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Besenia Rodriguez

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Black History Matters

“Long Live Third World Unity! Long Live Internationalism”¹

Huey P. Newton’s Revolutionary Intercommunalism

Besenia Rodriguez

“Long Live Third World Unity! Long Live Internationalism” explores the transnational socialism of Huey P. Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party. The Panthers linked their own oppression with that of other racialized and oppressed groups in the U.S. and linked oppression at home with imperialism throughout the tricontinental. The article begins with a brief discussion of the significance of the 1955 Bandung Conference and the 1956 Suez Crisis for antiracist activists in the U.S., paying particular attention to Malcolm X. It then situates the Black Panther Party as heirs to Malcolm X’s tricontinental tradition; lastly, it traces the ideological evolution of Newton and the BPP from revolutionary nationalists and internationalists to revolutionary intercommunalists, arguing that this new conceptual framework, anticipating theories of globalization by twenty years as it does, situates Newton as a central figure of the tricontinental political tradition.

Keywords: Bandung Conference, Black Panther Party, Huey P., Malcolm X, Newton, Third World

Whenever death may surprise us, it will be welcome, provided that . . . our battle cry reaches some receptive ear, that another hand stretch out to take up weapons. . . . Let the flag under which we fight represent the sacred cause of redeeming humanity, so that to die under the flag of Vietnam, of Venezuela, of

Guatemala, of Laos, of Guinea, of Colombia, of Bolivia, of Brazil, to name only a few of the scenes of today's armed struggles, be equally glorious and desirable for an American, an Asian, an African, or even a European.

—Ernesto Guevara, cited by Huey Newton²

It is our goal to be in every single country there is. We look at a world without any boundary lines. We don't consider ourselves basically American. We are multi-national; and when we approach a government that doesn't like the United States, we always say, "Who do you like; Britain, Germany? We carry a lot of flags."

—Robert Stevenson, Executive President, Ford, *Business Week*, cited by Huey Newton³

The first thing the American power structure doesn't want any Negroes to start is thinking internationally.

—Malcolm X⁴

In 1992, filmmaker Spike Lee released *Malcolm X* to critical acclaim.⁵ The film had an enormous cultural impact, with celebrities and youth donning hats and t-shirts with the letter "X."⁶ Soon after, Gerald Horne's article, "Myth and the Making of *Malcolm X*" presented a critique of Lee's rendering, arguing that the film participated in constructing a mythology of figures like Malcolm X that "neglect[s] highly relevant and persuasive evidence because it does not necessarily comport with the contemporary lessons that one is to draw from these myths."⁷ Lee's film, an intervention in a historiographical and popular record of the Black freedom struggle that has "centered on Martin Luther King, Jr. with Rosa Parks and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) playing pivotal supporting roles," creates an alternative mythology that, like the prevailing "King years" myth, fails to include the concurrent history of leftists like Claudia Jones, William Patterson, and Paul Robeson. Glaringly absent from Lee's film, Horne contends, is Malcolm's "embrace [of] a more progressive form of nationalism—when he followed in Patterson's footsteps seeking to take the Black Question to the United Nations." Also absent were his disputes with Louis Farrakhan, his relationships with "world leaders—especially on the African continent," and his early interpretations of the 1955 Bandung conference of African and Asian leaders "as spelling doom for the 'white devils.'"⁸

Readings of Malcolm, as Horne argues, have been "heavily influenced by a pervasive narrow nationalism" and, like the King myth, have largely failed to "encompass the international dimension."⁹ "To do so," he asserts, "might necessitate encompassing a now taboo history involving the Council on African Affairs and the black Left."¹⁰ Similarly, Farrakhan is completely absent from *Malcolm X*, Horne contends, because including him "would have been too difficult to explain and would have disturbed a major myth."¹¹

Like his meeting with Fidel Castro in Harlem's Hotel Theresa in 1960, Malcolm's close relationship with Yuri Kochiyama was absent from *Malcolm X*.¹² This omission is particularly misleading because of what this friendship illustrates about Malcolm's allegiances and his ever-developing analysis of racism. The two met briefly in 1963 at the Brooklyn courthouse, where a timid Kochiyama told Malcolm that she admired his work but disagreed with his stance against integration. He invited her to his 125th Street office but was soon silenced by Elijah Muhammad for his infamous remarks following Kennedy's assassination. Three months later, Kochiyama invited Malcolm to a reception at her home for three atomic bomb survivors of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki World Peace Study



“Audience members listening to Dick Gregory” February 1972 © Raymond Fudge

Mission who were on a global tour speaking against nuclear arms proliferation. More than anyone else, they wanted to meet Malcolm X. Although she never received a response, on June 6, 1964, Kochiyama organized a reception for Malcolm with the assistance of the Harlem Parents Committee.

Hopeful, “the Kochiyama family waited excitedly” in their Harlem apartment for Malcolm X to arrive.¹³ Soon after, Malcolm arrived with three security guards; he apologized for not having responded to Kochiyama’s letters and promised to write to her should he travel again. He thanked the guests for touring the “World’s Worst Fair”—Harlem, itself “scarred . . . by the bomb of racism,” instead of the World’s Fair in Queens.¹⁴ He spoke of Europe’s colonization of Asia and the similarities between African and Asian history, which he studied while in prison, and of his admiration for Mao Tse-tung for fighting feudalism and imperialism. An astute observer of international events, he spoke of the war in Vietnam two months before President Johnson ordered that additional military advisors be sent to Vietnam and nine months before the first U.S. combat troops landed. “If America sends troops you progressives should protest,” he told them, insisting that “the struggle of Vietnam is the struggle of the whole Third World: the struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism.”¹⁵ He kept his promise to Kochiyama, writing her eleven times from nine different countries, including Egypt, England, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria before his assassination in early 1965.¹⁶ In turn, Kochiyama joined his Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU).¹⁷ “Without question,” her daughter and granddaughter wrote in the preface to her autobiography forty years later, “Malcolm X was and still is the single most influential person in Yuri’s political development.” Kochiyama herself has called Malcolm her “political awakening.”¹⁸

Had Kochiyama been represented in the film, cradling Malcolm’s head as his aides attempted to revive him, as in the photograph made famous by *Life* magazine, the image would have been largely unintelligible to an audience inundated by a mythology in which figures equated with “Black Power” like Malcolm and the Black Panther Party, are understood uncomplicatedly as “Black nationalists.”¹⁹ This mythology renders invisible aspects of their ideologies which fail to conform to existing frameworks. The Black Panther Party is often understood to be the ideological heir to Malcolm X and explicitly claimed this tradition for itself. In revisiting Malcolm’s deeply antiracist concept of world revolution, influenced by the Conference of Nonaligned Nations in Bandung, Indonesia and the movements that emerged in its wake, this article examines the Black Panther Party’s debt to Malcolm X through an alternative lens. It focuses on the construction of a tricontinental ideology and a set of solidarities beyond race and nation that belie the traditional interpretations of figures canonized as “Black nationalists” or “pan-Africanists,” highlighting the extent to which these figures, at times explicitly, rejected these political and ideological categories.²⁰

The Black Panthers espoused a critique that linked their own oppression with that of other racialized and oppressed groups in the U.S. and linked oppression at home with imperialism throughout the Third World. They promoted a variant of tricontinental socialism closely aligned with that of Castro and Mao Tse-tung and set up community programs throughout the nation to counteract the detrimental effects of racial capitalism. The BPP was influenced as much by the writings of Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Amilcar Cabral and the events unfolding in Cuba, Vietnam, China, and Palestine as it was by the ideologies of Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams and events in Oakland, Detroit, and New York. Their shifting philosophies and internal ideological conflicts provide a valuable opportunity to examine the

inherent multiplicity and instability of any discourse. For instance, they evolved from self-described “Black nationalists” to “revolutionary nationalists,” “internationalists,” and finally, to “revolutionary intercommunalists” between 1966 and 1972.²¹ Panthers have written extensively about the periods they spent traveling the globe and in exile; nonetheless, this article limits its focus to the BPP’s tricontinentalism, owing a considerable debt to Malcolm X as it did, through the lens of its chief theoretician, Huey P. Newton.²²

The concept of the “Third World” has largely been associated with the period during which the Panthers emerged, borne of the 1955 conference in Bandung and the anticolonial movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America of the 1960s and 1970s. Nonetheless a central feature of the erasure of this tricontinental tradition has been the oversight of the direct and indirect impact of two events one year apart on Malcolm X and the Black Panthers, the Bandung Conference and the Suez Crisis.

