

# New Directions

---

Volume 3  
Issue 3 *Bicentennial Edition*

Article 11

---

7-1-1976

## From Bunker Hill to Bien Hoa: 200 Years With the Black Soldier

Wallace H. Terry

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections>

---

### Recommended Citation

Terry, Wallace H. (1976) "From Bunker Hill to Bien Hoa: 200 Years With the Black Soldier," *New Directions*: Vol. 3: Iss. 3, Article 11.

Available at: <https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections/vol3/iss3/11>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Howard @ Howard University. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Directions by an authorized editor of Digital Howard @ Howard University. For more information, please contact [digitalservices@howard.edu](mailto:digitalservices@howard.edu).

# From Bunker Hill To Bien Hoa

The following is an excerpt from a soon to be published book, "The Bloods: The Black Soldier from Viet Nam to America," by Wallace H. Terry

## 34 200 Years With The Black Soldier

By Wallace H. Terry

If anyone had told me when I was a child that Black bandits rode with Billy the Kid or that a Black Army scout died in the arms of Chief Sitting Bull after the Battle of Little Big Horn, I would have called him crazy. "If you are brown, stick around," we used to say. "If you are Black, get back."

But if you were white, you were right. And everyone in my neighborhood knew that Hollywood was right and white: there were no Blacks around when Jane Russell nursed Robert Taylor back to health in *The Outlaw*; only whites died with their boots on when Errol Flynn made his last stand.

The only Blacks we saw in the movies had names like Buckwheat and Butterfly, Mantan and Steppin' Fetchit. They spent their screen time running around pantries and jumping wide-eyed from haunted houses. No one ever let them near a gun, much less play a role with dignity and self-esteem. They didn't even have a good shot at losing a battle (unless Tarzan turned the elephants loose on some *blood thirsty Black savages*) or at being rounded up by Hopalong Cassidy's posse.

I grew up believing that Victor Mature crossed the Alps, and that Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner turned the elite British troops back at New Orleans, and that not one Black tried to make the world safe for democracy.

My school books seemed to see my history the same—without me. Washington crossed the Potomac in a lily-white boat. Grant led a white only army South to save the Union and free the slaves. Whites chased down Geronimo. Whites chased up San Juan Hill. White soldiers were invincible. Black soldiers were invisible.

My toy guns were useless in the ghettos of Harlem and Indianapolis. "You gotta be the Indians," some white kid would tell me. "You gotta be the Japs." Why? "Cause you're a darky just like them." Black children grew up for so long in America losing

Peter Salem with Lt. Grosvenor at the Battle of Bunker Hill.



It was painful. And my pain grew when I returned home from holding my hand over my heart as the flags waved and the strains of "The Star Spangled Banner" swirled, ending the movie at the segregated Madam C. J. Walker Theater; when I clutched the Savings Bond book I dutifully filled for a chance to ride in an Honest-to-God-For-Real-Army-Jeep at the school grounds; when I looked into a mirror and I did not see John Wayne cleaning up the Japs or Alan Ladd doing in the Nazis. Where, America, were Augustus W. Hamilton and Howard E. Mitchell? My uncles. No American Legion post turned out to see them come marching home to Indianapolis, the home of the national headquarters of the American Legion. Or for Charles DeBow who flew with the 99th Pursuit Squadron against the Germans. Or for Jesse Jarman, Jr., who had lived across the street on Boulevard Place and didn't come back at all. And they had to *fight* to fight.

Taladega College gave Uncle Gus a degree in mathematics and physics; Indianapolis in 1942 gave him a broom and a mop. While whites built the airplanes at Curtis-Wright, Gus swept the floors.

The draft—more indignities, more insults: segregated units; segregated camps; segregated mess halls; segregated housing; the South. Then they had to face German machine gun fire or Japanese Kamikaze.

On the way to Ft. Benning, Georgia, a white gas station owner near Brownsville, Texas, let Gus know that no niggers, in uniform or out, could piss there. My grandmother went to the restroom anyway. She locked the door. The owner banged on the door. She wouldn't open it. He busted Gus in the jaw. The blood splattered over the corporal stripes on his khaki shirt. In Italy, a captain now, his color made no difference when the Germans, spotting the reflection from his binoculars, opened up, sending machine gun fire ripping through his arm and side.

Uncle Howard, out of Boston University, was sent to the intelligence school. Howard

to the general in charge, no one wanted him and the other Black student there. So they assigned them to photographic interpretation, the toughest course. Surely they would flunk. Howard finished fourth, the other Black, seventh, in a class of 84. While the white graduates put on officers' bars, the two Blacks kept their corporal stripes and went off to Italy and the segregated 92nd Division. When it came time for a push against the Germans, only two men in the entire division could read aerial reconnaissance: the white lieutenant colonel who was *the* intelligence officer, and some Black corporal. A week later, Howard was a second lieutenant.

### The Early Wars

From the first wars white America waged, Black Americans hastened to wear the same uniform, fight the same battle, die the same death, ever hopeful—like my uncles—that their sacrifice would make the land as free for them as it was for whites. Rarely were the services they rendered justly rewarded. The land and law they fought for in war enslaved and denied them in peace. Where is the white American who would fight as long and wait as long as James Robinson did for freedom without revolting against his masters? This Maryland slave marched for his master to the Battles of Brandywine and Yorktown during The American Revolution. His master promised freedom in return. Lafayette pinned a gold medal on Robinson, a token for his bravery. When he came home to Virginia, new masters sold Robinson to plantation owners in Louisiana. Came the War of 1812 and James Robinson picked up his musket to join Andrew Jackson in New Orleans. When the battle was won, Robinson once more was returned to slavery. And there he waited, picking cotton, until 1863 when Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation finally gave Robinson the freedom he had sought at Yorktown almost a century before. At the age of 110, James Robinson was a free man at last.

James Robinson was no exception to the pattern of white America's mistreat-

ment of Blacks who fought in uniform. Before the battle, the Black man's loyalty was suspect, his rights denied. After the battle, his efforts were forgotten.

General George Washington helped set the pattern. A slaveholder, he refused to enlist Blacks, deserters, vagabonds, and any other "person suspected of being an enemy to the liberty of America." He relented when the British, promising freedom, began enlisting slaves into Virginia Governor Denmore's Ethiopian Regiment. From the Boston Massacre to Bunker Hill, from Concord to Valley Forge, 5000 Blacks—minutemen and sailors, Marines and spies—fought and died for liberty, including Crispus Attucks, a free Black and the first American to die in the conflict.

Lemuel Haynes, preacher and scholar, answered the call to arms on April 19, 1775, and marched with other minutemen to Lexington and Concord where he joined more Blacks like Cliff Whittemore, Cato Wood, Caesar Ferrit and his son, John. At Bunker Hill, Peter Salem, a free man who earned his living making baskets, fired when he saw the whites of Major John Pitcairn's eyes. For killing the commander of the British marines, Salem was presented to General Washington. Haynes marched on to Fort Ticonderoga, and Salem to the Battle of Saratoga. Another Black, Barzillai Lew, played the fife at Bunker Hill. Prince Whipple helped stroke the oars of the boat that carried Washington through sleet and snow across the Potomac on Christmas Day 1776. William Flora fought singlehandedly to hold the Great Bridge against a British advance at Norfolk. Jack Sisson helped capture the commander of British forces in Rhode Island during one of the most daring raids of the war. Phillip Field, a private, died in the terrible winter at Valley Forge. Deborah Gannett disguised herself as a man to serve for more than a year as a foot soldier. Saul Matthews, Pompey Lamp, James Armistead, Quaco Honeyman, Antiqua—spies and counterspies all—used the cover of tradesmen and servants to help discover the password that led to the cap-

36 ture of General Anthony Wayne. Blacks piloted four boats in skirmishes with British ships. After one of them, James Forten, was captured, he spurned the British captain's offer of education and freedom in England. "I am here as a prisoner for the liberties of my country," Forten told his captors. "I never, *never* shall prove a traitor to her interests."

