intimidation and suppression to take over the Communist party.⁴⁵ His primary focus was strengthening his legitimacy as the

⁴² David Lane, "V.I. Lenin's Theory of Socialist Revolution," *Critical Sociology* 47, no. 3 (2020): pp. 455-473, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920520958451>, 447-448.

⁴³ Felder, 20.

⁴⁴ Freidman, 7.

⁴⁵ Felder, 25.

General Secretary of the Communist Party and thrusting the Soviet Union into industrialization to keep up with the growing western countries.⁴⁶

In 1928, Stalin set in motion the first five plan for the Soviet Union. This plan revolved around trying to increase industrialization and agriculture. In 1934, the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations.⁴⁷ This was a puzzling move to some communists because the League of Nations represented the capitalist interest of western nations. But Stalin placed the external security of the Soviet Union as a higher priority than following Marxist ideology. The year before the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations, Adolf Hitler rose to power in Germany, and put European countries in a tense situation. Trying to avoid war and wanting to focus the Soviet Union on development, Stalin reached out to Hitler in 1939 and entered a non-aggression pact.⁴⁸ The same year, Stalin invaded eastern Poland and Hitler invaded western Poland. April 1941, Stalin signed a pact of neutrality with the Japanese.⁴⁹ Signing neutrality pacts with both Germany and Japan, the two most prominent fascist countries at the time, revealed the lengths that the communist Soviet Union was willing to go to avoid conflict. The pact between the Soviet Union, Germany and Japan did not last long. In June 1941, Hitler launched attacks into the Soviet Union and in December, the Japanese attacked the U.S.

At the end of the WWII, the Soviet Union refocused its attention from eliminating fascism to bringing down capitalism. The Soviets believed that anti-capitalism was the best move to secure a future for oppressed people and were therefore not interested in racial and cultural

⁴⁶ Ibid, 26.

⁴⁷ "USSR Joins the League Of Nations," Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library, accessed March 9, 2022, <https://www.prlib.ru/en/history>.

⁴⁸ "Secret Texts of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact, 1939," Wilson Center Digital Archive, accessed 2022, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110994>.

⁴⁹ "Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact April 13, 1941," The Avalon Project : Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact, 2008, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/s1.asp>.

aspects connected to liberation. In addition, the Soviet Union focused on lowering international tension to make communism seem less threatening to the West.⁵⁰ By advocating for peace, the Soviets drew in more countries/nations under their wing and boosted their international prestige. Thus, the Soviets sought to use economic power over violence to establish their hegemony in the world.

China

At the turn of the 20th century, Japan was off to a prosperous start. After defeating China in the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895, Japan was the most powerful East Asian country at the end of the 20th century. Annexing Taiwan from China after the war, Japan sought to expand its empire. So, in 1905, when the Japanese defeated the Soviets in the Russo-Japanese war, their power in the East grew expeditiously. As a result of their win, Japan annexed the Soviets former sphere of power, Manchuria. Seeking to expand further into China, Japan focused its colonial efforts into reinforcing and having complete control over Manchuria.⁵¹ Chinese resistance to Japan began to mount but remained spontaneous and was not organized during this time. In 1919, after Chinese demands were not met at the Paris Peace Conference, resistance to Japan went from spontaneous to organized resistance.⁵² Chinese resistance to the Japanese was nationwide, but two separate groups led the resistance. One was the Nationalists, and the other was the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).⁵³ Neither group wanted Japanese colonization, but neither group wanted the other to oversee Chinese affairs either. The leader of the CCP was Mao Tse-Tung.

⁵⁰ Friedman, 39.

⁵¹ Ienaga Saburō, *The Pacific War* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1978), 58-59

⁵² Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, 57.

⁵³ Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 17.

Born in 1893 and from a peasant background, Mao was attracted to communist ideology and active in the Japanese resistance movement at a young age. In 1921, a Comintern⁵⁴ delegation made its way to Shanghai and met a group of Chinese revolutionaries in a town house, Mao was one of those individuals.⁵⁵ Although Mao understood communism very well and paid close attention to the Bolsheviks, he was not convinced that communism revolution strictly depended on the might of the working class. Mao began to organize armed guerilla factions around Marxist ideas and depended greatly on the help of Chinese peasants as well as the working class to combat the Nationalist and Japanese in China. By 1927, Mao had set up a base in Chingkangshan mountain range and started to create liberated zones of China that were under communist rule.⁵⁶

The three-way struggle for China continued between the Japanese, Nationalist and the CCP. Even though all three sides did not want the other to win, the Nationalist and Japanese both viewed communism with disdain. In a way, the CCP fought two battles, because the Nationalist and Japanese had a common hatred for communism. One scholar notes that "...the Nationalist had no objection in principle to Japan-China cooperation against communism, but wanted the military aspects left to them."⁵⁷ So, while fighting off a Japanese invasion, the CCP fought a civil war as well.

By the end of the 1930's, Europe was engulfed in Fascism and Japan was an ally of the Nazis. In 1937, the war over China took a drastic turn. Because Nazi Germany and Japan shared

⁵⁴ After the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviets created the Comintern. The Comintern traveled throughout the world to educate individuals and groups on Soviet-style communism.

⁵⁵ Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (London, UK: Vintage, 2020), 29-30.

⁵⁶ Ienaga, 58.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 74.

so many traits of fascism, Japan joined the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany in 1936.⁵⁸ But even with a contractual obligation to Germany, the Japanese were still able to maintain a stronghold in China.⁵⁹ But at the end of 1937, the Japanese provided the fuel that pushed the CCP even harder in its resistance to Japan. The Rape of Nanking started in December of 1937 and lasted for six weeks. During the six weeks, thousands of Chinese were slaughtered at the hands of Japanese soldiers.⁶⁰ This endless slaughter and deprivation was made even worse by the actual rape of thousands of Chinese women ranging from 12-80 years old.⁶¹ The result of the Rape of Nanking was anti-Japanese sentiments at an all-time high. The CCP used this to step up their resistance in 1938 and began to viciously combat the Japanese occupation.

With most of China poor and seeking land reform, the numbers of sympathizers and fighters for the CCP grew. Leading the resistance was the charismatic Mao. Mao had begun to write numerous volumes of work that captured his personal thoughts and political ideas. Most of his published work revolved around Chinese politics and how communism would be used in China. His charisma proved to be a great asset and drew in the attention of millions even outside of China. As the CCP put up fierce resistance, their guerilla warfare tactics helped defeat both the Japanese and Nationalist when guerilla warfare called for a long-drawn-out war that the Japanese simply could not handle. According to one scholar the “Japanese forces held their own against the Nationalist units, but the Communist Eight Route Army was a different story.”⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid, 80.

⁵⁹ “China Defensive,” *China Defensive*, n.d., <https://history.army.mil/brochures/72-38/72-38.HTM>.

⁶⁰ Dr. Anne Bailey and John Daniel Davidson, “Exposing the Rape of Nanking,” *Newsweek*, March 13, 2010, <https://www.newsweek.com/exposing-rape-nanking-170890>.

⁶¹ Bailey and Davidson, “Exposing the Rape of Nanking”.

⁶² Ienaga, 91.

Guerilla warfare was not new to the world, but the CCP Army perfected it. With no stable supply of weapons, the peasants in support of the CCP utilized what little weapons they had. When the CCP Army defeated the Japanese in battle, they would take Japanese weapons. Everything from pistols to tanks became available to the CCP.⁶³ Blowing up bridges, cutting phone lines and attacking the Japanese as they slept were all guerilla tactics that the CCP mastered. Mao eventually wrote a book about the lessons of guerilla warfare that would be read by numerous guerilla styled units for years to come.⁶⁴ Never actually facing their enemies in a line battle or seeking to engage in hand-to-hand combat, the CCP Army "...defied conventional military modes of analysis and bloodied the Japanese army."⁶⁵

The use of guerilla warfare to take down a more powerful military and trained soldiers was another aspect of the CCP that groups from Vietnam, Cuba and the U.S. mimicked to overcome their oppressors.⁶⁶ All of this and more came out of Mao's Communist China. But as with communist revolution in the Soviet Union, the main tactic that garnered support from the masses was land reform. When the CCP gained control of a region, they did not waste time in reducing land rent and establishing schools. The CCP also created industry to improve the standard of living and improved literacy among the peasants. In addition, men and women eighteen and older were given voting rights as well.⁶⁷ These actions resulted in earning the trust of peasant masses. Instead of aligning themselves with the strict policies of Soviet style communism, the CCP made their own version of communism to meet their needs and wants.

⁶³ Ibid, 92.

⁶⁴ B.N. Majumdar, "Mao's Concept of Guerrilla Warfare," Leatherby Libraries (Sage Publications), accessed March 9, 2022, <https://journals-sagepub-com.libproxy.chapman.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/000944556700300109>, 21.

⁶⁵ Ienaga, 91.

⁶⁶ B.N. Majumdar, "Mao's Concept of Guerrilla Warfare," 21.

⁶⁷ Ienaga, 92

Throughout WWII, the CCP kept up its fierce resistance to the Japanese and this proved helpful to the Allies.⁶⁸ When Japan surrendered in 1945, China was officially free of colonialism, but the CCP still had to combat the Nationalists. The civil war continued, and by October 1949, the Nationalist had retreated to Taiwan and Mao declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China.⁶⁹

When Mao came into power in 1949, one of his main goals was to establish his regime and build China's economy back up.⁷⁰ Mao's communist leadership in China put America at even greater odds with China and the Asian continent in general. Although Maoism eventually spread to the U.S., Vietnam felt the effects of Maoism as well. This trickle-down effect on Vietnam eventually made Vietnam a point of influence for black radicals as well.

Maoism in Vietnam

Since the mid 19th century, Vietnam existed as a colonial outpost for the French.⁷¹ Subsequently occupied by Japan in 1940 until the end of WWII, Vietnam was no stranger to imperialism. But prior to the Japanese occupation, Ho Chi Minh organized the first communist party in Vietnam in 1930.⁷² Shortly after founding the party, he traveled to Moscow from 1933-1938 to study Marxism.⁷³ While there, he was also an instructor at the Institute for the Study of National and Colonial Questions.⁷⁴ Falling out of favor with Stalin, he went to China in 1938 and

⁶⁸ "China Defensive", U.S. Army

⁶⁹ "The Chinese Revolution of 1949," U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State), accessed April 22, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/chinese-rev>.

⁷⁰ Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 51.

⁷¹ John F. Cady, "The French Colonial Regime in Vietnam," *Current History* 50, no. 294 (February 1966): pp. 72-78, <https://doi.org/45311437>, 72.

⁷² "Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) - Columbia University," accessed April 23, 2022, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/exeas/asian-revolutions/pdf/ho-chi-minh-timeline.pdf>.

⁷³ William J. Duiker, *Communist Road to Power in Vietnam: Second Edition* (London, UK: Routledge, 2019), 67.

⁷⁴ Duiker, *Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 67.

joined the Communist Eighth Route Army.⁷⁵ Minh's conflict with Stalin came from the disagreement that Minh had with Soviet Communist party doctrine.⁷⁶ As previously mentioned, the Soviets did not have to fight a foreign invader for their communist revolution. It was an internal enemy the Soviets combatted and afterwards, anti-capitalism became the main goal. Although capitalism was recognized as an enemy in Russia, for East Asian countries like Vietnam, imperialism was the first enemy that had to be defeated. During his time in China, Minh authored numerous articles in favor of the Chinese fighting against the Japanese.⁷⁷ Minh was not just an author in China, but he also served as guerilla warfare instructor in the Hanyang Chinese region.⁷⁸ After the French lost to Germany in 1941, Japan took over their colonies, which included Vietnam. That same year, Minh left China, returned to Vietnam and organized the Viet Minh, a guerilla force that combatted the Japanese occupation.⁷⁹

When Minh returned to Vietnam, the influence of Mao was apparent regarding the vision of the Viet Minh. Just as Mao believed in the peasants of China and sought to create a mass movement out of all Chinese regardless of class, Minh, did the same. "All patriotic elements in Vietnam, regardless of class, were welcomed into the front against the common adversary. Not only the bourgeoisie and rich peasants, but wealthy landlords, Overseas Chinese merchants, and patriotic Frenchmen were considered potential allies."⁸⁰ Like Mao, Minh moved away from Soviet-style communism and adjusted communism for the needs of Vietnam. "In contrast to previous occasions, when Communist policies had often been made in Moscow and had reflected

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 53.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 74.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 74.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 73.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 72.

the ideological proclivities of the Comintern leadership, the new approach was tailored to the situation in Vietnam.”⁸¹ His approach to defeating the Japanese, French, and later American forces all came from his time spent learning in China. His formation of an army that included all classes recognized the importance of not only the militant struggle but the political one, that used guerilla warfare tactics, and established liberated zones.⁸²

After the Japanese capitulation in 1945, the French moved back into Vietnam and faced heavy resistance from the Viet Minh.⁸³ By 1954, the Viet Minh managed to oust the French and Vietnam split into two parts.⁸⁴ The north belonged to Viet Minh forces and the south belonged to the South Vietnam Army. Seeking to combat communism in East Asia, the U.S. entered Vietnam as military advisors to South Vietnam in 1955. But to unite the country, the Viet Minh began insurgency in the south in 1957. By 1963, the Viet Minh or the Vietcong as they were better known, successfully defeated the South Vietnamese Army.⁸⁵ But, as U.S. aggression took a turn for the worst in Vietnam, Mao announced in August 1964, “America's aggression against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was also aggression against China, and that China would never fail to come to the aid of the Vietnamese.”⁸⁶ Thus, the CCP publicly inserted itself into the Vietnamese conflict and showed the world that it was willing to combat U.S. imperialism internationally.

⁸¹ Ibid, 72.

⁸² Ibid, 74.

⁸³ “The Vietnam War: A Timeline,” ANCHOR: A North Carolina History Online Resource, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/vietnam-war-timeline>.

⁸⁴ “The Vietnam War: A Timeline,” ANCHOR: A North Carolina History Online Resource.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Chen Jian, “China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964–69,” *The China Quarterly* 142 (June 1995): pp. 356-387, 365.

The same month Mao declared support for the Vietnamese, millions of Chinese rallied against U.S. imperialism and in favor of Vietnam.⁸⁷ In 1965, the U.S. advanced from military advising to active combat in Vietnam, and the Vietnam War for the U.S. began. That same year, China began to aid Vietnam with three main tools. First, Chinese engineering troops. In North Vietnam, Chinese engineers built airfields, roads, and railways. Second, Chinese anti-aircraft artillery troops who were stationed in North Vietnam to help defend against American air raids. Third, military equipment was shipped all over North Vietnam to be used by the Vietcong in their efforts against American GI's.⁸⁸ The aid that the CCP provided to Vietnam played a fundamental role in the Vietcong's eventual victory over the U.S.

While China was keen on lending support to Vietnam, the Soviets tried to negotiate peace between Vietnam and the U.S. because of their plans to deescalate tension throughout the world. The Soviets did not endorse anything that sought major global change and only armed struggle that was not going to cause a "...full scale war with the West."⁸⁹ As expected, China strictly opposed any peace talks regarding Vietnam, "...leading the Soviet embassy in Moscow to write that the Chinese had made clear their desire 'to fight against the Americans to the last Vietnamese soldier.'"⁹⁰ Although he did not live to see the Vietcong defeat the American troops, Ho Chi Minh was revered as the leader of the Vietcong and the reverence for him lived beyond his death in 1969.

With Chinese aid, the Vietcong were able to eventually defeat the U.S. and liberate themselves completely. Not only did the Vietnamese share the same enemy with the Chinese, but

⁸⁷ Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War", 1964-69, 366.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 372.

⁸⁹ Freidman, 146.

⁹⁰ Friedman, 130.

they were both victims of imperialism at the hands of western power. For Ho Chi Minh, following Mao's example clearly worked for the liberation of Vietnam. Emulating Mao's revolutionary path for liberation was repeated throughout the 20th century by various leftist groups throughout the world, including black radicals.

U.S. Domestic Problems

Blacks in America had been subjected to racism and racial violence throughout the 20th century and had seen little to no justice by the end of the post WWII period. Many black people were living in deplorable conditions and were victims of race-based violence. And some black Americans drew a line connecting how colonizing countries subjected colonized people to racial violence to the same kind of violence directed at blacks in America at the hands of white people. At the end of the Civil War, black people were no longer enslaved, but this proved to only be true on paper, because by the mid 1870's, America ushered in the Jim Crow Era.⁹¹ Coined as Jim Crow laws, these laws "codified discriminatory practices and provided the legal framework necessary for the unequal treatment of African Americans".⁹² Quickly evolving into something more, Jim Crow laws became a way of life in America.

