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# \*\*\*Blksavage: A Study On The Elements of Traditional Radical Black Political Theories & Their Contributions To Contemporary Black Political Thought

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THE COLLEGE OF  
WOOSTER

***“\*\*\*BlkSavage”***

**A STUDY ON THE ELEMENTS OF TRADITIONAL RADICAL BLACK POLITICAL  
THEORIES & THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONTEMPORARY BLACK POLITICAL  
THOUGHT**

**By: Jestin B. Kusch**

**An Independent Study Thesis  
Submitted to the Department of Political Science  
At the College of Wooster  
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements of I.S. Thesis**

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To everyone else...I love you & you matter.

### **Foreword:**

This Senior Independent study explores the transition of “radical theory” between Traditional Black Radical Theorists and individuals within the school of Contemporary Black Political Thought. I will be looking at Traditional Radical Theorists: El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, who I will refer to as Malcolm X throughout this study, and Huey P. Newton. I will compare these political theorists with the contemporary Black Political Theorists Patricia Hill-Collins, and Tupac Shakur. Each of these four theorists have focused their research around black studies and equality, and I believe that they are sufficient voices in the formation of Black Political Theory. I do understand that Malcolm X and Huey Newton do not cover the scope of radical black political thought in America, but they are a backbone to Black Theory and their work does speak towards a large portion of traditional black radical theory.

I chose this topic for a few reasons. The first has a lot to do with my mis-education of the Black Power Movement, and the mis-portrayal of the time period in media. As I went through elementary and secondary education, a majority of my knowledge of ‘Black Power’ was through the lens of Malcolm X. I believed that Black Power was a theory only held by cynical racial bigots who had a mis-understanding of what America really stood for. Instead, what I came to understand was that Black Power as a theory is more about collective action and black love/solidarity than white oppression, depending upon the theorist. Thus, I felt it important to re-educate myself on “Black Power” and other Traditional Black Radical Theories in hopes of figuring out how the theories are used in Contemporary Black Political Thought.

My second reason for choosing this topic is one presented in my Junior Independent Study. For the last three years of my life, I have struggled to take a stance on my ideological beliefs of black equality. Throughout my sophomore year of college, I took an attitude of wanting to create a post-racial society, not understanding the complications of institutional racism, or even

understanding the micro-aggressions and dangerous spaces that people of color must face each day around their identity. From readings and personal interracial conflicts, throughout the summer of my sophomore year and the beginning of my junior year, I began to identify with the theoretical perspective of a black nationalist. This transition of thought presented two problems: 1) I am biracial (black and white) and do not have the capability or willpower to denounce an entire lineage of my bloodline, and 2) I attend the College of Wooster, which is a predominately white institution (PWI) in where I have many interactions with white colleagues and professors who do not hold values of privilege. In understanding these two complications, I sought to determine my own place on the black ideological spectrum, hoping to help in the progression of African Americans in our generation. My Junior Independent Study helped me to figure out my own ideology in the realm of how Traditional Black Radical Theorist Huey Newton fit into my political framework. In my senior Independent Study, I planned to instead focus on the overall political thought within the black community, by examining the connection between contemporary theorists' beliefs and those of traditional black radical theorists.

Thus my research question is: What elements of the Traditional Radical Black Political Theorists ideologies have crossed into Contemporary Black Political Thought, and how can these elements contribute to the progression of African Americans and racial equality in the United States today? In this venture, I first will analyze each of the four theorists independently by first, accounting their theoretical evolutions, and then second, by writing on the theorists' beliefs on: blackness, violence, and power; blackness, sexuality and power; and blackness, artistic responsibility, and power. Then, I will compare these theorists with one another in the conclusion and attempt to understand the progressing ideologies that have influenced themselves in Contemporary Black Political Thought by Traditional Black Radical Theorists. This will also help

me determine whether there are any ideologies that can contribute to Contemporary Black Political Thought.

My aim is to figure how each of these four theorists analyze relationships with the three topics (violence, sexuality, and artistic responsibility) and how these themes may contribute to understand how these theorists associate with one another. Although I plan to do a cross-time analysis to see whether any contemporary theorists have borrowed from traditional theorists, I will also discuss how contemporary theorists have found ways to alter traditional theory to fit contemporary black social culture, and also have furthered traditional theory and created new ideologies that can make social change in contemporary social change.

