



Waves of Struggle

A Discussion Paper

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THREE WAVES OF STRUGGLE:

Notes Toward A Theory Of Black
Liberation And Social Revolution

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A Discussion Paper

Introduction

Everyone knows that the Black liberation struggle has awakened and put the War against Black America back into the national political discussion. Everywhere people are proclaiming **Black Lives Matter!**

People in communities and on campuses are getting back into the streets, saying this is a new day and we won't be silent any longer. Youth are in the lead. Their power is their energy and fearlessness.

Many movement veterans are involved today as well, while thinking back on earlier experiences. We are not yet free. So what did we get out of the 1960s and 1970s? Can it help going forward? To start to answer these questions, we offer here the idea of **Three Waves of Struggle.**



In explaining this idea, we are practicing the Sankofa principle: reaching back into the past to take what is useful for the future. We hope to get everyone thinking about the way forward so we can achieve our goals quickly, not slowly.

Differences and how to navigate them

Any act against oppression is something every freedom-loving person should support. At the same time, many voices are pointing out problems within the current movement. This can help as long as we are not just tearing people down, as long as we are making the movement stronger. Principled discussion can get people

clear and focused on the battle against our enemies. We endorse W. E. B. DuBois and Monroe Trotter in their approach to Booker T. Washington, Ella Baker's advice and aid to the soon-to-be-SNCC organizers within SCLC, and Malcolm's criticism of the Negro leadership of his time. And we remember Malcolm X reassessing Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement during his last few years of reflection.

The Three Waves is not about arguing about who is right and who is wrong. It is about coming together to get things done. We have been using what we call the 80-20 principle. In other words, let's establish the 80% where we agree and get to work on that basis. We can always keep learning from each other about the remaining 20%, the disagreements or misunderstandings.

Three Waves of Struggle will demonstrate the untapped power of the Black majority, the Black working class, as well as the activists who are already in motion. How can we —

youth, students, women, workers, grassroots activists—combine forces for Black liberation? We are talking about the few and the many, every workplace and unemployment center, every campus and high school, and every community-based battlefield. Our experience tells us that the Black working class can lead the way: they can turn Black protest into a mighty Black Liberation Movement. That movement can then give energy to and unite with all oppressed people, all working people.

Three waves theory

So what are the three waves of struggle? They are Action, Cadre, and Revolution. Each wave is a new social force being born. People in each wave are on the cutting edge, building relationships that can last a lifetime, even if they disagree from time to time. The three waves don't come one after the other. They overlap. They feed into each other. They fuel the movement. A big wave, like a tsunami, can define an entire generation.

1. Action. The first wave is mass action. It is a spontaneous reaction to some kind of attack, so it is generally a defensive move. Black people catch hell all of the time. They will often do something on a local level. But there comes a time when a massive fightback bursts out nationwide. A spontaneous outpouring of anger and moral outrage identifies wrongs and proposes reforms to right those wrongs. Slogans unify people. Charismatic leaders gain prominence. Multiple organizations emerge, both local and national. So, with police and vigilantes killing Black people every 24 hours (as the

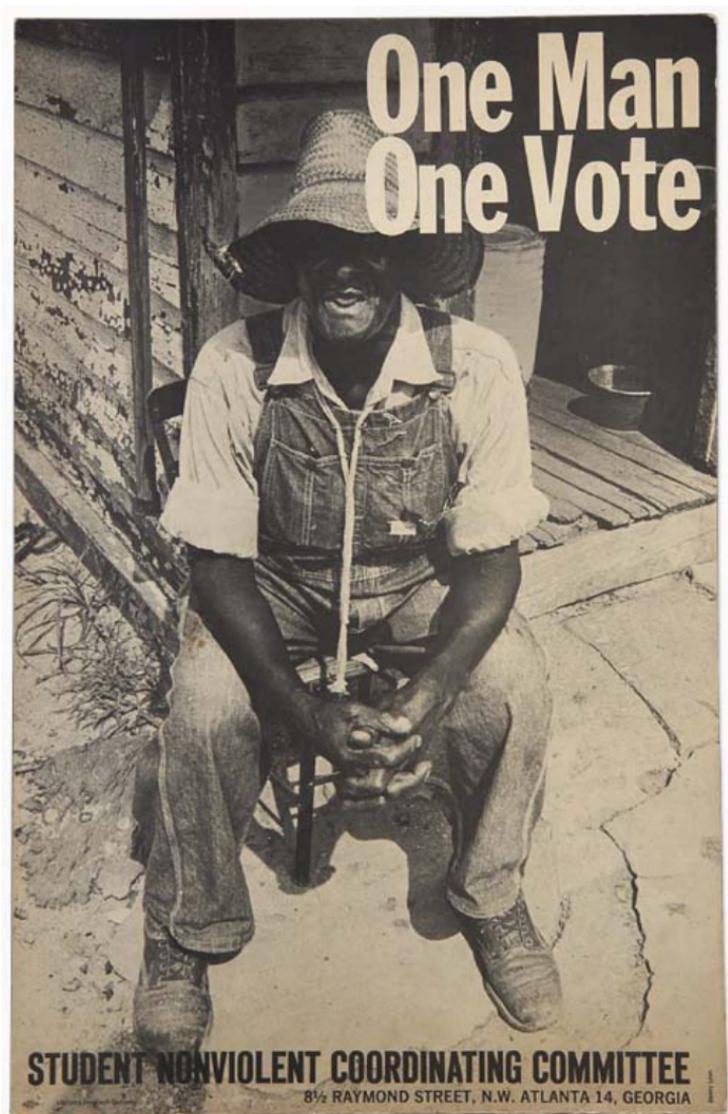


Malcolm X Grassroots Movement reported) people are rising up all over the country. They are coming together to defend themselves as a group.

2. Cadre. The second wave is cadre development. People come forward to become a staff—paid or not—that keeps the mass action going and helps to organize it so it can be more effective. They become an infrastructure. The mass struggle focuses on reform, specific changes as immediate remedies. That is necessary to connect a movement with everyday life. The first concern of cadre is to make sure the movement doesn't stall out. They establish a division of labor between themselves and among other people too. Really, they are the ones taking care of business. But cadre also learn that more is needed. The movement needs to help people figure out how to solve all of their problems once and for all. Cadre commit to the struggle as a lifelong journey. They engage to win particular battles that help people understand their power while building

the basis to transform the entire system. This means cadre have to understand the nature of the system we fight—capitalism—so we can create a completely new system that works for everybody, not a few.