Employing ideas of social Darwinism and eugenics during the so-called "progressive Era" (1890-1920) of the U.S., social scientist at the time were able to "prove" blacks inferior to whites.⁹³ Because of such an outlandish claim, blacks were subject to violence at the hands of

⁹¹ Frances L. Edwards, "The Legal Creation of Raced Space: The Subtle and Ongoing Discrimination Created Through Jim Crow Laws," *Berkeley Journal of African-American Law Policy* 12, no. 1 (2010): pp. 145-167, <https://discovery-ebSCO-com.libproxy.chapman.edu/linkprocessor/plink?id=e3d9dc22-cb08-3222-8662-d80f5726c209>, 151.

⁹² Edwards, "The Legal Creation of Raced Space: The Subtle and Ongoing Discrimination Created Through Jim Crow Laws," 145.

⁹³ Thomas C. Leonard, "Mistaking Eugenics for Social Darwinism: Why Eugenics Is Missing From the History of American Economics," *History of Political Economy* 37, no. Suppl_1 (January 2005): pp. 200-233, https://doi.org/10.1215/00182702-37-suppl_1-200, 200.

racist white Americans. Lynching's was a prominent form of violence that blacks were often victims of. Between 1882 and 1968, there is almost 5,000 lynching's recorded. These victims were usually lynched after being shot, castrated, beaten, dragged, burned, quartered and dismembered.⁹⁴ Blacks fell victim to lynching for acts such as simply looking at a white person or trying to vote. Often white preachers taught their congregations that white supremacist ideology was backed by Christianity which led to more so-called "justified" racial violence.⁹⁵ Every aspect of life for black people was affected. From restaurants to public education, Jim Crow legitimized white supremacy and racism against blacks in America.⁹⁶ In the early 20th century, the options to combat this legalized state of anarchy were very limited. Seeking protection and trying to fight for their right to some blacks joined the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). And for some, the CPUSA provided a haven against racism.

The CPUSA was established in 1919 shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution.⁹⁷ But as with most communist parties that were established after the Bolshevik Revolution, the CPUSA was not any different in its alliance with the Soviets.⁹⁸ Focusing on workers' rights first and addressing racism later down the line, blacks were accepted into the CPUSA, but their grievances were addressed as labor issues, not race issues. This is not to say that the CPUSA completely ignored racism, black activist like Claudia Jones found the CPUSA and Marxism as a way to combat racism in America. Speaking on her experiences with Jim Crow laws, Jones felt

⁹⁴ Ian Eppler and Kiara Boone, "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror," *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*, 2017, <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report/>.

⁹⁵ Amy Kate Bailey and Karen A. Snedker, "Practicing What They Preach? Lynching and Religion in the American South, 1890–1929," *American Journal of Sociology* 117, no. 3 (November 2011): pp. 844-887, <https://doi.org/10.1086/661985>, 848.

⁹⁶ Edwards, 145.

⁹⁷ Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, "History of the Comintern. Sections," *Communist Party, USA*, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/cpusa/encyclopedia-american-left.htm>.

⁹⁸ Buhle, Georgakas, "History of Comintern".

that "...the science of Marxism-Leninism- philosophy that not only rejects racist ideas, but is the antithesis of them."⁹⁹ Thus, while willing to accept blacks into party ranks and understanding Marxism as a way to combat racism in America, the racial plight that blacks faced was not a main focus for the CPUSA.

Nevertheless, communism did not only appeal to those that followed the Black Power movement. It was very popular amongst black people who were simply searching for equality. At the turn of the 20th century, blacks in America hoped to experience the same rights as their white counterparts and receive equal protection under the democratic laws that gave protection to white people. This proved not to be the case. Democracy in America did not have black people in mind, it was strictly for white people, even poor whites had better experiences with democracy than upper class blacks. So, the failures of democracy for blacks were not a matter of class, but a matter of race. No matter what economic class you belonged to in America, if you were black, you were automatically at the bottom. The system that went against this and strictly saw class struggle, was communism. For blacks, the beauty of communism was that race did not matter, it was a matter of the working class versus the bourgeoisie. This appeal to a class struggle drew in blacks who were either blue collar workers, farmers or simply trying to move away from the racial plight to a worker plight that entailed whites and blacks. But as some blacks came to realize, the CPUSA's agenda followed too closely with Soviet styled communism, meaning that there was too much of an oversight regarding racial problems in America.

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Flynn Gurley, "13 Communists Speak to the Court," University of Pittsburgh Digital Collections, accessed March 9, 2022, <https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3A31735061657908/viewer#page/26/mode/2up>, 24. This pamphlet was put together by Gurley after the trial of thirteen communist in 1953 for crimes of sedition. The quote from Jones is on the twenty-fourth page of the pamphlet.

But it was Vladimir Lenin himself who noted in 1916, “In the United States, the Negro (and also the Mulattoes and Indians) account for only 11.1 percent. They should be classed as an oppressed nation, for the equality won in the Civil War of 1861-1865.”¹⁰⁰ Recognizing blacks as part of the working class the CPUSA saw “...African-Americans as the most oppressed and exploited part of the American proletariat.”¹⁰¹ By 1930, the CPUSA was vigorously fighting for racial equality in America. Trying to recruit more blacks into the Party, the CPUSA addressed police brutality, evictions and unemployment amongst blacks in America. In 1930, the CPUSA convened and made a declaration for a “Black Belt Soviet {sic} Republic in the South.”¹⁰² This so-called Republic was going to be an autonomous zone for black Americans in the southern United States that would consist of land throughout Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, and Virginia. This area was to be governed in a communist fashion and was backed by the Soviet Union.¹⁰³

Urged to rise together when confronting racism, white and black workers members of the CPUSA were often victims of violence at the hands of white racist.¹⁰⁴ The CPUSA was successful early on in recruiting blacks who were in blue collar labor, farming, and various technical trades. Because of this by the 1940s, there was an estimated ten-thousand blacks in the CPUSA, making up approximately ten percent of its membership.¹⁰⁵ Spreading communist ideals amongst other blacks, some black communists belonging to the CPUSA and joined the ranks of

¹⁰⁰ V.I. Lenin, “Statistics and Sociology,” in *V.I. Lenin: Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1972), pp. 271-278, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/cw/pdf/lenin-cw-vol-23.pdf>, 275.

¹⁰¹ Manfred Berg, “Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism: The NAACP in the Early Cold War,” *Journal of American History* 94, no. 1 (June 1, 2007): pp. 75-96, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25094777>, 79.

¹⁰² Maxwell C. Stanford (Atlanta University, 1986), pp. 1-231, 35.

¹⁰³ Stanford, 35.

¹⁰⁴ “Not Even Past: Social Vulnerability and the Legacy of Redlining,” History Engine 3.0 (Digital Scholarship Lab / University of Richmond), accessed March 16, 2022, <https://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/5225>.

¹⁰⁵ Stanford, 36

strictly black organizations. One example was the Alabama Sharecroppers Union (SCU) which was created in 1931. Peaking at 5,000 members, the SCU sought to endorse the creation of the Black Belt and unite black and white farm workers.¹⁰⁶ Frequently engaging in gun battles with racist whites, the SCU showed the effect that Communism had on black workers.¹⁰⁷ Many blacks first experience with communism was from organized labor unions that aligned with the CPUSA. William Z. Foster, a former prominent labor organizer, states, "...the Communists played a prominent part, took a friendly attitude toward the organization of Negro workers."¹⁰⁸ But these labor unions were often run by white people who did not understand the racial issues that these black laborers were facing outside of work.

As mentioned before, the CPUSA was still closely aligned with the Soviets and did not stray too far from Soviet rhetoric. So, despite their growing influence amongst black workers, the CPUSA did not fully addressing the needs of black people and black workers in America. As black nationalist groups began to rise in the 1930s, membership to the CPUSA amongst blacks declined because black nationalist groups sought to address all the needs of black people, not just labor issues. One of the more popular black nationalist groups, the Nation of Islam (NOI) began in Detroit in the 1930s and grew at an alarming rate.¹⁰⁹ Utilizing elements of Christianity and Islam, Elijah Poole (who would later change his name to Elijah Muhammad and lead the NOI)

¹⁰⁶ John Beecher, "The Share Croppers' Union in Alabama," *Social Forces* 13, no. 1 (January 1934): pp. 124-132, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2570227>. 124.

¹⁰⁷ Beecher, "The Share Croppers' Union in Alabama," 125.

¹⁰⁸ William Z. Foster, "The CIO and Organizing Black and White Workers," *The CIO and Organizing Black and White Workers* (New York, NY: Red Star Publishers , 2019), 13.

¹⁰⁹ Stanford, 45.

attracted blacks who saw that Christianity had failed them and sought a religion that appealed to needs and desires of black people.¹¹⁰

This was the organization that attracted future Black Power leader Malcolm X.¹¹¹ The religious teachings were combined with an admiration for Asia, particularly Japan. Recognizing Japan as the most prominent Asian nation, Muhammad told his followers in 1942, “The Japanese are brothers of the black man... The Asiatic race is made up of all dark-skinned people, including the Japanese and the Asiatic black man. Therefore, members of the Asiatic race must stick together. The Japanese will win the war because the white man cannot successfully oppose the Asiatics.”¹¹² Telling black people that they were Asiatic, and that white people were devils, the NOI grew to a massive movement peaking in the 1960s and adding to the Black Power movement.¹¹³

By 1935, European powers were mainly concerned with the rise of fascism. The outbreak of WWII pushed American racial issues further back on the CPUSA’s agenda. As fascism rose in Europe, the Soviet Union did its best to stay out of ensuing conflict and the CPUSA followed suite by declaring that Americans had no business fighting in Europe.¹¹⁴ So, despite acting against racism in America, fascism in Europe was being overlooked. Even more so, when the Soviet Union signed a neutral pact with fascist Germany, many blacks naturally moved away from communist ideology because the Soviet Union had chosen not to fight against fascism. But

¹¹⁰ “Honorable Elijah Muhammad,” NOI.org Official Website, March 10, 2022, <https://www.noi.org/honorable-elijah-muhammad/>.

¹¹¹ Stanford, 45.

¹¹² Nathaniel Deutsch, “‘The Asiatic Black Man’: An African American Orientalism?,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 4, no. 3 (2001): pp. 193-208, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jaas.2001.0029>, 194.

¹¹³ Marjorie Corbman, “The Creation of the Devil and the End of the White Man’s Rule: The Theological Influence of the Nation of Islam on Early Black Theology,” *Religions* 11, no. 6 (2020): p. 305, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11060305>, 4.

¹¹⁴ Berg, “Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism”, 80.

when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, the CPUSA quickly backed the Soviet Union's military action against Nazi Germany and moved further away from the struggle against racism in America.¹¹⁵ Thus, the blacks who saw the CPUSA as a way of combatting the racial problems in America had been bamboozled. Once again, a European-based ideology had failed them.

Despite being Communist and having black members, the CPUSA remained a white majority in membership and leadership. Whites sympathized with the racial plight of blacks, but just like the Soviets, they did not focus on race as a main priority in bringing forth a revolution. At the end of WWII, the black membership of the CPUSA had declined to 2,000 members.¹¹⁶ Although blacks needed worker rights and fair compensation and wanted socialist conditions versus capitalist ones, the CPUSA did not address the problems of racism in America with due diligence.

Another reason that black radicals began to look elsewhere for an international alliance was because more liberal mainstream Civil Rights groups like the National Advancement Association for Colored People (NAACP) failed to bring about the type of progress that some black people were looking for post WWII. Founded in 1909 by black intellectuals and progressive thinking whites, NAACP leaders had goals of reform, not revolution.¹¹⁷ Reforms only meant to alter a law or alter a segment of the system versus revolutionizing which sought to completely uproot the system and start anew. The NAACP had a goal of changing the minds of racists and sought to make racism unlawful. As stated by one scholar, "The NAACP expected racial change

¹¹⁵ "Fascism and Its Ally, Racism": The Complexities of the Washington Commonwealth Federation's Stance on Civil Rights," Washington Commonwealth Federation and Civil Rights, accessed 2022, https://depts.washington.edu/depress/washington_commonwealth_federation_civil_rights.shtml.

¹¹⁶ Berg, 94.

¹¹⁷ "NAACP: A Century in the Fight for Freedom Founding and Early Years," Library of Congress, February 21, 2009, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/naacp/founding-and-early-years.html>.

to result from political reforms, not from revolutionary class struggle.”¹¹⁸ Post-WWI period, the NAACP worked within the system to bring about equity and equality without violent means. Ways of working within the system included encouraging blacks to vote, giving legal help to victims of race related crimes and encouraging blacks to work within the system to change the system. But for certain blacks, these policies and reforms within the system were not enough. The NAACP was not bringing about a mass change that black radicals felt was needed. The nonviolent means of change and seeking to gain political positions did not stop lynching’s and was not helping eradicate poverty amongst blacks.

For some blacks, the NAACP and groups like them, represented American democracies failure to take the plight of black people seriously. In addition to this, the shortcomings of the peaceful means of the NAACP showed certain blacks that violent means was the only way to go about change. Within the Black Power movement, reform was not a goal, revolutionizing the system was the goal. Refusing to work closer with the NAACP through democratic means, America had indirectly ushered some black people away from peaceful means. One of these black people was Robert F. Williams. Facing constant threats and violence at the hands of the KKK, Williams had joined the NAACP, but was soon disappointed in their reaction to his armed response against the KKK. It would not be too long after his split with the NAACP that Williams would make a friend in China who embraced his struggle and saw him as a revolutionary.

Civil Rights Groups vs Black Power Movement

When asked about his Mao poster on his office wall, famed Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver simple stated, “...because Mao Zedong is the baddest motherfucker on the planet

¹¹⁸ Berg, 78.

earth.”¹¹⁹ The end of WWII left the U.S. and Soviet Union as the two highest superpowers in the world. Yet, despite its death and destruction, the end of the war left many nations, countries and people, still searching for their liberation. Former colonies were no longer tied down to their former colonizers because resources could not be allocated by the colonizers to hold them, which meant a great push by these nations for freedom. And although black Americans were not a colonized people on paper, some believed that their conditions in the U.S. matched colonized conditions. In 1962, black communist, Harold Cruse wrote an article in *Studies on the Left* that defined black peoples condition as “domestic colonialism.”¹²⁰ He stated that black people in America had been victimized by underdevelopment, “...hunger, illiteracy, disease, ties to the land, urban and semi-urban slums, cultural starvation, and the psychological reactions to being ruled over by others not of his kind...”¹²¹ and thus he saw black Americans as a colonized people. Regardless of differences among the Black Power movement participants, most supported this idea that black people were colonized.

But while black people received subhuman treatment from the U.S. government, the same government aided numerous countries in their liberation. For example, when Japan lost its colonial ties to Korea, the U.S. helped set up South Korea. This went even further in 1950 when North Korea invaded and the U.S. sent troops to Korea to not only repel communism, but to help South Korea as well.¹²² But as the U.S. was providing aid to other countries, racism against black people continued to escalate and the government was not seeking to liberate black people. Up

¹¹⁹ Bidoun, “International,” *Bidoun.org*, n.d., <https://www.bidoun.org/issues/15-pulp>.

¹²⁰ Ramón A. Gutiérrez, “Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race,” *Cambridge Core (Du Bois Review)*, September 2004), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/du-bois-review-social-science-research-on-race/article/internal-colonialism-an-american-theory-of-race/16F1E2837F1211B208D09DFA9F3D716E>.

¹²¹ Gutiérrez, “Internal Colonialism”, 286.

¹²² Randy Felder “Dysfunctional” (2020), 11.

until this point, America had not provided black people with equal treatment at any level. These actions by the U.S. government proved to some black people that America did not care for them and that an international ally with their best interest at heart was needed.

But the strategies to combat racial violence was not the same among black leaders in the post WWII period. By the early 1960s, black leaders fighting on behalf of black Americans fell into two general categories, those who supported mainstream Civil Rights activism and those who supported Black Power strategies and goals. Although both movements wanted to see an elevation of black people in society, the ultimate goals and methods were very different.