But when the Revolutionary War ended, only a few Blacks were freed for their services, and only a few states enacted moderate emancipation legislation. For the masses of Blacks the Declaration of Independence was so much wasted rhetoric. Cotton would become King, and they would be its slaves. The Army became lily-white once more, as Congress restricted its ranks to "able-bodied white males." Six years later, in 1798, the Navy banned the enlistment of Blacks on board her men of war and into the ranks of the Marines.

Yet, in the War of 1812, Blacks fought again. A battalion of 600 free Blacks rallied to Andrew Jackson's cause in the Louisiana campaign, turning the tide against troops seasoned in the Napoleonic Wars. Jackson praised their efforts: "I invited you to share in the perils and to divide the glory of your white countrymen. I expected much from you; for I was not uninformed of those qualities which must render you so formidable. I knew you could endure hunger and thirst, and all the hardships of war. I knew that you loved the land of your nativity, and that, like ourselves, you had to defend all that is most dear to man. But you surpassed my hopes. Soldiers!"

The tribute was wasted on the rest of the Nation. The glory was not shared, not even in New Orleans, the city they saved; for there, their exploits were not recited and their presence in the victory parades was unwanted. In 1820, the War Department announced that "no Negro or Mulatto will be received as a recruit of the Army." The Nation, out of danger now, put the Blacks back in their place. Whatever their previous disappoint-

ments, the Civil War gave to Blacks renewed hope that their participation would bring tangible improvement in their future lives. Blacks were itching to fight. In Baltimore, Nicholas Biddle, age 65, tried to join Union forces heading South. A white mob stoned him. In New York, in Michigan, in Ohio, Blacks volunteered by the thousands. The City of Cincinnati offered to send 1000 Blacks whose skins were so light that from a distance they would look white. Robert Smalls led one party of slaves against a Rebel gunboat, the *Planter*, in Charleston Harbor. After seizing it, they sailed it through the Harbor into the hands of the Union blockade. "I thought the *Planter*," Smalls told Union officers, "might be of some use to Uncle Abe." In different waters, William Tillman, the Black cook of the Yankee schooner *S.J. Waring*, captured by Rebel privateers, murdered the Rebel captain and forced the Rebel mates to follow the coastline to New York City.

Into 166 all-Black units the Union organized 187,000 Black soldiers. One of every four Union seamen—29,511 of 118,044— was Black, and they all served in ranks below petty officer. Nearly 200,000 more Blacks foraged for food, carried messages, built roads and camps. A Black man in Mr. Lincoln's army, however, had more than one enemy to fight. There was, for instance, discrimination in pay. White privates received \$13.50 a month, but Black enlisted men of all ranks received \$10.00. Sergeant William Walker of the Third South Carolina Regiment and three other Blacks were executed when they refused to fight for unequal pay. There was discrimination in promotion. Fewer than 100 Blacks became officers, mostly doctors and chaplains, and no combat officers ranked above captain. There was discrimination in assignments. One of the two highest ranking Black officers, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander T. Augusta, was shifted from senior regimental surgeon to examiner of recruits because white doctors objected to his position—over them.



**Lemuel Haynes**, preacher and scholar, answered the call to arms on April 19, 1775 and marched to Lexington and Concord.

In this war, Blacks earned a new and more widely acknowledged respect. Said General Nathaniel P. Banks of Black attempts to capture Port Hudson: "Their conduct was heroic. No troops could be more determined or more daring." Said *The Chicago Tribune*: "The Negro will fight for his liberty, for his place among men, for his right to develop himself in whatever direction he chooses; he will prove himself a hero and, if need be, a martyr." Said General Benjamin F. Butler, commander of the Army of the James River, as he bade farewell to his Black troops: "With a bayonet you have unlocked the iron-barred gates of prejudice, opening new fields of freedom, liberty, equality, of right to yourselves and your race forever." And said Lincoln to Congress: "It is difficult to say they are not as good soldiers as any. No servile insurrection or tendency to violence or cruelty has marked the measures of emancipation and arming of the Blacks."

Yet, most Black soldiers went home poor, some even in debt to the government. There were no mules, no acres of land for them. And in time the South would raise up black codes to terrorize them into submission. But the Black soldier had for the first time won, though still segregated, a certain permanency within the military establishment. In 1866 Congress authorized the formation of four Black regiments, the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry. Twelve-thousand-five-hundred Blacks volunteered. But it would be a long time before the equality Blacks fought for during the Civil War would be implemented within the armed forces, let alone the society at large.

When the cavalry rode West the Black troopers did too. They rode from the Dakotas to the Rio Grande to win the West for a white America that was not always grateful. There were times when whites got away with murdering Black troops. Some white commanders, like George A. Custer, refused to lead them.

they were issued the poorest horses, the poorest food and the poorest equipment.

Yet their valor made them legendary among both red men and white. When word reached Sitting Bull that Isaiah Dorman, Custer's Black interpreter, lay dying at Little Big Horn, he brought his old friend water and ordered his wounds treated. Other proud Indian leaders like Geronimo and Victorio called the Black troopers "Buffalo Soldiers" for their tight, curly hair, their dark skins, their buffalo skin coats, but mostly for their courage. Wild Bill Hickok, Kit Carson and Buffalo Bill Cody gladly scouted for them as they protected the routes for the laying of the Kansas Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads. First Lieutenant John Pershing talked so fondly of his days with the 10th that West Point cadets, resenting his stern discipline, nicknamed him "Nigger Jack." Changed later to "Black Jack," the nickname stuck.

Black cowboys prospected and mined for gold, carried mail on the Pony Express, took part in the bloody range wars, shot it out with white cowboys on the streets of Dodge City and Cheyenne, and wound up buried on Boot Hill. Nat Love became "Deadwood Dick" when he won a roping contest. George Glenn rode the Chisholm Trail. Jim Beckworth was a Rocky Mountain man. Ben Hodges rustled cattle. Oliver Lewis rode the first Kentucky Derby winner. Bronco Sam worked the ranges around Laramie. Rodeo star Bill Pickett invented bulldogging, and Tom Mix and Will Rogers assisted his performances. "Nigger Bob" Leavitt ran saloons in Montana. "Cherokee Bill" Goldsby shot his first man at 14 and when he went to the gallows at 20 he had robbed more trains, held up more banks and killed more men than Billy the Kid. General Lew Wallace used Black troops to find Billy, and trap him in Lincoln, New Mexico. And two Buffalo Soldiers, Sergeant Benjamin Brown and Corporal Isaiah Mays of the 24th, even won the Medal of Honor for trying to stop white outlaws from robbing a paymaster wagon.

When America went to war with Spain over Cuba, the Black man again fought. When the *Maine* was sunk in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1890—the pretext needed to start the war—22 Blacks died on board. Just three months later, Elijah B. Tunnell, a Black, became America's first combat casualty. While assisting the wounded aboard the torpedo boat *Winslow*, Tunnell's legs were blown off "Did we win the fight, boys?" the cook wanted to know. "Yes," someone answered. "Then I die happy."

From the Dakotas came the 25th Infantry. From the Southwest came the 9th and 10th. They would start the charge up San Juan that Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders would be credited for. Five more would win the Medal of Honor, including Sergeant Major Edward L. Baker who singlehandedly captured the enemy colors at the Battle of El Caney. Yet the Black troops had to sail to battle in segregated ships, taking their coffee after the whites had theirs.