Bandung Spirit

And once you study what happened at the Bandung conference . . . it actually serves as a model for the same procedure you and I can use to get our problems solved. At Bandung . . . there were dark nations from Africa and Asia . . . Despite their economic and political differences, they came together. All of them were black, brown, red, or yellow.²³

On November 10, 1964, at the Northern Grass Roots Leadership Conference in Detroit organized by Grace Lee Boggs, Malcolm X gave what would become one of his most celebrated speeches, “A Message to the Grassroots.” In a fierce censure of the civil rights establishment, which he referred to as “house Negroes,” Malcolm spoke of the March on Washington as a “picnic” and a “circus.” In sharp contrast, he cited the Kenyan, Chinese, Algerian, and Cuban revolutions, which have been “bloody . . . hostile . . . [and which knew] no compromise.”²⁴ The international focus of Malcolm’s speech, which emphasized the need for political unity borne of a shared oppression, was all the more extraordinary given that much of the Black press and leadership was focused on the events taking place in the U.S. south, including the passing of the Civil Rights Act and the murder of three civil-rights workers in Mississippi.²⁵

In the wake of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the cold war battle for the markets of the newly independent Asian and African nations, Indonesian Prime Minister Ali Sastroamidjojo delivered a speech in August, 1953 reflecting his view that “strong cooperation between [Asian and African] countries will strengthen the efforts in creating peace in the world.”²⁶ A few months later, at a meeting later known as the Colombo Conference, leaders of four other Asian countries met in response to Sastroamidjojo’s call and to discuss ways to address those problems created by racial colonialism and left unaddressed by the newly formed United Nations. This conference gave way to the establishment of the Asian-African Conference to be hosted by Indonesia and co-sponsored by India, Ceylon (later Sri Lanka), Burma, and Pakistan. Among other aims, the Asian-African Conference sought to “discuss the matters, particularly related to Asian-African nations, for example matters related to national sovereignty, racialism, and colonialism” and “to observe the position of Asia and Africa, and their nations in the world, to observe what they can give to promote peace and cooperation in the world.”²⁷

The Indonesian government invited twenty-five countries, including the People's Republic of China, Egypt, Ethiopia, the then-Gold Coast, Syria, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, and Northern and Southern Vietnam, to the mountain city of Bandung from April 16–24, 1955. Representatives of South Africa's African National Congress also attended. In his opening speech, "Let a New Asia and New Africa Be Born," Indonesian President Sukarno highlighted themes that would become a central feature of tricontinentalism. He told the participants, representing over half of the world's population, from different nations, "social, cultural, religion, political background, and even different skin color," that they could be united by their experiences of colonialism and "by the same devotion to defend and strengthen the world peace."²⁸ "The nations of Asia and Africa," he declared, "are no longer the tools and playthings of forces they cannot influence."²⁹ He ended,

I hope [this conference] will give evidence of the fact that we, Asian and African leaders, understand that Asia and Africa can prosper only when they are united, and that even the safety of the world at large can not be safeguarded without a united Asia-Africa. . . . I hope that it will give evidence . . . that a New Asia and New Africa have been born!³⁰

The Conference resulted in the "Ten Principles of Bandung," which affirmed the nations' commitment to promoting "respect for fundamental human rights, [for] . . . justice, [and] for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations" as well as the "recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small" and a call for all the signatories to "refrain from acts or threats of aggression" against any other territory.³¹ Condemning "colonialism in all of its manifestations," including U.S. and Soviet neo-colonialism, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru declared, "If I join any of these big groups I lose my identity."³² The Conference's Final Communiqué emphasized the need for tricontinental nations to "loosen their economic dependence on the leading industrialized nations by providing technical assistance to one another through the exchange of experts and technical assistance for developmental projects, as well as the exchange of technological know-how and the establishment of regional training and research institutes."³³

Fifty-years later, Indonesian and South African leaders issued the following statement, "following the historic Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955, the world has witnessed the emergence of new nations in the two continents and the births of a sense of kinship and solidarity between them. This "Bandung Spirit," brought about by the conference, subsequently became the underlying inspiration for these new nations to continue to strive towards the attainment of a just, peaceful, progressive and prosperous world order."³⁴ Bandung, and the Nonaligned Movement it spawned six years later at its founding summit in Belgrade, constituted "the major political expression of the developing countries of the Third World."³⁵ Nonaligned nations developed increasingly audacious condemnations of racism, imperialism and neo-colonialism, emboldened by charter members like Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Egypt, each of whom hosted major conferences. For instance in Belgrade, Cuban leader Osvaldo Dorticos charged, "If we dare to condemn the colonialist domination of Algiers and Angola, let us also condemn the colonialist domination of Puerto Rico," raising the ire of an already antagonistic U.S.³⁶

Harlem watched the events unfolding in Bandung with anticipation. Representative Adam Clayton Powell and novelist Richard Wright were in attendance, along with Margaret Cartwright, the first Black reporter assigned to the UN, and journalist William Worthy; messages were read from Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois, whose passports were confiscated by the State department. Robeson's newspaper, *Freedom*, published articles on the conference, talking with Harlem residents on the significance of the declarations and solidarities forged in Bandung for their lives. In an article entitled, "War and Jim Crow Set Back at Bandung," journalist Kumar Goshal noted that, "since the conference laid great stress on political and economic imperialism and the evils of racialism, it was of supreme importance to all Americans, especially Negro Americans."³⁷ Goshal continued, "for as India's Nehru emphasized in his speech, it is the U.S-sponsored North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO), the Southeast Asia Treat Organization (SEATO), and other military alliances that are today helping maintain what remains of imperialist rule in Asian and African colonies." He noted that "by and large, the Negro press in America was fully conscious of the importance and significance of Bandung. The Afro-American felt that the conference 'signaled the end of a centuries-old era of colonialism,' and asked 'Western statesmen... to heed this solemn warning that the old order of things no longer exists.'"³⁸

In "Harlem Speaks... About Bandung," a *Freedom* journalist "took [a] camera and notebook to one of Harlem's busiest streets, to ask Mr. and Miss average Harlemite what they thought about the doings at...the historic Bandung [Conference]."³⁹ To varying degrees, the "average Harlemite," a homemaker, a photographer, a high school student, and a veteran, agreed that the conference would have a "good effect" on U.S. Blacks, indicating that perhaps for many, the events in Bandung had a diffuse impact; yet the response from leading activist-intellectuals speaks to the centrality of the Bandung Conference for the development of a broader tricontinental imaginary.⁴⁰

As cheers rang from the audience at Bandung, one participant recited Robeson's speech.⁴¹ He expressed his "profound conviction that the very fact of the convening of the Conference... will be recorded as an historic turning point in all world affairs," stating that the gathering opened "a new vista of human advancement in all spheres of life."⁴² In a resounding statement, Robeson declared, "the time has come when the colored peoples of the world will no longer allow the great natural wealth of their countries to be exploited and expropriated by the Western world while they are beset by hunger, disease and poverty."⁴³ He then discussed his "deep and abiding interest in the cultural relations of Asia and Africa," and lamented not being able to see his "brothers from Africa, India, China, Indonesia, and from all the nations represented at Bandung... old friends I knew in London years ago, where I first became part of the movement for colonial freedom—the many friends from India and Africa and the West Indies with whom I shared hopes and dreams of a new day for the oppressed colored peoples of the world."⁴⁴ "Fully endors[ing] the objectives of the Conference to prevent...[another H-bomb] [and]... the demand of Africa and Asia for independence from alien domination and exploitation," Robeson attempted to speak in behalf of U.S. and Caribbean Blacks. He wrote, "Typical of my people's sentiments are these words from one of our leading Negro newspapers: 'Negro Americans should be interested in the proceedings at Bandung. We have found this kind of fight for more than 300 years and have a vested interest in the outcome.'"⁴⁵

Two years later, Robeson, W.E.B. Du Bois, former Council on African Affairs secretary W. Alphaeus Hunton, and labor leader José Santiago spoke at a Harlem

event commemorating the anniversary of the Bandung Conference.⁴⁶ In his speech, Robeson acknowledged, “we American Negroes can no longer lead the colored peoples of the world because they far better than we understand what is happening in the world today. But we can try to catch up with them.”⁴⁷ Once again challenging his audience to broaden its antiracism to include internationalism, anti-imperialism, and anti-capitalism, he urged them to “learn about China and India and the vast realm of Indonesia rescued from Holland . . . [and] of the new ferment in East, West, and South Africa. We can realize by reading . . . how socialism is expanding over the modern world and penetrating the colored world.”⁴⁸