Amongst the Civil Rights movement, leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and organizations such as the NAACP, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), sought to reform the system that was oppressing black people.¹²³ These reforms often dealt with trying to change repressive laws and trying to integrate with white America. On the other hand, the Black Power leaders such as Robert F. Williams and Max Stanford and groups such as Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) sought to liberate black people through revolutionary violence.¹²⁴

The Civil Rights Movement did not want to end the democratic system or seek a new way of governance. They were not happy with U.S. governance but did not think that there was a better system other than democracy that could best serve black people. Although many of them were against the Vietnam War, they did not connect oppressed people suffering throughout the world to the plight of blacks in the U.S. Nor was the Civil Rights movement a separatist

¹²³ Don Freeman, "Black Youth And Afro-American Liberation," *Black America*, 1964, p. 15, https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC513_scans/RAM/513.RAM.Black.America.Fall.1964.pdf, 15.

¹²⁴ Max Stanford, "We Can Win," *Black America*, 1964, p. 2, https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC513_scans/RAM/513.RAM.Black.America.Fall.1964.pdf, 2.

movement or endorsing the use of violence to accomplish its goals.¹²⁵ With black leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., came a message of non-violence in the face of violence.

Another, clear difference between the Civil Rights movement and Black Power movement was the use of media. Both movements were aware of the power that media had and both used media in various forms to get their message out. The "...civil rights organizers were extremely aware of the possibilities that were opened up by television. Access to millions of people across the nation, they knew, would quicken the pace towards change on both a local and national level."¹²⁶ Knowing that their events received mass media coverage, one Civil Rights group, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) held practices on how to quickly assume the fetal position after being struck by a police officer.¹²⁷ And with this use of media, the Civil Rights movement propagated black people as being passive victims in the face of violent racism. The portrayal of blacks as fetal victims strengthened the "emotions of viewers"¹²⁸ who would watch these incidents on television. The result of this translated into black people being victims of isolated racism in America. By submitting to beatings at the hands of police, an international connection with East Asian countries such as China and Vietnam who did not submit to violent repression, was never built with the Civil Rights movement. For groups like the Vietcong, submitting to violence without lashing back was not plausible and drew a clear distinction between themselves and the Civil Rights movement.

¹²⁵ "The Civil Rights Movement and the Second Reconstruction, 1945-1968: US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives," The Civil Rights Movement And The Second Reconstruction, 1945–1968 | US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives, 2008, <https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Historical-Essays/Keeping-the-Faith/Civil-Rights-Movement/>.

¹²⁶ Amanda Philley, "The Civil Rights Movement: The Power of Television," *3690: A Journal of FirstYear Student Research Writing* 2012, no. 4 (2012), 9.

¹²⁷ Philley, "The Civil Rights Movement", 9-10.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 10.

This paled in comparison to how the Black Power movement used media. In any media coverage of the Black Power movement, guns were often present, and the police were not beating on them, but on guard in case of any gun violence. This played directly into the message taught by Black Power leaders, that violence was a necessary means for liberation. Adding to this, even when guns were not present in media coverage, members of the Black Power movement were not curled up in the fetal position allowing police to beat them. By showing their armed resistance to the world, Africans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Middle Eastern countries like Palestine related directly to this and sought connections.¹²⁹

Often seeing the separatist goals of the Black Power movement as far-fetched, the Civil Rights movement wanted black people to be integrated with white people and have the same rights and treatment as white people in America. Civil Rights groups like SNCC allowed white membership alongside black members and often stood side by side with white people at protest.¹³⁰ The integrationist attitude was a key feature of the Civil Rights movement. The Civil Rights movement sought to have its place at the table of America through various nonviolent protest and reforming of laws.

The Black Power movement, in contrast, did not seek reform but instead revolution. Malcolm X clearly defined in 1963 what revolution eventually meant to the Black Power movement, “Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality...Revolution is bloody, revolution is hostile, revolution knows no compromise, revolution overturns and destroys everything that gets in its way.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ Alex Lubin, “Black Panther Palestine,” *Studies in American Jewish Literature* (1981-) 35, no. 1 (January 2016): pp. 77-97, <https://doi.org/10.5325/studamerjewilite.35.1.0077>, 83.

¹³⁰ Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 119.

¹³¹ George Breitman, *Malcolm X Speaks* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1994), 9.

And with this revolution, the Black Power movement sought to uproot themselves from America and establish black people as a separate entity in America or outside of it. Part of this separation was carried out with publicizing gun ownership, the establishment of social programs outside of public assistance from the government and seeking to be in control of their own neighborhoods. Seeking to be able to “do for oneself”, Black Power movements participants followed the path of East Asian revolutionary groups, complete separation from their colonizers and keeping these colonizers out of their country. Although black people did not have their own country per se, for the Black Power movement, eventually having their own land inside from the U.S. was possible. Within black neighborhoods, the U.S. government and law enforcement were viewed as the occupiers of their neighborhoods.

The Black Power movement did not see racism in America as an isolated phenomena but saw it as the reality of America. In their acceptance of Marxist teachings, the Black Power movement related capitalism directly to the racism that black people experienced and saw in socialism and communism as a way to combat this. Furthermore, black radicals believed that the capitalism which fueled American democracy fueled the racism that black people felt as well. To the Black Power movement, reactionary reform was not enough for black people, only a violent revolution would give black people in America what was needed for their sovereignty.

Another key element of the Civil Rights movement was Christianity. Leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Baynard Rustin were devout Christians. Holding true to their religious beliefs, these beliefs often played a serious role within their Civil Rights work. “Turning the other cheek” as Jesus did was used by Civil Rights leaders. Trying to advocate the fight against

racism with the words of Christ, these leaders related to the oppressed people in the Bible who eventually reached the “Promised Land” and stayed true to the word of God. And while Christianity was embedding in mainstream liberal Civil Rights activism, religion to the Black Power movement was often seen in a classic Marx sense, “the opium of the people.”¹³² This viewpoint did not eliminate religion from the Black Power movement, but rather it was not seen as a rallying point for many of the Black Power participants. For example, Malcolm X, who was a devout Muslim, told an audience in 1964, “We’re going to forget religion... Whether you are a Christian or a Muslim... They don’t hang you because you’re a Baptist; they hang you ‘cause you are black.”¹³³ So, instead of trying to utilize religion as a rallying point to combat racism, the Black Power movement sought to utilize the victimization that all blacks dealt with regardless of their religion, as a rallying point to combat racism.

Black Power, East Asia

The scrutiny towards religion, especially Christianity was part of the reasoning that East Asian revolutionary groups found unity with Black Power groups. As Mao said in 1945, “Our God is none other than the masses of the Chinese people.”¹³⁴ But in a religious-like manner, the Black Power movement embraced Mao as a god. This was most seen through the leaders of the Black Power movement who studied Maoism and brought their supporters and organization to the teachings of Mao. Mao in many ways, became a guiding light towards revolution. The

¹³² Karl Marx, “Introduction,” in *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Paris, France: Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, 1844), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>.

¹³³ Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet,” American Radio Works , accessed March 16, 2022, <https://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/mx.html>.

¹³⁴ “Commonly Read Speeches and Writings of Mao Zedong (1927-1945): Asia For Educators: Columbia University,” Commonly Read Speeches and Writings of Mao Zedong (1927-1945) | Asia for Educators | Columbia University, 2022, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1900_mao_speeches.htm.

leaders of the Black Power movement needed an icon who could show them the way to international revolution and Mao was that icon.

Because the Black Power movement was part of an international movement that sought to revolutionize the U.S. on behalf of black people, the movement saw East Asia as not only a partner in international solidarity, but as providing blueprint for revolution and governance. It was not a coincidence that the Black Power movement aligned itself with Maoism. And because the Black Power movement aligned with Maoism, China was more willing to accept the Black Power movement. Both groups shared a common enemy, western imperialism and colonialism. Additionally, Mao's charisma attracted oppressed people from all over the world. One scholar states that Mao was "...of peasant origin, but one who cherished violence; so were many of his later global followers."¹³⁵ Mao was born as a peasant and knew firsthand what it meant to be poor. His ascendance to a world leader was admirable by those who were born in deplorable conditions. Mao also later proved to be a staunch anti-racist.

Although the Soviets sought to undermine American capitalism, they were not focused on eliminating racism. Black radicals sought to eradicate racism, not live with it or bring it to a tolerant level. To the Black Power movement, the Soviet Union was trying to coexist with America, and this was seen as reactionary.¹³⁶ For the Black Power movement, imperialism and racism was not something to coexist peacefully with, imperialism and racism had to be eliminated and black people had to be liberated.

¹³⁵ Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History*, 29.

¹³⁶ "The Black Power Movement : Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement , 1962-1996," *The Black Power Movement : Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement , 1962-1996* § (1962), <https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=010629-006-0001&accountid=10051>.

Another reason for the lack of appeal amongst the Black Power movement towards the Soviets was that they were still white. Despite being communist and an enemy to most European nations and the U.S., the Soviets were not a colored people. In addition to this, many Black Power groups did not want to depend on a historically European country for help against imperialism and racism. It must also be remembered that the Soviet Union had joined the League of Nations, had a non-aggression pact with Hitler, invaded Poland and were not keen to black culture. Ignoring culture and race, the Soviets did exactly what every European power did before them, ignored the culture of the people and sought to assimilate the indigenous people with their way of living. As one scholar states, “The Soviet Union found itself devoid of scholars...” that would go and study the cultures of people that they were trying to appeal to.¹³⁷

The attraction that the Black Power movement had towards the CCP came, thus with good reason. Aside from the common enemy, China was helping multiple countries with colored populations in the aftermath of WWII. In 1950, when U.S. landed troops in Korea to push North Korean troops back, China sent numerous amounts of troops over the Chinese-North Korean border to help North Korea push back the Americans.¹³⁸ Vietnam also received aid from China. The Black Power movement revered all of this.

As black radicals in America struggled with American imperialism, Africans struggled with European imperialism too. In addition to aiding Vietnam, Mao and the CCP gave money and trained rebels in Africa. Across the African continent, the Chinese sent guerilla warfare instructors to teach various African rebel groups how to make landmines, shoot weapons, conduct searches and utilize guerilla warfare tactics. But Chinese help in various African nations

¹³⁷ Ibid, 30.

¹³⁸ Felder “Dysfunctional”, 18.

began as early as 1955. In Africa, Mao and China sought to gain hegemony as a leader against western imperialism. One scholar states that after the Bandung Conference in 1955, “China declared its intent to help liberation fighters throughout the world, and this became the hallmark of China’s Africa policy from the 1950s to the end of the Cold War in 1990.”¹³⁹ These countries included but were not limited to, Angola, Mozambique, Algeria, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Guinea Bissau.¹⁴⁰

Shortly after the Bandung Conference two main parties against Portuguese rose to power in Angola, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Front of the Liberation of Angola (FNLA). And by 1959 in Guinea-Bissau, the African Party for Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) formed.¹⁴¹ So when Angolan revolutionary leader, Viriato da Cruz, and Guinea revolutionary leader, Amilcar Cabral came to China for help after being shut down by the Soviets, China was more than happy to comply. Giving both men twenty thousand dollars and accepting ten people from each group for military training, the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated, “They are very friendly towards us...strongly condemn Portugal’s violent, oppressive rule, and criticize U.S. imperialism’s support for Portugal’s oppression of colonial peoples.”¹⁴² Also rising against the Portuguese in 1959 and receiving CCP funding was the Mozambique National Democratic Union (UDENAMO) and the Mozambican African National Union (MANU) . In 1962, the groups became the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO).¹⁴³ In 1963, the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) formed

¹³⁹ Ousman Murzik Kobo, “A New World Order? Africa and China,” *Origins* (Ohio State University, March 2013), https://origins.osu.edu/article/new-world-order-africa-and-china?language_content_entity=en.

¹⁴⁰ Kobo, “A New World Order?”

¹⁴¹ Abdul Alkalimat, *Dialectics of Liberation: The African Liberation Support Movement* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2022), 24.

¹⁴² Friedman, 54.

¹⁴³ Alkalimat, *Dialectics of Liberation*, 27.

against the British colonial rule.¹⁴⁴ By 1960, the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) had formed in Namibia against German occupation.¹⁴⁵ The one thing that all these groups had in common was the extensive help that China gave them. Each one of these countries followed a guerilla path style to liberation based on the same fighting techniques that were taught by Chinese instructors. In addition to this, Chinese Communism was taught to the African fighters and Chinese admiration was high amongst these African nations. The aid to Africa appealed to Black Power movement leaders who saw Africa as the home they had been kidnapped from. It was also the home to millions of people who looked just like the black people in America. Mao's support of guerilla warfare in African countries furthered the admiration black radicals had for him and China. Although Mao died in 1976, between 1964 to 1985, China spent between \$170 and \$220 million in training rebels in Africa.¹⁴⁶

It was not only the money, but the vision that China shared with certain African countries as well. African nations had been subject to Europe control for centuries. Colonization and imperialization had resulted in the African continent being drained of natural resources and left Africans with no sovereignty. The Chinese understood this feeling all too well. The diplomatic relations that the Chinese shared with African nations made their appeal to black radicals even stronger. For black radicals, Africa was only far in distance, but the struggle Africa shared was close in heart.

The Black Power movement did not hesitate to use this connection in globalizing the struggle with imperialism. Former activist turned scholar, Abul Alkalimat wrote, "The existence of African Americans people is the result of transplanting Africans into the Americas. They were

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 30.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 33.

¹⁴⁶ Lovell, 195.

taken out of Africa, but Africa was never taken out of them.”¹⁴⁷ The global revolution that Mao often spoke of was being built in Africa. By helping African nations liberate themselves from European imperialism, China attracted the attention of black radicals in America. Mao fully endorsed global revolution and within the next ten years, the Black Power movement and its understanding of armed conflict was embraced by those dissatisfied with non-violent civil disobedience. The Bandung Conference in 1955 was a pivotal moment for what became the Black Power movement. Although China was not the only country willing to lend aid to African nations after WWII and after the Bandung Conference, China was the only country that supported global revolution by violent means. Black people who had begun to move away from the reactionary way of combatting racism saw China as leading the way with revolutionary violence. China was fully aware that black radicals were aligning their struggles with Africa’s. Seeing Africa as a source of strength and origin, the Black Power movement had high admiration of Africa and sympathized with their struggles. This shared struggle was mostly related to transatlantic slavery at the hands of western powers. “...Communist theory and practice were obvious sources of inspiration, for it was the ‘world capitalist system’ that had created black slavery in America in the first place.”¹⁴⁸

Africa, black Americans and China had all been victimized by western imperialism. According to one scholar, even though colonialism varied amongst blacks and Africans, three things remain the same. “...racist class exploitation of the African descendants; memory of Africa connected with self-defined identity; and the desire for freedom for African people the world over.”¹⁴⁹ Unlike the Soviet Union in their dealings with other countries, China was willing

¹⁴⁷ Alkalimat, *Dialectics of Liberation* 33.

¹⁴⁸ Lovell, 283.

¹⁴⁹ Alkalimat, 34.

to let nations to grow, if they embraced Maoism. Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai announced in 1964, "...The goal of Chinese government in providing aid is to help countries gradually go down the road of raising themselves on their own forces and independent economic development..."¹⁵⁰ Unlike the Soviets, China did not have set conditions that countries/nations had to meet for revolution. They understood culture as a being a dominant factor in revolution and did not want to control the culture of these revolutions, only to influence the revolution and connect with the people who were partaking in the revolution.

When Malcolm X travelled through Africa in spring 1964, he had a goal of creating a better relationship with various African countries in order to create a bond between blacks in America and Africans. Seeing China aid to Africa Malcolm X became a fan of China and Maoism as well. Later that same year at a forum, Malcolm spoke highly of the Chinese.

"There used to be an expression used in this country that something doesn't have a Chinaman's chance - because he wasn't respected, he wasn't protected. His rights were ignored. But the expression has become outdated. It doesn't fit anymore. By that I mean, since China itself had become a power on this earth, wherever you find the Chinese person, since China is respected, that Chinaman is respected. His status or condition or position changed only to the degree that the continent or nation with which he was identified ancestrally also was changed."¹⁵¹

He later told a crowd in 1964, "You can't understand what is going on in Mississippi if you don't understand what is going on in the Congo. And you can't really be interested in what's going on in Mississippi if you're not also interested in what's going on in the Congo. They're both the same."¹⁵² The Black Power movement recognized that the same European white man that was oppressing Africans in Africa is no different than the American white man that was oppressing blacks in America. In 1964, Malcolm had reached a climatic leadership point in the Black Power

¹⁵⁰ Friedman, 118.

¹⁵¹ Breitman, *Malcolm X Speaks*, 211.

¹⁵² Breitman, 25.

movement. By endorsing and speaking so highly of China, those that followed Malcolm were sure to fall in line with his opinions on China.