Throughout this project, I have used the primary sources of each of the theorists. These texts include speeches, books/pamphlets, and song lyrics. Conversely, these writings serve as my foundation of understanding the theory and practices of each political theorist within this study (Malcolm X, Huey Newton, Patricia Hill Collins, and Tupac). These theorists provide an interesting perspective to this project, because they do not offer traditional studies in theory. They do not fall in traditional definitions of ‘theorist’, so the ideologies they present look at a broader spectrum of ideas than just traditional theorists would in the realm of academia. These primary texts along with a large member of secondary texts contribute towards the completion of this paper and a greater understanding of Black Political Theory.

As part of my personal examination of how traditional black radical thinking has molded itself into my theoretical principles, I have written a poetry collection. “\*\*\*BlkSavage” is a raw, uninhibited account of how black male identity has been constructed in America. The poetry collection follows the same structure as the chapters, with the addition of a first section entitled “this little light o’ mine”. The goal of “\*\*\*BlkSavage” is to embrace my own thinking around how

African American males are viewed from the perspective of all social communities (ie: white male, white female, black male and black female). I hope the collection is a reflection of my growth and development as part of Independent Study.

Ultimately, I believe this Senior Independent Study will present an argument that Traditional Radical Black Theorists are not just a relic of African American history. Their work is often under-studied in modern political theory because of the connotation associated with the theorists' ideologies and actions. This Senior Independent Study project is necessary because it can contribute to both a re-education of traditional black radical theorists in a contemporary black political theory realm, and help formulate a new approach of how black communities must operate when discussing or working towards racial equality.



## **Chapter 1: “*they sleep, we grind*”**

### **A Survey of Malcolm X’s Traditional Radical Political Thought**

“Why, Jesus himself prophesized: You shall know the truth and it shall make you free. Beloved brothers and sisters, Jesus never said that Abraham Lincoln would make us free. He never said that Congress would make us free. He never said that the Senate or Supreme Court or John Kennedy would make us free. Jesus two thousand years ago looked down the wheel of time and saw your and my plight here today and he knew the tricky high court, Supreme Court desegregation decisions, would only lull you into a deeper sleep, and the tricky promises of the hypocritical politicians on civil rights legislation would only be designed to advance you and me from ancient slavery to modern slavery.” (Malcolm X, “The Black Revolution”, 1963)

In this Chapter, I will present a survey of Malcolm X’s traditional black radical theory. In the beginning of the chapter, I will primarily write towards Black Nationalism and its intersectionality with Islamic religion/ tradition, black masculinity, and Malcolm X’s final ideology – which I will categorize as a form of internationalism. In the latter portion of this chapter, I will write on Malcolm X’s ideas of blackness, violence and power; blackness, sexuality and power, and blackness, artistic responsibility and power. It is through these lenses, and mechanisms of understanding that I hope to help structure how Malcolm X contributes to traditional black radical theory.

Throughout this chapter, I will call Malcolm X by two monikers 1) Malcolm X and 2) Shabazz. Although his other names - Detroit Red and his birth name Malcolm Little - are also important, the former two names were his primary monikers throughout his activist career, and therefore, the most appropriate ways to address Malcolm X throughout this study. It is important to note that Malcolm X never deemed himself a political theorist. Rather, he considered himself a minister, and political activist. His goal was to awaken black people. It is through this Chapter that I hope to bring people to understanding Malcolm X’s perception of a black person who is “sleep” or unconscious of his oppression, and a black person who is “woke” or understanding of his

oppression, and illustrate how this interpretation of actions towards making progression in the black community, helps measure the ideological beliefs of contemporary black political theorists.

***bring it black:***

A brief background of Malcom X's theoretical development

"... 'Cause if you are black you should be thinking black, and if you are black and you are not thinking black at this late date, well I'm sorry for you. Once you change your philosophy, you change your thought pattern, and then you go on into some action." (Malcolm X, "Ballot or the Bullet", 1964)

Michael Eric Dyson in, "Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X" describes nationalism as, "an attempt to establish and maintain a nation's identity, growing out of circumstances of social and cultural conflict." (Dyson 1994, 80) Subsequently, he defines Black Nationalism as, "a response of racial solidarity to the divisive practices of white supremacist nationalism." (ibid) This fundamental understanding, by Dyson's belief, is formed by the idea that, "black nationalism has been viewed as a response to the erosion of communal identity and the eradication of self-determination under slavery, and as a strategy to combat the destructive cultural effects resulting from the rejection of fragile black political liberties after Emancipation and Reconstruction." (ibid) Thus, Nationalism is not a white bashing agenda, but rather an exploration of African American identity and a reclamation of solidarity within that identity.