From the Bandung Conference emerged the concept of the “Third World.” As the antiracist labor-leader James Boggs would note in 1974, it was not until after the 1939–45 War that the “people living in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East . . . [began] to struggle as a social force to determine their own destiny and the future of the world. . . . There was no *concept* of Third World Peoples until approximately twenty years ago . . . created on the basis of the real historical struggles of the colonial peoples in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.”⁴⁹ “As independence was being fought for by many countries and won by a few,” he told his audience, “a conference was held in Bandung, Indonesia. . . . Out of the Bandung and subsequent conferences of Asia, Africa, Arab, and Latin American nations, came the concept of *the Third World*, referring to those countries struggling for independence, . . . which had been systematically damned into a state of underdevelopment by capitalism.”⁵⁰ In the U.S., Boggs observed, “the identification of Black Americans with the Third World was really a question of solidarity, i.e., the feeling that progressive and revolutionary people all over the world should have for each other in their common struggle for the advancement of humanity.”⁵¹ Yet he criticized those who, “in order to express the fact that as non-whites they have all experienced discrimination and segregation in the United States, . . . adopted the phrase ‘Third World’ to describe themselves, even though this phrase and this concept came from a totally different set of historical circumstances.”⁵²

Four years earlier, Yuri Kochiyama’s article, “Third World,” printed in *Asian Americans for Action’s* newsletter, provided an example of this tendency among U.S. radicals. “Whether in the Black, Brown, Red, or Yellow movement, the term Third World makes its appearance on flyers; is hurled about in speeches, pops up in raps; is unfurled on banners and carried on posters.”⁵³ “This world,” Kochiyama continued, “Africa, Asia, and Latin America, is the world of the Black, Brown, and Yellow people seeking independence of the first two worlds.” In a resounding statement illustrating the tricontinentalism that evolved from her Malcolm-inspired political awareness, she added,

the cause of Palestine is that of Vietnam’s; the liberation struggles of Mozambique and Angola are related to the guerrillas’ involvement in Uruguay and Bolivia. The Philippines’ sentiment against military colonialism is mutual with that of Puerto Rico’s. The Black man’s [sic] degrading experience in Amerika corresponds with the treatment of the Indians, Eskimos, and Chicanos in both Americas, and the Aborigines in Australia. The uprisings in the Caribbean . . . and the demands of the Okinawans are all the voices of the Third World, the world’s oppressed. . . . The Third World and its descendants in the western hemisphere are in motion. It is a life-and-death struggle to cast off the shackles of imperialism and colonialism, and obliterate racism. . . . The Third World must oppose, challenge, confront and halt

transgression of imperialistically-inclined powers, including those in their own world, for imperialism knows no color or geographic lines. The Third World must offer an alternative—a more humane way of life, where diversity of peoples, cultures, religions, and ideologies will enhance civilization, rather than proscribe life.⁵⁴

The Road to Suez

The second event, Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company in 1956, did not receive as much coverage in the U.S. Black press as the Bandung Conference had, yet Nasser's "successful weathering of an invasion . . . made him a hero" not just for the "Bandung" or "Third World" nations, but "among many African Americans" as well.⁵⁵ Over five-thousand miles away, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote an acerbic poem entitled, "Suez." In it, Du Bois presented a caustic critique of the U.S., U.K., and Israel—which he had supported in the past. He praised Nasser for rising in the face of "lions" with their "pockets full of gold" and declaring "what's mine is mine!"⁵⁶

No U.S. Black activist-intellectual had a more intimate connection with the Middle East or its postcolonial hero, Nasser, than Shirley Graham Du Bois.⁵⁷ Her biography, written within the framework of Egyptian history, *Gamal Abdel Nasser: Son of the Nile*, was the first to be published in the English language. Graham Du Bois discussed the Bandung Conference, criticizing the U.S. and Europe, including John Dulles's threats toward Egypt if it participated in the conference with "communist countries."⁵⁸ Nasser's comments at Bandung, pledging Egypt's commitment to "the welfare of peoples beyond our borders" and its "support . . . of self-determination for all peoples," led to his hailing as "Champion of Africa and Asia."⁵⁹ As Graham Du Bois wrote, "there was no doubt that [Nasser] emerged from the Bandung Conference a hero in the eyes of his own people and in the Middle East as a whole."⁶⁰ He emerged as "the most important leader of the Arab world and as one of the major figures of the nonaligned movement." Along with "Cuba's Castro and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah," notes historian Melani McAlister, "Nasser represented an emotionally explosive convergence of anticolonial defiance and postcolonial global consciousness."⁶¹

In May, 1956, Nasser further defied Eisenhower by announcing that diplomatic relations had been established with the People's Republic of China.⁶² The U.S. and U.K. reneged on their loans for the building of a High Dam at Aswan. Two months later, Nasser announced, "We Egyptians will not permit any imperialists or oppression to rule us, militarily or economically. We will not submit to dollar dictatorship."⁶³ He vowed that the dam would be completed without western assistance. On July 26, 1956, the anniversary of King Farouk's abdication, Nasser told a "wildly cheering crowd: 'Today we take over our Canal.'" The Suez Canal would be nationalized and managed by the Egyptian Canal Authority and Nasser would build the dam with its revenue.⁶⁴ Paraphrasing a Saidi proverb, Nasser shouted, "and if the imperialists don't like it, they can choke on their rage!"⁶⁵ According to Graham Du Bois, Egyptians "were hysterical with joy. They screamed! Men threw their arms about each other and wept. Not only Egyptians and Arabs, but subject peoples throughout the world were thrilled by Nasser's daring gesture."⁶⁶

For many seeking tricontinental solidarity, Nasser's actions "represented a particular connection between black and Arab anticolonialism."⁶⁷ As McAlister

convincingly argues, “Just as Egypt was geographically positioned at the intersection of the Middle East and Africa, in the years after Bandung, Nasser positioned himself as a leader in connecting African and Asian anticolonial movements.”⁶⁸ For instance, Nasser, who had met Kwame Nkrumah at Bandung two years prior, sent a large delegation to Ghana’s independence celebrations in 1957, and upon Nkrumah’s visit to Egypt shortly thereafter, Nasser awarded him Egypt’s highest decoration. The two joined five other leaders in calling the First All-African Peoples Conference in Accra in 1958.⁶⁹

The Heirs of Malcolm

Malcolm’s relationships with U.S. activists of color like Kochiyama, his extensive knowledge of global events, and his travels throughout the Middle East and Africa contributed to his emergent “independent ‘Third World’ political perspective.”⁷⁰ He showed signs of this perspective as early as the 1950s, when he gave a speech suggestive of “A Message to the Grass Roots,” comparing the developing crisis in Vietnam with the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya, “framing both of these movements as uprisings of the ‘Darker races’ creating a ‘Tidal Wave’ against U.S. and European imperialism.”⁷¹ Yet, as historian Robin Kelley observes, “Africa remained his primary political interest outside black America.”⁷² In this way, Malcolm X’s anticolonial pan-Africanism differed from the tricontinental identity, inclusive of the non-Black world, that many of his successors would develop.

Malcolm X was the first political person in this country that I really identified with. . . . We continue to believe that the Black Panther Party exists in the spirit of Malcolm.⁷³

Black Panther Party co-founders Huey Newton and Bobby Seale did not seek to replicate Malcolm’s Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). Nonetheless, his teachings were “fundamental in structuring the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, as the group was originally named in October 1966.”⁷⁴ Newton was introduced to Malcolm’s speeches and writings while attending Oakland City College. The previous year, he and Seale witnessed eruptions in Watts as well as the Highway Patrol and Oakland Police’s “determin[ation] to rule by force,” carrying shotguns in full view.⁷⁵ “Out of this need,” Newton and Seale “had no choice but to form an organization that would involve the lower-class brothers” or what Karl Marx referred to as the lumpen proletariat.⁷⁶

Long before outlining the BPP’s ten-point platform, Newton and Seale held informal political education sessions at Seale’s house, studying “the literature of oppressed people and their struggles for liberation in other countries. . . to see how their experiences might help us to understand our plight.”⁷⁷ These included the work of Frantz Fanon, Mao Tse-tung, and Ché Guevara.⁷⁸ Reflecting upon the BPP’s early influences, Newton wrote, “We read these men’s works because we saw them as kinsmen; the oppressor who had controlled them was controlling us, both directly and indirectly.”⁷⁹ For Newton, learning how these freedom-fighters confronted imperialism and racism was critical to creating a strategy for a U.S.-based struggle. Newton and Seale were careful not to “import ideas and strategies” and believed it necessary to “transform what we learned into principles and methods acceptable to the brothers on the block.”⁸⁰ Thus, they

studied Robert F. Williams's *Negroes with Guns*, which "great[ly] influence[d]... the kind of party we developed."⁸¹ While they identified with Williams's calls for self-defense in Monroe, North Carolina, his appeal to working-class activists, and with his analysis of the global effects of racial capitalism, Newton was dissatisfied with Williams' requests for assistance from the federal government, which Newton viewed as "an enemy, the agency of a ruling clique that the controls the country."⁸² Malcolm, with his razor-sharp critiques of the U.S. government rooted in a sense moral superiority, provided a model ideological ancestor.⁸³