Mass Appeal from the CCP

Besides the support for Africa, one other reason why the CCP appealed to black radicals, was because of the advocacy of violence. It was Mao who said "...revolution is not a dinner party...it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle...A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another."¹⁵³ Looking at the violence that black people and East Asian people had been subject to at the hands of western powers, it should come as no surprise that revolutionary violence was viewed as a solution to countering oppressive violence. Although the Soviets had utilized violence early in their revolution, violence was not a key element in their anti-capitalist rhetoric. For them, the main fight was against economic and political power and the struggle between classes. Ultimately Stalin was an advocator of violence, but an ideologue promoter and organizer.¹⁵⁴ The CCP also presented Marxism as an idea that could be molded to the conditions that fit different societies. For them, there was no preexisting conditions required for revolution. This meant that communism was not absolute but could be molded to fit the exact conditions faced by black people. Unlike the Soviets, Mao understood that culture played a part in building a well-rounded socialist state.¹⁵⁵ Essentially the CCP taught that Marxism flowed like water and could adjust to any conditions.

Another part of Maoism's mass appeal came from his "Little Red Book". Originally published in 1964, this book became one of the most popular reads among revolutionaries in the

¹⁵³ Mao Tse-Tung, "Classes And Class Struggle", in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung: 'The Little Red Book'* (Peking, China: Peking Foreign Languages Press, 1966), https://www.marxists.org/ebooks/mao/Quotations_from_Chairman_Mao_Tse-tung.pdf.

¹⁵⁴ Lovell, 31.

¹⁵⁵ Mao Tse-Tung, "Culture and Art", in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*

world. Full of political ideology and military strategy, this book was the first education many people, not just black people, had on revolutionary politics. But for black people, to read the book of an international leader who encouraged them to rise up in arms against the U.S. was incredible. Easy to access, some estimate that the book was printed over a billion times since its first print.¹⁵⁶ When Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton first started the Black Panther Party in 1966, they sold copies of the book to college students and anyone who would buy one to raise funds to buy guns for the BPP.¹⁵⁷ The message of militancy, unity and war appealed to young blacks who were being victimized by racism in America. Through this book and other various forms of propaganda, Maoism spread throughout the globe and into the hearts of many black radicals. Tired of taking the back seat in the struggle for liberation, Mao's advocacy of guerilla warfare, armed self-defense, utilizing the masses and his support for anti-imperialism, garnered support and recognition from the Black Power movement.

Another reason why Maoism appealed to blacks is because Mao's support in personally vocalizing support multiple times for black people in America. In August 1963, Mao made his first public statement regarding the condition of black people in America. Stating, "I wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Chinese people, to express our resolute support for the Afro-Americans in their struggle against racial discrimination and for freedom and equal rights."¹⁵⁸ Mao was the first international leader to vocalize this kind of support. His statement was not only condemning the U.S. for its racist actions, but Mao extended himself and the entire country of China in support of black people fighting against racism in the U.S. With Mao's support towards

¹⁵⁶ "Mao's Little Red Book," Mao's Little Red Book | Information School | University of Washington, July 17, 2012, <https://ischool.uw.edu/podcasts/dtctw/maos-little-red-book>.

¹⁵⁷ Lovell, 279.

¹⁵⁸ Mao Tse-Tung, "Chairman Mao Tse-Tung's Statement," *Peking Review*, August 16, 1963, VI edition, sec. 33, pp. 6, <https://massline.org/PekingReview/PR1963/PR1963-33.pdf>.

Africa and Vietnam, this statement was not a statement to be taken lightly. Bringing in wages and labor exploitation, Mao goes on to say, “In general, only the most backbreaking and despised jobs are open to them. Their average wages are barely a third or a half of the white people. The proportion of unemployment among the Afro-Americans is the highest.”¹⁵⁹ This special attention to race and class that Mao gave was a defining appeal characteristic to blacks. For the Black Power movement, the combination of recognizing race and class and Mao’s rhetoric of arming the masses, was taken literal.

Mao was not hesitant to condemn the U.S. and seek an alliance with black people. The Soviet path of revolution did not allow for such bold declarations of condemnation, especially against the U.S. as noted before. Mao’s rallying cry for a united front against the U.S. continued, “I call on the workers, peasants, revolutionary intellectuals, enlightened elements of the bourgeoisie and other enlightened persons of all colors in the world, whether white, black, yellow, or brown, to unite to oppose the racial discrimination practiced by U.S. imperialism and support the black people in their struggle against racial discrimination.”¹⁶⁰ Chinese support from the Black Power movement increased even more when the Chinese successfully made their first nuclear bomb and called it the “Afro-Asian” bomb in 1964.¹⁶¹

Days after the assassination of MLK, Mao made another public statement supporting black people, and with the killing of King, Mao’s support was more fervent. Condemning the U.S. once more and showing support for “revolutionary force” amongst black radicals, Mao stated “Only by over-throwing the reactionary rule of the U.S. monopoly class and destroying the colonialist and imperialist system can the black people in the United States win complete

¹⁵⁹ Mao, “Chairman Mao Tse-Tung's Statement”, 7

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 7.

¹⁶¹ Friedman, 198.

emancipation.”¹⁶² Words like this fueled black radicals and justified the violence that black radicals later utilized in their fight for liberation. Directly adding to the revolutionary fuel that was burning in America, Maoism directly challenged the democracy of the U.S. and brought about revolutionary motivation amongst black radicals. Mao’s concludes this declaration by stating, “People of the whole world, unite still more closely and launch and sustain a vigorous offensive against our common enemy, U.S. imperialism, and against its accomplices!”¹⁶³

Already being located inside “the belly of the beast”, blacks radicals answered the call to Mao’s statement to “sustain a vigorous offensive” against the U.S.

Emulating the teaching of Mao, Huey P. Newton wrote in 1967, “The black people in America are the only people who can free the world, loosen the yoke of colonialism and destroy the war machine. As long as the wheels of the imperialistic war machine are turning there is no country that can defeat this monster of the west.”¹⁶⁴ Expounding on this, Newton’s logic was that because black people had been victims of American imperialism and that because black people played such a crucial role in America’s structure, that if black people revolutionized, they could destroy America from within. Another element of this faith in the masses of black people was the way Mao propped up the power of peasants in China. Mao saw the peasants of China as a main force behind its revolution.¹⁶⁵ This use of peasants attracted black people who for a long time had been treated as peasants in America. So, because the peasants in China were the main force

¹⁶² Mao Tse-tung, “Statement by Comrade Mao Tse-Tung, Chairman the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Ln Support of the Afro-American Struggle Against Depression,” *Peking Review* , April 19, 1968, pp. 5-6, <https://massline.org/PekingReview/PR1968/PR1968-16-Mao-Afro-American.pdf>.

¹⁶³ Mao Tse-tung, “Statement by Comrade Mao Tse-tung”, 5-6.

¹⁶⁴ Huey P. Newton, “In Defense of Self Defense,” *The Black Panther*, June 20, 1967, 1 edition, sec. 3, p. 3, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/black-panther/01n03-Jun%2020%201967.pdf>, 3.

¹⁶⁵ Mao Tse-Tung, “Culture and Art”, in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*

of revolution in China and because Newton understood black people as the main force capable of destroying America, the connection between Mao's faith in peasants translated directly to blacks in America. Maoism did not limit those who could participate in the revolution, it was simply about being a victim of imperialism/colonialism. It was the CCP and Mao's support of blacks that gave way to the confidence for black radical leaders like Newton.

Geopolitics

Geopolitically China was also the right option for black radicals. With oceans on both sides of the U.S., international allies for black radicals were not close by. Unlike the European and African continent, American borders were not under constant tension from neighbors. At the time, Canada and Mexico posed no threats domestically to the U.S. Cuba was the closest hostile country for two main reasons. One because of Fidel Castro's defensive attitude to the U.S. and two, because of the Soviet support that the Cubans received.

Although Cuba had experienced imperialism at the hands of Spain and the U.S., when Fidel Castro came into power in 1959, he disposed of Fulgencio Batista, who was also Cuban. The Cuban Revolution was very similar to the Bolshevik Revolution in the sense of a communist party having to fight against their current government. Castro's main opposition during the Cuban Revolutionary War was the Cuban Army that was loyal to Batista. Before Castro, there was widespread racism in Cuba.¹⁶⁶ With white Cubans having privilege and darker Afro-Cubans being on the opposite end of that privilege, many Afro-Cubans dealt with the same oppression as blacks in America. Afro-Cubans were not allowed in certain parks, beaches and hotels. Castro believed that part of the reason for Afro-Cuban prejudice was due to the influence of the U.S.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Frei Betto and Fidel Castro, *Fidel and Religion: Conversations with Frei Betto on Marxism & Liberation Theology* (Melbourne, Australia : Ocean Pr, 1990), 152.

¹⁶⁷ Betto and Castro, *Fidel and Religion*, 152.

In addition to this, Castro received praise from Black Power leader such as Malcolm X. X later said, "...you don't see any anti-Castro Cubans around here, we eat them up...Don't come up to Harlem and tell us who we should applaud for and shouldn't applaud for. Or there will be some ex anti-Castro Cubans..."¹⁶⁸

Even though Castro liberated Cuba without external help, in the aftermath, Cuba would not have successful if the Soviets did not aid the Cubans. Soviet aid, however, came with contingencies and these contingencies suffocated some of Castro's ambitions. Although black radicals supported Castro and Cuba's fight against U.S. imperialism and stood for the independence of the Cuban people, the reality of Cuba's revolutionary state was complicated.¹⁶⁹ This complication is because the Soviet aid to Cuba did not allow Castro and Cuba to freely support revolutionary movements despite Cuba's image as a haven for anti-imperialism. BPP Minister of Information, Eldridge Cleaver later testified that his preconceived notions of Cuban aide for blacks was naïve.¹⁷⁰ The Soviets did not want hostile relations with the U.S. and sought to avoid direct conflict with the U.S.¹⁷¹ Because of this, the type of aid black radicals sought from Cuba never came into fruition. And despite the support for Castro and Cuba, black radicals noted the dependency that Cuba had on the Soviets and how Cuba was treated by the Soviets. For black radicals, Cuba's superfluous dependency on the Soviet Union was not appealing. This dependency revealed that Cuba simply lacked the resources to the fully help black radicals. China on the other hand had an expansive economy and was not a pawn in anyone's chess game.

¹⁶⁸ Joy James, "Review / Harlem Hospitality and Political History: Malcolm X and Fidel Castro at the Hotel Theresa," *Contributions in Black Studies: A Journal of African and Afro-American Studies* 12, no. 12 (1994), <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1088&context=cibs>, 109.

¹⁶⁹ Bloom and Martin, 138.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 138.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*.

Castro was often under the bind of the Soviets and Cuba was often treated as pawn by the Soviets rather than an ally against capitalism. Castro for example became extremely furious when the First Secretary of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev decided to remove Soviet nukes in October 1962 from Cuba without first consulting Castro.¹⁷² Furthermore, Castro did not prioritize international revolution as a responsibility belonging to Cuba. Adding to this, the Soviets did not endorse Castro exporting the revolution because of their policies.¹⁷³ Part of this struggle in not being able to export he revolution also came from the Kennedy Administration's embargo on Cuba in early 1962.¹⁷⁴ Castro's priority was on building up Cuba before extending too much aide externally.

For the Black Power participants, not exporting the revolution went against their goals. Emulating the CCP, the Black Power movement sought to take the fight against U.S. imperialism internationally. Frequently referring to the U.S. imperialistic notions, black radicals drew comparisons between the police in their neighborhoods to the U.S. troops terrorizing other parts of the world and sought an alliance with all victims of U.S. imperialism. Examples of this will be explained later.

Although the Chinese could not physically infiltrate America with guerilla assistance or provide weapons to black radicals, having dissenters inside of America who admired Mao and China was the best-case scenario for them. Reflecting this sentiment, while in Cuba, Robert F.

¹⁷² "Castro and the Cold War," PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), accessed 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/castro-and-cold-war/>.

¹⁷³ Nicholas V. Boline, "Fidel Castro 's Grand Strategy in the Cuban Revolution: 1959-1968," Northgeorgia.edu, accessed March 17, 2022, <https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1115&context=papersandpubs>, 8.

¹⁷⁴ John F. Kennedy, "Proclamation 3447-Embargo on All Trade with Cuba," Proclamation 3447-Embargo on All Trade with Cuba | The American Presidency Project, February 3, 1962, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-3447-embargo-all-trade-with-cuba>.

Williams spoke about the consequences of black Americans violently rebelling within the U.S., “The fact is that the racist oppressors of the AfroAmerican realize the insecurity and vulnerability of the most powerful military complex in the world to a violent internal struggle, wherein its horrible and sophisticated weapons of war will be ineffective.”¹⁷⁵ With other nations, the Chinese had been able to directly partake in revolutionary actions, whether that was training rebels or providing various forms of aide. As the Chinese sought to spark international revolution, black radicals located in America were, to paraphrase an old Chinese saying, the single spark that can start a prairie fire.

¹⁷⁵ Robert F. Williams, “The Potential of a Minority Revolution ,” *Sauti The Inner-City Voice*, October 1969, 2 edition, sec. 1, p. 6, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/ic-voice/ic-voice-2-1a.pdf>, 6.

Chapter II: Black Radicals and East Asia

Elmer “Geronimo” Pratt joined the Army in 1965, served in the infantry, deployed to Vietnam twice and was honorably discharged in 1968. Coming home, Pratt joined the Black Panther Party because he saw “...that the people in the-what’s called the ghetto, or the black communities, the colonies or whatever you want to call it, were treated almost exactly the way we just got through treating the Vietcong or Vietnamese people...”¹⁷⁶ He later used his military training to fortify the Los Angeles office of the BPP. This proved helpful in the botched L.A.P.D. raid on the office. Pratt was not the first black person to connect the harsh realities of black people in America to the problems that the Vietnamese were going through. But black radicals like Pratt helped build the connection to East Asia. This chapter uses four case studies to investigate the deep connections between the Black Power in the U.S. and East Asia to show how the influence of Maoism and East Asia help to revolutionize the Black Power movement. Each of these case studies evolved from the historical background explained in the previous chapter and will show how the Black Power movement was influenced and connected to Maoism and East Asia.

Robert F. Williams

Robert F. Williams was born in 1925 and raised in Monroe, North Carolina. The grandchild of a slave and a resident of a segregated town, Williams was familiar with the racial tensions that plagued the South during the first half of the 20th century. In his book *Negroes With Guns*, Williams stated that one-third of Monroe was black and that “There are no trade

¹⁷⁶ YouTube, *Geronimo Pratt*, 1988, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GCvWo26JBI&list=LL&index=1>. 18:12.

unions in our county and the south-eastern regional headquarters of the Ku Klux Klan is Monroe.”¹⁷⁷ Although Williams was not the only armed black man in America, he was a pioneer in utilizing guns as a means to combat the racism that surrounded him. Growing up and seeing the local Klan extensively use violent means against black people, Williams was engulfed in a violent racial atmosphere and sought to use weapons to defend himself and others as city officials in Monroe did not protect its black citizens from the Klan on the basis “...that the Klan was a legal organization.”¹⁷⁸

Recognizing the negligence of local law enforcement and seeking a path for black liberation, by the 1940s, Williams looked to the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) for answers. Like many other black men in Detroit in the early years of WWII, Williams found work in factories and in the labor industry. Williams was living in Detroit when he first joined the “Local 600 of the United Automobile Workers of America.”¹⁷⁹ Although the rhetoric of equality and fight against worker exploitation appealed to him, there was nothing that addressed the racism that black people faced. Black communist Harry Haywood documented, “The CPUSA did not even attempt to mobilize labor support for the Black struggle, and the labor aristocracy maintained hegemony over the workers’ movement.”¹⁸⁰ Williams later documented that the dismissal of Christianity in relation to black people and the strict notion that the working class alone would end racism initially turned him off to communism.¹⁸¹ Because the CPUSA lacked in

¹⁷⁷ Robert F. Williams , “An NAACP Chapter Is Reborn In Militancy,” in *Negroes With Guns* (Mansfield Centre , CT: Martino, 2013), 50.

¹⁷⁸ Williams, *Negroes With Guns*, 54.

¹⁷⁹ Tyson, 39.

¹⁸⁰ Harry Haywood, *A Black Communist in the Freedom Struggle: The Life of Harry Haywood* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 272.

¹⁸¹ Tyson, 70-71.

directly addressing racism and lacking an interest in politics yet, Williams enlisted in the Army in 1945.