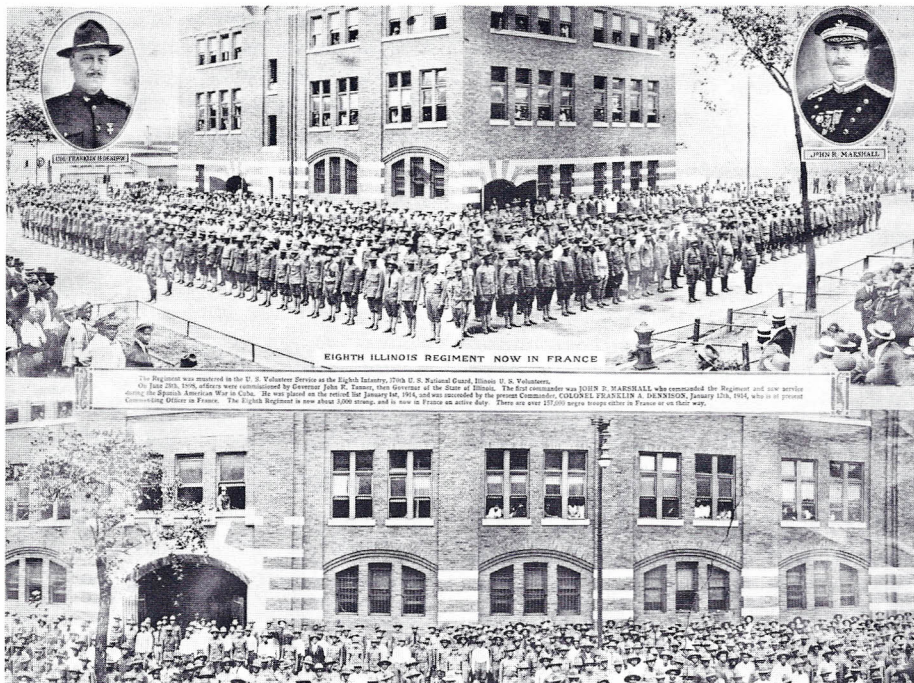
### The First World War

When America entered World War I, tens of thousands of Black men volunteered, believing that their stake in their country's future was greater than their suffering in her present or her past. Yet they found themselves continuing to fight for that future in segregated units, led mostly by white officers. The government accepted 371,710 of the Black volunteers, and sent to France about 50,000 in segregated combat units and 150,000 in segregated support forces. The highest ranking Black officer at the time was Colonel Charles Young, the third Black to have graduated from West Point. Young was forced to retire despite riding a horse from Xenia, Ohio, to Washington to prove that the high blood pressure the War Department said he had was in fact no handicap. America was not yet ready for a Black commander, even of a Black battalion.

At the front, the ability and reliability of Blacks were again impugned by white officers who didn't want to serve with

**The Eighth Illinois Regiment**, which was mustered in the U. S. Volunteer Service as the Eighth Infantry, 370th U. S. National Guard. The men of this regiment were sent to France for active duty during the first world war.

38



Gen. Benjamin O. Davis, Sr.



them. The ranks of the 92nd Infantry were once broken by the German offensive at Meuse-Argonne. The white commander, Major General Robert Lee Bullard, called his Black troops "lazy, slothful, superstitious, imaginative." He advised, "If you need combat soldiers, and especially if you need them in a hurry, don't put your time upon Negroes." But the French believed otherwise. Although no Black man won a Medal of Honor from white America, entire Black regiments—like the 369th, the 370th, the 371st and the 372nd—won the Croix de Guerre from France. Indeed the first Americans honored by the Croix de Guerre were two Blacks, Henry Johnson and Needham Roberts, who alone repulsed an attack of at least 20 Germans, resorting to bolo knife and gun butts when their guns jammed. The 369th went on to capture two towns from the Germans, survive 191 days—longer than any other American unit—of enemy fire, and reach the Rhine before any other Allied unit.

Such heroism had no bearing on the treatment Blacks received in America

the war, whites rioted against Blacks 26 times, lynching at least 70, including Black doughboys wearing the uniforms in which they had helped to make the world safe. The Klan grew strong again, counting more followers in the North than in the South. Blacks were the last hired, housed and fed. The Marines, and the Army Air, Artillery, Engineer, Tank and Signal Corps refused Blacks. The Navy and the Coast Guard gave Blacks food to cook, dishes to wash and floors to sweep.

### The Second World War

When America entered World War II, many Blacks thus wanted no part of dying once more as second-class citizens. Some, like the late Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad and civil rights organizer Bayard Rustin, chose jail instead. Others fought for first class treatment in the war plants and in the uniform. A. Philip Randolph threatened to march 100,000 Blacks to Washington if Franklin Roosevelt did not end plant discrimination. FDR agreed.

Yancy Williams threatened a law suit to Blacks the opportunity to fight in the

air, so the Army Air Corps opened a Jim Crow training school at Tuskegee. And Roosevelt ordered the Navy to use Blacks everywhere. It responded with deliberate pause. At war's end, 95 percent of the Black sailors were still cooking food and sweeping decks. The Marines accepted the first Black recruits in 1942, and Black Marines got to the beaches of Guadalcanal, Saipan and Okinawa.

Blacks in the Army were still segregated and serving under senior white officers. Most Black soldiers wound up in Europe and Asia driving trucks, building bridges, and stacking supplies. Becoming a Black hero was more difficult than ever. No Black won the Medal of Honor, even though more than one million Blacks entered the services, with half that number going overseas. There were those who doubted the usefulness of the Black soldier. In the Pacific, the 24th languished over menial duties for two years; it was doubtful, the War Department explained, that Blacks could master modern weapons. Dwight Eisenhower told FDR that he could find no country that would welcome the Black soldier. Someone in the 5

War Department suggested Liberia, but the idea was abandoned, not because it was insulting but because it was impractical.

Nevertheless, the number of Black officers grew substantially. In the Army the number swelled to 8000, including the first Black general, Benjamin O. Davis Sr. The Navy counted 52, including a lieutenant commander. And not all white generals were doubtful about possible Black contributions to the fighting army; neither Douglas MacArthur nor George S. Patton had any qualms about using Blacks. "I won't return them," MacArthur told George Marshall when other generals said that was their intention. Patton exhorted the 71st Tank Battalion on Omaha Beach, "Men, you're the first Negro tankers ever to fight in the American Army. I would never have asked for you, if you weren't good. I don't care what color you are so long as you go up there and kill those Kraut sonsabitches. On D-Day, when Blacks came ashore, even Ike commended their "courage and determination."

There were individual Black heroes. On the Day of Infamy, Dorie Miller stopped collecting laundry aboard the *U.S.S. Arizona* in Pearl Harbor, and shot down six Japanese fighters. Robert H. Brooks, a private, was probably the first American soldier to die in land war against the Japanese. Charles Jackson French towed 15 men on a raft for two hours away from enemy fire at the Battle of Coral Sea. Private Ernest Jenkins alone captured 15 Germans. More than 2000 Black volunteers fought side by side with whites to drive the Germans back at the Bulge. Ten thousand Blacks helped build the Burma Road, and thousands more brought Patton's gas on the Red Ball Express. And the all-Black 99th Pursuit Squadron, led by Benjamin O. Davis Jr., faced the Messerschmitts at Anzio.

The Jim Crow Army finally came to an end three years after the war. On July 26, 1948, Harry S. Truman, a one-time Army captain who had been impressed by the

during World War I, signed the order desegregating the Armed Forces. Eisenhower disagreed with the move. It took some time to overcome the resistance of many Southern-born white officers. But by September 1953 less than five percent of Black troops remained in all-Black units.