"They Work Together to Oppress Us. We'll Work Together to Resist"⁸⁴

While Newton considered the BPP "a living testament to [Malcolm's] life's work," which they studied carefully—Seale collected all of his speeches from papers like *The Militant* and *Muhammad Speaks*—the BPP remained largely the creation of its chief theoretician, Newton.⁸⁵ The two young men furthered Malcolm's ideology, "rejecting his black nationalism," as chief-of-staff David Hilliard notes, as well as his concentration on Africa, "while incorporating a class-based political analysis that owed much to the writings of" Fanon, Guevara, and Mao.⁸⁶

Following Newton's July 1970 acquittal on charges in the death of Oakland police officer John Frey, the Party entered a period of immense transition. As Hilliard notes, Newton's arrest in October, 1967 galvanized the Party's first wave of "political fervor"; "his release engendered a number of equally historic changes from 1971 to 1972."⁸⁷ Newton traveled to Africa and Asia, where he met Mozambique president Samora Moises Machel and Premier Chou En-lai, who, along with events such as the U.S. escalating encroachments upon Central American and southeast Asian sovereignty, helped shape Newton's most groundbreaking and prescient ideological formation, "intercommunalism."

When Newton and Seale formed the BPP in 1966, the organization was avowedly "Black nationalist"—by this they meant that they "realized the contradictions in society, the pressure on Black people in particular, and we saw that most people in the past had solved some of their problems by forming into nations."⁸⁸ They assumed that the sufferings of people of African descent would end "when we established a nation of our own." Newton and Seale sought a method of analysis that would fill the gaps left by existing groups. The two were involved in numerous organizations, some of which they joined, such as Oakland City College's Afro-American Association, many of which they did not, such as the Progressive Labor Party and the Nation of Islam. In addition to the "mystical or religious aspect," Newton paradoxically stated that he "found it difficult to accept some of the Black nationalist ways."⁸⁹ For Newton, Black nationalism involved an "attitude of great hatred for... white people," an attitude which he could not fully internalize without feeling a "certain guilt about it," for which he was subsequently criticized.⁹⁰ Thus the Party's initial self-identification as a Black nationalist organization existed uneasily with Newton's own discomfort with the term and his 1971 statement that "from its very conception," the Black Panther Party "was meant as an antiracist party."⁹¹

Because of these contradictions, they soon redefined themselves as "revolutionary nationalists"—"that is, nationalists who want revolutionary changes in everything,

including the economic system the oppressor inflicts upon us.”⁹² During this phase, Newton adopted the language of internal colonization, linking the oppression of “black communities throughout the country—San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Haven” with traditional colonies throughout the Third World.⁹³ The Panthers made explicit that they were “individuals deeply concerned with the other people of the world and their desires for revolution.”⁹⁴ Allying itself with colonized peoples throughout the world, the Party soon defined itself as an “internationalist” organization.⁹⁵

At their first large-scale public appearance, the Panthers issued a speech that, for those who could look past the rifles and black uniforms, demonstrated the Party’s broad analysis of the interplay of global events and hinted at its budding commitment to developing ties that transcended racial and national borders. Executive Mandate Number One was written by Newton and read by Seale at the Sacramento State Capital on May 2, 1967 in protest of the Mulford Bill—or “Panther Bill” as it was alternately known—which criminalized open displays of loaded firearms.⁹⁶ While “racist police agencies throughout the country intensify the terror, brutality, murder, and repression of Black people,” Newton argued, the California legislature was attempting to keep “Black people disarmed and powerless.”⁹⁷ He wrote, “At the same time that the American Government is waging a racist war of genocide in Vietnam, the concentration camps in which Japanese-Americans were interned during World War II are being renovated and expanded.” Newton continued, invoking a phrase made famous by Malcolm X, “Since America has historically reserved its most barbaric treatment for non-white people, we are forced to conclude that these concentration camps are being prepared for Black people who are determined to gain their freedom by any means necessary.” Reminding listeners of the racist treatment historically meted out to racialized people within and beyond U.S. borders at the hands of the U.S. government, Newton wrote,

The enslavement of Black people at the very founding of this country, the genocide practiced on the American Indians and the confinement of the survivors on reservations, the savage lynching of thousands of Black men and women, the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and now the cowardly massacre in Vietnam all testify to the fact that toward people of color the racist power structure of America has but one policy: repression, genocide, terror, and the big stick. . . . As the aggression of the racist American Government escalates in Vietnam, the police agencies of America escalate the repression of Black people throughout the ghettos of America.⁹⁸

Even as Newton struggled to classify his organization’s burgeoning ideology, the speech delivered at the Party’s first attempt at gaining national attention illustrated a commitment to a “people of color”—or what I refer to here as a tricontinental—politics, one which holds the U.S. government accountable for its acts of aggression against racialized peoples wherever they are found. A central feature of this tricontinental politics, which Newton’s statement evinces, is a sense of solidarity among peoples who have been subjected to this shared racist oppression. It is this shared exploitation, this understanding of race as primarily a tool of oppression rather than as a biological fact, that drives the Panther’s alliances with the tricontinental region and with its anticolonial and antiracist politics.

The following year, the Panthers expanded their actions beyond patrolling police officers by taking their critiques and calls for justice to the UN “delegations

of revolutionary countries” and calling a press conference to “alert the American people, the people of the world, and particularly the oppressed and colonized people of the world, to an already dangerous situation which is rapidly deteriorating.”⁹⁹ By this, the BPP meant the “racist imperialist power structure’s” attempted “silencing” of Newton by falsely charging him with murder.¹⁰⁰ Citing Newton’s opposition to both “the imperialist aggression of the United States in International affairs and the vicious oppression of black people in the domestic areas,” the Panthers called upon “oppressed and colonized people to organize demonstrations before the embassies, consulates, and property of the imperialist exploiters of the United States whenever they have access to such installations and property, to show and manifest solidarity with Huey P. Newton and the black liberation struggle.” They also called upon UN member nations to authorize the stationing of “UN Observer Teams” throughout U.S. cities “wherein black people are cooped up and concentrated in wretched ghettos.”¹⁰¹ In doing so, they drew on a tradition of antiracist activists who sought to combat the U.S. struggle before an international arena, including the National Negro Congress, the Civil Rights Congress, and SNCC.¹⁰²

In addition, the BPP’s newspaper published countless articles on the struggles of Chicana/os, Puerto Ricans, particularly Young Lords, and Asian-Americans, as well as anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist efforts in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia especially the Congo, Palestine, Bolivia, Cuba, and Vietnam.¹⁰³ In an October, 1968 article reprinted from the Cuban Daily, *Granma*, the BPP’s Minister of Education, George Mason Murray, was quoted as having declared, “We have vowed not to put down our guns or stop making Molotov cocktails until colonized Africans, Asians and Latin Americans in the United States and throughout the world have become free.”¹⁰⁴ Murray and New York Panther leader Joudon Ford were in Cuba as guests of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL) participating in the “Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of the Afro-American people.” At a press conference, Murray, likely referencing the rebellions that reached Detroit the previous summer, stated, “We want to tell the people who are struggling throughout the world that our collective struggle can only be victorious, and the defeat of the murderers of mankind will come as soon as we create a few more Vietnams, Cubas and Detroits.”¹⁰⁵ “In order to bring humanity to a higher level,” U.S. Blacks would “follow the example of Che Guevara, the Cuban people, the Vietnamese people and our leader and Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton [and] . . . Malcolm X, Lumumba, Ho Chi Minh and Mao Tse-tung.” Murray and Ford also referred to the armed struggles taking place in Bolivia, where Guevara had been assassinated, and told their audience of the coalitions between New York “blacks and Puerto Ricans,” who are “aware” of the tactics used by “imperialists [to create] . . . divisions between minority racial groups” and were “uniting to fight oppression.”¹⁰⁶

In July, 1970, in an interview from his prison cell, Newton characterized the BPP as an international and indeed, *anti-national*, organization. Grounded in Marxist-Leninism, it was logical that the BPP would seek solidarity with anti-capitalists throughout the world. “When the people start to move,” he told interviewer Mark Lane, “I guarantee you it’ll be international. The Black Panther Party is an international party. We have a coalition with all struggling people of the world. And we feel that we must be international because we’re fighting an international enemy.”¹⁰⁷ Newton reiterated the need to adapt “Marx-Leninism to our particular situation here in America.” He cited North Korean Premier Kim