Standing up for himself at all costs, Williams did not allow himself to be a passive in the face of racism, even in the Army. His insubordination to racist white officers, led Williams to a three-month sentence in the stockade and honorably discharged from the Army in November 1946.¹⁸² For the next ten years Williams moved around the country looking for work and stability but in 1954 he decided to join the Marine Corps.

When the Marines reneged on certain things promised to him in his contract, Williams grew disgruntled with the Marines. He became subject to an “espionage investigation”¹⁸³ and was dishonorably discharged from the Marines in 1955. That same year, Williams began a new chapter in his life to combat the shortcomings he and so many other black people were dealing with in a post WWII America. Focusing his energies on the racism black Americans faced in post WWII America, Williams remembers; “The story begins in 1955 when, as a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, I returned to my home town Monroe and joined the local chapter of the NAACP.”¹⁸⁴ When Williams returned to Monroe for good, not much had changed since he had last left, except that the Klan was even stronger and tormenting black residents regularly.

He was not the only veteran in his NAACP branch either. “Most important, we had a strong reputation of returned veterans who were very militant and who didn’t scare easy.”¹⁸⁵ Being a black veteran in a racist America was a complex situation for black men. Since the end of WWI, many black veterans came home and expected to be treated with dignity and respected

¹⁸² Tyson, 47.

¹⁸³ Williams, *Negroes With Guns*, 73.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 49.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 51

as black men, not given subhuman treatment.¹⁸⁶ Having put their life on the line for their country, many felt that America had no reason to see them as unequal anymore. Utilizing their military skills, many of these black veterans later used these skills to organize blacks and teach them proper weapon tactics. This would be a repeated pattern all throughout the 20th century.

Williams immediately took over the local NAACP branch in Monroe. “We moved on to win better rights for Negroes: economic rights, the right of education and the right of equal protection under the law.”¹⁸⁷ Aside from those goals, which were very much in line with the national organization strategies, Williams broke with NAACP protocol and made sure his branch was openly armed. Resorting to armed resistance, seeking to set up social programs for black people in Monroe and establishing liberated zones of Monroe where blacks could feel safe, Williams was following the Maoist approach to radical liberation and was aware of it yet. His advocacy for armed self-defense against the K.K.K., earned the Monroe branch “...the reputation of being the most militant branch of the NAACP...”¹⁸⁸ Because of his advocacy for armed self-defense, Williams was eventually suspended indefinitely from the NAACP.

Williams’s advocacy of armed self-defense carried was exactly what the American government feared; an armed black veteran who built a coalition of others just like him and were ready and able to take lives and sacrifice their own for equality. Williams did not hesitate to use his military training to protect the black people of Monroe. “We started this action out of the need for defense, because law and order had completely vanished...”¹⁸⁹ In addition, he represented a growing group of dissident black people who grew tired of American democracy

¹⁸⁶ Chad L. Williams, “Vanguards of the New Negro: African American Veterans and Post-World War I Racial Militancy,” *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 3 (2007): pp. 347-370, 348.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 51-52.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 52

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 54.

shortcomings and sought a new form of governance. In Williams mind, the American government's shortcomings reflected Monroe city officials' failure to stop the KKK. So, "Since the city officials wouldn't stop the Klan, we decided to stop the Klan ourselves."¹⁹⁰ Stopping the Klan for Williams and his followers meant being always armed and ready for combat. As expected, his leadership and open armed advocacy aroused the wrath of the Klan in Monroe.¹⁹¹

In the summer of 1957, armed Klansmen attacked the home of a black man in Monroe. "We shot it out with the Klan and repelled their attack and the Klan didn't have any more type of stomach for this fight."¹⁹² This firefight with the Klan prompted a small change in Monroe. "After this clash the same city officials who said the Klan had a constitutional right to organize met in an emergency session and passed a city ordinance banning the Klan from Monroe without a special permit from the police chief."¹⁹³ Left with no choice but to fight against the Klan, once local blacks in Monroe started using their weapons, city officials suddenly decided to act against the Klan. Williams and his armed group proved not be passive and had no problem utilizing their firearms for change. Williams was fighting a race war in Monroe.

In August 1961, the Civil Rights group known as "Freedom Riders", came to Monroe. Upon arrival, a mob of armed white citizens assaulted them mercilessly. According to Williams, "The police held Negroes while white racist beat them up."¹⁹⁴ The white crowd assaulted any black person they could get their hands on, "They were massing for an attack on our community."¹⁹⁵ By nightfall, many blacks armed themselves and Williams's home served as a

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 54.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 52

¹⁹² Ibid, 57.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 57.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 84.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 84.

rallying point for the blacks of Monroe. While standing guard and defending their neighborhood, "...a car with white men drove by, firing..." and the group of blacks led by Williams did not hesitate to fire back, "...and about twenty fellows fired back and you could see flames where the bullets struck the car."¹⁹⁶ Resorting to other forms of terror, the local whites utilized aircraft on the black neighborhood of Monroe, but Williams and his group remained resilient. Williams testified that "...when this plane swooped over the house about fifteen men armed with high-powered .30-caliber rifles opened fire."¹⁹⁷

Although Williams and his group were able to fend off the white mob off that night, the night did not end well for Williams. State troopers were in route to arrest Williams and his neighborhood was cut off from the rest of Monroe. "I went out into the street. I looked around. Both ends were being blocked off by police cars. I realized they were trying to trap me into waiting until the state troopers got there."¹⁹⁸ That same night Williams and his family managed to sneak past the barriers and became fugitives on the run from American authorities. Williams eventually made it out the country and ended up in Cuba. Being an international fugitive in the revolutionary Cuba, Williams fully evolved into a Black Power leader. Williams was welcomed with open arms by Fidel Castro and Cubans alike.

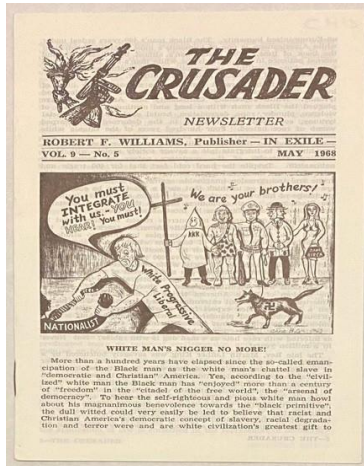
Although Williams spent less than five years in Cuba, it was here he published his newspaper, *The Crusader* amongst other anti-U.S./imperialist material. The newspaper became Williams's main outlet of anti-U.S. and anti-imperialism rhetoric. While in Cuba, Williams also started "Radio Free Dixie." Deemed as "a service to the oppressed" the show broadcasted from

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 86.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 86.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 88.

Cuba into the U.S.¹⁹⁹ Also written and published in Cuba, *Negroes With Guns* was Williams memoir of events that had led to his exile in Cuba and this book had a fundamental effect on the founding of Black Panther Party.²⁰⁰



May 1968 cover of *The Crusader* featuring a graphic drawing of a black nationalist dying at the hands of white liberalism.

While in Cuba, Williams had his first experience of living in a communist country.

Taking note of the many Afro-Cubans in political leadership, Williams saw that Fidel was not only talking about being anti-racist but acted on it. In Cuba, Williams was not treated as a black man, but as a human being. It is key to note that Williams was in Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis and observed how Castro and Cuba were ready to sacrifice themselves in the fight against the U.S.

Despite his fair treatment in Cuba, Williams was in a difficult position as an American fugitive on an island supported by the Soviet Union. The Soviets pressured Castro to limit what

¹⁹⁹ "Radio Free Dixie," *Radio Free Dixie* (Havana, Cuba, October 10, 1963), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/bhlead/umich-bhl-85506?byte=155590327;focusrgn=summaryinfo;subview=standard;view=reslist>.

²⁰⁰ Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 117.

Williams said and printed to avoid antagonizing the U.S.²⁰¹ And Williams was doing more than just broadcasting and publishing. While in Cuba, he sent multiple letters to John F. Kennedy demanding that he put an end to the terror of the K.K.K., “If you are interested in human rights, save those innocent people of Monroe, North Carolina who have been framed by your K.K.K. and are being legally lynched in you racist kangaroo courts.”²⁰² Adding to this, Williams wrote a memo to Indonesian President Achmed Sukrano asking him for legal help to combat racism in the U.S., “Please appeal to Attorney General Kennedy to halt Ku Klux Klan US {sic} Government persecution...”²⁰³ As Soviet pressure mounted on Castro, Williams realized that living in Cuba under Soviet-style communism had its limits in his fight against racism and imperialism. Thus, Williams left to travel in East Asia in 1965 and it was in these travels that Williams was influenced and connected black liberation to East Asia.

Williams traveled to Vietnam and meet with Ho Chi Minh. Williams established a personal relationship with Minh and spent almost six months in Vietnam.²⁰⁴ Williams was given special treatment in Vietnam and treated like a brother in the struggle against U.S. imperialism, no longer subject to Soviet style restrictions, Williams’s ideology flourished in East Asia. During his six months in Vietnam, Williams frequently broadcasted on an English radio show called “Hanoi Hannah.” This radio show was available for listening by all American troops, but Williams focus aimed at trying to get black GIs to turn their backs on the Vietnam War, “How can we defend democracy in the jungles of Vietnam when it doesn’t exist in the streets of Washington and Harlem, or the black belt of lower states?”²⁰⁵ Although there was no mass

²⁰¹ Tyson, 293.

²⁰² Robert F. Williams , “Michigan Historical Collections,” *Michigan Historical Collections*, n.d., pp. 1-46, 31 & 46.

²⁰³ Williams , “Michigan Historical Collections,” 28.

²⁰⁴ Tyson, 295.

²⁰⁵ Frazier, 148.

defection or insubordination among black soldiers in Vietnam, the words and propaganda of Williams had a profound effect on these soldiers. Returning home and seeing that the country they had fought for was not upholding the rights of blacks in America, black veterans such as Geronimo Pratt became radicalized and related their struggles in America with those of the people in East Asia.²⁰⁶ By the time Williams left Vietnam for China, he was a staunch advocate against the Vietnam War. Settling in China in 1965, he established Afro-Asian solidarity and became the most prominent black leader to establish relations in China since W.E.B DuBois. After the assassination of Malcolm X, William's role in the Black Power movement elevated.

After arriving in China, the famous Chinese poet, Tso Chung-Ling wrote a poem to Williams in which he stated, "You have six hundred and fifty million brothers in arms."²⁰⁷ The timing of his arrival could not have been at a better time either. China's Cultural Revolution movement started in 1966. Initiated by Mao with the goal of eradicating anything that did not support the communist revolution and hinted at close relations with western culture, it proved to be the perfect event to start Williams five year stay in China. Kicking off the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guard (millions of militarized students) took to the streets of China and destroyed anything that resembled the "Four Olds".²⁰⁸

The Four Olds were any old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits that were deemed counterrevolutionary or western that had survived Mao's initial coming to power in

²⁰⁶ Sean L. Malloy, *Out of Oakland: Black Panther Party Internationalism During the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 182.

²⁰⁷ Tao Tso Chung-Ling, "To Robert Williams," *The Crusader*, October 1964, 6th edition, pp. 1-1, <https://www.freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/Black%20Liberation%20Disk/Black%20Power!/SugahData/Journals/Crusader.S.pdf>, 10.

²⁰⁸ Denise Y. Ho, "Revolutionizing Antiquity: The Shanghai Cultural Bureaucracy in the Cultural Revolution, 1966–1968," *The China Quarterly* 207 (September 2011): pp. 687-705, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305741011000713>, 690.

1949.²⁰⁹ In a quite literal fashion, the Red Guard destroyed relics, books, statues, symbols and anything that did not support Maoism.²¹⁰ And Williams witnessed all of this. Seeing this had to have a profound effect on his admiration of Maoism. In Cuba, Williams saw Castro used a puppeteer in the fight against the U.S. But in China, Williams witnessed millions of students rallying behind Mao and China to exterminate anything that was going to hold China back from completing its revolution.

Given lavish tours of China, Williams getting the best treatment China could offer.²¹¹ The respect that Williams received in China was unparallel to anything he had received in America. In China, Williams was allowed full reign over his anti-American propaganda. At a rally on China's National Day in 1966, Williams recalls, "I was allowed to stand beside Chairman Mao...as a representative of oppressed Afro-Americans and deliver an uncensored speech to one and half million people".²¹² Williams's experience with communism in China was different than what he had experienced in America and Cuba. Breaking free of Soviet influence, Williams experienced communism at the hands of a colored people free of European influence.

Since 1964, Williams had championed Chinese guerilla warfare as a blueprint for black militancy in the U.S. and with free reign over his publications, *The Crusader* became more striking and Williams used this free reign to condemn America, imperialism, racism and the Vietnam War any chance he got.²¹³ In a 1967 edition of *The Crusader*, he encouraged "...Black America to arm to the teeth, to organize and to religiously acquaint themselves with the theory

²⁰⁹ Ho, "Revolutionizing Antiquity", 690.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Tyson, 296.

²¹² Tyson, 296.

²¹³ Frazier, 139.

and tactics of urban guerrilla warfare.”²¹⁴ Williams told readers to “Transform your instruments of sensual pleasure into weapons of war and prepare to make any sacrifice that may be required. Prepare now for that great raging fire when there will be no hiding place.”²¹⁵

Williams’s propaganda writing expanded beyond *The Crusader* in the late 1960s. In 1968, Williams published a forty-page anti-war pamphlet called “Listen, Brother!” This anti-war pamphlet targeted black GI’s serving in Vietnam.²¹⁶ Utilizing vivid details and descriptive passages along with various images that connected the reality of the Vietnam War to the violence experienced by black people in America, “Listen, Brother!” spoke directly to the conscious of black soldiers. Noting the dehumanization of black soldiers, Williams starts the pamphlet, “Like a miserable and shivering dog, you cuddle in your foxhole.” Reminding black GIs that they will not be returning to a country that loves them, he states, “It as ever been such in the white man’s America and you will find the conditions unchanged when you return.”²¹⁷ He continues by using vulgar language to show how the black soldier is used to continue oppression in East Asia. “You have been given a license to be a junior nigger partner in a brutal campaign of extermination colored people. The man expects you to show your boundless appreciation for the Uncle Tom right to kill freedom-loving colored people like a Mississippi white savage.”²¹⁸ Equating black soldiers to occupiers in a foreign land, Williams continued, “Now, you are the brutal cop. The man with the gun. The licensed killer in the colored ghetto.”²¹⁹ Thus, Williams placed the

²¹⁴ Robert F. Williams , “USA: The Coming Firestorm ,” *The Crusader*, 1967, 9th edition, sec. 1, 11.

²¹⁵ Williams, “USA”, 11.

²¹⁶ Stephen Millies, “Robert Williams 1925–1995. 'A Couple of Years Ahead of His Time' -Malcolm X,” <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/> (Hartford Web Publishing), accessed 2022, <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/123.html>.

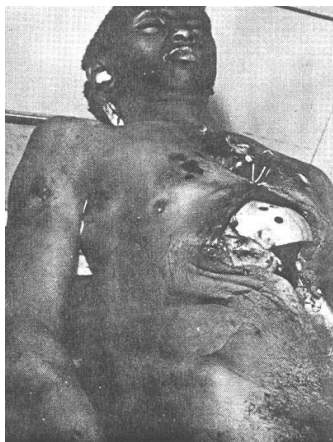
²¹⁷ Robert F. Williams , “Listen, Brother! : Robert F. Williams, 1925-1996,” <https://archive.org/> (New York : World View Publishers), accessed 2022, https://ia803205.us.archive.org/11/items/ilovepdf_merged10/ilovepdf_merged%2810%29.pdf, 11.

²¹⁸ Williams, “Listen, Brother!”, 10.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 10.

soldiers' experiences in Vietnam along side the historic treatment of black people by white people suggesting the wrongness of black soldiers in Vietnam.

Williams also shows how Vietnam was no different than the ghettos that most of these black GIs came from; he included pictures of violent racism originating from America. One such image was the entrails of a black man who had been shot multiple times by police in New Jersey. The man lays dead on a gurney with his stomach open from the multiple bullet wounds. The caption under the photo reads "For democracy? Whose democracy?"²²⁰ In another photo, a Marine carrying a M-16 rifle at the high ready is walking by an Afro-Dominican women during the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965. The caption reads "How colored they look!"²²¹ With the woman standing in the doorway of what appears to be her home, the Marine walks nonchalantly by with dark shades on, his shoulders back, his rifle in one hand and the barrel pointed at the sky. The pictures show the pompous attitude of the American military as it plays the role of a foreign invader. These words and use of imagery show that Williams had taken lessons from China and Mao on how to best utilize propaganda.