Malcolm X, in Chapter Eleven of his Autobiography, "Saved", wrote on his transition into understanding the oppression of black people and the importance of working toward equality. This time period served as his theoretical genesis. Malcolm X began talking to The Honorable Elijah Muhammad via letter during his time in jail. Within these letters, Muhammad told Malcolm X that "black prisoners, symbolize white society's crime of keeping black men oppressed and deprived and ignorant, and unable to get decent jobs, turning them into criminals." (Malcolm X, Letters,

1965) Malcolm X was re-awakened – or brought to consciousness - by this message, and continued the legacy of his parents. Malcolm X's parents both worked under Marcus Garvey's agenda and were thinkers of Pan- Africanism. This new dedication to absorbing the knowledge of injustices that were performed against black people led Malcolm X to join the Nation of Islam and commit his prison tenure to obtain as much consciousness on the black community as possible. Shabazz used the library to read on the history of racial construction, and past theorists, to begin to craft what he felt was necessary to carry out that message to others.

When released from prison, Shabazz grew very close to Muhammad. Initially he moved to Detroit, and became assistant minister at Temple One. Later he started a temple in Boston, which expanded to Philadelphia. After serving as a minister at these three temples, Malcolm X was appointed to lead Temple 7 in Harlem, which was the temple that Elijah Muhammad would regularly attend. It was here that Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad developed their tight knit relationship.

As Malcolm X began to become Elijah Muhammad's second in command, he also would teach the beliefs of Muhammad. While serving the Nation of Islam and Elijah Muhammad for his 14 year tenure, Malcolm X taught black supremacy, and Black Nationalism. Within this assertion of black supremacy, Malcolm taught his followers that black men – moors - were the originators of the world. He demonized white men, and called them "white devils." In his demonization of white people, Malcolm X would say,

Because that's what he is. What do you want me to call him, a saint? Anybody who rapes, and plunders, and enslaves, and steals, and drops hell bombs on people... anybody who does these things is nothing but a devil.

Look, Lomax, history rewards all research. And history fails to record one single instance in which the white man –as a people–did good. They have always been devils; they always will be devils, and they are about to be destroyed. The final proof that they are devils lies in the fact that they are about to destroy themselves. Only a devil–and a stupid devil at that–would destroy himself!

Now why would I want to integrate with somebody marked for destruction?  
(Malcolm X, “The Black Revolution”, 1963)

These ideas of white people being devils and black people being the most supreme people on the Earth combined with his following of Black Nationalism, led to Malcolm X being one of the leading radical thinkers of the 50’s and 60’s. These principles steered thousands of African Americans into the Muslim faith, and also pushed Malcolm X onto the FBI’s watch list.

Malcolm X was most known for his speeches and rallies. While serving to the Nation, Malcolm would travel around the country and speak to colleges, temples, and on corners, about how black men (and women) were not positioning themselves to gain equality. He, during this time, would preach for self-defense, and violence if necessary. Malcolm X would also deliver speeches across the country. His most revered speeches while under the Nation of Islam include, “Black Man’s History”, “After the Bombing/ Speech at Ford Auditorium”, “God’s Judgment of White America (When the Chickens Come Home to Roost)”, and “The Black Revolution”. In these speeches, Malcolm X acknowledges Elijah Muhammad as the visionary behind his words, and then presumes to challenge the discourse between white and black people. His ultimate goal in creating this binary is to help black people “wake up” and understand the importance of racial equality in America.

In 1962, Malcolm X began to notice Elijah Muhammad getting sick. It is also during this time that Malcolm X began to deal with internal structural issues with the Nation of Islam. As the years progressed, many people in the Nation thought that Malcolm had intentions to upstage Muhammad and take over the Nation of Islam. Malcolm X would be left out of newspaper articles, held under private watch, and eventually forced into only communication with people ordained by

Muhammad. Because of these actions, and hidden affairs and sexual misconduct performed by Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam.

In 1964, Malcolm X spent two months touring Germany, Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Beirut, Cairo, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Senegal and Morocco to further his connection to Allah and Islam. While abroad, Malcolm X realized how under the faith of Allah, every race, ethnicity and class, could come together regardless of differences, and be one. After his encounter at Mecca, Malcolm X re-conceptualized what he believed a “white man” was in the world. His prior perception of white men was built in, “specific attitudes and actions toward the black man, and toward all other non-white men.” (Malcolm X, Mecca, 1965)

Upon return, Malcolm X formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity. This organization’s aim followed the Organization of African Unity with aims to fight for the human rights of African Americans and to unite African Americans as well as people of the African diaspora. It is at this time that Malcolm X understood that religion was a divide in uniting African Americans. (Malcolm X, “Ballot or the Bullet”, 1964) Malcolm X also began the process of not demonizing white skin, but instead attacked the system of oppression ingrained in white culture, and the American capitalist society. This new message created a new more broad following for Malcolm. After a year of preaching this message, Malcolm X, who went by Shabazz in his final years, was assassinated in the Audubon Theatre by members of the Nation of Islam while delivering a speech.