Il Sung's call for the "freedom for each nation to interpret Marx-Leninism according to its own needs, as he puts it, the chief thing is to fight against U.S. imperialism, World Enemy No. 1. . . . We struggle and support all of those countries and we want solidarity with them."¹⁰⁸ The embrace of internationalism also provided a way to circumvent the anti-whiteness that Newton associated with "Black nationalism" and pointed to his increasingly sophisticated analysis of the very concept of nationhood. Noting the scarcity of inhabitable land, Newton believed that creating a new nation would require becoming a "dominant faction in this one," and yet the fact that oppressed people "did not have power was the contradiction that drove us to seek nationhood in the first place."¹⁰⁹

Shortly after Newton's release from prison, the BPP held a two-part Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia on September 5, 1970 and at Howard University in Washington, D.C. in November 27–29 of that year. According to Newton, this meeting of "Revolutionary Peoples from oppressed communities throughout the world" was convened "in recognition of the fact that the changing social conditions throughout the world require new analyses and approaches in order that our consciousness might be raised to the point where we can effectively end the oppression of people by people."¹¹⁰

The delegates gathered to create a document that championed women's self-determination and queer rights, and proposed concrete strategies for battling sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia.¹¹¹ Organized as a series of mass assemblies, the convention held a symbolic purpose as well as a political one—those in attendance gathered together because they perceived, according to Newton, "a common enemy [and] a common goal." More importantly, it signified that "the geographical barriers which separated us from one another in the past are no longer obstacles to our revolutionary unity." Newton's welcome speech began, "Friends and comrades throughout the United States and throughout the world . . . we gather in the spirit of revolutionary love and friendship for all oppressed people of the world regardless of their race or the race and doctrine of their oppressors."¹¹² Newton then introduced his audience to the concept of intercommunalism, the notion that the rise of U.S. imperialism had "transformed all other nations into oppressed communities," making it impossible for revolutionaries like the Panthers to make their stand as nationalists or even as internationalists.¹¹³

Beyond recognizing "commonalities" among the peoples oppressed by racial capitalism, Newton contended that the very categories and concepts which defined peoples were becoming obsolete. "We once defined ourselves as nations because we had distinct geographical boundaries. . . . We see, however, that the growth of bureaucratic capitalism in the United States transformed the nation."¹¹⁴ Departing from Lenin's notion of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, Newton argued that capitalism, when traversing national boundaries to exploit the "wealth and labor of other territories," transformed both the capitalist nation *and* the subjugated territory.¹¹⁵ The rapid development of technology led to a shift in the relationships within and between nations. The "swiftness with which their 'message' can be sent to these territories has transformed the previous situation," Newton argued. Beyond becoming a colony or a neo-colony, these territories, unable to "protect their boundaries . . . political structure and . . . cultural institutions," are no longer nations, just as the U.S. is no longer a nation but an empire whose power transcends geographical boundaries.¹¹⁶

In order to be classified as a (neo)colony, he contended, a territory must have the capacity to return to its former state. "What happens when the raw materials

are extracted and labor is exploited within a territory dispersed over the entire globe?” Newton asked rhetorically. “When the riches of the whole earth are depleted and used to feed a gigantic industrial machine in the imperialist’s home?” “The people and the economy are so integrated into the imperialist empire that it’s impossible to ‘decolonize,’ to return to the former conditions of existence,” he explained. If colonies cannot “return to their original existence as nations,” Newton contended, “then nations no longer exist. . . . And since there must be nations for revolutionary nationalism or internationalism to make sense. . . we say that the world today is a dispersed collection of communities.” Newton defined a community as a small entity with a collection of institutions that exist in order to serve a small group of people. The global struggle, according to Newton’s analysis, is between the small clique of individuals—and its ruling police force—that “administers and profits from the empire of the United States, and the peoples of the world who want to determine their own destinies.”¹¹⁷ He termed the current age, in which a ruling circle uses technology to control all other people, is reactionary intercommunalism.

Grounded in dialectical materialism, Newton saw the contradiction inherent in the development of capitalism, which would eventually lead to its own demise. The “communications revolution, combined with the expansive domination of the American empire, has created the ‘global village.’”¹¹⁸ As the U.S. empire “disperses its troops and controls more and more territory, it becomes weaker and weaker. . . . And as they become weaker. . . the people become stronger.”¹¹⁹ Technology has developed to the extent that it can provide material abundance—the “material conditions exist that would allow the people of the world to develop a culture that is essentially human. . . . The development of such a culture,” Newton argued, “would be revolutionary intercommunalism.”¹²⁰ Some communities, for instance in China, Cuba, and Northern Korea and Vietnam, have “liberated their territories and have established provisional governments.”¹²¹ Nonetheless, no territory can remain safe from the long arm of the U.S. empire indefinitely.

Newton’s concept of intercommunalism emerged soon after he offered troops to the Vietnamese National Liberation Front in 1970.¹²² After making his offer, Newton remained dissatisfied with his statement of solidarity because of its central contradiction—even as he relinquished all claims to nationalism and expressed the Party’s ultimate goal as the “destruction of statehood itself,” he continued to offer support for revolutionary nationalism among the NLF and all “developing countries.”¹²³ Solidarity with the Vietnamese struggle seemed logical to Newton, for it “is also our struggle, for we recognize that our common enemy is the American imperialist who is the leader of international bourgeois domination. There is not one fascist or reactionary government in the world today,” he argued, “that could stand without the support of United States imperialism.”¹²⁴ The U.S. ceased being a nation as it became a “government of international capitalists and in as much as they have exploited the world to accumulate wealth, this country belongs to the world.” On the contrary, the developing countries “have every right to claim nationhood because they have not exploited anyone. The nationalism of which they speak is simply their rightful claim to autonomy, self-determination and a liberated base from which to fight the international bourgeoisie.” Because of their historic position as descendants of slaves without a sense of national belonging, U.S. Blacks were in a vanguard position in the international struggle against racial capitalism and imperialism. As “the vanguard party—without chauvinism or a sense of nationhood,” the Panthers offered troops to the NLF “and to the people of the world.”¹²⁵

Newton continued to hold U.S. Blacks responsible for their government's exploitative nationalism "because we are all guilty on one level or another of being the exploiter or accepting the bride of the exploiter if we are not at war with him."¹²⁶ The U.S. empire has taken the wealth of the communities of the world, centralizing it in a few hands; even those who did not participate in the exploitation have "reaped the benefits from this violation. Intercommunalism expresses our view that the people of the world own the wealth of the United States and our obligation to give them their just desserts."¹²⁷ Newton "disclaimed all of the black nationalists" in his statement, which caused conflict with other Black organizations "because all of them, even the bourgeois ones, are somewhat nationalistic in tone and in goal." His rejection of nationalism for U.S. Blacks and support of nationalism for Vietnamese rebels left him feeling as if he were "belittling them [or] being traitors to them."¹²⁸ Even for those who claimed simultaneous nationalism and internationalism, Newton noted a contradiction; a show of respect for national boundaries alongside a need for international solidarity arising from the U.S. continual violation of national boundaries. In spite of this tension, Newton sent the statement, remaining "very dissatisfied and unhappy for about a month."¹²⁹ He woke up in his Oakland apartment with the concept of intercommunalism emerging "like a vision... I had solved the contradiction in my sleep."¹³⁰

Newton's 1971 article, which appeared in *The Black Panther's* Intercommunal News section, provided both a contemporary example of reactionary intercommunalism and evidence of his willingness to transcend race in his critiques of imperialism. He wrote, "In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia this week, Ethiopian [sic] overseer Haile Selassie sat down to lunch with Spiro Agnew, the reactionary intercommunal public relations man for the U.S. Empire."¹³¹ The two leaders, which Newton charged, "expect god-like worship from the people," enjoyed a "European style luncheon... in the plush 'Jubilee Palace,' which was built with the blood and sweat of Ethiopia's oppressed citizens."¹³² Agnew and "his overseer, Selassie," he charged, shared similar goals "oppression of black and white."¹³³ He vowed that Panthers would "continue our struggle to free all people," including those led by a former icon of Black independence, "from the bonds of oppression."¹³⁴

A Universal Identity for "All the Earth's People (Not Peoples)"

