

# vita non nova

[incipit]<sup>v2n</sup>

chapitre 1  
eldridge cleaver

chapitre 2  
une situation huey p. newton

chapitre 3  
polypthych bobby seale

Laissons les morts enterrer les morts, et les plaindre...  
Notre sort sera d'être les premiers à entrer vivants  
dans la vie nouvelle

Marx ; lettre à Arnold Ruge, 1843, cité par Guy Debord in *Mémoires*, 1952



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[incipit]

Sibi Quisque profecto  
Fit deus. Iganuis precibus fortuna répuignât.  
*Chacun, quand il veut, devient un dieu pour lui-même.  
La fortune rejette les lâches qui se bornent à faire des vœux.*

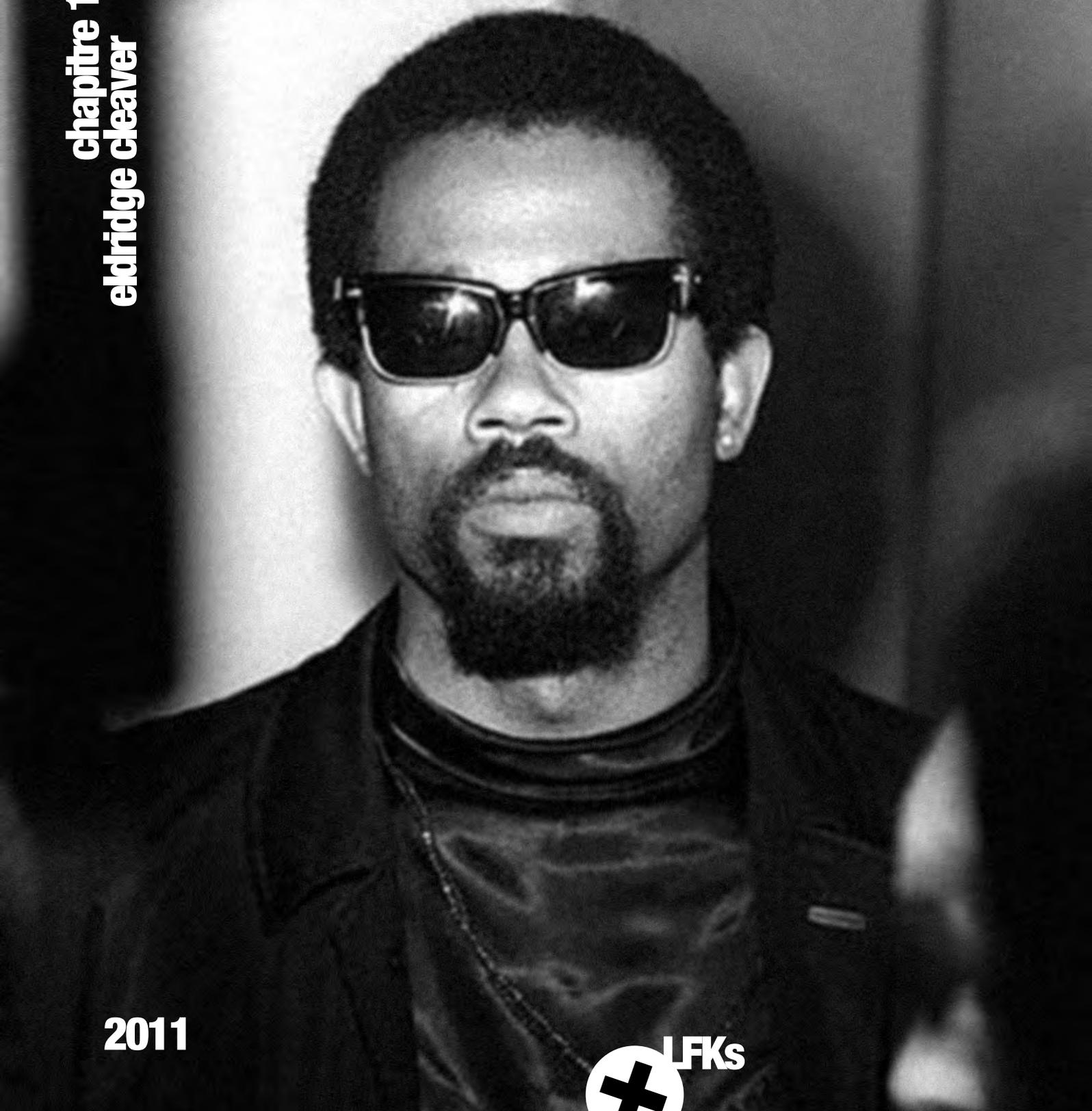
Ovide ; *Les Métamorphoses*, VII 72-73



# vita non nova

IV2n  
[incipit]

chapitre 1  
eldridge cleaver



2011

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IV2n  
[incipit]

chapitre 2  
une situation huey p. newton

2012

2013

chapitre 3  
polyptych bobby seale

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When asked by the teacher to write an essay on punishment for Hitler, one little Negro schoolgirl wrote :  
«Dress him up in a black skin and make him live in the united States».

Saul D.Alimsky, *Reveille For Radicals*, 1946



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Right on, Davis!

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«The Chinese write the world CRISIS with two characters. One means DANGER and the other means OPPORTUNITY. Together they spell CRISIS.»  
Saul D. Alinsky : Réveille For Radicals, 1946.

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[incipit]

And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action.

*Ainsi les couleurs natives de la résolution  
blémissent dans les pâles reflets de la pensée,  
et les entreprises les plus vives et les plus importantes,  
ainsi se détournent de leur cours  
et perdent le nom d'action.*

*Shakespeare, Hamlet, Acte Troisième, scène I, 84-88.*



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[incipit]

ORGANIZER: Do you live over in that slummy building?

ANSWER: Yeah. What about it?

ORGANIZER: What a hell do you live there for?

ANSWER: What do you mean, what do I live there for? Where else am going to live? I'm on welfare.

ORGANIZER: Oh, you mean you pay rent in that place?

ANSWER: Come on, is this a put-on? Very funny! You know where you can live for free?

ORGANIZER: Hmm. That place looks like it's crawling with rats and bugs.

ANSWER: It sure is.

ORGANIZER: Did you ever try to get that landlord to do anything about it?

ANSWER: Try to get him to do anything about anything! I you don't like it, get out. That's all he has to say. There are a plenty more waiting.

ORGANIZER: What if you don't pay your rent?

ANSWER: They'd throw us out in ten minutes.

ORGANIZER: Hmm. What if nobody in that building paid their rent?

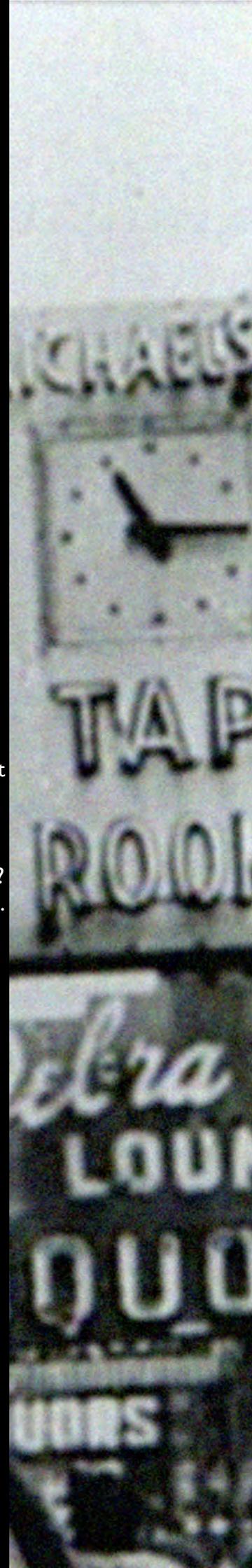
ANSWER: Well, they'd start to throw...

Hey, you know, they'd have trouble throwing everybody out, wouldn't they?

ORGANIZER: Yeah, I guess they would.

ANSWER: Hey, you know, maybe you got something—say, I'd like you to meet some of my friends. How about a drink?

Saul D. Alinsky, *Radicals*, 1971

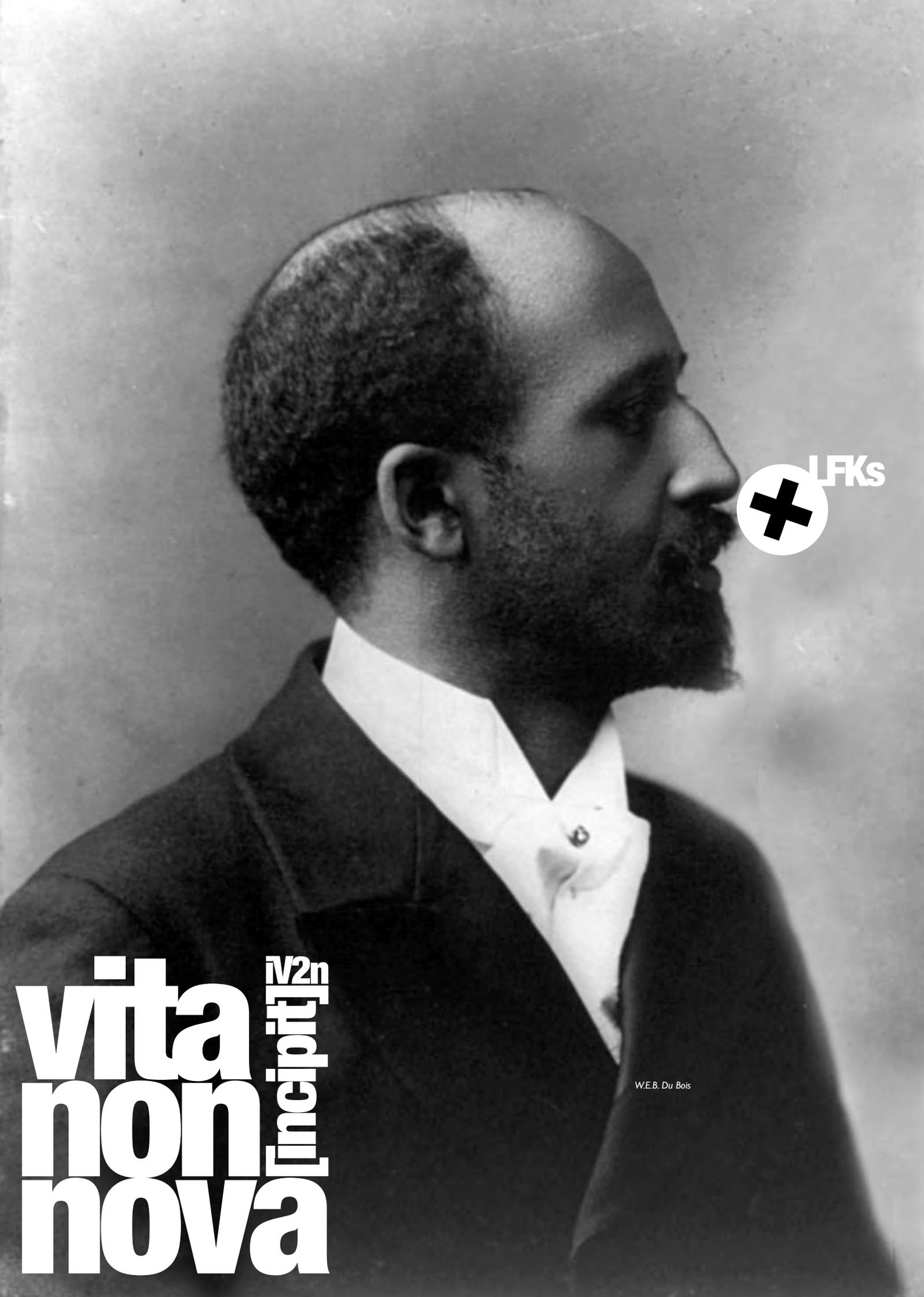


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[incipit]

«Quitter nos rêves, abandonner nos vieilles croyances et nos amitiés d'avant la vie»





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W.E.B. Du Bois

# Le Monde

**L'**inauguration d'une fresque murale géante à Villiers-le-Bel.

Un déplacement à La Courneuve pour rencontrer des jeunes. Une rencontre à Bondy avec une star hollywoodienne. L'ambassadeur des États-Unis en France, Charles Rivkin, multiplie depuis un an les actions en direction des banlieues sensibles. Mais ces opérations symboliques et médiatiques masquent l'ampleur du travail de réseau effectué en France ces dernières années pour identifier les élites des quartiers et des minorités ethniques.

L'ambassade américaine s'est en effet constitué un carnet d'adresses exceptionnel - aujourd'hui le plus complet, le plus pertinent, le plus actualisé sur les banlieues françaises. Au point que ni les partis politiques ou les associations, ni le monde intellectuel ou médiatique - toujours très frileux sur les questions de diversité - ne rivalisent avec le réseau de l'ambassade américaine.

Des dizaines de responsables associatifs, d'éducateurs, d'élus locaux de droite comme de gauche, d'artistes, de jeunes chercheurs ont ainsi été identifiés comme de futures élites de la société française. «C'est fascinant : chaque fois que je rencontre quelqu'un de brillant, il est déjà en contact avec l'ambassade», témoigne Ahmed El-Keiy, 43 ans, présentateur d'un talk-show sur France Ô et un des meilleurs connaisseurs des réseaux de la diversité.

Les plus prometteurs se voient proposer des séjours de deux à trois semaines aux États-Unis pour approfondir leurs réflexions sur leurs sujets d'intérêt (Le Monde du 6 mai). Un programme de «visiteurs internationaux» que l'ambassade destinait autrefois aux filières traditionnelles les plus élitistes. Des figures comme Nicolas Sarkozy ou François Fillon ont ainsi bénéficié de ces dispositifs lorsqu'ils étaient trentenaires.

Depuis le 11 septembre 2001, les Américains ont en partie réorienté leur stratégie d'influence vers les leaders musulmans des pays occidentaux. Une démarche renforcée par l'élection de Barack Obama. «Notre volonté est d'identifier les futurs leaders français, ceux qui pourront émerger, ceux qui seront amenés à prendre des responsabilités», explique Lora Berg, attachée culturelle de l'ambassade. «Les Américains misent sur un changement socio-démographique en France, complète le chercheur Vincent Geisser, 42 ans, spécialiste de l'islam, parti aux États-Unis fin 2009. Ils font le calcul que les élites françaises, aujourd'hui âgées et blanches, vont forcément évoluer, et identifient ceux qui, aujourd'hui en périphérie du système, pourront être demain des leaders.» Loin des fantasmes sur la toute-puissance américaine, le travail de repérage est effectué par une employée française de l'ambassade, Randiane Peccoud, 53 ans, chargée de la société civile ; une méthode simple mais efficace, un travail de veille, la participation à des dizaines de rencontres et le bouche-à-oreille pour savoir qui fait quoi et qui est intéressant.

«C'est simple, Randiane connaît tout le monde», s'émerveille Bruno Laforestrie, directeur de la radio Générations 88.2. «Le Who's Who de la diversité en France, c'est elle qui le tient», glisse Fayçal Douhane, membre du bureau national du PS, parti aux États-Unis il y a deux ans. «Ils ne cherchent pas des leaders médiatiques, mais des gens qui agissent, qui sont acteurs, qui produisent quelque chose», relève El-Yamine Soum, 31 ans, sociologue, impliqué dans le réseau de l'ambassade. «Je n'ai jamais vu un réseau pareil», témoigne Ali Zahi, adjoint au maire de Bondy, invité aux États-Unis après les émeutes de l'automne 2005.

Le décalage entre l'activisme américain et la frilosité française est perçu douloureusement. Comme un indice supplémentaire du désintérêt de la société française. «L'ambassade avance sur un territoire vierge qu'aucune institution ne cherche à travailler», note Antoine Menuisier, rédacteur en chef du «Bondy Blog». «Nous sommes identifiés par un autre pays comme un leader potentiel, alors que nous ne sommes pas reconnus ici», ajoute Rokhaya Diallo, 32 ans, présidente des Indivisibles,

de retour des États-Unis. «Aux États-Unis, on nous considère comme un espoir, comme un acteur potentiel de la France de demain», se réjouit Reda Didi, 34 ans, consultant en ressources humaines, président de Graines de France, un groupe de réflexion sur les quartiers. Même analyse de la part de Majid El-Jarroudi, jeune patron de 33 ans, invité aux États-Unis pour un sommet économique : «Ce qui est troublant, c'est qu'on a plus d'écho auprès du gouvernement américain que vis-à-vis des institutions françaises.» L'autre surprise vient du pragmatisme absolu dans les stratégies de détection.

«Leur force, c'est qu'ils mettent tout le monde sur le même pied. Ils ne sont pas dans une logique d'étiquette, comme nous Français, mais dans une logique d'action : qui agit ? Qui propose ? Qui innove ? Et pas : Quel est ton diplôme ? Où tu as fait tes études ? Qui est ton père ?», résume l'humoriste Yassine Belattar, un des piliers des réseaux de la diversité en France.

**Luc Bronner**

Article paru dans l'édition du 06.06.10

**vita  
non  
nova** [incipit]



**volume 1**  
**eldridge cleaver**

**vita**  
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**nova**

**[incipit] 2n**

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*Walking Tall . . . Walking Proud . . .*

*Walking Softly but Carrying It Big . . .*

*You'll Be Cock of the Walk with the*

## **NEW FALL COLLECTION**

*From*

## **ELDRIDGE DE PARIS**

*Life is just a chain of daisies when you slip into (careful, now) these revolutionary hot pants—with their ever-so-daring accent provocateur—just unveiled by famous radical designer Eldridge Cleaver of Paris. They're bad, they're mad, they're up front (but never out of sight) . . . and, of course, they're for men only . . . real men . . . the three-fisted variety. "There is no mistaking they are men's pants," says M. Cleaver (seen here modeling a high-waisted two-tone pair of "Cleavers" with side zipper and matching "appurtenance"). "The pants that men wear now will be looked upon as girls' pants after my models are sold." So far, Eldridge admits, none have been, either wholesale or retail, but he's busy working on that problem right now in his Latin Quarter office. He's also working on some new designs, including a red-and-white-striped appurtenance for the U.S. Bicentennial.*

*Up your revolution! And don't forget . . . heavy on the starch!*

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**volume 1  
eldridge cleaver**



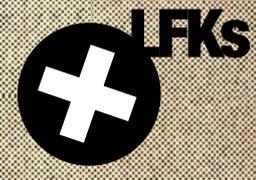
AVEC  
CLAIRE ANDRIES  
THIERRY ARREDONDO  
MAMADOU GOO BA  
HANNES BRAUN  
MARTINE BRUNOTT  
JEAN MICHEL BRUYÈRE  
RICHARD CASTELLI  
JEAN-PAUL CURNIER  
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NADINE FEBVRE  
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ASSANE SENE  
DELPHINE VARAS

V2N

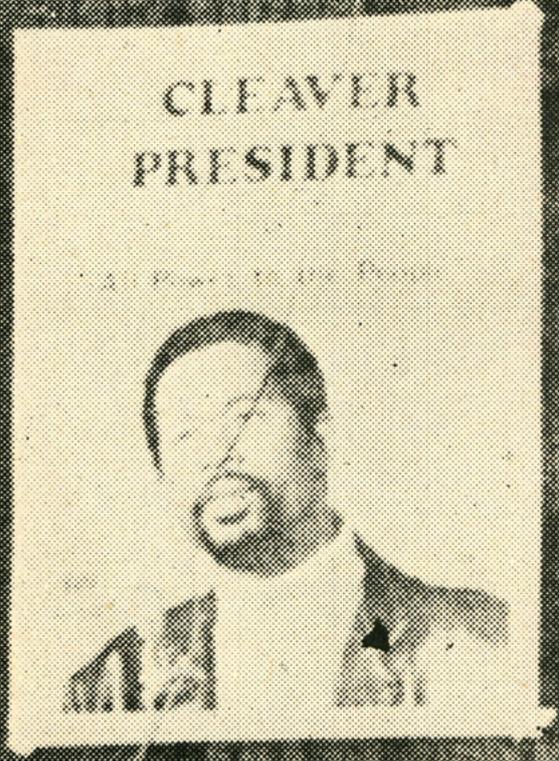
[INCIPIT] VITA' NON NOVA  
VOLUME 1

# vita non nova

[incipit] V2N



eldridge cleaver



PRODUCTION  
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CRÉATION EN OCTOBRE 2011

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(98-05-02) 04:00 PST BERKELEY -- Eldridge Cleaver, the former Black Panther and best-selling author whose fiery rhetoric and lucid prison writings were an indelible part of the revolution of black America, died yesterday at the age of 62.

Cleaver died at the Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center in Pomona, according to hospital spokeswoman Leslie Porras. At the family's request, the cause of his death was not divulged.

His former wife, Kathleen Cleaver, said from New York that she learned that «some time in the last 24 hours he had a heart attack.»

«He also had diabetes, and he was being treated for prostate cancer, she said». «I'm in a state of shock.»

Reflecting on Cleaver's heyday, she said, «He was a very brilliant, very quiet and very stately individual who had been consigned to state prison to be warehoused. I saw him come out of that and come alive, and flourish and develop. He was extraordinary because he was so energetic and so gentle and so visionary.»

Former Panther chief of staff David Hilliard said yesterday that he first met Cleaver in 1966 and thought he was «the personification of Malcolm X.»

«Cleaver's greatest contribution was coalition politics, Hilliard said.»

Cleaver lived in Berkeley for many years, but moved to Southern California a few years ago and lived most recently in Pomona. For the past few months, he had been working as a consultant to the Coalition on Diversity at the University of La Verne, 35 miles east of downtown Los Angeles.

Last June, he joined several Panther veterans in a tumultuous welcome in Santa Ana for ex-Panther Elmer Geronimo Pratt, who was released after 25 years in prison. And last month, Cleaver appeared at an Earth Day conference in Portland, Ore., where he said, «I've gone beyond civil rights and human rights to creation rights.»

Cleaver's life was a whirlwind of variety and contradiction -- convict, Black Power revolutionary, best-selling author and media darling, fugitive from justice and quixotic political thinker whose ideas ranged across the political spectrum. He was a failed perennial candidate for public office and, finally, an introspective man who kept largely to himself.

He was born Leroy Eldridge Cleaver in 1935 in Wabbeseka, Ark., and his family later moved to Phoenix and then Los Angeles. By the time he was 18, Cleaver had already served stints in reform school and in 1954 he began a series of prison terms that would keep him behind bars for most of the next 12 years for crimes ranging from drug dealing to attempted murder and assault.

Cleaver was best known as the convict who wrote *Soul on Ice*, his outraged cry against an America he saw as a vicious cauldron of racism. He wrote the book in 1965, while he was in Folsom Prison, and it was published three years later to wide critical praise and sold millions of copies.

When Cleaver emerged from prison in the mid-1960s, he found a Bay Area seething with a strong black revolutionary spirit centered in Oakland. It was a region already primed for revolution by the Free Speech Movement and the anti-war demonstrations at the University of California at Berkeley.

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE PANTHERS

In the fall of 1966, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton founded the Black Panther Party. The original idea was that the Panthers, bristling with

weapons and outfitted in berets and black jackets, would protect their Oakland neighborhoods from what they said was the predatory Oakland Police Department. But the Panthers became equally well known for organizing day-care centers and free breakfast programs.

At the time, Cleaver was writing for the left-wing Ramparts Magazine, and by the spring of 1967 he was working almost full-time for the Panthers.

Impressed by his writing and flair for oratory, Newton and Seale asked Cleaver to become the party's spokesman, and he was dubbed the minister of information.

He reveled in the job, joining the party's central committee and editing the Panthers' newspaper. Cleaver was the one who got across the message that the Panthers were going to carry weapons and weren't afraid to use them. This struck fear into the heart of white America, a fact that simply made the Panthers more dangerously attractive.

With his flair for coalition politics, Seale said in an earlier interview, Cleaver «was getting all the groups together -- the Yippies, the SDS (*Students for a Democratic Society*), the SCLC (*Southern Christian Leadership Conference*). His personal style was profound, and with his writing ability he was able to give a depth of understanding to what our struggle was all about. That was his great contribution.»

#### PRISON CRY PUBLISHED

By 1968, when *Soul on Ice* came out, Cleaver took on the added cachet of best-selling author, befriended by middle- and upper-class white liberals and toasted from coast to coast for his chilling and powerful writing on what it was like to be a black American in a California prison.

«When Eldridge was in prison, he produced the first so-called black prisoner book, the book that set the trend for revolutionary black prisoners», said former Chronicle reporter Tim Findley, who covered the Panthers during the

1960s and '70s. «And then he became the first black revolutionary figure, a cause celebre, probably with a lot of real justification.»

In April 1968, Cleaver was involved in a violent shootout with police in West Oakland during which party member Bobby Hutton was killed. Cleaver was arrested and charged with attempted murder. He jumped \$50,000 bail and fled the United States.

For seven years, he and Kathleen Cleaver lived all over the world, seeking refuge in Communist- or left-dominated countries where he felt secure enough to know he would not be deported to the United States. The Cleavers started out under the benevolent wing of Fidel Castro in Havana and later moved to Algeria, North Korea and, finally, France. In 1970, Huey Newton, unhappy with what he perceived as Cleaver's shifting ideologies, drummed him out of the party.

Abroad, Cleaver gave interviews and lived the life of a celebrity exile. After settling in Paris, he took a run at the world of fashion design with his unique codpiece, an item of men's clothing worn over pants -- which looked something like

#### RETURN FROM EXILE

In 1975, unhappy and dispirited from his years in exile, Cleaver surrendered to FBI agents in Paris and returned to California, where he garnered more attention by renouncing his leftist ways for the newfound light of the Republican Party. After a plea bargain with Alameda County authorities, Cleaver served five years on probation.

Cleaver confounded his friends with his abrupt change in politics.

He became a born-again Christian, flirted briefly with the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church and crusaded against his former Communist allies and for conservatives he would have shunned in an earlier life.

«I feel good about Ronald Reagan!» Cleaver told a crowd of Harvard students in the fall of 1982, as a roar of disbelief rippled through the audience.

But Kathleen Cleaver said her ex-husband's widely publicized political swing from left to right is «a superficial analysis.»

«In truth, he was a very patriotic anti-communist,» she said. «I think he had examined the philosophical orientation of the American left and found it wanting. But I also think he had

been psychologically degraded by the experience of his exile.»

As perhaps an oblique explanation for why Cleaver changed his politics so markedly and abruptly, Kathleen Cleaver said, «he came back (from exile) a very unhealthy person, unhealthy mentally, and I don't think he's ever quite recovered. He became a profoundly disappointed and ultimately disoriented person.» In 1981, the Cleavers separated and in 1987 they were divorced.

Cleaver made desultory runs at political office in the Bay Area -- in 1984 he mounted an unsuccessful campaign for Congress against Ron Dellums -- but nothing ever came out right. By the fall of 1992, Cleaver's politics, though, had swung back toward the center.

«He had changed a lot,» Seale said. «He wasn't tooting his horn any more about born-again Christians. And he was much more critical of Reagan and Bush.» Cleaver joined Seale on the lecture circuit for a while, talking about the effect of the Panthers' revolution on American politics.

In his last years, Cleaver had a few scrapes with the police. In 1988, he was placed on probation after being convicted of burglarizing a house in Oakland that was under renovation. He was jailed briefly that same year for violating his probation after testing positive for cocaine use.

In 1990, Cleaver entered a drug rehabilitation center to recover from what he said was an addiction to crack cocaine. Two years later, he was arrested by Oakland police while carrying rock cocaine, but the charges were later dropped because police had conducted an illegal search of his truck.

In March 1994, Cleaver was arrested in Berkeley for possession of crack cocaine. He became ill shortly after his arrest and underwent surgery for a severe head injury. Soon after he recovered, he moved to Southern California.

In addition to his former wife, Cleaver is survived by a daughter, Joju, and a son, Maceo, both of New York City.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

Chronicle staff writer Rick DelVecchio contributed to this report.

This article appeared on page A-1 of the San Francisco Chronicle

**August 31, 1935**  
**May 1, 1998**

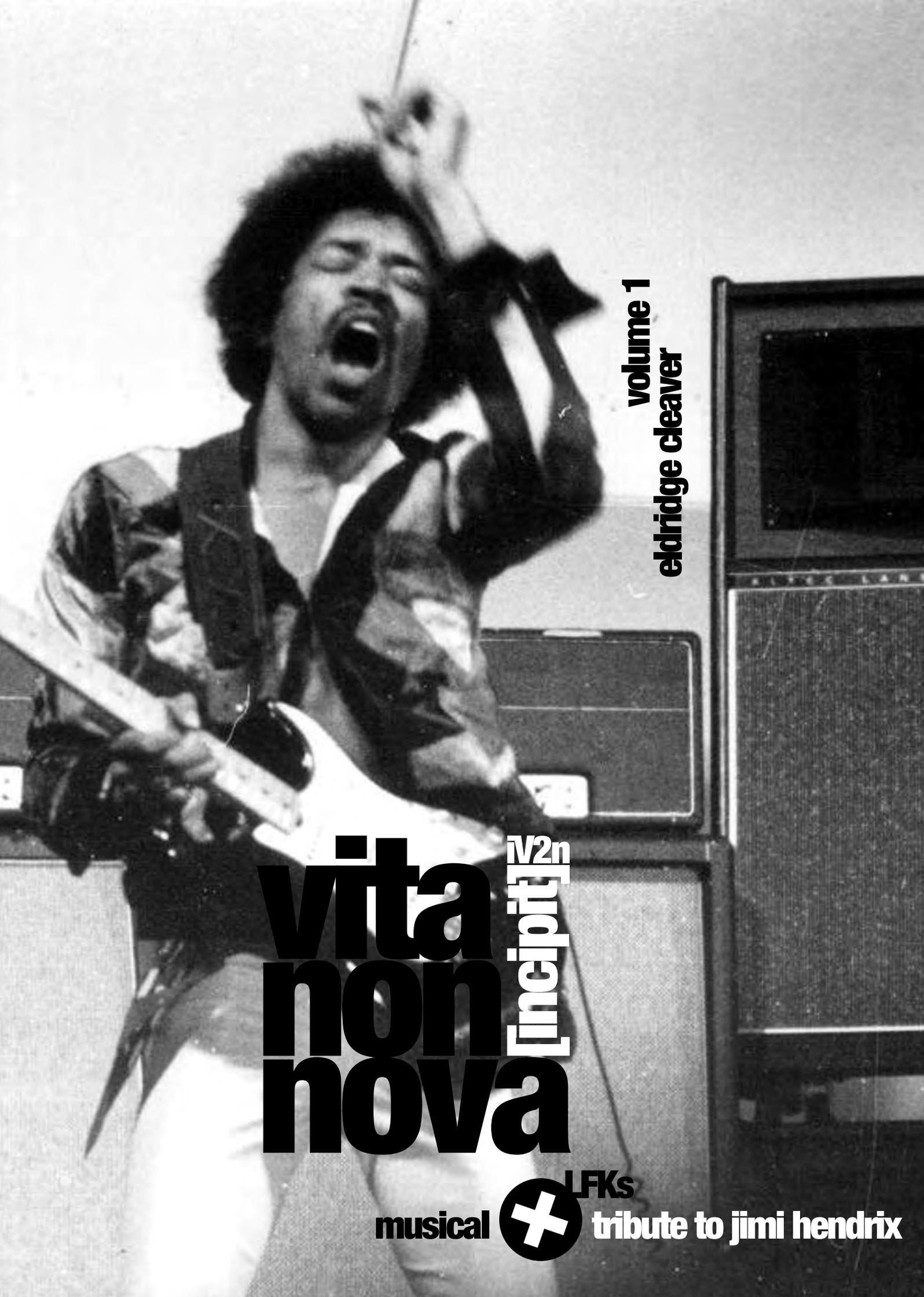
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musical **+** LFKs **tribute to jimmi hendrix**



# vita non nova

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chapitre 1  
eldridge cleaver

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER  
SOUL ON ICE, 1966

JIMI HENDRIX  
ELECTRIC LADYLAND, 1968



(films, spectacles, installations,  
œuvres plastiques, livres...)

IV2N

Après *Le Préau d'Un Seul*, formes et esthétiques contemporaines de la répression de l'immigration des étrangers non-blancs en Europe, ayant donné lieu à une série de créations entre 2007 et 2010, le collectif international d'artistes LFKs et Jean Michel Bruyère ouvrent un nouvel ensemble, intitulé [incipit] Vita Non Nova, dont les ghettos urbains, leur population et formes de vie seront le sujet central. Le tout premier temps, la première création du cycle, intitulée *Eldridge Cleaver*, aura lieu au Théâtre Garonne, en février 2011. Spectacle, film, installation... Un premier chapitre "historique", qui considère la formation des ghettos urbains de l'Europe contemporaine en tant qu'outil d'une domination raciale dans la longue entreprise de contrôle et moralisation de la sexualité, associant une jugulation, une stricte circonscription de la sexualité des hommes et surtout des jeunes hommes étrangers non-occidentaux ou d'origines étrangères non-blanches aux limites d'un territoire déserté, dévasté et désintégré, et l'offre large de déterritorialisation faite à la sexualité des femmes des mêmes catégories racialisées, ainsi transformées en sujets et enjeux de pouvoir.

Figures, actes, discours, textes du Black Panther Party, musiques noires américaines des années 60 et 70, films de la Blaxploitation, l'histoire et la vie des ghettos états-uniens au XXème sont mis en perspectives esthétique, sociologique et politique de la situation actuelle des ghettos urbains européens et français.

## [INCIPIT] VITA NON NOVA VOLUME 1

salles des  
Ateliers 1  
et 2

(festival d'Avignon 09, HKW  
Berlin 08, deSingel Antwerp 09,  
Linz 09, Hellerau Dresden 10...)

cette nouvelle série comportera notamment l'opéra Huey P. Newton, La Fatigue et l'Usure - juillet 2012 (coproduit par le Festival d'Art Lyrique, le Théâtre du Bois de l'Aune d'Aix-en-Provence et le Théâtre National de Chaillot), le film Polyptych-Bobby Seale, juillet 2013, (produit avec Marseille-Provence 2013, capitale culturelle européenne en 2013, et le ZKM à Karlsruhe)

MELVIN VAN PEEBLES  
SWEET SWEETBACK'S BAADASSSSS SONG, 1971

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eldridge cleaver



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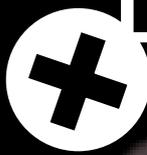


Soul On Ice - 1968

The Allegory Of The Black Eunuchs

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eldridge cleaver



LFKs

I sat down to eat my beans at a table for four with two of my contemporaries: young, strong, superlative Black Eunuchs in the prime. Soon after we were seated, an old fat Lazarus, with sleek grayish hair that had been artificially straightened and a jolly, ebullient smile which made him resemble a chocolate Santa Claus, invited himself over to our table and sat down in the chair opposite me. I exchanged glances with my contemporaries. Ironical smiles lit our black faces, while an intenser fire blazed in our eyes as we scrutinized this Lazarus interloper.

A few minutes passed in silence.

My contemporaries and I, we had a thing going about elderly Negroes like this one sitting opposite from me. There was something in his style, the way he carried himself, that we held in contempt. We had him written down as an Uncle Tom – not that we had ever seen him buck dancing or licking the white man's boots, but we knew that black rebels his age do not walk the streets in America: they were either dead, in prison, or in exile in another country. Or else, and this is how we sized this one up, they had turned into a type of fake that proliferates in the Negro ghetto. Not a passive resister (and he wasn't non-violent), he was death on another black, and although the white man had ripped off his whole existence, his whole race, he was always talking about what he would do if the white man ever did something to him personally. If talk alone could overthrow a government he would be in power. From a certain point of view we hated this black, but in a subtle way we were fascinated by the curious terms at which he had arrived with the world.

Just then, and with no apparent provocation, the young Eunuch on my left said, pounding his fist on the table for emphasis, "Old Lazarus, why come you're not dead?"

"What?" asked the Infidel, startled more by the suddenness of the question and the menacing tone in which it was hurled at him than by the question itself. (After all, his entire generation was being asked the same question in a million different guises: Charlie Parker asked Lester Young, Dizzy Gillespie asked Louis Armstrong, Mao Tse-Tung asked Chiang Kai-shek, Fidel Castro asked Batista, Malcolm X asked Martin Luther King, Robert F. Williams asked Roy Wilkins, Norman Mailer asked the Totalitarian Squares.) The question sank in slowly, and as it did his Santa Claus smile dissolved, with a hint of panic, into a twitch at the left corner of his fat mouth. His dark, beady eyes darted from face to face.

"I asked you why you aren't dead?" repeated the Eunuch on my left.

"Why should I be dead? I don't under—"

"If you had laid down your life," the Eunuch cut him off, "at least we could respect you. At least we could say you were a man—a great man. At least we could point to your grave as a sign, a standard, with pride—with reverence! But no, you cringing cunctator, you dared to cling to your miserable life, to grow old and gray and fat and funky!" The accusatory broke off and started eating his beans with a vengeance, as though each bean were a white man, and he downed them by the spoonful.

"What's wrong with this cat today?" asked the Accused, his face screwed up in nervous bafflement.

"He's sick," I offered, to see how the Infidel would take it.

"He must be sick," said the Accused, stirring his coffee uncertainly. "All this stupid talk about death and dying."

"Yes I'm sick!" Erupted the Accuser, almost choking, talking through his beans. You make me sick, Methuselah! What are you trying to do, win a longevity contest? How did you get that gray hair—how did you manage to survive? Yeah, I'm sick, sick, sick!"

I'm sick too, said the Eunuch on my right, speaking for the first time, I'm sick, sick, sick!"

"I'm sick, too," I said.

"What's the name of this game?" asked Lazarus, trying to inject a note of levity, on the sly. "This is a new one to me."

It was a cruel thing that we were doing and we knew it because we had done it before to others. In one sense we were only playing with him, probing him, examining him, studying him, but on another level we were deadly serious. The Lazarus, detecting the ambiguity, was confused.

"Do you know the difference between a gorilla and a guerrilla?" the Eunuch on my right asked the Accused.

The Accused appeared to be contemplating an answer.

"I'll make it easy for you," the Eunuch said, "You're a gorilla, and a guerrilla is everything you are not."

The Accused opened his mouth to reply, but the Eunuch on my left, who had cast the first stone, cut him off. "A guerrilla is a man," he snapped, his eyes flashing, "but you're some kind of freak!"

A self-searching, inward-looking silence ensued. One thought of blood and guns and knives, whips, ropes and chains and trees, screams, night riders, fear, nightsticks, police dogs and firehoses, fire, wounds and bombs, old women in pain and young women defiled, lies, jeers, little boys frozen in their first heat and young men destudded and old men burnt out, little girls psychically vitiated and physically massacred...

After a while I asked the Accused, in a neutral voice, "Have you ever hit a black woman?"

As if his switch had been flipped, his eyes lit up and, anxious for what in his death he took to be a change of subject, the Lazarus took the bait. The twinkle in his eye turned evil as he leaned across the table and said, in a confidential way : "I wish I had a nickel for every bitch whose ass I've put my foot in! I'd be so rich right now that you lames would have to put in your requests six months in advance just to get to see me, let alone sit down at the same table with me!"

"A home-run slash at your neck with a scimitar is the solution to all your problems, Lazarus!" hissed the Accuser, the Eunuch on my left, his lips trembling with rage. "What do you mean by that?" asked the Accused, affecting not to have understood.

"He means what I mean," said the Eunuch on my right, "that for four hundred years you have had the fear of the slave-master in you, but now it's time for you to know the fear of your own kind!"

"Humph!" snorted the Accused, and he took a spoonful of beans into his mouth, chewing them absently. He resumed talking after a few moments. "Black women take kindness for weakness. Leave them the least little opening and they will put you on the cross. I hate a black bitch. You can't trust them like white women, and if you try to, they won't appreciate it and they won't know how to act. It would be like trying to pamper a cobra. Anyway, every black woman secretly hates black men. Secretly they all love white men—some of them will tell you so to your face, the others will tell you by their deeds and actions. Haven't you ever noticed that just as soon as a black woman becomes successful she marries a white man? I'm going by what I know. I know one black bitch who always says that there ain't nothing a black man can do for her except leave her alone or bring her a message from, or carry a message to, a white man.

"There is no love left between black man and black woman. Take me, for instance. I love white women and hate black women. It's just in me, so deep that I don't even try to get it out of me any more. I'd jump over ten nigger bitches just to get to one white woman. Ain't no such thing as an ugly white woman. A white woman is beautiful even if she

is baldheaded and only has one tooth.... It's not just the fact that she's a woman that I love; I love her skin, her soft, smooth, white skin. I like to just lick her white skin as if sweet, fresh honey flows from her pores, and just to touch her long, soft, silky hair. There's a softness about a white woman, something delicate and soft inside her. But a nigger bitch seems to be full of steel, granite-hard and resisting, not soft and submissive like a white woman. Ain't nothing more beautiful than a white woman's hair being blown by the wind. The white woman is more than a woman to me.... She's like a goddess, a symbol. My love for her is religious and beyond fulfillment. I worship her. I love a white woman's dirty drawers.

"Sometimes I think that the way I feel about white women, I must have inherited from my father and his father and his father's father—as far back as you can go into slavery. I must have inherited from all those black men part of my desire for the white woman, because I have more love for her than one man should have. Yes, I want all the white women that they wanted but were never able to get. They passed on their desire to me, they must have; desire for the white woman is like a cancer eating my heart out and devouring my brain. In my dreams I see white women jumping over a fence like dainty little lambs, and every time one of them jumps over, her hair just catches the breeze and sprays out behind her like a mane on a Palomino stallion: blondes, redheads, brunettes, strawberry blondes, dirty blondes, drugstore blondes, platinum blondes—all of them. They are the things in my nightmares. Does all this sounds like I'm making it up, youngblood?"

He nodded at me; he was asking me. I took my time about answering. I would have preferred to remain silent. I said, "Why should you lie to us? I mean, no one can be completely true in all that they say, and you give me the impression of, well, talking of the top of your head..."

He was laughing inside, I could see it in his eyes. Then he said, "Well, I've thought about it for years. You have to try to understand what's bugging you, you know. But really, I don't believe that I understand anything about anything, when you get right down to it. But I'm stuck with myself and I accept my

own thoughts about things. For instance, I don't know just how it works, I mean I can't analyze it, but I know that the white man made the black woman the symbol of slavery and the white woman the symbol of freedom. Every time I embrace a black woman I'm embracing slavery, and when I put my arms around a white woman, well, I'm hugging freedom. The white man forbade me to have the white woman on pain of death. Literally, if I touched a white woman it would cost me my life. Men die for freedom, but black men die for white women, who are the symbol of freedom. That was the white man's will, and as long as he has the power to enforce his will upon me, force me to submit to his will in this instance or in any other, I will not be free. I will not be free until the day I can have a white woman in my bed and a white man minds his own business. Until that day comes, my entire existence is tainted, poisoned, and I will be a slave-and so will the white woman.

"You may not believe this... when I off a nigger bitch, I close my eyes and concentrate real hard, and pretty soon I get to believing that I'm riding one of them bucking blondes. I tell you the truth, that's the only way that I can bust my nuts with a black bitch, to close my eyes and pretend that she is Jezebel. If I was to look down and see a black bitch underneath me or if my hand happened to feel my nappy hair, that would be the end, it would be all over. I might as well get on up and split because I wouldn't be able to get anything down, even if I piled her all night long. Any black man who says he don't dig Jezebel is a goddamn liar. I believe that if a leader wanted to unite the Negroes in a solid unity, he could do so very easily. All he'd have to do is promise every black man a white woman and every black woman a white man. He would have so many followers that he wouldn't know what to do with them all. Believe me.

"I'm going to tell you three youngbloods something that I don't like to talk about. I don't like to talk about none of this shit.... You cats are sitting here all puffed up. You think you got a hell of a thing going for yourselves, but you don't really know anything about yourselves, or about your women, or about white people. You probably won't believe what I tell you: it rubs your ego the wrong way. But I'm going to tell you anyway."

The Lazarus paused and squirmed around in his chair as though trying to get a better grip on it with his rump. When he spoke again there was a tremor in his voice: "He who worships the Virgin Mary will lust for the beautiful dumb blonde. And she who yearns to be rocked in the arms of Jesus will burn for the blue eyes and white arms of the All-American Boy."

Here the Lazarus stopped and searched our faces. But our faces were impenetrable masks and we gave him no sign. He went on: "The war going on between the black man and the white man is not the only war. Life is full of little wars and you fight them all at the same time. You

have to have a grand strategy designed to cope with all hostilities, you have to have a style, and if there is someone making war on you and you don't know it, well, you are in big trouble, you're lost from the go.... There is a war going on between the black man and the black woman, which makes her the silent ally, indirectly but effectively, of the white man. The black woman is an unconsenting ally and she may not even realize it — but the white man sure does. That's why, all down through history, he has propped her up economically above you and me, to strengthen her hand against us. But the white man is a fool because he is also fighting a war against the white woman. And it doesn't end there: white men have a war going on against each other.

"The myth of the strong black woman is the other side of the coin of the myth of the beautiful dumb blonde. The white man turned the white woman into the weak-minded, weak-bodied, delicate freak, a sex pot, and placed her on a pedestal; he turned the black woman into a strong self-reliant Amazon and deposited her in his kitchen—that's the secret of Aunt Jemima's bandanna. The white man turned himself into the Omnipotent Administrator and established himself in the Front Office. And he turned the black man into the Supermasculine Menial and kicked him out into the fields. The white man wants to be the brain and he wants us to be the muscle, the body. All this is tied up together in a crazy way which was never too clear to me. At one time it seems absolutely clear and at other times I don't believe in it. It reminds me of two sets of handcuffs that have all four of us tied up together, holding all black and white flesh in a certain mold. This is why, when you get down to the root of it, the white man doesn't want the black man, the black woman, or the white woman to have a higher education. Their enlightenment would pose a threat to his omnipotence.