All-Black units like the 24th and the 25th fought for the last time in Korea. They were deactivated before that war ended. Others were converted, like the 9th and 10th, which became the 509th and 510th Tank Battalions, and their ranks mixed with whites. The 24th wrote one last chapter to its remarkable history when it seized the railhead city of Yech'on and thereby won the first significant U.S. victory of the war. Two of its men, Private William Thompson and Sergeant Cornelius Charlton, died winning the Medal of Honor, the first Blacks so honored since the Spanish American War. In other units, Blacks, like Arthur Dudley of the 19th Infantry Regiment, ably commanded whites for the first time. The whites in Dudley's squad swore that he killed more enemy with a rifle than either Alvin York in World War I or Audie Murphy in World War II.

For the Black man in the American armed forces, a new chapter appeared to have begun.

### The Viet Nam War

During the first three years of the Viet Nam War, the military seemed to represent the most integrated institution in American society. For the first time Blacks were fully integrated in combat and fruitfully employed in positions of leadership. In the swamps of the Mekong Delta, in search and destroy missions across the rubber plantations to the rolling hills of the Central Highlands, in the set-piece battles of the DMZ, on the swift boats and off the carrier decks of the Seventh Fleet, in the cockpits of helicopters and fighter jets above both Viet Nams, as frogman or doctor, as sniper or engineer, as machine-gunner or chaplain, the American Black

pected his nation to forever honor. "I've fought in three wars and three more wouldn't be too many to defend my country," Daniel "Chappie" James Jr., a Black Air Force colonel stationed at Ubon, Thailand, said in 1967. "I love America and as she has weaknesses or ills, I'll hold her hand."

Eleven percent of the American population, Blacks always died in Viet Nam at a greater rate. In 1965 and 1966, Blacks were 23 percent of those Americans killed in action. Where Blacks were a third of the crack brigade of the 101st Airborne and half of its reconnaissance commanders, the front lines became known as "Soulville." In 1967, Blacks were 20 percent of the combat forces, 25 percent of the elite troops, and up to 45 percent of the airborne rifle platoons; 20 percent of the Army fatalities were Black, 11 percent of the Marine. By 1968, the war's peak year, 14 percent of the U.S. combat deaths were Black.

Despite the high casualties, there was little to support the charges of some Black leaders that Black soldiers were being unwillingly used as "cannon fodder." Most Black soldiers, in 1966 and 1967, were anxious to prove themselves in combat and agreed that the war was worth fighting to halt the spread of communism. Because past discrimination deprived them of full opportunity, fewer Blacks than whites possessed the preparation and training for entrance into more highly skilled occupations such as electronics, and thus they ended up carrying guns or pushing brooms.

Newspapers, magazines and television networks back home heralded most the spirit of brotherhood between Blacks and whites in the foxhole. Near Bien Hoa, for instance, Specialist 5 Cleophas Mims, a Black medic for the 1st Infantry Division, dragged a wounded tank commander to the back deck of his tank, covered his body with his own as a rubber tree cut apart by communist fire crashed down upon them. The commander was white. Blacks saving whites, whites saving

**Gen. Frederic Davison**, now executive assistant to the President of Howard, leads combat troops through war-shattered village in the Delta of South Viet Nam. At the time, Davison was a brigadier general and commander of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade which repulsed the Communist attacks on Saigon during the Tet Offensive of 1968.

40 Blacks—it all became commonplace in this war.

But there was another side to the story, a side that was obscured during the first years in Viet Nam. Later, as the war ground on, the other side became more important, more visible, more significant for the future.

Brotherhood at the front lines was one thing. But back at the bases, the signs of future trouble were more obvious. Beneath the integrated surface of the war, the old prejudices still festered. Confederate flags flew from barracks and trucks. On the walls of bars and latrines were scrawled such graffiti as "niggers eat shit" and "I'd prefer a gook to a nigger." The Black soldier still found himself doing more than his share of the dirty work. Promotions, awards and coveted rear area assignments were too often slow in coming the Black soldier's way, however well he fought or however high the proportion of his front line casualties. There were, at the end of 1967, only two Black generals among 1346 generals and admirals, one in the Army and one in the Air Force. The Army general was Frederic Davison, a Howard University graduate and the first Black general to lead Americans into battle. The Marines had no full colonels. And across the battlefield only two battalion commanders in 380 were Black.

Meanwhile a new Black soldier appeared, born of the American failure in the war against Black poverty and white racism, but born most of all of the new Black spirit that sprang from the ashes of Harlem and Watts, from the fallen manhood of Malcolm X and from the blood of Martin Luther King.

Unify, the brothers said. Show your brother—your blood—where he can come for strength, protection and understanding. Show the Man with his foot on your neck. Show the Chuck. The Rabbit. The Devil. The Beast. The Swine.

So when Blood met Blood, clenched fists were raised. At meeting points, like the Soul Kitchen on Saigon's outskirts, Blood greeted Blood over sparsens, guns,







<https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections/vol3/iss3/11>

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LARRY BURROWS

cornbread and chitlins in endless Black Power handshakes and grips that ended with Blood giving Blood knowledge by tapping him on the head, or Blood vowing to die for Blood by crossing the chest Roman Legion-style. The Bloods of each division, of each battalion, and of each company would have their own special way of giving up power, of laying down the dap, of gripping and greeting the hand of the brother Blood.

In increasing numbers, the Bloods, even along the borders of Cambodia and Laos, organized to protest discrimination in punishment, promotion and assignment. Some chose to live by themselves, asking whites to leave or driving them from hootches they shared. There were some, like the Bloods of a company of 1st Cavalry Division attack troops, who startled white commanders by entering battle in black battle dress: black berets, black shirts, black beads, and black gloves. From late 1967 racial insults swept the battle zones, leading to fights and riots. Injuries often followed, and some were killed. The various commands were forced to establish race relations committees but conditions were not fully ameliorated until many alleged Black trouble-makers were discharged, often arbitrarily, and the last Americans were removed from Viet Nam.

It became clearer, however, that the Black American soldier will forever more be respected not only by the enemies of his uniform but by his white comrade-in-arms. A Black soldier in the 9th Infantry Division once explained to me why he never heard racial insults: "Nobody ever calls me nigger when I'm carrying my grenade launcher." □

Copyright 1976 by  
Wallace H. Terry

*Wallace H. Terry is professor of journalism at the School of Communications, Howard University. He covered the Viet Nam War for Time Magazine from 1967 to 1969, and is currently studying the problems of Viet Nam veterans as a Fellow of the Center for National Security Studies.*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARMY STAFF SGT. EARL VAN ALSTINE





**Black troops** of the 25th Infantry Division near Bien Hoa, South Viet Nam, hold a North Vietnamese soldier they have captured in battle. The troops of this battalion were commanded by a Black officer, Lt. Col. James Bradley, who gained the nickname "Ambush" for his successful night fighting.



**In Chu Lai**, South Viet Nam, militant Black Marines raise clenched fists before the hooch they call "Hekalu" from the Swahili language. Reacting to cross burnings and other signs of racism, the Marines organized chapters of the Ron Karenga "US" movement throughout South Viet Nam.

## The Black Nation and The Bicentennial

Continued from page 16

*A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, Vol. 1, The Citadel Press, New York, 1967, p. 6-7.)*

These pleadings represent what W. E. B. DuBois called, in his preface to Aptheker's volume, a record of "the common run of human beings" of African descent. The "common run" among Blacks went by the thousands to the British lines or fled to Canada seeking freedom, showing little loyalty to a social system bent upon oppression and continued subjugation of Blacks. These were not the words, thoughts and deeds of a people involved in the act of revolution which created a nation, but in a struggle to create themselves as whole new men and women. Clearly, the *potential* of this revolution for them could have been to deliver their freedom as well. But this was not to be, and the loss of this opportunity by America has profoundly nurtured Black people's ambiguity toward these events.