3. Revolution. The third wave is revolutionary struggle. Action and Cadre alone will enable the Black Liberation Movement to become a major force for change. These two waves will be constantly interacting to coordinate the efforts of the people and keeping them pushing forward. The cadre will help the mass actions of the many Black Liberation Movement battlefronts come together as one. They will deepen the link between reform and revolution. When the Black Liberation Movement, along with movements of women, workers, and people fighting on all the key battlefronts can unite, they become a force for revolution. This aims at ending capitalism, ending all oppression, and turning from destroying the environment to preserving it.



Three waves in past struggles

Three Waves sizes up the 1960s and 1970s experience in order to face the future. First we'll look back and then we will apply Three Waves to today's movements. Five historical movement organizations demonstrate the three waves, especially the role of cadre:

1. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, or SNCC
2. Revolutionary Action Movement, or RAM
3. The Black Panther Party
4. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers
5. African Liberation Support Committee, or ALSC.

1. SNCC

The modern Civil Rights Movement is a good example of waves of struggle, especially the case of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). After the 1954 Supreme

Court decision in favor of integrating schools (even though integration was slower than molasses in winter), all Black communities became very motivated. This increased with the blatant murder of Emmett Till in August 1955. Mass resistance was re-born as a political norm in December 1955 when the Black Mass resistance was born as a political norm when the Black community of Montgomery, Alabama, led by Martin Luther King, boycotted the city bus system. This was mainly energized by the near universal support and organizational leadership of Black women. This led to the revival of the left, which had been kept down by conservative politicians, especially Wisconsin senator Joseph McCarthy.

Then a few years later, based on the student generation most impacted by the Supreme Court decision, the massive sit-in movement began. The first was the Miami protest in 1959, and then there were the Greensboro and Nashville protests in 1960. It was like the sit-ins came from out of nowhere. The main-

stream press, amazed, wrote about this in detail. That helped spark the sit-ins nationwide. The sit-in movement was mass action in which students led the way in the reawakening of Black resistance after the McCarthy terror. As the students began to network and coordinate their actions, Ella Baker invited them to a conference at Shaw University in 1960. The conference debated whether to become a student-based affiliate of the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) run by Martin Luther King and his network of ministers, or a new student activist organization. Baker, herself a staff member of SCLC, advised the students to go out on their own, and SNCC was born.

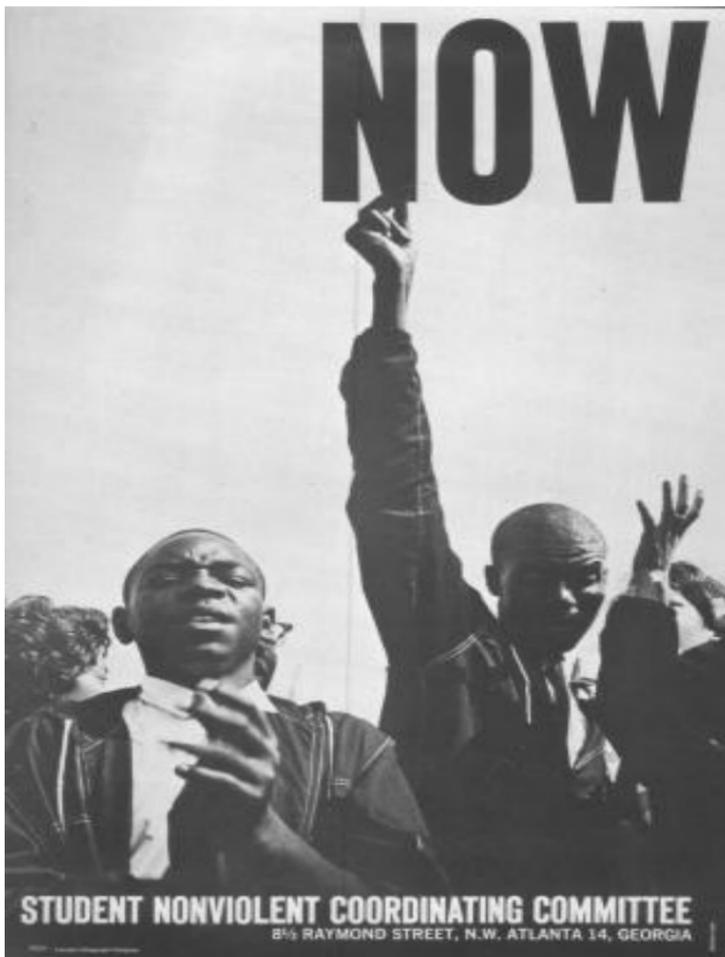
The local student groups that met at Shaw joined forces to begin developing a cadre organization called the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. SNCC called its cadre “field secretaries.” These people took time off from school, worked for the very minimum wage of \$10 a week (\$80 in 2016 dollars), and fanned out across the South to help local movements. Participatory democracy was the

approach: all community participants were in on discussions. It was an alternative to voting, which just created a divide between the winners and the losers. The tough struggles required everyone to agree.

SNCC field secretaries lived with the people in the various communities throughout the South, especially in rural areas. They promoted and sustained mass action. Actions included the Albany Movement in Georgia, the Danville Movement in Virginia, the Lowndes County Movement and the Selma Movement in Alabama, the Mississippi Summer Project, and finally the March on Washington. Jim Forman, executive secretary of SNCC from 1961 to 1965, was a leading force in sustaining the field secretaries. Foreman was followed by Ruby Doris Robinson as Executive Secretary of SNCC.

The first SNCC cadre workers were students from Howard University, the University of Michigan, and Swarthmore College, among

others. Black youth and students from the South joined them. Among them were the great Mississippi recruits: sisters Joyce and Dorie Ladner, Sam Block, brothers James and Willie



Peacock, Jesse Harris, Colia Liddell, Jimmy Travis, Curtis Hayes, Willie and Hollis Watkins. The SNCC field secretaries were not about coming in and running the show. They made strong connections with the people of the South and helped them become their own leaders. The ten-dollar-a-week salary meant depending on local people for help with housing, a square meal, and more. For instance in Mississippi many great leaders in Mississippi came forward: Fannie Lou Hamer, Hartman Turnbow, Amzie Moore, among others.