"Haven't you ever wondered why the white man genuinely applauds a black man who achieves excellence with his body in the field of sports, while he hates to see a black man achieve excellence with his brain? The mechanics of the myth demand that the Brain and the Body, like east and west, must never meet—especially in competition on the same level. When it comes to the mechanics of the myth, the Brain and the Body are mutually exclusive. There can be no true competition between superiors and inferiors. This is why it has been so hard historically for Negroes to break the color bar in sport after sport. Once the color bar falls, the magic evaporates, and when the black man starts to excel in a particular sport the question starts floating around: 'Is boxing dying?' 'Is baseball through?' 'What happened to football?' 'What is basketball coming to?' In fact, the new symbol of white supremacy is golf, because there the Brain dominates the Body. But just as soon as the Body starts ripping off a few trophies, they will be asking the question, 'what happened to golf?'

“All this became clear when Joe Louis cleaned out Max Schmeling in their second fight. Schmeling stood for the very thing the white man nursed and worshipped in his own heart. But the whites applauded Joe for crushing Schmeling. Why? Because Joe’s victory over Schmeling symbolized the triumph of capitalistic democracy over nazism? No! There may have been a little of that to it, but on a deeper level they applauded Joe for the same reason they despised Ingemar Johansson, while rewarding him handsomely, for knocking out Floyd Patterson. Joe’s victory over Schmeling confirmed, while Floyd’s defeat contradicted, the white man’s image of the black man as the Supermasculine Menial, the personification of mindless brute force, the perfect slave. And Sonny Liston, the mindless Body, is preferred over loud-mouthed Cassius Clay, because, after all, it takes at least a birdbrain to run a loudmouth, and the white man despises even that much brain in a black man. And when Clay, the loud-mouthed clown, abdicates his image as the Body becomes Muhammad Ali, the Brain, whitey can’t hold his mud! The white man loves the Supermasculine Menial—John Henry, the steel-driving man, all Body, driven to his knees by the Machine, which is the phallus symbol of the Brain and the ultimate ideal of the Omnipotent Administrator. To the white man’s way of thinking, this was a perfect system of social imagery. But like all perfect systems, it had a great big flaw right in the middle of it.

“The Omnipotent Administrator conceded to the Supermasculine Menial all of the attributes of masculinity associated with the Body: strength, brute power, muscle, even the beauty of the brute body. Except one. There was this single attribute of masculinity which he was unwilling to relinquish, even though this particular attribute is the essence and seat of masculinity: sex. The penis. The black man’s penis was the monkey wrench in the white man’s perfect machine. The penis, virility, is of the Body. It is not of the Brain: the Brain is neuter, HOMO MACHINE. But in the deal which the white man forced upon the black man, the black man was given the Body as his domain while the white man pre-empted the Brain for himself. By and by, the Omnipotent Administrator discovered that in the fury of his scheming he had blundered and clipped himself of his penis (notice the puny image the white man has of his own penis. He calls it a ‘prick’, a ‘peter’, a ‘pecker’). So he reneged on the bargain. He called the Supermasculine Menial back and said: ‘Look, Boy, we have a final little adjustment to make. I’m still going to be the Brain and you’re still the Body. But from now on, you do all the flexing but I’ll do all the fucking. The Brain must control the Body. To prove my omnipotence I must cuckold you and fetter your bull balls. I will fetter the range of your rod and limit its reach. My prick will excel your rod. I have made a calculation. I will have sexual freedom. But I will bind your rod with my omnipotent will, and place a limitation on its

aspiration which you will violate on pain of death.... I will have access to the white woman and I will have access to the black woman. The black woman will have access to you—but she will also have access to me. I forbid you access to the white woman. The white woman will have access to me, the Omnipotent Administrator, but I deny her access to you, you, the Supermasculine Menial. By subjecting your manhood to the control of my will, I shall control you. The stem of the Body, the penis, must submit to the will of the Brain.’

“It was the perfect solution, only it didn’t work. It only drove the truth underground. You can’t really dissociate the penis from the Body! Not even the Brain, the Omnipotent Administrator, can do that! But you can seize the Body in a rage, in violent and hateful frustration at this one great flaw in a perfect plan, this monkey wrench in a perfect machine, string the Body from the nearest tree and pluck its strange fruit, its big Nigger dick, pickle it in a bottle and take it home to the beautiful dumb blonde and rejoice in the lie that not the Body but the Brain is the man.”

The Lazarus stopped talking and sat there with his mouth hanging open. He was breathing hard, as if he had been running and was out of breath. The Eunuch on my left was staring off into space, looking off deliberately rather than allow anyone to see the wild look I knew would be in his eyes. Thought refused to crystallize in my mind; I poured more coffee into my cup, and as I lifted the cup to my lips I blew softly on the surface of the murky brew to cool it off, and stared over the rim at the Infidel, who sat with his face screwed up, biting his ample bottom lip, as if he was trying hard to remember something or maybe to understand or figure something out. He seemed embarrassed. The Eunuch on my right was staring down into his plate of beans.

Then the Infidel looked up and locked my eyes with his own. A cruel, wounded expression was in his eyes. I could see a pain there that was dreadful. It made me feel fear – not so much for the Infidel as for myself, my generation, my contemporaries, because I was not sure that I, we, knew what to do or would learn before it was too late, and would be able to escape from feeling the same deep-seated pain some day, myself, ourselves. It seems to me in that moment, and I knew that the same thought was running through the minds of my Eunuch contemporaries, that any fate, death, the gas chamber, the electric chair, a firing squad, heroin, suicide—anything would be better than to submit to the terrible, horrible pain which the Infidel had learned to live with. I felt a hot throbbing in my crotch. Instinctively and with a taste of panic, I reached down, almost afraid that my rod would be missing, but it was there and it was erect and I squeezed it and it was strong and resilient and firm. When I gave it that squeeze, a wave of strength surged through my body. I felt powerful, and I knew that I would make it if I never betrayed the law of my rod. The Infidel smiled, and I was sure he had read my thoughts. He let out a deep breath and sat back in his chair and started talking in a tired voice, almost a monotone:

“I had a woman once—no, a bitch!—who had a hook like Sugar Ray Robinson. I had to knock her out every Saturday night. She’d start an argument and then tee off on me, just like a man. How’re you supposed to treat a bitch who can’t live with you without fighting? And she didn’t have to be mad at me to start a fight. I experimented with her. I tried all kinds of techniques on her. Once I refused to argue with her. I just stood there and looked at her in a way that she knew that I was not mad at her, as if I was saying to her, ‘Look, baby, it’s up to you. Whatever happens will be because you made it happen.’ BOOM! She hit me in the mouth. That was when I realized that she could not accept me as a man unless I acted like the Body, exerting physical force over her. I didn’t hit her back. I was filled with a rage that I had never felt before or since. Actually, I think I went momentarily insane. I grabbed her by the arm, whipped out my switchblade knife—it had about an eight-inch blade—I opened my knife and made her sit on the sofa. I could see that she thought it was all over for her. Her eyes were big as a cow’s and she was really scared. I shoved the knife into her hand and made her take it. Then I lay down with my arms around her body and with my head in her lap. She was furious. She threatened to cut my jugular vein if I did not get up. I was not my usual self and I had no intention of getting up. It seemed that if I got up I would not be able to live another second. That was the feeling I had, that if I got up and let her go or tried to protect myself in any way from the knife, I could not go on living. So I laid there with my jugular vein exposed to her and the knife. And I went to sleep. At first she tried to get my head out of her lap, then she stopped that, then she started crying. I could feel the sobs racking her body. But I kept my eyes closed and went to sleep. I had no dream or anything. It was a deep, peaceful, sweet sleep. I can still recall the ecstasy of that sleep. I have never in my life experienced such blissful sleep. When I woke up, she was holding my head cradled in her lap and she had a beautiful, saintly glow on her face, an expression that was utterly foreign to anything that I had ever seen in her before. Then I remembered the knife and a great fear came over me. I jumped and looked around. She had closed up the knife and broken the blade and thrown it across the room on the floor. My stomach trembled as I realized what a big chance I had taken.

“Anyway, we went along fine for about a month. Our relationship was infused with new life and vitality. During that time we did not have a single argument, not a single harsh word passed between us. That granite, that steel (which I hate in a black bitch!) was gone. And strangely, I felt myself acting natural, without pretense toward her. It seemed as if we were dancing through those days perfectly in time and in step with each other. Then one day, we were out driving and I ran through a red light just a little too late and this motorcycle cop pulled me over.

“ ‘Say boy,’ he said to me, ‘are you color-blind?’ I didn’t want a ticket so I decided to talk him out of it. I went into my act, give him a big smile and explained to him that I was awfully sorry, that I thought that I could make it but that my old car was too slow. He talked real bad to me, took me on a long trip about how important it was that I obeyed the laws and regulations and how else can society be controlled and administered without obedience to the law. I said a bunch of Yes Sir’s and No Sir’s and he told me to run along and be a good boy. When I drove off, I looked over at my woman and she had turned completely sour. That sweetness of the last month was gone and I could see the granite and steel in her. When we got home she tried to start a fight with me, but I refused to respond. Without another word, she packed up all her belongings and split. The bitch cut me clean a loose. I’ve never been cut loose that clean before! She got herself another stud. They used to fight all up and down the streets. That stud used to love to fight her just as much as she loved to fight. They were very happy together. Later on, she killed that cat. Shot him down in the street like a dog – and she beat the case in court. They called it justifiable homicide.

“Then the bitch changed her name and started singing professionally. She made it real big, her name and picture was in all the magazines and newspapers. I used to go check her performances in night clubs. She was great. She made a lot of big money. Then guess what she did. She married a white man! The cat was a blank, a tramp, he didn’t have anything going for himself. He didn’t have a quarter when he married her. She gave him all of her money. He ran through her bank account. He bought himself a big fancy nightclub. Then he divorced her. She lost her touch after that and started slipping down, down, down. Her earning power shrank to nothing. She hung the whole life up and started singing church music. Spirituals. She joined a church, became real religious. Everybody said she fell in love with Jesus and that in him she finally found her righteous man. That’s where she is right now, in that church.

“Evers since then I always believed that marrying a white man, to a black woman, is like adding the final star to her crown. It’s the apex of achievement in her eyes and in the eyes of her sisters. Look at how many famous black celebrities marry white men. All of the Negro women who are not celebrities wish they were so that they, too, could marry white men. Whitey is their dream boy. When they kiss you it ain’t really you they’re kissing. They close their eyes and picture their white dream boy. Listen to the grapevine... Jesus Christ the pure is the black woman’s psychic bridegroom. You will learn before you die that during coition and at the moment of her orgasm, the black woman, in the first throes of her spasm, shouts out the name of Jesus. ‘Oh, Jesus, I’m coming!’ she shouts to him. And to you it will hurt. It will be like a knife in your heart. It will be the same as if your woman, during orgasm, calls out the name of some sneaky cat who lives down the block.

“Now there is one thing I want to tell you that is directly related to this. To be sure, I have never understood it and I don’t believe that I ever will. But I have seen it work and it may be that you brothers can understand it, and it may prove useful to you, it may help you to make it. There is a sickness in the white that lies at the

core of their madness and this sickness makes them act in many different ways. But there is one way it makes some of them act that seems to contradict everything we know about whitey and shakes many blacks up when they first encounter it....There are white men who will pay you to fuck their wives. They approach you and say, 'How would you like to fuck a white woman?' 'What is this?' you ask. 'On the up-and-up,' he assures you. 'It's all right. She's my wife. She needs black rod, is all. She has to have it. It's like a medicine or drug to her. She has to have it. I'll pay you. It's all on the level, no trick involved. Interested?' You go with him and he drives you to their home. The three of you go into the bedroom. There is a certain type who will leave you and his wife alone and tell you to pile her real good. After it is all over, he will pay you and drive you to wherever you want to go. Then there are some who like to peep at you through a keyhole and watch you have his woman, or peep at you through a window, or lie under the bed and listen to the creaking of the bed as you work out. There is another type who likes to masturbate while he stands beside the bed and watches you pile her. There is the type who likes to eat his woman up after you get through piling her. And there is the type who only wants you to pile her for a little while, just long enough to thaw her out and kick her motor over and arouse her to heat, then he wants you to jump of real quick and he will jump onto her and together they can make it from there by themselves.'

It did not occur to me to say anything; I didn't know what to say. I was angry at the Infidel and repulsed by his monologue and the importance he seemed to attach to these matters. My dreams lay elsewhere and I could not begin to evaluate the things he had been talking about. I sat there, savoring the strange quality of the emotion which had been aroused within me. I don't know when the Eunuch on my left started to speak, for I first became aware of his voice as sound purely, a nebulous, incoherent sound, and only later did I begin to distinguish the words:

"fed up with it! You old Lazarus. Everything you said was twisted, it was all dead and stinking, it was all warped and out of joint, it was off cue, off center." The Eunuch had his jaw set defiantly.

"Yes I know," said the Infidel, "and you youngbloods see your big chance coming up to change all of that. Every man with a pipe dream sees his chance as just coming.... But even so, you have to admit that the white man is a bitch with his shit. Did he clean us out or not, huh? Did he take care of business? He took care of so much business that it got good to him, and he got carried away and cleaned everybody out—including himself. Now ain't that a motherfucking shame?" The Infidel looked from one to the other of us. No one replied to him. We just stared at him, at his face, his eyes, his smooth chocolate skin. Then he broke out laughing, until his obese frame shook. There was no telling what he was laughing at. It was coming from deep inside him, but his face looked pained, as if he where not enjoying his laugh. Several times he tried to say something but each time he was overcome by laughter. Finally he blurted out: "... you've got to give the devil his due," and went into another spasm of chuckles and grunts.

When the laughter died he began drumming on the table with his short fat fingers. "I had a very close friend once," he said. "We grew up together – never mind where. He was the best friend I ever had, closer than a brother. We where tighter than fish pussy, and that's waterproof. When we were just kids, we took a blood-brother oath, like Indian braves. Just me and him. We made a pact to be lifelong comrades." His mind drifted for a moment. Tiny drops of perspiration stood out of his forehead. "But something happened and I... I... went away... I didn't see or hear of him for many, many years. Then, finally, I went back... to that place. I had to see the old hometown once more. I decided to look up my old friend. After searching for him, it turned out that he was in an institution. A mental institution. He had been there ever since, for all those years. So I went to see him. He had

changed completely, so much that I don't believe I would have recognized him, if it were not for his eyes. I'd never forget those eyes, never. He had eyes like they say Jomo Kenyatta has, look right through a brick wall." The Infidel lifted his hand and pointed at the Eunuch on my left. "My friend had his eyes, only more so, just like this brother here," he said. An embarrassed, frightened look showed on his face for a moment, which he quickly suppressed. The Eunuch on my left shifted about in his chair.

"But he recognized me, my friend did," said the Infidel. "Immediately he knew who I was. He didn't have to pull me from his memory, as you think he would have after all those years. The minute they brought him into the visiting room I could see that he recognized me, though he didn't call my name. We sat down at a little table and he said to me: 'Ah! I thought you would never get here! Now we can embark on our great enterprise! We will transform the whole of proud Europe into an international whorehouse, and men from all over the earth will make their pilgrimage there and fertilize the depleted human soil with their rich and varied seed!' I said nothing to him, couldn't say anything. I just listened. He talked on and on. He took me back, back, back. Then it was time for me to go. I promised him I'd be back the next day. They led him away. I never went back. Even as I promised him, I knew I would never return, never." The infidel paused, swallowed. He was struggling with himself, fighting to keep under control something powerful, torrential, within himself. You could feel the terrible force of the agony raging inside

him. "He died two weeks later, my friend did—from self-inflicted wounds, from banging his own head against a jagged edge of a concrete wall."

For many minutes no one spoke. Each was submerged in thoughts of his own. Finally, the Eunuch on my left, in a cold, icy tone, said:

"You dirty Lazarus. You killed him. You murdered him. You betrayed him!"

The infidel made as if to reply, but the effort died. The Eunuch on my left said to the Infidel:

"You're trouble, old Lazarus, is that you can't stand the sight of the slavemaster's blood."

The Infidel looked surprised. "The world," he said slowly, "cannot stand another bloodbath."

"The world is hemophiliac," retorted the Eunuch. "Look at it! When did the world ever stop bleeding? It never has, for a moment, ceased to bleed; it's bleeding somewhere right this very moment. Right now, as we sit here talking, someone somewhere is taking careful aim at someone else, at an enemy. Someone is thrusting with a blade, at an enemy. Someone is lighting a fuse, at an enemy. In Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, and right here in the good old U.S.A., blood is flowing. Go listen to the radio or TV right now and the first news you catch will be of blood, a count of the bodies. Go pick up a newspaper or a magazine and it will be dripping with blood. Blood flows from the TV screen. So why does it shock you to hear of blood?"

"Yes, the world is bleeding," said the Infidel, "but it's bleeding to death. How much longer can it last?" He shuddered at his own question.

"Blood is a lubricant," said the Eunuch on my left. "It smooths the way that enables a people to slip out of the tightest of clutches. You don't tinker with a logjam, man, you dynamite it!"

"You are thirsty for blood!" said the Infidel, speaking directly to the Eunuch on my left. "But it won't do!"

"Yes!" Replied the Eunuch. "I'm thirsty for blood—white man's blood. And when I drink I want to drink deeply, because I have a deep thirst to quench. I want to drink for every black man, woman, and child dragged to the slaughter from the shores of Africa, for every one

of my brothers and sisters who suffered helplessly in the rotten holds of the damned slave ships—for your friend who bashed his own brains out in that nuthouse—I want to drink the white man's blood for every ounce of my flesh and blood that he crushed and broke in the Caribbean Islands, for all the souls of black folk mangled in the fetid fields of the Old South and for every one slaughtered and lynched in the mire of the New South—and in the North, East and West of the hells of North America! Only the white man's blood can wash away the pain I feel. You shrink from shredding the white man's blood, you old Lazarus, but I say to you that the day is here when I will march into the Mississippi legislature with a blazing machine gun in my hands and a pocketful of grenades. Since I will be going to die, I definitely will be going to kill."

"No," said the infidel. "No. More blood will only add crime upon crime. No!" He suddenly stood up from the table, looked at each of us as if to plead, like a criminal before a jury he knows is about to send him to the death chamber. He breathed deeply as he had done earlier, and let his shoulders sag. "Blood upon blood; crime upon crime; brick of blood upon brick of blood of a new mad Tower of Babel which, too, will fall.... There can be no triumph in blood." Then he turned and faltered slowly away from the table.

We watched him walk away. He stopped and looked back at us, as if he half-expected, half-hoped, for us to call him back. Then he turned and faded from our sight, from our lives.



**Un Noir à l'ombre - 1968**

**L'allégorie des Eunuques noirs**

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volume 1

eldridge cleaver



LFKs

Nous occupions trois chaises sur quatre, autour d'une petite table ; nous mangions nos haricots. J'étais avec deux de mes contemporains : deux superbes Eunuques noirs, jeunes, forts – à la fleur de l'âge. Nous venions de nous installer quand un vieux Lazare, bien gras, est arrivé ; il avait des cheveux lisses, grisâtres, décrêpelés, et un sourire tout épanoui qui le faisait ressembler à un Père Noël de chocolat ; il s'est invité à notre table et s'est assis sur la chaise en face de moi. Mes contemporains et moi avons échangé des regards furtifs. Un sourire ironique a passé sur nos visages noirs ; une flamme plus vive brillait dans nos yeux, cependant que nous examinions ce Lazare intrus.

Quelques minutes se sont écoulées en silence.

Mes contemporains et moi, nous avions notre idée sur certains vieux noirs comme celui qui était assis en face de moi. Il y avait quelque chose dans son style, dans sa façon de se tenir, que nous méprisions. Nous l'avions classé parmi les oncles Tom. Nous ne l'avions jamais vu ramper ou lécher les bottes de l'homme blanc ; mais nous savions que les rebelles noirs de son âge, aux États-Unis, ne couraient pas les rues : ils étaient morts en prison ou ils s'étaient exilés. Ou bien, et c'est ainsi que nous jugions celui-ci, ils avaient retourné leur veste, tas de faux jetons qui abondaient dans le ghetto noir. Sans être résistant passif (et il n'était pas non-violent), Lazare exérait pourtant les autres Noirs ; dépouillé de toute existence, toute sa race dépouillée par l'homme blanc, il n'arrêta pas d'annoncer ce qu'il ferait, si jamais l'homme blanc le touchait, lui personnellement. Si le bavardage suffisait à renverser le gouvernement, Lazare serait au pouvoir. D'un certain point de vue, nous le haïssions ; nous éprouvions aussi un sentiment plus subtil, fascinés par l'étrange spectacle d'un tel accommodement avec le monde.

Puis, sans provocation apparente, le jeune Eunuque à ma gauche a parlé, martelant les mots à coups de poings sur la table :

— Vieux Lazare, comment ça se fait que tu n'es pas mort ?

— Quoi ? a demandé l'Infidèle, plus effrayé par la brusquerie de la question et le ton menaçant que par la question elle-même.

(En fait, toute sa génération connaît la question, une même question répétée un million de fois sous des formes différentes : Charlie Parker l'a posée à Lester Young, Dizzy Gillespie l'a posée à Louis Armstrong, Mao Tsé-toung l'a posée à Tchang Kai-chek, Fidel Castro l'a posée à Batista, Malcolm X l'a posée à Martin Luther King, Robert F. Williams l'a posée à Roy Wilkins, Norman Mailer l'a posée aux vieilles moulures totalitaires.)

La question a pénétré lentement. Le sourire de Père Noël s'est effacé, recouvert d'une ombre de panique, une contraction soudaine a tiré le coin gauche de la grosse lèvre pulpeuse. Les deux grains de ses yeux noirs allaient et venaient d'un visage à l'autre.

L'Eunuque à ma gauche a répété :

— Je t'ai demandé pourquoi tu n'es pas mort ?

— Pourquoi je devrais, moi, être mort ? Je ne compr...

L'Eunuque l'a interrompu :

— Si tu t'étais fait tuer pour quelque chose, on pourrait au moins te respecter. On pourrait au moins dire que tu as été un homme, un grand homme. On pourrait au moins montrer ta tombe comme un avertissement, un modèle, avec orgueil – avec respect ! Mais, non ! traîne-savate servile, tu as l'audace de t'accrocher à ta vie misérable, te voilà vieux, gris, gras, foireux !

L'Accusateur s'est arrêté de parler et a commencé de manger ses haricots, avec une expression de vengeance, comme si chaque haricot était un homme blanc, et il les descendait à pleine cuillère.

— Qu'est-ce qu'il lui prend, ça ne va pas ? a demandé l'Accusé, le visage crispé.

J'ai dit, pour voir comment l'Infidèle prendrait la chose :

— Il est malade.

— Il est sûrement malade, a répondu l'Accusé, remuant son café d'un geste hésitant. Toutes ces idioties qu'il raconte sur la mort et les morts.

— Oui, je suis malade ! a érupté l'Accusateur, s'étouffant presque avec ses haricots. C'est ta faute, Mathusalem, tu me rends malade ! Qu'est-ce que tu essaies, tu veux gagner un concours de longévité ? Comment ils te sont venus, ces cheveux gris ? Comment tu t'es arrangé pour survivre ? Ouais, je suis malade, malade, malade !

— Je suis malade, moi aussi, a dit l'Eunuque à ma droite, parlant pour la première fois. Je suis malade, malade, malade !

J'ai dit :

— Je suis malade, moi aussi.

— À quel jeu vous jouez ? a demandé Lazare, s'efforçant de le prendre à la légère. Je connais pas, c'est nouveau pour moi.

C'était un jeu cruel, nous le savions, et nous l'avions déjà pratiqué avec d'autres. Et, d'une certaine façon, ce n'était qu'un jeu : nous nous amusions à le sonder, à l'examiner, à l'étudier. Mais, en même temps, nous étions terriblement sérieux. Lazare, percevant l'ambiguïté de la situation, était gêné.

L'Eunuque à ma gauche a demandé à l'Accusé :

— Tu sais la différence entre un gorille et un guérillero ?

L'Accusé semblait méditer une réponse.

— Je vais t'aider, a dit l'Eunuque. Tu es un gorille. Un guérillero, c'est tout ce que tu n'es pas.

L'Accusé a ouvert la bouche pour répondre, mais l'Eunuque à ma gauche, qui avait jeté la première pierre, l'a devancé et l'a rembaré, ses yeux jetant des éclairs :

— Un guérillero, c'est un homme, mais toi, tu es une espèce de monstre !

Un silence oppressant a suivi. Un silence tout rempli de sang, de fusils, de couteaux, de fouets, de cordes et de chaînes, d'hommes pendus à des arbres, de hurlements, de KKK, de terreur, de matraques, de chiens policiers et de lances d'incendie, d'incendies, de blessures, de bombes, de vieilles femmes torturées et de jeunes femmes souillées, de mensonges, de ricanements, de petits garçons refroidis dans l'ardeur du premier âge et de jeunes hommes émasculés, de vieux hommes consumés, de petites filles corrompues dans leur

esprit et massacrées dans leur chair...  
Après un instant, d'une voix neutre, j'ai demandé à l'Accusé :

— Tu as jamais battu une femme noire ?  
Comme si j'avais tourné un commutateur, ses yeux se sont allumés. Du fond de son tombeau, heureux de ce qu'il prenait pour un changement de sujet, Lazare a mordu à l'appât. Une lueur mauvaise brillait dans son regard. Il s'est penché par-dessus la table et il a dit, sur un ton de confiance :

— Si seulement j'avais mis de côté un rond, chaque fois que j'ai botté le cul à une pute ! Aujourd'hui, je serais tellement riche, que vous autres cloches, vous devriez vous inscrire six mois à l'avance rien que pour avoir le droit de me voir, et pas question de vous asseoir à la même table que moi !

— Un fameux coup de cimeterre pour te décoller la tête, Lazare, voilà la solution à tous tes problèmes, a sifflé l'Accusateur, l'Eunuque à ma gauche, ses lèvres tremblant de rage.

— Qu'est-ce que tu veux dire ? a demandé l'Accusé, faisant semblant de ne pas avoir compris.

— Il dit ce qu'il dit, a expliqué l'Eunuque à ma droite.

— Depuis quatre cents ans, tu vis dans la terreur du maître des esclaves, mais c'est le moment, à présent, de te faire entrer une autre terreur dans le sang, la terreur de ceux de ta race !

— Hum ! a grogné l'Accusé. (Il a enfourné une cuillère de haricots, qu'il s'est mis à mâcher d'un air absent. Au bout d'un moment, il a de nouveau parlé :) Les femmes noires, elles prennent la bonté pour de la faiblesse. Laisse-leur un peu de liberté, et elles achètent la corde pour te pendre. Je les déteste, les putains noires. On ne peut pas leur faire confiance comme aux femmes blanches, et quand on essaie, ce n'est pas de leur goût et elles ne savent pas comment réagir. Autant essayer de cajoler un cobra ! Pour sûr, toutes les femmes noires détestent en secret les hommes noirs. Toutes, en secret, elles aiment les hommes blancs. Il y en a qui te le disent carrément. Les autres, elles te le disent par leurs faits et gestes. Vous n'avez jamais remarqué qu'une femme noire, sitôt qu'elle a réussi dans la vie, elle se marie avec un homme blanc ? Je parle de ce que je sais. Je connais une pute noire qui n'arrête pas de dire qu'un homme noir ne peut rien pour elle. Les hommes noirs, qu'ils la laissent tranquille, qu'ils lui apportent seulement un message d'un homme blanc, ou qu'ils aillent apporter un message à l'homme blanc !

« Il ne reste plus d'amour entre l'homme noir et la femme noire. Regardez-moi, par exemple ! J'aime les femmes blanches et je déteste les noires. C'est

comme ça, tellement profond en moi, que je n'essaie même plus de changer. Je sauterais par-dessus dix salopes noires pour m'avoir une blanche. Une femme blanche, elle n'est jamais laide. Ça n'existe pas. Une femme blanche est toujours belle, même quand elle est chauve et qu'elle n'a plus qu'une dent... Je ne l'aime pas seulement parce que c'est une femme : j'aime sa peau, sa peau blanche, douce et lisse. J'aime lécher sa peau blanche, comme s'il s'écoulait du miel nouveau de ses pores, j'aime toucher ses longs cheveux soyeux. Tout est douceur chez la femme blanche, il y a en elle quelque chose de tendre, de délicat. Mais une pute noire est tout acier, dure comme du granit et résistante. Elle n'est pas douce et soumise comme la femme blanche. Il n'y a rien de plus beau que les cheveux d'une femme blanche soulevés par le vent. La femme blanche est pour moi plus qu'une femme... c'est une déesse, un symbole. Mon amour pour elle est une religion, mon amour va au-delà de l'accomplissement. La femme blanche, je l'idolâtre. J'aime les culottes sales d'une femme blanche.

« Quelquefois, je me dis que mes sentiments pour la femme blanche, je les ai hérités de mon père et du père de mon père et du père de mon grand-père – de tous mes ancêtres en remontant dans la nuit de l'esclavage. J'ai sûrement hérité de tous ces hommes noirs une partie de mon désir, car j'ai plus d'amour pour la femme blanche que le cœur d'un seul homme ne pourrait en contenir. Oui, je désire toutes les femmes blanches qu'ils ont désirées et n'ont jamais pu posséder. Ils m'ont passé leur désir, voilà l'unique explication. Le désir de la femme blanche est comme un cancer qui me dévore le cœur et me ronge le cerveau. Dans mes rêves, je vois des femmes blanches qui sautent par-dessus une barrière, comme de mignons petits agneaux, et chaque fois qu'il y en a une qui saute, le vent soulève ses cheveux, qui s'évasent comme la crinière d'un beau cheval : elles sautent, les blondes, les rousses, les brunes, toutes les blondes, blond paille, blond sale, blond platine, et les blondes oxygénées, toutes. Elles peuplent mes cauchemars. Alors, jeune homme, tu trouves que j'ai l'air d'inventer ? Il hochait la tête dans ma direction ; c'était à moi qu'il s'adressait. J'ai pris mon temps avant de répondre. J'aurais préféré demeurer silencieux. Finalement, j'ai répondu :

— Pourquoi tu nous raconterais des mensonges ? C'est-à-dire, personne ne réussit à être entièrement vrai dans ses paroles, et j'ai l'impression, mettons, que tu exagères un peu...  
Il riait en dedans de lui, je le voyais à ses yeux. Puis il a dit :

— J'y pense depuis des années. On doit essayer de comprendre ce qui vous turlupine, c'est important. Pourtant, au fin fond, je crois que je ne comprends rien à rien. Mais je suis collé dans ma peau, et j'accepte les idées qui me viennent. Par exemple, je ne sais pas comment ça fonctionne exactement, je suis incapable d'analyser le phénomène, voilà ce que je veux dire, mais je sais que l'homme blanc a fait de la femme noire le symbole de l'esclavage et de la femme blanche le symbole de la liberté. Chaque

fois que j'embrasse une femme noire, j'embrasse l'esclavage. Et quand je prends une femme blanche dans mes bras, j'étreins la liberté. L'homme blanc, sous peine de mort, m'a interdit de posséder la femme blanche. Si je touchais une femme blanche, ça me coûterait la vie, littéralement. Des hommes meurent pour la liberté. Les hommes noirs se meurent de désir pour la femme blanche, symbole de la liberté. Telle est la volonté de l'homme blanc. Et, tant qu'il a le pouvoir de m'imposer sa volonté, de me soumettre à sa volonté dans ce cas précis ou n'importe quel autre cas, je ne suis pas libre. Je ne serai libre que le jour où je pourrai avoir une femme blanche dans mon lit et où l'homme blanc s'occupera des seules affaires qui le concernent personnellement. En attendant, je reste esclave – toute mon existence infectée, empoisonnée – et la femme blanche reste esclave, elle aussi.

« Vous ne le croirez peut-être pas... quand je baise une pute noire, je ferme les yeux et je me concentre très fort, et bientôt j'arrive à croire que je monte une de ces sauteuses blondes. Je vous dis la vérité, c'est le seul moyen que j'ai pour réussir à découiller dans une de ces salopes noires, fermer les yeux et faire semblant que je monte Jézabel. Si j'ouvrais les yeux, si je voyais là-dessous une pute noire, ou si par hasard ma main touchait ses cheveux pelucheux, ça serait la fin, tout serait terminé. Je ferais aussi bien de me relever et de filer, parce que je n'arriverais plus à rien, même si je la travaillais toute la nuit. Tous les hommes noirs n'ont jamais fait que bourrer Jézabel, et celui qui vient vous raconter le contraire, c'est un sacré menteur. À mon avis, si un leader voulait vraiment réaliser l'unité des Noirs, il pourrait réussir très facilement. Il lui suffirait de promettre une femme blanche à tous les hommes noirs et un homme blanc à toutes les femmes noires. Il aurait tellement de partisans qu'il ne saurait plus qu'en faire. Croyez-moi !

« Je vais vous dire à vous trois, jeunes gens, quelque chose que je ne lâche pas facilement. Je n'aime pas parler de toutes ces saletés de merde... Vous autres, les jeunes chats, vous êtes là à vous enfler. Vous vous montez la tête, tout vertige, mais en réalité vous ne savez rien de vous, rien de vos femmes, rien des Blancs. Vous ne croirez sûrement pas ce que je vous dis, parce que ça vous frotte à rebrousse-poil. Mais je vous le dirai quand même.

Lazare s'est arrêté ; il s'est tortillé sur sa chaise, comme s'il essayait de mieux caler ses fesses. Quand il s'est remis à parler, il y avait un frémissement dans sa voix :

— Celui qui adore la Vierge Marie, il désire la belle blonde idiote. Et celle qui aspire à être bercée dans les bras de Jésus, elle brûle d'amour pour les yeux bleus et les bras blancs d'un garçon pur-américain, tout blanc.

Lazare s'est de nouveau arrêté et il nous a regardés attentivement. Mais nos visages étaient des masques impénétrables ; il n'a découvert aucun signe révélateur. Il a continué :

— La guerre entre l'homme noir et l'homme blanc n'est pas la seule guerre. La vie est remplie de petites guerres, qu'on mène en même temps. On doit mettre au point une grande stratégie pour affronter toutes les hostilités, on doit avoir du style, et si quelqu'un vous fait la guerre, et que vous n'en savez rien, malheur à vous ! Depuis le commencement, vous avez perdu... Il y a une guerre entre l'homme noir et la femme noire : la femme noire se range du côté de l'homme blanc, elle est pour lui un allié silencieux, non déclaré mais utile. La femme noire est un allié non consentant ; elle ne connaît peut-être pas sa position. Mais l'homme blanc sait à quoi s'en tenir. C'est pourquoi, tout au long de l'histoire, il l'a haussée économiquement au-dessus de vous, au-dessus de moi, pour lui donner plus de force contre nous. Mais l'homme blanc, l'imbécile, est aussi en guerre avec la femme blanche. Et ce n'est pas fini : les hommes blancs se font la guerre entre eux.

« Le mythe de la femme noire, forte et puissante, est le revers du mythe de la belle blonde idiote. L'homme blanc a transformé la femme blanche en un monstre fragile, faible d'esprit, faible de corps, un vase à foutre, et il l'a placée sur un piédestal ; il a transformé la femme noire en une Amazone, forte et autoritaire, qu'il a placée dans la cuisine – voilà le secret du mouchoir de tante Jemina. L'homme blanc a fait de lui-même l'administrateur tout-puissant et s'est établi dans le grand bureau. Il a fait de l'homme noir le Domestique Surmâle, qu'il a expédié aux champs. L'homme blanc veut être le

cerveau ; nous devons être les muscles, le corps. Toutes ces folies sont liées ensemble, mais je n'ai jamais très bien compris la combinaison. Quelquefois, je crois avoir compris, et d'autres fois j'ai l'impression que je me trompe complètement. Il me vient une image : deux paires de menottes, qui nous attachent tous les quatre ensemble, pour maintenir toute la chair noire et toute la chair blanche dans un certain moule. Quand on examine à fond la question, voilà l'explication ; et on découvre pourquoi l'homme blanc préfère que l'homme noir, la femme noire ou la femme blanche restent sans instruction. S'ils avaient la possibilité de se développer par la connaissance, ils menaceraient la toute-puissance de l'homme blanc.

« Vous ne vous êtes jamais posé la question ? L'homme blanc applaudit sincèrement l'homme noir qui affirme la supériorité de son corps, dans le domaine des sports, mais ne supporte pas de voir un homme noir affirmer la supériorité de son cerveau. Pourquoi ? L'appareil du mythe exige que le Cerveau et le Corps, comme l'est et l'ouest, ne se rencontrent jamais, ne rivalisent surtout pas dans le même domaine. Selon l'appareil du mythe, le Cerveau et le Corps s'excluent réciproquement. Il ne peut pas exister de rivalité réelle entre supérieurs et inférieurs. Voilà pourquoi, passant d'un sport à un autre, les Noirs ont toujours eu tant de mal à briser la barrière de couleur. Quand la barrière de couleur s'effondre, l'enchantement se dissipe, et quand l'homme noir commence à surpasser ses rivaux dans tel ou tel sport, on entend toujours la même rengaine : « C'est la fin de la boxe ? » « C'est la fin du baseball ? » « Que va devenir le football ? » « Où va le basket-ball ? » Le golf est le nouveau symbole de la suprématie blanche, car ici le Cerveau l'emporte sur le Corps. Mais, dès que le Corps aura commencé à rafler quelques coupes, on entendra la chanson : « Que va devenir le golf ? »

« La vérité de cette situation est clairement apparue quand Joe Louis a lessivé Max Schmelling, à leur deuxième combat. Schmelling représentait tout ce que

l'homme blanc choyait et idolâtrait dans son cœur. Mais les Blancs ont applaudi Joe pour avoir écrasé Schmelling. Parce que la victoire de Joe sur Schmelling symbolisait la victoire de la démocratie capitaliste sur le nazisme ? Non ! Même s'il y avait un peu de ça. La raison est plus profonde. N'oubliez pas qu'ils ont méprisé Ingemar Johansson, tout en le récompensant généreusement, pour avoir abattu Floyd Patterson. La victoire de Joe sur Schmelling confirmait l'image de l'homme noir vu par l'homme blanc, alors que la défaite de Floyd contredisait cette image : le domestique surmâle, personnification de la brute dénuée d'intelligence, l'esclave parfait. Le Blanc préfère Sonny Liston, Corps dénué d'intelligence, à Cassius Clay, la grande gueule ; car, après tout, il faut au moins un cerveau d'oiseau pour faire fonctionner une grande gueule, et c'est encore trop aux yeux des Blancs. Quand Cassius Clay, le pitre fort en gueule, renonce à représenter l'image du Corps et devient Mohamed Ali, le Cerveau, les culs blancs chient dans leur culotte. L'homme blanc aime le Domestique Surmâle – John Henry, muscle d'acier, tout Corps, forcé de s'agenouiller devant la Machine, symbole phallique du Cerveau et idéal fondamental de l'administrateur tout-puissant. Selon la pensée de l'homme blanc, c'était là un système parfait d'imagerie sociale. Mais, comme tous les systèmes parfaits, celui-ci avait une grosse fêlure au beau milieu.

« L'Administrateur Tout-Puissant avait concédé au Domestique Surmâle tous les attributs de la virilité relatifs au Corps : la force, la puissance brute, le muscle, même la beauté du corps brut. Tous les attributs, sauf un. Il y avait un seul attribut de la virilité que l'homme blanc refusait d'abandonner, quand même cet attribut particulier est l'essence et le centre de la virilité : le membre viril. Le pénis. Le pénis de l'homme noir était le bâton dans les roues de la parfaite machine de l'homme blanc. Le pénis, la virilité, appartient au Corps. La virilité n'appartient pas au Cerveau : le cerveau est neutre, HOMO, HOMO-MACHINE. Mais, dans le marché auquel l'homme blanc a contraint l'homme noir, l'homme noir a reçu le Corps en partage ; l'homme blanc se réservant le Cerveau. Peu à peu, l'administrateur tout-puissant a découvert qu'il avait commis une bourde, dans la fureur de sa machination, et qu'il s'était coupé le pénis (notez, en passant, l'image mesquine que l'homme blanc se fait de son pénis : il l'appelle « bite », « popaul », « baveuse »). Il a voulu revenir sur le marché traité. Il a rappelé le domestique surmâle et lui a dit : « Écoute, mon garçon, il y a encore une dernière mise au point. Je reste le Cerveau et tu restes le Corps. Mais, à partir d'aujourd'hui, tu fais tout le trimage et c'est moi qui fais tout le baisage. Le Cerveau doit contrôler le Corps. Pour prouver ma toute-puissance, je dois te cocufier et enchaîner tes grosses couilles de taureau. Je vais t'entraver la verge et en limiter la portée. Ma bite va dépasser ta verge. J'ai effectué un calcul. J'aurai la liberté sexuelle. Mais, de par ma volonté toute-puissante, je vais ligoter ta verge et imposer des limites à ses inspirations. Si tu violes les limites, c'est la peine de mort qui t'attend... J'aurai mes entrées chez la femme noire. La femme noire se laissera approcher par toi, mais elle se laissera aussi approcher par moi. Je t'interdis d'approcher la femme blanche. La femme blanche se laissera approcher par moi, l'Administrateur Tout-Puissant, mais j'interdis à la femme blanche de s'approcher de toi, le Domestique Surmâle. En soumettant ta virilité au contrôle de ma volonté, je contrôle ton existence. La tige du Corps, le pénis, doit se soumettre à la volonté du Cerveau. »

« C'était la solution parfaite, mais ça n'a pas marché. Ça n'a servi qu'à enfouir la vérité sous la surface. On ne peut pas vraiment dissocier le pénis du Corps ! Même le Cerveau, l'Administrateur Tout-Puissant, ne peut y réussir ! Mais dans un mouvement de rage, dans un mouvement violent de réaction contre cette fêlure de la machine, on peut se saisir du Corps, on peut pendre le Corps au premier arbre venu et

cueillir l'étrange fruit, la grosse pine noire, la mettre à mariner dans un bocal et la rapporter à la maison, pour la montrer à la belle blonde idiote, et jouir du mensonge, affirmer que ce n'est pas le Corps, mais le Cerveau, qui fait l'homme.

Lazare s'est arrêté de parler ; il restait assis immobile, la bouche grande ouverte. Il respirait péniblement, comme s'il avait couru et était essoufflé. L'Eunuque à ma gauche regardait dans le vide, détournant volontairement les yeux, pour nous empêcher d'apercevoir l'éclat féroce que je devinais entre ses paupières. La pensée refusait de se cristalliser dans mon esprit ; je me suis versé du café et, soulevant la tasse vers mes lèvres, j'ai doucement soufflé à la surface du sombre breuvage, pour le refroidir. Par-dessus le bord de la tasse, je regardais l'Infidèle, qui demeurait là, le visage tout contracté, à mordre les chairs épaisses de sa lèvre inférieure, comme s'il tentait désespérément de se rappeler, ou peut-être de comprendre, ou d'imaginer quelque chose. Il semblait gêné. L'Eunuque à ma droite regardait fixement son assiette de haricots.

Puis, l'Infidèle relevant les yeux, c'est moi qui ai détourné la tête. Il y avait dans ses yeux une blessure cruelle. Je lisais dans ses yeux une douleur affreuse, et j'en éprouvais de la terreur – non pas tellement pour l'Infidèle que pour moi-même, ma génération, mes contemporains, car je n'avais plus aucune certitude de savoir ce que je devais faire, ce que nous devons faire ou apprendre pendant qu'il était encore temps, pour échapper à une telle douleur, pour ne pas nous trouver exposés à ressentir un jour une si profonde douleur. À ce moment-là, il m'est apparu, et je savais que la même pensée faisait son chemin dans l'esprit de mes contemporains eunuques, que n'importe quelle fin, la mort, la chambre à gaz, la chaise électrique, le peloton d'exécution, l'héroïne, le suicide, tout valait mieux que de se soumettre à la douleur terrible, à l'horrible douleur dont l'Infidèle avait appris à s'accommoder. J'ai senti un élancement dans ma braguette. Instinctivement, dans un geste de panique, j'ai abaissé la main, craignant vaguement de ne plus retrouver ma verge ; mais elle était là, dressée ; je l'ai pressée ; elle a rebondi, solide, pleine de vigueur. À l'instant où j'ai serré ma verge, une vague de force s'est répandue dans mon corps. Je me sentais puissant et je savais que je réussirais à me tirer d'affaire, à condition de ne jamais trahir la loi de ma verge. L'Infidèle a souri ; je suis sûr qu'il avait lu dans mes pensées. Il a laissé échapper un long soupir, il s'est appuyé au dossier de sa chaise et il a commencé à parler d'une voix fatiguée, monotone :

— Autrefois, j'avais une femme – non, une pute ! – qui savait vous balancer un crochet aussi bien que Sugar Ray Robinson. J'étais obligé de la mettre K. O. tous les samedis soir. Elle cherchait un prétexte de bagarre, puis elle y allait, comme un homme. Comment est-ce qu'on traite une pute qui ne peut pas vivre sans se bagarrer avec son homme ? Pour se mettre en train, elle n'avait pas même besoin d'être en colère. Je faisais des expériences sur elle. J'ai essayé toutes sortes de tactiques. Une fois, j'ai refusé de me disputer avec elle. Je suis resté tranquillement debout à la regarder. Elle savait bien, d'après mes yeux, que je n'étais pas fâché contre elle et que mon regard, ça revenait à dire : « Écoute, poupée, c'est à toi de décider. S'il arrive quelque chose, c'est toi qui l'auras voulu. » BOUM ! Elle m'a envoyé son poing au milieu de la figure. Ce soir-là, j'ai compris. Le seul moyen, c'était le Corps : je devais la mater, lui faire subir la force de mon corps, si je voulais qu'elle m'accepte en tant qu'homme. Je ne lui ai pas rendu son coup. J'étais dévoré de rage, une rage telle que je n'en avais pas connu auparavant et n'en ai plus connu depuis. À vrai dire, je crois que je suis devenu fou pendant un moment. Je l'ai attrapée par le bras, j'ai sorti mon couteau à cran d'arrêt – une lame d'environ vingt centimètres – j'ai ouvert mon couteau et je l'ai obligée à s'asseoir sur le canapé. Elle croyait que j'allais la tuer ; ça se voyait. Elle écarquillait tout grand les yeux, aussi grands que des yeux de vache, et elle avait vraiment peur. J'ai mis le couteau dans sa main et j'ai replié ses doigts sur le manche.