Newton predicted that reactionary intercommunalism, having sown the seeds to its own destruction, would yield to revolutionary intercommunalism. Ever critical of cultural nationalists's romantic views of a pre-colonial past, he wrote, "Our hopes for freedom lie... in a future which may hold a positive elimination of national boundaries and ties; a future of the world, where a human world society may be so structured as to benefit all the earth's people (not peoples)."¹³⁵ Newton defined the transition to revolutionary intercommunalism as the phase in which the world's masses would control their own institutions and seize the means of production, allowing them the freedom to "re-create themselves and to establish communism, a stage of human development in which human values will shape the structures of society."¹³⁶ "Contradictions" such as "racism and all kinds of chauvinism," will not be resolved immediately, "But the fact that the people will be in control of all the productive and institutional units of society—not only factories, but the media too—will enable them to start solving these contradictions. It will produce new values, new identities; it will mold a new and essentially

human culture as the people will resolve old conflicts based on cultural and economic conditions.”¹³⁷ Subsequently, a qualitative change would occur and revolutionary intercommunalism would be transformed into communism—the point in history when people will “produce according to their abilities and all receive according to their needs.”¹³⁸

The most significant shift would be the creation of a universal identity. In February 1971, Newton participated in a public discussion with psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, during which he spoke at length about the concept of collective identity. Ultimately, Newton argued, the creation of an identity that “extends beyond family, tribe, or nation—an identity that is essentially human” was critical for the survival of human beings. “If we do not have a universal identity,” he declared to a somewhat hostile audience, “then we will have cultural, racial, and religious chauvinism, the kind of ethnocentrism we have now. Unless we cultivate an identity with everyone, we will not have peace in the world.”¹³⁹ Much of the resistance to Newton’s concept of intercommunalism—he was once booed while onstage—and the need for a “universal identity” was foreshadowed in the resistance many demonstrated to the BPP’s alliances with white radicals, the international focus of its newspaper, and the offer of troops to the NLF.¹⁴⁰ He believed that most of his audiences were “not ready for many of the things we talked about” and considered the problem of simplifying his ideology for the masses to be the BPP’s “big burden.”¹⁴¹ It was the *Black Panther Party* because its leadership was trying “to do everything possible to get [average people] to relate to us... [without being] too far ahead of the people[’s] thinking... We are being pragmatic... when that job is done, the Black Panther Party will no longer be the *Black Panther Party*,” he told an audience member.¹⁴²

Conclusion: If We Must Die

In early 1969, the BPP’s newspaper printed Claude McKay’s famed 1919 poem, “If We Must Die.” Like Guevara in this article’s epigraph, McKay’s poem speaks of facing a “common foe” and of a “brave,” “noble,” and decidedly masculine death. For Newton and the Black Panthers, the enemy which “far outnumbered” oppressed peoples throughout the world, “press[ing] [them] to the wall” with “their thousand blows” was the “technology and military might of the United States, [which] made it possible... to violate the territorial integrity of the peoples of the world, creating an empire here and destroying all their qualities of nationhood and making them dispersed communities of oppressed people.”¹⁴³ Newton defined “revolutionary intercommunalism” as a “higher level of consciousness than nationalism or internationalism” which “recognizes the need for unity and solidarity among the dispersed communities against” the U.S.¹⁴⁴ Those who attended the Constitutional Convention where Newton first made public his concept of intercommunalism gathered to “organize our forces to move against the evils of capitalism, imperialism and racism” and “for the solemn purpose of formulating a new constitution for a new world.”¹⁴⁵ Capitalists, Newton argued, had “used the philosophy of racism to support their wicked oppression. Through the philosophy of racism all those in this country have been taught that people are better than others because of differences in physical and social characteristics, and therefore they have a right to exploit the other.”¹⁴⁶

By the mid-1970s, the Black Panther Party had reached the height of its influence. In spite of the numerous assassinations, raids, trials, and incarcerations,

they counted over forty U.S. chapters, coalitions with Asian Americans, Latina/os, white anti-war activists, feminists, and lesbians and gay men, chapters in England, Israel, Australia, and India, and solidarity committees in Germany, China, Japan, and Peru.¹⁴⁷ Among the reasons for their international appeal was Newton's profoundly antiracist belief that "the physical and social characteristics of the people of our communities shall never be used as a basis for exclusion."¹⁴⁸

Notes

1. Yuri Nakahara Kochiyama, *Passing It On—A Memoir*, eds. Marjorie Lee, Akemi Kochiyama-Sardinha, and Audee Kochiyama-Holman (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2004), 173.
2. Huey P. Newton, "The Technology Question," in *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, ed. David Hilliard and Donald Weise (New York; London: Seven Stories Press, 2002 [1972]), 261.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 147.
5. The film was nominated for a Golden Globe and two Academy Awards, among several others.
6. Lee ends the film with photos of Tracy Chapman, Bill Cosby, and Janet Jackson wearing "X" caps.
7. Gerald Horne, "Myth and the Making of 'Malcolm X,'" *American Historical Review* 98, no. 2 (1993): 441.
8. Maulena Karenga discusses the absence of Malcolm's relationships with African leaders in New York Amsterdam News 26 December 1992, as cited in *Ibid.*, 445. Horne calls to task historians and scholars as well, stating that in its failure to give a "proper account of the play of international forces . . . Lee's flaw is not his alone.
9. *Ibid.*, 446.
10. *Ibid.* The exceptional work produced in the ten years since Horne's article was published has begun to fill the void of which Horne speaks. See, for example, Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and US Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Cynthia Young, "Soul Power: Cultural Radicalism and the Formation of a U.S. Third World Left" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1999); Robin D. G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," *Souls* 1, no. 3 (1999); Robin D. G. Kelley, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem': Black History's Global Vision, 1883–1950," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999); Nikhil Pal Singh and Andrew F. Jones, "Introduction," in *Positions, East Asia Cultures Critique; Special Issue: The Afro-Asian Century*, ed. Nikhil Pal Singh and Andrew F. Jones (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000).
11. Horne, "Myth and the Making of 'Malcolm X,'" 444.
12. For more on the meeting between Malcolm and Castro in Harlem, see Rosemary Mealy, *Fidel and Malcolm X: Memories of a Meeting* (Melbourne, Australia: Ocean Press, 1997).
13. Kochiyama, *Passing It On*, 68.
14. *Ibid.*; Yuri Kochiyama, "With Justice in Her Heart: A Revolutionary Worker Interview with Yuri Kochiyama," *Revolutionary Worker Online*, no. 986 (1998).
15. Kochiyama, *Passing It On*, 70.
16. *Ibid.*, 69.
17. *Ibid.*, 74, 71.
18. *Ibid.*, xiv.
19. Anonymous, "The Violent End of the Man Called Malcolm X," *Life*, March 26, 1965.
20. I use the term "tricontinental" to describe both the region known as the "global South" or the "Third World" and the political formation that aligned itself with this region and its emergent anticolonial and antiracist politics. Borrowing from Robert Young, I also use the phrase to invoke an identification with the 1966 Havana Tricontinental Conference, which initiated the first anti-imperialist alliance of the peoples of the three continents as well as the founding moment of postcolonial theory

in its journal, the *Tricontinental*. While the term itself was not used by these activist-intellectuals, “tricontinentalism” offers a useful framework for understanding their global, antiracist, and anti-imperialist politics. Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford and Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers). See also Besenia Rodriguez, “‘De la Esclavitud Yanqi a la Libertad Cubana’: U.S. Black Radicals, the Cuban Revolution, and the Formation of a Tricontinental Ideology,” *Radical History Review* 92 (Spring 2005): 62–87.

21. Huey Newton, ed., *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton* (New York: Random House, 1972), 32.

22. In early 1971, due to discord manipulated and intensified by Hoover’s FBI, Newton expelled several members from the BPP, including the Intercommunal Section run from Algiers by Eldridge Cleaver. In hindsight, the early seeds of these differences can be appreciated, for instance, in the divergent ways in which Newton and Hilliard on the one hand, and Cleaver, on the other, viewed Malcolm X’s influence on their organization. Cleaver looked to Malcolm as one of his heroes, precisely because he saw him as “the father of revolutionary black nationalism.” Eldridge Cleaver, *Revolution in the Congo* (London: Revolutionary Peoples’ Communications Network, 1971), 7. Hilliard and Newton depart from Malcolm X precisely because of his nationalism and his focus on Africa, to create a more expansive tricontinentalism, developing closer ties with antiracist groups of color in the U.S. and abroad. It is for these reasons that I focus here on Huey P. Newton. For more on the internal divisions within the BPP, and the FBI’s role in fomenting them, see J. Edgar Hoover, “Untitled FBI Memo re. COINTELPRO” (August 25, 1961). Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, Inc. and Black Panther Party Collections, Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, California. Fred P. Graham, “F.B.I. Files Tell of Surveillance of Students, Blacks, War Foes,” *New York Times*, March 25, 1971; Tim Butz, “COINTELPRO: Psychological Warfare and Magnum Justice,” *Counter-Spy* (1976); Ernest Volkman, “Othello,” *Penthouse*, April 1980. Ross K. Baker, “Panther Rift Rocks Whole Radical Left,” *Washington Post*, March 21, 1971; Earl Caldwell, “Internal Dispute Rends Panthers,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1971; Black Panther Party, “Expelled,” *The Black Panther*, February 13, 1971; Black Panther Party, “Enemies of the People,” *The Black Panther*, February 13, 1971; Black Panther Party, “Intercommunal Section Defects,” *The Black Panther*, March 20, 1971; Bobby Seale, “Bobby Seale: I am the Chairman of Only One Party,” *The Black Panther*, April 3, 1971.