***“on your marx..gat ready..fire!”***  
blackness, violence & power

“They don’t hang you because you’re Baptist; they hang you ‘cause you’re black. They don’t attack me because I’m a Muslim; they attack me ‘cause I’m black. They attack all of us for the same reason; all of us catch hell from the same enemy.” (Malcolm X, “Ballot or the Bullet”, 1964)

Malcolm X's daughter, Attallah Shabazz, discusses her father's approach on violence in her foreword of *An Autobiography of Malcolm X* co-written by Malcolm X and Alex Haley in 1965. In this foreword she expounds upon the famous and common but mis-used quote, "by any means necessary" which was coined during Malcolm X's 1964 speech at the Founding Rally of the "Organization of Afro-American Unity". Malcolm's daughter writes, "The statement was intended to encourage a paralyzed constituent of American culture to consider the range of options to which they were entitled-the "means." "By any means necessary" meant examine the obstacles, determine the vision, find the resolve, and explore the alternatives toward dissolving the obstacles" (Malcolm X, Foreword, 1965) Thus, within this section, I will use Malcolm X's writings and speeches to illustrate Malcolm X's most coveted phrase, and point to different ways that this phrase contributed towards his belief of blackness, violence and power.

Malcolm X had an understanding of how violence affected the black community long before he began to use tactics of structured violence to help in his efforts of racial progression. Shabazz saw two ways in which violence affected the black community: 1) the internal struggle of violence perpetuated by the cruel acts performed on the black community by white members of the American community; 2) the systematic and "genocidal" murder and incarcerations of black citizens. These two causal factors, were the root of Malcolm X's political philosophy. Everything he spoke for, was to end black on black violence, and the plight of "genocide" that the white community struck onto Black Americans.

Malcolm X, spoke most on his ideas against violence in his speeches given in 1964. In his speech, "The Ballot or the Bullet", Malcolm wrote speeches about his beliefs of non-violent political protests. He did not appreciate the reactionary tendencies of non-violent protests, in which people were beat, and allowed injustices to be exploited by white media outlets. Malcolm X was

not a supporter of non-violent or passive forms of protest. In this speech, Shabazz directly critiques the sit-in form of non-violent protesting, saying:

“As long as you gotta’ sit-down philosophy, you’ll have a sit down thought pattern, and as long as you think that old sit-down thought you’ll be in some kind of sit-down action. They’ll have you sitting in everywhere. It’s not so good to refer to what you’re going to do as a sit-in. That right there castrates you. Right there it brings you down. What goes with it? Think of the image of someone sitting. An old woman can sit. An old man can sit. A chump can sit. A cowards can sit. Anything can sit. Well you and I have been sitting long enough, and its time today for us to start doing some standing, and some fighting to back that up.” (Malcolm X, “Ballot or the Bullet”, 1964)

His claim against non-violent strategies of “human rights”, as well as his claims against the term “civil rights” – which is rooted in his belief that the civil rights movements were controlled by white liberals who didn’t care about black people, molded Malcolm X into “radical” and “violent” by many civil rights activists and white America. Malcolm X never directly refers to physical force or violence in this speech. He makes statements on the possibility of violence being necessity, later that year, in his speech at the “Founding Rally of the Organization for Afro American Unity”. It is here where Malcolm X first used the acclaimed political slogan “by any means necessary” to explicate the necessity of using self-defense.

In section two of the bylaws of the Founding Rally of the Organization for Afro American Unity, entitled “Self-Defense”, which I will refer to as OAAU throughout the rest of this study, Malcolm X writes specifically on his ideas of self-defense. He begins by stating, “Since self-preservation is the first law of nature, we assert the Afro American’s right to self-defense.” (Malcolm X, “By Any Means Necessary”, 1964)

In this same section Shabazz expounds on how non-violent movements are not sufficient enough to make social change in a racist imperialist country. Malcolm X speaks,