Puis je me suis couché ; je lui avais passé mes bras autour de la taille et j'avais posé ma tête sur ses genoux. Elle était furieuse. Elle a menacé de me couper la veine jugulaire si je ne me relevais pas. Mes oreilles l'entendaient, mais je n'avais pas l'intention de me relever. Il me semblait que, si je me levais, je n'aurais pas la force de vivre une minute de plus. C'est exactement le sentiment que j'avais : si je me lève et la laisse partir, ou si je fais le moindre mouvement pour me protéger du couteau, je ne pourrai pas continuer à vivre. Je suis resté étendu, ma veine jugulaire exposée à la lame du couteau. Et je me suis endormi. D'abord, elle a essayé de soulever ma tête, pour l'écarter, puis elle a renoncé, et elle s'est mise à pleurer. J'entendais les sanglots qui déchiraient son corps. Mais je gardais les yeux fermés, et je me suis endormi. Je n'ai pas fait de rêves, je ne me rappelle rien. Je me rappelle seulement un sommeil profond, paisible, un doux sommeil. Je me rappelle encore le miracle de ce sommeil. Jamais encore je n'avais connu un sommeil aussi serein. Quand je me suis réveillé, elle berçait ma tête sur ses genoux. Il y avait sur son visage une lumière radieuse, surnaturelle, une expression aussi différente que possible de tout ce qu'elle avait laissé paraître jusqu'alors. Puis, je me suis souvenu du couteau et une grande terreur m'a submergé. J'ai sauté sur mes pieds et j'ai regardé autour de moi. Elle avait brisé la lame, refermé le couteau et l'avait jeté sur le parquet, de l'autre côté de la chambre. En pensant au risque que j'avais couru, je sentais le cœur qui me remontait dans la gorge.

«Après quoi, pendant un mois environ, il n'y a plus eu un seul accrochage entre nous. Nos rapports étaient tout autres ; nous vivions une vie nouvelle. Pendant tout ce temps, nous n'avons pas eu une seule dispute, nous n'avons pas échangé un seul mot désagréable. Le granit, l'acier (tout ce que je déteste chez une pute noire !) avait disparu. Et, bizarrement, je me sentais plus naturel moi-même, je n'essayais pas de lui jouer la comédie. Nous dansions au même rythme, parfaitement en accord l'un avec l'autre. Puis, un jour qu'on sortait en voiture, j'ai brûlé un feu rouge – ou plutôt, j'ai raté de justesse un feu vert – et le flic à motocyclette m'a coincé.

« Il m'a dit : ' Alors, mon garçon, tu serais pas daltonien ? ' Moi, je ne voulais pas de contravention ; j'ai décidé de m'en tirer langue de velours. J'ai fait mon numéro, tout sourire, j'ai expliqué que je regrettais terriblement, que j'avais cru pouvoir passer à temps, mais que ma vieille voiture était trop lente. Il m'a parlé d'un ton vraiment grossier, il m'a retenu longtemps : c'est très important d'obéir aux lois et aux règlements, et si les gens désobéissent à la loi, comment est-ce qu'on peut administrer et contrôler la société ? J'ai répondu un paquet de Oui, monsieur et de Non, monsieur, puis il m'a dit de me sauver et d'être sage. En démarrant, j'ai jeté un coup d'œil vers ma femme ; elle avait complètement tourné à l'aigre. La douceur de ce dernier mois avait disparu ; il ne restait plus en elle que le granit et l'acier. Quand nous sommes rentrés à la maison, elle a cherché la bagarre, mais j'ai refusé de répondre. Alors, sans un mot, elle a emballé toutes ses affaires et elle s'est barrée. La pute m'a laissé tomber aussi sec. Jamais personne ne m'avait laissé tomber comme ça. Elle s'est trouvé un autre mâle. Ils se bagarraient dans la rue. Le gaillard, il aimait la battre, tout autant qu'elle aimait taper. Ils étaient très heureux ensemble. Plus tard, elle l'a tué. Elle l'a descendu dans la rue, comme un chien – et elle a été acquittée. On a appelé ça un cas de légitime défense.

## 5/7

« Puis, la salope a changé de nom et elle s'est lancée dans une carrière de chanteuse. Elle a vraiment réussi : on voyait son nom et sa photographie dans tous les journaux et les magazines. J'allais l'écouter dans les boîtes de nuit. Elle était formidable. Elle gagnait des tas d'argent. Vous devinez ce qu'elle a fait ? Elle s'est mariée avec un homme blanc ! Le salaud était un zéro, un maquereau, un rien de rien. Il n'avait pas un rond quand il s'est marié avec elle. Elle lui a donné tout son argent. Il a vidé le compte en banque. Il s'est acheté une belle grande boîte de nuit. Puis il a demandé le divorce. Après ça, elle a dégringolé ; elle est tombée de plus en plus bas, toujours plus bas. Elle ne gagnait plus rien. Elle a complètement changé de vie et s'est mise à chanter des cantiques. Des spirituals. Elle est devenue vraiment pieuse, membre d'une Église. Tout le monde disait qu'elle était tombée amoureuse de Jésus et qu'en lui elle avait enfin trouvé l'homme qu'il lui fallait. Elle est restée dans cette Église, elle y est encore.

« Depuis ce temps-là, je n'arrête pas de penser que le mariage avec un Blanc, pour une femme noire, c'est comme le dernier diamant qu'elle ajoute à sa couronne. À ses yeux et aux yeux de ses sœurs de couleur, c'est le sommet de la réussite. Rappelez-vous toutes les célébrités noires qui se sont mariées avec des hommes blancs ! Toutes les femmes noires voudraient être des vedettes, pour pouvoir se marier avec un homme blanc. Elles rêvent d'un cul blanc. Quand elles vous donnent un baiser, ce n'est pas vraiment vous qu'elles embrassent. Elles ferment les yeux et voient le garçon de leurs rêves. Regardez autour de vous, écoutez les bruits

secrets de la ville... Jésus Christ le pur est le marié psychique de la femme noire. Avant de mourir, vous aurez le temps de l'entendre : pendant le coït, au moment de l'orgasme, dans les premiers tourments du spasme, la femme noire hurle le nom de Jésus. « Oh, Jésus, je viens ! » elle lui crie. Et ça vous fait mal. C'est comme un couteau dans le cœur. C'est comme si votre femme, pendant l'orgasme, criait le nom du voisin, un chat rusé qui habite dans la même rue.

« À présent, je voudrais vous dire quelque chose, en rapport direct avec ce que je viens de vous raconter. Je n'y ai jamais rien compris et je ne crois pas que je comprendrai jamais. Mais je parle d'expérience, et vous comprendrez peut-être, vous autres frères, et ça vous sera peut-être utile, vous saurez peut-être en tirer profit. Au fin fond de leur folie, les Blancs ont une maladie spéciale, et cette maladie leur commande des actions variées. Il existe une combine, entre autres, qui semble contredire tout ce que nous savons des pâlots ; et beaucoup de Noirs en sont drôlement agités, la première fois que ça leur arrive... Il y a des hommes blancs qui vous paient pour baiser leur femme. Ils s'amènent, ils disent : « Ça te plairait de baiser une femme blanche ? » Tu demandes : « Quoi, pardon ? » L'autre te rassure : « Pas de risque, pas de problème. C'est ma femme. Elle a besoin d'une verge noire, c'est tout. Elle en a besoin. Comme remède, comme drogue. Elle en a besoin. Je te paie. Un coup régulier, pas de traquenard. Ça t'intéresse ? » Tu le suis et il te conduit en voiture jusque chez eux. Vous entrez tous les trois dans la chambre à coucher. Il y a le type qui te laisse avec sa femme et te dit de bien la bourrer. Quand c'est terminé, il te paie et te reconduit où tu veux. Il y a aussi le type qui aime reluquer par le trou de la serrure et regarder pendant que tu possèdes sa femme, ou guigner par la fenêtre, ou se coucher sous le lit, pour entendre craquer les ressorts pendant que tu la travailles. Il y a aussi le type qui aime rester debout à côté du lit, pour se masturber pendant que tu baises sa femme. Il y a le type qui aime bouffer sa femme, tout de suite après que tu as joui. Il y a aussi le type qui veut seulement que tu la baises un petit moment, juste le temps de la dégeler, de faire démarrer le moteur, de la recharger à bloc, puis il te demande de te retirer en vitesse,

il lui saute dessus, et après ils se débrouillent rien que les deux.

Il ne m'est pas venu à l'idée de parler. Je n'aurais pas su quoi dire. J'étais furieux contre l'Infidèle, dégoûté par son monologue et l'importance qu'il paraissait attacher à ces questions. Mes rêves se situaient ailleurs, et je n'étais pas préparé à commenter les choses qu'il venait de raconter. Je restais assis, savourant l'étrange qualité de l'émotion qui s'était éveillée en moi. C'était l'Eunuque à ma gauche qui grondait. J'aurais été incapable de dire à quel moment il avait ouvert la bouche. Au commencement, j'entendais sa voix uniquement comme un son, un son vague, incohérent. Puis, j'ai distingué les mots : — ... marre ! Espèce de tordu, vieux Lazare, tout ce que tu racontes, c'est la puanteur de la mort ! C'est tout faussé, déjeté, gondolé, dévié !

L'Eunuque avançait le menton d'un air de défi.

— Oui, je sais, a répondu l'Infidèle, et vous autres, jeunes gens, vous voyez approcher l'occasion de tout changer. Quand on rêve, on est toujours en train de voir venir l'occasion... Mais avouez que l'homme blanc n'est qu'une saloperie de merde. Il nous a lessivés, non ? Il ne s'est pas fourré partout ? Il s'est fourré partout où ça lui plaisait, il a tout ramassé et il a lessivé tout le monde – et tout le monde se retrouve baisé, même l'homme blanc. C'est pas une baise-ta-mère foutue honte ?

Le regard de l'Infidèle allait de l'un à l'autre, nous interrogeant tous les trois. Personne ne lui a répondu. Nous nous contentions de l'examiner, d'observer son visage, ses yeux, sa peau lisse couleur de chocolat. Puis il a éclaté de rire, et son corps obèse en était tout secoué. Je me demandais pourquoi il riait. Le rire montait des profondeurs, mais le visage demeurait douloureux. Lazare ne semblait pas vraiment s'amuser. Plusieurs fois, il a essayé de dire quelque chose ; mais, chaque fois, il a succombé, submergé par cette vague de rire. Finalement, il a lâché :

— Il faut faire la part du diable !

Et il a recommencé à se débattre dans un flot de gloussements et de grognements.

Ensuite, quand il a cessé de rire, il s'est mis à tambouriner sur la table, de ses doigts courts et gras. Il a dit :

— Autrefois, j'avais un ami. Nous étions très liés. Nous avons grandi ensemble – peu importe où ça se passait. C'est le meilleur ami que j'aie jamais eu. Nous étions plus unis que deux frères. Une amitié à toute épreuve, plus étanche que la craquette de mimi-poisson. Enfants, nous avons fait le serment du sang, comme les guerriers indiens. Rien que nous deux. Nous nous étions juré de rester amis toute la vie. – Il a flotté un moment ; des petites gouttes de sueur perlaient à son front. – Mais, il est arrivé quelque chose, et je... je... suis parti... Pendant des années et des années, je ne l'ai plus revu, je n'ai pas eu de ses nouvelles. Puis, enfin, je suis rentré... d'où j'étais parti. Je voulais revoir la petite ville où j'étais né. J'ai cherché à revoir mon ami. J'ai cherché quelque temps et j'ai découvert qu'il était dans un hospice. Une institution pour malades mentaux. Il y était depuis toujours, depuis tout ce temps-là. Je suis allé le voir. Il avait complètement changé, tellement changé que je ne l'aurais sûrement pas

reconnu, sauf les yeux. Jamais je n'oublierai ses yeux, jamais. Il avait des yeux comme Jomo Kenyatta, d'après ce qu'on raconte, des yeux qui transpercent un mur de briques. — L'Infidèle a levé le bras et, désignant l'Eunuque à ma gauche, il a ajouté : Mon ami avait les mêmes yeux, avec seulement un petit quelque chose en plus, les mêmes yeux que notre frère assis à cette table.

L'expression de son visage laissait percer de la gêne, de la frayeur. Puis il a repris un air impassible. L'Eunuque à ma gauche remuait sur sa chaise.

— Mais il m'a reconnu, continuait l'Infidèle, mon ami m'a reconnu. Il a tout de suite su qui j'étais. Après tant d'années, contrairement à ce qu'on pourrait penser, il n'a pas eu besoin de fouiller sa mémoire. L'instant où on l'a fait entrer dans la salle de visite, j'ai compris qu'il me reconnaissait, quand même il n'a pas prononcé mon nom. Nous nous sommes assis à une petite table et il m'a dit : « Ah, je croyais que tu n'arriverais jamais jusqu'ici ! Maintenant, on peut s'embarquer dans notre grand projet ! On va transformer toute l'orgueilleuse Europe en bordel international, et des hommes du monde entier y viendront en pèlerinage, pour fertiliser de leur semence riche et diverse le sol humain épuisé ! » Je n'ai rien répondu. J'étais incapable de rien dire. J'écoutais. Il n'arrêtait pas de parler. Il me ramenait en arrière, loin, très loin dans le temps. Puis l'heure est venue de partir. Je lui ai promis que je reviendrais le lendemain. On l'a emmené hors de la salle. Je ne suis jamais revenu. Au moment même où je le lui promettais, je savais que jamais je ne reviendrais, jamais.

L'Infidèle a avalé sa salive. Il luttait contre lui-même, il se débattait pour maîtriser une force puissante, un torrent qui bouillonnait en lui. Nous lisions sur ses traits l'angoisse terrible qu'il s'efforçait de contenir.

— Il est mort deux semaines plus tard, mon ami est mort... il s'est fracassé la tête sur les arêtes d'un mur de béton ébréché.

Pendant quelques minutes, personne n'a parlé. Chacun restait enfoncé dans ses propres pensées. Enfin, l'Eunuque à ma gauche a dit d'un ton froid, glacé :

— Espèce de sale Lazare ! Tu l'as tué. Tu l'as assassiné. Tu l'as trahi !

L'Infidèle a entrouvert les lèvres, mais sans aller jusqu'au bout de son effort. L'Eunuque à ma gauche a dit à l'Infidèle :

— Ce qui ne va pas, chez toi, vieux Lazare, c'est que tu ne peux pas supporter de voir verser le sang du maître des esclaves.

L'Infidèle a eu l'air surpris. Il a répondu lentement :

— Le monde ne peut pas survivre à un nouveau bain de sang.

— Le monde est hémophile, a riposté l'Eunuque. Écoute un peu ! Quand est-ce que le monde s'est arrêté de saigner ? Jamais, pas un seul instant, le monde ne s'est arrêté de saigner. Il saigne quelque part en ce moment même. En ce moment même, pendant que nous restons assis à parler, un homme quelque part vise soigneusement un autre homme, un ennemi. Un homme enfonce une lame nue dans le corps d'un ennemi. Un homme allume une fusée, dirigée contre un ennemi. En Afrique, en Asie, en Europe, en Afrique du Sud, et ici même, sur cette bonne vieille terre d'Amérique, le sang coule. Va, à la minute, écouter ce que raconte la radio ou la télévision. Premières nouvelles, dernières nouvelles, du sang. L'appel des cadavres ! Ramasse n'importe quel journal, n'importe quel magazine, il ruisselle de sang. L'écran de télévision déverse des flots de sang. Et tu te choques d'entendre parler de sang ?

— Oui, le monde saigne, a répondu l'Infidèle, mais il saigne à mort. Combien de temps ça peut encore durer ?

Et, tout en parlant, il a frissonné.

— Le sang est un lubrifiant, a dit l'Eunuque à ma gauche. Le sang prépare le chemin et permet à un peuple de se dégager d'entre les griffes les plus acérées. On ne tripatouille pas un embâcle de troncs, mon brave, on le fait sauter à la dynamite !

— Tu as soif de sang ! — L'Infidèle s'adressait directement à l'Eunuque qui venait de parler. — Mais ce n'est pas une solution.

— Oui ! s'est écrié l'Eunuque. J'ai soif de sang, j'ai soif de boire le sang de l'homme blanc. Et, quand je boirai, je boirai avidement, parce que j'ai une soif profonde à étancher. Je veux boire pour tous les hommes, toutes les femmes, tous les enfants noirs arrachés aux rivages d'Afrique, pour chacun de mes frères et sœurs qui ont souffert enchaînés dans les flancs damnés des bateaux d'esclaves — et pour ton ami qui s'est fait éclater la tête, là-bas, dans sa maison de dingues. Je veux boire le sang de l'homme blanc pour chaque morceau de ma chair qu'il a anéanti, chaque goutte de sang de mon sang qu'il a répandue dans les îles de la mer des Antilles, pour l'âme de tous les Noirs charcutés dans les champs puants du Vieux Sud et de tous les Noirs massacrés et lynchés dans le borbier du Nouveau Sud — et dans le Nord, dans l'Est, dans l'Ouest des enfers d'Amérique du Nord ! Seul le sang de l'homme blanc peut laver ma douleur. Tu refuses de répandre le sang de l'homme blanc, vieux Lazare, mais je t'annonce que le jour approche où je pénétrerai dans la législature de l'État du Mississippi, une mitraillette ardente à la main et les poches remplies de grenades. Du moment que je dois mourir, je suis fermement décidé à tuer.

— Non, a répondu l'Infidèle. Non. Un nouveau flot de sang ne signifie jamais qu'un crime de plus. Non !

Il s'est levé brusquement et nous a regardés l'un après l'autre. Il semblait nous implorer, tel un criminel affrontant des jurés inébranlables qui vont l'envoyer à la chambre d'exécution. Il a aspiré une ample bouffée d'air, comme il l'avait déjà fait auparavant, et il a laissé s'affaisser ses épaules.

— Le sang et le sang, le crime et le crime, brique de sang sur brique de sang d'une nouvelle tour de folie, tour de Babel qui s'écroulera, elle aussi... Il n'existe pas de victoire dans le sang.

Il nous a tourné le dos et s'est éloigné de la table en chancelant.

Nous le regardions partir. Il s'est arrêté, nous a jeté un coup d'œil, comme s'il espérait vaguement, comme s'il attendait un appel. Puis il s'est détourné et il est sorti de la salle, sorti de notre vie.



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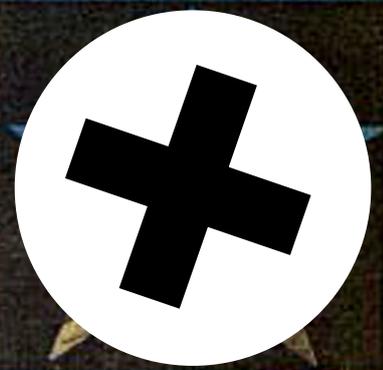
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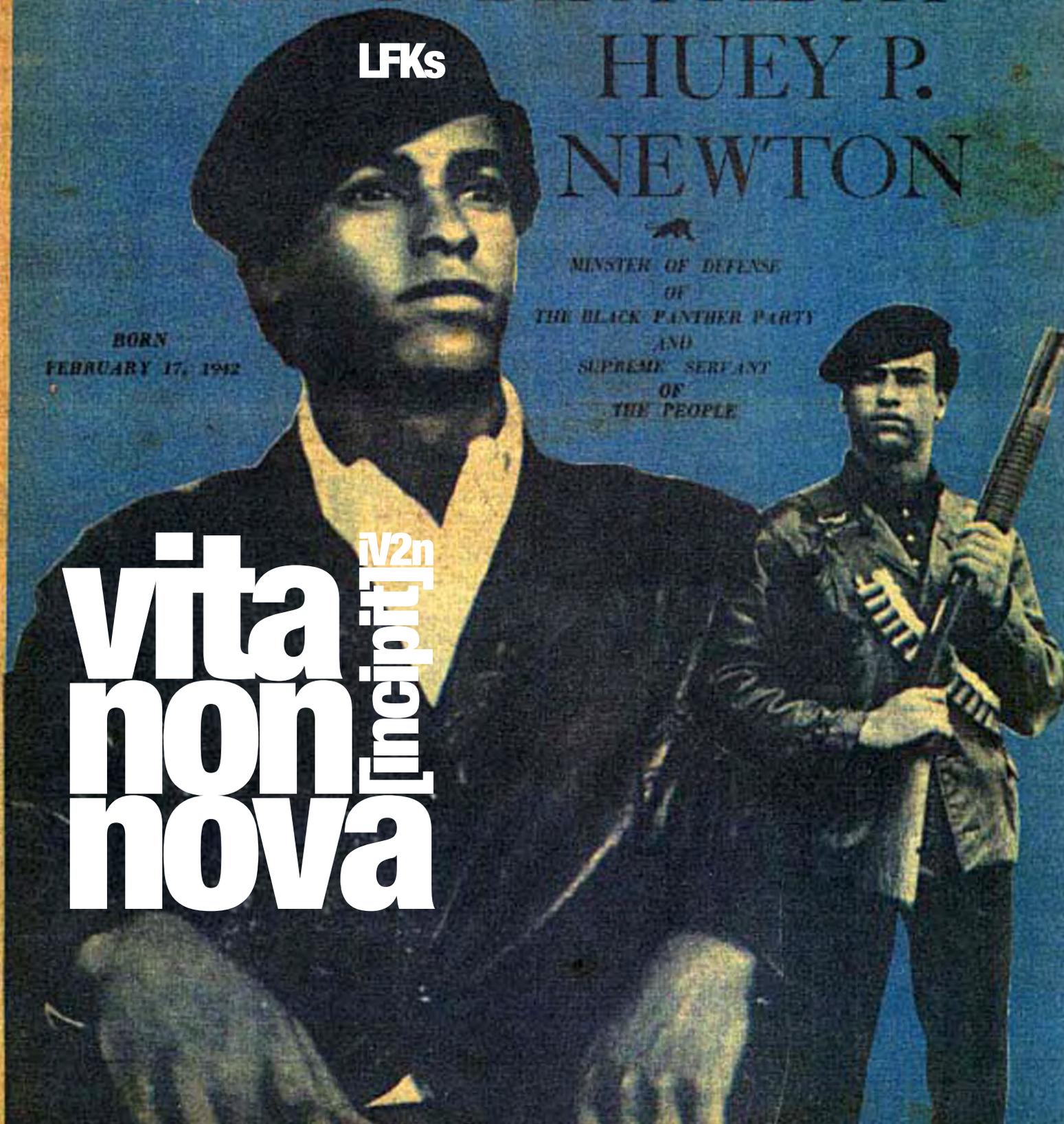
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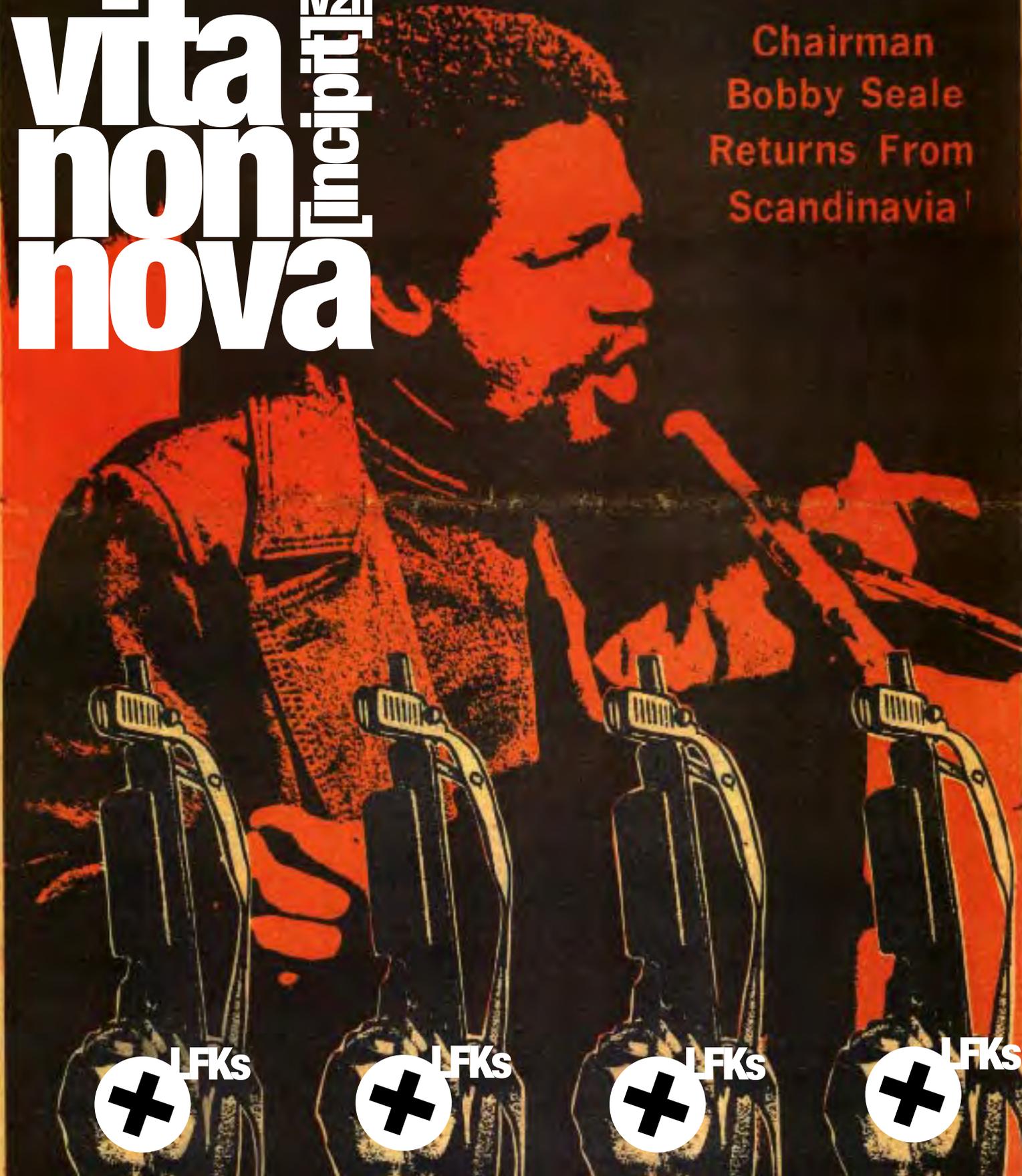
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THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

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Chairman  
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Scandinavia!



# vita non nova

[incipit] IV2n

volume 1  
eldridge cleaver



LFKs

## Eldridge Cleaver. 1982, interview by David Mills

*In 1982 I interviewed Eldridge Cleaver, former "Minister of Information" for the Black Panther Party. He had come to the University of Maryland on a lecture tour. The one-time gun-toting Marxist revolutionary was now a Reagan Republican and a fan of Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church. Which made for a lively conversation.*

*I have no romantic attachment to the Panthers. In fact, I resent the simple-minded glorification of violent black radicalism. If Mr. Cleaver's recollections can be trusted, my resentment is justified.*

*Cleaver died in 1998 at the age of 62. He certainly lived an interesting life, including seven years of exile in Cuba, France and Algeria (after a gun battle with Oakland police). This three-part interview covers a lot of ground. Stick with it till the end of pt. 3 and you'll see perhaps the weirdest thing anyone ever said to me during an interview.*

*DAVID MILLS: It seems quite a change of heart you've had over 15 years. During the Black Power movement, you thought the primary crisis we faced was the American system. Now you say it's the Communist threat.*

**ELDRIDGE CLEAVER:** It's not a total change, because the stuff I was preoccupied with in the '60s is still true. American history is American history. I'm not trying to say America is utopia. Far from it. But I think that in the past I was oblivious to what was going on in Communist countries, or I didn't believe what was said against the Communists.

I was really favorable toward the Communists because they made such a strong critique of capitalism and America. They were opposed to America systematically, so I viewed that as a source of strength or a source of alliances. Many people do this. We used to say that America's enemies are our friends. (...)

What changed my whole point of view was that I had a chance to leave America and go live in Communist countries and see what was going on there. Without having that experience, I probably would still, like a lot of other people, be running around pushing the same line.

We have many problems in America, and some of them are absolutely outrageous. But with all our problems, we have more freedom in this country than any of those Communist countries.

So what I say today is we need to be more precise in what's wrong with America. In the past we just used the shotgun approach, and just said burn it down, destroy it, overthrow it, that sort of stuff. Well, that's very dangerous thinking. It's not even thinking. It's sloganizing.

Everybody admits that we have a huge economic problem, but the question becomes what do we do about it? Just close the curtain down, you know? Stop the show, change all the furniture around on the stage, and then let the show go on?

That's one of my gripes with revolutionaries. Most of these revolutionary scenarios call for exactly that. But it's like changing a tire on a moving vehicle; we have to figure out how to solve these problems while the thing's in motion. So that means being very precise about what's wrong.

*MILLS: Let's backtrack, because it's ironic. Do you think that during the Panther movement when you were advocating revolution, that you and the Black Panthers were being used by the Communists?*

**CLEAVER:** At different stages, you could say that. The Communists did not summon us into being. We grew up in our own community around our own issues and, as a matter of fact, against the activity of the Communists. They weren't happy to see us come along because we were organizing people outside of their fold. They also had an attitude toward armed struggle that was more conservative than ours.

At a certain point, the Communists recognized that we were the ones having impact in the community. So they came to us. They offered us free legal representation – we always needed lawyers – and they would contribute finances to us. And we wanted to do this, because we were Marxists ourselves.

I think at a certain point, the Black Panther Party became the driving engine for a whole phase of the [Communist] movement. So in that sense, the Communists used us. On a worldwide basis, they used us propaganda-wise.

*MILLS: What's ironic about that is that was the FBI's excuse to go after the Panthers, wasn't it? That you were tools of the Communists?*

**CLEAVER:** Well, it's not against the law to be a Communist. But when you advocate the violent overthrow of the government, or when you practice it –

You know, many people lie about what they're doing. And we used to lie, use falsehood, when we were describing our own activity. For instance, we would go out and ambush the police. Then, if we got caught, we'd say they shot at us first.

*MILLS: And that was not true?*

**CLEAVER:** It wasn't always true. There were many times when we would shoot first.

And I say this because it illustrates the distortions that get involved when the people hate the police because they

always see the police making trouble. But a lot of times, the police are not wrong. A lot of times, people did exactly what police said they did, but then they lie about it.

I think we were in that situation in the '60s with the FBI. The FBI investigated us and came to the conclusion that we were a dangerous group.

*MILLS: Was the FBI right?*

**CLEAVER:** I think it was right. See, the problem gets into what does the FBI have a right to do to you? Once they make the decision that you are an enemy of America, then they consider you outside the law, so they use all their dirty tricks on you.

This got them into a lot of trouble. If they could have proven that we were systematically engaging in armed struggle, then they would have had less trouble with the public over what they were doing.

The whole thing is a mixture, because we were not always wrong. And we didn't start out actually shooting at the cops. We were rebelling against a routine. We were rebelling against a whole history. We were rejecting America, America's laws, everything like that.

*MILLS: So the case could be made that J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI were justified in going after the Black Panther Party?*

**CLEAVER:** I think a case could be made on the following points: that the FBI was not always wrong; that many of their accusations were accurate when it came to our use of violence, our use of bombs, our use of ambush tactics.

So if I would fault the FBI at all, it would be in its overzealousness in using CIA tactics on the American people. I say this because they did this to people who were not Black Panthers, or who were not involved in that kind of activity. Just people who dissented.

*MILLS: There is still that kind of dissent in America. Why do you think that is?*

**CLEAVER:** To really understand it, you have to go back to the Second World War. The Second World War was considered a patriotic war. America was solidly behind it. But from that time on, there was a new kind of struggle, very controversial, with a new kind of political party which was not well understood, an international party coming in trying to change the government. That started the Cold War and what you call the "struggle for the minds of men."

From that time on, we have had in America a preachment against the government, condemning the government, condemning the activity of the government in foreign countries – in Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, all over the world. It was a whole period of decolonization that took place.

## eldridge cleaver The Interviews



John Edgar Hoover

So we have in America a couple of generations of people who have grown up just hearing negative about America. This is amazing because it has a distorting impact. I think Americans have been bombarded with very powerful negative propaganda. ... It has a brainwashing effect on people.

*MILLS: What about black Americans? There's nothing new about black dissatisfaction with America.*

CLEAVER: I think this is one of the very serious constituents of the black identity crisis. Blacks generally don't feel part of America. I call it a fence-straddling mentality.

Even though you don't have a strong "back-to-Africa" movement, you do have that theme that floats around in the community. The consequence is that you have people paralyzed on the fence. They neither go back to Africa nor do they participate fully in America. So you have millions and millions of blacks who are in a kind of catatonic trance over what to do.

The strong condemnation of America, the constant criticism of America, this has fixed a certain mindset. This is the mindset I have broken with, and it's the mindset I encounter almost universally among middle-class blacks, which is what you find mostly on college campuses: America not being their home, or America being the worst country in the world, or everything being racist. Just racism, racism, everywhere is racism – not being able to draw some distinctions and to see some good in America as well as the bad.

*DAVID MILLS: You have led a very dramatic life. I'd like to walk you through it, if you don't mind, because it's so fascinating and because of your new perspective on things.*

*Let's start with your childhood. What were your feelings about race and America while growing up in Arkansas?*

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER: I didn't stay there long enough to get deep impressions. I left Arkansas when I was about 10 years old, so my memory of Arkansas is really about learning how to hunt with my dog, chasing rabbits, things like that.

*MILLS: After moving to California, what kind of things influenced your political development?*

CLEAVER: In growing up in L.A., I realized the existence of the white world, the black world and the Chicano world. I grew up in a neighbourhood that was predominately Chicano, and the Chicanos, particularly at that time, had their own subculture which totally rejected white America.

I spent a lot of my time – my early years – as part of that view. And I think

that had something to do with the strong withdrawal and rejection [of America] that I experienced.

*MILLS: If you had grown up in a predominately black neighbourhood, you might not have been so anti-American?*

CLEAVER: I think so. And I say that because hanging out with the Chicano guys as a choice was, in itself, a rejection of what the blacks were doing – going along with the program.

In the '40s, the Chicanos were involved in kind of a war in L.A. against the establishment, against the police. It was a very powerful reality in your life. The cops were always chasing them, they were outlaws. Living in that neighbourhood helped sow the seeds of rebellion.

My parents wanted to guide me into being a minister. This was something that was really square as far as I could see, so I chose a rebellious direction.

*MILLS: How many years of your life have you spent locked up?*

CLEAVER: I add it up to be about 15.

I was sentenced to prison twice: once for possession of marijuana, and once for assault with a deadly weapon – not, as many people think, for rape.

When I was in prison, I wrote a book ["Soul on Ice"]. One section of the book dealt with the subject of rape, and I described some activity that I was involved in. And the way the press took it up, it was just sort of assumed that I was sentenced to prison for rape.

I was sentenced to prison for possession of marijuana, and I served two and a half years for that, then I was sentenced to prison for assault charges, and I stayed in there for 10 years.

*MILLS: The first time you went to prison, how did that affect you?*

CLEAVER: Well, I had some prior training for that by going to juvenile hall and the youth authority. So on that level I was already broken in to prison. But I think it had the effect of powerfully fixing my rebellious path.

I went to prison when I was 18 years old, and that's a very delicate age for a young man. It's an age when your sap is beginning to flow. And being locked up at that point is really one of the worst kinds of experiences.

That's when I really began to be filled with hatred, and I think I became much more violent in prison. I believe that prisons, in that sense, are schools for crime.

I became a Communist in prison. I studied Marxism in prison.

*MILLS: When you came out after that first term, you spent about a year on the outside before your second conviction. And during that time, as you revealed in "Soul on Ice," you set about raping white women as a principle of black rebellion.*

CLEAVER: I wrote this in prison. And I wrote this because I was trying to describe my own feelings, my own attitudes, and the attitudes of a lot of black men. At that time, this was something that was not really written about, talked about. It was kind of scandalous. There was a lot of denial in blacks who had these feelings.

*MILLS: What feelings? Sexual attraction to white women?*

CLEAVER: People used to deny that. The whole phenomenon was raging at that time because this whole black consciousness thing was coming in, interracial relationships were rising.

One of the old bugaboos of race relations in America has been black rape. It has been a big problem down through history and continues to be a problem. For my own part, I think there is often a lot of denial in that. But I think the facts will support a case that there is quite a bit of black rape.

*MILLS: How come?*

CLEAVER: Well, it has to do with social dynamics – I've said what I have to say about that subject in "Soul on Ice."

*MILLS: Looking back on that period now, how do you feel about your own activity?*

CLEAVER: What I would do if I wrote about that again would be to put it in a larger context. At that point, I was trying to describe the motivations of the black rapist – what goes on inside his head, what he was thinking – whereas today I am very concerned about male violence against women. That was not what I was addressing in my essay. I would not repeat today what I said 20 years ago because the context is different.

*MILLS: You have said that your affiliation with the Black Muslims and the solidarity of that group kept you going while in prison.*

CLEAVER: I think it was very important in prison because everybody is organizing, like little armies, for survival. Racial tensions were really high in prison because of things that were going on outside. Consequently, we had a lot of riots in prison.

The prisons in California used to be segregated, and there were struggles inside the prison to break up some of those traditional practices. So there was a lot of motivation for people joining together in these kinds of groups. And the one that appealed to me was the Black Muslims.

You had the Mau-Mau, the Blood Brothers, just little cliques of people taking different names. But I had liked the concern of the Black Muslim organization, and the fact that it was an organization that was more legitimate than some of the cutthroat activity.

Here is the last of my 1982 conversation with former Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver. (I had saved my question about “the pants” for the very end.)

**I interviewed Cleaver at the University of Maryland before he gave a speech. During that speech, Cleaver got heckled. It didn't surprise him. He had been getting that a lot on his college tour...**

*MILLS: Kwame Toure – whom you knew as Stokely Carmichael – has come to this campus a few times. He was sponsored by the Black Student Union, which I would guess sympathizes more with his pan-Africanist philosophy than with your conservatism.*

CLEAVER: I would guess so too.

*MILLS: What do you think of that?*

CLEAVER: This is a problem I'm working on. First of all, I don't think [black students] have heard what I've got to say. But there have been very powerful condemnations of me. Probably a lot of them think I'm an FBI agent or a CIA agent.

When I show up [at a college], they think I'm the one on the spot. But I show up with the understanding that they're the ones on the spot. They're often surprised because they

think they're on such solid ground. And it's because they've been exposed to that kind of emotional rhetoric.

At the time the Black Power movement came into being, I think it was a very positive movement. I think it did a lot of good for black people and white people. But like many other things, it runs its course, and there are extremes.

It's very appealing to black students to be told that they're great, and that black is beautiful, and to have a whole cosmos of black interests spelled out in a way that is very ego-satisfying to them, and to condemn the white man.

*MILLS: So how have black students reacted to your message?*

CLEAVER: I've experienced all kinds of reactions. The one that I find unacceptable is the one that tries to stop me from talking by hissing, running commentary – I find the communists do this and some of Stokely's people do this. Just being very emotional and shouting.

All I want is the opportunity to express my point of view.

*MILLS: Is it true that in California during the '60s, when you started speaking out against the Vietnam War and for revolution, Gov. Ronald Reagan got the parole officials to harass you to make you shut up?*

*MILLS: What did you think of Martin Luther King during this period?*

CLEAVER: At that time, I was very negative. I actually sort of hated Martin Luther King for preaching non-violence, and for being a Christian preacher. Martin Luther King to me was the embodiment of a lot of problems for black people.

I used to want to kill Martin Luther King. I thought it would be good if he was out of the way. I thought he was holding up the movement. Non-violence was never popular among the majority of black Americans from the very beginning. (...)

*MILLS: Looking back now, what do you think of Dr. King?*

CLEAVER: Well, looking back, for a long time, I have come to really admire him. When Martin Luther King was assassinated, I got busted two days later [in Oakland]. The gunfight I was involved in was part of the whole atmosphere that was reacting to his assassination.

When Martin Luther King was still alive, we were sort

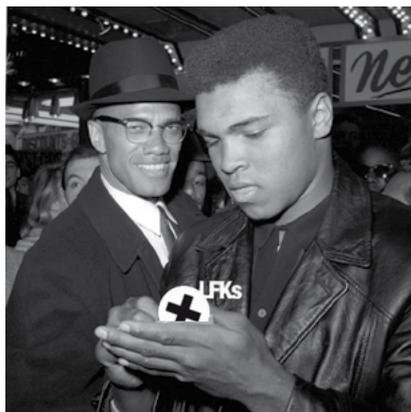
of waiting in the wings impatiently because we saw that non-violence was on the way out. Non-violence worked mostly in the South. When things moved toward the North, they became violent immediately. (...)

I remember when the media was anti-NAACP.

They thought the NAACP were the most extreme people to come along, and they were for a while. But after a while, the media started loving the NAACP.

That's because each extreme point, calibrated on a spectrum, tends to legitimize the ones it has eclipsed, if that makes sense. Like Martin Luther King and his direct-action movement, even though it was non-violent, eclipsed the NAACP's legalistic tactics.

And when Martin Luther King came along, he started getting busted and going to jail, and the NAACP started getting invited to the White House. Then, when more violent people came along, Martin Luther King started getting invited to the White House.



*MILLS: But all during that time, you didn't accept the Black Muslim philosophy that all white people were devils, correct?*

CLEAVER: That's why Malcolm X appealed to me, because Malcolm was more political. He had more of an economic analysis, whereas Elijah Muhammad was just full of that demonology.

Sometimes we would really wonder about the truth of Elijah's teachings, because it was very easy to believe the whites were devils, particularly the way the information was organized. And it was very appealing to believe that. One man said that it was necessary to teach the black that the white man is the devil in order to get him to stop believing that the white man is God.

*MILLS: After leaving prison in 1967, what attracted you to the Black Panthers?*

CLEAVER: The fact that they were armed. When I left prison, I didn't know anything about the Black Panther Party. But I left with the conviction that blacks had to take up guns.

The civil rights movement was turning violent already. I was still in prison when Watts went up in rebellion, and all the major cities across the country were experiencing those rebellions. So what I was aware of in prison was a lot of black people were being killed. And police were using police dogs, cattle prods, water hoses, all these things on the people. We in prison used to look at that news.

And we were already violent people. We were in prison for involving ourselves in criminal violence, nothing political. So it was very easy to transfer those attitudes. You began to just live for the day when you could get out and get involved.

One of the first things I did when I got out was to get some guns. And shortly thereafter, I met the Black Panthers at a meeting. When they came into this meeting, they had their guns. It was like love at first sight.

**CLEAVER:** There's no doubt about that.

I was chosen by students to be a lecturer at Berkeley. And as governor, Ronald Reagan was on the board of regents of the University of California system. He used to try to prevent me from speaking on campuses.

We referred to Ronald Reagan as the father of the Black Panther Party. It started under his administration. Reagan was always trying to get me off the streets. They were always trying to revoke my parole.

**MILLS:** *How do you feel about Reagan as president?*

**CLEAVER:** I voted for him. I supported him over Jimmy Carter in 1980.

I voted for Jimmy Carter in 1976, but I was completely upset by his performance. One of the things that had me upset was his very weak foreign policy, his weak way of dealing with every problem that we had, from Iran to the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, stuff that was jumping off in Latin America.

I felt that I had seen enough of Carter's policies to recognize that he was basically accommodating America to the expansion of Communism in the world. So when it came to the election, I chose Ronald Reagan because I felt he would give the country a very strong foreign policy, and I had no doubt that he would do the things he was talking about to the economy. I still feel this.

**MILLS:** *You've been an atheist, a Black Muslim, a born-again Christian. What is your current religious status?*

**CLEAVER:** I don't know how to describe my own religious status. I'm not a member of any church, but I'm someone who's convinced that none of our problems can be solved without addressing the spiritual element.

**MILLS:** *Are you a follower of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon?*

**CLEAVER:** Rev. Moon to me is one of the most significant religious and spiritual leaders in the history of the whole world. That's saying a lot. I have been helped to a great extent by studying Rev. Moon's teachings. I'm not a follower in the sense that I'm not a member of the church.

I started studying the Unification Church's teachings in 1979, so I've had quite a bit of time to consider it and ponder it. The world is going through a lot of changes about Rev. Moon, but I do believe that in time they'll be able to view him objectively.

MILLS: A few years ago, you were in the news for designing pants for men with a pouch in front to contain the genitals. Whatever became of those pants?

CLEAVER: As far as a business venture? I'm not a businessman so I wasn't able to do any spectacular business. I lost money. But from an aesthetic point of view, from the point of view of clothing, I think this whole thing has been misunderstood. My design had to do with an argument against what's being done with our clothing. Who controls our clothing? If you notice, the clothing industry is dominated by homosexuals. They want men and women to look basically the same.

There are a lot of problems involved in the design of men's clothing. The way our clothing is designed right now requires a man to wear his genitals in either his right or his left pants leg. There are a lot of implications to that. Scientifically, it's been determined that that structure generates a lot of heat that has a decomposing effect on sperm. There's a whole warping effect that comes from wearing your genitals in your pants leg.