220. "For democracy? Whose democracy?"



221. "How colored they look!"

²²⁰ Ibid, 22.

²²¹ Ibid, 24.

Williams's publication was not possible without Chinese backing and his publications were used as a blueprint for publications put out by other individuals and organizations that subscribed to Black Power ideology. By allowing Williams to freely say what he wanted, the CCP showed that they were unafraid of direct confrontation with the U.S. and invited chaos into the domestic sphere of American life. By seeking to have black GIs question their intentions and motivations in Vietnam, China was looking to break the U.S. from the inside. With his publications coming out of China, the CCP support for black Americans, and prestige received from the CCP, Williams pioneered the internationalism of the Black Power movement.

The relationship between Williams and China was not one sided, the CCP used Black Power ideology to spread Maoism. The CCP portrayed racism as an idea belonging strictly to the U.S., imperialism, and an idea that belonged in the past. In order to move forward and advance the international revolution, Maoism and the CCP suggested other strategies. In a savior type manner, Mao showed black Americans that he sympathized with them and that under his leadership, oppressed people could overcome imperialism and racism would be eradicated. Deeming the oppressed people the majority, Mao was "...firmly convinced that, with the support of more than 90 per cent of the people of the world, the American Negroes will be victorious in their just struggle."²²² This is not to say that racism was eradicated in China or that the Chinese fully accepted blacks as their brothers and sisters but by putting forth the idea and taking action to show Chinese dedication to eradicating racism and colonialism/imperialism, Mao and the CCP hoped to embarrass the U.S. on an international level. The embarrassment was that as the U.S. claimed to be a country founded in democracy, it failed to address its racial problem. Meanwhile,

²²² Mao Tse-Tung, "Chairman Mao Tse-Tung's Statement", 6.

Mao, the leader of a communist country fully backed black people in their struggle for rights in America.

China and black people in America shared the same overall arching enemy, American imperialism. Mao had long recognized American imperialism as not only an enemy of China, but the entire world. A propaganda poster released by the CCP circa 1960 shows a coalition of soldiers from various racial backgrounds (one soldier is black) clutching rifles and charging into battle, the caption reads “Shoulder to shoulder we go into battle. Fight hegemony; bring freedom and liberation; overthrow American capitalism.”²²³ In 1964 another poster produced by the CCP shows a group of young black men gathering around Mao’s *Little Red Book*. With looks of excitement on their faces, the caption reads, “Vigorously support the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.”²²⁴



223. Shoulder to shoulder



224. Anti-imperialist

Because of his time in East Asia, Williams became more than a local leader against the Klan. Using his time in China, he created publications that attacked U.S. imperialism and praised

²²³ Sarah Sprouse, “The Aesthetics of Revolution: Chinese Propaganda and the Anthony E. Clark Chinese Poster Collection,” *Chinese Arts Poster Documents | Chinese Arts Posters Collection*, 2017, pp. 1-39, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315481258-3>, 35.

²²⁴ Ignatius G.D Suglo, “Visualizing Africa in Chinese Propaganda Posters 1950–1980,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 2021, p. 002190962110258, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096211025807>, 6.

China's passion against U.S. imperialism. East Asia helped ascend Williams to an international level and because of this, the Black Power movement ascended as well. As mentioned before, the attention and power given to Williams inspired countless other groups and individuals to not only take up the Black Power movement, but to seek relations with East Asia and other oppressed people in the world.²²⁵ One such group was the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM).

Revolutionary Action Movement

Compared to Robert Williams and groups like the Black Panther Party, Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) did not garner public attention; instead, RAM remained in the shadows throughout its existence. Focused primarily on urban guerilla warfare and not social change, RAM classified as a black nationalist group which sought to utilize urban guerilla warfare to revolutionize America. The use of urban guerilla warfare as a tactic was drawn from East Asia. It was this fighting method that Mao used in China, and it was the same method that the Vietcong used to combat imperialism in Vietnam. RAM was the first coalition of black radicals to utilize revolutionary tactics nationwide in America post-WWII and like Williams and others, eventually found East Asian support for their cause.

Formed at Central State University in 1961, RAM's membership came mostly from the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Most of the members were in their early 20's or late 30's.²²⁶ Calling themselves "Challenge" at first, the students became more radicalized and moved their activities off campus and took on the name Revolutionary Action Movement. The

²²⁵ As the reader will see in the next section, Williams had garnered attention from Black Power movements in the U.S. and as previously mentioned before, after the assassination of Malcolm X, Williams was seen as the next guiding figure in Black Power ideology. His work also served as a model for the Black Panther Party.

²²⁶ Stanford, 75.

same year RAM was founded, Max Stanford and Donald Freeman emerged as the group's leaders.²²⁷ In the early 1960's, RAM was far more in tune with reform and did not see revolution as a viable means for helping blacks, but a sequence of events in 1963 pushed many members to support the Black Power ideology and the idea of becoming an underground movement.²²⁸

The first event was the Birmingham Riots.²²⁹ In early May 1963, after the homes/hotels of various Civil Rights leaders including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were bombed by a team of police and Klansman, the aftermath resulted in riots that were put down by a coalition of American law enforcement. The Alabama National Guard and 3,000 federal troops occupied the streets of Birmingham and violently repressed those that were rioting.²³⁰ Seeing their city occupied by federal troops and National Guardsmen, many blacks sought alternatives to passive resistance.

The following September, a bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church by white supremacist resulted in the injury of more than twenty people and the death of four young black girls.²³¹ The aftermath of the bombing resulted, again, in rioting across Birmingham. Those riots just like the ones in May were put down by American law enforcement.²³² Despite the carnage of the riots, Black Power ideology gained momentum. Members of RAM watched the riots very carefully and "...began to theorize about the potential

²²⁷ Ibid, 75.

²²⁸ Ibid, 89.

²²⁹ Ibid, 82.

²³⁰ "Birmingham Campaign," Stanford | The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, accessed 2022, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/birmingham-campaign>.

²³¹ Stanford, 88.

²³² "America Sees the Truth," National Museum of African American History and Culture, November 29, 2014, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/america-sees-truth>.

of this kind of activity.”²³³ By the end of 1963, RAM “...cells were to remain underground and to develop an underground movement.”²³⁴

Part of the reason that Black Power movement gained so much momentum during the early 1960s, was because of law enforcements failure to prosecute crimes of racism, racial violence, or law enforcement’s advocacy for violent acts of racism. Reasons like this not only prompted RAM to support the Black Power movement, but also to conduct clandestine activities. Racial violence increased sharply in the early 1960s (for example, the events listed previously) and the Civil Rights Movement was seen as too passive and too willing to align with the same system that was oppressing blacks. With the CCP condemning U.S. racism at any opportunity and individuals like Robert F. Williams finding refuge in Cuba and China, reforming democracy in the U.S. amongst black youths lost its appeal. Alternatives outside of the Civil Rights movement and American democratic governance were being sought out. For some black Americans, the Civil Rights struggle proved to be too reactionary, too passive and was not resulting in changes that blacks wanted to see. Movements like RAM and the appeal to Maoism grew expeditiously as a result.

Before RAM, no group of black radicals had tried to actively seek a nationwide revolution through militant means. Most groups revolved around strict self-defense tactics and usually operated along the lines of their local politics. For example, Williams and his local group in Monroe did not have a goal of revolutionizing America through guerilla warfare, they were armed primarily to deal with local Klansmen. For Williams, the resources to begin a nationwide revolution were not present. It was not until fleeing from the U.S. that Williams took on an

²³³ Stanford, 89.

²³⁴ Ibid, 108.

international context. And it was not until Williams reached China that he promoted guerilla warfare and nationwide revolution amongst blacks. But for RAM, a prime goal from their origin was to "...advocate the use of urban guerrilla warfare to achieve the objective of an independent black socialist republic in the south."²³⁵ Culminating on clandestine activities rather than outright offensive maneuvers, documentation on RAM is very limited. Picking the idea of a separate black state within the U.S., RAM had a goal of separating from the U.S. through means of urban guerilla warfare.

As RAM put it, black people were colonized based on the "internal colony model theory." Stanford explained this theory, "Black people are not only a nation within a nation, but are a "captive nation" which was originally kidnapped and transplanted by force to America from their original home land, Africa. As a result, they are a "trapped" colonialized nation held in colonial bondage within the geographical boundaries of the colonial mother country, the United States, the world's most powerful imperialist country."²³⁶ Black people were essentially trapped in America and needed their own nation within America. Because black people were forced to build America through slavery and fought in American wars, to RAM, black people needed the same rights that white Americans had in America. So, for members of RAM, the only way to ensure this separate nation was not through legislation or passive means, it was through violent revolution just as China and Vietnam had done. China and Vietnam were recognized by Stanford as one of "...the most revolutionary examples for oppressed peoples."²³⁷

The ideology RAM adopted came right out of the Bandung Conference of 1955. Calling it Bandung Humanism, Stanford defined this as a revolutionary revision of western or traditional

²³⁵ Ibid, 2.

²³⁶ Ibid, 10.

²³⁷ Ibid, 147.

Marxism.²³⁸ Bandung Humanism paid attention to "...the unprecedented political, socio-economic, technical and psycho-cultural developments occurring in the post World War II era."²³⁹ RAM recognized the world at war, and it was split into two sides, western imperialism and the oppressed people or as RAM would put it, Bandung People. Recognizing class as secondary to the international struggle, the Bandung People were "made up of all people of color from Asia, Africa, Latin-America, Central America, the Caribbean, North America, the Indian sub-continent and the Pacific Islands."²⁴⁰

Recognizing black people as victims of colonization, RAM connected black people with all colonized people throughout the world. But because of their revolutionary goals, RAM paid close attention to Vietnam and China because of their use of guerilla warfare to attain liberation. Vietnam was a special case for the Black Power movement because of its active fight during the 1960's against U.S. imperialism. Although China used guerilla warfare to attain its freedom, its war was over, and they were advancing in their revolution. In addition to this, the Vietcong did not back down and proved to be more than the U.S. could handle. RAM saw the Vietcong's victories as an inspiration to declare their own independence. RAM's magazine, *Black America* stated in 1964 "...we of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) congratulate the Vietnamese Front of National Liberation for their inspiring victories against U.S. imperialism in South Vietnam and thereby declare Our Independence from the policies of the U.S. government abroad and at home."²⁴¹

²³⁸ Ibid, 146.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ "Greetings To Our Militant Vietnamese Brothers," *Black America*, 1964, pp. 1-25, https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC513_scans/RAM/513.RAM.Black.America.Fall.1964.pdf, 21.

To develop their international ties, RAM sought to bring in leaders that could help propel their internationalism, Williams was the perfect candidate. As mentioned before, when Williams made it to Cuba, he had taken on an international presence and became a prime leader in the black power movement. Stanford was a subscriber to *The Crusader*.²⁴² As mentioned before, by 1964, Williams was praising China for its international solidarity. In February 1964, Williams wrote, “The Chinese people support all peoples who struggle for justice and liberation. They whole-heartedly support Afroamericans who struggle against the Jim Crow and racial oppression in the so-called free world of the racist USA.”²⁴³ His praise for China’s advocacy for blacks fit perfectly into RAM’s agenda for their international ambitions. In this same issue, Williams spoke of potential guerilla operations in America. “Not only must we defend ourselves violently, but we must do it collectively. We must condition ourselves for defense, both physically and psychologically...During the hours of the day sporadic rioting takes place and massive sniping. Night brings all out warfare, organized fighting and unlimited terror against the oppressor and his forces...If we must die, then let us die in the only way that the oppressor will feel the weight of our death.”²⁴⁴

As Williams advanced beyond self-defense advocacy to urban guerilla warfare and molding relations with East Asia, RAM cadre reached out to him while in exile to be part of their coalition. He accepted the role and in May 1964, RAM made Williams their leader in exile and

²⁴² Ahmad, 97.

²⁴³ Robert F. Williams , “Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate,” Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate § (1971), pp. 1-2038, 1696. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.c051765354&view=1up&seq=9&q1=Chinese%20people%20support%20a> ll.

²⁴⁴ Robert F. Williams , “Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate,” 1693.

he was listed as RAM's International Chairman.²⁴⁵ Williams settled into his role nicely and told readers of *The Crusader* in June 1964, "The weapons of defense employed by Afroamerican freedom fighters must consist of a poor man's arsenal. Gasoline fire bombs (Molotov cocktails), lye or acid bombs (made by injecting lye or acid in the metal end of light bulbs) can be used extensively. During the night hours such weapons, thrown from roof tops, will make the streets impossible {sic} for racist cops to patrol."²⁴⁶ At this point, RAM had goals of guerilla warfare and an international leader who sought diplomacy for blacks across the world. Despite this, RAM was nascent and required a lot of building and networking.

Like the Vietcong and CCP, RAM utilized their young members with purposefulness because of their high levels of frustration. Black youth of the 1960s did not want to wait around for change or simply allow racism to continue. Whether they fell in line with the Black Power movement or the Civil Rights Movement, they did not have the patience of their parents. Just as the CCP had their Red Guards, RAM created the "Black Guards." With most members being in college, some members of Black Guards were as young as 15.²⁴⁷

Part of the Black Guards training was studying tactics of guerilla warfare by East Asian standards. "As part of the political education, the B.G.'s recruits would have to take a pamphlet (usually a Chinese Marxist party article) and RAM or historical materials and write a report on it."²⁴⁸ For RAM, Maoism was not just philosophy, but a way of life. By teaching the black youth

²⁴⁵ Stanford, 92, 99.

²⁴⁶ Robert F. Williams, "USA: The Potential of a Minority Revolution," *The Crusader*, 1964, 5th edition, sec. 4, p. 6, <https://www.freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/Black%20Liberation%20Disk/Black%20Power!/SugahData/Journals/Crusader.S.pdf>, 6.

²⁴⁷ "The Black Power Movement : Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement , 1962-1996," *The Black Power Movement : Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement , 1962-1996 § (1962)*

²⁴⁸ Ahmad, 150.

the core components of Maoism, RAM was teaching a future generation the ways of Mao and setting up black youth to combat U.S. democracy. Not stopping with political philosophy, the Black Guard's guerilla training involved weapon handling and physical training as well.²⁴⁹ All of this was done underground in hopes of building an army that would be ready for urban guerilla warfare. The Black Guards were often tasked with protecting RAM high ranking personnel, carrying documents and acting as a lookout while older RAM members conducted organizational activities.²⁵⁰ The Black Guards were also responsible for purging counter-revolutionary individuals and police informants in the black communities.²⁵¹

Although rooting out individuals in black communities who did not agree with the goals of RAM was a past time of the Black Guards, the bulk of RAM was split into three cells.²⁵² First, there was the area cell. Designed to support local community activities, the area cell promoted RAM through the support to the local community. Second there was the work cell. The work cell's responsibility was to organize black laborer's and promote RAM rhetoric. Third was the political cell. Their job was to infiltrate all Civil Rights groups and recruit potential members for RAM or change the direction of these groups to a revolutionary path.²⁵³ In their most active years, RAM essentially planted Maoist seeds in many black individuals and groups that were otherwise stubborn to revolutionary violence. By infiltrating and planting the seed, RAM was watering the Black Power groups of the future. RAM members were responsible for much of the armed black power groups that emerged throughout the rest of the 20th century.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 150.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 133.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Stanford, 110.

²⁵³ Ibid.

A well-known group that RAM infiltrated was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).²⁵⁴ Founded in 1960 as a non-violent movement and directly appealing to students, the SNCC was at the forefront of the Civil Rights movement and organized masses of students across color lines in favor of racial reform in America. RAM's focus on college students paid off in 1964 when Freeman began to "...challenge SNCC concerning the concepts of armed self-defense and black nationalism..."²⁵⁵ That same year, Stanford recruited SNCC members who were in favor of an all-black coalition such as RAM versus the integrated SNCC.²⁵⁶ Soon members of the SNCC in Mississippi began to discuss with RAM members on how "...to establish a state-wide armed self-defense system."²⁵⁷ Members of the SNCC were supposed to be advocates of nonviolence and not in favor of armed self-defense, but with RAM's infiltration in rank and file, SNCC saw members fleeing to the Black Power movement and away from the Civil Rights struggle.