SNCC fought to change things. Cadre workers continued the fight in two different ways. Some field secretaries tried to reform the system from the inside. Others stayed outside the system and tried to bring the system down. The first group worked for other civil rights organizations, became professors and reporters, and got elected to government. The second group established or joined the Black Panther Party, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and the Revolutionary Action Movement.

RAM

Revolutionary Action Movement or RAM grew out of the actions of student and community activists working together. It began with the Black Student Movement, specifically the group Challenge located at Central State College in Wilberforce, Ohio. As Muhammad Ahmad wrote,

Challenge's main emphasis was struggling for more student rights on campus and bringing a Black political awareness to this student body.... Challenge members attended student conferences in the South and participated in demonstrations in the North.

Older people in the movement had a lot to do with how RAM developed out of Challenge. Harold Cruse had written an article, "*Revolutionary nationalism and the Afro-American*," that group members took ideas from. The group's first name was Reform Action Movement; it soon renamed itself

Revolutionary Action Movement. Members also engaged with elders such as Malcolm X, Robert Williams, Queen Mother Moore and James and Grace Lee Boggs. These elders helped to shape RAM's anti-imperialism and internationalism.

RAM's mission was to recruit leaders of key organizations in order to move those organizations to the left. By summer 1963, a Black Vanguard conference took place in Cleveland, Ohio. The people at the meeting voted for RAM to build a Black Liberation Front. RAM continued to influence civil rights organizations, especially the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and SNCC. Both CORE and SNCC had full-time organizers across the South.

RAM saw Black workers, Black artists and cultural workers, Black students, Black veterans, and the Black street force (as James Boggs thought of the unemployed) as the backbone of the Black liberation movement. RAM aimed at a united Black liberation front

The Los Angeles War Cry



'Burn, Baby, Burn'

10¢

9/68

that could coordinate the many groups working both nationally and locally.

RAM did not say it was leading the way for the Black liberation movement. It did not see itself as above the community, setting the example that all should follow. Instead it worked from below, from what many called the underground. They set out to develop cadres, consciousness, and connections in what they called the “pillars of the movement.” Revolutionary journals were a major part of how RAM got its message out.



Black Panther Party

The Black Panther Party also had its origins in the student movement, but from the start, it was community oriented. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were students at Merritt College in Oakland, California. As part of a national movement against police violence, they formed a local Black Panther Party for Self Defense, which caught on like wildfire. The Black Panther imagery came from the SNCC political project, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. It had the Black Panther as its symbol. The Panthers took inspiration from the Chinese revolution. Their first act was to sell copies of the Little Red Book of quotations from Mao Tse-tung and use the money to buy shotguns.

The Panthers used an old California law that allowed people to arm themselves with un concealed weapons. In May 1967, they organized a squad of armed militants to invade the California State Legislature. Armed, they patrolled the Black community as part of the struggle

against police brutality. This sparked people's imagination and raised awareness of Black resistance to a new level.

Out of it came What We Want Now! This was their original ten point program:

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the Capitalists of our Black Community.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.



5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present day society.
6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.
8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

By 1968, the Panthers had expanded rapidly throughout the country. The party developed a whole series of Serve the People programs. Their Free Breakfast Program got local busi-

nesses to donate food, local churches to serve as centers, and movement activists to prepare and serve the meals. At the same time the Panthers taught the children being fed about Black liberation. They also offered free health exams, free legal assistance and prison visits, and freedom schools. The Panthers did have revolution in their sights, but their main work remained in the Serve the People programs and eventually in electoral politics.

League of Revolutionary Black Workers

Black workers have organized in every workplace since the Atlantic slave trade. Sometimes they did so quietly and sometimes they rose up openly. Every slave revolt was an action of class struggle, workers fighting against their masters. After the Civil War, Black workers moved into industrial jobs in larger numbers. In this way, Black farmers and farm workers became urban workers, most importantly in Birmingham, Baltimore, and Memphis in the

South, and Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Gary in the North. These workers faced racist segregation by the factory bosses as well as the union officials. They had to fight both.

One form of spontaneous fight back against racist aggression were the so-called “race riots” in major industrial cities. Chicago 1919 and Detroit 1943 were only the biggest of these. This was workers fighting back against racist attacks. They continued into the 1960s, the biggest being Chicago 1966 and Detroit 1967.

These were times of militant mass action. Wildcat strikes (not approved by the union officialdom) happened more and more. Chrysler reports the following increases in wildcat strikes: 15 in 1960, 49 in 1967, and 91 in 1968. Not just Chrysler, but all manufacturing companies had to deal with an increase in these actions: 1,000 wildcat strikes in 1960 and 2,000 in 1969. Part of this was the militancy of a new generation of workers. In 1967 the United

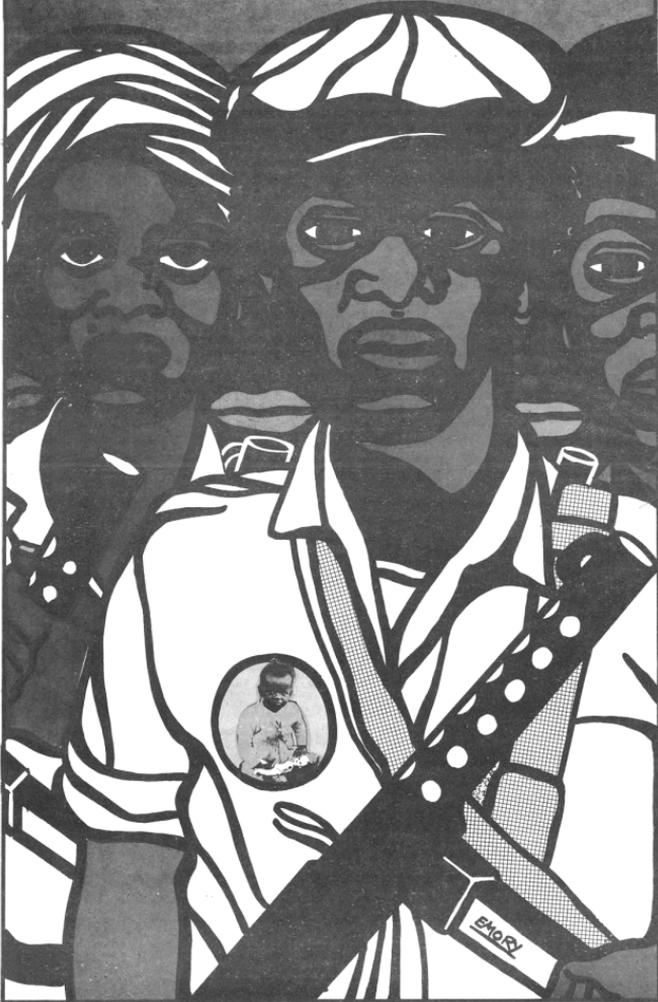
Auto Workers membership was young, with 40% being below 30 years of age.