But if the Revolutionary period of 1776 was not to fulfill its potential to free Africans from oppression, what prospect was there in 1876, 100 years later at the Centennial of the nation, that the liberation of Blacks would be achieved?

Few scholars, save DuBois, have referred to the American Centennial, as a "Revolutionary age; but DuBois terms it a Counter-Revolution in the sense that white Southerners were determined to retake the power they had lost 10 years earlier in the Civil War. Blacks had been enfranchised and the "Color-line" became the term describing the conflict between Blacks and whites for control of the Southern electorates. As one observer stated it: "For a long time the whites have wanted a sufficient excuse to rise up and overthrow the African Government under which they live . . ." (Letter of H. V. Redfield, correspondent for the *Cincinnati Commercial*, in Walter Flemming's *Documentary History of the Reconstruction*,

Vol. 2, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1966, p. 406.)

Thus, a war had begun and in 1876, the political dimensions of it could be seen in the rapid rise of Rifle Clubs in the South, the repression of Blacks and the ending scenario which found armed whites stationed at the polling places on election day to insure their victory. The economic dimension of this counter-revolution was described by DuBois as one concerned with property and the reassertion of the control over Southern commercial territory by the whites. (W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880*, Meridan Books, New York, 1962, pp. 580-635.)

The complementary political and economic aspects of this revolution were aided by the Hayes-Tilden Compromise of 1876, which had the effect of exchanging Southern white votes for a promise to withdraw the military governance of the South and leave the Blacks unprotected. The period of white violence and terror which followed is one of the worst examples of open savagery in the pages of human history.

Again, the historical record shows that Blacks had little to remind them of the liberating power of the promise of the American Revolution after 100 years, but rather, suffered the reinforced will of America to denigrate the "common run" of the Black humanity.

Now, in 1976, the task of the political enfranchisement of Blacks is incomplete — with between only 40 and 50 percent registered and voting and less than one percent of the elective offices held by Blacks nationally. The share of Blacks in the economic power, in terms of national GNP, is about the same as the voting power output in terms of elective office; and Black income and employment levels are steadily diverging from those of whites and middle-income Blacks. Meanwhile, in almost every other category of public interest where policy or resources

are at stake in the society, there is an unresolved conflict because of the special low-status position of Blacks. Even though it is possible to agree with Thomas Sowell, that "the story of how millions of people developed from the depths of slavery—acquired work skills, personal discipline, human ideals, and the whole complex of knowledge and values required for achievement in a modern society—is a largely untold story," still, the measure of achievement for the "common run" of Blacks is where it has always been. (Thomas Sowell, "Patterns of Black Excellence," *The Public Interest*, No. 43, Spring 1976, p. 26.) Therefore, in 1976, because of the unfulfilled promise of freedom in this society, Blacks must again affirm the ambiguities involved in the national commemoration of the American Revolution.

Ambiguity, however, turns sharply to denial when attention is directed to the fact that the lack of interest by some Blacks for memorializing the American Revolution may be rooted in a positive factor—such as the making of the Black Revolution within the context of America. The Black Revolution stands in a symbiotic, yet often antagonistic, relationship to the American Revolution, and may be viewed as the basic understanding that in order for the promise of the American Revolution to mean freedom for Blacks, a change must come about in the social order, and the Blacks have a positive role in fomenting the goals, pace and strategies of change.

Sometimes the pace of the Black Revolution has been swift and the strategies have taken the form of movements causing social upheaval and massive political mobilization. These movements—the slave rebellions, the Conventions, the Garvey Movement, the March on Washington Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power movement, and others—have provided the total social system with many of its most dynamic conflicts, and struggles to cleanse

itself from the scourge of domination, agonizingly.

At other times, the pace of change has been slow, steady, and subtle, and worked through social, political and economic institutions. Here one must recognize the value of counter Black institutions and their methods of operation which allow them to have the staying power to consistently perform in the interest of Blacks. But one must also recognize the value of the ordinary Black person who, working within or without these institutions of society, chose the time and the place to challenge their precepts and behavior. For these acts often are not conceptualized to belong within the spectrum of the total Black revolution, but they are.

The methodologies of the Black Revolution have been persistent, but full of the usual human maladies and triumphs. Blacks have had glorious moments, but the forward pace of the movement has been slowed by no small amount of timidity, corruption, reaction, self-gratification, and a host of other ills. Collectively, these vices have affected Black organizations and institutions to the point where they still resemble those which were evaluated by Ralph Bunche more than three decades ago—often exhibiting the same weaknesses and other tendencies. The effects of these problems, however, have been responsible for the twists and turns in strategy and in direction *only in part*. For, as a powerless people, the behavior of Blacks is greatly influenced by what happens in the larger system, and it is here that strategies for change should be focused.

Now, Blacks have come to realize the necessity for a *New American Revolution*. The America of 1976 is, ideologically, a reactionary America, grown fat and sufficient from the achievements of world power and responsibility. As such, it now participates in the dismantling of unpopular regimes, supports the tendencies of

engages in its own brand of neo-colonialism in Africa and in other areas of the world.

This flatulent America has also grown weary of the constant challenge to the ideals of the American Revolution mounted by Blacks, other minorities, and their compatriots. It has used the public rule of the majority to evade responsibility for the general welfare in the truest sense, and instead fomented the most devastating incrementalism. It has used the force of private minorities and secret armies to discourage Black leaders and disrupt and surveil Black organizations and institutions. A war has been waged against Blacks in the name of preserving the peace and tranquility of a democratic society.

But the new American Revolution must see that the continuing pander of policy-makers to the minority of those who control social resources is a road which will come to the total ruin. So, the goals of the revolution must be to arrive at an equitable system of social justice—justice which dispenses value in society according to human equality rather than race, sex, or social standing. This new system would tolerate no unemployment, no unmet health needs, no under-resourced educational systems, no indignities to the elderly, no racism, and no wildly growing class cleavages. In short, it would provide the environmental building blocks for the further achievements of the Black Revolution.

Change must come for a *people*, not for just any old American Black person, but for all Black *people*. There is a sense of peoplehood for which this freedom is meant because of the commonalities of our origin, maintained by the dominance of the larger society. In this sense, it is difficult for some to yield to the commemoration of America's forefathers.

The national symbols are not equally meaningful symbols to some Blacks, whose symbols are Red, Black and Green colors as defined by Marcus

Garvey and which appear often in most of the flags of Africa. Sometimes the Black flag had no colors at all, if one believes those who tell of the revolt of the slave Gabriel Prosser, who in 1800 intended to purchase a piece of silk for a flag on which his compatriots would write "liberty or death." (Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, International Publishers, New York, 1963, p. 220) then sometimes, even the American flag meant Black liberation as one recalls Jeremy's revolt of 1739, when after his insurrection, "other Negroes joined them until something like seventy-five or eighty slaves were gathered, they called out liberty! marched on with colours displayed, and two drums beating." (Ibid, P. 188 (Aptheker).

The Black people's anthems have been as formal as "Lift Every Voice and Sing," and as informal as "Steal Away" or "Mississippi Goddam!" But whatever, it was a pledge of allegiance to the idea of struggle "till victory is won"—for only when victory is won will the music of the American National Anthem, or the Pledge of Allegiance or the Declaration of Independence have real meaning.

Even the location of Blacks affirms, at the same time, both the reality of the limitations of American social structure, and the reality of community as a place for the expression of ethnicity. Black people in America, about 80 percent of whom have become urban in residence, constitute the most urban minority in the world. But whatever it means to yield to the imperatives of urbanization as a life style, its meaning has been permanently altered by the living, throbbing presence of a Black life style. It is a question of sharing in the total culture, influencing it to a degree, and being influenced by it where social controls are the most necessary to maintain the dominance of American politics, industry and culture.