There's a lot of evil in society that comes from clothing. Most of us are completely ignorant of this. One of the things that distinguishes us from animals is that we have the control of our second skin. This is a great power, because we can go underwater, we can go to the moon, we can go to the desert, to Alaska, because we just don't have scales or hair. We have a technology where we manage our second skin.

This is a sacred responsibility, yet like many other things it is dealt with frivolously. And one of the most obnoxious things that is happening today is what the homosexuals are doing to our clothing.

If you view your pants as an extension of the fig leaf – which is what clothing really is, symbolically speaking – you begin to see that this is very intimately connected with the whole condition of man in the world. Scripturally, the fig leaf came

about as a fallout from the fall of man. And I think from that point on, we've made a lot of trouble for ourselves by the way we handle our clothing.



Rev. Sun Myung Moon



Eldridge Cleaver

## 1986, interview by Bill Kauffman and Lynn Scarlett

*The Black Panthers scared the hell out of America in the 1960s. Emerging from the ghettos of Oakland, they scorned the establishment black leadership as Uncle Toms and took to the streets demanding «total liberty for black people or total destruction for America,» in the words of Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver.*

*In and out of reform schools and prisons since the age of 13 and an avowed «insurrectionary» rapist, Cleaver discovered radical politics and a flair for writing in Folsom Prison. Upon his release in 1966 he joined the fledgling Black Panther Party and started writing for the monthly Ramparts.*

*Cleaver burst upon the national scene in 1968 with the publication of Soul on Ice, a collection of his prison writings. Hip, revolutionary, and teeming with hatred for «everything American - ncluding baseball and hot dogs,» Soul on Ice became the Bible of Black Power and Eldridge Cleaver the intellectuals' favourite black radical.*

*The Black Panthers' early rhetoric had been decentralist, but the organization soon degenerated into Maoist politics and senseless violence. On April 6, 1968, Cleaver participated in a shootout with Oakland police - '60s legend has it that three carloads of Panthers were ambushed while Cleaver was urinating in a side street - n which 17-year-old Black Panther Bobby Hutton was killed. (Cleaver offers a different version of these events below.)*

*To avoid being sent back to prison for his part in the Hutton shootout, Cleaver skipped the country, taking refuge in Cuba. He spent the next seven years wandering through the communist world, with sojourns in Algeria, North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union before finally settling in France. But in 1975, homesick and deeply disillusioned with revolutionary politics, Eldridge Cleaver came home. «Pig power in America was infuriating,» he wrote upon his return. «But pig power in the communist framework was awesome and unaccountable.»*

*The repatriated Cleaver was denounced by his former comrades as an apostate, a turncoat, even an FBI informer. His conversion to Christianity and anticommunist pronouncements combined to give him a right-wing reputation - a reputation, as this interview makes clear, that is a far cry from the truth. Eldridge Cleaver lives today in a modest apartment in Berkeley, California, where he is hard at work writing a history of the '60s. A large American flag flies from his front porch. His wife, Kathleen, his partner in exile, is a student at Yale Law School in New Haven, Connecticut, where she lives with the couple's children, Jodu and Maceo.*

*Eldridge Cleaver was interviewed at his Berkeley apartment by REASON editors Bill Kauffman and Lynn Scarlett.*

**REASON:** *What do you think is the legacy of the 1960s? Was it a positive period?*

**ELDRIDGE CLEAVER:** Well, overall, I would have to say there is a lot of positive. There is a lot of negative, also. You have three things going on - a cultural revolution, the antiwar movement, and also the black liberation movement - and they were a mix, but America has been completely transformed because of them. We've gotten rid of the system of segregation, and that's a plus for America. We've gone down the road to completely demolishing that whole mentality. And the war is no longer with us in Vietnam. So I think there are some pluses.

The minuses that I see - I think we went overboard ideologically. I live here in Berkeley

where my old comrades are now in power, and I find myself struggling against them. And this is the legacy, that the left became so ideologically attached to anti-Americanism and pro-communism and Third Worldism that I believe that we have a problem on our hands.

**REASON:** *How do you look back on your Black Panther days?*

**CLEAVER:** With amazement. I am writing a history of what I call «the domestic wars.» It's a history of the whole movement that we've been talking about. And I am impressed by certain things, such as the small number of people who were killed in that transformation that took place starting with the civil-rights decision by the Supreme Court in 1954. It was a very economical process in terms of blood being spilled.

I learned during the period in the Black Panther Party that in America one bullet fired really has the impact that large-scale battles have abroad. It has to do with the diffusion of information; magnified through the media, one bullet is like a whole fusillade. So an incident can take place where there is a little shooting, and it was as though the whole country participated, and people drew lessons or reacted or made decisions not only in the locality where the shooting took place but throughout the country.

The process was confrontational, it was frightening, it was terrible; but in the final analysis I think it is amazing that America had that ability to jettison structures that were demonstrably untenable and, you know, to walk away from some of those traditions.

I myself really used to be obsessed with - I used to really plan on how to kill Ronald Reagan. I'm talking about hatred, hatred that was blind to any other influence. I don't have that hatred any more. I've had opportunities to kill Ronald Reagan going around the country, and it never occurred to me to do that. And knowing my own heart and how I've walked away from hatred, I think other people have done the same thing. This is the hopeful thing, and I think that people all over the world can do the same thing.

**REASON:** *Did the Panthers try to provoke violence? Was that part of the strategy?*

**CLEAVER:** Sure it was part of the strategy. It was using the theories of revolutionary violence. A lot of people don't like to give us credit, but in America you had some of the best-educated revolutionaries in the world - even better-educated than some successful revolutionaries in other countries. We studied the experiences of these other countries and we knew the theories of guerrilla warfare and Marxism and Leninism and people's war, and we definitely were not sitting back waiting for the authorities to attack us. We used to lie about it, because the information was a weapon also. We would go out and ambush cops, but if we got caught we would blame it on them and claim innocence. I did that personally in the case I was involved in.

**REASON:** *The Bobby Hutton case?*

**CLEAVER:** Yes. We went after the cops that night, but when we got caught we said they came after us. We always talk that. When you talk about the legacy of the '60s, that's one legacy. That's what I try to address, because it helped to distort the image of the police, but I've come to the point where I realize that our police department is necessary.

**REASON:** *I just read Soul on Fire, your 1978 book, and the police seemed terribly abusive and violent nonetheless. I mean, even if they were...*

**CLEAVER:** Sure they were abusive and violent. They were murderers. And they still are. But policemen are like dogs on a leash. I'm not saying this to put them down, but you take the leash off a dog and it sics you, and that dog is going to bite if it is an obedient dog. The police function under political direction. They go after whoever they are sent after, and that's where the problem comes in.

Now we had a situation where we are dealing with a tradition - black people were moving out of their traditional position in America. Nobody knew what to do about it. The white politicians were confused, the blacks were confused. We didn't know exactly how to go about it. And the police were told to go out, stop those civil-rights marches, scare those people, terrorize them, beat them, use cattle prods, use this and that, and they went out and did that. When you talk to police now who participated in that, you find out that they were in the same position we were in - just trying to find the right formula.

REASON: So are you saying that in a sense their position vis-a-vis the Black Panthers was justified?

CLEAVER: I'm not saying justified. I'm just saying that part of the attitude was traditional - Keep these niggers in their place. They were functioning under orders, they were also humans. You can condemn the tradition, you can condemn the excesses. But when we have no axe to grind, we are just trying to understand, we are looking at human beings.

REASON: The nation's top cop, J. Edgar Hoover, seemed to be obsessed with the threat the Panthers posed to law and order. Do you understand him in the same way?

CLEAVER: Sure I can understand J. Edgar Hoover, because he wasn't inaccurate. We were the most militant black organization, and we were serious in what we were going about. He said that we were the main threat. We were trying to be the main threat. We were trying to be the vanguard organization. J. Edgar Hoover was an adversary, but he had good information. We were plugged into all of the revolutionary groups in America, plus those abroad. We were working hand-in-hand with communist parties here and around the world, and he knew that. So from his position, he had to try to stop us.

REASON: A lot of the Panthers seem to be, personally, pretty strong individualists, like you, and yet you espoused revolutionary socialism, collectivism. Did you notice the inconsistencies?

CLEAVER: At the time I didn't notice it. It's one thing to study Marxism on paper, living in a capitalistic country where you have individual freedoms and so forth - you don't really see the relationship between the ideology and the form of government that comes out of that ideology. Now, when I had a chance to go and live in communist countries this individualism came into conflict with the state apparatus, and that's when I recoiled against it. But when I was here I was looking at Marxism-Leninism as a weapon, as a tool, to fight against the status quo, and you know, it's just a quality of human beings that when they are trying to tear something down they don't pay enough attention.

Just like in South Africa right now They went to visit Nelson Mandela, and they asked him, «Would you prefer apartheid to communism?» And his attitude was, Communism is better than apartheid. Because apartheid has him in prison and has had him in prison for 2 years. Well, you get a guy in a communist country who has been in prison there for 20 years, and he will tell you, "I would rather live under apartheid," because he could leave. But the truth is that any form of constraint on our freedoms is not acceptable.

REASON: There is an interesting debate going on today, with economists and social scientists like Thomas Sowell, Charles Murray, and Walter Williams arguing that government welfare programs actually hurt the people they're tended to help. What do you think?

CLEAVER: I've come to basically the same conclusions. My life, I think, spans the whole era of the welfare state. I was born in 1935. I remember when people were ashamed to be on welfare and receive state aid and all that, but we developed a situation where black people to a large degree and a lot of other groups such as elderly people, children and a lot of poor white people ended being harnessed by

political forces, particularly the Democratic Party. In return for the federal appropriations that we now dependent upon, our leaders were obligated to get out the black vote for the Democratic Party. So this put us in a negative relationship with the economic system. We were dependent upon the federal budget - a very precarious situation, because when the political winds change, we get our living cut off.

REASON: How do you break that dependence? Something like 90 percent of blacks voted for Mondale.

CLEAVER: Ninety percent of voting blacks. A majority of the black people didn't participate in the election and never have. But I think that the only way to break the cycle is to give - not give, but make it possible for black people to have a stake in the economic system, where they earn wages, salaries, interest, and dividends. This is the only way you can break that. You're not going to pull your living out of the air. If you can't get your living through participation in the production process, then you are going into dependency on the consumption process. I would like to see black people flood into the productive process.

REASON: Are problems of poverty things that the government can solve, or do they have answers elsewhere, through different institutions or the private sector?

CLEAVER: It would have to be the private sector. But at the point where we are right now, the government can't just bow out. This is one of the problems Reagan had. He scared the hell out of people because he started cutting programs, but he didn't spend enough time talking to people about how to replace them. So people had this idea that he was just throwing them aside.

What we have to do is organize people in free institutions that can put them to work, and then they can draw their living out of our economy, not out of the federal treasury. Because the federal treasury doesn't produce anything. It gets what it has out of the private sector.

We need entities where people could belong to organizations that are not controlled by government. The organizations could come up with projects that would benefit society and then they could earn money that would come out of that national product and not filter through the state. If we do it through the state like, say, President Roosevelt did it with the New Deal, you augment the power of the state. But if you do it through decentralized structures that are controlled by the people, then we maintain our freedom, within a free institution. I don't want to see the government get control of the economic system as a whole and the livelihood of all the people, because I have seen that, and it's a no-no.

REASON: Aren't private ventures of this sort what people like Muslim dissident leader Louis Farrakhan are after? What do you think of Farrakhan?

CLEAVER: I know Farrakhan. You know, he taps a deep chord among the people because people want to be involved in some enterprise, they want to have money that they can control and get some benefit out of, something that the government doesn't control. The same activity that Farrakhan is talking about doing could be funded in other ways. But because we don't have any provision for that, he goes to Qaddafi. The problem with that is that Qaddafi is not giving away anything. He has some strings attached.

REASON: Is Farrakhan a dangerous man because of his Qaddafi connection?

CLEAVER: Certainly he's a dangerous man, because he will do things for them - intelligence things, but also military things.

REASON: When you were living in exile in Cuba and Algeria, what was it that started to make you rethink your view of them and their government?



Snoop Dog and Farrakhan

CLEAVER: It was exactly that - the shortness of it, the duration of their experience and the depth and quality of it. See, I lived in those kinds of places and I got to know people and made friends. I got to know the governments, the people in the military, people in the Communist Party or whatever they called it. That gives you a different perspective.

CLEAVER: I had a great burning desire to help enlarge human freedom and no desire at all to increase human misery or totalitarianism, so I stood up in America to fight against what I saw as the evils of our system. Then to go to a country like Cuba or Algeria or the Soviet Union and see the nature of control that those state apparatuses had over the people - it was shocking to me. I didn't want to believe it, because it meant that the politics that I was espousing was wrong and was leading toward a very bad situation. So, I tried to figure out what was wrong.

You know, the communists teach you that the dictatorship is a transient phase - that once capitalism is eliminated, then the state will wither away and you will have freedom. Well, when you look at those governments up close and see how they treat their own people, you can't believe in that. You see that people are using that preachment of the withering away of the state as their excuse to justify their own dictatorial power. The way that the goods and services of the economy are distributed, the way that the power mechanism is organized and the monopoly on power by the Communist Party, the control of the Communist Party apparatus by an elite - these things struck me as dangerous. And then when I had a chance to get to know people and see what the experiences had been in these countries since their revolutions, it made me realize that a new form, a worse form, of totalitarianism was creeping into the world and that it was necessary to sound an alarm against it, stand up and protest it - without sugar-coating anything that's wrong over here.

That's been the mistake made by a lot of people in assessing what I have said. I have never intended to say that we can rest on our laurels or we can stay right where we are. But I wanted to point out that we had better be careful where we jump when we jump out of the frying pan.

REASON: *A lot of American intellectuals have gone, say, to the Soviet Union or China and come back full of praises. What you saw in Cuba, Algeria, China, or the Soviet Union, somehow they just overlooked. Do you think it's because usually these things are short, they just scurry right through? Or what was it that made you able to perceive...*

When I first went to those countries boy was I impressed. If you would read some of the things I wrote then! I was full of praise, because I got that standard tour that they give people to impress them. I took the same tour that Barbara Walters took in Cuba, and Senator [George] McGovern, but after the tour I had a chance to meet other people and have a different experience. If I had gone only on the basis of how the governments treated me, I would have continued praising them, because really they did treat me well. They gave me a red-carpet treatment in those countries. But when you get off the red carpet and step down in the mud where the people are, you get a chance to talk to them and hear the stories that they have to tell, over and over again.

I lived out there for eight years. I lived in Cuba, I lived in Algeria, and I lived in France. I travelled throughout Africa, throughout the Communist world, and I had a chance to be a part of different cliques, and I got all of their criticisms of the other groups. When you get a chance to see behind the scenes, behind the rhetoric of international solidarity and world revolution and all of that, there is naked national self-interest. You see the Soviet Union jockeying for power against China. You see the Koreans and Vietnamese trying to stay out of the clutches of both of them. And you begin to develop a little realism or cynicism.

REASON: *In your book Soul on Fire you say that of all the communist groups you associated with, it was the North Vietnamese that you most liked and felt were more akin to what the ideology seemed like it should be.*

CLEAVER: Yes. You could sympathize with them, because they were struggling against the Soviet Union and China trying to dominate them, and they were also struggling against Chinese racism. So they had an antiracist attitude, and they had an anti-big-power attitude. When we went to Hanoi and started talking about their problems, they started with the Chinese. They regarded America as a small interlude - they had been struggling against the Chinese for thousands of years. They would ask us to say things in international forums, things that they couldn't say. They would ask us to criticize the Soviet Union and the Chinese because they have tried to control them. So there was a real sympathetic vibration that I felt. If you could eliminate the war against America you still could sympathize with them, because of the other plight that they were in. People called them the niggers of Asia.

REASON: *Many conservatives now call the Vietnam war a noble cause. You opposed it then. In retrospect do you feel it was a noble cause?*

CLEAVER: I think the idea of stopping communism is a noble cause. However, don't agree with the way we go about doing it. The old thing that Lenin said about communists being able to buy their ropes from the capitalists with which to hang the capitalists - this is something I have thought about for a long time. Conservatives often talk about this and try to have boycotts and cut off trade. But the way to destroy communism is through our technology and through open trade. It is hopeless to try to get businessmen to stop trading and not make a buck. If they can't do it legally, they

are going to do it illegally. It's just like the drug traffic. So my disappointment and my disagreement with conservatives is that they are forced into a position of hypocrisy.

REASON: *What do you think about intervention abroad - for example, in Central America? Do you think intervention in other people's civil wars and struggles can stop the march of communism, or is that wasted energy and also perhaps wrong?*

CLEAVER: The way we do it is wrong, because from Chiang Kai-shek down to Somoza we have been losing. How is it that such a powerful country can be defeated like this? It has to do with a mixture of motivation. No one talks, say, about the real ideological basis of the Monroe Doctrine. It was not meant as a bully doctrine to keep these guys under our boot heel. The Monroe Doctrine in its inception grew out of a vision of the unity of the Western Hemisphere, and we didn't want these other powers coming in because they would frustrate that unity. Simon Bolivar and all these people, too, wanted to unite Latin America or South America, and on that basis the Monroe Doctrine made sense. But it turned into a bully doctrine.

We need to revive that attitude of uniting the Western Hemisphere and keeping other powers out. The Soviet Union has penetrated this hemisphere, and as long as we deal with it as we are now dealing with it, we are delivering it to them. So I am not for intervention with the same old mix, because it just gets a lot of people killed. I think that ideology is primary. The armies of communism are the instruments of the ideology and not vice versa.

REASON: *Are you saying that we should use the ideology of freedom, always intervening in support of people who are fighting against totalitarianism, but with the voice of liberty and freedom and human rights?*

CLEAVER: Sincere freedom—not to try to replace Somoza with another culprit, you see, but to really help those people develop their lives and their economy and their political and institutional freedom.

REASON: *The way they choose?*

CLEAVER: They would choose to do it in the classical model of free institutions. Nobody chooses slavery. But they get pushed into these positions, because here we are offering the status quo and the communists are offering guns. If you are being oppressed and you can't feed your children, you get so angry that you want to kill whoever is in power, and what you don't see is that the guy giving you the gun is also putting a chain around your leg. You will see it later, but then it will be too late.

We are in a position where everything gets filtered through this confrontation that we have with the communists. And what happens is the communists are able to get the best of all the arguments. Right now in South Africa they get the best of the argument because they stand up and support the people. I am incensed with Jessie Jackson and Jerry Falwell. This shouldn't be a black versus white issue - not for the American people. We should have an American attitude toward that situation, and then I think we would come down on the side of freedom. But to be arguing in favour of the South African government leaves the Soviet Union to support the people over there, and they win the favour not only of the majority of the people of South Africa but of all of Africa, all of the Third World, and even the majority of the American people. It is really very blind and ignorant.

REASON: *You spent a number of years in prison in the United States, and in Soul on Fire you mention how tormenting that experience is. Does prison have any useful function?*

**CLEAVER:** Prisons are necessary because we have to be able to isolate certain kinds of behaviour. If we can't get people to behave in a social manner, we can't let them run amok and harm other people. But I think what we have in this country right now is a total breakdown in the whole concept of penology. It has to do with the death penalty. Now imprisonment, first of all, is isolation. It's increasingly severe measures of isolation, all the way down to solitary confinement, death row, and the ultimate isolation, death. So the death penalty is a spearhead of this whole thing. But what we have done is lop off the spearhead, you see, by getting rid of the death penalty, and so the tension in the whole penal code is removed. Because people don't fear it.

**REASON:** You said in one of your books that in order to be rehabilitated in prison, your personality has to be destroyed. Was your personality destroyed? Why don't you commit crimes any more?

**CLEAVER:** It's a process of education. I think no one should be let out of prison if they don't admit what they did. Because that's where the process of rehabilitation starts, with the person recognizing what they did was wrong. I used to do things and never would admit that it was wrong. I always thought I was justified in doing these things. As long as I felt that way, nothing could penetrate me. But what I did, those rapes - okay, I didn't get sent to prison for that, I beat it in court. But it was in my own heart of hearts, when I confronted my own behaviour, that I admitted that that's not right. That's the beginning of rehabilitation.

**REASON:** Do you look at the Eldridge Cleaver who committed rapes as a different person?

**CLEAVER:** Not really. I can't say a different person, because there is a continuity. I could even say I committed worse crimes against women after getting out of prison than before I went in. Not that I raped them, but I became more skilful in manipulating them. I think what changed me was getting married and having children. That may be the best rehabilitation of all, yet there are married people with children in prison, too, so it's the individual case. You've got to transform that person's value system and that person's attitude toward other human beings.

**REASON:** The prisons are largely filled with people jailed for drug-related crimes. Should those laws exist?

**CLEAVER:** There's no doubt in my mind that our present attitude toward drugs is wrong - it's self-defeating, and it's not going to solve the problem. I would like to see the profit taken out of the drug trafficking. Otherwise we're going to be overwhelmed. We already are overwhelmed. The

DEA, the Drug Enforcement Agency, already has admitted that stopping drugs at their source or in transit is a failure. So now we've adopted a catastrophic tactic in urging corporations and business entities to adopt random mandatory testing, which lets Big Brother in through the back door. We are giving the government the right to test our body fluids - it's inevitable. The government is going to have to take it over just to ensure fairness, because of the 14th Amendment. And so the same way that we got J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI out of Prohibition, we're getting what I call the Piss Police out of this whole drug situation. It's absolutely catastrophic in terms of our freedom.

**REASON:** Do you think that by legalizing it...

**CLEAVER:** Where people could get it in drug stores and pharmacies, okay.

**REASON:** So it comes down to its real cost?

**Cleaver:** Yes, because its inflated cost is feeding a criminal culture. And because, frankly, I don't see drugs as being as bad for the individual as we make them out to be. So I would take the profit out of drugs and educate people to show them what they are doing to themselves. I started smoking weed when I was 13 years old. It's not because of the cops that I don't smoke it now. It's because I don't want to be unproductive. It's not out of fear of the cops that I don't go around snorting cocaine. It's because I don't want to be living like that. I know a lot of people who have done drugs in their life and who have quit because of the quality of their life.

**REASON:** What are you involved with these days?

**CLEAVER:** Mostly writing. I was involved in political campaigns around here, but my main thrust at this time is writing, and I have been doing screenplays.

**REASON:** Any success yet?

**CLEAVER:** I'm waiting. I got a winner, but I haven't sold it yet. I'm looking for a good agent who can help me.

**REASON:** Do you see any of the other Black Panthers or contact any of them?

**Cleaver:** I see Huey Newton. He used to walk down this street every day at 3:45 when he was in the hospital here in one of those dry-out programs. But if you sit around up on College Avenue you can see Huey Newton every once on a while.

**REASON:** But you don't really...

**CLEAVER:** He won't talk to me.

**REASON:** How about Bobby Seale?

**CLEAVER:** I talk to Bobby Seale over the phone. And a lot of the other people who were in the Black Panther Party are all over the place, and I talk to them. We had a split in the party. People on my side of the split,



I'm on good terms with. People on the other side, I'm not on good terms with, and they've gone on to other things. The Black Panther Party doesn't exist anymore - there's nobody running around talking about the Black Panther Party. But they're in other political activities. In the governments in Oakland, Los Angeles, and here in Berkeley there are a lot of ex-Black Panthers.

**REASON:** Have they generally pursued a socialist or leftist...?

**CLEAVER:** Anti-American kind of leftist, I call it. Really a hodgepodge ideology, because a lot of people haven't rethought it. Like Tom Hayden—when he comes up here and talks on the campus, you'd think he was still back in the '60s, yet he's on the public payroll. I did what a lot of people didn't want to do, and that is to back away from the whole mix and let the chips fall where they fall. When I first came back to America, Huey Newton was in Cuba, Bernardine Dohrn and those people were still fugitives, and they all denounced my coming back. Then, when they saw me working out my own legal problems, - Huey Newton came back. The other people like Bernardine Dohrn and many others came back, but they still made the same kind of statements. Bernardine Dohrn is waiting to be admitted to the New York Bar, but you ask her what she thinks about America and she'll say nya, nya, nya. I think that's an unfortunate attitude.

**REASON:** In exile, you rued the fact that your son didn't play football. Does he play now?

**CLEAVER:** He's a hell of a football player! I brainwashed him from the time he was a baby. I had a pair of football shoes that I always kept hanging in my den. These football shoes were mine at Abraham Lincoln High School in Los Angeles. I never had a chance to use them, because I got busted. But I always kept them. My son has them now, and from the time that he was first born I always talked to him about football. I think it worked. He loves football.

## Spring 1997, interview by prof. Gates

Eldridge Cleaver, former Minister of Information for the Black Panther Party, represented the most militant wing of the Black Panther Party, advocating the overthrow of the United States Government and the establishment of socialism.

The FBI's exploitation of ideological differences between Eldridge Cleaver and BPP Chairman Huey P. Newton eventually led to the dissolution of the organization.

Cleaver's acclaimed 1968 book *Soul on Ice* – written while serving a prison term for rape – was a searing statement about his life as a black American. After his release from prison, he was indicted on charges relating to a shoot-out with Oakland, California police. He fled the U.S. and lives in exile for seven years in Algeria and France, where he was joined by his wife Kathleen Neal Cleaver.

Prof. Gates first met the Cleavers in Paris during their exile there. He was then working as a stringer for time magazine. The Cleavers were divorced in 1984.

Eldridge Cleaver also wrote *Post-Prison Writings and speeches*. In this interview, conducted in the spring of 1997, Eldridge talked with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. about the shoot-out with Oakland police which led to his exile., and looks back at the legacy of the Panthers and the civil rights movement.

CLEAVER: When these riots started all over the country in the aftermath of the assassination of Martin Luther King -- I think he got killed on the fourth of April. This shootout that we had took place on the sixth and the seventh of April. So we saw it coming while the police were acting so we decided to get down first. So we started the fight. There were 14 of us. We went down into the area of Oakland where the violence was the worst a few blocks away from where Huey Newton had killed that cop so we dealt with them when they came upon us. We were well armed, and we had a shootout that lasted an hour and a half. I will tell anybody that that was the first experience of freedom that I had. I was free for an hour and a half because during that time the repressive forces couldn't put their hand on me because we were shooting it out with them for an hour and a half. Three police officers got wounded. None of them got killed; I got wounded. Another Panther got wounded.

Bobby Hutton didn't get wounded during the shootout, but they murdered him after we were in custody. That is why I am sitting here today because the police offers to whom we surrendered -- when I came back from my exile and was going to court on those charges. I was facing charges that would give me 82 years in prison. This police officer came to court one day, and the district attorney said, «Eldridge, there is somebody that wants to meet you. Would you mind talking to him?» I said, «well, I will meet anybody, Ben. Bring them on. Who is it?» He said, «it's Lieutenant Hilliard.» I knew his name from the grand jury transcript. This was the guy that we surrendered to. He told me -- he said, «Eldridge, remember that night? Remember when you came out of the building and you looked up and there was a police officer in the window and you had a pistol in your face about three feet from your face?» I said, «I sure do remember that.» He said, «you know I was already squeezing the trigger. I was going to blow your head off because three officers had gotten wounded. All that shooting had everybody on edge.

So I was pulling the trigger to blow your head off, and something told me not to do it.» I said,

«praise the Lord.» He said, «praise the Lord.» He told me, «I am no longer a police officer.» He said, «I have my own private security firm now.» He said, «the reason that they have not been rushing you to court is because of my testimony and the testimony of 13 other police officers who were that night who do not agree with what the police did in the way they killed Bobby Hutton.» He said, «they murdered Bobby. They murdered my prisoner.» That's what he said. Then he went on to describe -- he said, «the police have the responsibility of enforcing the law, the guardians of the law. But what they did that night was worse than what you did.» He said, «if you are going to court, I am going to testify against you because what you did was wrong. But I'm also going to testify against them because what they did was worse. There is no statute of limitation on murder. What they did was first degree murder.» This is what he said.

They just took Bobby and pushed him. They pushed him, and he only went about five feet. He was stumbling and almost falling. They shot him 12 times, man. Murdered him right there on the spot. He fell down.

GATES: What did you do?

CLEAVER: I'm down there, they got shotguns and pistols in my face, man. I figured they going to shoot us. I could not imagine living through that. But this other cop, he started complaining about what they had just done, and that was the last of that and then they took me and put me in that van and I knew from Huey Newton's trial that all of the police calls are tape recorded automatically so whoever was talking to these cops asked them who you got, who's in there? So they were saying we don't know who he is. So I said it's Eldridge Cleaver. I wanted to get that on that tape, see, and so then they took me down a little side street. Two of them suckers got in there, they started beating me and I have no doubt that they meant to kill me, but then it came over the radio that this cop who was driving was telling «a couple officers in the back slapping this guy up» and so the squawk box told them to stop it. And so they kept on and he told them your order is to stop that, and so they wouldn't stop. And so he told them they won't stop. So that guy said something, like in some kind of code -- that was the second time I heard that code -- and whatever that code meant, boy, it froze them right in their -- they stopped right then, man, and they took me on in.

GATES: Otherwise you'd be dead?



CLEAVER: Yeah, I'd be dead.

GATES: Was the civil rights movement a success?

CLEAVER: I think it was a success in terms of the goals that it espoused. That was to break down the colour barrier if public accommodations access to the institutions and things like that. But the big failure of the civil rights movement was that it did

not have an economic plank because while we got access to schools and to Hot Dog Stands and all that, the burning issue right now is economic freedom and economic justice and economic democracy. The NAACP didn't touch that. They had no plan for that. When Martin Luther King was turning towards the economic arena in Nashville supporting the strike of the garbage man, he was murdered. I applaud my country for the changes that we have undertaken in these areas of civil rights. But where the big problem still remains is with the economic system. If you would call a meeting today to talk about segregation, wouldn't nobody come but Louis Farrakhan and David Dukes. But if you call a meeting to talk about the money, it would be standing room only. It wouldn't all be black because the money is funny for everybody, right. That's where the rubber hits the road; that's what we've got to deal with.

GATES: Well, is that what the Panthers were all about?

CLEAVER: We had a strong economic place in our program. We had a direct challenge- the whole exploitation of the capitalist economy in our ten points. We had a point dealing with the economy. But we were also Marxist in our orientation, which is like totally economics. Do you see what I'm saying. So we understood the relationship to our freedom and our access to our economic remuneration and not just a little job because that is whimsical. The man on top can change that any time he wants to. That's why I was always so down on being totally dependent on the welfare system because when the winds blow differently in Washington, they can cut you off. But the black democrats they thought that they were eternal. They thought that Tip O'Neil was going to be there forever to throw them crumbs. But it was obvious to me that this was a very dangerous dependency; therefore, I talked about stuff that went beyond welfare. I rejected welfare because we need to be involved not just with the federal budget but with the private sector because the federal government gets its money from the private sector so we have to be involved in owning and have an influence over the productive capacity of this country or else we are



going to be perpetually dependent upon the largesse of those who rule.

GATES: That's a long way from Marxism.

CLEAVER: Yeah, because I had a chance to witness Marxism up close in action. So in my travels around the world, I saw that it wasn't working. I saw that the dictatorship of the proletariat was the last thing I wanted to have. That's when I began to see that with all of our problems in the United States, we had the best formal government in the world. We had the freest and most democratic procedure.

I'm telling you after I ran into the Egyptian police and the Algerian police and the North Korean police and the Nigerian police and Idi Amin's police in Uganda, I began to miss the Oakland police. The last time I saw them suckers, I was shooting at them; and they were shooting at me. But regardless of what our standards are in this country, we do have some laws; we do have some principles that to a certain degree restrain our police.

GATES: Eldridge, how would the world look, how would America look, if the Panthers had won?

CLEAVER: I think the only way we could have won is that the American people would have revolted against the status quo. We had the anti-war movement and the black movement coming together for a better America. Now, victory in those terms would have meant that we would have been able to have a group of people who could get control of the government and administer it. But I do not think that we had a winning scenario. We never dreamed that we would be able to overthrow the American government. We didn't see that as our task. We saw that as the task of the survivors. Our job was to tear down the status quo and leave it to other people on how to rebuild because it was not possible to seize control of the government and install our people. That's reserved for banana republics. We had no illusions on that point and so victory, in our sense, was to get the laws passed that were passed. They started passing voter rights acts and all this kind of stuff, new civil rights bill, so we saw ourselves as providing backbone that was missing from Dr. Martin Luther King's nonviolent movement and we did not think that

movement would be rewarded.

It's like the NAACP. NAACP used to be considered a wild eyed radical organization until Martin Luther King came along and then they became acceptable and Martin Luther King was the devil. So when we came along Martin Luther King started looking better. To some people. Obviously not to all. Because when the killing started it was to liquidate the plan hatched here in Boston, or I should say in Massachusetts, between the Kennedy dynasty and Martin Luther King.

Their plan was for Martin Luther King and Malcolm X to work together because together they could turn out the total black vote and then with the votes that the Kennedys could deliver they would have been able to establish a dynasty that would have ruled this country into the next century. That was their plan and that is why they were liquidated. The two Kennedy brothers killed, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X killed so that plan could not come into fruition. That was the scenario, that is why they were killed we do not understand that. The only one that really broke it down was this guy Sorensen who was the Kennedy choice for the CIA, but the establishment would not allow him to take control. Maybe it was the FBI, he was supposed to become head of the FBI.



Odetta

GATES: Theodore Sorensen?

CLEAVER: Yeah. He was a speech writer. And so Kennedy tried to get him appointed head of the FBI and they wouldn't do it and so they were murdered and so the powers that be murdered them and they made -- if you look at all four of those assassinations they were textbook. They were murdered and the finger was pointed at some obvious enemy in all four cases. In all four cases, baloney. They were killed by the powers that rule this country who did not want to see the political dynasty of the Kennedys take control and last into the next century. They were still paranoid from how long Roosevelt was in power. Remember they changed the laws so that he couldn't run again and he obliged them by dying and so they were very fearful that this could be repeated, and it was on the way to being repeated but they knocked them out because by now Martin Luther King would have been president. That was their scenario.

GATES: Eldridge, how is it different to be black today in 1997 than it was when you were in that basement in Oakland 30 years ago? We have the largest black middle class that we've ever had in history. 45% of all black children live at or beneath the poverty line. It's like we have the best of times and the worst of times. What's that all about?

CLEAVER: That's because our black middle class has

followed an assimilationist ethic. They have become white and they've adopted all the worst features of America in terms of not caring about the other people. Like the white ruling class never cared about poor white people, let alone about black people and other minorities and these blacks who are following W.E.B. Du Bois' formula of educating that 10% who will then come back and lift up the rest of the people -- the argument that was had between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington was over how we're going to manage this thing.

Booker T. said we've got to teach these people how to work, then they'll get jobs, then they'll be able to afford education and then they can do that. And Du Bois said no, we've got to concentrate on the intellectual development of the people and get 10% of our people educated and then they can help the other people, but if you just learn a trade and you don't know what's going on, that ain't going nowhere.

I say both of them were right. We need both of what they promised and we've got both of what they promised. But they didn't have a unifying vision and consequently we've got an enlarged black bourgeoisie but they have departed from the basis of the black bourgeoisie according to E. Franklin Frazer. This was the professional classes and that was their economic base but the progress that has taken place has given a new economic base to the black bourgeoisie, to the expanded black -- now their

economic base is political as well as up front economic and they still have a professional class but it is been expanded because you have a lot of black people with a whole lot of money coming from these other pursuits.

Add to that, the million-dollar salaries to football players, basketball players and baseball players, not that they're doing anything constructive with all of that money, but they have it. But they didn't bring it back to pull the other people up and so it's like the devil take the hindmost. That is what we're dealing with so that the black bourgeoisie is as corrupt and immoral as the white bourgeoisie and that is the problem.

GATES: It sounds like you're saying we were better off in the 60s or under segregation than we are today.

CLEAVER: No, I'm not saying that. A lot of people think that we were better off because we had more integrity to our black colleges and there were a lot of black businesses and all that, but that is like a tempest in a teapot. We are better off because we have more access, we have more mobility, but we have a problem which is a political problem because when the laws were passed to open up the political arena for black people the most visible leaders and the ones who were able to get those jobs were our protest leaders so what they did, they took our protest machinery and transformed it into their personal political machinery to get them reelected which stripped the black community of any kind of organizational machinery and consequently it left us floundering and treading water in a miserable state.

That is why the number one task that we have in the black community is a coup d'état against our present leadership to strip them from that machinery that controls the community so that new ideas and new people can percolate up and then we can have a new agenda. But because of the way that it's controlled right now, the number one task of the black politician

who's got these position should be to politically educate the black community but they didn't do that because they knew that if the black community was politically educated the first thing they would do would be to get rid of them.

So consequently the black community is devoid of any kind of democratic process. We're under the dictatorship of the black bourgeoisie as it has never been before. And so they have federal money now to fund their political machine and keep any new people from moving, any new ideas from moving, and they're not any more concerned with the poorer black people than the rich white politicians are concerned with poor white people.

*GATES: We were talking about black leadership. What's your take on the Million Man March and Minister Farrakhan?*

CLEAVER: I think the Million Man March will go down in history as the defining episode for a generation of people and I know Minister Farrakhan personally and have known him for years. And my overall decision on Farrakhan is that the Afro-American people are not going to follow him anywhere and as General Colin Powell said in his famous commencement address at Howard University, he said that after what we've been through and after coming this far we cannot afford to take a detour through the swamps of hatred and that is the Achilles heel of Farrakhan is that the doctrine of the Nation of Islam is a racist doctrine and the Afro-American people are not racist people.

We are anti-racist people. We among all the people of the world have put up a valiant struggle against racism and for emancipation from a system based on racism and so that is the problem with Farrakhan. He needs to be born again. He needs a new vision. Somebody needs to talk to that guy. I tried to talk to him but he's too slick. He won't listen, you see.

### 3.111

I remember him when he first came along, when he was nothing but a pimp and a calypso singer and Malcolm X pulled him and let him sing his song which was A White Man's Heaven Is A Black Man's Hell and by singing that song at Malcolm X's rallies every week he got to hear Malcolm X's speech 1000 times so when Malcolm X

was murdered, the show must go on so they were looking around for who could keep the show going. Farrakhan was there. He knew Malcolm's speech word for word, he has a good mind and a good memory and he was able to do it because he was a showman from the beginning and so he was able to step into that vacuum, but the boy's not creative and he's blind sided so consequently he was not able to shuffle off that mortal coil which he should have done.

He should have not felt obligated to carry on the doctrine according to Elijah Mohammed but he did that to stay the hands of his rivals who were willing to do that in order to get the power. So they were calling him a revisionist for a long time. That is why he had to stick to what Elijah Mohammed was teaching and for that reason we cannot follow him because we don't want to go where he's going, and where he's going is where all haters go and that's

into the garbage can of history and we're not going with him.

*GATES: What about Colin Powell?*

CLEAVER: I think Colin Powell is a magnificent American and he is different from these other so-called leaders because he is not a protest leader. The man is an American leader, he's an all-American leader, but because he has this Afro-American ancestry he appeals to black people but he also appeals to white people and that is the way it should be because we don't need no narrow mentality person in the White House. We need a person who is an



Colin Powell

all-American and this brings me closer to my agenda. I have to apologize to Vice President Gore because he will not become president in the year 2000.

*GATES: Who will?*

CLEAVER: Because he is too little too late. In the year 2000 the American people, are going to elect the first woman president of the United States of America and it's not just going to be a woman, it's going to be a mother because what is missing from our decision making process in this Old Boy

network is the heart and the concerns of a mother and so I, along with a lot of other people, are going to make it happen. We don't want to specify who is our choice right now because we have to get women to raise their self esteem and to realize and understand that there are a lot of women in America who are qualified to be president of the United States of America.

You would have to look up under a whole lot of rocks in America to find a woman as unqualified as these suckers we've been sending to Washington and women need to understand that and deal with that because we

cannot go into a new millennium and a new century with the Old Boy network which is racist and misogynistic. We have got to go in there with a new deal and I hope that we will have time to tick off a few points that I feel are extremely important but I want to make sure you finish your questions first on this.

*GATES: You, thirty years ago, were a socialist, I think it's fair to say. Do you believe that capitalism is compatible with the absorption of a significantly larger*

*percentage of black people into the middle class?*

CLEAVER: I think it is. I think that it is possible for the capitalist system to have a program of full employment, but we have a spiritual and moral problem in America. Our problem is not economic or political, it is that we do not care about each other because we say hey look, my people, my group, we're first class and you guys, you're second class and you guys over there, you third class and

you guys in the back right there, no ain't got no class. That's our attitude but our creator never wasted his or her time creating a second class person. He made us all first class and he provided this earth as our home for all of us, not for the black man, the white man, the red man, the yellow man, the brown man, but for the whole human family.

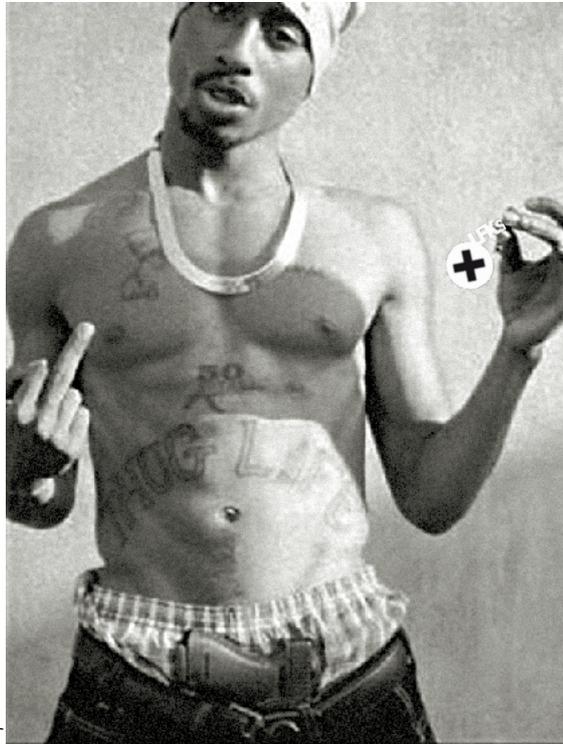
We are the ones who have created a system of scarcity. There's enough building materials in this country, enough skilled workers, that there should not be any homeless people. There should not be any hungry people. And so a man wrote a poem in Berkeley, old man, in which he had an immortal line. It was a poem on greed in which he said how much more than enough do you want? There is enough for all of us but we don't have values that include us all and the black bourgeoisie suffers from that same lack of values as the white bourgeoisie and so we need a spiritual transformation in our attitude towards each other so that we can look upon each other as a family and therefore our national economy should be based upon a family budget, not going around preaching scarcity. There's not enough money for this. There's enough money for everything if you stop spending it the way you're spending it and so we need to undertake some political reform. Number one, I told you about the toilets, but number two, we have got to require our politicians to write their own speeches and when they campaign to campaign under the penalties of perjury because we have developed a political culture of mendacity.

We all know the politicians lie, we don't expect them to tell the truth so we have a low expectation because they've been lying all down through history. We've got to raise the standard and to start with we require them to write their own speeches or let's vote for the speech writer. George Bush went in talking about let there be 1000 points of light then when he got in the White House all the lights in the country went out and we found out that a woman wrote that speech. He didn't even write the speech. So when you come before us reading your speech we want to know what you are talking about, what you are thinking about, where you are coming from, but you can't tell us that if you going to read a speech some word monger wrote for you. We got to change that, man, because we need truth in our political arena, and then we've got to restore vision because our young people are lost, they don't see a future and to restore - yes, sir?

*GATES: How do we do that in the black community? I mean we have this gangster culture.*

*CLEAVER: I know. We have got to do it for the country as a whole because it is no longer a situation where you can just deal with the problems of black people because we now have the same problem. We've gotten rid of the special problems. I know that there's still discrimination going on and racism in the decision and what Newt Gingrich talked about a new contract with the American people. I used to carry his book around with me and I'd jump up and down on it and kick it off the stage because why do we think that Newt Gingrich going to live up to a new contract when he hasn't*

*lived up to the old contract? We don't need a contract. The contract that we should be going by is called the Constitution of the United States of America and all this other stuff is just a political scam.*



*GATES: But the Constitution doesn't say anything about economic equality.*

*CLEAVER: It says that we are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And those causes are elastic. If we have people who will interpret that Constitution right what do we need to be happy? We need some food, we need a house, we need some money in our pocket. We don't need to be begging, asking for spare change, we don't need to be on welfare asking for a handout from the federal government. We need money and income that we can control. We need part of the private sector. We need property and we need ownership so that we can not be just floundering this way and that way, depending on who's in Washington and which way the political winds are blowing.*

That is what we've got to be emancipated from and that calls for not a communist formula and the redistribution of the wealth, we need at least 51% of the wealth in this country shifted into the hands of women. They are over 50% of the population. Now they are divorced into poverty. They work with these chumps and help them get rich then they run away with the secretary and divorce the wife into poverty. We have got to stop that. We need to shift 51% at the very least of the wealth of this country into the hands of women.