In response to the mass action of the Civil Rights Movement, activists in Detroit began experimenting with cadre formations. This included students at Wayne State University in 1963 organizing UHURU, a revolutionary nationalist formation. UHURU expanded into a citywide organization called the Afro-American Student Movement. They published a journal that discussed political ideas.

Three critical speeches of Malcolm X inspired them: *Message to the Grass Roots* in 1963, *Ballot or the Bullet* in 1964, and *Fighting on all Fronts* in 1965. In 1966, UHURU helped establish the Detroit branch of the Black Panther Party.

These remained small organizations of cadre development following Civil Rights mass actions like the great Detroit Walk to Freedom in 1963. The 1967 Detroit Rebellion led to developments that were more revolutionary. The Re-

"REVOLUTION IN OUR LIFETIME"



bellion was a major instance of militant fight back. It was costly: 43 dead, 1,000 wounded and 2,000 buildings destroyed. The Black community, mainly the industrial workers, battled the police and National Guard. Some called it a riot, some a rebellion, and some an insurrection. All three of these are militant forms of spontaneous mass action.

In 1968, the Dodge Main plant experienced a major wildcat strike. Some of the strike leaders



created a cadre organization called DRUM, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement.

DRUM inspired many others. United Parcel had UPRUM, Ford FRUM. By 1969, these RUM organizations converged into a citywide cadre organization called the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

The League was a revolutionary Black organization that was inspired by Marx and Lenin and especially Mao Tse-tung. It was the first revolutionary force on the factory floor in the United States since the 1930s. They fought the mis-leadership of the United Auto Workers union to bring about reform: their war cry was “We finally got the news about how our dues are being used!” They also made contact with revolutionary fighters in other countries: Vietnam, China, Palestine, Cuba, and all over Africa. The RUM form of organization spread beyond Detroit in the form of Black worker caucuses within different unions nationwide. The League was the basis for the Black Workers Congress. It was also a source of Black

workers joining other revolutionary cadre organizations to live up to their slogan, “Black Workers take the Lead!”

ALSC

Africa had never left the memory of African Americans. But we had to resist the racist imagery in the mass media and movies such as Tarzan, or Bud Abbott and Lou Costello in *Africa Screams*. Ghana’s 1957 independence was a turning point in the relationship of African Americans with Africa. The Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah had studied in the United States and maintained strong ties with African



American leaders such as W. E. B. DuBois and Horace Mann Bond. Finally, the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in South Africa and the emergence of armed struggle there spurred the U.S. Black Liberation Movement to increase its support for African liberation.

Pan-Africanism was reborn. African Americans began to visit the African continent. One such trip sparked a mass movement. Howard Fuller (Owusu Sadauki) went to Tanzania for a conference on community development. Once there he was able to join a trip into Mozambique led by FRELIMO cadre. FRELIMO was fighting against the Portuguese who ruled their country. They proposed that people in the US should build a global support movement such as had been organized to fight US aggression in Vietnam. This had happened here and there, but not nationally.

Back home, Fuller helped organize a May 27, 1972 mass action known as African Liberation Day. ALD demonstrations mobilized 58,000 people in Washington, DC, San Francisco,

Toronto, and on the Caribbean islands Antigua, Dominica and Grenada. ALD was spontaneous and diverse: members of Congress, middle-class leaders of the civil rights movement, and militants from nationalist and Marxist groups all took part. Cadre from strong organizations organized ALD from the start, among them Congress of African People, Student Organization for Black Unity, and Malcolm X Liberation University. ALD 1973 involved 80,000 people demonstrating in 25 US cities and 6 countries. Out of this mass action came a national organization: African Liberation Support Committee or ALSC.

In the broad mass movement, more than one organization focused on developing cadre. And there was debate: were we fighting racism or imperialism? This became known as the Marxist-Nationalist two-line struggle. But even at the height of this struggle, mass action accelerated. In June 1973, a national meeting at Frogmore, SC, adopted “An ALSC Statement of Principles.” Cadre and activists then and after-

wards took a hard look at the document. One position paper in particular argued for the statement: Abdul Alkalimat and Nelson Johnson's "Toward the Ideological Unity of the African Liberation Support Committee: A Response to Criticisms of the ALSC Statement of Principles." Throughout 1973, nationally coordinated demonstrations demanded the repeal of the Byrd Amendment, which allowed for the illegal importation of chrome from Rhodesia. This was not allowed, according to US sanctions against apartheid. So began Weeks of Solidarity to Defeat Portuguese Imperialism in solidarity with struggles against settler governments in Southern Africa. We also saw a week of demonstrations in 30 cities mobilizing an estimated 100,000 people. All this led to a second Africa Liberation Day in Washington, DC, on May 25, 1974. The ALD conference held that day attracted representatives of ALSC chapters from 51 communities in 27 states and six countries. Several revolutionary organizations emerged out of this cadre-led mass movement.

Three Waves in today's struggles

Each of these cases demonstrates the Three Waves: mass activists in the lead gave way to cadre leading as staff of mass organizations, and finally to lifelong revolutionary fighters. Action, Cadre, and Revolution are the Three Waves of Struggle. We can find differences as well: Who were the people in motion? Where the working class or oppressed nationalities took the lead, where they self-organized, each wave hit harder. These people, more than any others, set their sights on Revolution.