“Be nonviolent only with those who are nonviolent to you. And when you can bring me a nonviolent racist, bring me a nonviolent segregationist, then I’ll get nonviolent. But don’t teach me to be nonviolent until you teach some of those crackers to be nonviolent. You’ve

never seen a nonviolent cracker. It's hard for a racist to be nonviolent. It's hard for anyone intelligent to be nonviolent. Everything in the universe does something when you start playing with his life, except the American Negro. He lays down and says, " Beat me, daddy." So it says here: "A man with a rifle or a club can only be stopped by a person who defends himself with a rifle or a club." That's equality. If you have a dog, I must have a dog. If you have a rifle, I must have a rifle. If you have a club, I must have a club. This is equality. If the United States government doesn't want you and me to get rifles, then take the rifles away from those racists. If they don't want you and me to use clubs, take the clubs away from the racists. If they don't want you and me to get violent, then stop the racists from being violent. Don't teach us nonviolence while those crackers are violent. Those days are over." (Malcolm X, "Founding Rally of the Afro-American Unity", 1964)

Thus, he posits the necessity of using self-defense, and possibly proactive violence as a means of working towards racial equality. In his speech, Malcolm gives an example of how black people may be organized in their violent acts. He says, "I might say right here that instead of the various black groups declaring war on each other, showing how militant they can be cracking each other's heads, let them go down South and crack some of those crackers' heads." (Malcolm X, "Founding of Afro American Unity Speech", 1964) Although this example might be perceived as extreme, his overall message within this section – and even with this example – is to address the importance of self-defense in a society that continuously attempts to oppress and kill you.

Shabazz, in the "Ballot or the Bullet" and "The Black Revolution", does speak on the potential nonviolent route towards creating racial equality. In "The Black Revolution", Malcolm says, "America can save herself. But if America waits for God to step in and force her to make a just settlement, God will take this entire continent away from the white man. And the Bible says God can then give the kingdom to whomsoever he pleases." (Malcolm X, "The Black Revolution", 1963) The following year, in the "Ballot or the Bullet", Malcolm says:

This is why I say it's the ballot or the bullet. It's liberty or its death. Its freedom for everybody or freedom for nobody. America today finds herself in a unique situation. Historically, revolutions are bloody. O, yes, they are. They haven't never had a blood-less revolution, or a non-violent revolution in which you love your enemy, and you don't have a revolution in which you are begging the system of exploitation to integrate you into it. Revolutions overturn systems. Revolutions destroy systems. A revolution is bloody, but



America is in a unique position. She's the only country in history in a position to actually become involved in a bloodless revolution... But today this country can become involved in a revolution that won't take bloodshed. All she's got to do is give the black man in this country everything that's due him, everything." (Malcolm X, "Ballot or the Bullet", 1964)

Thus, Malcolm X saw ways in which white America could avoid violent conflict, which would be reparations – which were never specified in his later writings, he understood that there was a possibility that there would be no progress without force. He warned white America in the "Ballot or the Bullet", "I hope that the white man can see this, 'cause if he doesn't see it you're finished. If you don't see it you're going to become involved in some action in which you don't have a chance." (ibid).

Overall, the OOAU Section 2 bylaws represented Malcolm X's final understanding of how violence should be addressed in American racial political progression. Although, in his last years, Malcolm did not hold overall bigoted beliefs of white people– or hold onto the "white devil" ideology – that he possessed while a member of the Nation of Islam, he did believe that the only way towards working in the direction of equality, was direct action, and self-defense. These different elements, combined, is why "by any means necessary" was used. As Malcolm X's daughter said, Malcolm saw the importance of looking through various perspectives to achieve the goal of racial equality, even those that may have required violent action to carry the message of the necessity of creating equal opportunity for Americans of all races.

***Blk & eve***  
blackness, sexuality & power

"If you are in a country that is progressive, the woman is progressive. If you're in a country that reflects the consciousness toward the importance of education, it's because the woman is aware of the importance of education. But in every backward country you'll find the women are backward, and in every country where education is not stressed it's because the women don't have education."(Malcolm X)

Malcolm X approached sexuality through two lenses. The first lens, was constructed around the ideological beliefs that Elijah Muhammad had about women, and masculinity. The second lens, was formulated after Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam. Although Malcolm X does not formally speak on his ideologies of sexuality in his speeches, in his Autobiography, he talks on how he approached women. He also, within this book discusses his following of Elijah Muhammad, who did speak about the constructs of masculinity and femininity, and his discussion around gender post Nation of Islam, to some extent. These text/individuals will serve as my foundation in studying how Malcolm X looked at sexuality and its role in daily actions within the black community, and in leadership roles towards equality.