*GATES: Are you optimistic about the future? I mean given the fact that we have this large black underclass and a large black middle class, it looks like we have two nations and they're both black.*

*CLEAVER: We have more nations than that because we have poor white people, we have poor Indians, we have poor -- we have got to eliminate the economic basis of the underclass by providing them with jobs not handouts from the federal government. That is the failure of our economic system, that you have economists who say that you've got to keep the people on the brink of starvation in order to motivate them to work and hustle around. The failure of the capitalistic economic system is that they did not provide for full*

*employment. They were satisfied with a certain percentile and then they were willing to keep a lot of people perpetually in reserve and that was to keep wages down and all that kind of pressure. We have got to have a policy of full employment and by restoring the frontier and the union of the western hemisphere it is a full employment program for the whole hemisphere. There's a lot of work to be done but we have to reorient ourselves from a system of scarcity and a belief system in scarcity and there is no problem that we have on our agenda that we cannot solve.*

*GATES: Eldridge, many people compare Huey Newton with Tupac Shakur. And some people even suggest that without a gangster culture, that is, 30 years ago, a person like Tupac would have emerged as a leader of a revolutionary group like Huey P. Newton.*

CLEAVER: This is an historical perspective because they do not understand that Tupac is a child of Huey Newton and Malcolm X. That Tupac would not have been who he was had he not been born of parents who followed Huey Newton. Afeni Shakur and Amumu Shakur were members of the Black Panther party. And it was because of that experience that they were able to raise Tupac with the mentality and the spirit that he had. So talking about going back like that, saying that Tupac would have been Huey, you cannot unring the bell.

GATES: But Tupac was a gangster, wasn't he?

CLEAVER: Huey was a gangster.

GATES: Oh, he was?

CLEAVER: I'm not-- I'm talking about a real gangster. Tupac, they were talking about gangster rap. Huey P. Newton was a gun toting gangster, but that's not all he was. I'm saying he went through that experience as a criminal, but the thing about Tupac was his spirit and his rebellion against oppression. This comes from the way that he was raised and the values that were transmitted to him.

His father died in a gun fight with the New York police department and so Afena was a very strong stalwart of the Black Panther party and Tupac was raised like that. He is what we call a panther cub. And that was what he was about.

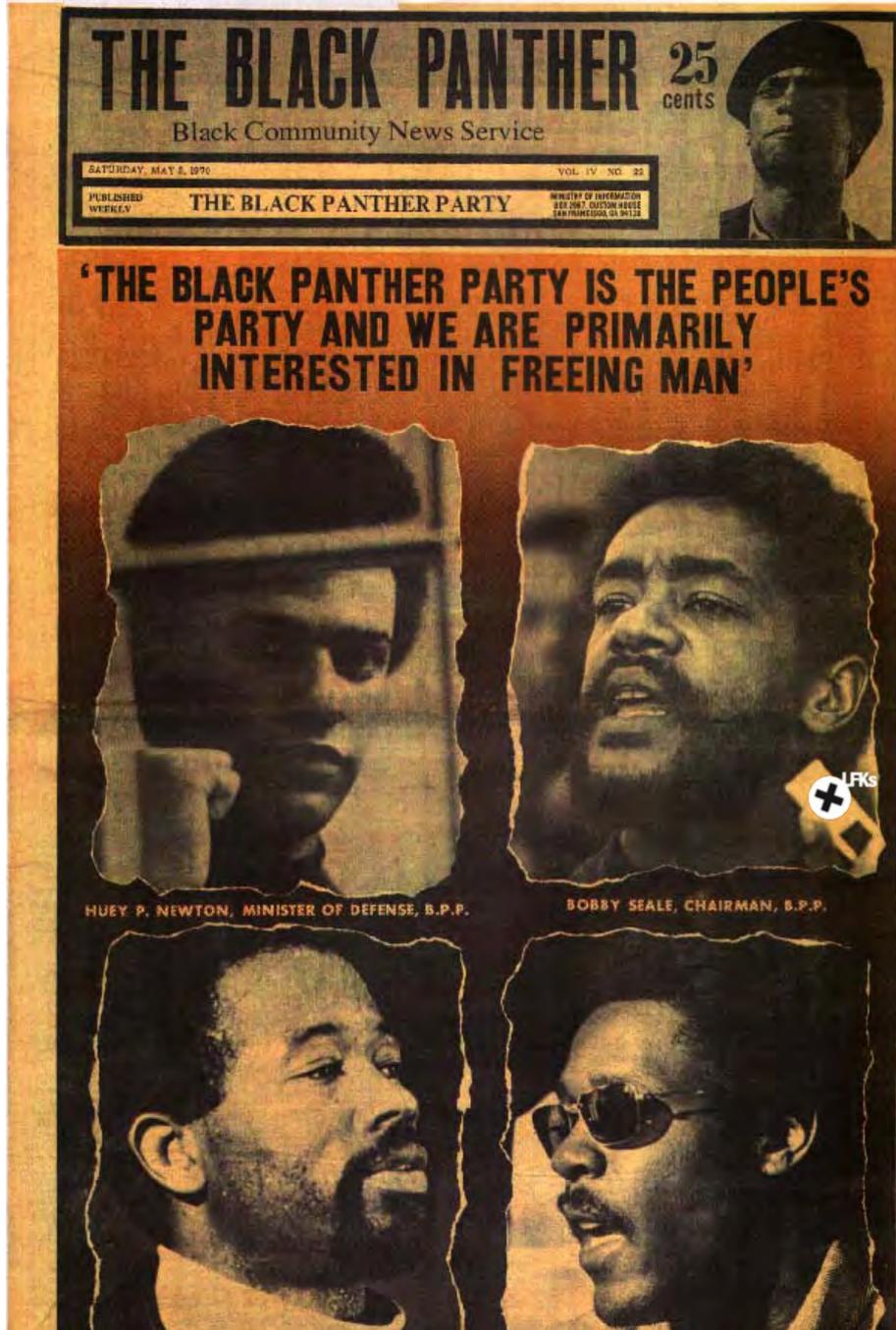
And that is why it was such a blow, [Tupac's] liquidation, and many people think that it was the COINTELPRO that took him out because the story doesn't hold up because anybody who knows Las Vegas knows that after the Mike Tyson fight there, there is no way that anybody going to drive along upside of another car, shoot them and drive away because it's gridlocked for blocks around there, man. So that is not what happened. There is more to it than that.

GATES: Eldridge, now, thirty years later, the smoke has cleared, bodies are buried, people have moved on. Was it worth it? I mean was the Panther movement worth it? Was it a good thing?

CLEAVER: It was a good thing and like all things, there was good and bad, but nothing like what this nitwit, Horowitz, is talking about because that is not where we were coming from. And I regret the way that the Party was repressed because it left a lot of unfinished business because we had planned to make a transition to the political arena and we

GATES: You're crazy.

CLEAVER: They're taking out more people than anything else.



would have been able to transmute that violence and that legacy into legitimate and peaceful channels. As it was they chopped off the head and left the body there armed. That's why all these young bloods out there now, they've got the rhetoric but without the political direction and they've got the guns. A man told me in Berkeley, said-- 'Eldridge, the two most dangerous demographics in the Bay Area right now are young black men with guns and middle-aged white women with Volvos.'

GATES: Will history judge you and your contemporaries from the '60s -- Karenga, Rap, Stokely, Angela, the whole gang, Julian Bond -- favorably, do you think?

CLEAVER: I think they will. I think they will give us Fs where we deserve them and they'll give us As where we deserve them and they're going to give Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver an A plus.

# THE BLACK PANTHER

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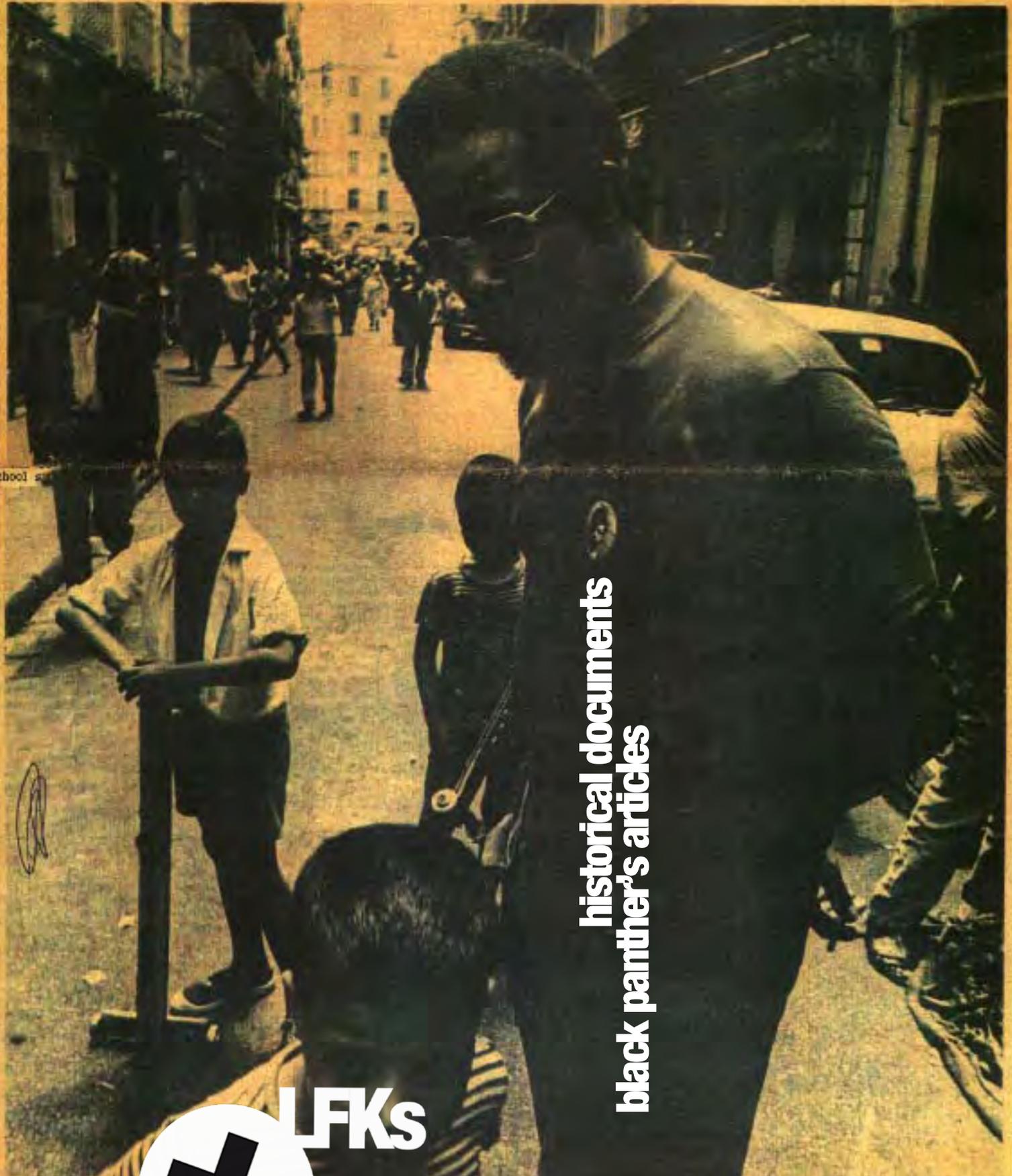
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«We have said: the ideology of the Black Panther Party is the historical experience of Black people and the wisdom gained by Black people in their 400 year long struggle against the system of racist oppression and economic exploitation in Babylon, interpreted through the prism of the Marxist-Leninist analysis by our Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton.

However, we must place heavy emphasis upon the last part of that definition. The world of Marxism-Leninism has become a jungle of opinion in which conflicting interpretations, from Right Revisionism to Left Dogmatism, foist off their reactionary and blind philosophies as revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. Around the world and in every nation people, all who call themselves Marxist-Leninists, are at each other's throats. Such a situation presents serious problems to a young party, such as ours, that is still in the process of refining its ideology.

When we say that we are Marxist-Leninists, we mean that we have studied and understood the classical principles of scientific socialism and that we have adapted these principles to our own situation for ourselves. However, we do not move with a closed mind to new ideas or information. At the same time, we know that we must rely upon our own brains in solving ideological problems as they relate to us.

For too long Black people have relied upon the analyses and ideological perspectives of others. Our struggle has reached a point now where it would be absolutely suicidal for us to continue this posture of dependency. No other people in the world are in the same position as we are, and no other people in the world can get us out of it except ourselves. There are those who are all too willing to do our thinking for us, even if it gets us killed. However, they are not willing to follow through and do our dying for us. If thoughts bring about our deaths, let them at least be our own thoughts, so that we will have broken, once and for all, with the flunkeyism of dying for every cause and every error - except our own.

One of the great contributions of Huey P. Newton is that he gave the Black Panther Party a firm ideological foundation that frees us from ideological flunkeyism and opens up the path to the future - a future to which we must provide new ideological formulations to fit our ever changing situation.

Much - most - of the teachings of Huey P. Newton are unknown to the people because Huey has been placed in a position where it is impossible to really communicate with us. And much that he taught while he was free has gotten distorted and watered down precisely because the Black Panther Party has been too hung up in relating to the courts and trying to put on a good face in order to help lawyers convince juries of the justice of our cause. This whole court hang-up has created much confusion.

For instance, many people confuse the Black Panther Party with the Free Huey Movement or the many other mass activities that we have been forced to indulge in in order to build mass support for our comrades who have gotten captured by the pigs. We are absolutely correct in indulging in such mass activity. But we are wrong when we confuse our mass line with our party line.

Essentially, what Huey did was to provide 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. There is a lot of confusion over whether we are members of the Working Class or whether we are Lumpenproletariat. It is necessary to confront this confusion, because it has a great deal to do with the strategy and tactics that we follow and with our strained relations with the White radicals from the oppressor section of Babylon.

Some so-called Marxist-Leninists will attack us for what we have to say, but that is a good thing and not a bad thing because some people call themselves Marxist-Leninists who are downright enemies of Black people. Later for them. We want them to step boldly forward, as they will do—blinded by their own stupidity and racist arrogance—that it will be easier for us to deal with them in the future.

We make these criticisms in a fraternal spirit of how some Marxist-Leninists apply the classical principles to the specific situation that exists in the United States because we believe in the need for a unified revolutionary movement in the United States, a movement that is informed by the revolutionary principles of scientific socialism. Huey P. Newton says that «power is the ability to define phenomena and make it act in a desired manner.» And we need power, desperately, to counter the power of the pigs that now bears so heavily upon us.

Ideology is a comprehensive definition of a status quo that takes into account both the history and the future of that status quo and serves as the social glue that holds a people together and through which a people relate to the world and other groups of people in the world. The correct ideology is an invincible weapon against the oppressor in our struggle for freedom and liberation.

Marx defined the epoch of the bourgeoisie and laid bare the direction of the Proletarian future. He analyzed Capitalism and defined the method of its doom:

VIOLENT REVOLUTION BY THE  
PROLETARIAT AGAINST THE BOURGEOIS  
STATE APPARATUS OF CLASS OPPRESSION  
AND REPRESSION. REVOLUTIONARY  
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE COUNTER-  
REVOLUTIONARY CLASS VIOLENCE  
PERPETRATED THROUGH THE SPECIAL  
REPRESSIVE FORCE OF THE ARMED  
TENTICLES (sic.) OF THE STATE.

This great definition by Marx and Engels became the mightiest weapon in the hands of oppressed people in the history of ideology. It marks a gigantic advance for all mankind. And since Marx's time, his definition has been strengthened, further elaborated, illumined, and further refined.

But Marxism has never really dealt with the United States of America. There have been some very nice attempts. People have done the best that they know how. However, in the past, Marxist-Leninists in the United States have relied too heavily upon foreign, imported analyses and have seriously distorted the realities of the American scene. We might say that the Marxism-Leninism of the past belongs

to the gestation period of Marxism-Leninism in the United States, and that now is the time when a new, strictly American ideological synthesis will arise, spring up from the hearts and souls of the oppressed people inside Babylon, and uniting these people and hurling them mightily, from the force of their struggle, into the future. The swiftly developing revolution in America is like the gathering of a mighty storm, and nothing can stop that storm from finally bursting, inside America, washing away the pigs of the power structure and all their foul, oppressive works. And the children of the pigs and the oppressed people will dance and spit upon the common graves of these pigs.

There are some Black people in the United States who are absolutely happy, who do not feel themselves to be oppressed, and who think that they are free. Some even believe that the President wouldn't lie, and that he is more or less an honest man; that Supreme Court decisions were almost written by god in person; that the Police are Guardians of the Law; and that people who do not have jobs are just plain lazy and good-for-nothing and should be severely punished. These are like crabs that must be left to boil a little longer in the pot of oppression before they will be ready and willing to relate. But the overwhelming majority of Black people are uptight, know that they are oppressed and not free; and they wouldn't believe Nixon if he confessed to being a pig; they don't relate to the Supreme Court or any other court; and they know that the racist pig cops are their sworn enemies. As for poverty, they know what that is all about.

These millions of Black people have no political representation, they are unorganized, and they do not own or control any of the natural resources; they neither own nor control any of the industrial machinery, and their daily life is a hustle to make it by any means necessary in the struggle to survive.

Every Black person knows that the wind may change at any given moment and that Lynch Mob, made up of White members of the «Working Class», might come breathing down his neck if not kicking down his door. It is because of these factors that when we begin to talk about being Marxist-Leninists, we must be very careful to make it absolutely clear just what we are talking about.

On the subject of racism, Marxism-Leninism offers us very little assistance. In fact, there is much evidence that Marx and Engels were themselves racists--just like their White brothers and sisters of their era, and just as many Marxist-Leninists of our own time are also racists. Historically, Marxism-Leninism has been an outgrowth of European problems and it has been primarily preoccupied with finding solutions to European problems.

With the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1948 and the People's Republic of China in 1949, something new was injected into Marxism-Leninism, and it ceased to be just a narrow, exclusively European phenomenon. Comrade Kim Il Sung and Comrade Mao Tse-tung applied the classical principles of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions in their own countries and thereby made the ideology into something useful for their people. But they rejected that part of the analysis that was not beneficial to them and had only to do with the welfare of Europe.

Given the racist history of the United States, it is very difficult for Black people to comfortably call themselves Marxist-Leninists or anything else that takes its name from White people. It's like praying to Jesus, a White man. We must emphasize the fact that Marx and Lenin didn't invent Socialism. They only added their contributions, enriching the doctrine, just as many others did before them and after them. And we must remember that Marx and Lenin didn't organize the Black Panther Party. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale did.

Not until we reach Fanon do we find a major Marxist-Leninist theoretician who was primarily concerned about the problems of Black people, wherever they may be found. And even Fanon, in his published works, was primarily focused on Africa. It is only indirectly that his works are beneficial to Afro-Americans. It is just easier to relate to Fanon because he is clearly free of that racist bias that blocks out so much about the Black man in the hands of Whites who are primarily interested in themselves and the problems of their own people. But even though we are able to relate heavily to Fanon, he has not given us the last word on applying the Marxist-Leninist analysis to our problems inside the United States. No one is going to do this for us because no one can. We have to do it ourselves, and until we do, we are going to be uptight.

We must take the teachings of Huey P. Newton as our foundation and go from there. Any other course will bring us to a sorry and regrettable end. Fanon delivered a devastating attack upon Marxism-Leninism for its narrow preoccupation with Europe and the affairs and salvation of White folks, while lumping all third world peoples into the category of Lumpenproletariat and then forgetting them there; Fanon unearthed the category of the Lumpenproletariat and began to deal with it, recognizing that vast majorities of the colonized people fall into that category. It is because of the fact that Black people in the United States are also colonized that Fanon's analysis is so relevant to us.

After studying Fanon, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale began to apply his analysis of colonized people to Black people in the United States. They adopted the Fanonian perspective, but they gave it a uniquely Afro-American content.

Just as we must make the distinctions between the mother country and the colony when dealing with Black people and White people as a whole, we must also make this distinction when we deal with the categories of Working Class and Lumpenproletariat.

We have, in the United States, a «Mother Country Working Class» and a «Working Class from the Black Colony». We also have a Mother Country Lumpenproletariat and a Lumpenproletariat from the Black Colony. Inside the Mother Country, these categories are fairly stable, but when we look at the Black Colony, we find that the hard and fast distinctions melt away. This is because of the leveling effect of the colonial process and the fact that all Black people are colonized, even if some of them occupy favored positions in the schemes of the Mother Country colonizing exploiters. There is a difference between the problems of the Mother Country Working Class and the Working Class from the Black Colony. There is also a difference between the Mother Country Lumpen and the Lumpen from the Black Colony. We have nothing to gain from trying to smooth over these differences as though they don't exist, because they are objective facts that must be dealt with. To make this point clear, we have only to look at the long and bitter history of the struggles of Black Colony Workers fighting for democracy inside Mother Country Labor Unions.

Historically, we have fallen into the trap of criticizing mother country labor unions and workers for the racism as an explanation for the way they treat Black workers. Of course, they are racist, but this is not the full explanation.

White workers belong to a totally different world than that of Black workers. They are caught up in a totally different economic, political, and social reality, and on the basis of this distinct reality, the pigs of the power structure and treacherous labor leaders find it very easy to manipulate them with Babylonian racism.

This complex reality presents us with many problems, and only through proper analysis can these problems be solved. The lack of a proper analysis is responsible for the ridiculous approach to these problems that we find among Mother Country Marxist-Leninists. And their improper analysis leads them to advocate solutions that are doomed to failure in advance. The key area of the confusion has to do with falsely assuming the existence of one All-American Proletariat; one All-American Working Class; and one All-American Lumpenproletariat. O.K. We are Lumpen. Right on. The Lumpenproletariat are all those who have no secure relationship or vested interest in the means of production and the institutions of capitalist society. That part of the «Industrial Reserve Army» held perpetually in reserve; who have never worked and never will; who can't find a job; who are unskilled and unfit; who have been displaced by machines, automation, and cybernation, and were never «retained or invested with new skills»; all those on Welfare or receiving State Aid.

Also, the so-called «Criminal Element», those who live by their wits, existing off that which they rip off, who stick guns in the faces of businessmen and say 'stick'em up', or 'give it up!' Those who don't even want a job, who hate to work and can't relate to punching some pig's time clock, who would rather punch a pig in the mouth and rob him than punch that same pig's time clock and work for him, those whom Huey P. Newton calls «the illegitimate capitalists». In short, all those who simply have been locked out of the economy and robbed of their rightful social heritage.

But even though we are Lumpen, we are still members of the Proletariat, a category which theoretically cuts across national boundaries but which in practice leaves something to be desired.

*Contradictions within the Proletariat of the USA.*

In both the Mother Country and the Black Colony, the Working Class is the Right Wing of the Proletariat, and the Lumpenproletariat is the Left Wing. Within the Working Class itself, we have a major contradiction between the Unemployed and the Employed. And we definitely have a major contradiction between the Working Class and the Lumpen.

Some blind so-called Marxist-Leninists accuse the Lumpen of being parasites upon the Working Class. This is a stupid charge derived from reading too many of Marx's footnotes and taking some of his offhand scurrilous remarks for holy writ. In reality, it is accurate to say that the Working Class, particularly the American Working Class, is a parasite upon the heritage of mankind, of which the Lumpen has been totally robbed by the rigged system of Capitalism which in turn, has thrown the majority of mankind upon the junkheap while it buys off a percentage with jobs and security.

The Working Class that we must deal with today shows little resemblance to the Working Class of Marx's day. In the days of its infancy, insecurity, and instability, the Working Class was very revolutionary and carried forward the struggle against the bourgeoisie. But through long and bitter struggles, the Working Class has made some inroads into the Capitalist system, carving out a comfortable niche for itself. The advent of Labor Unions, Collective Bargaining, the Union Shop, Social Security, and other special protective legislation has castrated the Working Class, transforming it into the bought-off Labor Movement—a most un-revolutionary, reformist minded movement that is only interested in higher wages and more job security. The Labor Movement has abandoned all basic criticism of the Capitalist system of exploitation itself. The George Meanys, Walter Reuthers, and A. Phillip Randolphs may correctly be labelled traitors to the proletariat as a whole, but they accurately reflect and embody the outlook and aspirations of the Working Class. The Communist Party of the United States of America, at its poorly attended meetings, may raise the roof with its proclamations of being the Vanguard of the Working Class, but the Working Class itself looks upon the Democratic Party as the legitimate vehicle of its political salvation.

As a matter of fact, the Working Class of our time has become a new industrial elite, resembling more the chauvanistic elites of the selfish craft and trade guilds of Marx's time than the toiling masses ground down in abject poverty. Every job on the market in the American Economy today demands as high a complexity of skills as did the jobs in the elite trade and craft guilds of Marx's time. In a highly mechanized economy, it cannot be said that the fantastically high productivity is the product solely of the Working Class. Machines and computers are not members of the Working Class, although some spokesmen for the Working Class, particularly some Marxist-Leninists, seem to think like machines and computers.

The flames of revolution, which once raged like an inferno in the heart of the Working Class, in our day have dwindled into a flickering candle light, only powerful enough to bounce the Working Class back and forth like a ping pong ball between the Democratic Party and the the Republican Party every four years, never once even glancing at the alternatives on the Left.

*Who speaks for the Lumpen Proletariat?*

Some Marxist-Leninists are guilty of that class egotism and hypocrisy often displayed by superior classes to those beneath them on the social scale. On the one hand, they freely admit that their organizations are specifically designed to represent the interests of the Working Class. But then they go beyond that to say that by representing the interests of the Working Class, they represent the interests of the Proletariat as a whole. This is clearly not true. This is a fallacious assumption based upon the egotism of these organizations and is partly responsible for their miserable failure to make a revolution in Babylon.

And since there clearly is a contradiction between the right wing and the left wing of the Proletariat, just as the right wing has created its own organizations, it is necessary for the left wing to have its form of organization to represent its interests against all hostile classes--including the Working Class.

The contradiction between the Lumpen and the Working Class is very serious because it even dictates a different strategy and set of tactics. The students focus their rebellions on the campuses, and the Working Class focuses its rebellions on the factories and picket lines. But the Lumpen finds itself in the peculiar position of being unable to find a job and therefore is unable to attend the Universities. The Lumpen has no choice but to manifest its rebellion in the University of the Streets.

It's very important to recognize that the streets belong to the Lumpen, and that it is in the streets that Lumpen will make their rebellion.

One outstanding characteristic of the liberation struggle of Black people in the United States has been that most of the activity has taken place in the streets. This is because, by and large, the rebellions have been spear-headed by Black Lumpen.

It is because of the Black people's lumpen relationship to the means of production and the institutions of the society that they are unable to manifest their rebellion around those means of production and institutions. But this does not mean that the rebellions that take place in the streets are not legitimate expressions of an oppressed people. These are the means of rebellion left open to the Lumpen.

The Lumpen have been locked outside of the economy. And when the Lumpen does engage in direct action against the system of oppression, it is often greeted by hoots and howls from the spokesmen of the Working Class in chorus with the mouthpieces of the bourgeoisie. These talkers like to put down the struggles of the Lumpen as being «spontaneous» (perhaps because they themselves did not order the actions!), «unorganized», and «chaotic and undirected». But these are only prejudiced analyses made from the narrow perspective of the Working Class. But the Lumpen moves anyway, refusing to be straight-jacketed or controlled by the tactics dictated by the conditions of life and the relationship to the means of production of the Working Class.

The Lumpen finds itself in the position where it is very difficult for it to manifest its complaints against the system. The Working Class has the possibility of calling a strike against the factory and the employer and through the mechanism of Labor Unions they can have some arbitration or some process through which its grievances are manifested. Collective bargaining is the way out of the pit of oppression and exploitation discovered by the Working Class, but the Lumpen has no opportunity to do any collective bargaining. The Lumpen has no institutionalized focus in Capitalist society. It has not immediate oppressor except perhaps the Pig Police with which it is confronted daily.

So that the very conditions of life of the Lumpen dictates the so-called spontaneous reactions against the system, and because the Lumpen is in this extremely oppressed condition, it therefore has an extreme reaction against the system as a whole. It sees itself as being bypassed by all of the organizations, even by the Labor Unions, and even by the Communist Parties that despise it and look down upon it and consider it to be, in the words of Karl Marx, the father of Communist Parties, «The Scum Layer of the Society». The Lumpen is forced to create its own forms of rebellion that are consistent with its condition in life and with its relationship to the means of production and the institutions of society. That is, to strike out at all the structures around it, including at the reactionary Right Wing of the Proletariat when it gets in the way of revolution.

The faulty analyses which the ideologies of the Working Class have made, of the true nature of the Lumpen, are greatly responsible for the retardation of the development of the revolution in urban situations. It can be said that the true revolutionaries in the urban centers of the world have been analyzed out of the revolution by some Marxist-Leninists.»

THE BLACK PANTHER  
April 6, 1969. Page 14.

*Serving The People*

*The Black Panther Party is a political party established to create revolutionary political power for Black People and is continuing steadily to serve the People heart and soul.*

Our Cardinal Rule is: «Have faith in the People, and faith in the Party.»

This faith derives from an undying love for our people and the awareness of a need for governmental eclipse. We, as the vanguard of the oppressed masses, realize that we must and will serve the People heart and soul. The need and wants of the People must be fulfilled, and we, as Huey P. Newton says, shall be like an oxen to be ridden by the People. The exploited and oppressed people's needs are land, bread, housing, education, freedom, clothing, justice and peace and the Black Panther Party shall not, for a single day, alienate ourselves from the masses and forget their needs for survival, but instead institute to the People faith to the death.

«I'd rather be without the shame,  
A bullet lodged within my brain.  
If I were not to reach our goal  
Let bleeding cancer torment my soul.»

THE BLACK PANTHER  
May 11, 1969. Page 11.

«CHAIRMAN BOBBY SPEAKS AT MAY DAY RALLY TO FREE HUEY»

What's happening people? (FREE HUEY) Good evening, Good morning. I think it's about 12:00 right now. It's about 12:00 and if you look in the back of you, you will see Reagan's state building, with his state pigs observing the people. And, of course, if you look in front of you, you will see Nixon's U.S. federal building, with the pigs inside, observing the people. And if later on you decide to leave here and go on down Polk Street, you'll walk in front of pig mayor Alioto's office, and they'll be observing the people. Now I know you've heard a lot lately about what pig Mafioso, Moussili, Alioto, has had to say, (right on) I know you've heard this pig with his ignorant backwards, minded butt sit up and say crazy things, like he wants to destroy the Black Panther Party. But the Black Panther Party, and black people, and Mexican-American people, and all people are saying there will always be Huey P. Newton, and a Black Panther Party, as long as there are black people living here in this city. (right on). Pig mayor Alioto said that he wanted to destroy the Black Panther Party. Richard Nixon, from the United States White House, is saying that he wants to destroy the Black Panther Party, by lying to the people, (right on) and by not telling the truth; and the reason they're not telling the truth is 'cause they always told lies. Right on. They told lies about the people, trying to protect their own self-capitalist interests. In the papers this morning (and I want the papers to get ahold of this) they're saying or trying to imply that the Black Panther Party is «subversive.» Well, this is all the Black Panther Party has to say to all those

It is only the People that can overthrow the present imperialistic environment that we are exposed to and only the People can institute a socialistic government that will serve them. The spirit of the People is greater than the man's technology, and that spirit will be guided by the vanguard party of this present liberation struggle.

The capitalistic, imperialistic, doggish, pimping of the People must cease by this wanton, sadistic country or perish like Babylon. The People shall smash the glutton roaches running this decadent society and, along with the directing of the Black Panther Party, halt these running dogs and gain true liberation for all. We cannot depend upon the present government to fulfill our wants and needs. Thus more and more programs shall be set up to suffice the desires of the People and destroy the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (ruling class) and its lackeys.

The Black Panther Party is for everything that the enemy (U. S. imperialists) is against, and against everything the enemy is for. We believe in serving the People whole-heartedly in a socialistic manner, not spending money like the U. S. to take hung er surveys, but to feed the People. All our actions are to the exact opposite of this hypocrisy called democracy. The Black Panther Party will continue to serve the people and fulfill their every desire as an International united front of revolutionaries of the world, battling this mass oppression of capitalism and imperialism.

When people call in to say they need food, we do not spout a lot of superficial rhetoric, but see that they are fed.

«Our duty is to hold ourselves responsible to the People. Every word, every act, and every policy must conform to the People's interest and, if mistakes occur, they must be corrected — that is what being responsible to the People means.»  
Mao Tse-tung

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pigs in the power structure. The Black Panther Party, along with other members of the community are feeding 2,000 young brothers and sisters every morning (right on), if that's subversive, then damn it we're subversive. (More right on's). The Black Panther Party is going forth implement Free Health Clinics in the black community, and we hope the Mexican-Americans, and the Chinese-Americans and all the other people do the same thing -- and if Free Health Clinics are subversive then damnit, mayor Alioto, and pig Reagan and Nixon, damnit, we're subversive. (Right on). We're saying that the Ten Point Platform and Program that our Minister of Defense Huey P. Newton put together; is in the process of being implemented. That if it had not been for Huey P. Newton we would not have people with an understanding that they got a right to use weapons to defend themselves against any pigs who attack them. (Right on.) We're saying that if it had not been for Huey P. Newton, there would not be any BREAKFAST FOR CHILDREN. (Right on.) If it had not been for Huey P. Newton COMMUNITY CONTROL OF POLICE would not be in the process of being implemented by the people. If it had not been for Huey P. Newton, FREE HEALTH CLINICS would not be in the process of being implemented in the black community. If it had not been for Huey P. Newton, the TEN POINT PLATFORM AND PROGRAM of the Black Panther Party would not begin to be implemented by the people. And not only black people, because the Chinese-American, the Red Guard, has copied the same Platform and Program, and they got a right to it. And the Indian-American organization named NARP has copied the same Ten Point Platform and Program of the Black Panther Party and they got a right to it. We're just waiting for this racism to break down when we see in the poor white Appalachians up in the mountains copy the same Ten Point Platform and Program and go forth to destroy the Nixons, the Reagans, and the pig Aliotos. (Right on.) When the Party says «Power to the People, « we ain't giving a pound. We say Power To The People. And when the people say to Reagan, when the people say to Alioto, when the people say to pig Richard M. Nixon, that we want Huey P. Newton free, we're saying you bald headed pig punks better get out of the way (Right on.) because we're tired. And we saying you better let Huey go. They let that pig O'Brien, who killed Basket go, right on. You let him go on the very minute you allowed him in the street to murder our brothers.

They let that other pig go who killed Brother Lindstrom out in Hunter's Point (right on). Wait a minute, the Young Men of [no text --ed.] And this damn bald-headed Mafioso, Alioto jumped up talking about (right on), wait a minute, the Young Men of Action are his boys. Aint he an ass-hole, shame. (Right on.) What we're saying is this. We're saying this here. We heard the brothers say in a press conference the brothers in Young Men of Action, they said in a press conference that they denounced pig mayor Alioto, and mayor Alioto is saying that that's his boys. But we're saying this here: the Panther Party aint mayor Alioto's boys. (laughter) We are the people's workers, and we're going to keep serving the people, everybody. I mean everybody. The man don't like it, but we gone show him. You got your Red Books, hold your Red Books up and tell the brothers where we getting some new ideology from. We're saying like Huey P. Newton said, «that we're going to follow the thoughts of Chairman Mao.» We're saying we going... Panther Party standing up and proving through social practice that we're not racist, but proving that they in fact are the real racists. They have never liked the Black Panther Party and the people talk about «We want some community control of police.» They have never respected Huey P. Newton. But we respect Huey P. Newton. We love Huey P. Newton. (Right on.) I say: We love Huey P. Newton (repeated). We love Eldridge Cleaver (repeated). We love Kathleen Cleaver. We love all our people. We love our people so much that if the pigs attack us, we gone defend ourselves rightfully with guns and force. (Right on.) We love the people (audience repeats) and we love the people so much that we gone say: I am a revolutionary and that's our message to pig Alioto and Richard M. Nixon's America. That you and FREE HUEY, (repeated). FREE HUEY. FREE HUEY. Some Brothers are walking around with some buckets, some plastic buckets, they gone be asking for some donations for all the money that had to be put out, and we had to borrow it, to put this rally over, and so let's get it together, there some more speakers coming, sister Kathleen Cleaver is here, Eldridge Cleaver's wife, the Chief of Staff David Hilliard is here, we gone donate to the bucket, because are what, we say: I am a revolutionary. (Audience repeats each statement): FREE HUEY P. NEWTON. DOWN WITH THE PIGS. DOWN WITH ALL THE PIGS. POWER TO ALL THE PEOPLE. The collection is going on. Power to the people and thank you brothers and sisters. Right on. (Applause.)

«WHAT IS ULTRA-DEMOCRACY?»

by Field Marshal D.C.

Ultra-Democracy is individualism manifesting itself as an aversion to discipline.

Our Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton, pointed out in his essay on Anarchists and Individualists that, «This is a class society; it always has been.» The majority of the people that become Panthers are from the lowest class. One of the major characteristics of this class is to think and act as an individual. This tendency was, and is, perpetrated by the ruling class (capitalists) in its rhetoric and in its governmental documents such as the declaration of independence, constitution, bill of rights, etc. Having people thinking and acting individually is an aid to the ruling class in its exploitation and oppression of people around the world in general, and the exploitation and oppression and the perpetration of racism against Black people in particular. All laws and institutions of the society are structured to create individual thinking and action. This prevents oppressed and exploited people from seeing their problem as a collective one, such as the exploitation and racism perpetuated against all Blacks. Therefore, collective thinking and action is required if oppressed and exploited people are to wage a successful struggle to gain their freedom and liberation.

All things having a dual nature, let us examine what can be called the positive aspects of individualism on the part of the masses of Black people in this present society.

Due to exploitation, oppression and racism of this society, the masses of Black people are mainly unemployed or under-employed. Therefore, means of survival other than employment were developed by Black people. Prime Minister Stokley Carmichael says, «You get things three ways: you work, you beg, or you take.» Although Black people employ all three methods to fulfill their desires and needs, the latter receives priority.

Many Black people become very revolutionary in the process in their action if not in their thought. They develop ways of surviving on this society but not in this society. This is done individually or in very small groups, never collectively. These are the people who most readily see the Black Panther Party as a means to change their lot in particular and the lot of the Black people in general.

When these people come into the Party they bring these individualist tendencies with them. Within the Party these tendencies prevent Party policies from being carried out well or not at all. On the one hand, an individual trying to survive in the present society following only the rules and laws that serve you individually and rejecting those that do not is revolutionary by nature. On the other hand, coming into the Party and continuing to obey only orders and directions of the Party that please or satisfy you individually is counter-revolutionary and is called ultra-democracy.

A few examples are: «the Panther Party should apply democratic centralism from the bottom to the top, or should let the lower levels discuss all problems first and then let the higher levels decide.» On an individual level, a Panther was told by an officer to clean one of the Panther cars, and he responded by saying, «I don't drive the car; therefore I won't clean the car.» This is ultra-democracy. If it is not eradicated it will damage or completely wreck the party organization.

*Some methods of correction are as follows:*

- (a) Education of the rank and file to destroy the roots of ultra-democracy.*
- (b) To ensure democracy under centralized guidance (1) the leadership must give correct guidance and solve problems when they arise in order to establish themselves as centers of leadership*
- (2) the leadership must know the life of the masses and be familiar with the situation in the rank and file in order to have an objective basis for correct guidance*
- (3) at no level in the Party should decisions be made casually in solving problems*
- (4) all major decisions and policies made by the leadership of the Party must be immediately communicated to the rank and file*
- (5) the rank and file must discuss decisions and policies of the leadership of the Party in order to understand them and decide on the methods of carrying them out.*

«STATEMENT BY THE CENTRAL  
COMMITTEE OF THE BLACK PANTHER  
PARTY»

Twenty one New York Black Panther Party members busted by pig power structure. Statement from the Black Panther Party Central Committee at National Headquarters, Oakland, California, delivered by the Deputy Chairman, David Brothers of the New York State Black Panther Party Central Staff.

Historically, all REACTIONARY forces (the pig power structure and their «cultural» Black capitalist lackeys) on the verge of EXTINCTION invariably conduct a last desperate struggle against the revolutionary forces (all workers, the unemployed, Mexicans, Indians, Puerto Ricans, poor whites, et. al., but especially poor black and oppressed peoples and their vanguard, the Black Panther Party.

And some revolutionaries are apt to be deluded for a time by this phenomenon of outward strength but inner weakness, failing to grasp the essential fact that the enemy is nearing extinction while they themselves (*the revolutionary peoples*) are nearing victory. (*Mao's little Red Book, page 83*)

TWO MILLION ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS BAIL AND THE CHARGES AGAINST THE 21 BLACK PANTHER PARTY MEMBERS IS ABSURD AND OUTRAGEOUS.

Concerning the charges, every Black Panther Party chapter and leadership knows that we would not waste dynamite on the blowing up of some jive railway stations and department stores simply because some of our own poor people would be killed and we know this is completely wrong when it comes to organizing the people against the demagogue politicians, the avaricious businessmen, and the racist pig police forces. They are the enemies of the people of America, be they white, brown, black, yellow or red.

We will not try to fight fire with fire because all of the people that FIRE is best put out with WATER. Therefore, the Black Panther Party will not fight racism with racism. But we will fight racism with solidarity. We will not fight capitalism with capitalism (Black capitalism), but with the implementation of socialism and socialist programs for the people. We will not fight U.S. government imperialism with more imperialism because the peoples of the world and other races, especially in America, must fight imperialism with proletarian internationalism. All peoples and revolutionaries must defend themselves with organized guns and force when attacked by the PIG POWER STRUCTURE.

«The socialist system will eventually replace the capitalist-racist system; this is an objective law independent of man's will. However much the reactionaries try to hold back the wheel of history, sooner or later revolution will take place and will inevitably triumph.» (*Mao's little Red Book, page 24*)

The Black Panther Party is informing and calling on all the peoples of the communities across the country to

SCORN and DENOUNCE the actions of this capitalist-racist government's attempts to try and destroy the Black Panther Party which has chapters and branches across the nation. SCORN, DENOUNCE, and DESTROY the lies by capitalists and racists, from the Nixons, the Rockefellers, and all their pig lackeys, to the bootlicking cultural nationalists and black capitalists. They are the real conspirators where we see their obvious attempts to destroy the Black Panther Party's revolutionary leadership. They, of course, try to do this by murders, jailings, unfair court trials, the forcing of Eldridge Cleaver into exile, and the temporary imprisonment of the Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton in California. FREE HUEY. THE REVOLUTION IS HERE. We the people of the world must FREE HUEY AND ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS because if it wasn't for Huey P. Newton, free BREAKFAST FOR CHILDREN programs before school would not be spreading across the nation. If it wasn't for Huey P. Newton, the idea of having free medicine and FREE HEALTH CLINICS wouldn't be in the process of being implemented. If it wasn't for Huey P. Newton, the teaching that «it's not a race struggle, but a class struggle» would not begin to be understood. IF IT WASN'T FOR HUEY P. NEWTON, THE TEN POINT PLATFORM AND PROGRAM OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY WOULD NOT BE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED, PRACTICAL SOCIALIST PROGRAMS FROM THE BLACK NATION IS WHERE IT'S AT, WHEN EVEN OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS COPY IT, AND THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD KNOW THIS IS THEIR AND THAT IT'S RIGHT.

THE NEW YORK BLACK PANTHER PARTY 21 MUST BE SET FREE AS HUEY P. NEWTON MUST BE SET FREE. THEY, AND ALL OTHER POLITICAL PRISONERS, MUST RECEIVE THE PEOPLE'S SUPPORT AS A NATIONAL RESISTANCE AGAINST THE PIG POWER STRUCTURE WHICH IS IMPERIALISTIC, CAPITALISTIC AND RACIST.

A NATION-WIDE CAMPAIGN IS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF BEING WAGED TO PUT TOGETHER A «FREE POLITICAL PRISONERS FOR THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE.» THE NEW YORK BLACK PANTHER PARTY 21 MUST BE SET FREE. BAIL MONEY IS NEEDED FOR THE 21, HUEY P. NEWTON, ELDRIDGE CLEAVER, AND «THE CONSPIRACY 8» OF CHICAGO, WITH BOBBY SEALE, BLACK PANTHER PARTY CHAIRMAN. DONATIONS MAY BE SENT TO:

Legal Defense Fund  
Black Panther Party  
Box 1224

POWER TO ALL THE PEOPLE  
*Panther Power To The Vanguard*

«The Black Panther: Mirror of the People» Just what is the Black Panther Black Community News Service? Is it something like the bourgeois press, to be read once and then discarded in the nearest trash can, or is it something else--something more? The Black Panther Black Community News Service, is not just a newspaper in the traditional sense of the word, it's more than that.

The Black Panther Black Community News Service is a living contemporary history of our people's struggle for liberation at the grass roots level. It's something to be studied and grasped, and saved for future generations to read, learn and understand.

The Black Panther Black Community News Service tells the story of our people's struggle in the streets. Its story unfolds far from the perfumed parlors of the petty bourgeoisie. It tells the true story of what happens in the concrete inner-city jungles of Babylon when brothers and sisters off the block, workers, and members of the petty bourgeoisie decide to cast aside their petty personal goals and aspirations, and begin to work unselfishly together with a common goal in mind: to serve the people and liberate the colony, by the only means necessary--the GUN.

The history of the Black Panther Black Community News Service, goes back to the first issue printed in 1967 (VOL. I NO. 1), back to the vicious murder of Denzil Dowell by fascist gestapo pigs in Richmond, Calif., and documents what happens when the people of the community say «this is enough,» decide to arm themselves to put an end to exploitation and oppression and is an objective lesson in the art of self-defense, serving the people, national liberation, and revolution.

The Black Panther documents step by step the actions taken by, and programs instituted by the Black Panther Party in its unstoppable drive to serve the people; and documents before the whole world the repression and murders committed by Amerikkka's corrupt monopoly capital in its dastardly attempts to stop this move to institute people's power.

The Black Panther Black Community News Service, tells how our courageous Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton, the baddest brother to ever step into history, stood up in the bowels of fascist Amerikkka with a shotgun in his hands and told those murderous mad dogs who occupy our community like a foreign army: «My name is Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party. I'm standing on my constitutional right to bear arms to defend my people. If you shoot at me pig, I'm

shooting back.» And thus his courageous example moved the struggle of our people to a higher level--from throwing rocks and bottles, to arming themselves for survival. The Black Panther teaches the people the strategic means for resisting the power structure.