Another pattern is the dance of the individual and the organization. The Action wave relies on spontaneous action, so on individuals. The Cadre wave relies on coordinated action, so on organization. Cadre naturally form into a staff (either paid or unpaid) with division of labor and a collective process of accountability. Criticism and self-criticism emerge. The Revolution wave emerges when the Cadre wave figure out reform is not enough and that only a revolution will get the job done. This leads to

the formation of revolutionary organizations and revolutionary people.

What about today? Where are today's Waves? Now we look at the Fight for 15, the campaigns against police killings and violence, Moral Monday, The Anti-Eviction Campaign, the antiracist struggles on campuses nationwide, and the efforts to organize Southern workers.

Action: The first wave

Each of the present-day struggles we will consider here reflect Action, the first and very important wave. Each struggle is aimed militantly at one or more reforms. These reforms would stop the attacks or combat the daily crisis that poor and working-class families face. The difficulty in achieving any reform is driving the emergence of Cadre, the second wave. And signs are there that the *idea* of Revolution is in the air. Let's see how this can play out.

Action is a spontaneous response. It assumes that the system can correct itself if pushed hard

to do so. Mass marches and protests of all kinds are forms of social pressure. People are trying to be heard, to “speak truth to power” to inspire more pressure and then a correction. “Stop the War on Black America” and “Black Lives Matter” are the most general slogans invented to rally people. This and every Action wave is absolutely necessary.

Each mass action starts with a particular social base. It can also recruit activists from other battlefronts. The challenge is how deep and broad does the fightback get? Does it mobilize poor and working people? In struggle, people begin to wake up and ask questions about problems and solutions, learning from victories and defeats. And the first wave is soon joined by the second.

In order to explain how the second and third waves, Cadre and Revolution, are emerging or might emerge, we first profile each struggle in its current Action wave. Then we discuss more generally the present-day prospects for Cadre and Revolution.

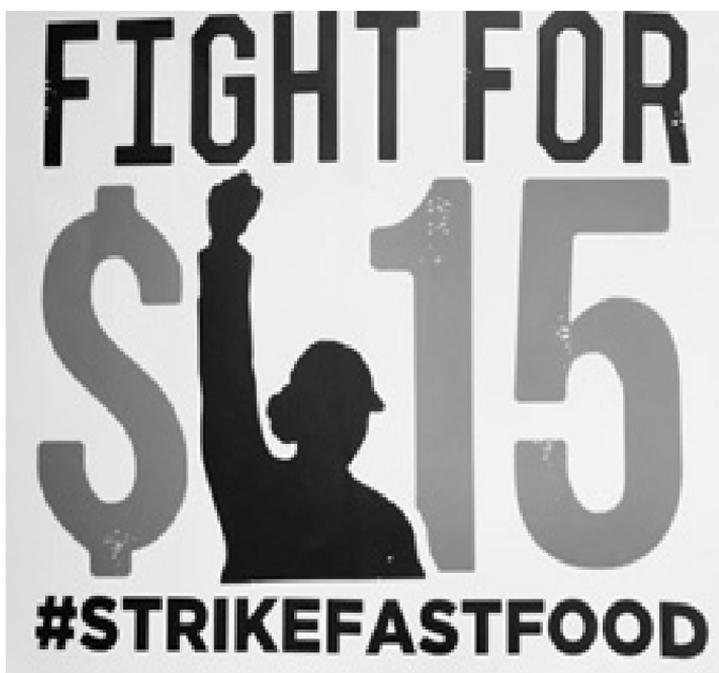
Fight for 15

In order to get people to work, capitalists pay them wages. In order to make money for themselves, capitalists want to pay workers less than the money they get for what the workers do or make. To protect workers, the minimum wage was created. The 1938 U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act set the first minimum wage: 25 cents an hour, limited to certain categories of workers. It has since been raised 22 times, most recently in July 2009 to \$7.25 an hour. At 40 hours a week for 52 weeks, this is an annual salary before taxes of \$15,080. For a family of two or more, this is below the official poverty level and that official level is also considered too low.

Fighting for higher wages is necessary. Everybody needs economic security. Fifty dollars an hour might feel adequate, and \$15 is a start!

The Fight for 15 actions, strikes, pickets, and more demand a raise in the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Fast food workers, especially at

McDonalds, are in the lead. They have broken into the media. Certain city councils and state legislatures have responded. Legislation passed in Los Angeles will take effect in 2020 and in Seattle in 2021. The delayed start dates mean that the minimum wage will still be behind inflation. Minimum wage increases have long been wiped out because the cost of living has also increased. And that's not the spirit or intent of the Fight for 15.



Campaigns to stop police violence and killings

Police are shooting and killing Black people. They have no fear of facing any penalty for murder. They attack without regard to gender, age, region, sexuality, location, or time of day. Research reported a killing every 28 hours and soon had to revise that to every 24 hours. Indictments are rare, trials even rarer. Across all the prominent cases, few cops have been held responsible: the Asian-American Peter Liang in New York City.

Modern police forces originated from 19th-century slave patrols. So government-sponsored terror fits the political culture of the United States. Combined with that is a direct connection between the US military and local police. Armaments designed for war end up in police hands. Veterans recruited as cops see the inner city as the battlefield they left behind.

Reformers want civilian review boards, cameras in cars and on officers' bodies, no more

police use of military weapons, and recruiting a more diverse police force. They are meeting cold reality. We face both factories that are being relocated overseas and robots doing the work. Therefore now is a time of mass unemployment and mass incarceration. So the police can only be violent masters of social control—they can even commit murder! One risk is that civilian review boards will not involve the people most at risk. Or they will have no power to bring police to justice. Another is that police cameras will happen to fail, recordings will go missing, or the camera will point the wrong way. This is not what the fierce street protests have in mind!

Moral Monday

North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory won election in 2012 and immediately led a right-wing Republican attack on almost all aspects of the social welfare state. Voting rights, environmental protection, LGBT rights, access to abortion, and public school teachers all took

MORAL MONDAY 8

When workers' rights are under attack, what do we do?

STAND UP! FIGHT BACK! June 24th!

This is special call by **NC State AFL-CIO** for all unions in North Carolina to represent at the final Moral Monday in June. Let's show our immoral state legislature what solidarity among workers looks like! **WEAR UNION SHIRTS!**

RALLY / 5 PM / HALIFAX MALL

The great lawn behind the legislature (16 W. Jones St.)

You do not have to participate in civil disobedience. Your support, claps, and cheers will matter a great deal to those who do make that choice.