I will first layout the Qur'an's interpretations of how women should operate within their family structure, and overall in society, by using Chapter 4: Al Ni'sa (which means The Woman). Chapter 4 lays out clear gender roles in the first verse, as it says, "O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two many men and women. And keep your duty to Allah, by whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship. Surely Allah is ever a Watcher over you." (Qur'an, Al Ni'sa) In this section I will most specifically talk about two gender roles (rules) that the Qur'an lays out. They are: the possession of women by men and what happens when a women does not follow the rules laid out by Muhammad in the Qur'an. I do understand that this chapter lays out a multitude of other gender roles (rules) that men and women should abide by in Muslim faith, and that these verses have a multitude of interpretations, but these two serve to this importance to Malcolm X's definition of sexuality.

Al Ni'sa discusses how men are supposed to take care of their wife (wives). Men, although are created equal to women,

4:34 Men are the maintainers of women, with what Allah has made some of them to excel others and with what they spend out of their wealth. So the good women are obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded. And (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the beds and chastise them. So if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Surely Allah is ever Exalted, Great.

Malcolm X also used language to support this idea that men were united, and that the women were subservient to men throughout his Autobiography, and within his speeches. In the “Mecca” chapter of the Autobiography, Malcolm X meets Dr. Azzamm, his father and a friend. While at this home, Malcolm is served tea by an Arabian woman. After receiving his tea, he says, “No women were anywhere in view. In Arabia, you could easily think there were no females.” (Malcolm X, Autobiography, 1965) This neglect of acknowledgement or “invisibility” was also mentioned in his speeches.

In the Qur’an, when a woman does not follow the rules of submissiveness, they are doomed to hell. The text states, “It was narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that women will form the majority of the people of Hell. It was narrated from ‘Imran ibn Husayn that the Prophet who said (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), “I looked into Paradise and I saw that the majority of its people were the poor. And I looked into Hell and I saw that the majority of its people are women.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 3241; Muslim, 2737) Thus, although many can interpret the text many ways, what this text alludes to, which is also spoken on in Al- Nisa women are probable to go to hell more than men. This consistency of male dominance is placed all throughout the Qur’an.

That being said, the Qur’an does not encourage any overt and intentional mistreatment of women. The text says,

"O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should you treat them with harshness, that you may take away part of the dowry you have given them - except when they have become guilty of open lewdness. On the contrary live with

them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them, it may be that you dislike something and Allah will bring about through it a great deal of good." [Noble Quran 4:19]

There are many counter arguments to the patriarchal perception of the Nation of Islam. (Sullivan 795, 1991) Many Muslim scholars have stated that the Qur'an has argued for gender equality amongst men and women and that Allah only honors those who look at both genders as equals. (ibid) Although this is an argument that has been presented about the Qur'an, I believe Malcolm X held patriarchal and sexist tendencies in his approach to leading the Nation of Islam.

When Malcolm X, addressed the audience during his speeches, he would only address "his brothers." As he spoke within "By Any Means Necessary", he would only address black men when talking about various ways to approach racial equality. Because men were supposed to protect women, Malcolm X felt as though the women were supposed to be obedient, or follow their men in the struggle towards equality. In his lecture entitled: "On Women, Marriage, and Leadership & Study" Shabazz speaks on the role women should play in supporting their men. He says, "when a man is reading a book, you should read with him, not encourage him to watch television." (Malcolm X, On Women, Marriage, Leadership & Study – YouTube)

Alex Haley also spoke on Malcolm X's dialogues and ideas about women in his chapter of the Autobiography. Alex quotes Malcolm saying,

"Woman who cries all the time is only because she knows she can get away with it," he had scribbled. I somehow raised the subject of women. Suddenly, between sips of coffee and further scribbling and doodling, he vented his criticisms and skepticisms of women. "You never can fully trust any woman," he said. "I've got the only one I ever met whom I would trust seventy-five per cent. I've told her that," he said. "I've told her like I tell you I've seen too many men destroyed by their wives, or their women.

He said, "Whatever else a woman is, I don't care who the woman is, it starts with her being vain. I'll prove it, something you can do anytime you want, and I know what I'm talking about, I've done it. You think of the hardest-looking, meanest-acting woman you know, one of those women who never smiles. Well, every day you see that woman you look her right in the eyes and tell her 'I think you're beautiful,' and you watch what happens. The first day she may curse you out, the second day, too-but you watch, you watch, you

keep on, after a while one day she's going to start smiling just as soon as you come in sight."

(Alex Haley, Prelude, 1965)

These statements, have allowed me to determine Malcolm X's attitude on sexuality. Shabazz places heavy emphasis on male leadership, and men "brothers" handling the business of racial equality. Although he had an understanding that women had a place in society, he subjugated their position into merely taking care of the family, and supporting the husband – or man of the household. Men were supposed to carry themselves with authority, and hold a level of leadership within the household, and subsequently in their society.