The inner-city, which only relatively recently was known as the "ghetto," is the place in which most Blacks have

46 managed to share and perpetuate a set of values—developed as a fusion of European and African civilizations—both confronted and shaped by modern technology. But this community, disparate yet together, stretching now into new suburbs, has provided the embryo and the transmission belt for the unique drama of Black life.

Finally, Blacks have, because of the existence of the unique drama outlined above, a separate sense of our own dignity and worth, knowing the many shared values that developed out of a common struggle. The core question is: When will Black people celebrate the Black Bicentennial, the commemoration of a hard-fought, hard-won freedom?

The Black nation in America is a nation within a nation. Not everyone in the Black community recognizes the existence of the Black nation, but the irony of this is that all Blacks must yield to the negative indications of the existence of the nation when they are faced with racism and oppression in the society. Yet there is a positive Black nation, and the answer to the question posed is in itself ambiguous because of Black people's relation to the nation of America.

But when, for example, was the Black nation born? Was it 1619? Has it always existed as an extension of African civilization to the "New World"? And, if there are those who say that the African-American has evolved into a distinctly new man in the West, then, what is the benchmark of that development and how can it be commemorated?

Do Black people in America celebrate 1865 as the transition from slavery to freedom? It can hardly be said that this was the nature of the transition, considering Reconstruction and its aftermath, and as such the real nature of the transition was from slavery to limited citizenship—for some Blacks. This precarious status—limited citizenship for some Blacks—is a

from anything Blacks can say to express a sense of personal and group efficaciousness.

It was still precarious when Martin Luther King, Jr., went to the mountain top in 1963; after the new revolts of Watts and hundreds of other cities; after Black Power and Black politics. It is still ambiguous and precarious even today.

The materials of a Bicentennial are not chosen, they are the inescapable events of history, woven into the matrix of lives of a people. Black people will know when freedom comes, not by arbitrarily choosing to celebrate—with ambiguity—someone else's freedom, but when destiny gives an unmistakable sign, acknowledged by both the elite and the "common run" of Blacks, that the search for full freedom is over. Only when the Black Revolution has run its course will Blacks be able to conceptualize a truly just role in American society. Until that time comes, the American Bicentennial is for Americans, and only honest men and women may participate with any dignity whatsoever. □

---

*Ronald Walters, Ph.D. is director of the Social Science Research Center, Institute for Urban Affairs and Research, Howard University.*

## The Bicentennial and America's Africa Policy

*Continued from page 17*

Africans seeking freedom and dignity by force after peaceful means have failed.

One wonders how the United States expects to order its priorities in any impending racial confrontation in Southern Africa, given the admitted contact the State Department maintains, for example, with the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), which is committed to achieve independence for Namibia (South-West Africa) mainly through armed confrontations. The State Department also has made contacts with the leadership of the various Zimbabwe and South African liberation movements, according to a Department news release of March 19, 1976. At the same time, however, the Department is explicit in denying United States' endorsement or support of the African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress because of their espousal of a resort to force in their struggles for freedom. Why the support for certain groups struggling for liberation via violence and not others? Why deny support for any on the basis of the same means employed by the "Fathers" of this Nation? One may also wonder about the efficacy of those contacts with the liberation movements while officially supporting the governments of Rhodesia and South Africa. Not only is there a contradiction here, there are grave risks not explained to the American people.

A rising number of American critics seem to sense the dangers inherent in ambiguity and contradictions in government rhetoric and actions in African affairs and are likely to articulate alternatives. In this trending situation Afro-Americans can play a special role as a bridge across the abyss.

A growing number of Blacks in this country are continuing to demonstrate deep concern for Africa and justice.

This concern for Africa dates back to the days of slavery and the revolt of the

construct viable societies, for example, in Liberia and in Sierra Leone; there followed a number of Pan African moves in the 20th century, and support for the education of Africans in predominantly Black schools. Service in Africa through various agencies and through private efforts is another indication of linkages in a positive sense. And the short-lived but committed groups like the Ethiopian Research Council, Council on African Affairs, AMSAC, American Leadership Conference on Africa, and presently the African-American Scholars Council, and Black Forum on Foreign Policy continue that tradition.

Black Americans have historically pioneered in the interest of Africa while at the same time recognized their own stake in the United States. This duality of interests should impel Afro-Americans to organize effectively and use their impact towards educating all Americans about the nature of the struggle in Southern Africa—with a view to effectuate change to demonstrate their latent power in this country—and in the process move more positively toward deepening the sense of identity with their heritage. This kind of initiative would no doubt attract interested persons of other backgrounds who remember the long-standing support Blacks have given to various reform movements throughout the history of the United States. It could galvanize a core of concerned persons who could exert considerable influence on decisions relating to those critical issues involving Africa, the Southern part in particular.

Blacks in the United States, therefore, have a unique opportunity at hand to serve the interests of the United States, of Africa, and of the world by influencing policy decisions more reflective of the basic principles embodied in the American Declaration of Independence which is being celebrated in 1976.

Historically, Howard University has pursued the tradition of preparing a pool of Black leaders for service to the Black

World as doctors, dentists, teachers, scientists, engineers, missionaries, politicians, businessmen, and craftsmen in various parts of Africa and the diaspora (and elsewhere). Thus, with the largest Black alumni of any university in the world, the men and women of Howard—if properly mobilized—could become a force of great magnitude nationally and internationally. The recognition of this goal has been too long deferred and its accomplishment would indeed be the quintessence of African-Black Diaspora interrelations. □

*Joseph E. Harris, Ph.D., is chairman and professor, History Department, Howard University.*

48 **Socio-Politics of  
Black Exile***Continued from page 31*

If Southeast Asia is a barometer, Black Americans fought Asians without much protest against fighting people of color. What will stop Black men and women from going to Afrika to fight Black men and women if the United States so orders? With America's sophisticated use of mass media (T.V., radio, printed media) and advertisement—along with the addiction to it—Blacks can be made to fight immediate families under “proper” conditioning. This is a serious consideration for the development of any long or short range strategy for the liberation of Black people.

**Black Exiles and the Future**

As we survey the world, we see races and nations lining up to position themselves for the entry into the 21st century. What of the Black exiles? Those exiles not only in the United States, but South America, Canada, the West Indies, Europe, the South Sea Islands, Asia and elsewhere? The Arabs under Pan-Arabism, using Islam and oil as tentacles, are laying new claims to Afrika and its people. The Europeans under Pan-Europeanism, using Christianity, capitalist technology and Communist ideology, have begun a new scramble for Afrika. The Asians under Pan-Asianism, using highly-skilled cadres, are making important in-roads into the continent. And we, the Black Exiles, who are currently being organized by the Arabs, Europeans, Americans or Asians are pushing their programs more diligently and enthusiastically than they are. How do we reorder these unproductive ties? How do we Black people productively tie ourselves to each other and construct a worldview that realistically takes into account the complexities of the world as well as the complexities of the “Westernized” Black individual.

Without a doubt, Black people must struggle first where they know best. (It is the height of folly for me, a Chicagoan, to go to Angola and presume to give in-

structions to my brothers in their righteous struggle. Yes, I can go and learn from my Angolan brothers which is useful but would I be more useful fighting in the area I know best? And this too would apply equally to my brothers from the continent coming to the West.)

There are *national interests* that must be attacked first, if we are truly concerned about the international Black struggle against imperialism and corporate exploitation. Therefore, the question is: To what degree will it benefit Black people worldwide if Blacks in the United States achieve liberation politically, economically and culturally? This question carries with it other questions: Is such a liberation possible without an all out war? Personally, I believe that the American Indian “Solution” has more than adequately answered this question.