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The Black Panther Black Community News Service, tells how the correct examples of the Party, led by Huey P. Newton, spread like wildfire throughout fascist Amerikkka--as exemplified by Detroit and Newark--and how on the morning of October 28, 1967, two night-riding greasy Oakland pigs tried to murder our Minister of Defense from ambush. It also tells how that attempt failed and one pig, Frey went to the pig sty in the sky, and the other one, Haines, somehow received three bullet holes.

The Black Panther documents for all humanity to see, how the wretched slaves of Amerikkka moved fearlessly to establish ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE. It also shows how the forces of reaction perfected their ambushes and murdered Li'l Bobby, Robert, Tommy, Steve and other Party members in attempts to stop us. The weekly issues of The Black Panther also shows how people who will be free refuse to be either cowed or intimidated by death, imprisonment or exile, and continue to develop and expand. It is a lesson in the objective truth, that the spirit of the people is indeed greater than the man's technology. The best that humanity possesses will never yield to any oppressor.

Issue by issue the people's revolutionary struggle for national salvation unfolds in the pages of THE BLACK PANTHER COMMUNITY NEWS SERVICE, free from the distortion, bias, and lies of the oppressor controlled mass media. The People's paper tells how starting out with nothing, the People's Party, The Black Panther Party, moved with the people to implement Free Breakfast Programs to feed our hungry children, Free Health Clinics to care for the sick, Free Clothing Programs to clothe our needy, Liberation Schools to educate our youth, and Community Centers to keep the community informed; and how with each meal served, with each child clothed, and with each bandage applied, we were attacked wilder and wilder--Fred Hampton and Mark Clark murdered in their sleep by Chicago's thin blue line on December 4, 1969 and the L.A. office attacked by 400 crazed pigs on December 8, 1969 (VOL. IV NO.2).

The Black Panther Black Community News Service, is not only a history of the people's growth, but also the pigs' fanatical repression as they near

total destruction. The Black Panther documents and indicts Amerikkka for the fascist police state that it is, attempting to crush all dissent by force.

The Black Panther Black Community News Service, when put together is a glorious living history, a testament to the fact that no matter how the pigs try to stop us, the people will be free; clearly points out that all the wild attacks by the pigs is like a fool picking up a rock only to drop it on his own foot; and gives proof of the objective truth that oppression only creates resistance.

The Black Panther Black Community News Service, is a living, breathing history that continues each and every day. Each new issue has its message, its lessons to be learned, its objective truth.

No! The Black Panther Black Community News Service, is not an ordinary newspaper. It is the flesh and blood, the sweat and tears of our people. It is a continuation of the story of the middle passage, of Denmark Vesey, of Nat Turner, of Harriet Tubman, of Malcolm X, and countless other oppressed people who put freedom and dignity beyond personal gain. The Black Panther Black Community News Service, is truly a mirror of the spirit of the people.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE  
POW'S FOR PANTHERS  
BLACK PANTHER PARTY  
Political Prisoner, Denver Colorado  
Landon Williams --The Black Panther,  
January 17, 1970



**1969:  
YEAR  
OF THE  
PANTHER**



Black Panther National Anthem  
By Elaine

Yes — he turned and he walked  
Past the eyes of my life  
And, he nodded and sang without sound  
And his face had the look  
Of a man who knew strife  
And a feeling familiarly came around

I said  
Man, when have you been for all these years  
Man, Where were you when I sought you  
Man, do you know me as I know you  
Man, am I coming through

And he spoke in a voice  
That was centuries old  
And, he smiled in a way that was strange  
And his full lips of night  
Spoke about our people's plight  
And a feeling familiarly came around

I said  
Man, when have you been for all these years  
Man, Where were you when I sought you  
Man, do you know me as I know you  
Man, am I coming through

And we sat and we talked  
About freedom and things  
And, he told me about what he dreamed  
But I knew of that dream  
Long before he had spoke  
And a feeling familiarly came around

I said  
Man, when have you been for all these years  
Man, Where were you when I sought you  
Man, do you know me as I know you  
Man, am I coming through

The Black Panther, April 27 1969





**black panther party**  
**repères chronologiques**



# 1965

# USA

- 80 % des Noirs américains vivent dans des villes et 50% dans le Nord du Pays
- dans le cadre de son projet de «Guerre contre la pauvreté» le Président Johnson, fait établir une série de lois sur l'enseignement, la santé (le Medicare), le vote des Noirs dans le Sud, le logement et le développement urbain

Martin Luther King mène campagne dans le Sud des USA pour le droit de vote des Noirs

## Janvier

- 4 janvier – l'université de Berkeley autorise la liberté d'expression et d'association et instaure une plus grande liberté académique. Victoire partielle du *Free Speech Movement*, qui a mobilisé les étudiants de Californie durant 4 mois et provoqué l'arrestation de 800 d'entre eux

## Février

- 7 février – premiers raids américains dans le Nord Vietnam

- 21 février – New York, Harlem, salle de l'Audubon : assassinat de Malcolm X de l'OUAA. La publication posthume de ses mémoires (*The Autobiography of Malcom X*, 1965) et sa très large diffusion feront croître infiniment l'influence du leader charismatique. L'exemple de Malcolm X va inspirer nombre de militants noirs de la période, dont certains reprendront ses thèses séparatistes, tandis que d'autres mettront à application ses théories d'une autodéfense des noirs américains

- 28 février – intensification des raids aériens au Nord Vietnam (*Rolling Thunder*)

## Mars

- 7 mars – violente répression policière de la Marche pour les droits civiques de Selma sur Montgomery. La répression ordonnée par le gouverneur dans l'état de l'Alabama, George Wallace, oblige le président Johnson à placer la garde nationale de l'état sous contrôle fédéral

- 15 mars – le président Johnson propose un projet de loi destiné à la lutte des États contre la discrimination

## Avril

loi sur l'enseignement primaire et secondaire. L'aide du gouvernement aux États pour l'enseignement devient proportionnelle au nombre d'élèves pauvres et aux dépenses pour la scolarisation dans chaque État

# Monde

Che Guevara, Ministre cubain de l'Industrie, séjourne en Guinée et au Mali

négociations financières postcoloniales maliennes à Paris

- 12 février – le dirigeant noir Malcolm X, militant de l'autodéfense et de l'internationalisme noir américain, arrive en France dans la perspective de sa participation à des débats étudiants organisés à Paris par des étudiants africains en février et mars 65. Il est prié de quitter le territoire français sur l'heure et rentre alors à New York, où il arrive le 14 février

- 18 février – déclaration d'indépendance de la Gambie
- 20 février – marche pour la liberté en Australie

- 7 mars – premiers débarquements d'unités de combat américaines au Vietnam

début du conflit entre l'Inde et le Paksitan

- 28 avril – intervention militaire des États Unis en République Dominicaine

# 1965

## Juin

fondation de la *National Organization for Women* (NOW)

- 8 juin – première participation officielle de soldats américains aux combats Nord-Vietnamiens

- 19 Juin – Algérie le président Ben Bella est renversé par le ministre de la Défense H. Boumédiène, ancien chef de l'Armée de Libération nationale

## Août

- 11 août – Marquette Frye, un Noir de 21 ans est arrêté par la police pour conduite en état d'ivresse, devant son domicile à la limite de Watts et Compton, deux quartiers pauvres du Sud de Los Angeles. Sa famille intervient, trois personnes sont brutalement interpellées

- 13 Août – Watts s'embrase. La révolte est immense, elle prend même la dimension d'une guérilla urbaine lorsque l'armée est appelée à la rescousse par les autorités. Un couvre-feu est imposé ; six jours sont nécessaires à un retour au calme. Le bilan est de 34 morts, 1 100 blessés, 4000 arrestations, 100 millions de dollars de dégât

- 21 août – premiers bombardements américains au Nord-Vietnam

Uruguay ; sabotage des usines Bayer par les Tupamaros qui optent pour l'action violente généralisée, attaquent les banques et pratiquent la redistribution dans les quartiers pauvres

- 21 août – premiers bombardements américains au Nord-Vietnam

# USA

## Septembre

le prince Saoudien Fayçal propose l'organisation d'un premier sommet islamique réunissant les représentants de l'ensemble du monde musulman

## Octobre

- 16 octobre – manifestation massive contre la Guerre du Vietnam

- 21-25 octobre – sommet de l'OUA à Accra. Résolutions contre le gouvernement de la minorité blanche en Rhodésie. Boycott de l'Afrique du Sud

## Novembre

230.000 soldats américains sont désormais au Vietnam

# Monde

des milliers de paysans pauvres Indonésiens occupent et exploitent les terres des grands propriétaires depuis la réforme agraire de 1963 sont exterminés, les terres, récupérées par les propriétaires

- 11 novembre - déclaration unilatérale d'indépendance de la Rhodésie par des colons blancs pratiquant l'apartheid

- 24 Novembre – Congo : le coup d'état du Général Mobutu met fin à la guerre civile et rétablit l'intégrité du territoire désormais sous sa dictature

Stokely Carmichael, président du *Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee*, et Charles V. Hamilton popularisent l'expression Black Power

Huey P. Newton et Bobby Seale fondent le *Black Panther Party* (BPP) qui propose de s'opposer par les armes aux excès de la répression policière

# Monde

grande famine en Inde

# 1966

# USA

**Janvier** - 1er janvier – apparition des premières communautés hippies en Californie

le président du Nigéria (Azikiwe) est renversé.  
Début d'une série de coups d'État  
Répression de la guérilla rurale au Pérou. Des milliers de morts

- 1er janvier – coup d'état de J.B. Bokassa en Centrafrique

- 3 janvier – soulèvement populaire en Haute-Volta, chute du gouvernement de Yaméogo

- 3-15 janvier – conférence tricontinentale à La Havane à l'initiative de Fidel Castro afin de créer un réseau de solidarité révolutionnaire entre les peuples du Tiers Monde

**Février**

- 23 février – coup d'état en Syrie

- 24 février – coup d'état au Ghana

**Mars**

publication du *Déciln et la Chute de l'Économie Spectaculaire-Marchande* dans l'Internationale Situationniste par Guy Debord, au sujet des émeutes d'août 1965 à Watts

- 2 mars – coup d'état de Obote en Ouganda

**Avril**

- 12 avril – les avions américains commencent les bombardements sur le Nord Vietnam

**Juin**

- 27 juin – la *Chartre de l'Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache* (OCAM) est adoptée à Tananarive

- 28 juin – coup d'état militaire en Argentine

- 30 juin – Léopoldville au Congo est renommée Kinshasa

# 1966

## juillet

- 7-25 juillet – opération *Hasting* au Vietnam
- 18-23 juillet – émeutes raciales à Hough, Cleveland, Ohio

- 29 juillet – coup d'état au Nigeria
- 29 juillet – en Argentine, la police déloge les professeurs et les étudiants qui occupent Les universités

## Août

- 7 août – grandes émeutes raciales à Lansing, Michigan
- 18 août – bataille de *Long Tan* au Vietnam

- 25 août – manifestation pour l'indépendance à Djibouti
- 23 août – début de grève des gardiens de troupeaux en Australie contre les bas salaires et les conditions de vie des Aborigènes d'Australie
- 31 août – la France demande l'évacuation des soldats américains du Vietnam

# USA

## Septembre

- 30 septembre – indépendance du Botswana

# Monde

## Octobre

- 15 octobre – création du *Black Panther Party For Self Defense* par Huey P. Newton et Bobby Seale.

- 4 octobre – début de diffusion massive du Petit Livre Rouge de Mao Zedong en Chine

## Novembre

le BPP organise les premières patrouilles armées de surveillance de la police à Oakland. Respectant à la lettre la législation, parfaitement instruits du droit américain, les groupes de Panthères contraignent, par leur présence silencieuse mais intimidante, les forces de police à rompre avec un usage systématique de la violence dans leurs incessants contrôles et interpellations de citoyens noirs

- 7 novembre – élection à Cleveland du premier maire Noir d'une grande ville américaine
- 8 novembre – Ronald Reagan est élu gouverneur de Californie

- 28 novembre – coup d'état au Burundi et établissement de la république
- 30 novembre – indépendance de la Barbade

## Décembre

- 16 décembre – les Nations Unies proclament le Pacte International relatif aux droits économiques, sociaux et culturels

- institution par le président Johnson du *Busing*, pour organiser la mixité sociale dans les écoles américaines
- émeutes raciales dans 127 villes, tuant 77 personnes et faisant 4 000 blessés, essentiellement des Noirs
- 400.000 soldats américains au Vietnam. 15.000 déjà sont morts depuis le début du conflit

# USA

la Suède, premier pays au monde à légaliser la pornographie

# Monde

## Janvier

une antenne du BPP ouvre en Californie du Sud

- 6 janvier – début de l'opération *Deckhouse Five* au Vietnam
- 14 janvier – *Human Be-In* spontané au Golden Gate Park de San Francisco
- 21 janvier – émeutes raciales à la prison de Saint Quentin, Californie

- 13 janvier – coup d'état au Togo

## Février

- 15 février – 2 500 femmes manifestent devant le Pentagone à l'appel de *Women's Strike for Peace*. Elles réclament de voir «les généraux qui envoient nos fils à la mort»

- 21 février – Eldridge Cleaver rejoint le Black Panther Party

- 5 février – installation d'une dictature au Nicaragua

- 5 février – Chine : Proclamation de la Commune Populaire de Shanghai

- 25 février – premières grandes grèves ouvrières en France, à Besançon, puis Lyon

## Mars

ouverture du premier service des informations intercommunales du BPP

apparition de courants révolutionnaires en Inde

- 20 mars – premiers actes de révolte estudiantine en France, à Nanterre

- 21 mars – coup d'état en Sierra Leone

# 1967

un noir américain de Richmond, Californie, Denzill Dowell, est abattu par la police. Sa famille dénie les investigations policières sur les conditions du drame et demande au BPP de mener une enquête indépendante sur les conditions exactes de l'assassinat

- 4 avril – Martin Luther King prononce son discours «*Beyond Vietnam. A Time to Break Silence*» à New York

## Avril

- 25 avril – édition du premier numéro du journal du BPP : le *Black Panther Party Black Community News Service*

- 28 avril – le champion du monde de boxe Mohammed Ali, qui refusait d'aller combattre au Vietnam, est arrêté après s'être fait refuser le statut d'objecteur de conscience

- révoltes paysannes au Cambodge

- à la conférence Tricontinentale un message de Che Guevara est lu : «il faut détruire l'impérialisme et, pour cela, il faut créer deux, trois, plusieurs Vietnam»

- 11 avril – grève générale à Saint Nazaire, en France

- 17 avril – création d'un *parti unique* au Zaïre

- 21 Avril – coup d'état militaire en Grèce

## Mai

Émeutes raciales à Nashville, Tennessee et Houston

- 2 mai – trente Panthères armées s'introduisent dans le Capitole de Sacramento pour protester contre le projet de loi *Mulford Act*, destiné à empêcher le port d'armes en Californie et visant à libérer la police de la pression que les patrouilles du BPP exerce sur celle-ci et contre ses méthodes

- 17 mai – affaires des *Neuf de Catonsville*. 9 personnes, dont des prêtres catholiques, mettent le feu aux registres d'incorporation

- 19 mai – bombardements américains sur Hanoi

- 27 mai – référendum pour les droits civiques des Aborigènes en Australie

## Juin

- 12 juin – un arrêt annule la loi de Virginie interdisant les mariages inter-raciaux

- 28 juin – l'état de Californie adopte la loi *Mulford Act*. Les patrouilles du BPP sont rendues hors-la-loi

- 5-10 juin – guerre des *Six Jours*

## juillet

émeutes raciales dans 127 villes, tuant 77 personnes et faisant 4 000 blessés, essentiellement des Noirs

- 6 juillet – guerre du Biafra

- 28 juillet – légalisation de l'homosexualité en Grande Bretagne

# USA

## Août

- 28 août – Thurgood Marshall est le premier Noir à siéger à la Cour Suprême

- 10 Août – droit de vote pour les Aborigènes d'Australie

- 26 Août - début de la guérilla en Namibie contre le pouvoir Sud-africain

# 1967

## Septembre

- 7 septembre – naissance du mouvement féministe *Women's Lib*

# Monde

## Octobre

- 9 octobre – manifestations devant le Pentagone contre la guerre du Vietnam

- 28 octobre – à l'aube, le véhicule de Huey P. Newton est contrôlé par deux officiers de police d'Oakland. L'un d'eux est abattu et l'autre blessé. Newton, de son côté, est grièvement blessé. Il est arrêté dès son arrivée à l'hôpital

premiers troubles dans les universités en Italie

- 9 octobre – mort de Che Guevara abattu à la Higuera en Bolivie

- 23 octobre – Tchécoslovaquie : manifestations étudiante à Prague, brutalement réprimées

## Novembre

début de la campagne contre la ségrégation des Noirs et la pauvreté, organisée par des mouvements des droits civiques

- novembre-décembre, grèves étudiantes à Nanterre en France

- parution en France de *la Société du Spectacle*, de Guy Debord et du *Manuel de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations*, de Raoul Vaneigem

## Décembre

- 11-20 décembre – congrès international des africanistes à Dakar

- près d'un million d'Africains du Sud sont arrêtés en 1968 par le gouvernement de l'apartheid pour infractions

- entre 65.000 et 70.000 personnes sont détenues au Sud Vietnam dans des conditions terribles, dénoncées par tous les observateurs

# Monde

530.000 soldats américains au Vietnam. 40.000 sont morts, 250.000 ont été blessés

## USA

### Janvier

- 17 janvier – le Président Johnson annonce la fin de la convertibilité du dollar en or

- une première expérience de *Corporations de Développement Communautaire* se met en place dans le quartier de New York, Bedford-Stuyvesant, en accord avec les leaders noirs du quartier, avec l'appui de la fondation Ford et le soutien de Robert Kennedy, alors en campagne dans les primaires de l'élection présidentielle

## 1968

- 8 février – morts de trois étudiants en Caroline du Sud lors de manifestations pour les droits civiques

### Février

- 17 février – la manifestation FREE HUEY est organisée à l'auditorium d'Oakland à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de Newton. L'intercommunalisme cher à Huey P. Newton y est fortement affirmé, avec la présence et l'intervention des leaders des différents mouvements politiques contestataires et radicaux américains de l'époque

Mars 68 Arthur Glen Carter, premier d'une longue liste de membres du Black Panther Party qui seront abattus par la police

### Mars

- 1er mars – publication du rapport Krener ; Report On The Advisory Commission On Civil Disorders

- 16 mars – Vietnam : l'armée états-unienne massacre 500 habitants du village de *My Lai*.

- 31 mars – Johnson annonce un arrêt partiel des bombardements au Vietnam et renonce à se représenter aux élections présidentielles

- Japon : violents affrontements entre les étudiants et la police à Tokyo puis à Sasebo

- Japon : les *Zengakuren* (Fédération japonaise des associations d'autogestion étudiantes) protestent contre l'arrivée du porte-avion nucléaire *Enterprise* et assiègent la base d'Okinawa (USA)

- 5 janvier – Irlande : manifestation des catholiques de Derry réprimée dans le sang. Début des «troubles» en Irlande

- 5 janvier – Tchécoslovaquie : début du *Printemps de Prague* avec le réformateur Dubcek à la tête du Parti communiste tchèque

- 15-30 janvier – grèves ouvrières à Caen en France. Affrontements violents. Agitations dans les lycées

- 26 janvier – manifestations à Paris. Interventions de la police dans les universités

- 30 janvier – Pologne : début d'une série de manifestations contre la censure et l'autoritarisme

- 31 janvier – Vietnam : offensive du Têt. L'Armée populaire vietnamienne mobilisent 80 000 hommes dans 100 villes

- 31 Janvier – évacuation anticipée des bases militaires françaises en Algérie

- 18 février – Berlin : manifestation internationale de solidarité avec le peuple vietnamien

- 29 février – Italie : occupation de l'Université de Rome par les étudiants. La police intervient pour évacuer les locaux : bataille de *Valle Giulia*, le 1er mars

- 8 mars – Pologne : répression des manifestations étudiantes de Varsovie et expulsion des juifs du Parti ouvrier unifié polonais

- 12 mars – indépendance de l'île Maurice

- 17-18 mars - Paris : manifestation devant le siège d'American Express. Arrestations

- 22 mars – Paris : occupation de la tour administrative de la faculté de Nanterre par 142 étudiants

- 30 mars – réforme du système monétaire international sur la convertibilité

- ouverture d'une antenne du BPP à New York

- occupation de l'université de Columbia

- 4 avril – assassinat de Martin Luther King à Memphis ; émeutes dans plusieurs villes

### Avril

- 6 avril – Bobby Hutton, 17 ans, l'un des premiers membres du BPP meurt dans une fusillade à Oakland, au cours de laquelle Eldridge Cleaver est blessé et incarcéré

- 11 avril – le président Johnson signe la *Loi sur les Droits Civiques*

- 11 avril – Allemagne de l'Ouest : Rudi Dutschke, leader de l'extrême-gauche allemande, est grièvement blessé lors d'un attentat commandité par l'extrême droite. Violentes manifestations étudiantes en RFA

- 18 avril – coup d'état militaire en Sierra Leone

- 19 avril – Italie : les syndicats décrètent une grève générale

# USA

**Mai** Pétition du BPP pour un contrôle populaire des actions de la police

# 1968

révoltes estudiantines et ouvrières en Europe, en Amérique du Nord, en Afrique (Sénégal, Mauritanie...)

– Japon : 50 universités sont paralysées par des émeutes étudiantes. 20 000 arrestations

- 3 mai – Paris : assemblée générale à la Sorbonne pour dénoncer la fermeture de la faculté de Nanterre. Intervention de la police. Premiers affrontements de rue avec les policiers

- 6 mai – Début des grèves lycéennes Françaises. Premières barricades à Paris. Violents affrontements au Quartier latin : 600 étudiants et plus de 300 policiers sont blessés. Le mouvement s'étend en province

- 10-11 mai – Paris : « Nuit des barricades » au Quartier latin. 1 000 blessés lors d'affrontements avec la police

- 13 mai – France : grève générale. Un million de manifestants à Paris. Occupation de la Sorbonne. Manifestations violentes à Nantes

- 14-16 mai – France : grèves et occupations d'usines à Nantes, Flins, Billancourt. Grève des journalistes de la radio et de la télévision d'État contre la partialité de l'information

- 18 mai – France : l'université de Strasbourg se déclare autonome

- 22 mai – France : dix millions de grévistes chez les ouvriers et les salariés

- 24 mai – deuxième «*nuit des barricades*» à Paris. Manifestations et émeutes en France

- 27 mai – Paris : fin des négociations entre le gouvernement et les représentants syndicaux. Les *accords de Grenelle* (réduction du temps de travail, augmentation des salaires, droit syndical) sont rejetés par les grévistes. Une assemblée générale au stade Charléty réunit 60 000 personnes

- 30 mai – France : manifestation de soutien à de Gaulle sur les Champs-Élysées. Dissolution de l'Assemblée nationale, annonce d'élections législatives

# Monde

## Juin

- 5 juin – assassinat de Robert Kennedy

- 8 juin – retrait de 25.000 hommes du Vietnam

- 13 juin – le New York Times commence la publication des *Pentagon papers*, documents internes secrets sur l'implication des USA dans la guerre du Vietnam

- 6 juin – France : occupation des usines Renault, à Flins

- 10 juin – France : mort par noyade d'un lycéen de 17 ans, à Flins, alors qu'il était poursuivi par les policiers

- 11 juin – France : manifestations dans plusieurs villes de France en réaction à la mort d'un lycéen. Heurts violents entre policiers et grévistes de l'usine Peugeot à Montbéliard ; deux ouvriers sont tués

- 12 juin – France : interdiction de toute manifestation sur tout le territoire jusqu'aux élections et dissolution judiciaire de 11 organisations d'extrême-gauche par décret du ministre de l'Intérieur

- 14 juin – France : il reste environ un million de grévistes

16 juin – France : la Sorbonne est évacuée par la police

- 23 et 30 juin – France : les élections législatives consacrent la réaction gaulliste

- 26 juin – Brésil : manifestation de 100 000 personnes à Rio de Janeiro pour la fin de la répression et de la censure

## juillet

- 15-16 juillet – ouverture du procès de Huey P. Newton. Plus de 6 000 personnes manifestent devant le palais de justice

premières restrictions de l'immigration en France

- 26-27 juillet – Mexico : violents affrontements entre étudiants et policiers

## Août

- 26 au 29 août – manifestations contre la guerre, le racisme et les inégalités lors de la Convention du Parti démocrate à Chicago. 800 arrestations

- 13 août – Grèce : attentat manqué contre le chef de la Dictature des colonels

- 20-21 août – Tchécoslovaquie : Invasion des armées du Pacte de Varsovie et écrasement du *Printemps de Prague*

## Septembre

# 1968

Huey P. Newton est condamné à une peine de 2 à 15 ans de prison

Le bureau du BPP est détruit au fusil par deux policiers

Eldridge Cleaver voit sa conditionnelle révoquée et doit retourner en prison. Il disparaît le 24 novembre, trois jours avant son incarcération. Avec Kathleen, sa femme, ils fuient à Cuba, Paris, puis Alger

# Monde

- 4 septembre – coup d'état militaire au Congo-Brazzaville

- 12 septembre – France : réouverture de la Sorbonne

# USA

## Octobre

- 16 octobre – Tommy Smith et John Carlos, athlètes noirs états-uniens, lèvent un poing ganté de noir sur le podium des Jeux Olympiques de Mexico pour protester contre la discrimination raciale aux États Unis

Japon : *Assauts de Tokyo* par le mouvement des étudiants et des ouvriers. Ils attaquent le parlement, l'ambassade américaine, et le siège de la police. Manifestations dans plus de 300 localités japonaises

- 2 octobre – Mexique : *Massacre de Tlatelolco*, Mexico, après deux semaines d'affrontements violents entre policiers et étudiants (et sympathisants). Entre 300 et 800 morts

- 3 octobre – coup d'état réformiste au Pérou

- 12 octobre – indépendance de la Guinée Équatoriale

## Novembre

5 novembre – Nixon est élu président. George Wallace, gouverneur ségrégationniste et réactionnaire de l'Alabama rassemble 10 millions de voix

- 19 novembre – coup d'état au Mali pour la restauration de la démocratie

## Décembre

- 10 décembre – coup d'État au Dahomey

- 26 décembre – Athènes : premier acte de terrorisme international à l'initiative d'activistes palestiniens

43 % des familles noires sont officiellement pauvres.  
Le salaire d'un Noir ne représente pas 60 % de celui  
d'un Blanc. Les Noirs et autres citoyens de couleur ont  
deux fois plus de chance d'être au chômage

# USA

## Janvier

premier des nombreux programmes sociaux du BPP : petits déjeuners gratuits pour les enfants, à Oakland

- 17 janvier – Bunchy Carter et John Higgins militants du BPP de LA sont tués par des membres de l'organisation *United Slaves* (US), mouvement concurrent, sur un campus de Los Angeles. Le soir même, dix-sept Panthers sont arrêtés au domicile de Higgins. Le FBI a instrumentalisé et organisé le conflit

- 20 janvier – Richard Nixon succède à Johnson

- 1er janvier – le Congo-Brazzaville devient une république socialiste

- 18 janvier – ouverture de la conférence élargie sur le Vietnam à Paris

## Février

ouverture par le BPP du premier de ses *Instituts Intercommunaux Pour La Jeunesse*

- 3 février – guérilla au Mozambique

# Monde

## Mars

- 24 mars – Bobby Seale est accusé d'avoir fomenté des émeutes en août 1968. Il est arrêté

## Avril

- 1er avril - début d'un vaste programme de petits déjeuners au BPP de Chicago

- 2 avril – accusés de préparation de complot contre la police de New York, 21 panthères sont arrêtés

Italie : début des grèves ouvrières dans les usines Fiat, à Turin

# 1969

## Mai

- 9 mai – début du scandale du Watergate

- 22 mai - 8 Panthers sont arrêtés à New Haven dans le Connecticut, accusés du meurtre d'un membre new yorkais du BPP

- 23 mai - un membre du BPP est abattu par des membres de l'*United Slaves* (US)

lors d'un *bed-in* à l'Hôtel Reine-Élisabeth de Montréal, Jonh Lennon, Yoko Ono et Timothy Leary enregistrent *Give peace a chance*

- 10-20 mai – bataille d'*Hamburger Hill* au Vietnam

- 25 mai – coup d'état au Soudan

- 29 mai – Argentine : révolte des étudiants de l'Université de Córdoba (le *Cordobazo*) contre la dictature du général Onganía

ouverture par le BPP du premier de ses *Centres Cliniques Gratuits*

naissance de la *Weather Underground Organization* qui organisera, bientôt dans la clandestinité, des actions directes de protestation durant toute la guerre du Vietnam

## Juin

- 8 juin – Bobby Seale est condamné à 3 ans avec sursis pour port d'arme près d'une prison. Cette affaire ajoute à celle de mars, il est enfermé à partir du 19 août

- 28 juin – nuit d'émeutes après un raid policier au *Stonewall Inn*, bar gay de New York, et naissance du mouvement pour la libération des gays et des lesbiennes

- 11 juin – proclamation de l'état d'urgence au Sénégal suite aux grèves estudiantines et à l'agitation commencée en avril

## juillet

- 17 juillet – premier programme social du BPP à New Haven

- 3 juillet – Italie : grève générale des ouvriers et étudiants de Turin

- 5 juillet – assassinat du ministre de la planification au Kenya

- 5 juillet – première édition du festival panafricain à Alger

# USA

## Août

- 15 août – un membre du BPP de San Diego est abattu par l'*United Slaves* (US)

- 15-17 août – festival de *Woodstock*

- 14 août – les troupes anglaises se déploient en Irlande du Nord

- 31 août – coup d'état militaire au Brésil

# 1969

# Monde

## Septembre

- 3 septembre – Eldridge et Kathleen Cleaver créent la section internationale du BPP à Alger

- 16 septembre – nouveau retrait de troupes américaines au Vietnam

un million de gréviste en Italie

- 1er septembre – chute du roi de Lybie, Qadafi au pouvoir

- 11 septembre – Italie : le déclenchement de la grève des métallurgistes donne le coup d'envoi de l'automne chaud italien

## Octobre

- 15 octobre – manifestations monstres contre la guerre du Vietnam dans plusieurs grandes villes

- 18 octobre – la police de Los Angeles abat un membre du BPP tandis qu'il vend le journal du Parti

- 15 octobre – assassinat du président somalien

## Novembre

- 9 novembre – début de l'occupation de l'île d'Alcatraz, dans la baie de San Francisco, par 79 autochtones ayant pour slogan «*You are on Indian land*». L'occupation durera jusqu'en juin 1971

Chili : fondation de l'*Unité Populaire* qui remportera les élections en 1970

## Décembre

- 4 décembre – assassinat dans son sommeil de Fred Hampton par la police de Chicago. Le leader des Black Panthers de Chicago est criblé de balles dans son lit. Mark Clark, également présent dans l'appartement perd la vie lui aussi

- 8 décembre – attaque massive de la police contre les bureaux du BPP, occasionnant un affrontement armé de plusieurs heures

- 11-20 décembre – congrès international des africanistes à Dakar

# USA

première année de grande sécheresse au Mali (70-74)  
qui fera 100.0000 morts

moins de 9% de la population active du Danemark  
travaille dans l'agriculture

# Monde

## Janvier

premier programme du Vêtement Gratuit par le BPP

- 8 janvier – guerre du Biafra

## Mars

premier programme de Transport Gratuit vers les  
prisons

- 20 mars – conférence de Niamey ; 21 États créent  
l'Agence de coopération culturelle et technique

- 26 mars – les lois de 1970 sanctionnent la perte par  
les Noirs bantoustans de la citoyenneté sud-africaine

## Avril

- 11 avril – lancement de la mission lunaire Apollo 13

- 29 avril – intervention américaine et Sud vietnamienne au Cambodge

## Mai

- 4 mai – assassinats de 4 étudiants par la garde nationale  
de l'Ohio lors d'une manifestation contre la guerre du  
Vietnam. 400 universités et collèges se mettent en grève

- soulèvements dans la prison de Queens, à Long Island  
et de Folsom en Californie

apparition d'une guérilla urbaine en Argentine

# 1970

## Juin

- 18 juin – installation de la junte militaire au pouvoir en Argentine

**juillet**

- 27 juillet – Portugal : mort de Salazar, continuité du Régime

# USA

# 1970

**Août**

- 5 août – libération sous caution de Huey P. Newton  
- 7 août – dramatique prise d'otages d'un juge conduite par Jonathan Jackson, frère de George Jackson. Accusée d'avoir fourni l'arme, Angela Davis est poursuivie

- 12 août – *Traité de Moscou*

**Septembre**

délégation du BPP au Vietnam, en Chine et à Moscou

# Monde

**Octobre**

- 10 octobre – indépendance des Îles Fidji  
- 20 octobre – fondation des Brigades Rouges en Italie

**Novembre**

- 20 novembre – innocenté, Bobby Seale est libéré  
nouvelle fourniture d'armes à Israël

- 4 novembre – Salvador Allende remporte les élections au Chili  
- 22 novembre – le pouvoir en Guinée est renversé par 350 mercenaires internationaux

**Décembre**

enquête du Winter Soldier. Des centaines de vétérans témoignent des horreurs qu'ils ont commises ou auxquelles ils ont assisté

- 16 décembre – état d'urgence en Érythrée

Saul Alinsky publie *Rules For Radicals*, chez Random House

le FBI réussit à introduire la suspicion et les dissensions entre les membres du BPP que la prison ou la fuite dans le clandestinité ont physiquement éloignés

le BPP est peu à peu pris dans une guerre des chefs qui l'épuise. Deux clans principalement s'opposent, celui de la côte Ouest, fidèle à Huey P. Newton et celui de la côte Est, rallié à la cause de Cleaver, en exil à Alger

# USA

affrontements sanglants à Belfast

# Monde

## Janvier

ouverture de l'Oakland Community School

- 25 janvier – le général Idi Amin Dada renverse Milton Obote en Ouganda

## Mars

programme du BPP contre la peur dans les quartiers

# 1971

## Avril

- 21 avril – dictature de Duvalier à Haïti

## Mai

création par le BPP d'une Fondation contre l'anémie

## juillet

programme du BPP pour le *Logement Gratuit*

- 11 juillet – nationalisations au Chili par Allende  
- 19-23 juillet – coup d'état communiste au Soudan

## août

- 21 août – assassinat de George Jackson à la prison de San Quentin  
- émeutes à San Quentin

- 19-21 août – coup d'état de Suarez en Bolivie

## Septembre

- 9-14 septembre – soulèvement dans la prison d'Attica, État de New York. La répression fait 31 morts

- 3 septembre – indépendance du Qatar

## Octobre

ouverture du premier parc d'attraction du *Walt Disney World Resort*

27 octobre – le Congo devient le Zaïre

## Novembre

- 26 novembre – grande offensive aérienne au Vietnam

- 17 novembre – coup d'état en Thaïlande  
- émeutes entre croates et serbes en Yougoslavie

## Décembre

conflit armé entre l'Inde et le Pakistan

- 2 décembre – indépendance des Émirats Arabes Unis  
l'armée israélienne met fin à la résistance palestinienne dans la bande de Gaza

Mauvaises récoltes

# USA

# Monde

## Janvier

- 13 janvier – coup d'état au Ghana
- 27 janvier – activisme militant aborigène à Canberra, Australie
- 30 janvier – Bloody Sunday, Irlande du Nord

## Février

21-28 février – voyage de R. Nixon en Chine

début des actions de l'Ira en Angleterre

## Mars

# 1972

- 22 mars – le Congrès approuve l'*Equal Right Amendment* visant à garantir la complète égalité de droits aux femmes
- 30 mars – début d'une grande offensive au Vietnam

## Mai

- 22-23 mai – Nixon en URSS

- Mai-juin – grèves, émeutes à Madagascar. Le pouvoir est renversé

## Juin

- 17 juin – base du scandale du *Watergate*

## Août

- 18 août – Elmer Geronimo Pratt, membre historique du BPP, est condamné à tort pour meurtre. Il sera innocenté

## Septembre

- 5 septembre – prise d'otages aux jeux olympiques de Munich. Massacre d'athlètes israéliens par des terroristes palestiniens

## Octobre

- 6 octobre – coup d'état militaire au Bénin

## Décembre

- 18-19 décembre – des pilotes américains refusent des missions au Vietnam, dont le bombardement de populations

- 21 décembre – début des attaques de fermes blanches en Rhodésie du Sud. Les guerres raciales feront 20.000 victimes en huit ans

- début d'une grande sécheresse au Sahel

# Monde

# USA

# 1973

## Janvier

- 22 janvier – légalisation de l'avortement
- 27 janvier – *accords de Paris* : cessez-le-feu et retrait militaire américain au Nord-Vietnam

rupture avec Israël des pays d'Afrique Noire membres de l'OUA

le Royaume-Uni, l'Irlande et le Danemark intègrent la CEE

## Février

- 8 février – ouverture d'une commission d'enquête sur le scandale du *Watergate*
- 11 février – libération des prisonniers de guerre américains au Nord-Vietnam
- 21 février – les États-Unis signent un cessez-le-feu avec le Laos
- 27 février – 200 Sioux de l'*American Indian Movement* occupent Wounded Knee pour protester des conditions de vie dans les Réserves Indiennes. Ils résistent durant 71 jours

- 5 février – installation d'une dictature au Nicaragua

- 5 février – Chine : Proclamation de la commune populaire de Shanghai.

- 25 février – premières grandes grèves ouvrières en France, à Besançon, puis Lyon

## Mars

- Bobby Seale se présente aux élections municipales d'Oakland
- 29 mars – les derniers soldats rentrent du Vietnam

soutenue par Les États-Unis, l'opposition chilienne à Allende bloque le fonctionnement des institutions et du pays et aggrave la crise économique

- 20 Mars – en Chine, Mao Zetong rappelle Deng Xiaoping aux affaires pour contrôler l'Armée Populaire de Libération

## Avril

- 4 avril – inauguration du *World Trade Center* de New York
- 30 avril – scandale du *Watergate*, deux des principaux conseillers de Nixon démissionnent

- 15 Avril – la Révolution populaire en Lybie vient consolider le pouvoir de Qadafi

## Mai

- 3 mai – trois commandants du BPP sont arrêtés par une patrouille de police. Une fusillade s'ouvre, dont seulement l'un des trois en réchappent

- 10 mai – création du Front Polisario au Sahara Occidental

## Juin

visite de Leonid Brejnev aux États-Unis

- 1er juin – abolition de la monarchie en Grèce par la junte militaire
- 20 juin – retour triomphale de Juan Péron en Argentine
- 27 juin – coup d'état en Uruguay. Installation d'un pouvoir autoritaire

juillet

# USA

- 5 juillet – coup d'état militaire au Rwanda
  - 17 juillet – Afghanistan, destitution du roi, création d'une république afghane
  - 18 juillet – départ d'une marche de l'unité arabe de Tripoli au Caire
- la Lybie nationalise à 51% la production de pétrole

Septembre

les États-Unis soutiennent le coup d'État militaire et la répression brutale au Chili entraînant l'assassinat ou la «disparition» de 11.000 personnes

# 1973

- 5-9 septembre – conférence des *non-alignés* à Alger
- 11 septembre – coup d'état militaire au Chili. Mort d'Allende. Soutien des États-Unis au régime et à la répression militaire sauvage. 250.000 chiliens doivent s'exiler
- 23 septembre – Péron est de nouveau porté au pouvoir en Argentine
- 24 septembre – la Guinée-Bissau déclare son indépendance
- 25-26 septembre – série d'assassinats politiques en Argentine

# Monde

Octobre

- 6 octobre – échange de menaces au nucléaire entre Washington et Moscou dans le cadre de la *guerre du Kippour*
- 20 octobre – mise en route d'une mesure d'empêchement pour destituer le président Richard Nixon

- 6-24 octobre – *guerre du Kippour* ; quatrième guerre israélo-arabe
  - 16-17 octobre – premier choc pétrolier, résultant du conflit : l'OPEP décide d'une réduction de livraison internationale du pétrole
  - 20 octobre – le roi Fayçal d'Arabie décide d'un embargo total du pétrole sur les livraisons aux USA, puis aux Pays-Bas
- inauguration de l'opéra de Sydney

Novembre

- 7 novembre – limitation des pouvoirs du président par le Congrès

- 6 novembre – la famine se répand en Éthiopie et d'autres pays du Sahel
- 11 novembre – signature d'un cessez-le-feu entre Israël et l'Égypte
- 25 novembre – loi martiale en Grèce
- 28 novembre – reconnaissance de l'OLP comme représentant du peuple palestinien par la *Ligue des Pays Arabes*

Décembre

- 1er décembre – rupture de l'Union Égypto-libyenne
- indépendance de la Papouasie-Nouvelle Guinée
- 23 décembre – doublement des prix du pétrole
- intervention militaire de l'Iran à Oman
- multiplication des violences au Liban entre Palestiniens et chrétiens
- grande famine dans la zone Sahel. Elle durera deux années
- adoption officielle d'une politique multiculturelle en Australie

# USA

# 1974

## Février

- 13 février – conférence des pays consommateurs de pétrole à Washington

- 7 février – indépendance de la Grenade

- 8 février – coup d'état militaire en Haute-Volta

- 14 février – la Somalie adhère à la Ligue Arabe

## Mars

- 18 mars – Sadate obtient la levée de l'embargo sur le pétrole, malgré le blocage des négociations entre Israël et la Ligue Arabe

- 18 mars – Cambodge ; les Khmers Rouges prennent la ville d'Oudong. La plupart des 20.000 habitants de la ville sont déportés ou exécutés

- 26 mars – annonce de la libération de tous les prisonniers politiques au Sénégal

## Avril

- 15 avril – coup d'état militaire au Niger

- 18 avril – actions terroristes des Brigades Rouges en Italie

- 25 avril – Portugal ; *révolution des œillets*. Une junte militaire de sept membres prend le pouvoir. Elle institue et prépare la démocratie

l'Iran soutient la résistance Kurde en Irak

## Mai

- 31 mai – accord Israélo-syrien

## juillet

sous la menace d'une inculpation, Huey P. Newton s'exile à Cuba. Elaine Brown prend la tête du BPP, dont Bobby Seale et quelques autres dirigeants sont convaincus qu'elle est pilotée par le FBI. **Bobby Seale déclare dissout le BPP**

- 23 juillet – effondrement du régime des colonels en Grèce

## Août

- 8 août – Watergate ; Richard Nixon annonce sa démission de la présidence

- 9 août – Nixon est remplacé par Gerald Ford, vice-président

## Septembre

- 6 septembre – accord sur l'indépendance du Mozambique, mais les combats se poursuivent

- 12 septembre – Éthiopie, l'empereur Haïlé Sélassié est renversé par l'armée

## Décembre

négociation avec le Panama pour la refonte du traité de 1903 sur la zone du canal

conflit frontalier entre le Mali et la Haute-Volta

# vita non nova

[incipit] IV2n

ARSON AND STREET WAR  
— MOST DESTRUCTIVE  
RIOT IN U.S. HISTORY

les émeutes de Watts  
vues par Guy Debord



Le déclin et la chute de l'économie spectaculaire-marchande

Entre le 13 et le 16 août 1965, la population noire de Los Angeles s'est soulevée. Un incident opposant policiers de la circulation et passants s'est développé en deux journées d'émeutes spontanées. Les renforts croissants des forces de l'ordre n'ont pas été capables de reprendre le contrôle de la rue. Vers le troisième jour, les Noirs ont repris les armes, pillant les armureries accessibles, de sorte qu'ils ont pu tirer même sur les hélicoptères de la police. Des milliers de soldats et de policiers - le poids militaire d'une division d'infanterie, appuyée par des tanks - ont dû être jetés dans la lutte pour cerner la révolte dans le quartier de Watts ; ensuite pour le reconquérir au prix de nombreux combats de rue, durant plusieurs jours, les insurgés ont procédé au pillage généralisé des magasins, et ils y ont mis le feu. Selon les chiffres, officiels, il y aurait eu 32 morts, dont 27 Noirs, plus de 800 blessés, 3 000 emprisonnés.

Les réactions, de tous côtés, ont revêtu cette clarté que l'événement révolutionnaire, du fait qu'il est lui-même une clarification en actes des problèmes existants, a toujours le privilège de conférer aux diverses nuances de pensée de ses adversaires. Le chef de la police, William Parker, a refusé toute médiation proposée par les grandes organisations noires, affirmant justement que « ces émeutes n'ont pas de chefs ». Et certes, puisque les Noirs n'avaient plus de chefs, c'était le moment de la vérité dans chaque camp. Qu'attendait, d'ailleurs, au même moment un de ces chefs en chômage, Roy Wilkins, secrétaire de la National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ? Il déclarait que les émeutes « devaient être réprimées en faisant usage de toute la force nécessaire » Et le cardinal de Los Angeles, McIntyre, qui protestait hautement, ne protestait pas contre la violence de la répression, comme on pourrait croire habile de le faire à l'heure de l'aggiornamento de l'influence romaine ; il protestait au plus urgent devant « une révolte préméditée contre les droits du voisin, contre le respect de la loi et le maintien de l'ordre », il appelait les catholiques à s'opposer au pillage, à « ces violences sans justification apparente ». Et tous ceux qui allaient jusqu'à voir les « justifications apparentes » de la colère des Noirs de Los Angeles, mais non certes la justification réelle, tous les penseurs et les « responsables » de la gauche mondiale, de son néant, ont déploré l'irresponsabilité et le désordre, le pillage, et surtout le fait que son premier moment ait été le pillage des magasins contenant l'alcool et les armes ; et les 2 000 foyers d'incendie dénombrés, par lesquels les pétroliers de Watts ont éclairé leur bataille et leur fête. Qui donc a pris la défense des insurgés de Los Angeles, dans les termes qu'ils méritent ? Nous allons le faire. Laissons les économistes pleurer sur les 27 millions de dollars perdus, et les urbanistes sur un de leur plus beaux supermarkets parti en fumée, et McIntyre sur son shérif abattu ; laissons les sociologues se lamenter sur l'absurdité et l'ivresse dans cette révolte. C'est le rôle d'une publication révolutionnaire, non seulement de donner raison aux insurgés de Los Angeles, mais de contribuer à leur donner des raisons, d'expliquer théoriquement la vérité dont l'action pratique exprime ici la recherche.