If you do choose to petition the legislature through nonviolent civil disobedience, it is **CRITICAL** that you attend a briefing and information session beforehand:

Info session - Pullen Memorial Baptist Church - 3:00pm (6/24)

1801 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC 27605

Solidarity Forever • For the union makes us strong!

hits. McCrory also led the repeal of the North Carolina Racial Justice Act. This made it legal

again to use racist practices when imposing the death penalty.

The state NAACP with its chairperson Reverend William Barber soon launched a massive fightback. This pulled together activists to restore all the cut programs and protections. On what they call Moral Mondays, they hold ever-bigger teach-ins and sit-ins at the state capital and submit to mass arrests. Moral Monday has also spread to Florida, Alabama, Missouri, and Indiana.

The moral argument made by religious organizations, liberals, and others is powerful, but the government has not yet responded. The governor was voted out, but the North Carolina State Assembly is now even more vicious. Behind the state are the capitalists who are determined to downsize public services and eliminate legal protections. More protesters, which mean workers and students, are needed. To win the moral argument, the power of money has to meet the still-greater power of the people.



The Anti-Eviction Campaign

Housing is one of the basic needs. Since the Great Depression, the U.S. government has provided subsidized housing to help make sure that every family has a place to live. But for the last few decades, rising homelessness has put the poorest and the sickest among us, urban and rural, at risk of living on the street or in abandoned buildings.

The bankers who give out mortgages for homes created a house of cards. Ever-more mortgages were written for houses at ever-higher prices for people who could not afford them. Finally in 2008 the bubble burst. It was a time of ever-more evictions, both legal and illegal. People just could not pay the outrageous mortgages. President Obama held the bankers responsible but declared their banks were “too big to fail.” No one went to jail. Instead the feds gave the banks billions of tax dollars.

And people continued to be evicted. This sparked an anti-eviction campaign, especially

in Chicago. Like in the Great Depression, activists support evicted tenants by moving them back in and protecting them from the police. The struggle has spread to public housing. The state is reducing support and moving to tear public housing down—just when the need for affordable housing is increasing.

The Anti-Eviction Campaign has learned that tenant and community control, land trusts, co-operatives, and major policy and constitutional changes are needed so everyone has housing. Without ever-bigger mass actions, corporate and state power will win, and things will stay the same.

Anti-racism on campus

Students are always part of social movements and sometimes the battle is right on campus. Colleges and universities continue past racist practices. Black students, staff, and faculty are all in constant struggle just to work and study in these institutions. The 1960s Black Student Movement battled back against institutional

racism: it got more Black students enrolled, more Black faculty hired, and brought about the creation of Black Studies.

Many campuses date back to slavery. As with the police, racism is at the root. Today student activism is confronting racist practice on campus. It's the right-wing racism President-elect Trump has encouraged. It's the continuing insensitivity of faculty and administrators to people of color, Muslims, and non-binary genders. It's deeply racist campus hiring, pay, and even facility names.

Meanwhile, the campus has become a business, turning students into customers and faculty into salespersons of technical training rather than education for life. So anti-racists keep battling, needing ever more to win some victories.





Southern worker organizing

Black people have a special relationship to the South. The region was settled and built up mainly on the labor of enslaved Africans. Their freedom resulted from the 19th-century Civil War—but the story of that war has been twisted in the South. The result is a political culture based on racism, which exploits both Black and whites. The 20th-century Civil Rights Movement helped to make the society less racist on the surface. However, the deep structures of racist oppression and exploitation continue.

Southern workers are the least unionized and lowest paid. New York State with one-sixth the population has more unionized workers than all 12 Southern states combined. The South is a strategic region of concentration and exploitation for global finance capital. A Southern Labor Congress is needed to unite local unions and worker organizations across the region. Independent political action and workers state power is needed to make the South a base area of the Black liberation and workers struggle.

The challenge for a revolutionary movement in the US is to unite all poor and oppressed people. Only the common struggle will defeat the capitalists. In the South the Black cadre in the workers movement has two goals: to bring together Black workers; and then to bring them together with other workers of color, as an anchor and leadership in uniting the multinational working class as a vital strategic movement force.

Cadre, the second wave

When these mass actions grow and encounter resistance, cadre come into play. Today, NGO-funded activists come from liberal nonprofits, both religious and nonreligious. Also today people from radical and revolutionary organizations of all sorts join the mass actions. One approach is: let's make reform work. The NGO idea is that with hard work the system can transform itself. NGOs think they can take money from rich people and get the results they need. The other is: join us and make a revolution. Our relatively small organizations already have the leadership and ideas to make the revolution—so if you are serious, join us.

Each of these can make a difference. But only if they connect with the more fundamental process of how mass struggle develops.

Existing organizations are crucial, but not the end-all and be-all. Many activists become cadre and then revolutionaries. This means they are transformed within the movement.

This happens not because they have been hired and have a career in the movement earning from \$30,000 to \$80,000 a year. And not because they are part of organizations with big budgets supported by big money. In fact, people who rise from the oppressed and go the NGO route can point out the problem. It's the failure that comes from subsidizing the movement cadres. They see NGO organizers, called "trainers," living large or at least with secure incomes. The trainers move from project to project advancing their careers. NGO - funded efforts can bring about reform, but don't do much beyond that. Our point is not to mistake what they do for a revolutionary intervention in the historical process. There is no getting around the fact that a movement must be based on the will and resources of the people.

Left cadre organizations and parties often fall short of what is needed as well. They can "cherry pick" the mass movement for recruits. These recruits then do what the particular party tells them. The party leaders might have little

or no movement experience or street cred in the movement they aim to lead. This can be true of both the Black liberation movement and the workers movement. This often weakens the mass movement when it is just getting started. We need millions in the movement. That will take thousands of revolutionary cadre who are organically linked to the mass motion, who are respected and loved by people in local areas. These cadre must also be able to link the mass motion to the general process of historical transformation.

Ideas are critical. One of the first steps in going from being an activist to a cadre is reading, learning, study. What study are we talking about? We offer some ideas in the appendix here. The important thing is to read and think critically, while not leaving the mass action.

We see four aspects to developing cadre:

1. Always studying the objective situation, summing up what's happening in the struggle, connecting ideas to actions, linking tac-

tics to strategy so as to know what action to take next, and practicing the mass line by embracing comrades in the struggle and listening carefully to what they think.