*The Sixth Pan Afrikan Congress [Dares-Salaam, 1974] taught me one important thing about my Afrikan brothers and sisters. That is, first and foremost all of the Afrikan nations represented had their own national agenda as priority items, and if Pan-Afrikanism fitted into their national program, fine; if it didn't, they would gladly talk about it, but not much more. The Afro-Americans, of course, came basically with Pan-Afrikan interests first and national interests second, if at all. The experience was helpful, from a personal standpoint, in reversing our concerns as Black people in the Western hemisphere, more specifically in the United States. Therefore, concepts and principles had to be developed that dealt first with our local situations, secondly with the national and lastly with the world.*

Anderson Thompson has stated that Blacks need to be projecting on a worldwide basis the Afrikan principle which is “the greatest good for the greatest number of Afrikans wherever they may be.”<sup>13</sup>

Afrikans in the continent should define their true relationship to Blacks in the United States. As more Afrikan countries become liberated, they must clarify openly

and accurately their view toward their Black brothers and sisters in the West who are still fighting for their liberation. Blacks in America over the last 15 years have been instrumental in keeping the Afrikan struggle alive in the minds of all the people in the United States, thereby helping to legitimize it and at the same time intimately connecting and involving themselves with it.

Black Americans have not only publicized Afrikan liberation movements, but we have in a minimal way aided them monetarily and with other goods and services. But true content of the relationships between Blacks in Afrika and in the diaspora must be defined.

**Black Intellectuals  
And the Liberation Struggle**

It is significant to all of the Black people in the world that Black people in the United States have the greatest number of college and high school graduates. It is also worth noting that the majority of Black college graduates in the United States are not *consciously* working for the liberation of their people and in fact many of them view the Black struggle as a passing fad, something to have been involved with in high school and college but once into the real world the major issue is one of *making it or not making it*.

By default, the majority of the brightest Black minds end up in the liberation movements of white people. The Black presence in the areas of law, religion, education, politics, business, sports, entertainment, etc., brings legitimacy to the illegitimate. Black intellectuals in cosmetic and non-decision making positions have been used unsparingly in the maintenance and development of the white political, economic, cultural and religious systems. These same systems have unceasingly exploited not only Black people but many of the non-white people in this country.

The white process of *de-educating* Black people is a calculated move toward the neutralization of the best minds Blacks have to offer. White-educated Black intel-



lectuals have failed to respond adequately to the needs and aspirations of their people in the way that white intellectuals have responded to white people's problems and future. Unlike the Jewish, Irish or Anglo-Saxon intellectuals, the Black "intellectuals" are more concerned with "proving" themselves in the eyes of their teachers (the Jews, Irish, Anglo-Saxons, etc.) than about the liberation of their people.

However, this is only natural in the face of the *content* and *intensity* of the educational system. *We do as we have been taught to do*, and this proves the effectiveness of the educational process. But there are others who have the cohesive creativity and raw energy to overcome this deficiency in order to struggle for their people. Black intellectuals also must begin to creatively use their minds and resource in their people's struggle. Harold Cruse has stated that:

*The Negro intellectual must not be allowed to forget that the integrated intellectual world is not representative of ethnic group aspirations with regard to the world of American Negro or Indian. The Indian world of the reservation exemplifies the fate awaiting the American Negro, who is left stranded and impoverished in the ghettos, beyond the fringe of absorption. He will be pushed there through the compulsions of the American capitalistic dynamic if, as the most populous ethnic "out" group, the American Negro fails to galvanize his potential as a countervailing force. But the Negro group cannot act out this role by assuming the stance of separatism. The program of Afro-American Nationalism must activate a dynamism on all social fronts under the guidance and direction of the Negro intelligentsia. This already implies that Afro-American Nationalism be broken down into three parts: political nationalism; economic nationalism, and cultural nationalism; in other words, organizational specialization. Therefore the functional role of the*

*not be absolutely separated from either the black or white world.*<sup>14</sup>

This is an important statement because it focuses on the absolute necessity for Black intellectuals to be able to maneuver between the Black and the white while at the same time recognizing that their major allegiance is to their people.

### The Challenge to the Black World

It has been said that the people's strongest instinct is that of survival, and the strongest need is that of security. And the Black people in the West have been operating on the survival theory since our introduction into the Western hemisphere. We have *survived* at the cost of *development*. We have been taught to be an irresponsible people with regard to decision making at all levels of human involvement that affect our lives. Generally, *we make choices within the perimeters of other peoples' decisions*. This, after all, is the essence of 20th century slavery in America. It has made us insecure as a people and distrustful of our inner and outer voices; there can be no movement if we are not secure within our own vision.

As Black people in the West, our greatest fear is the inability to challenge the unknown—and often times that which is planned for us. We are put into someone else's world system as pawns to be maneuvered or destroyed at will.

Regardless of how we ultimately view the world, it means little if we cannot change the world. The relationship between Black people and white people in the United States—as is in much of the world—is that of the master and the slave; the powerful and the powerless. When speaking of power, it is meant:

*Not man's power over nature, or over an artistic medium, such as language, speech, sound, or color, or over the means of production or consumption, or over himself in the sense of self-control. When we speak of power, we mean man's control over the minds and actions of other men.*<sup>15</sup>

Before this power relationship can be altered to serve the needs of Black people, the ability of others to totally control and maneuver us at will must be understood. The most ancient and crudest form of domination is Military Imperialism, which is generally followed by Economic Imperialism. However, the most subtle form of imperialism is *Cultural Imperialism*. And when we talk about power relationships we can go to the core of those relationships if we accurately understand the phenomenon of Cultural Imperialism:

*What we suggest calling cultural imperialism is the most subtle and, if it were ever to succeed by itself alone, the most successful of imperialistic policies. It aims not at the conquest of territory or at the control of economic life, but at the conquest and control of the minds of men as an instrument for changing the power relations between two nations. If one could imagine the culture and, more particularly, the political ideology, with all its concrete imperialistic objectives, of State A conquering the minds of all the citizens determining the policies of State B, State A would have won a more complete victory and would have founded its supremacy on more stable grounds than any military conqueror or economic master.*<sup>16</sup>

Blacks must be open enough not to be *against foreign ideologies because they are foreign (or white), but because they have not worked as agents of development for the majority of Black people*. If nothing else, history has taught Blacks to maintain an open and undogmatic perspective. Black people must realize that:

*The will that creates a people is always in agreement with the individual will, but can develop only in persons who want to retain, share, and participate in their homeland, language, state, or whatever else unites them.*<sup>17</sup>

What "homeland" do Black people speak of in the United States? This question is still unanswered and becomes even more of a crucial issue when the nation is 16

50 **Black people in America are indeed a patient people. For more than 350 years, Blacks have watched immigrants from Europe come to America and enjoy the fruits and benefits of Black labor ...**

seriously debating the need to cut population in the United States by 60 million! The following, which appeared in the *Daily American*, February 8-9, 1976, in Paris, France, illustrates this point:

*The average American will not be able to live a full or rich life unless the population is reduced by 60 million persons, Dr. Linus Pauling said yesterday. . . .*

*The optimum population for the United States should be 150 million, the Nobel prize winning professor said. The current population of the nation is about 214 million.*

*Pauling was one of a number of individuals from academic life who met with the Senate Government Operations Committee.*

*He said his analysis of population in this country had led him to estimate that 150 million persons would be the optimum population of the United States. He urged Congress to study the issue, agree on an optimum population and take steps to achieve this goal.*

*Pauling did not offer suggestions on how to meet the 150 million population level.<sup>18</sup>*

The question is who will be in that 60 million? Those most marginal to the economic and political situation in the United States, the Black People, come to mind. The Indian question in America has been already settled there is now the "Nigger" question which has always been in the American consciousness but now openly surfaces as technology continues to eliminate the labor needs of Black people while white people continue to seek higher living standards on a finite planet. The non-functional use of the majority of the Black population clearly points out the movement from chattel slavery to scientific slavery, from open and raw racism to neo-racism. White Supremacy, with its very effective use of culture, economics, politics, science and technology, has developed the new slaves who are enslaved to a greater and more deadly degree through the uses of cheap consumer gad-

getry and behavior modification controlled indirectly through the use of mass media and other modern mind-controlling innovations.