23. Malcolm X, “Message to the Grassroots” (paper presented at the Northern Grass Roots Leadership Conference, Detroit, MI, November 10, 1964).

24. *Ibid.*

25. Melani McAlister, “One Black Allah: The Middle East in the Cultural Politics of African American Liberation, 1955–1970,” *American Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (1999): 633.

26. Republic of Indonesia and Republic of South Africa, *Asian-African Summit 2005 and the Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Asian-African Conference 1955* Asian African Summit, 2005 [cited August 18, 2005]; available at <http://asianaficansummit2005.org/history.htm>.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. Shirley Graham DuBois, *Gamal Abdel Nasser: Son of the Nile, a Biography* (New York: The Third Press, 1972), 148.

30. Indonesia and Africa, *Asian-African Summit 2005 and the Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Asian-African Conference 1955*.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Wikipedia.org, *Bandung Conference* Wikipedia.org, August 18, 2005 [cited August 18, 2005]; available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bandung_Conference. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Speech to Bandung Conference Political Committee* Fordham University, 1955 [cited August 18, 2005]; available at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1955nehru-bandung2.html>.

33. Wikipedia.org, *Bandung Conference*.

34. Indonesia and Africa, *Asian-African Summit 2005 and the Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Asian-African Conference 1955*.

35. Ted Roberts, “Cuba and the Non-Aligned Movement,” *Center for Cuban Studies Newsletter* 3, no. 4–5 (1976).

36. *Ibid.*

37. Kumar Goshal, “War and Jim Crow Set Back at Bandung,” *Freedom*, May–June, 1955.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Unknown, “Harlem Speaks . . . About Bandung,” *Ibid.*

40. Anonymous, *Ibid.*

41. Kumar Goshal, “War and Jim Crow Set Back at Bandung,” *ibid.*

42. Paul Robeson, “Greetings to the Asian-African Conference” (April, 1955). Paul Robeson Collection, Box 7:000150. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Bandung, Indonesia.

43. Ibid.
44. Indeed, as Reuters and a *New York Times* reader noted, of the 2000 representatives in attendance at the Bandung Conference, no representatives and only two advisors were women. Laili Roesad, "Women Advisers at Bandung," *New York Times*, April 22, 1955; Reuters, "No Women Delegates Among 600 at Bandung," *New York Times*, April 18, 1955.
45. Robeson, "Greetings to the Asian-African Conference."
46. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The American Negro and the Darker World," (1957). Paul and Eslanda Robeson Collection. Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC.
47. Ibid.
48. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The American Negro and the Darker World," (1957). Paul and Eslanda Robeson Collection. Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC.
49. James Boggs, "Correcting Mistaken Ideas about the Third World" (March 14, 1974). James and Grace Lee Boggs Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University Archives, Detroit, Michigan. Box 3: 16. 4.
50. Ibid., 6.
51. Ibid., 7.
52. Ibid.
53. Yuri Nakahara Kochiyama, "Third World," *Asian Americans for Action Newsletter*, October 1970, 199.
54. Ibid., 199–200.
55. McAlister, "One Black Allah," 632–633.
56. DuBois, *Gamal Abdel Nasser*, 163–164. The poem was published in several small progressive periodicals, including the December 1956 issue of *Mainstream Magazine*.
57. In a dissertation chapter, I discuss Shirley Graham DuBois's tricontinental socialism, in particular, her interest in Egypt and the Middle East, which has often been understood as pan-Africanist or dismissed entirely. I argue that her impassioned writings on the ongoing crisis in the Middle East provide significant insight into the global reach of her antiracist politics as well as her broader anti-imperialist project. See "Beyond Nation: The Formation of an Antiracist Tricontinental Discourse" (Yale University, in progress).
58. DuBois, *Gamal Abdel Nasser*, 141.
59. DuBois, *Gamal Abdel Nasser*, 152.
60. Shirley Graham Du Bois, *Gamal Abdel Nasser: Son of the Nile, A Biography* (New York: The Third Press, 1972), 154.
61. McAlister, "One Black Allah," 632–633.
62. DuBois, *Gamal Abdel Nasser*, 155; Erskine B. Childers, "The Road to Suez" (1962). Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Box 31:20. Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Cambridge, Mass., 18.
63. DuBois, *Gamal Abdel Nasser*, 159.
64. Ibid., 163.
65. Ibid.
66. Du Bois, *Gamal Abdel Nasser*, 163.
67. McAlister, "One Black Allah," 632.
68. Ibid. McAlister also discusses the Nation of Islam's endorsement of the Egyptian seizure of the Suez Canal.
69. Nasser also developed warm ties with Guinea's President Sékou Touré. DuBois, *Gamal Abdel Nasser*, 176.
70. Robin D. G. Kelley, "House Negroes on the Loose: Malcolm X and the Black Bourgeoisie," *Callaloo* 21, no. 2 (1998): 431.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Huey P. Newton, David Hilliard, and Donald Weise, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, (New York; London: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 52.
74. David Hilliard, "Introduction," in *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, ed. David Hilliard and Donald Weise (New York; London: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 11.
75. Newton, Hilliard, and Weise, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, 49.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., 50.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.

81. Ibid. Robert F. Williams, "Robert Williams Speaks at Panther Benefit," *The Black Panther*, December 27, 1969; Robert F. Williams, "Robert Williams Speaks at N.C.C.F. Panther Benefit; Detroit, Michigan," *The Black Panther*, January 3, 1970.

82. Newton, Hilliard, and Weise, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, 50.

83. Each May, the Black Panther Party's newspaper, *The Black Panther*, published a commemorative issue celebrating Malcolm X's birthday. See, for example, Black Panther Party, "The Heirs of Malcolm have picked up the gun and now stand millions strong facing the racist pig oppressor," *The Black Panther*, May 19, 1970, cover.

84. Black Panther Party, "They Work Together to Oppress Us. We'll Work Together to Resist," *The Black Panther Intercommunal News Service*, February 5, 1972.

85. Newton, Hilliard, and Weise, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, 52.

86. Hilliard, "Introduction," 11. While Malcolm X identified largely with working-class Black people and, often, with left-leaning causes, his increasing critiques of capitalism are rarely, if ever, discussed in Black Panther writings and references to his work. These critiques are highlighted to differing degrees by various scholars. See George Breitman, *Malcolm X: The Man and His Ideas* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1965); George Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1967); Eugene Wolfenstein, *The Victims of Democracy: Malcolm X and the Black Revolution* (London: Free Association Books, 1989, orig. 1981); Kelley, "House Negroes on the Loose."

87. David Hilliard, "Part Three: The Second Wave," in *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, ed. David Hilliard and Donald Weise (New York; London: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 179.

88. Huey Newton, "Revolutionary Intercommunalism," in *Revolutionary Intercommunalism and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, ed. Amy Gdala (Newton, Wales: Cyhoeddwy y Superscript, Ltd., 2004 [1971]), 27.

89. Ibid., 49.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid., 28.

93. Ibid., 49.

94. Ibid.

95. Black Panther Party Chief-of-Staff David Hilliard cites Oakland's history as pivotal in shaping Newton and the Party's internationalism. Hilliard discusses the city's rich union tradition and its racially and ethnically integrated political environment. "Solidarity is the watchword, and we are surrounded by examples collectively asserting their power. The internationalism is emphasized by the fact that Oakland, like Mobile, is an integrated community. You don't simply find whites and blacks, but yellows, browns, Native Americans too. These groups coexist in a particular way. New York is famous for its many ethnic communities. But whenever I visit there, I'm surprised at how groups don't mix: the city is multiracial, not intraracial. But on July 4, when the young people of Oakland crowd the park by the bay to watch the fireworks, the array of skin shades is beautiful and impressive; couples claim five and six strains in their blood." David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: the Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1993), 68.