2. Getting a job or surviving on resources from the basic masses of people. NGO or foundation support should always be temporary. The source of material support will influence what one can say or do. The goal is for people to support their own movement. That is freedom in action.
3. Relating to current activists while also reaching out broadly and deeply into a mass base for the movement. People do join the movement—some for longer than others. A cadre is always recruiting people, and then helping them develop their consciousness and the skills necessary to wage higher and higher levels of struggle.
4. Being humble and self-critical in the context of everything else. Trust and respect must be earned. A big danger is getting the big head,

thinking of oneself as better than other people because of activism and veteran status. Cadre must demonstrate that the only way forward is based on self-criticism.

Seizing on Strategic Opportunities to Make Leaps in the Black Liberation Struggle

Hurricane Katrina triggered the Gulf Coast disaster, killing 2,000 residents of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, destroying housing, forcing thousands to live in an over crowded and unsanitary football stadium, and forcing more than 150,000 majority working-class Black people to migrate to every state throughout the US. It provided the basis for bringing the major battlefronts together.

This exposed the failures of the US government and its genocidal actions:

- Waited four days before responding to the disaster, first sending in the military to protect corporate property.
- Mainstream media criminalizing Black survivors as looters and criminals making them targets of police and national guard violence and deaths.
- Refusing medical aid and supplies from Cuba and Venezuela.
- Ethnic cleansing by destroying affordable public housing, and forcibly dispersing 150,000 majority Black people from voting districts, jobs, vital social institutions and mass organizations rooted in the neighborhoods and workplaces.
- Failure to repair substandard levees making communities more vulnerable to climate change and environmental racism.
- Increasing the homeless population.

- The dismantling of the public-school system into 4 school systems and the weakening and attempt to bust the teacher's union.
- Suspending of the Davis Bacon Act a federal law requiring federally funded projects to pay the local prevailing wages for laborers and mechanics often set by trade unions.

The organizing of the Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) began around building a cadre of the Black left to help develop what many saw as a regional struggle into a national and international struggle for Gulf Coast Reconstruction, promoting it as a strategic national mandate for the Black liberation movement, the Black masses, the Chicano/Latinx movements, sections of the white working-class and international solidarity.

An International Tribunal was held during which families and workers that were im-

pacted by Katrina and government neglect and attacks testified. A Reconstruction (Survivors) Assembly was held that developed a basic Reconstruction Program, out of which a national Katrina Solidarity Committee was formed consisting of forces from several states and trade unions. However, a national assembly for Black liberation was not organized to unite around this strategic Gulf Coast centered national struggle.

Because many of the Black left were supported by the NGO/foundations they failed to prioritize the Katrina struggle as a na-



tional struggle out of fear that it would divert funding away from their budgets for local projects and campaigns.

The elements for an expanding regional Reconstruction movement were present, but action was not taken. Struggle could have created a national Black mandate for the 2008 presidential elections. It would have been further fueled by the Jena 6 struggle against sentencing 6 Black high school teenagers who were in a fight with white students over their hanging a noose from a tree on the school grounds. A case mirroring the trial of the Scottsboro Boys in the 1930s. Instead Black people were left to fall behind the neo-liberal policies of the Obama presidency.



Revolution, the third wave

For the third wave to emerge, first we have to argue the case that a revolution is needed. Today we live in a time of technological revolution driven by computers and the Internet. Labor as we have known it faces an uncertain future but it still represents a strong base of power if it is transformed into a movement fighting its class enemy. The social safety nets of the industrial period were fought for by organized labor. Today they are in shreds as more and more jobs are being done by machines and many jobs have been moved to countries where wages are low and governments block labor organizing. Industries are hiring temporary workers paying low wages, no benefits, and no job security. The capitalists are privatizing society and eliminating public services, education, health, transportation, parks and other forms of recreation.

The capitalist class does not act in the broad interest of all of us. It must be replaced at the commanding heights of the economy and the

state. Revolution is both a long march and a leap— actually a series of leaps.

The strategy for revolutionary transformation must be understood as a long march. It involves a cadre's commitment to stick with the struggle over many decades. This means sinking deep roots in a mass base connected to many battlefronts. It is also a long march because the movement has to recruit and sustain the active participation of successive generations. Finally this strategy is a long march because change begins with policy and structure (power) but in the end must result in a change in how people think and what they think is worthy in human life. The decadent values of the capitalists are not going to disappear overnight. The full revolutionary transformation of society will take generations to come into being.

The leaps take place in every aspect of the long march. The leaps take place on two levels of consciousness: the consciousness of the cadre and the consciousness of the masses of

people. Both develop out of the back and forth between theory and practice, between thinking and doing. But sometimes a slow process speeds up as events can spark a leap forward. Mao said it plain, "A single spark can start a prairie fire." Taking power when the chance is there requires a major leap in political thinking and action.

Revolutionary forms of organization are necessary. Cadre will not survive unless they become part of an organization. People are social animals and must have people who share their beliefs and life style. What's more, we are going up against the organization of the state and capitalist companies. We must meet strength with strength. As they are professional, so must we be professional. Revolutionaries can't be amateurs.

Broad united fronts are a must. We must make the people's struggle a joint effort if the spontaneous movement is to push forward. In the Draft Freedom Manifesto we have discussed the struggle taking place on many different

battlefronts. Cadre develop on each battlefront—they maintain whatever struggle is at hand. But as these cadre become more and more focused on the revolutionary struggle, it becomes clear that these battlefronts must be brought together. They are all fighting the same enemy, the same system: the capitalist class and their state. A united front of all who fight back, from all nationalities and classes, is needed. The working class forces will serve as the leadership.

A fundamental goal of this front is the development of a transitional program of dual power. This will enable the people to collect their resources in preparation for even bigger battles. Dual power helps the movement change from a defensive to an offensive struggle. Defensive means the struggle is reacting to what the capitalist state does. Offensive means the movement decides on its own when, where, and how to attack and take power. Our current challenge is to come up with examples of what this looks like. For example:

1. The fight for power in the cities. The fight to capture the mayor's office and the city councils are local struggles that can have big impacts. One example is the fight for city revenue through taxing the rich and not the poor. So real estate tax, not sales tax. The main goal in this case is to get people organized. The battle for city hall will prepare the people for even bigger battles to come. Mass struggle is the strategic process, and within this process there will be many tactics used including but not limited to the electoral process.