Part of this flock to the Black Power movement from the SNCC was because of its acceptance of white students into the organization²⁵⁸. After Malcolm X's assassination in 1965, the SNCC's inner workings began to crumble because the Civil Rights movement was not making the progress that young students demanded. The culmination of RAM infiltration in the SNCC came in 1966 after Stokely Carmichael became SNCC president. In June 1966, Carmichael spoke at a rally cohosted by the SNCC, CORE and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Yelling throughout his speech, "We Want Black Power!" and when the crowd chanted it back,

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 87.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 90.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 91.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 93.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 95.

the SNCC lost the battle with Black Power.²⁵⁹ Although the SNCC never fully crumbled, the goals and main objectives had been lost to RAM and its infiltration. But with infiltrations such as these, RAM implemented Maoism and pushing the revolutionary tactics of East Asian groups whether they knew it or not.

RAM planted the seeds for many Black Power activist throughout the rest of the century. By establishing various cells throughout the country and having Williams as an international leader, RAM was able to bring Maoism directly into the forefront of the Black Power movement. Although RAM never attained their national revolutionary goal, by disrupting the Civil Rights movement with Maoism, Chinese Communism, RAM played a pivotal role in what J. Edgar Hoover dubbed "...the greatest threat to the internal security of the country", the Black Panther Party.²⁶⁰

Black Panther Party

Officially established in October 1966, in Oakland, CA, the Black Panther Party was created by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. Seeking to counter the racism blacks experienced in the Oakland and fighting back against police brutality, the BPP became the most well-known Black Power group in history. From their inception, neither Seale nor Newton envisioned the BPP becoming an international phenomenon. Promoting gun ownership by all blacks and seeking to improve their neighborhoods without the help of the U.S. government, the BPP ultimately wanted black people to be able to determine their own sovereignty. Maoism was part of the BPP since its inception. Determined to eradicate any hold the U.S. government had on

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 119.

²⁶⁰ "Black Panther Greatest Threat to U.S. Security ," *The Desert Sun*, July 16, 1969, 42nd edition, pp. 1-24, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DS19690716.2.89&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----> 1, 17.

them, they were anti-capitalist and black nationalist from the start. Having paid attention to the groups that came before them, Seale and Newton decided that the was going to be the vanguard of the revolution. Plus, by the time the BPP was created in the mid 1960's events such as the Alabama Church Bombings, assassination of John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X put the fight for Black Power on a more public level than ever before. Therefore, unlike RAM, the BPP did not conceal their activities.

Since their meeting at Merritt College in Oakland, Newton and Seale were two sides of the same coin. Both had parents who moved to California from the southern United States, and both grew up in and out of trouble with the police. Oakland had become a hotspot for many blue-collar black laborers looking for work during the WWII period.²⁶¹ Oakland is part of the Bay Area, and the entire Bay Area during WWII was a hub for military shipping and receiving. By the 1960s, the city of Oakland was a key part to the Bay Area's shipping and receiving structure. BPP, Chief of Staff, David Hillard later recalled that the Communist Party actively recruited at the docks in the Bay Area.²⁶²

Oakland was home to a large black population, so much that by the late 1960s, Merritt College, located in the heart of Oakland, had a forty percent black population.²⁶³ By the time Newton and Seale met at Merritt College, both had been exposed to communism, Mao, Che Guevara, and black nationalism.²⁶⁴ Newton, also self-educated himself on California law and revolutionary concepts prior to founding the BPP; read Karl Marx and Frantz Fanon, and was versed in Marxism and armed revolution. As college students during the founding of the BPP,

²⁶¹ Malloy, *Out of Oakland*, 48.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid. 51.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. Merritt College at the time was very active with revolutionary thought. At Merritt there was "...the emerging fusion between urban black nationalism, anticapitalism, and Third World anticolonialism."

Seale and Newton were aware of the Vietcong and the Chinese Communist Party. But it was Mao's writings that had a profound effect on Newton. "My conversion was complete when I read the four volumes of Mao Tse-tung to learn more about the Chinese Revolution."²⁶⁵

Initiation into the BPP, required recruits to read specific reading material, like Mao's *Little Red Book*. Often changing Mao's quotes from *The Little Red Book* to fit BPP ideology, Mao's ideas for revolution and politics played a heavy role in the affairs of the BPP. Seale wrote, "Huey would say, 'Well, this principle here is not applicable to our situation at this time.' Where the book said 'Chinese people of the Communist Party,' Huey would say 'Change that to the Black Panther Party. Change the Chinese people to black people.' When he saw a particular principle told in the Chinese terms, he would change it to apply to us."²⁶⁶ The BPP replicated Mao's actions of changing communist ideology to fit specific needs and wants.

By 1966, events across the world had culminated with the founding of the BPP. The Vietnam War picked up for the U.S., Sino and Soviet tension was in the news, and RAM was planting seeds of revolutionary violence rooted in Maoism. So, when Newton and Seale founded the BPP, it was the perfect organization to usher in East Asian influence domestically and to go to war with the U.S. Just like RAM before them, the BPP saw themselves as a colonized people and related directly to East Asia and other colonized peoples. Despite the admiration for Maoist ideology, the BPP organized its cadre very similar to the Vietcong because the BPP saw itself at war with the U.S. as well. Because of this, the BPP saw black people as Third World citizens and joined them in the ranks of black and brown people being oppressed around the world.

²⁶⁵ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 70.

²⁶⁶ Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1970), 8

Emulating the Vietcong's, "Program of the National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam",²⁶⁷ which Vietcong desires for Vietnam, one of the first things the BPP did was established the "Ten Point Program." Actions like this reinforced the notion that black people were colonized people and were linked in solidarity with East Asia. But this solidarity was not in vain or for show, the struggles that black people endured were part of the same struggle that the people of East Asia suffered according to Newton, Seale and other black radicals. For example, part of the Vietcong's program stated that they wanted to "Suppress the monopolies imposed by the American imperialists and their servants; establish an independent and sovereign economy and finances in accordance with the national interest..."²⁶⁸ And the BPPs, third point in the Ten Point Program stated, "We Want An End To The Robbery By The White Man Of Our Black Community."²⁶⁹ Much like the Vietcong who saw "...U.S. economic interest in using Vietnam as a source of raw materials and as a market for American products"²⁷⁰, the BPP saw economic exploitation occurring with the economics of black neighborhoods. As mentioned before, Oakland's port was a buzzing hub of business, but this revenue from the ports was never put into the black communities of Oakland.

One major goal that both the Vietcong and BBP had was the implementation of socialism for their people. The desire for socialism for both groups stemmed from years of capitalist exploitation through imperialism and colonialism. Seeking to break free of American economic

²⁶⁷ "The Wars for Viet Nam," Program of the National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam - The Wars for Viet Nam - Vassar College, accessed March 21, 2022, <https://www.vassar.edu/vietnam/documents/docnlf.html>.

²⁶⁸ "The Wars for Viet Nam," Program of the National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam

²⁶⁹ "What We Want Now! What We Believe," *The Black Panther*, May 15, 1967, 1st edition, sec. 2, pp. 1-8, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/black-panther/01n02-May%2015%201967.pdf>, 3.

²⁷⁰ Joseph Jermiah Zasloff, Guy J. Pauker, and John C. Donnell, "Viet Cong Motivation and Morale in 1964: A Preliminary Report," Viet Cong Motivation and Morale in 1964: A preliminary report § (1964), pp. 1-85, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD0738742.pdf>, 27.

chains and wanting to be self-sufficient, both the Vietcong and BPP saw socialism as the best way to combat capitalism. Being subject to western colonialism for over 25 years at the hands of the French, the Vietnamese people did not want any more outside interference with their affairs. When asked for his motivation to fight, a Vietcong POW stated, “We are fighting to end poverty. We are fighting to redistribute the land. We want to end unemployment.”²⁷¹ This socialist sentiment reflected exactly what the BPP wanted as well. Stating in their tenth point, “We Want Land, Bread, Housing, Education, Clothing, Justice And Peace”²⁷², it is clear that the BPP paid close attention to the developments of the Vietcong.

Newton later described this relationship; “Because Black people desire to determine their own destiny, they are constantly inflicted with brutality from the occupying army, embodied in the police department.” Newton continued by stating, “There is a great similarity between the occupying army in Southeast Asia and the occupation of our communities by the racist police. The armies are there not to protect the people of South Vietnam, but to brutalize and oppress them for the interests of the selfish imperial power.”²⁷³ For Newton and the BPP, U.S. imperialism was not only limited to international actions of the U.S. The military and the police were seen as pawns of U.S. imperialism in BPP rhetoric, and this put black and Vietnamese people at war with the U.S.

The influence of the Vietcong on the BPP also came with the active guerilla warfare that they were using against the U.S. military. Newton told readers in 1967, “As the aggression of the racist American government escalates in Vietnam, the police agencies of America escalate the

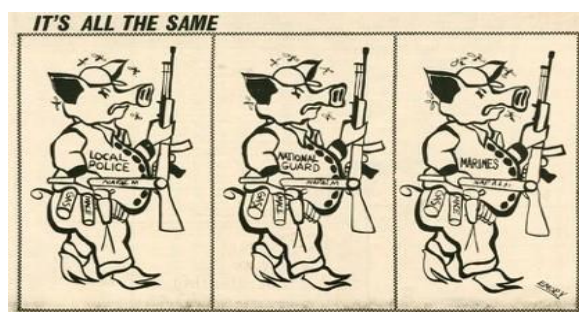
²⁷¹ Zasloff, Pauker, Donnell, “Viet Cong Motivation and Morale in 1964” 28.

²⁷² “What We Want Now! What We Believe,” *The Black Panther*, 3.

²⁷³ Huey P. Newton, “Functional Definition of Politics,” *The Black Panther*, January 17, 1969, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/newton/1969/01/17.htm>.

repression of black people throughout the ghettos of America...The Black Panther Party for Self Defense believes that the time has come for black people to arm themselves against this terror before it's too late."²⁷⁴ Just like the Vietcong who sought to "expel the American imperialist"²⁷⁵, the BPP sought to expel representations of American imperialism from their neighborhoods, the police.

By 1968, the BPP used the word pig "...to express a wider national and international critique of U.S. hegemony."²⁷⁶ Illustrating in a literal fashion that the National Guard, Marines and police were all pigs, the BPP identified the enemies of Vietnam as their own enemies and vice versa.²⁷⁷



277. It's all the same

The military and the police were both pawns of U.S. imperialism in BPP rhetoric and this put black and Vietnamese people at war with the U.S.

Huey and Mao

Newton was an avid follower of Mao and in many ways subscribed to Maoism in a student to teacher relationship although the two never met. And because Newton was the

²⁷⁴ Huey P. Newton, "Statement by the Minister of Defense," *The Black Panther*, May 15, 1967, 1st edition, p. 1, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/black-panther/01n02-May%2015%201967.pdf>, 2.

²⁷⁵ Zasloff, Pauker, Donnell, "Viet Cong Motivation and Morale in 1964" 26.

²⁷⁶ Malloy, 85.

²⁷⁷ Emory Douglas, "It's All The Same," *The Black Panther*, September 28, 1968, 2nd edition, sec. 7, p. 22, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/black-panther/02n07-Sep%2028%201968.pdf>, 22.

Minister of Self Defense for the BPP, Maoism was integrated at all levels of BPP activities and goals. Newton knew that in garnering the support of Mao, he could actively challenge the U.S. and even win that challenge. He would go about this by implementing Maoism into the BPP and embracing his own cult of personality like Mao.

Part of this replication Newton embarked on was the advocacy of arms through Maoism. In 1967, Newton wrote, “When the people move for liberation, they must have the basic tool of liberation: the gun. Only with the power of the gun can the black masses halt the terror and brutality perpetuated against them by the armed racist power structure; and in one sense only by the power of the gun can the whole world be transformed into the earthly paradise dreamed of by the people from time immemorial.” Directly quoting Mao, Newton goes on to say, “One successful practitioner of the art and science of national liberation and self defense, Brother Mao Tse-Tung, put it this way: ‘We are advocates of the abolition of war, we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun.’”²⁷⁸ To determine their destiny, to have control over their sovereignty, guns were vital for the BPP.. And all through American history, the gun has proven to be a tool of unlimited possibilities. And Mao understood this too regarding China. Mao saw with “...the power of the gun that the working class and the laboring masses can defeat the armed bourgeoisie and landlords; in this sense we may say that with guns can the whole world be transformed.”²⁷⁹ Connecting guns directly the politics of black people, Newton made sure that the BPP was heavily armed and that they knew that their political power grew from the

²⁷⁸ Huey P. Newton, “Essays From the Minister of Self Defense,” *Essays From the Minister of Self Defense* (Oakland, CA: Black Panther Party, 1968), 5-6.

²⁷⁹ Mao Tse-Tung, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung: "The Little Red Book"*, 2018, 29.

barrel of a gun. To Newton, black people needed political power to gain their liberation and in order to gain this political power, war was inevitable.

For Mao, the armed Chinese masses were different from the Red Army. Mao stated in 1936, "...the operations of the people's guerillas and those of the main forces of the Red Army complement each other like a man's right arm and left arm, and if we had only the main forces of the Red Army without the people's guerilla, we would be like a warrior with only one arm."²⁸⁰

Newton recognized arming black people and the BPP the same way. It was also a core belief that all black people in America should be armed, Panther or not. Seale told a crowd, "So the whole concept is this basically, the whole black nation has to be together as a Black Army. And we gon' walk on this nation...and we gon' say to the whole damn government, stick 'em up mothafucka this is a hold up, we've come for what's ours."²⁸¹ The BPP was the vanguard of the revolution and were responsible for leading the revolutionary war that was to occur in America. Later a black army would be created out of the black masses.

Understanding this, Newton's logic was to get organized and armed. The so-called inevitable war between the classes was a constant point that was reiterated by Mao and Newton wanted blacks to be ready. Mao wrote, "Revolutions and revolutionary wars are inevitable in class society, and without them it is impossible to accomplish any leap in social development and to overthrow the reactionary ruling classes and therefore for the people to win political power."²⁸² And as a student of Mao, Newton called for the BPP to be ready for the violent revolution. The gun in the hands of black people not only gave them control over self-

²⁸⁰ Mao Tse-Tung, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, 41.

²⁸¹ *Historical Footage and Interviews with Black Panthers, YouTube / Historical Footage and Interviews with Black Panthers* (KTVU FOX 2 San Francisco / www.archives.gov, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHWGAEF5GGA>, 13:55.

²⁸² Tse-Tung, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, 28.

determination, but it became a symbol of equality with the police and white America because the BPP was now able to wage war against their occupiers.

In the same way that Mao had utilized the “peasants” of China to amass an army that led to a communist revolution, Newton recruited what he called “lower-class brothers.”²⁸³ Unlike RAM which was mainly comprised of college students and political intellectuals, BPP recruits did not have to have any sense of political knowledge, they just had to be black and willing to combat racism. This sense of recruitment matched the same tactics that Mao and the Vietcong had put forth before the BPP. It was Mao himself who stated, “The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people.”²⁸⁴ Newton’s recognition of “lower-class brothers” allowed the BPP to grow exponentially. Yet, this recruiting process proved to be too much for the BPP, by 1968, the BPP had grown beyond its own expectations and could not keep up with recruits coming in, which played a role later in the dismantling of the BPP.²⁸⁵ So, the black army that Seale spoke of, was a very real ideal amongst the BPP. Violent revolution was common thought with BPP leaders. Former Minister of Information for the BPP, Eldridge Cleaver told readers in a 1969 pamphlet the only way to overcome capitalism is by “Violent revolution by the proletariat against the bourgeois state apparatus of class oppression and repression.”²⁸⁶

Newton’s following of Maoism was not without confusion regarding the teachings of Mao. Where Newton failed with this interpretation of Maoism was in differentiating what might have been a symbolic lesson and what was to be taken literally. For example, despite Mao’s advocacy for violent revolution, Mao stated in 1956, “Our country and all the other socialist

²⁸³ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 116.

²⁸⁴ Tse-Tung, 40.

²⁸⁵ *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* (PBS / Amazon, 2016), 15:02-15:34.

²⁸⁶ Eldridge Cleaver, “On The Ideology Of The Black Panther Party,” *On The Ideology Of The Black Panther Party* (Oakland, CA: Black Panther Party, 1967), 3.

countries want peace; so do the peoples of all countries of the world. The only ones who crave war and do not want peace are certain monopoly capitalist groups in a handful of imperialist countries that depend on aggression for their profits.” Reflecting this exactly, Newton said in an interview in 1968, “I say that violence, war and guns are a thing that the Black Panther Party would like to see gotten rid of. We are absolutely against people killing each other and committing violence against each other.”²⁸⁷ Part of this failure by Newton was not understanding that although Mao was still a world leader and had to do what was best for China. This exact sentiment played a pivotal role in the later downfall of the BPP.