96. Hilliard, "Introduction," 12.

97. Newton, Hilliard, and Weise, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, 69.

98. Ibid., 70. In the years after these comments were made, Newton forged a relationship with allies representing, "oppressed people of Japan," who formed the "Committee to Support Black Panthers in Japan." These anti-imperialist activists, as critical of Japanese imperialism as they were of U.S. imperialism, corresponded with Newton, sending a monetary donation and expressing their support for the BPP's goals and most recently, Newton's "ideas of intercommunalism," which they saw as "an enlightenment for many third-world people in Japan." Newton, in turn, expressed his desire to accept the Committee's invitation to Japan, regretting that he could not do so during his visit to the People's Republic of China. Newton wrote, "We were very glad to know that our Comrades in Japan have embraced the philosophy of revolutionary intercommunalism, for truly this will be a uniting factor between our people and yours. . . . Our struggles, as you yourselves clearly pointed out, are one struggle; our enemies are the same enemy; our victories shall be common" and reprinted the Committee's letter in the December 4, 1971 issue of *The Black Panther*. Matsuko Ishida and Japan Committee to Support the Black Panther Party to Huey Newton, September 25, 1971 Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, Inc. and Black Panther Party Collections, Box 7 (series 2): 3. Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University; Matsuko Ishida and Japan Committee to Support the Black Panther Party to Huey Newton, September 25, 1971 Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, Inc. and Black Panther Party Collections, Box 7 (series 2): 3. Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University; Huey Newton to Japan Committee to Support the Black Panther Party, November 29, 1971 Dr. Huey

P. Newton Fd. Collection, Box 7 (series 2): 3; Huey Newton to Masao Omata, November 29, 1971 Dr. Huey P. Newton Fd. Collection, Box 7 (series 2): 3.

99. For an excellent treatment of the Panthers' policing of the police, which were aimed at capturing the imagination of local black communities by "subverting the state's official performance of itself . . . turning the police . . . into the 'symbols of uniformed and armed lawlessness,'" see Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), esp. 199–211.

100. Ibid.

101. Black Panther Party for Self Defense, "Panthers Move Internationally: Free Huey at the U.N.," *The Black Panther*, September 14, 1968; Black Panther Party, "Take Black Genocide Before U.N.," *The Black Panther*, March 21, 1970.

102. Black Panther Party, "Interview: With William Patterson and Charles Garry," *The Black Panther*, July 5, 1969; Party, "Take Black Genocide Before U.N.,"; Charles W. Cheng, "The Cold War: Its Impact on the Black Liberation Struggle Within the United States, Part 1 of 2," *Freedomways* 13, no. 3 (1973).

103. See, for example, Black Panther Party for Self Defense, "Chinese Government Statement," *The Black Panther*, July 20, 1967; Black Panther Party for Self Defense, "United States 'Democracy' in Latin America," *The Black Panther*, July 20, 1967; Black Panther Party for Self Defense, "Mexican-Americans Fight Racism," *The Black Panther*, May 4, 1968; Black Panther Party for Self Defense, "Eyes of the Third World on U.S. Racism," *The Black Panther*, May 4, 1968; Black Panther Party, "Chilean Workers Struggle Against Exploitation," *The Black Panther*, October 12, 1968; Black Panther Party, "Mexican Students Fight Against Repression," *The Black Panther*, October 12, 1968; Black Panther Party, "Palestine Guerrillas," *The Black Panther*, October 19, 1968; Black Panther Party, "Anti-U.S. Rallies," *The Black Panther*, October 19, 1968; Black Panther Party, "Che Guevara on Vietnam," *The Black Panther*, October 19, 1968; Black Panther Party, "Cubans Support Movement," *The Black Panther*, October 19, 1968; Huey Newton, "Los Siete de la Raza," *The Black Panther*, June 28, 1969; Black Panther Party, "Boycott Lettuce," *The Black Panther Intercommunal News Service*, September 23, 1972; Black Panther Party for Self Defense, "Bootlicker Tshombe Captured," *The Black Panther*, July 20, 1967; Black Panther Party, "Bolivians Fight," *The Black Panther*, February 2, 1969; Black Panther Party, "Bolivian 'Niggers' U.S.-Style Racism and Capitalism in Bolivia," *The Black Panther Intercommunal News Service*, April 22, 1972; Black Panther Party, "Cuban Revolution 10 Years Old," *The Black Panther*, February 2, 1969; Black Panther Party, "The Heroic Palestinian [sic] Women," *The Black Panther*, July 26, 1969; Black Panther Party, "The Week of the Heroic Guerrilla," *The Black Panther*, October 9, 1971. Black Panther Party, "Important Statements of a Brazilian Revolutionary Leader," *The Black Panther*, August 1, 1970; Black Panther Party, "International Communique No. 1," *The Black Panther*, October 12, 1968.

104. George Murray, "George Murray, Minister of Education, Black Panther Party, Relates Revolutionary History in the Making at Havana, Cuba Press Conference," *The Black Panther*, October 12, 1968.

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid., 27.

107. Mark Lane and Huey Newton, "Huey Newton Speaks," (September 1, 1970). Dr. Huey P. Newton Fd. Collection, Box 57 (series 1): 7. Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, 6.

108. Ibid.

109. Newton, "Revolutionary Intercommunalism," 27.

110. Huey Newton, "Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention: Resolutions and Declarations, Washington, D.C." (November 29, 1970). Dr. Huey P. Newton Fd. Collection, Box 11 (series 2): 14. The idea for a Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention emerged from the Conference for a United Front Against Fascism, organized by the BPP and other community organizations and held in Oakland July 18–20, 1969. See Black Panther Party, "A United Front Against Fascism," *The Black Panther*, June 28, 1969; Eldridge Cleaver, "On the Constitution" (1970). Dr. Huey P. Newton Fd. Collection, Box 30 (series 2): 6.

111. Black Panther Party and Youth International Party, "Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention" (1970). Publications Relating to the Black Panther Party. Tamiment Library, New York University, New York.

112. Huey Newton, "Huey's Message to the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention Plenary Session, Philadelphia" (September 5, 1970). Dr. Huey P. Newton Fd. Collection, Box 11 (series 2): 14.

113. Newton, "Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention."

114. Ibid., 1.

115. Ibid.
116. Ibid., 2.
117. Newton, "Revolutionary Intercommunalism," 31.
118. Ibid., 36.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid., 31.
121. Ibid., 32.
122. Huey Newton to Provisional Government of South Vietnam and National Liberation Front, 1970 Dr. Huey P. Newton Fd. Collection, Box 47 (series 1): 24. Nguyen Thi Dinh and South Vietnamese People's Liberation Armed Forces to Huey Newton, October 31, 1970 Dr. Huey P. Newton Fd. Collection, Box 7 (series 2): 3.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid.
125. Ibid.
126. Newton, "Revolutionary Intercommunalism," 119.
127. Huey Newton, "Intercommunalism: A Higher Level of Consciousness" (nd). Dr. Huey P. Newton Fd. Collection, Box 48 (series 1): 4. 13.
128. Newton, "Revolutionary Intercommunalism," 119.
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
131. Within Black Atlantic political history, Selassie is perhaps most well known for being perceived as God incarnate among Rastafari and for leading an independent Ethiopia while it was under attack by Italy's Mussolini. By 1960, particularly after a failed revolutionary Marxist coup in December, Selassie became increasingly conservative, aligning with the U.S., U.K., and other western nations. Black Panther Party, "Agnew Visits his Country Estate—Ethiopia," *The Black Panther*, July 19, 1971.
132. Ibid.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid.
135. Huey P. Newton, "Uniting Against the Common Enemy," *ibid.*, October 23.
136. Newton, "Revolutionary Intercommunalism," 33.
137. Ibid., 45.
138. Ibid., 6.
139. Ibid., 37, 56.
140. Many Panthers, including Newton himself, have admitted that he was a far more effective thinker and writer than orator. He claimed that he received letters from "truly oppressed . . . welfare recipients . . . saying, "I thought the Party was for us; why do you want to give those dirty Vietnamese our life blood?" Ibid., 47.
141. Ibid., 46, 41.
142. Ibid., 46–47.
143. "If we must die—let it not be like hogs/ Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,/ While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,/ Making their mock at our accursed lot./ If we must die—oh, let us nobly die/ So that our precious blood may not be shed/ In vain; then even the monsters we defy/ Shall be constrained to honor us, though dead!/ Oh kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;/ Though far outnumbered let us show we're brave, And for their thousand blows deal one death blow!/ What though before us lies the open grave!/ Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,/ Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!" Claude McKay, "If We Must Die," *The Black Panther*, January 4, 1969 [1919]. Newton, "Intercommunalism: A Higher Level of Consciousness."
144. Newton, "Intercommunalism: A Higher Level of Consciousness," 13.
145. Newton, "Huey's Message to the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention," 4, 6.
146. Newton, "Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention."
147. Hilliard, "Introduction," 17.
148. Newton, "Revolutionary Intercommunalism," 5.