Dans l'Adresse publiée à Alger en juillet 1965, après le coup d'État de Boumediène, les situationnistes, qui exposaient aux Algériens et aux révolutionnaires du monde les conditions en Algérie et dans le reste du monde comme un tout, montraient parmi leurs exemples le mouvement des Noirs américains qui, « s'il peut s'affirmer avec conséquence », dévoilera les contradictions du capitalisme le plus avancé. Cinq semaines plus tard, cette conséquence s'est manifestée dans la rue. La critique théorique de la société moderne, dans ce qu'elle a de plus nouveau, et la critique en actes de la même société existent déjà l'une et l'autre ; encore séparées mais aussi avancées jusqu'aux mêmes réalités, parlant de la même chose. Ces deux critiques s'expliquent l'une par l'autre ; et chacune est sans l'autre inexplicable. La théorie de la survie et du spectacle est éclairée et vérifiée par ces actes qui sont incompréhensibles à la fausse conscience américaine. Elle éclairera en retour ces actes quelque jour.

Jusqu'ici, les manifestations des Noirs pour les « droits civiques » avaient été maintenues par leurs chefs dans une légalité qui tolérait les pires violences des forces de l'ordre et des racistes, comme au mois de mars précédent en Alabama, lors de la marche sur Montgomery ; et même après ce scandale, une entente discrète du gouvernement fédéral, du gouverneur Wallace et du pasteur King avait conduit la marche de Selma, le 10 mars, à reculer devant la dignité et la prière. L'affrontement attendu alors par la foule des manifestants n'avait été que le spectacle d'un affrontement possible. En même temps la non-violence avait atteint la limite ridicule de son courage : s'exposer aux coups de l'ennemi, et pousser ensuite la grandeur morale jusqu'à lui épargner la nécessité d'user à nouveau de sa force. Mais la donnée de base est que le mouvement de droits civiques ne posait, par des moyens légaux, que des problèmes légaux. Il est logique d'en appeler légalement à la loi. Ce qui est irrationnel, c'est de quémander légalement devant l'illégalité patente, comme si elle était un non-sens qui se dissoudra en étant montré du doigt. Il est manifeste que l'illégalité superficielle, outrageusement visible, encore appliquée aux Noirs dans beaucoup d'États américains, a ses racines dans une contradiction économique-sociale qui n'est pas du ressort des lois existantes ; et qu'aucune loi juridique future ne peut même défaire, contre les lois plus fondamentales de la société où les Noirs américains finalement osent demander de vivre. Les Noirs américains, en vérité, veulent la subversion totale de cette société, ou rien. Et le problème de la subversion nécessaire apparaît de lui-même dès que les Noirs en viennent aux moyens subversifs ; or le passage à de tels moyens surgit dans leur vie quotidienne comme ce qui y est à la fois le plus accidentel et le plus objectivement justifié. Ce n'est plus la crise du statut des Noirs en Amérique ; c'est la crise du statut de l'Amérique, posé d'abord parmi les Noirs. Il n'y a pas eu ici de conflit racial : les Noirs n'ont pas attaqué les Blancs qui étaient sur leur chemin, mais seulement les policiers blancs ; et de même la communauté noire ne s'est pas étendue aux propriétaires noirs de magasins, ni même aux automobilistes noirs. Luther King lui-même a dû admettre que les limites de sa spécialité étaient franchies, en déclarant, à Paris en octobre, que « ce n'étaient pas des émeutes de race, mais de classe ».

La révolte de Los Angeles est une révolte contre la marchandise, contre le monde de la marchandise et du travailleur-consommateur hiérarchiquement soumis aux mesures de la marchandise. Les Noirs de Los Angeles, comme les bandes de jeunes délinquants de tous les pays avancés, mais plus radicalement parce qu'à l'échelle d'une classe globalement sans avenir, d'une partie du prolétariat qui ne peut croire à des chances notables de promotion et d'intégration, prennent au mot la propagande du capitalisme moderne, sa publicité de l'abondance. Ils veulent tout de suite tous les objets montrés et abstraitement disponibles, parce qu'ils veulent en faire usage. De ce fait ils en récuse la valeur d'échange, la réalité marchande qui en est le moule, la motivation et la fin dernière, et qui a tout sélectionné. Par le vol et le cadeau, ils retrouvent un usage qui, aussitôt, dément la rationalité oppressive de la marchandise, qui fait apparaître ses relations et sa fabrication même comme arbitraires et non nécessaires. Le pillage du quartier de Watts manifestait la réalisation la plus sommaire du principe bâtard : « A chacun selon ses faux besoins », les besoins déterminés et produits par le système économique que le pillage précisément rejette. Mais du fait que cette abondance est prise au mot, rejointe dans l'immédiat, et non plus indéfiniment poursuivie dans la course du travail aliéné et de l'augmentation des besoins sociaux différés, les vrais désirs s'expriment déjà dans la fête, dans l'affirmation ludique, dans le potlatch de destruction. L'homme qui détruit les marchandises montre sa supériorité humaine sur les marchandises. Il ne restera pas prisonnier des formes arbitraires qu'a revêtues l'image de son besoin. Le passage de la consommation à la consommation s'est réalisé dans les flammes de Watts. Les grands frigidaires volés par des gens qui n'avaient pas l'électricité, ou chez qui le courant était coupé, est la meilleure image du mensonge de l'abondance devenu vérité en jeu. La production marchande, dès qu'elle cesse d'être achetée, devient critiquable et modifiable dans toutes ses mises en forme particulières. C'est seulement quand elle est payée par l'argent, en tant que signe d'un grade dans la survie, qu'elle est respectée comme un fétiche admirable.

La société de l'abondance trouve sa réponse naturelle dans le pillage, mais elle n'était aucunement abondance naturelle et humaine, elle était abondance de marchandises. Et le pillage, qui fait instantanément s'effondrer la marchandise en tant que telle, montre aussi l'ultima ratio de la marchandise : la force, la police et les autres détachements spécialisés qui possèdent dans l'État le monopole de la violence armée. Qu'est-ce qu'un policier ? C'est le serviteur actif de la marchandise, c'est l'homme totalement soumis à la marchandise, par l'action duquel tel produit du travail humain reste une marchandise dont la volonté magique est d'être payée, et non vulgairement un frigidaire ou un fusil, chose aveugle, passive, insensible, qui est soumise au premier venu qui en fera usage. Derrière l'indignité qu'il y a à dépendre du policier, les Noirs rejettent l'indignité qu'il y a à dépendre des marchandises. La jeunesse sans avenir marchand de Watts a choisi une autre qualité du présent, et la vérité de ce présent fut irrécusable au point d'entraîner toute la population, les femmes, les enfants et jusqu'aux sociologues présents sur ce terrain. Une jeune sociologue noire de ce quartier, Bobbi Hollon déclarait en octobre au Herald Tribune : « Les gens avaient honte, avant, de dire qu'ils venaient de Watts. Ils le marmonnaient. Maintenant ils le disent avec orgueil. Des garçons qui portaient toujours leurs chemises ouvertes jusqu'à la taille et vous aurais découpé en rondelles en une demi-seconde ont rattrapé ici chaque matin à 7 heures. Ils organisaient la distribution de la nourriture. Bien sûr, il ne faut pas se faire d'illusion, ils l'avaient pillée [...] Tout ce bla-bla chrétien a été utilisé contre les Noirs pendant trop longtemps. Ces gens pourraient piller pendant dix ans et ne pas récupérer la moitié de l'argent qu'on leur a volé dans ces magasins pendant toutes ces années... Moi, je suis seulement une petite fille noire. » Bobbi Hollon, qui a décidé de ne jamais laver le sang qui a taché ses espadrilles pendant les émeutes, dit que « maintenant le monde entier regarde le quartier de Watts ».

Comment les hommes font-ils l'histoire, à partir des conditions préétablies pour les dissuader d'y intervenir ? Les Noirs de Los Angeles sont mieux payés que partout ailleurs aux États-Unis, mais ils sont là encore plus séparés qu'ailleurs de la richesse maximum qui s'étale précisément en Californie. Hollywood, le pôle du spectacle mondial, est dans leur voisinage immédiat. On leur promet qu'ils accéderont, avec de la patience, à la prospérité américaine, mais ils voient que cette prospérité n'est pas une sphère stable, mais une échelle sans fin. Plus ils montent, plus ils s'éloignent du sommet, parce qu'ils sont défavorisés au départ, parce qu'ils sont moins qualifiés, donc plus nombreux parmi les chômeurs, et finalement parce que la hiérarchie qui les écrase n'est pas seulement celle du pouvoir d'achat comme fait économique pur : elle est une infériorité essentielle que leur imposent dans tous les aspects de la vie quotidienne les mœurs et les préjugés d'une société où tout pouvoir humain est aligné sur le pouvoir d'achat. De même que la richesse humaine des Noirs américains est haïssable et considérée comme criminelle, la richesse en argent ne peut pas les rendre complètement acceptables dans l'aliénation américaine : la richesse individuelle ne fera qu'un riche nègre parce que les Noirs dans leur ensemble doivent représenter la pauvreté d'une société de richesse hiérarchisée. Tous les observateurs ont entendu ce cri qui en appelait à la reconnaissance universelle du sens du soulèvement : « *C'est la révolution des Noirs, et nous voulons que le monde le sache !* » Freedom now est le mot de passe de toutes les révolutions de l'histoire ; mais pour la première fois, ce n'est pas la misère, c'est au contraire l'abondance matérielle qu'il s'agit de dominer selon de nouvelles lois. Dominer l'abondance n'est donc pas seulement en modifier la distribution, c'est en redéfinir les orientations superficielles et profondes. C'est le premier pas d'une lutte immense, d'une portée infinie.

Les Noirs ne sont pas isolés dans leur lutte parce qu'une nouvelle conscience prolétarienne (la conscience de n'être en rien le maître de son activité, de sa vie) commence en Amérique dans des couches qui refusent le capitalisme moderne et, de ce fait, leur ressemblent. La première phase de la lutte des Noirs ; justement, a été le signal d'une contestation qui s'étend. En décembre 1964, les étudiants de Berkeley, brimés dans leur participation au mouvement des droits civiques, en sont venus à faire une grève qui mettait en cause le fonctionnement de cette "multiversité" de Californie et, à travers ceci, toute l'organisation de la société américaine, le rôle passif qu'on leur y destine. Aussitôt on découvre dans la jeunesse étudiante les orgies de boisson ou de drogue et la dissolution de la morale sexuelle que l'on reprochait aux Noirs. Cette génération d'étudiants a depuis inventé une première forme de lutte contre le spectacle dominant, le Teach In, et cette forme a été reprise le 20 octobre en Grande-Bretagne, à propos de la crise de Rhodésie. Cette forme, évidemment primitive et impure, c'est le moment de la discussion des problèmes, qui refuse de se limiter dans le temps (académiquement) ; qui ainsi cherche à être poussé jusqu'au bout, et ce bout est naturellement l'activité pratique. En octobre des dizaines de manifestants paraissent dans la rue, à New York et à Berkeley, contre la guerre au Vietnam, et ils rejoignent les cris des émeutiers de Watts : « *Sortez de notre quartier et du Vietnam !* » Chez les Blancs qui se radicalisent, la fameuse frontière de la légalité est franchie : on donne des "cours" pour apprendre à frauder

aux conseils de révision (*Le Monde* du 19 octobre 1965), on brûle devant la TV des papiers militaires. Dans la société de l'abondance s'exprime le dégoût de cette abondance et de son prix. Le spectacle est éclaboussé par l'activité autonome d'une couche avancée qui nie ses valeurs. Le prolétariat classique, dans la mesure même où l'on avait pu provisoirement l'intégrer au système capitaliste, n'avait pas intégré les Noirs (plusieurs syndicats de Los Angeles refusèrent les Noirs jusqu'en 1959) ; et maintenant les Noirs sont le pôle d'unification pour tout ce qui refuse la logique de cette intégration au capitalisme, nec plus ultra de toute intégration promise. Et le confort ne sera jamais assez confortable pour satisfaire ceux qui cherchent ce qui n'est pas sur le marché, ce que le marché précisément élimine. Le niveau atteint par la technologie des plus privilégiés devient une offense, plus facile à exprimer que l'offense essentielle de la réification. La révolte de Los Angeles est la première de l'histoire qui ait pu souvent se justifier elle-même en arguant du manque d'air conditionné pendant une vague de chaleur.

Les Noirs ont en Amérique leur propre spectacle, leur presse, leurs revues et leurs vedettes de couleur, et ainsi ils le reconnaissent et le vomissent comme spectacle fallacieux, comme expression de leur indignité, parce qu'ils le voient minoritaire, simple appendice d'un spectacle générale. Ils reconnaissent que ce spectacle de leur consommation souhaitable est une colonie de celui des Blancs, et ils voient donc plus vite le mensonge de tout le spectacle économico-culturel. Ils demandent, en voulant effectivement et tout de suite participer à l'abondance, qui est la valeur officielle de tout Américain, la réalisation égalitaire du spectacle de la vie quotidienne en Amérique, la mise à l'épreuve des valeurs mi-célestes, mi-terrestres de ce spectacle. Mais il est dans l'essence du spectacle de n'être pas réalisable immédiatement ni également même pour les Blancs (les Noirs font justement fonction de caution spectaculaire de cette inégalité stimulante dans la course à l'abondance). Quand les Noirs exigent de prendre à la lettre le spectacle capitaliste, ils rejettent déjà le spectacle même. Le spectacle est une drogue pour esclaves. Il n'entend pas être pris au mot, mais suivi à un infime degré de retard (si il n'y a plus de retard, la mystification apparaît). En fait, aux États-Unis, les Blancs sont aujourd'hui les esclaves de la marchandise, et les Noirs, ses négateurs. Les Noirs veulent plus

que les Blancs : voilà le cœur d'un problème insoluble, ou soluble seulement avec la dissolution de cette société blanche. Aussi les Blancs qui veulent sortir de leur propre esclavage doivent rallier d'abord la révolte noire, non comme affirmation de couleur évidemment, mais comme refus universel de la marchandise, et finalement de l'État. Le décalage économique et psychologique des Noirs par rapport aux Blancs leur permet de voir ce qu'est le consommateur blanc, et le juste mépris qu'ils ont du blanc devient mépris de tout consommateur passif. Les Blancs qui, eux aussi, rejettent ce rôle n'ont de chance qu'en unifiant toujours plus leur lutte à celle des Noirs, en en trouvant eux-mêmes et en en soutenant jusqu'au bout les raisons cohérentes. Si leur confluence se séparait devant la radicalisation de la lutte, un nationalisme noir se développerait, qui condamnerait chaque côté à l'affrontement selon les plus vieux modèles de la société dominante. Une série d'exterminations réciproques est l'autre terme de l'alternative présente, quand la résignation ne peut plus durer.

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Les essais de nationalisme noir, séparatiste ou pro africain, sont des rêves qui ne peuvent répondre à l'oppression réelle. Les Noirs américains n'ont pas de patrie. Ils sont en Amérique chez eux et aliénés, comme les autres Américains, mais eux savent qu'ils le sont. Ainsi, ils ne sont pas le secteur arriéré de la société américaine, mais son secteur le plus avancé. Ils sont le négatif en œuvre, « *le mauvais côté qui produit le mouvement qui fait l'histoire en constituant la lutte* » (*Misère de la philosophie*). Il n'y a pas d'Afrique pour cela.

Les Noirs américains sont le produit de l'industrie moderne au même titre que l'électronique, la publicité et le cyclotron. Ils en portent les contradictions. Ils sont les hommes que le paradis spectaculaire doit à la fois intégrer et repousser, de sorte que l'antagonisme du spectacle et de l'activité des hommes s'avoue à leur propos complètement. Le spectacle est universel comme la marchandise. Mais le monde de la marchandise étant fondé sur une opposition de classes, la marchandise est elle-même hiérarchique. L'obligation pour la marchandise, et donc le spectacle qui informe le monde de la marchandise, d'être à la fois universelle et hiérarchique aboutit à une hiérarchisation universelle. Mais du fait que cette hiérarchisation doit rester inavouable, elle se traduit en valorisations hiérarchiques inavouables, parce que irrationnelles, dans un monde de la rationalisation sans raison. C'est cette hiérarchisation qui crée partout les racismes : l'Angleterre travailliste en vient à restreindre l'immigration des gens de couleur, les pays industriellement avancés d'Europe redeviennent racistes en important leur sous-prolétariat de la zone méditerranéenne, en exploitant leurs colonisés à l'intérieur. Et la Russie ne cesse pas d'être antisémite parce qu'elle n'a pas cessé d'être une société hiérarchique où le travail doit être vendu comme une marchandise. Avec la marchandise, la hiérarchie se recompose toujours sous des formes nouvelles et s'étend ; que ce soit entre le dirigeant du mouvement ouvrier et les travailleurs, ou bien entre possesseurs de deux modèles de voitures artificiellement distingués. C'est la tare originelle de la rationalité marchande, la maladie de la raison bourgeoise, maladie héréditaire dans la bureaucratie. Mais l'absurdité révoltante de certaines hiérarchies, et le fait que toute la force du monde de la marchandise se porte aveuglément et automatiquement à leur défense, conduit à voir, dès que commence la pratique négative, l'absurdité de toute hiérarchie.

Le monde rationnel produit par la révolution industrielle a affranchi rationnellement les individus de leurs limites locales et nationales, les a liés à l'échelle mondiale ; mais sa déraison est de les séparer de nouveau, selon une logique cachée qui s'exprime en idées folles, en valorisations absurdes. L'étranger entoure partout l'homme devenu étranger à son monde. Le barbare n'est plus au bout de la Terre, il est là, constitué en barbare précisément par sa participation obligée à la même consommation hiérarchisée. L'humanisme qui couvre cela est le contraire de l'homme, la négation de son activité et de son désir ; c'est l'humanisme de la marchandise, la bienveillance de la marchandise pour l'homme qu'elle parasite. Pour ceux qui réduisent les hommes aux objets, les objets paraissent avoir toutes les qualités humaines, et les manifestations humaines réelles se changent en inconscience animale. *«Ils se sont mis à se comporter comme une bande de singes dans un zoo»*, peut dire William Parker, chef de l'humanisme de Los Angeles.

Quand "l'état d'insurrection" a été proclamé par les autorités de

Californie, les compagnies d'assurances ont rappelé qu'elles ne couvrent pas les risques à ce niveau : au-delà de la survie. Les Noirs américains, globalement, ne sont pas menacés dans leur survie - du moins s'ils se tiennent tranquilles - et le capitalisme est devenu assez concentré et imbriqué dans l'État pour distribuer des "secours" aux plus pauvres. Mais du seul fait qu'ils sont en arrière dans l'augmentation de la survie socialement organisée, les Noirs posent les problèmes de la vie, c'est la vie qu'ils revendiquent. Les Noirs n'ont rien à assurer qui soit à eux ; ils ont à détruire toutes les formes de sécurité et d'assurances privées connues jusqu'ici. Ils apparaissent comme ce qu'ils sont en effet : les ennemis irréconciliables, non certes de la grande majorité des Américains, mais du mode de vie aliéné de toute la société moderne : le pays le plus avancé industriellement ne fait que nous montrer le chemin qui sera suivi partout, si le système n'est pas renversé.

Certains des extrémistes du nationalisme noir, pour démontrer qu'ils ne peuvent accepter moins qu'un État séparé, ont avancé l'argument que la société américaine, même leur reconnaissant un jour toute l'égalité civique et économique, n'arriverait jamais, au niveau de l'individu, jusqu'à admettre le mariage interracial. Il faut donc que ce soit cette société américaine qui disparaisse, en Amérique et partout dans le monde. La fin de tout préjugé racial, comme la fin de tant d'autres préjugés liés aux inhibitions, en matière de liberté sexuelle, sera évidemment au-delà du "mariage" lui-même, au-delà de la famille bourgeoise, fortement ébranlée chez les Noirs américains, qui règne aussi bien en Russie qu'aux États-Unis, comme modèle de rapport hiérarchique et de stabilité d'un pouvoir hérité (argent ou grade socio-étatique). On dit couramment depuis quelque temps de la jeunesse américaine qui, après trente ans de silence, surgit comme force de contestation, qu'elle vient de trouver sa guerre d'Espagne dans la révolte noire. Il faut que, cette fois, ses "bataillons Lincoln" comprennent tout le sens de la lutte où ils s'engagent et la soutiennent complètement dans ce qu'elle a d'universel. Les "excès" de Los Angeles ne sont pas plus une erreur politique des Noirs que la résistance armée du P.O.U.M. à Barcelone, en mai 1937, n'a été une trahison de la guerre antifranquiste. Une révolte contre le spectacle se situe au niveau de la totalité, parce que - quand bien même elle ne se produirait que dans le seul district de Watts - elle est une protestation de l'homme contre la vie inhumaine ; parce qu'elle commence au niveau du seul individu réel et parce que la communauté, dont l'individu révolté est séparé, est la vraie nature sociale de l'homme, la nature humaine : le dépassement positif du spectacle.

From the 13th to the 16th of August, 1965, the blacks of Los Angeles revolted. An incident involving traffic police and pedestrians developed into two days of spontaneous riots. The forces of order, despite repeated reinforcement, were unable to gain control of the streets. By the third day, the negroes had armed themselves by pillaging such arms shops as were accessible, and were so enabled to open fire on police helicopters. Thousands of soldiers—the whole military weight of an infantry division, supported by tanks—had to be thrown into the struggle before the Watts area could be surrounded, after which it took several days and much streetfighting for it to be brought under control. The rioters didn't hesitate to plunder and to burn the shops of the area. The official figures testify to 32 dead, including 27 negroes, plus 800 wounded and 3,000 arrested.

Reactions on all sides were invested with clarity: the revolutionary act always discloses the reality of existing problems, lending an unaccustomed and unconscious truth to the various postures of its opponents. Police Chief William Parker, for example, refused all mediation proposed by the main Negro organizations, asserting correctly that the rioters had no leader. Evidently, as the blacks were without a leader, this was the moment of truth for both parties. What did Roy Wilkins, general secretary of the NAACP, want at that moment? He declared that the riots should be put down *«with all the force necessary»*. And the Cardinal of Los Angeles, McIntyre, who protested loudly, had not protested against the violence of the repression, which one would have supposed the subtle thing to do, at the moment of the *aggiornamento* of the Roman church; instead, he protested in the most urgent tones about *«a premeditated revolt against the rights of one's neighbour; respect for the law and the maintenance of order»*, calling upon Catholics to oppose the plundering and the apparently unjustified violence. All the theorists and "spokesmen" of the international Left (or, rather, of its nothingness) deplored the irresponsibility and disorder, the pillaging and above all the fact that arms and alcohol were the first targets for plunder; finally, that 2,000 fires had been started by the Watts petrol throwers to light up their battle and their ball. But who was there to defend the rioters of Los Angeles in the terms they deserve? Well, we shall. Let us leave the economists to grieve over the 27 million dollars lost, and the town planners over one of their most beautiful supermarkets gone up in smoke, and McIntyre over his slain Deputy Sheriff; let the sociologists weep over the absurdity and the intoxication of this rebellion. The job of a revolutionary journal is not only to justify the Los Angeles insurgents, but to help uncover their just reasons: to explain theoretically the truth for which such practical action expresses the search.

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In Algiers in July, 1965, following Boumedienne's coup d'état, the situationists published an Address to the Algerians and to revolutionaries all over the world, which interpreted conditions in Algeria and in the rest of the world as a whole; among their examples, they evoked the American negroes, who if they could *«affirm themselves significantly»* would unmask the contradictions of the most advanced of capitalist systems. Five weeks later, this significance found an expression on the street. Theoretical criticism of modern society, in its advanced forms, and criticism in actions of the same society, co-exist at this moment: still separated but both advancing towards the same reality, both talking of the same thing. These two critiques are mutually explanatory, each being incomprehensible without the other. Our theory of "survival" and the "spectacle" is illuminated and verified by these actions so unintelligible to the American false consciousness. One day these actions will in turn be illuminated by this theory.

Up to this time the Negro "Civil Rights" demonstrations had been kept by their leaders within the limits of a legal system which overlooked the most appalling violence on the part of the police and the racialists: in Alabama the previous March for instance, at the time of the Montgomery March, and as if this scandal was not sufficient, a discreet agreement between the Federal government, Governor Wallace and Pastor King had led the Selma Marchers on the 10th of March to stand back at the first request, in dignity and prayer. Thus the confrontation expected by the crowd had been reduced to the charade of a merely potential confrontation. In that moment, Non-Violence reached the pitiful limit of its courage: first you expose yourself to the enemies' blows, then force your moral grandeur to the point of sparing him the trouble of using more force. But the basic fact is that the civil rights movement, by remaining within the law, only posed legal problems. It is logical to make an appeal to the law legally. What is not logical is to appeal legally against a patent illegality as is this contradiction would disappear if pointed out. For it is clear that the superficial and outrageously visible illegality—from which the blacks still suffer in many American states—has its roots in a socio-economic contradiction which existing laws simply cannot touch, and which no future juridical law will be able to get rid of in face of more basic cultural laws of the society: and it is against these that the negroes are at last daring to raise their voices against and asking the right to live. In reality, the American negro wants the total subversion of that Society—or nothing.

The problem of this necessity for subversion arises of its own accord the moment the blacks start using subversive means: the changeover to such methods happens on the level of their daily life, appearing at one and the same time as the most accidental and the most objectively justified development. This issue is no longer the status of the American negro, but the status of America, even if this happens to find its first expression among the negroes. This was not a racial conflict: the rioters left certain whites that were in their path alone, attacking only the white policemen: similarly, black solidarity did not extend to black shopkeepers, not even to black cardrivers. Even Luther King, in Paris last October, had to admit that the limits of his competence had been overshot: *«They were not race riots»*, he said, *«but one class»*.

The Los Angeles rebellion was a rebellion against commodities and of worker consumers hierarchically subordinated to commodity values. The negroes of Los Angeles—like the young delinquents of all advanced countries, but more radically because at the level of a class globally deprived of a future, a sector of the proletariat unable to believe in significant chance of integration and promotion—take modern capitalist propaganda literally, with its display of affluence. They want to possess immediately all the objects shown and made abstractly accessible: they want to make use of them. That is why they reject the values of exchange, the commodity-reality which is its mould, its purpose and its final goal, which has preselected everything. Through theft and gift they retrieve a use which at once gives the lie to the oppressive rationality of commodities, disclosing their relations and invention to be arbitrary and unnecessary. The plunder of the Watts sector was the most simple possible realization of the hybrid principle: *«To each according to his (false) needs»*—needs determined and produced by the economic system, which the act of pillaging rejects.

But the fact that the vaunting of abundance is taken at its face value and discovered in the immediate instead of being eternally pursued in the course of alienated labor and in the face of increasing but unmet social needs—this fact means that real needs are expressed in carnival, playful affirmation and the potlatch of destruction. The man who destroys commodities shows his human superiority over commodities. He frees himself from the arbitrary forms which cloak his real needs. The flames of Watts consumed the system of consumption! The theft of large fridges by people with no electricity, or with their electricity cut off, gives the best possible metaphor for the lie of affluence transformed into a truth in play. Once it is no longer bought, the commodity lies open to criticism and modification, and this under whichever of its forms it may appear. Only so long as it is paid for with money, as a status symbol of survival, can it be worshipped fetishistically. Pillage is the natural response to the affluent society: the affluence, however, is by no means natural or human—it is simply abundance of goods. Pillage, moreover, which instantly destroys commodities as such, discloses the ultima ratio of commodities, namely, the army, the police and the other specialized detachments which have the monopoly of armed force within the State. What is a policeman? He is the active servant of commodities, the man in complete submission to commodities, whose job is to ensure that a given product of human labour remains a commodity with the magical property of having to be paid for instead of becoming a mere fridge or rifle—a mute, passive insensible thing, itself in submission to the first comer to make use of it. Over and above the indignity of depending on a

policeman, the blacks reject the indignity of depending on commodities. The Watts youth, having no future in market terms, grasped another quality of the present, and the truth of that present was so irresistible that it drew on the whole population, women, children, and even sociologists who happened to find themselves on the scene. A young negro sociologist of the district, Bobbi Hollon, had this to say to the Herald Tribune in October: «Before, people were ashamed to say they came from Watts. They'd mumble it. Now, they say it with pride. Boys who always went around with their shirts open to the waist, and who'd have cut you into strips in half a second, used to apply here every morning. They organized the distribution of food. Of course it's no good pretending the food wasn't plundered... All that Christian blah has been used too long against the negroes. These people could plunder for ten years and they wouldn't get back half the money that has been stolen from them all these years... Myself, I'm just a little black girl.» Bobbi Hollon, who has sworn never to wash from her sandals the blood that splashed them during the rioting, adds: «All the world looks to Watts now.»

How do men make history, starting from the conditions preestablished to persuade them not to take a hand in it? The Los Angeles negroes are better paid than any others in the US, but it is also here that they are furthest behind that high point of affluence which is California. Hollywood, the pole of the worldwide spectacle, is in their immediate vicinity. They are promised that, with patience, they will join in America's prosperity, but they realize that this prosperity is not a static sphere but rather a ladder without end. The higher they climb, the further they get from the top, because they don't have a fair start, because they are less qualified and thus more numerous among the unemployed, and finally because the hierarchy which crushes them is not one based simply on buying power as a pure economic fact: an essential inferiority is imposed on them in every area of daily life by the customs and prejudices of a society in which all human power is based on buying power. So long as the human riches of the American negro are despised and treated as criminal, monetary riches will never make him acceptable to the alienated society of America: individual wealth may make a rich negro but the negroes as a whole must represent poverty in a society of hierarchized wealth. Every witness noted this cry which proclaims the fundamental meaning of the rising: «This is the Black Revolution, and we want the world to know it!» Freedom now! is the password of all historical revolutions, but here for the first time it is not poverty but material abundance which must be controlled according to new laws. The control of abundance is not just changing the way it is shared out, but redefining its every orientation, superficial and profound alike. This is the first skirmish of an enormous struggle, infinite in its implications.

The blacks are not isolated in their struggle, because a new proletarian consciousness—the consciousness of not being the master of one's activity, of one's life, in the slightest degree—is taking form in America among strata whose refusal of modern capitalism resembles that of the negroes. Indeed, the first phase of the negro struggle has been the signal to a movement of opposition which is spreading. In December 1964 the students of Berkeley, frustrated in their participation in the civil rights movement, ended up by calling a strike to oppose the system of California's "multiversity", and by extension the social system of the US, in which they are allotted such a passive role. Immediately, drinking and drug orgies were uncovered among the students—the same supposed activities for which the negroes have long been castigated. This generation of students has since invented a new form of struggle against the dominant spectacle, the teach-in, a form taken up by the Edinburgh students on October 20th apropos of the Rhodesian crisis. This clearly imperfect and primitive type of opposition represents the stage of discussion which refuses to be limited in time (academically), and in this its logical outcome is a progression to practical activity. Also in October, thousands of demonstrators appeared in the streets of Berkeley and New York, their cries echoing those of the Watts rioters: «Get out of our district and out of Vietnam!» The whites, becoming more radical, have stepped outside the law: "courses" are given on how to defraud the recruiting boards, draft cards are burned and the act televised. In the affluent society, disgust for affluence and for its price is finding expression. The spectacle is being spat on by an advanced sector whose autonomous activity denies its values. The classical proletariat, to the extent to which it had been provisionally integrated into the capitalist system, had itself failed to integrate the negroes (several Los Angeles unions refused negroes until 1959); now, the negroes are the rallying point for all those who refuse the logic of integration into that system—integration into capitalism being of course the nec plus ultra of all integration promised. And comfort will never be comfortable enough for those who seek what is not on the market—or rather, that which the market eliminates. The level reached by the technology of the most privileged becomes an insult—and one more easily expressed than that most basic insult, which is reification. The Los Angeles rebellion is the first in history able to justify itself by the argument that there was no air conditioning during a heatwave.

The American negro has his own particular spectacle, his press, magazines, coloured film stars, and if the blacks realize this, if they spew out this spectacle for its phoneyess, as an expression of their unworthiness, it is because they see it to be a minority spectacle—nothing but the appendage of a general spectacle. They recognize that this parade of their consumption-to-be-desired is a colony of the white one, and thus they see through the lie of this total economico-cultural spectacle more quickly. By wanting to participate really and immediately in affluence—and this is an official value of every American—they demand the equalitarian realization of the American spectacle of everyday life: they demand that the half-heavenly, half-terrestrial values of this spectacle be put to the test. But it is of the essence of the spectacle that it

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cannot be made real either immediately or equally; and this, not even for the whites. (In fact, the function of the negro in terms of the spectacle is to serve as the perfect prod: in the race for riches, such underprivilege is an incitement to ambition). In taking the capitalist spectacle at its face value, the negroes are already rejecting the spectacle itself. The spectacle is a drug for slaves. It is not supposed to be taken literally, but followed at just a few paces' distance; if it were not for this albeit tiny distance, it would become total mystification. The fact is that in the US today the whites are enslaved to commodities while the negroes negate them. The blacks ask for more than the whites—that is the core of an insoluble problem, or rather one only soluble through the dissolution of the white social system. This is why those whites who want to escape their own servitude must needs rally to the negro cause, not in a solidarity based on colour, obviously, but in a global rejection of commodities and, in the last analysis, of the State. The economic and social backwardness of the negroes allows them to see what the white consumer is, and their justified contempt for the white is nothing but contempt for any passive consumer. Whites who cast off their role have no chance unless they link their struggle more and more to the negro's struggle, uncovering his real and coherent reasons and supporting them till the end. If such an accord were to be ruptured at a radical point in the battle, the result would be the formation of a black nationalism and a confrontation between the two splinters exactly after the fashion of the prevailing system. A phase of mutual extermination is the other possible outcome of the present situation, once resignation is overcome.

The attempts to build a black nationalism, separatist and pro-African as they are, are dreams giving no answer to the reality of oppression. The American negro has no fatherland. He is in his own country and he is alienated: so is the rest of the population, but the blacks differ insofar as they are aware of it. In this sense, they are not the most backward sector of their society, but the most advanced. They are the negation at work, «the bad aspect producing the movement which makes history by setting the struggle in motion». (Marx; *The Poverty of Philosophy*). Africa has nothing to do with it.

The American negroes are the product of modern industry, just as are electronics, advertising or the cyclotron. And they carry within them its contradictions. These are the men whom the spectacle-paradise must integrate and repulse simultaneously, so that the antagonism between the spectacle and the real activity of men surrenders completely to their enunciations. The spectacle is universal in the same way as the commodities. But as the world of commodities is based in class conflict, commodities are themselves hierarchic. The necessity of commodities—and hence of the spectacle whose job it is to inform about commodities—to be at once universal and hierarchic leads to a universal hierarchization. But as this hierarchization must remain unavowed, it is expressed in the form of unacknowledgeable hierarchic value judgements, in a world of reasonless rationalization. It is this process which creates racialisms everywhere: the English Labour government has just restrained coloured immigration, while the industrially advanced countries of Europe are once again becoming racialist as they import their sub-proletariat from the Mediterranean area, so exerting a colonial exploitation within their borders. And if Russia continues to be antisemitic, it is because she is still a society of hierarchy and commodities, in which labor must be bought and sold as a commodity. Together, commodities and hierarchies are constantly renewing their alliance, which extends its influence by modifying its form: it is seen just as easily in the relations between trade-unionist and worker as between two car-owners with artificially distinguished models. This is the original sin of commodity rationality, the sickness of bourgeois reason, whose legacy is bureaucracy. But the repulsive absurdity of certain hierarchies and the fact that the whole world strength of commodities is directed blindly and automatically towards their protection, leads us to see—the moment we engage on a negating practice—that every hierarchy is absurd.

The rational world produced by the industrial revolution has rationally liberated individuals from their local and national limitations, and related them on a world scale; but denies reason by separating them once more, according to a hidden logic which finds its expression in mad ideas and grotesque value-systems. Man, estranged from his world, is everywhere surrounded by strangers. The barbarian is no longer at the ends of the earth, he is on the spot, made into a barbarian by this very same forced participation in hierarchized consumption. The humanism cloaking all this is opposed to man, and the negation of his activity and his desires; it is the humanism of commodities, expressing the benevolence of the parasite, merchandise, towards the men off whom it feeds. For those who reduce men to objects, objects seem to acquire human qualities, and manifestations of real human activity appear as unconscious animal behaviour. Thus the chief humanist of Los Angeles, William Parker, can say: «*They started behaving like a bunch of monkeys in a zoo.*»

When the state of emergency was declared by the California authorities, the insurance companies recalled that they do not cover risks at that level: they guarantee nothing beyond survival. Overall, the American negroes can rest assured that, if they keep quiet, at least, their survival is guaranteed; and capitalism has become sufficiently centralized and entrenched in the State to distribute "welfare" to the poorest. But simply because they are behind in the process of intensification of socially organized survival, the blacks present problems of life and what they demand is not to survive but to live. The blacks have nothing to insure of their own; they have to destroy all the forms of security and private insurance known up to now. They appear as what they really are: the irreconcilable enemies—not of the vast majority of Americans—but of the alienated way of life of all modern society; the most advanced country industrially only shows us the road that will be everywhere followed unless the system is overthrown.

Certain black nationalist extremists, in showing why they could never accept less than a separate State, have advanced the argument that American society, even if it someday concedes total civic and economic equality, will never get around to accepting mixed marriages. It is therefore this American society which must disappear, not only in America but everywhere in the world. The end of all racial prejudice (like the end of so many others prejudices such as sexual ones related to inhibitions) can only lie beyond "marriage" itself: that is, beyond the bourgeois family (which is questioned by the American negroes). This is the rule as much in Russia as in the United States, as a model of hierarchic relations and of the stability of an inherited power (be it money or socio-bureaucratic status). It is now often said that American youth, after thirty years of silence, is rising again as a force of opposition, and that the black revolt is their Spanish Civil War. This time, its "Lincoln Battalions" must understand the full significance of the struggle in which they engage, supporting it up to the end in its universal implications. The "excesses" of Los Angeles are no more a political error in the Black Revolt than the armed resistance of the P.O.U.M. in Barcelona, May 1937, was a betrayal of the anti-Franquist war. A rebellion against the spectacle is situated on the level of the totality, because—even were it only to appear in a single district, Watts—it is a protest by men against the inhuman life; because it begins at the level of the real single individual, and because community, from which the individual in revolt is separated, is the true social nature of man, human nature: the positive transcendence of the spectacle.

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les émeutes de Newark et Detroit / le rapport de la commission Kerner

BEAU

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NEGRO  
OWNER  
SOUL  
BROTHER

WATKINS



## INTRODUCTION

The summer of 1967 again brought racial disorders to American cities, and with them shock, fear and bewilderment to the nation. The worst came during a two-week period in July, first in Newark and then in Detroit. Each set off a chain reaction in neighboring communities. On July 28, 1967, the President of the United States established this Commission and directed us to answer three basic questions:

*What happened?*

*Why did it happen?*

*What can be done to prevent it from happening again?*

To respond to these questions, we have undertaken a broad range of studies and investigations. We have visited the riot cities; we have heard many witnesses; we have sought the counsel of experts across the country.

This is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white--separate and unequal. Reaction to last summer's disorders has quickened the movement and deepened the division. Discrimination and segregation have long permeated much of American life; they now threaten the future of every American.

This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement apart can be reversed.

Choice is still possible. Our principal task is to define that choice and to press for a national resolution.

To pursue our present course will involve the continuing polarization of the American community and, ultimately, the destruction of basic democratic values.

The alternative is not blind repression or capitulation to lawlessness. It is the realization of common opportunities for all within a single society. This alternative will require a commitment to national action-

-compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the resources of the most powerful and the richest nation on this earth. From every American it will require new attitudes, new understanding, and, above all, new will. The vital needs of the nation must be met; hard choices must be made, and, if necessary, new taxes enacted. Violence cannot build a better society.

Disruption and disorder nourish repression, not justice. They strike at the freedom of every citizen. The community cannot--it will not--tolerate coercion and mob rule.

Violence and destruction must be ended--in the streets of the ghetto and in the lives of people.

Segregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most white Americans. What white Americans have never fully understood but what the Negro can never

forget--is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.

It is time now to turn with all the purpose at our command to the major unfinished business of this nation. It is time to adopt strategies for action that will produce quick and visible progress. It is time to make good the promises of American democracy to all citizens--urban and rural, white and black, Spanish-surname, American Indian, and every minority group.

Our recommendations embrace three basic principles:

- \* to mount programs on a scale equal to the dimension of the problems;
- \* to aim these programs for high impact in the immediate future in order to close the gap between promise and performance;
- \* to undertake new initiatives and experiments that can change the system of failure and frustration that now dominates the ghetto and weakens our society.

These programs will require unprecedented levels of funding and performance, but they neither probe deeper nor demand more than the problems which called them forth. There can be no higher priority for national action and no higher claim on the nation's conscience.

We issue this Report now, four months before the date called for by the President. Much remains that can be learned. Continued study is essential. As Commissioners we have worked together with a sense of the greatest urgency and have sought to compose whatever differences exist among us. Some differences remain. But the gravity of the problem and the pressing need for action are too clear to allow further delay in the issuance of this Report.

## PART I--WHAT HAPPENED?

### *Chapter I--Profiles of Disorder*

The report contains profiles of a selection of the disorders that took place during the summer of 1967. These profiles are designed to indicate how the disorders happened, who participated in them, and how local officials, police forces, and the National Guard responded. Illustrative excerpts follow:

### NEWARK

... It was decided to attempt to channel the energies of the people into a nonviolent protest. While Lofton promised the crowd that a full investigation would be made of the Smith incident, the other Negro leaders began urging those on the scene to form a line of march toward the city hall.

Some persons joined the line of march. Others milled about in the narrow street. From the dark grounds of the housing project came a barrage of rocks. Some of them fell among the crowd. Others hit persons in the line of march. Many smashed the windows of the police station. The rock throwing, it was believed, was the work of youngsters; approximately 2,500 children lived in the housing project.

Almost at the same time, an old car was set afire in a parking lot. The line of march began to disintegrate. The police, their heads protected by World War I-type helmets, sallied forth to disperse the crowd. A fire engine, arriving on the scene, was pelted with rocks. As police drove people away from the station, they scattered in all directions. A few minutes later a nearby liquor store was broken into. Some persons, seeing a caravan of cabs appear at city hall to protest Smith's arrest,

interpreted this as evidence that the disturbance had been organized, and generated rumors to that effect. However, only a few stores were looted. Within a short period of time, the disorder appeared to have run its course.

\* \* \*

... On Saturday, July 15, [Director of Police Dominick] Spina received a report of snipers in a housing project. When he arrived he saw approximately 100 National Guardsmen and police officers crouching behind vehicles, hiding in corners and lying on the ground around the edge of the courtyard.

Since everything appeared quiet and it was broad daylight, Spina walked directly down the middle of the street. Nothing happened. As he came to the last building of the complex, he heard a shot. All around him the troopers jumped, believing themselves to be under sniper fire. A moment later a young Guardsman ran from behind a building. The Director of Police went over and asked him if he had fired the shot. The soldier said yes, he had fired to scare a man away from a window; that his orders were to keep everyone away from windows.

Spina said he told the soldier: «Do you know what you just did? You have now created a state of hysteria. Every Guardsman up and down this street and every state policeman and every city policeman that is present thinks that somebody just fired a shot and that it is probably a sniper.»

A short time later more «gunshots» were heard. Investigating, Spina came upon a Puerto Rican sitting on a wall. In reply to a question as to whether he knew «where the firing is coming from?» the man said: «That's no firing. That's fireworks. If you look up to the fourth floor, you will see the people who are throwing down these cherry bombs.»

By this time four truckloads of National Guardsmen had arrived and troopers and policemen were again crouched everywhere looking for a sniper. The Director of Police remained at the scene for three hours, and the only shot fired was the one by the Guardsman. Nevertheless, at six o'clock that evening two columns of National Guardsmen and state troopers were directing mass fire at the Hayes Housing Project in response to what they believed were snipers. . . .

### DETROIT

... A spirit of carefree nihilism was taking hold. To riot and destroy appeared more and more to become ends in themselves. Late Sunday afternoon it appeared to one observer that the young people were «dancing amidst the flames.»

A Negro plainclothes officer was standing at an intersection when a man threw a Molotov cocktail into a business establishment at the corner... In the heat of the afternoon, fanned by the 20 to 25 m.p.h. winds of both Sunday and Monday, the fire reached the home next door within minutes. As residents uselessly sprayed the flames with garden hoses, the fire jumped from roof to roof of adjacent two- and three-story buildings. Within the hour the entire block was in flames. The ninth house in the burning row belonged to the arsonist who had thrown the Molotov cocktail. . . .

\* \* \*

... Employed as a private guard, 55-year-old Julius L. Dorsey, a Negro, was standing in front of a market when accosted by two Negro men and a woman. They demanded he permit them to loot the market. He ignored their demands. They began to berate him. He asked a neighbor to call the police. As the argument

grew more heated, Dorsey fired three shots from his pistol into the air. The police radio reported: «Looters, they have rifles.» A patrol car driven by a police officer and carrying three National Guardsmen arrived. As the looters fled, the law enforcement personnel opened fire. When the firing ceased, one person lay dead. He was Julius L. Dorsey. . .