Black people in America are indeed a patient people. For more than 350 years, Blacks have watched immigrants from Europe come to America and enjoy the fruits and benefits of Black labor. Most recently, America has accepted Cuban and Vietnamese refugees while at the same time Black unemployment is approaching 50% of the Black population. There is a limit to the social and political pressure that the minds and bodies of a people can endure without change. The fact is, outside of the Indians, Black people have consistently been the most persecuted and abused people in America. Therefore, the Black move toward the celebration of Black enslavement does not come as a surprise. Essentially, we Blacks *do what we have been taught to do*, and as a people—in many ways—have bought and digested the American illusions of freedom and justice for all. More than any other "ethnic" group in America, Black people have been the most consistent in upholding the principles of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights while being at the same time the people whose rights are routinely violated.

The priorities in America are incorrect. We must set forth our own, and must begin to ask ourselves some serious questions:

- What role if any should religion play?
- Are there any politics that give the individual the highest level of respect and freedom?
- What kind of economy will produce the greatest good for the greatest number of Black people without disrupting the world we live in?
- If history is a judge, is it possible for all peoples in the world to live in peace?
- Will we be able to feed ourselves by the year 2000?
- What is the Black philosophy of life?

These are just a few of the challenges facing Black people as well as other peo-

ple as we move into the 21st century and as America marks the Bicentennial.

The Afrikan-American historian, Chancellor Williams, has stated in his controversial and important book, *The Destruction of Black Civilization*, that:

The task we now face will test the genius of the Black race. The Blacks in the United States are in the best position as a lead-off example for the rest of the African race. For such a movement would further change the course of history and inspire Black youth everywhere, along with their elders, with a new vision, a sense of direction, and the kind of outlook that gives meaning to study as the source of inventions and new discoveries.<sup>19</sup>

In this crucial time, for Black people to take part in the Bicentennial or any other American celebration is also to condone and agree on the current and past domestic and foreign policies of the United States. It is to put our stamp of approval on world-wide exploitation and imperialism, put us in the position of supporting the elimination of the Indians, investments in white-ruled South Afrika, military aid to Israel, white suppression of Blacks in Australia, global capitalism and of course the spread of White World Supremacy. For Black people to celebrate the Bicentennial is to display our approval of the consistent use of the C.I.A., F.B.I. and other "law" enforcement agencies in the disruption of peaceful organizations and Institutions. We, as a people must issue a resounding and unequivocal "NO."

America, to Black people, is a different, distinctly ugly and more profound reality than it is to white people. In Boston the cry is "Bus the niggers back to Afrika," in Chicago white police officers arrest Black police officers just because the Blacks try to organize to protect their basic rights and jobs. All over America social agencies are forcing Black women into sterilization programs. All over America in the prisons and mental institutions Black people are regularly used as human

in America is not one of Celebration but one of survival and development, as it has always been for the majority of Black people. This is the issue in 1976 as it was in 1676, 1776 and 1876, and if we do not confront it now, in this year of acute fantasy, our ability to confront it in 2076 lessens as the technology and science become more refined and deadly. The option is: celebration or confrontation. □

Copyright 1976 by Haki R. Madhubuti

Haki R. Madhubuti (Don L. Lee) is poet-in-residence at Howard University, publisher-editor of the *Third World Press*, editor of the *Black Books Bulletin*, and director of the *Institute for Positive Education in Chicago*. This article is an edited version of a longer paper.

#### REFERENCE

1. John Modell, ed., *The Kikuchi Diary: Chronicle from an American Concentration Camp*, by Charles Kikuchi, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1973.
2. John Upton Terrell, *Land Grab: The Truth About "The Winning of the West,"* Dial Press, New York 1972 pg. 12.
3. John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, Oxford University Press, New York 1972 pg. 141, 163-164.
4. B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1971 pg. 133-134.
5. Mike Royko, *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago*, E. P. Dutton & Co., New York 1971.
6. Carter G. Woodson, *Mid-Education of the Negro*, Associated Publishers, Washington, D. C. 1933, revised 1969, preface XXXIII.
7. Samuel F. Yette, *The Choice: The Issue of Black Survival in America*, A Berkely Medallion Book, New York, 1972 pg. 14.
8. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, Bantam Books, New York 1971.
9. Anatoli Rapoport, ed., *Clausewitz On War*, Penguin Books, England, 1974 pg. 101.
10. *Social Indicators*, Federal Government Office of Management and Budget, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1973.
11. Sidney M. Wilhelm, *Who Needs the Negro*, Anchor Books, Garden City, New York pg. 334.
12. Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, translated and edited by Mercer Cook. Lawrence Hill & Co. New York, 1974.
13. Anderson Thompson, *Developing an Afrikan Historiography*, *Black Books Bulletin*, Vol. 3 Institute of Positive Education Chicago, 1975.
14. Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, William Morrow & Co., Inc., New York 1967 pg. 452.
15. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, fifth edition, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1973 pg. 28.

16. *Ibid.*, pg. 61.

17. Karl W. Deutsh and William Foltz, eds., *Nation Building*, Aldine Atherton Chicago, New York, Fourth Ed., 1971 pg. 44.

18. *U. S. Population Should Be Cut by 60 Million*, *The Daily American*, Paris, France February 8-9, 1976.

19. Chancellor Williams, *The Destruction of Black Civilization*, Third World Press, Chicago, 1974, pg. 381-382.



**Today**

Treat TODAY well and wisely,  
With mind and heart guilt-free  
and conscience-pure . . .  
Make sure its taste is sweet—  
Unflavored with malicious grains  
of arsenic  
And venom of the Asp . . .  
For TODAY belongs to *IS*,  
(With just fleeting hours for  
living Truth)  
That soon becomes YESTERDAY  
Which belongs to *WAS*,  
With no time at all for *living* . . .  
And with no assurance of TOMORROW  
Which belongs to uncertain and  
unpromised

**Will Be**

In which to heal the cruel wounds  
of TODAY.

Valerie Parks Brown  
*Howard University*

**Footprints**

Footprints in the sand. Pebbles  
Skipping cross the pond. Brown leaves  
Swirling in the winter wind.

What could our lives have become?  
What should our wants have become?  
What's a life want in a whirl  
Where goodbyes precede hello?

Oh, we could have meant so, so  
Much to . . . to . . .? But now, we can't  
Even remember our names.

Lionel C. Barrow, Jr.  
*Howard University*

**I Watch, Wait, and Listen**

I watch my people as they go from  
day to day  
With broken promises and no zest  
for living  
They are so hurt,  
and tired  
of dreaming dreams that never come  
true.  
I watch them suffer.  
I wait for a time when my people  
can sing  
about the joy of the world and the  
happiness it brings.  
Now all we can do is hope for the best,  
pray to our Lord and forget about  
the rest.  
I wait for this day.  
I listen to the cries of my people  
who cannot cope  
With a world so full of hate  
And one that lacks a spark of hope.  
What is left for them to  
go on?  
I watch, wait, and listen  
helplessly  
While they die.

Jacquelyn Conner  
*Washington, D. C.*

# NEW DIRECTIONS

Department of University Relations  
And Publications  
Howard University  
Washington, D. C. 20059

MRS. CORNELIA R STOKES  
MOORLAND-SPINGARN RESEARCH CENTER  
UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

CAMPUS MAIL