*sableXpress:*  
**blackness, artistic responsibility, & power**

"This is this book's dedication, "he said. I read: "This book I dedicate to The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, who found me here in America in the muck and mire of the filthiest civilization and society on this earth, and pulled me out, cleaned me up, and stood me on my feet, and made me the man that I am today." (Malcolm X, Autobiography, 1965)

Malcolm X prided his Autobiography, and the process that he wanted to follow in expressing his life story. Thus, Malcolm chose Alex Haley to co-write this piece of literature hoping to forever transform the "black autobiography." Previously the "black autobiography" was written about a particular black lived experience, but edited by white authors, which in many cases delegitimized the narrative. Malcolm X chose Alex Haley, a black author/ film maker/ black researcher, in hopes of authenticating Malcolm's life through writing. In this section, I will discuss why Malcolm felt this process was important in journey of artistic expression, and discuss the process that both Shabazz and Haley used to collaborate on what is revered as one of America's most prized pieces of literature. I will also discuss Malcolm's photography career, and how he used pictures as a way of uncovering various racial tensions for the Nation of Islam. These two

devices will serve as the foundation of understanding Malcolm X's approach towards artistic responsibility.

In the epilogue of Malcolm X's autobiography, Alex Haley discusses the process that he and Malcolm X took to co-write the piece of literature. Initially, Malcolm X refused to collaborate with Haley, with assumption Haley was working for the "devils" (white men), or the FBI. (Malcolm X, Autobiography, 1965) After many conversations, and an interview with Playboy, Alex Haley forwarded the idea of an Autobiography to Malcolm X. Malcolm X, worriedly responded, "I will have to give a book a lot of thought." (Malcolm X, Autobiography, 1965) A few days later, Malcolm X called Haley and approved the idea, with the criterion that all collections of money from the book would immediately go to the Nation of Islam. The other criteria, between Haley and Malcolm was: "Nothing can be in this book's manuscript that I didn't say, and nothing can be left out that I want in it." (Malcolm X, Autobiography, 1965)

A few months passed, and the writing process began. Malcolm would visit Haley at his apartment for two- to- three hour writing/interview sessions. Initially these conversations were "spooky" – Malcolm X's slang word for not copasetic – but this was because of Shabazz's distrust for African American authors of the time. Alex Haley in epilogue of the Autobiography says, "On television, in press conferences, and at Muslim rallies, I had heard him bitterly attack other Negro writers as "Uncle Toms," "yard Negroes," "black men in white clothes." (Malcolm X, Autobiography, 1965) This distrust of African American authors, as well as his Christian background left Alex Haley with not much content to place together, or as he said, "almost nothing but Black Muslim philosophy, praise of Mr. Muhammad, and the "evils" of "the white devil." (Malcolm X, Autobiography, 1965)

Haley became more frustrated on the writing process, and was prepared to retire the entire writing project, when he discovered Malcolm X constantly writing messages onto his coffee napkins, and newspaper margins. The first message Haley collected from Shabazz held, "Here lies an YM, killed by a BM, fighting for the WM, who killed all the RM." (Malcolm X, Autobiography, 1965) Shabazz would write many mantras onto paper, and Haley would transcribe these philosophical quotes onto his notebook, and probe Malcolm about their meaning.

The first light that Haley found in working with Malcolm came when Haley probed Malcolm on his mother. Haley quotes one of Malcolm's speaking's on his mother saying, "She was always standing over the stove, trying to stretch whatever we had to eat. We stayed so hungry that we were dizzy. I remember the color of dresses she used to wear-they were a kind of faded-out gray. . . ." (Malcolm X, Autobiography, 1965) From this moment forward, Malcolm X would become very vulnerable in telling his life story. Haley says Malcolm would spend entire evenings spilling over memories from his childhood.

This process lasted two years, and included exchanges of letters, phone calls, and more face to face interviews. Malcolm X, throughout these two years, purged facts about his childhood, his time pre-Muhammad, his time with Muhammad, and his time after leaving the Nation of Islam. Malcolm X would die before his publication was complete, but Alex Haley claims to have held onto his original promise of only speaking the facts of Shabazz's life. After his trip to Mecca, Malcolm X updated Haley on Mecca as much as possible – although it was reported that he might have had the possibility of another book just from this trip. (Malcolm X, Autobiography, 1965) Although Malcolm X was able to see many of the final chapters, the copy that America has come to love was submitted by Haley. Nonetheless, the book was published, and is one of the top-selling pieces of literature in America to date.