2. The fight for power in education. This is the fight to gain control of school boards and library boards. This has to involve the reeducation of teachers and librarians. It has to involve a change in what students learn in school and for the rest of their lives.

The Black working class must be ready to mobilize against any and all attacks on Black life. This is defensive. But revolution requires that the movement go on the offensive. The first

steps are the fights for reform, which lead to a revolutionary leap for power.

Why is dual power necessary? This is a critical question. A person can want a revolution to happen, but revolution is more than what one person thinks. It is a complete change in how society is set up. A person is more about what he/she does than what he/she says. In the same way, a society can be based on ideas and have leaders who talk about those ideas. But it is what is actually going on that gives the society its character. So the masses of people learn about power in the struggle to take it, moving step by step. This happens inside the system and outside from it. Dual power is about both of these forms of power.

Power is about the control of resources and the ability to make changes happen. The movement must be independent of the state, the corporate dominated political parties, and the NGO structures. The power of the people has to be something new, something that people have to learn how to build and use. This will

take some time. The history of the trade union movement provides good historical lessons. This movement was the most successful power center in the fight for reform. The workers had their numbers and they had money based on dues from their wages. Building mass bases of power in the economy, political system, military, and social institutions is the aim of a transitional program.

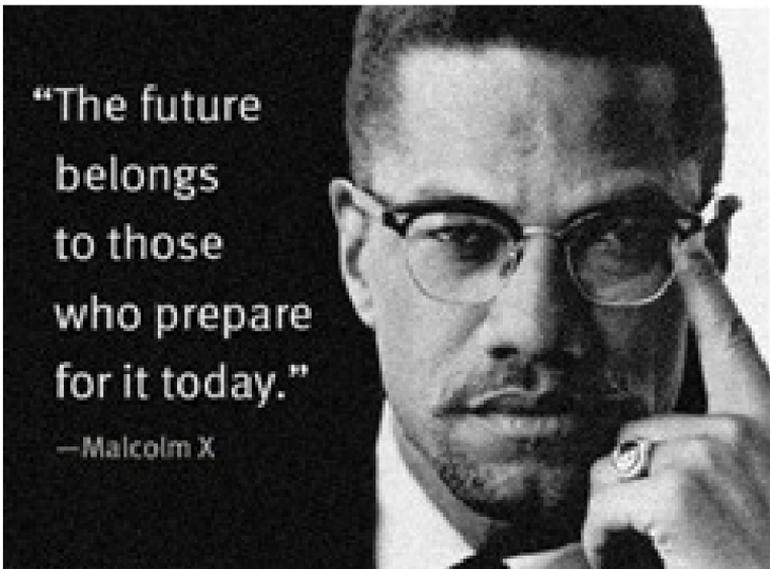
Black workers must be at the heart of the Black liberation movement. In the same way, the working class has to be at the heart of every mass movement if we want to challenge the capitalist class and win.

We have argued that the revolutionary process goes forward in three waves. We are in the midst of the first wave of spontaneous struggle. We are facing the challenge of cadre development. Cadre will begin to find each other and seek higher levels of unity and coordination. This is the logical development of movement heading toward revolutionary organization.

***We hope this paper will be the
basis for discussion.***

“The future
belongs
to those
who prepare
for it today.”

—Malcolm X



Notes for a cadre reading list

How to read

Read not to imitate but to stimulate and inspire.

Take care with those who write about movements without engaging in any. Look especially for writers who have a track record of action.

Look for where the activists and cadre took aim and who they united with.

Prepare to walk away from the attractions of the capitalist system. Prepare to give up the advantages you were born with. In other words, defect to those with nothing to lose. Be aware of reading lists but also read beyond those lists. Read what you find on your own. The internet gives us new ways to study and learn. Combine reading with watching and listening to audio and video.

What to read

Revolutionary experience. A good start is the seven revolutions Malcolm points to in *Message to the Grass Roots*:

United States 1776 (capitalism)

France 1789 (capitalism)

Russia 1917 (socialism)

China 1949 (socialism)

Cuba 1959 (socialism)

Algeria 1962 (national liberation)

Kenya 1963 (national liberation)

The experiences of the African liberation movements: South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau.

Histories of the Black liberation movement in the US: The National Negro Convention Movement, the slave revolts, the writings of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, the experiences of reformers and revolutionaries in the 1950s and 1960s, all veterans of the struggle.

Current strategic movement documents:

The Draft Freedom manifesto: <https://www.scribd.com/document/321034935/Draft-Black-Liberation-Manifesto-V-3-0>

The Movement for Black Lives Policy Statement: <https://policy.m4bl.org/>

Black is Back Coalition: <http://www.blackisbackcoalition.org/2016/09/09/nbpsd-declaration-and-19-points/>

Left Roots: <https://leftroots.net/towards-strategy/>

Malcolm X Grassroots Movement: <https://mxgm.org/the-jackson-plan-a-struggle-for-self-determination-participatory-democracy-and-economic-justice/>

Political Economy

—how capitalism and the state work

Black Revolutionary Theory

Walter Rodney,

How Europe Underdeveloped Africa

Abdul Muhammad Babu,
African Socialism or a Socialist Africa
Frantz Fanon,
The Wretched of the Earth
Hakim Adi,
Pan-Africanism and Communism

Autobiographies by movement cadre:

Autobiography of Malcolm X
The Making of a Black Revolutionary by
James Forman
Black Bolshevik by Harry Haywood
Black Fire by Nelson Peery
Living for Change by Grace Lee Boggs

Audio and video recordings online:

Malcolm X's speeches *Message to the Grass
Roots* (1963), *Ballot or the Bullet* (1964), and
Fighting on all Fronts (1965): [http://
www.brothermalcolm.net/aug04index.html](http://www.brothermalcolm.net/aug04index.html)
Black Liberation Theoreticians:
[http://www.brothermalcolm.net/
SOLDIERS/](http://www.brothermalcolm.net/SOLDIERS/)





These little brothers used to sell the Black newspaper in their community. You can get the weekly bulletin free in your email.

To subscribe send request to:
manifesto-request@lists.illinois.edu