\* \* \*

. . . As the riot alternately waxed and waned, one area of the ghetto remained insulated. On the northeast side the residents of some 150 square blocks inhabited by 21,000 persons had, in 1966, banded together in the Positive Neighborhood Action Committee (PNAC). With professional help from the Institute of Urban Dynamics, they had organized block clubs and made plans for the improvement of the neighborhood. . . . When the riot broke out, the residents, through the block clubs, were able to organize quickly. Youngsters, agreeing to stay in the neighborhood, participated in detouring traffic. While many persons reportedly sympathized with the idea of a rebellion against the «system,» only two small fires were set—one in an empty building.

\* \* \*

. . . According to Lt. Gen. Throckmorton and Col. Bolling, the city, at this time, was saturated with fear. The National Guardsmen were afraid, the residents were afraid, and the police were afraid. Numerous persons, the majority of them Negroes, were being injured by gunshots of undetermined origin. The general and his staff felt that the major task of the troops was to reduce the fear and restore an air of normalcy. In order to accomplish this, every effort was made to establish contact and rapport between the troops and the residents. The soldiers—20 percent of whom were Negro began helping to clean up the streets, collect garbage, and trace persons who had disappeared in the confusion. Residents in the neighborhoods responded with soup and sandwiches for the troops. In areas where the National Guard tried to establish rapport with the citizens, there was a smaller response.

#### NEW BRUNSWICK

. . . A short time later, elements of the crowd—an older and rougher one than the night before—appeared in front of the police station. The participants wanted to see the mayor. Mayor [Patricia] Sheehan went out onto the steps of the station. Using a bullhorn, she talked to the people and asked that she be given an opportunity to correct conditions. The crowd was boisterous. Some persons challenged the mayor. But, finally, the opinion, «She's new! Give her a chance!» prevailed. A demand was issued by people in the crowd that all persons arrested the previous night be released. Told that this already had been done, the people were suspicious. They asked to be allowed to inspect the jail cells. It was agreed to permit representatives of the people to look in the cells to satisfy themselves that everyone had been released. The crowd dispersed. The New Brunswick riot had failed to materialize. . .

The «typical» riot did not take place. The disorders of 1967 were unusual, irregular, complex and unpredictable social processes. Like most human events, they did not unfold in an orderly sequence. However, an analysis of our survey information leads to some conclusions about the riot process.

In general:

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\* The civil disorders of 1967 involved Negroes acting against local symbols of white American society, authority and property in Negro neighborhoods—rather than against white persons.

\* Of 164 disorders reported during the first nine months of 1967, eight (5 percent) were major in terms of violence and damage; 33 (20 percent) were serious but not major; 123 (75 percent) were minor and undoubtedly would not have received national attention as «riots» had the nation not been sensitized by the more serious outbreaks.

\* In the 75 disorders studied by a Senate subcommittee, 83 deaths were reported. Eighty-two percent of the deaths and more than half the injuries occurred in Newark and Detroit. About 10 percent of the dead and 38 percent of the injured were public employees, primarily law officers and firemen. The overwhelming majority of the persons killed or injured in all the disorders were Negro civilians.

\* Initial damage estimates were greatly exaggerated. In Detroit, newspaper damage estimates at first ranged from \$200 million to \$500 million; the highest recent estimate is \$45 million. In Newark, early estimates ranged from \$15 to \$25 million. A month later damage was estimated at \$10.2 million, over 80 percent in inventory losses.

In the 24 disorders in 23 cities which we surveyed:

\* The final incident before the outbreak of disorder, and the initial violence itself, generally took place in the evening or at night at a place in which it was normal for many people to be on the streets.

\* Violence usually occurred almost immediately following the occurrence of the final precipitating incident, and then escalated rapidly. With but few exceptions, violence subsided during the day, and flared rapidly again at night. The night-day cycles continued through the early period of the major disorders.

\* Disorder generally began with rock and bottle throwing and window breaking. Once store windows were broken, looting usually followed.

\* Disorder did not erupt as a result of a single «triggering» or «precipitating» incident. Instead, it was generated out of an increasingly disturbed social atmosphere, in

which typically a series of tension-heightening incidents over a period of weeks or months became linked in the minds of many in the Negro community with a reservoir of underlying grievances. At some point in the mounting tension, a further incident—in itself often routine or trivial—became the breaking point and the tension spilled over into violence.

\* «Prior» incidents, which increased tensions and ultimately led to violence, were police actions in almost half the cases; police actions were «final» incidents before the outbreak of violence in 12 of the 24 surveyed disorders.

\* No particular control tactic was successful in every situation. The varied effectiveness of control techniques emphasizes the need for advance training, planning, adequate intelligence systems, and knowledge of the ghetto community.

\* Negotiations between Negroes—including your militants as well as older Negro leaders—and white officials concerning «terms of peace» occurred during virtually all the disorders surveyed. In many cases, these negotiations involved discussion of underlying grievances as well as the handling of the disorder by control authorities.

\* The typical rioter was a teenager or young adult, a lifelong resident of the city in which he rioted, a high school dropout; he was, nevertheless, somewhat better educated than his nonrioting Negro neighbor, and was usually underemployed or employed in a menial job. He was proud of his race, extremely hostile to both whites and middle-class Negroes and, although informed about politics, highly distrustful of the political system.

\* A Detroit survey revealed that approximately 11 percent of the total residents of two riot areas admitted participation in the rioting, 20 to 25 percent identified themselves as «bystanders,» over 16 percent identified themselves as «counter-rioters» who urged rioters to «cool it,» and the remaining 48 to 53 percent said they were at home or elsewhere and did not participate. In a survey of Negro males between the ages of 15 and 35 residing in the disturbance area in Newark, about 45 percent identified themselves as rioters, and about 55 percent as «noninvolved.»

\* Most rioters were young Negro males. Nearly 53 percent of arrestees were between 15 and 24 years of age; nearly 81 percent between 15 and 35.

\* In Detroit and Newark about 74 percent of the rioters were brought up in the North. In contrast, of the noninvolved, 36 percent in Detroit and 52 percent in Newark were brought up in the North.

\* What the rioters appeared to be seeking was fuller participation in the social order and the material benefits enjoyed by the majority of American citizens. Rather than rejecting the American system, they were anxious to obtain a place for themselves in it.

\* Numerous Negro counter-rioters walked the streets urging rioters to «cool it.» The typical counter-rioter was better educated and had higher income than either the rioter or the noninvolved.

\* The proportion of Negroes in local government was substantially smaller than the Negro proportion of population. Only three of the 20 cities studied had more than one Negro legislator; none had ever had a Negro mayor or city manager. In only four cities did Negroes hold other important policy-making positions or serve as heads of municipal departments.

\* Although almost all cities had some sort of formal grievance mechanism for handling citizen complaints, this typically was regarded by Negroes as ineffective and was generally ignored.

\* Although specific grievances varied from city to city, at least 12 deeply held grievances can be identified and ranked into three levels of relative intensity:

First Level of Intensity

1. Police practices

2. Unemployment and underemployment

3. Inadequate housing

Second Level of Intensity

4. Inadequate education

5. Poor recreation facilities and programs

6. Ineffectiveness of the political structure and grievance mechanisms

Third Level of Intensity

7. Disrespectful white attitudes

8. Discriminatory administration of justice

9. Inadequacy of federal programs

10. Inadequacy of municipal services

11. Discriminatory consumer and credit practices

12. Inadequate welfare programs

\* The results of a three-city survey of various federal programs--manpower, education, housing, welfare and community action--indicate that, despite substantial expenditures, the number of persons assisted constituted only a fraction of those in need. The background of disorder is often as complex and difficult to analyze as the disorder itself. But we find that certain general conclusions can be drawn:

\* Social and economic conditions in the riot cities constituted a clear pattern of severe disadvantage for Negroes compared with whites, whether the Negroes lived in the area where the riot took place or outside it. Negroes had completed fewer years of education and fewer had attended high school. Negroes were twice as likely to be unemployed and three times as likely to be in unskilled and service jobs. Negroes averaged 70 percent of the income earned by whites and were more than twice as likely to be living in poverty. Although housing cost Negroes relatively more, they had worse housing--three times as likely to be overcrowded and substandard. When compared to white suburbs, the relative disadvantage is even more pronounced.

A study of the aftermath of disorder leads to disturbing conclusions. We find that, despite the institution of some postriot programs:

\* Little basic change in the conditions underlying the outbreak of disorder has taken place. Actions to ameliorate Negro grievances have been limited and sporadic; with but few exceptions, they have not significantly reduced tensions. \* In several cities, the principal official response has been to train and equip the police with more sophisticated weapons. In several cities, increasing polarization is evident, with continuing breakdown of inter-racial communication, and growth of white segregationist or black separatist groups.

#### Chapter 3--Organized Activity

The President directed the Commission to investigate «to, what extent, if any, there has been planning or organization in any of the riots.»

To carry out this part of the President's charge, the Commission established a special investigative staff supplementing the field teams that made the general examination of the riots in 23 cities. The unit examined data collected by federal agencies and congressional committees, including thousands of documents supplied by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, gathered and evaluated information from local and state law enforcement agencies and officials, and conducted its own field investigation in selected cities.

On the basis of all the information collected, the Commission concludes that:

The urban disorders of the summer of 1967 were not caused by, nor were they the consequence of, any organized plan or «conspiracy.» Specifically, the Commission has found no evidence that all or any of the disorders or the incidents that led to them were planned or directed by any organization or group, international, national or local.

Militant organizations, local and national, and individual agitators, who repeatedly forecast and called for violence, were active in the spring and summer of 1967. We believe that they sought to encourage violence, and that they helped to create an atmosphere that contributed to the outbreak of disorder.

We recognize that the continuation of disorders and the polarization of the races would provide fertile ground for organized exploitation in the future. Investigations of organized activity are continuing at all levels of government, including committees of Congress. These investigations relate not only to the disorders of 1967 but also to the actions of groups and individuals, particularly in schools and colleges, during this last fall and winter. The Commission has cooperated in these investigations. They should continue.

#### PART II--WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

##### Chapter 4--The Basic Causes

In addressing the question «Why did it happen?» we shift our focus from the local to the national scene, from the particular events of the summer of 1967 to the factors within the society at large that created a mood of violence among many urban Negroes.

These factors are complex and interacting; they vary significantly in their effect from city to city and from year to year; and the consequences of one disorder; generating new grievances and new demands, become the causes of the next. Thus was created the «thicket of tension, conflicting evidence and extreme opinions» cited by the President.

Despite these complexities, certain fundamental matters are clear. Of these, the most fundamental is the racial attitude and behavior of white Americans toward black Americans.

Race prejudice has shaped our history decisively; it now threatens to affect our future. White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II. Among the ingredients of this mixture are:

\* Pervasive discrimination and segregation in employment, education and housing, which have resulted in the continuing exclusion of great numbers of Negroes from the benefits of economic progress.

\* Black in-migration and white exodus, which have produced the massive and growing concentrations of impoverished Negroes in our major cities, creating a growing crisis of deteriorating facilities and services and unmet human needs.

\* The black ghettos where segregation and poverty converge on the young to destroy opportunity and enforce failure. Crime, drug addiction, dependency on welfare, and bitterness and resentment against society in general and white society in particular are the result.

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At the same time, most whites and some Negroes outside the ghetto have prospered to a degree unparalleled in the history of civilization. Through television and other media, this affluence has been flaunted before the eyes of the Negro poor and the jobless ghetto youth.

Yet these facts alone cannot be said to have caused the disorders. Recently, other powerful ingredients have begun to catalyze the mixture:

\* Frustrated hopes are the residue of the unfulfilled expectations aroused by the great judicial and legislative victories of the Civil Rights Movement and the dramatic struggle for equal rights in the South.

\* A climate that tends toward approval and encouragement of violence as a form of protest has been created by white terrorism directed against nonviolent protest; by the open defiance of law and federal authority by state and local officials resisting desegregation; and by some protest groups engaging in civil disobedience who turn their backs on nonviolence, go beyond the constitutionally protected rights of petition and free assembly, and resort to violence to attempt to compel alteration of laws and policies with which they disagree.

\* The frustrations of powerlessness have led some Negroes to the conviction that there is no effective alternative to violence as a means of achieving redress of grievances, and of «moving the system.»

These frustrations are reflected in alienation and hostility toward the institutions of law and government and the white society which controls them, and in the reach toward racial consciousness and solidarity reflected in the slogan «Black Power.»

\* A new mood has sprung up among Negroes, particularly among the young, in which self-esteem and enhanced racial pride are replacing apathy and submission to «the system.»

\* The police are not merely a «spark» factor. To some Negroes police have come to symbolize white power, white racism and white repression. And the fact is that many police do reflect and express these white attitudes.

The atmosphere of hostility and cynicism is reinforced by a widespread belief among Negroes in the existence of police brutality and in a «double standard» of justice and protection--one for Negroes and one for whites.

To this point, we have attempted to identify the prime components of the «explosive mixture.» In

the chapters that follow we seek to analyze them in the perspective of history. Their meaning, however, is clear:

In the summer of 1967, we have seen in our cities a chain reaction of racial violence. If we are heedless, none of us shall escape the consequences.

#### Chapter 5--Rejection and Protest: An Historical Sketch

The causes of recent racial disorders are embedded in a tangle of issues and circumstances--social, economic, political and psychological which arise out of the historic pattern of Negro-white relations in America.

In this chapter we trace the pattern, identify the recurrent themes of Negro protest and, most importantly, provide a perspective on the protest activities of the present era.

We describe the Negro's experience in America and the development of slavery as an institution. We show his persistent striving for equality in the face of rigidly maintained social, economic and educational barriers, and repeated mob violence. We portray the ebb and flow of the doctrinal tides--accommodation, separatism, and self-help--and their relationship to the current theme of Black Power. We conclude:

The Black Power advocates of today consciously feel that they are the most militant group in the Negro protest movement. Yet they have retreated from a direct confrontation with American society on the issue of integration and, by preaching separatism, unconsciously function as an accommodation to white racism. Much of their economic program, as well as their interest in Negro history, self-help, racial solidarity and separation, is reminiscent of Booker T. Washington. The rhetoric is different, but the ideas are remarkably similar.

#### Chapter 6--The Formation Of the Racial Ghettos[1]

Throughout the 20th century the Negro population of the United States has been moving steadily from rural areas to urban and from South to North and West. In 1910, 91% of the nation's 9.8 million Negroes lived in the South and only 27% of American Negroes lived in cities of 2,500 persons or more. Between 1910 and 1966 the total Negro population more than doubled, reaching 21.5 million, and the number living in metropolitan areas rose more than fivefold (from 2.6 million to 14.8 million). The number outside the South rose elevenfold (from 880,000 to 9.7 million).

Negro migration from the South has resulted from the expectation of thousands of new and highly paid jobs for unskilled workers in the North and the shift to mechanized farming in the South. However, the Negro migration is small when compared to earlier waves of European immigrants. Even between 1960 and 1966, there were 1.8 million immigrants from abroad compared to the 613,000 Negroes who arrived in the North and West from the South. As a result of the growing number of Negroes in urban areas, natural increase has replaced migration as the primary source of Negro population increase in the cities. Nevertheless, Negro migration from the South will continue unless economic conditions there change dramatically.

Basic data concerning Negro urbanization trends indicate that:

\* Almost all Negro population growth (98% from 1950 to 1966) is occurring within metropolitan areas, primarily within central cities. [2]

\* The vast majority of white population growth (78% from 1960 to 1966) is occurring in suburban portions of metropolitan areas. Since 1960, white central-city population has declined by 1.3 million.

\* As a result, central cities are becoming more heavily Negro while the suburban fringes around them remain almost entirely white.

\* The twelve largest central cities now contain over two-thirds of the Negro population outside the South, and one-third of the Negro total in the United States.

Within the cities, Negroes have been excluded from white residential areas through discriminatory practices. Just as significant is the withdrawal of white families from, or their refusal to enter, neighborhoods where Negroes are moving or already residing.

About 20% of the urban population of the United States changes residence every year. The refusal of whites to move into «changing» areas when vacancies occur means that most vacancies eventually are occupied by Negroes. The result, according to a recent study, is that in 1960 the average segregation index for 207 of the largest United States cities was 86.2. In other words, to create an unsegregated population distribution, an average of over 86% of all Negroes would have to change their place of residence within the city.

#### Chapter 7--Unemployment, Family Structure, and Social Disorganization

Although there have been gains in Negro income nationally, and a decline in the number of Negroes below the «poverty level,» the condition of Negroes in the central city remains in a state of crisis. Between 2 and 2.5 million Negroes--16 to 20% of the total Negro population of all central

cities live in squalor and deprivation in ghetto neighborhoods. Employment is a key problem. It not only controls the present for the Negro American but, in a most profound way, it is creating the future as well. Yet, despite continuing economic growth and declining national unemployment rates, the unemployment rate for Negroes in 1967 was more than double that for whites. .

Equally important is the undesirable nature of many jobs open to Negroes and other minorities. Negro men are more than three times as likely as white men to be in low paying, unskilled or service jobs. This concentration of male Negro employment at the lowest end of the occupational scale is the single most important cause of poverty among Negroes.

In one study of low-income neighborhoods, the «subemployment rate,» including both unemployment and underemployment, was about 33%, or 8.8 times greater than the overall unemployment rate for all United States workers.

Employment problems, aggravated by the constant arrival of new unemployed migrants, many of them from depressed rural areas, create persistent poverty in the ghetto. In 1966, about 11.9% of the nation's whites and 40.6% of its nonwhites were below the «poverty level» defined by the Social Security Administration (currently \$3,335 per year for an urban family of four). Over 40% of the nonwhites below the poverty level live in the central cities.

Employment problems have drastic social impact in the ghetto. Men who are chronically unemployed or employed in the lowest status jobs are often unable or unwilling to remain with their families. The handicap imposed on children growing up without fathers in an atmosphere of poverty and deprivation is increased as mothers are forced to work to provide support. .

The culture of poverty that results from unemployment and family breakup generates a system of ruthless, exploitative relationships within the ghetto. Prostitution, dope addiction, and crime create an environmental «jungle» characterized by personal insecurity and tension. Children growing up under such conditions are likely participants in civil disorder.

#### Chapter 8--Conditions of Life In the Racial Ghetto

A striking difference in environment from that of white, middle-class Americans profoundly influences the lives of residents of the ghetto.

Crime rates, consistently higher than in other areas, create a pronounced sense of insecurity. For example, in one city one low-income Negro district had 35 times as many serious crimes against persons as a high-income white district. Unless drastic steps are taken, the crime problems in poverty areas are likely to continue to multiply as the growing youth and rapid urbanization of the population outstrip police resources.

Poor health and sanitation conditions in the ghetto result in higher mortality rates, a higher incidence of major diseases, and lower availability and utilization of medical services. The infant mortality rate for nonwhite babies under the age of one month is 58% higher than for whites; for one to 12 months it is almost three times as high. The level of sanitation in the ghetto is far below that in high income areas. Garbage collection is often inadequate. Of an estimated 14,000 cases of rat bite in the United States in 1965, most were in ghetto neighborhoods.

Ghetto residents believe they are «exploited» by local merchants; and evidence substantiates some of these beliefs. A study conducted in one city by the Federal Trade Commission showed that distinctly higher prices were charged for goods sold in ghetto stores than in other areas. Lack of knowledge regarding credit purchasing creates special pitfalls for the disadvantaged. In many states garnishment practices compound these difficulties by allowing creditors to deprive individuals of their wages without hearing or trial.

#### Chapter 9--Comparing the Immigrant and Negro Experience

In this chapter, we address ourselves to a fundamental question that many white Americans are asking: why have so many Negroes, unlike the European immigrants, been unable to escape from the ghetto and from poverty. We believe the following factors play a part:

\* The Maturing Economy: When the European immigrants arrived, they gained an economic foothold by providing the unskilled labor needed by industry. Unlike the immigrant, the Negro migrant found little opportunity in the city. The economy, by then matured, had little use for the unskilled labor he had to offer.

\* The Disability of Race: The structure of discrimination has stringently narrowed opportunities for the Negro and restricted his prospects.

\* Entry into the Political System: The immigrants usually settled in rapidly growing cities with powerful and expanding political machines, which traded economic advantages for political support. Ward-level grievance machinery,

as well as personal representation, enabled the immigrant to make his voice heard and his power felt. By the time the Negro arrived, these political machines were no longer so powerful or so well equipped to provide jobs or other favors, and in many cases were unwilling to share their influence with Negroes.

\* Cultural Factors: Coming from societies with a low standard of living and at a time when job aspirations were low, the immigrants sensed little deprivation in being forced to take the less desirable and poorer-paying jobs. Their large and cohesive families contributed to total income. Their vision of the future--one that led to a life outside of the ghetto--provided the incentive necessary to endure the present.

Although Negro men worked as hard as the immigrants, they were unable to support their families. The entrepreneurial opportunities had vanished. As a result of slavery and long periods of unemployment, the Negro family structure had become matriarchal; the males played a secondary and marginal family role--one which offered little compensation for their hard and unrewarding labor. Above all, segregation denied Negroes access to good jobs and the opportunity to leave the ghetto. For them, the future seemed to lead only to a dead end.

Today, whites tend to exaggerate how well and quickly they escaped from poverty. The fact is that immigrants who came from rural backgrounds, as many Negroes do, are only now, after three generations, finally beginning to move into the middle class. By contrast, Negroes began concentrating in the city less than two generations ago, and under much less favorable conditions. Although some Negroes have escaped poverty, few have been able to escape the urban ghetto.

### PART III—WHAT CAN BE DONE?

#### *Chapter 10—The Community Response*

Our investigation of the 1967 riot cities establishes that virtually every major episode of violence was foreshadowed by an accumulation of unresolved grievances and by widespread dissatisfaction among Negroes with the unwillingness or inability of local government to respond.

Overcoming these conditions is essential for community support of law enforcement and civil order. City governments need new and more vital channels of communication to the residents of the ghetto; they need to improve their capacity to respond effectively to community needs before they become community grievances; and they need to provide opportunity for, meaningful involvement of ghetto residents in shaping policies and programs which affect the community.

The Commission recommends that local governments:

- \* Develop Neighborhood Action Task Forces as joint community government efforts through which more effective communication can be achieved, and the delivery of city services to ghetto residents improved.
- \* Establish comprehensive grievance-response mechanisms in order to bring all public agencies under public scrutiny.
- \* Bring the institutions of local government closer to the people they serve by establishing neighborhood outlets for local, state and federal administrative and public service agencies.
- \* Expand opportunities for ghetto residents to participate in the formulation of public policy and the implementation of programs affecting them through improved political representation, creation of institutional channels for community action, expansion of legal services, and legislative hearings on ghetto problems. In this effort, city governments will require state and federal support.

The Commission recommends:

- \* State and federal financial assistance for mayors and city councils to support the research, consultants, staff and other resources needed to respond effectively to federal program initiatives.
- \* State cooperation in providing municipalities with the jurisdictional tools needed to deal with their problems; a fuller measure of financial aid to urban areas; and the focusing of the interests of suburban communities on the physical, social and cultural environment of the central city.

enforcement.

\* Recruit more Negroes into the regular police force, and review promotion policies to ensure fair promotion for Negro officers.

\* Establish a «Community Service Officer» program to attract ghetto youths between the ages of 17 and 21 to police work. These junior officers would perform duties in ghetto neighborhoods, but would not have full police authority. The federal government should provide support equal to 90% of the costs of employing CSOs on the basis of one for every ten regular officers.

#### *Chapter 12—Control of Disorder*

Preserving civil peace is the first responsibility of government. Unless the rule of law prevails, our society will lack not only order but also the environment essential to social and economic progress. The maintenance of civil order cannot be left to the police alone. The police need guidance, as well as support, from mayors and other public officials. It is the responsibility of public officials to determine proper police policies, support adequate police standards for personnel and performance, and participate in planning for the control of disorders.

To maintain control of incidents which could lead to disorders, the Commission recommends that local officials:

\* Assign seasoned, well-trained policemen and supervisory officers to patrol ghetto areas, and to respond to disturbances.

\* Develop plans which will quickly muster maximum police man power and highly qualified senior commanders at the outbreak of disorders.

\* Provide special training in the prevention of disorders, and prepare police for riot control and for operation in units, with adequate command and control and field communication for proper discipline and effectiveness

\* Develop guidelines governing the use of control equipment and provide alternatives to the use of lethal weapons. Federal support for research in this area is needed.

\* Establish an intelligence system to provide police and other public officials with reliable information that may help to prevent the outbreak of a disorder and to institute effective control measures in the event a riot erupts.

\* Develop continuing contacts with ghetto residents to make use of the forces for order which exist within the community.

\* Establish machinery for neutralizing rumors, and enabling Negro leaders and residents to obtain the facts. Create special rumor details to collect, evaluate, and dispel rumors that may lead to a civil disorder.

The Commission believes there is a grave danger that some communities may resort to the indiscriminate and excessive use of force. The harmful effects of overreaction are incalculable. The Commission condemns moves to equip police departments with mass destruction weapons, such as automatic rifles, machine guns and tanks. Weapons which are designed to destroy, not to control, have no place in densely populated urban communities.

The Commission recognizes the sound principle of local authority and responsibility in law enforcement, but recommends that the federal government share, in the financing of programs for improvement of police forces, both in their normal law enforcement activities as well as in their response to civil disorders.

#### *Chapter 11—Police and the Community*

The abrasive relationship between the police and the minority communities has been a major and explosive source of grievance, tension and disorder. The blame must be shared by the total society.

The police are faced with demands for increased protection and service in the ghetto. Yet the aggressive patrol practices thought necessary to meet these demands themselves create tension and hostility. The resulting grievances have been further aggravated by the lack of effective mechanisms for handling complaints against the police. Special programs for bettering police-community relations have been instituted, but these alone are not enough. Police administrators, with the guidance of public officials, and the support of the entire community, must take vigorous action to improve law enforcement and to decrease the potential for disorder.

The Commission recommends that city government and police authorities:

\* Review police operations in the ghetto to ensure proper conduct by police officers, and eliminate abrasive practices.

\* Provide more adequate police protection to ghetto residents to eliminate their high sense of insecurity, and the belief of many Negro citizens in the existence of a dual standard of law enforcement.

\* Establish fair and effective mechanisms for the redress of grievances against the police, and other municipal employees.

\* Develop and adopt policy guidelines to assist officers in making critical decisions in areas where police conduct can create tension.

\* Develop and use innovative programs to ensure widespread community support for law

To assist government authorities in planning their response to civil disorder, this report contains a Supplement on Control of Disorder. It deals with specific problems encountered during riot-control operations, and includes:

- \* Assessment of the present capabilities of police, National Guard and Army forces to control major riots, and recommendations for improvement;
- \* Recommended means by which the control operations of those forces may be coordinated with the response of other agencies, such as fire departments, and with the community at large;
- \* Recommendations for review and revision of federal, state and local laws needed to provide the framework for control efforts and for the call-up and interrelated action of public safety forces.

*Chapter 13—The Administration of Justice Under Emergency Conditions*

In many of the cities which experienced disorders last summer, there were recurring breakdowns in the mechanisms for processing, prosecuting and protecting arrested persons. These resulted mainly from long-standing structural deficiencies in criminal court systems, and from the failure of communities to anticipate and plan for the emergency demands of civil disorders. In part, because of this, there were few successful prosecutions for serious crimes committed during the riots. In those cities where mass arrests occurred many arrestees were deprived of basic legal rights.

The Commission recommends that the cities and states:

- \* Undertake reform of the lower courts so as to improve the quality of justice rendered under normal conditions.
- \* Plan comprehensive measures by which the criminal justice system may be supplemented during civil disorders so that its deliberative functions are protected, and the quality of justice is maintained.

Such emergency plans require broad community participation and dedicated leadership by the bench and bar. They should include:

- \* Laws sufficient to deter and punish riot conduct.
- \* Additional judges, bail and probation officers, and clerical staff.
- \* Arrangements for volunteer lawyers to help prosecutors and to represent riot defendants at every stage of proceedings.
- \* Policies to ensure proper and individual bail, arraignment, pre-trial, trial and sentencing proceedings.
- \* Procedures for processing arrested persons, such as summons and release, and release on personal recognizance, which permit separation of minor offenders from those dangerous to the community, in order that serious offenders may be detained and prosecuted effectively.
- \* Adequate emergency processing and detention facilities.

The Commission recommends that the federal government:

- \* Amend the Federal Disaster Act—which now applies only to natural disasters—to permit federal emergency food and medical assistance to cities during major civil disorders, and provide long-term economic assistance afterwards.
- \* With the cooperation of the states, create incentives for the private insurance industry to provide more adequate property-insurance coverage in inner-city areas.

The Commission endorses the report of the National Advisory Panel on Insurance in Riot-Affected Areas: «Meeting the Insurance Crisis of our Cities.»

*Chapter 15—The News Media and the Disorders*

In his charge to the Commission, the President asked: «What effect do the mass media have on the riots?»

The Commission determined that the answer to the President's question did not lie solely in the performance of the press and broadcasters in reporting the riots. Our analysis had to consider also the overall treatment by the media of the Negro ghettos, community relations, racial attitudes, and poverty—day by day and month by month, year in and year out. A wide range of interviews with government officials, law enforcement authorities, media personnel and other citizens, including ghetto residents, as well as a quantitative analysis of riot coverage and a special conference with industry representatives, leads us to conclude that:

- \* Despite instances of sensationalism, inaccuracy and distortion, newspapers, radio and television tried on the whole to give a balanced, factual account of the 1967 disorders.
  - \* Elements of the news media failed to portray accurately the scale and character of the violence that occurred last summer. The overall effect was, we believe, an exaggeration of both mood and event.
  - \* Important segments of the media failed to report adequately on the causes and consequences of civil disorders and on the underlying problems of race relations. They have not communicated to the majority of their audience—which is white—a sense of the degradation, misery and hopelessness of life in the ghetto.
- These failings must be corrected, and the improvement must come from within the industry. Freedom of the press is not the issue. Any effort to impose governmental restrictions would be inconsistent with fundamental constitutional precepts. We have seen evidence that the news media are becoming aware of and concerned about their performance in this field. As that concern grows, coverage will improve. But much more must be done, and it must be done soon.

The Commission recommends that the media:

- \* Expand coverage of the Negro community and of race problems through permanent assignment of reporters familiar with urban and racial affairs, and through establishment of more and better links with the Negro community.
- \* Integrate Negroes and Negro activities into all aspects of coverage and content, including newspaper articles and television programming. The news media must publish newspapers and produce programs that recognize the existence and activities of Negroes as a group within the community and as a part of the larger community.
- \* Recruit more Negroes into journalism and broadcasting and promote those who are qualified to positions of significant responsibility. Recruitment should begin in high schools and continue through college; where necessary, aid for training should be provided.
- \* Improve coordination with police in reporting riot news through advance planning, and cooperate with the police in the designation of police information officers, establishment of information centers, and development of mutually acceptable guidelines for riot reporting and the conduct of media personnel.
- \* Accelerate efforts to ensure accurate and responsible reporting of riot and racial news, through adoption by all news gathering organizations of stringent internal staff guidelines.
- \* Cooperate in the establishment of a privately organized and funded Institute of Urban Communications to train and educate journalists in urban affairs, recruit and train more Negro journalists, develop methods for improving police-press relations, review coverage of riots and racial issues, and support continuing research in the urban field.

*Chapter 16—The Future of the Cities*

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By 1985, the Negro population in central cities is expected to increase by 72 percent to approximately 20.8 million. Coupled with the continued exodus of white families to the suburbs, this growth will produce majority Negro populations in many of the nation's largest cities.

The future of these cities, and of their burgeoning Negro populations, is grim. Most new employment opportunities are being created in suburbs and outlying areas. This trend will continue unless important changes in public policy are made. In prospect, therefore, is further deterioration of already inadequate municipal tax bases in the face of increasing demands for public services, and continuing unemployment and poverty among the urban Negro population:

Three choices are open to the nation:

- \* We can maintain present policies, continuing both the proportion of the nation's resources now allocated to programs for the unemployed and the disadvantaged, and the inadequate and failing effort to achieve an integrated society.
- \* We can adopt a policy of «enrichment» aimed at improving dramatically the quality of ghetto life while abandoning integration as a goal.
- \* We can pursue integration by combining ghetto «enrichment» with policies which will encourage Negro movement out of central city areas.

The first choice, continuance of present policies, has ominous consequences for our society. The share of the nation's resources now allocated to programs for the disadvantaged is insufficient to arrest the deterioration of life in central city ghettos. Under such conditions, a rising proportion of Negroes may come to see in the deprivation and segregation they experience, a justification for violent protest, or for extending support to now isolated extremists who advocate civil disruption. Large-scale and continuing violence could result, followed by white retaliation, and, ultimately, the separation of the two communities in a garrison state. Even if violence does not occur, the consequences are unacceptable. Development of a racially integrated society, extraordinarily difficult today, will be virtually impossible when the present black ghetto population of 12.5 million has grown to almost 21 million. To continue present policies is to make permanent the division of our country into two societies; one, largely Negro and poor, located in the central cities; the other, predominantly white and affluent, located in the suburbs and in outlying areas.

The second choice, ghetto enrichment coupled with abandonment of integration, is also unacceptable. It is another way of choosing a permanently divided country. Moreover, equality cannot be achieved under conditions of nearly complete separation. In a country where the economy, and particularly the resources of employment, are predominantly white, a policy of separation can only relegate Negroes to a permanently inferior economic status.

We believe that the only possible choice for America is the third—a policy which combines ghetto enrichment with programs designed to encourage integration of substantial numbers of Negroes into the society outside the ghetto.

Enrichment must be an important adjunct to integration, for no matter how ambitious or energetic the program, few Negroes now living in central cities can be quickly integrated. In the meantime, large-scale improvement in the quality of ghetto life is essential. In the meantime, large-scale improvement in the quality of ghetto life is essential. But this can be no more than an interim strategy. Programs must be developed which will permit substantial Negro movement out of the ghettos. The primary goal must be a single society, in which every citizen will be free to live and work according to his capabilities and desires, not his color.

#### Chapter 17—Recommendations For National Action

### INTRODUCTION

No American—white or black—can escape the consequences of the continuing social and economic decay of our major cities. Only a commitment to national action on an unprecedented scale can shape a future compatible with the historic ideals of American society. The great productivity of our economy, and a federal revenue system which is highly responsive to economic growth, can provide the resources. The major need is to generate new will—the will to tax ourselves to the extent necessary, to meet the vital needs of the nation.

We have set forth goals and proposed strategies to reach those goals. We discuss and recommend programs not to commit each of us to specific parts of such programs but to illustrate the type and dimension of action needed. The major goal is the creation of a true union—a single society and a single American identity. Toward that goal, we propose the following objectives for national action:

- \* Opening up opportunities to those who are restricted by racial segregation and discrimination, and eliminating all barriers to their choice of jobs, education and housing.
  - \* Removing the frustration of powerlessness among the disadvantaged by providing them means for them to deal with the problems that affect their own lives and by increasing the capacity of our public and private institutions to respond to these problems.
  - \* Increasing communication across racial lines to destroy stereotypes, to halt polarization, end distrust and hostility, and create common ground for efforts toward public order and social justice.
- We propose these aims to fulfill our pledge of equality and to meet the

fundamental needs of a democratic and civilized society—domestic peace and social justice.

### EMPLOYMENT

Pervasive unemployment and underemployment are the most persistent and serious grievances in minority areas. They are inextricably linked to the problem of civil disorder.

Despite growing federal expenditures for manpower development and training programs, and sustained general economic prosperity and increasing demands for skilled workers, about two million—white and nonwhite—are permanently unemployed. About ten million are underemployed, of whom 6.5 million work full time for wages below the poverty line.

The 500,000 «hard-core» unemployed in the central cities who lack a basic education and are unable to hold a steady job are made up in large part of Negro males between the ages of 18 and 25. In the riot cities which we surveyed, Negroes were three times as likely as whites to hold unskilled jobs, which are often part time, seasonal, low-paying and «dead end.» Negro males between the ages of 15 and 25 predominated among the rioters. More than 20 percent of the rioters were unemployed, and many who were employed held intermittent, low status, unskilled jobs which they regarded as below their education and ability.

The Commission recommends that the federal government:

- \* Undertake joint efforts with cities and states to consolidate existing manpower programs to avoid fragmentation and duplication.
- \* Take immediate action to create 2,000,000 new jobs over the next three years—one million in the public sector and one million in the private sector—to absorb the hard-core unemployed and materially reduce the level of underemployment for all workers, black and white. We propose 250,000 public sector and 300,000 private sector jobs in the first year.
- \* Provide on-the-job training by both public and private employers with reimbursement to private employers for the extra costs of training the hard-core unemployed, by contract or by tax credits.

- \* Provide tax and other incentives to investment in rural as well as urban poverty areas in order to offer to the rural poor an alternative to migration to urban centers.
- \* Take new and vigorous action to remove artificial barriers to employment and promotion, including not only racial discrimination but, in certain cases, arrest records or lack of a high school diploma. Strengthen those agencies such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, charged with eliminating discriminatory practices, and provide full support for Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act allowing federal grant-in-aid funds to be withheld from activities which discriminate on grounds of color or race. The Commission commends the recent public commitment of the National Council of the Building and Construction Trades Unions, AFL-CIO, to encourage and recruit Negro membership in apprenticeship programs. This commitment should be intensified and implemented.

### EDUCATION

Education in a democratic society must equip children to develop their potential and to participate fully in American life. For the community at large, the schools have discharged this responsibility well. But for many minorities, and particularly for the children of the ghetto, the schools have failed to provide the educational experience which could overcome the effects of discrimination and deprivation. This failure is one of the persistent sources of grievance and resentment within the Negro community. The hostility of Negro parents and students toward the school system is generating increasing conflict and causing disruption within many city school districts.

But the most dramatic evidence of the relationship between educational practices and civil disorders lies in the high incidence of riot participation by ghetto youth who have not completed high school.

The bleak record of public education for ghetto children is growing worse. In the critical skills—verbal and reading ability—Negro students are falling further behind whites with each year of school completed. The high unemployment and underemployment rate for Negro youth is evidence, in part, of the growing educational crisis. We support integration as the priority education strategy; it is essential to the future of American society. In this last summer's disorders we have seen the consequences of racial isolation at all levels, and of attitudes toward race, on both sides, produced by three centuries of myth, ignorance and bias. It is indispensable that opportunities for interaction between the races be expanded. We recognize that the growing

dominance of pupils from disadvantaged minorities in city school populations will not soon be reversed. No matter how great the effort toward desegregation, many children of the ghetto will not, within their school careers, attend integrated schools. If existing disadvantages are not to be perpetuated, we must drastically improve the quality of ghetto education. Equality of results with all-white schools must be the goal.

To implement these strategies, the Commission recommends:

- \* Sharply increased efforts to eliminate de facto segregation in our schools through substantial federal aid to school systems seeking to desegregate either within the system or in cooperation with neighboring school systems.
- \* Elimination of racial discrimination in Northern as well as Southern schools by vigorous application of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- \* Extension of quality early childhood education to every disadvantaged child in the country.
- \* Efforts to improve dramatically schools serving disadvantaged children through substantial federal funding of year-round compensatory education programs, improved teaching, and expanded experimentation and research.
- \* Elimination of illiteracy through greater federal support for adult basic education.
- \* Enlarged opportunities for parent and community participation in the public schools.
- \* Reoriented vocational education emphasizing work-experience training and the involvement of business and industry.
- \* Expanded opportunities for higher education through increased federal assistance to disadvantaged students.
- \* Revision of state aid formulas to assure more per student aid to districts having a high proportion of disadvantaged school-age children.

#### THE WELFARE SYSTEM

Our present system of public welfare is designed to save money instead of people, and tragically ends up doing neither. This system has two critical deficiencies:

First, it excludes large numbers of persons who are in great need, and who, if provided a decent level

of support, might be able to become more productive and self-sufficient. No federal funds are available for millions of men and women who are needy but neither aged, handicapped nor the parents of minor children.

Second, for those included, the system provides assistance well below the minimum necessary for a decent level of existence, and imposes restrictions that encourage continued dependency on welfare and undermine self-respect.

A welter of statutory requirements and administrative practices and regulations operate to remind recipients that they are considered untrustworthy, promiscuous and lazy. Residence requirements prevent assistance to people in need who are newly arrived in the state. Regular searches of recipients' homes violate privacy. Inadequate social services compound the problems.

The Commission recommends that the federal government, acting with state and local governments where necessary, reform the existing welfare system to:

- \* Establish uniform national standards of assistance at least as high as the annual «poverty level» of income, now set by the Social Security Administration at \$3,335 per year for an urban family of four.
- \* Require that all states receiving federal welfare contributions participate in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Unemployed Parents program (AFDC-UP) that permits assistance to families with both

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father and mother in the home, thus aiding the family while it is still intact.

- \* Bear a substantially greater portion of all welfare costs—at least 90 percent of total payments.
- \* Increase incentives for seeking employment and job training, but remove restrictions recently enacted by the Congress that would compel mothers of young children to work.
- \* Provide more adequate social services through neighborhood centers and family planning programs.
- \* Remove the freeze placed by the 1967 welfare amendments on the percentage of children in a state that can be covered by federal assistance.
- \* Eliminate residence requirements.

As a long-range goal, the Commission recommends that the federal government seek to develop a national system of income supplementation based strictly on need with two broad and basic purposes:

- \* To provide, for those who can work or who do work, any necessary supplements in such a way as to develop incentives for fuller employment;
- \* To provide, for those who cannot work and for mothers who decide to remain with their children, a minimum standard of decent living, and to aid in the saving of children from the prison of poverty that has held their parents.

A broad system of implementation would involve substantially greater federal expenditures than anything now contemplated. The cost will range widely depending on the standard of need accepted as the «basic allowance» to individuals and families, and on the rate at which additional income above this level is taxed. Yet if the deepening cycle of poverty and dependence on welfare can be broken, if the children of the poor can be given the opportunity to scale the wall that now separates them from the rest of society, the return on this investment will be great indeed.

#### HOUSING

After more than three decades of fragmented and grossly underfunded federal housing programs, nearly six million substandard housing units remain occupied in the United States.

The housing problem is particularly acute in the minority ghettos. Nearly two-thirds of all non-white families living in the central cities today live in neighborhoods marked with substandard housing and general urban blight. Two major factors are responsible.

First: Many ghetto residents simply cannot pay the rent necessary to support decent housing. In Detroit, for example, over 40 percent of the non-white occupied units in 1960 required rent of over 35 percent of the tenants' income.

Second: Discrimination prevents access to many non-slum areas, particularly the suburbs, where good housing exists. In addition, by creating a «back pressure» in the racial ghettos, it makes it possible for landlords to break up apartments for denser occupancy, and keeps prices and rents of deteriorated ghetto housing higher than they would be in a truly free market.

To date, federal programs have been able to do comparatively little to provide housing for the disadvantaged. In the 31-year history of subsidized federal housing, only about 800,000 units have been constructed, with recent production averaging about 50,000 units a year. By comparison, over a period only three years

longer, FHA insurance guarantees have made possible the construction of over ten million middle and upper-income units.

Two points are fundamental to the Commission's recommendations:

First: Federal housing programs must be given a new thrust aimed at overcoming the prevailing patterns of racial segregation. If this is not done, those programs will continue to concentrate the most impoverished and dependent segments of the population into the central-city ghettos where there is already a critical gap between the needs of the population and the public resources to deal with them.

Second: The private sector must be brought into the production and financing of low and moderate rental housing to supply the capabilities and capital necessary to meet the housing needs of the nation. The Commission recommends that the federal government:

- \* Enact a comprehensive and enforceable federal open housing law to cover the sale or rental of all housing, including single family homes.
- \* Reorient federal housing programs to place more low and moderate income housing outside of ghetto areas.
- \* Bring within the reach of low and moderate income families within the next five years six million new and existing units of decent housing, beginning with 600,000 units in the next year.

To reach this goal we recommend:

- \* Expansion and modification of the rent supplement program to permit use of supplements for existing housing, thus greatly increasing the reach of the program.
- \* Expansion and modification of the below-market interest rate program to enlarge the interest subsidy to all sponsors and provide interest-free loans to nonprofit sponsors to cover pre-construction costs, and permit sale of projects to nonprofit corporations, cooperatives, or condominiums.
- \* Creation of an ownership supplement program similar to present rent supplements, to make home ownership possible for low-income families.
- \* Federal writedown of interest rates on loans to private builders constructing moderate rent housing.
- \* Expansion of the public housing program, with emphasis on small units on scattered sites, and leasing and «turnkey» programs.
- \* Expansion of the Model Cities program.
- \* Expansion and reorientation of the urban renewal program to give priority to projects directly assisting low-income households to obtain adequate housing.

## CONCLUSION

One of the first witnesses to be invited to appear before this Commission was Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, a distinguished and perceptive scholar. Referring to the reports of earlier riot commissions, he said:

I read that report... of the 1919 riot in Chicago, and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '35, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '43, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot.

I must again in candor say to you members of this Commission--it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland--with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction. These words come to our minds as we conclude this report.

We have provided an honest beginning. We have learned much. But we have uncovered no startling truths, no unique insights, no simple solutions. The destruction and the bitterness of racial disorder, the harsh polemics of black revolt and white repression have been seen and heard before in this country.

It is time now to end the destruction and the violence, not only in the streets of the ghetto but in the lives of people.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON CIVIL DISORDERS  
(New York: Bantam Books, 1968).

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[1] The term «ghetto» as used in this report refers to an area within a city characterized by poverty and acute social disorganization, and inhabited by members of a racial or ethnic group under conditions of involuntary segregation.

[2] A «central city» is the largest city of a standard metropolitan statistical area, that is, a metropolitan area containing at least one city of 50,000 or more inhabitants.