Based on an analyzation of sources, Newton was not looking to be a pacifist or have the BPP put down their weapons. He had an end goal of starting a violent revolutionary war in America because Newton fully accepted the violent notion of revolutionary war that Maoism called for and had faith that the CCP would provide support for the BPP. Since the end of WWII, China had helped North Korea, various African nations, Vietnam and provided refuge for Robert F. Williams. Chinese support built the confidence that black radicals had in their revolutionary cause but also in the fight against U.S. imperialism. Newton’s embracement of Maoism was a signal for Chinese support.

Even more so, when members of the BPP memorized the words of Mao and dressed like Chinese peasants, this was a acceptance of Maoism and rejection of American principles and reform.²⁸⁸ In a way, Newton was trying to prove to Mao and the CCP that black people were

²⁸⁷ “Huey Newton on Guns & Gun Control (1968),” YouTube (AfroMarxist, April 26, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osSmBUHAVJk>, 0:43-1:04.

²⁸⁸ Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, “Black like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 1, no. 4 (1999): pp. 6-41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999949909362183>, 7.

ready to embark upon revolutionary war and that the masses of blacks were ready for the guidance of Mao. In trying to get rid of American law enforcement in their neighborhoods and purge out reactionaries, the BPP looked to create a black nation to sanction in Chinese aide. This would have solidified the world revolution that Mao had spoken of. Newton was by no means a fool and he knew the BPP could not take down U.S imperialism alone.

Unfortunately for the BPP and the Black Power movement, Newton was incarcerated in October 1967 because of a deadly confrontation between him and Oakland Police. During a traffic stop by Oakland PD, Newton was struck with a fist by one of the officers. Following the strike, the officer pulled his pistol and shot Newton in the stomach. What followed next added to the mythical perception of Newton, “My stomach seemed to explode...There were some shots, a rapid volley, but I have no idea where they came from...I vaguely remember being on my hands and knees on the ground...After that, I remember nothing.”²⁸⁹ The next twenty-two months proved to be a critical time for the Newton, the BPP, and the Black Power movement. Spending much of his jail time in solitary confinement with extra security, Newton was virtually cut off from the Party. Despite not being actively present in the Party, Newton’s image as a mythical leader grew. Cleaver, stated in 1969, that Newton provided “...the ideology and the methodology for organizing the Black Urban Lumpenproletariat. Armed with this ideological perspective and method, Huey transformed the Black lumpenproletariat from the forgotten people at the bottom of society into the vanguard of the proletariat.”²⁹⁰

As Newton sat in jail, the BPP grew rapidly and with Newton not there to guide the growth, the Party no longer aligned with Newton’s original goals. In addition to this, when

²⁸⁹ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 186-187.

²⁹⁰ Cleaver, “On The Ideology Of The Black Panther Party”, 2.

Newton was locked up, a power vacuum was created and various BPP leadership began to buttheads about the direction the Party was going to take. With Newton behind bars, the FBI and other law enforcement agencies were able to infiltrate the BPP easier and plant spies and cause sabotage among the organization.

His popularity accelerated while behind bars. When Newton was released on bail in August of 1970, a rally outside the courthouse had attracted thousands of people who showed up just to catch a glimpse of him. He came outside the courthouse and stood on top of a car, ripping his shirt off in a Superman like fashion.²⁹¹ Newton's cult of personality was higher than it ever had been before. Newton had become a Mao among the Black Power movement supporters. Newton appeared to be the "Black Messiah" that the FBI feared.²⁹² Newton had gained his own cult of personality, much like Mao already had.



291. Newton the day of his release

End of a Movement

Following his release, two events occurred that connected Newton and the BPP directly to East Asia more than ever. The first event occurred the same month Newton was released from prison in 1970; Newton released a written statement to the public not only reinforcing his

²⁹¹ "Huey Newton Released from Prison," *The Berkeley Revolution*, June 20, 2017, <https://revolution.berkeley.edu/huey-newton-released/>.

²⁹² Baxter Smith, "FBI Memos Reveal Repression Schemes," *The Black Scholar* 5, no. 7 (1974): pp. 43-48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1974.11431406>, 44.

support for Vietnam but pledging to send “an undetermined number of troops”²⁹³ directly to Vietnam to assist in the fight against the U.S. The troops that Newton was referring to, were BPP members. The impact of this declaration was severe. Newton had just gotten out of jail and hit the ground running.

Part of what made this declaration severe was the fierce resistance against the Vietnam War by Americans. When President Nixon told the country, in April 1970, that the U.S. was expanding its efforts to combat communism into Cambodia, anti-war activism drastically increased.²⁹⁴ By May 1970, college campuses across the country were filled with anti-war demonstrations and violence erupted as anti-war students clashed with American law enforcement. On May 4th, 1970, Kent State University became the epicenter of this violence. After several standoffs with students, the Ohio National Guard shot into a crowd of students and killed four.²⁹⁵ Due to the Kent State Shooting the resistance to the Vietnam War grew rapidly and the BPP were heavily involved in anti-war demonstrations.²⁹⁶

Newton’s statement revived his wish to move the BPP toward a more Marxist philosophy and away from black nationalist perspectives. Addressing the shared enemy, Newton stated in the same declaration, “...for we recognize that our common enemy is the American imperialist who is the leader of international bourgeois domination...The Black Panther Party offers these troops because we are the vanguard party of revolutionary internationalists who give up all claim to nationalism.”²⁹⁷ Moving away from nationalism, Newton was trying to elevate the BPP from

²⁹³ Huey P. Newton, “Letter to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam ,” Letter to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, accessed 2022, <https://web.viu.ca/davies/H324War/letter.HueyNewton.Vietnam.1970.htm>.

²⁹⁴ “In Photos: The Kent State Massacre,” CNN (Cable News Network, May 4, 2021), <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/03/us/gallery/kent-state-massacre/index.html>.

²⁹⁵ “In Photos: The Kent State Massacre,” CNN

²⁹⁶ Bloom and Martin, 263-265.

²⁹⁷ Newton, “Letter to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam”.

just fighting imperialism domestically. Newton's confidence in the BPP as an international force came about because he had followed the direct path of Mao and was confident as ever in the connection that he had built with East Asian comrades of the same struggle. The support for black people that came from China provided Newton with the confidence he needed to make such a daring declaration of support.

With this declaration, Newton had fully turned the BPP away from any peaceful de-escalation with the U.S. Newton was following the path of Mao and was willing to put members of the BPP on the frontlines against U.S. troops. Despite being part of the Black Power movement, the idea of U.S. citizens being sent to Vietnam to fight against U.S. troops shows the disconnect that the BPP with America. The Cold War was not simply being fought overseas. It had entered America's backyard through the Black Power movement. Newton's statement in support of sending Black Americans to fight with the Vietcong ultimately led to more efforts by American law enforcement to shut the Panthers down.

The second event connecting Newton and the BPP directly to East Asia was Newton's abrupt trip to China in September 1971. Knowing that President Richard Nixon was planning a trip to China in 1972, Newton not only wanted to make the trip first, but wanted to establish relations with the CCP and Mao personally. Although Newton would not meet Mao, he had multiple meetings with Chinese Premier Chou Enlai and discussed politics in depth with Mao's wife, Chiang Ch'ing.²⁹⁸ In addition to these meetings, Newton met with delegates from North Korea, Mozambique, and Vietnam, all countries that had learned a great deal from Mao and were dependent on Chinese aide.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 352.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

For Newton, the trip to China resulted in a psychological liberation that he had never felt.³⁰⁰ Stating that he experienced "...the sensation of freedom-as if a great weight had been lifted from my soul..."³⁰¹ Newton understood his trip to China as the upward mobility that was needed for the BPP and the Black Power movement. This would not be his last time abroad, but it was his first time abroad and China welcomed him with open arms. Experiencing some of the same feelings that Williams had in China, Newton saw China as a utopia and the goal for blacks in America. This was not the end of the BPP, but post Newton's trip to China, the BPP and Black Power movement took a turn towards de-escalation and never received the kind of help other nations received from China.

Plagued with strife, by 1971, the BPP was under serious strain. Internal conflicts were growing at an alarming rate. Cleaver had been living in exile since 1968 and gained a substantial following from Algeria. His prioritization of guerilla warfare in America went against Newton's plans for the BPP. This caused a rift between Newton and Cleaver, and by 1971 the BPP split into two factions, one with Cleaver and one with Newton.³⁰² Adding further to the internal collapse, was the death of various leaders and incarceration of others. For example, in December of 1969, Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton was executed in his sleep by Chicago police.³⁰³ And in 1970, Deputy Minister of Defense Geronimo Pratt was arrested on murder charges.³⁰⁴

In addition to this, the Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) of the FBI successfully destroyed the Panthers through its operations. "By July 1969, the Black Panthers had become the primary focus of the program and was ultimately the target of 233 of the total

³⁰⁰ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 348.

³⁰¹ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 348.

³⁰² Malley, 183-184.

³⁰³ Bloom and Martin, 238.

³⁰⁴ Malley, 183.

295 authorized ‘Black Nationalist’ COINTELPRO actions.’³⁰⁵ One of these authorized actions was the fostering of violence between local Chicago street gang, Blackstone Rangers and the Chicago BPP branch.³⁰⁶ First started in 1956 by the FBI, COINTELPRO became one of the bureaus most ruthless programs to disrupt and neutralize not only black nationalist groups, but any group or individual that was seen as a threat to the internal security of America. But it is no secret that COINTELPRO was mainly focused on what it called Black Nationalist groups. Ironically started during a time when the U.S. condemned the Soviets for their apparent overwatch on citizens, COINTELPRO proved to be proof that the U.S. compromised its own morals and laws in order to maintain its security.³⁰⁷ Former FBI official, William Sullivan testified that COINTELPRO used similar techniques that had been used against Soviet agents to neutralize Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.³⁰⁸ To discuss the operations, funding and ultimate outcome of COINTELPRO requires another thesis in itself. But for purposes of this thesis, the reader must understand that the Black Power movement and BPP did not fall apart as a whole strictly due to internal strife. Had the FBI adhered to not operating outside of the very law it is sworn to protect, the story of the Black Power movement during the Cold War might be very different.

These factors played into the downfall of the BPP and destroyed any international ambitions they had. The BPP were not the only Black Power group during the 1960s and 1970s, but they were the Vanguard of the Black Power movement and as they began to decline in influence and power, so did the Black Power movement. With no Vanguard, the connection

³⁰⁵ *COINTELPRO and Other Intelligence Activities Targeting Americans, 1940-1975: Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans* (Ipswich, MA: Mary Ferrell Foundation Press, 2010), 188.

³⁰⁶ *COINTELPRO and Other Intelligence Activities Targeting Americans*, 188.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 58.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 81.

between East Asia and black radicals was lost. But it was not only domestic issues that led to the demise of the relationship between East Asia and black radicals.

When Newton went to China in 1971, the CCP experienced a domestic change. China's focus for the future diverged from revolution and focused on international security, part of this was due to their ongoing fallout with the Soviet Union stemming from the mid 1950's. Consequently, China saw the Soviet Union as its biggest threat to border security.³⁰⁹ The best way to offset this threat was to align itself with the Soviet Union's biggest threat, the U.S. By late 1969, the Chinese and the U.S. had open lines of communication and were discussing détente.³¹⁰ Newton was unaware of this, and it was until February 1972 when Mao and President Nixon would be photographed shaking hands in China that the Black Power movement would find out about these relations. Just how Stalin joined the ranks of capitalist countries in 1934 for external protection of the Soviet Union, Mao did the same for China in 1972. This iconic meeting and photograph dealt a major blow to anyone who was still looking for potential revolutionary assistance from China. Although the CCP was willing to invest in revolutions worldwide, it seemed as if the security of China out ruled any Marxist ideology it once promoted. This made it official, the CCP showed the world that they were closing its chapter on revolution and open to diplomacy with the U.S. With no international help from China anymore, the Black Power movement and its relationship to Maoism was essentially over.

³⁰⁹ Jian, 240.

³¹⁰ Jian, 250.



The iconic photo that showed relations between the CCP and the U.S. had reached a level of understanding. Later, Nixon stated this his trip to China was “the week that changed the world.”³¹¹

³¹¹ Michael E. Ruane, “China Was a Brutal Communist Menace. In 1972, Richard Nixon Visited, Anyway.” *Washington Post*, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2022/02/20/nixon-china-mao-visit-1972/>.

Conclusion

Robert F. Williams, RAM, and the BPP could not have been as powerful and fought for black liberation for so long without East Asian support and influence. Part of this was due to the CCP's hospitality. The CCP enjoyed the company of men who came from humble beginnings like Williams and Huey P. Newton. Both men were viewed as nuisances in America and been subject to racism. But it was in East Asia where both these men felt as if they were treated like human beings. Meanwhile the Soviets sought to work more with established political leaders like Fidel Castro and Modibo Keita. Limiting their aid and trying to maintain peaceful existence with the U.S., they had little interest on the question of race. Their communist rhetoric did not appeal to black radicals in the latter half of the 20th century for this reason.

For Williams, China and Vietnam offered a true sense of freedom and haven. Both countries allowed Williams free reign over his publications and provided him with all the resources needed to combat U.S. imperialism. He was elevated to international status and was allowed to align the plight of black people with those of Vietnam and China. His fight overseas brought domestic racism in the U.S. to the forefront of internationalism during the Cold War era.

For RAM, the utilization of urban guerilla warfare was their main take from East Asia. Creating underground cells of black militants, RAM recreated the same militant structure that East Asian guerilla groups had. Electing Williams as their International Chair, RAM's goal of separating from the U.S. and becoming a sovereign nation was drawn from the success the CCP had in its fight for liberation. Although RAM never achieved that goal, the seeds of black militancy had been planted in the black neighborhoods. These planted seeds sprouted and combatted U.S. imperialism and racism in a domestic fashion that reflected East Asia's international fight against U.S. imperialism and racism.

The BPP rose to be the Vanguard of the Black Power movement. Led by Newton and Bobby Seale, these two were not only influenced by Williams and RAM but were well versed in leftist rhetoric coming out of East Asia. Declaring solidarity with East Asia and showing their militancy through open carry and shootouts with police, the BPP was trying to garner as much support from East Asia as possible.

Ultimately, East Asia and Maoism proved to be a very powerful tool for the Black Power movement. But due to internal strife, COINTELPRO and the CCP's turn towards peace, the international fight for black liberation in America declined. If there is one lesson that Black Power movement participants learned from East Asia it was that their human rights were not going to be handed to them, the demand for those rights needed force behind them. And that force was militancy and the willingness to pay the ultimate price for liberation. In hindsight, we can see the many mistakes that were made by the Black Power movement and how they should have theorized more about Maoism and East Asia. The Black Power movement may have aroused the anger of blacks, but it did not utilize the main component of any Marxist Revolution, the workers. Focusing too much on militancy and combatting U.S. imperialism, there was not enough rallying of black workers who could form a united front that could have struck American capitalism at its heart. The 1970s-1980s brought a different fight to black people in America, one that no longer called for gun toting black youth and international solidarity from China. For black people in America, the fight was beginning to muster amongst themselves.

Although Maoism had already played a role in the Black Power movement, the interpretation of Mao and influence of China was very different for the BPP. RAM had focused primarily on creating a nation inside of America for black people through urban guerilla warfare which had been inspired by China. In contrast the BPP emphasized gaining political power, land,

and on black economics. Newton and Seale were essentially trying to create a socialist state for black people that replicated China. RAM had extensive plans for revolution and overthrowing the chains of oppression but was not knowledgeable on how the so-called Black State would continue its existence. But as Mao always looked toward the years to come in China, Newton and Seale had a focus on not only revolution resulting in liberated land for blacks but on the economics and military power that was to come with this liberation.

In the Cold War context, the Black Power movement in many ways was another proxy war that the U.S. was fighting. Utilizing East Asia revolutionary rhetoric, the Black Power movement was able to apply itself to the forefront of domestic conflict in America. As history has shown, when a country's resources are stretched too thin, it can crumble. Fighting in Vietnam, giving aid out to various countries, CIA operations overseas and dealing with black radicals was not enough to make the U.S. crumble, but an argument can be made that the U.S.'s resources were stretched thin. The Black Power movement disrupted any notion of passive resistance that America hoped black people would abide by. Far in distance, but close in thought, the Black Power movement and East Asia together became one of the most disruptive forces during the Cold War.

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