Malcolm X also understood the importance of artistic responsibility from a photographic perspective. His distrust of the “white devils” and even black followers of white liberals led Malcolm X to seek ways to portray the black lifestyle through black means. Often, Malcolm X would walk around with a camera, and take pictures of families talking, or children at play. His aim was to share positive images of black culture, so that people would not associate black people – and most specifically members of the Nation of Islam – as violent savages. Malcolm X understood the power of visual media, and also understood that if he was in control of the media, he would be able to alter people’s perceptions of these two groups, and also peoples interpretations of the Civil Rights Movement.

Malcolm X, by many, was seen as a “visual strategist”. This meant, in many cases, that Malcolm X took pride in composing these pictures to spread positive images of black culture. Eve Arnold, worked alongside Shabazz in many photography shoots. She said, in one situation Malcolm walked, “10 women in traditional Black Muslim attire and posing them for a photo shoot.” She went on to say, “Malcolm set up the shots and I clicked the camera. It was hilarious,” (Berger, New York Times, 2012) these photos would be the portrayal of the Black Community and the Nation of Islam. Malcolm X, because of his dedication to equality, even understood the magnitude of artistic responsibility in racial equality.

***\*alarm clock buzzes\****  
Conclusion

In conclusion, Malcolm X followed his principles of waking up black people from their state of ignorance around the subject of living equally in America. I believe that not many people hold the original intent of Malcolm X’s ideas – derived from Elijah Muhammad. Rather, I believe specific ideas have been passed down, most specifically to the Black Power movement, and the Black Arts movement – which in turn have been passed down to black political thought today.



Specifically, I think Malcolm X's approach to blackness, sexuality and power, and blackness, artistic responsibility and power, have the greatest magnitude following his death.

When speaking on blackness, sexuality, and power, elements of Malcolm X's black masculinity that have evolved into today's thought include black patriarchy – or the assumed male leadership of black households, black female repression by black men – or the idea that women must conform to the man's household identity, as opposed to build their own – except in the cases of single parent households, and family dynamics including children. The structure, or importance of hierarchy has been passed on generation by generation, and is still present in contemporary black political thought.

## **Chapter II: “*them’ some bad ass niggas*”**

### **A Survey of Huey Newton’s Traditional Black Political Thought**

“I think what motivates people is not great hate, but great love for people.” (Huey Newton)

In this Chapter, I will present a survey of Huey Newton’s traditional black radical theory. In the beginning of the chapter, I will primarily write towards what has been coined Huey Newton’s body of theoretical principles – which has been labelled “Black Liberation Theory” and it intersects with The Black Power Movement, Huey Newton’s views of masculinity and femininity, and overall black progression. In the latter portion of this chapter, I will write on Huey Newton’s ideas of blackness, violence & power; blackness, sexuality & power; and blackness, artistic responsibility & power. It is through these lenses and mechanisms of understanding that I hope to help show how Huey Newton adds to traditional black radical theory and further Contemporary Black Political Thought.

In *Huey Newton, The Radical Theorist*, (2002), Huey Newton’s ideologies are broken down into four progressing components: Black Nationalism; Revolutionary Socialism; Internationalism; and Intercommunalism. I will use these four components to illustrate the political thought of Huey Newton, and the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, because they accurately show the variety and growth of Huey Newton’s thought during the Black Power Movement. These theories draw from a variety of other political theorists and public figures, and collectively develop the political thought of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. More importantly, these ideologies helped Huey Newton to develop his own beliefs towards black people and assisted the formation of the 10 Point Program. The 10 Point Program was distributed primarily throughout the Oakland community, but was also printed in the Party’s newspaper, “*The Black Panther*”, which was sold throughout the United States. (Jeffries 2002, 12) Then, I will set out Huey

Newton's ideas on the black community, and what he felt would lead to the ultimate freedom of African Americans.

**Section One: "*the black torah*"**  
A Survey of Huey Newton's "Black Liberation" Ideology

***genesis:***  
Black Nationalism

"Black Power is giving power to people who have not had power to determine their destiny." (Huey Newton)

A majority of Huey Newton's Black Nationalism theory branched from the theories of the late Malcolm X's writings and speeches. Jeffries states that, Huey Newton defined Black Nationalism as a "black community control free of outside interference, particularly of capitalists and police." (Jeffries 2002, 66) When speaking of a nation, Huey Newton believed that the characteristics of a nation included, "economic independence, cultural determination, control of the political institutions, territorial integrity, and safety." (ibid) The Black Power movement focused on placing "an emphasis on the term 'black' and demanding that it be substituted for 'Negro' or 'colored' as a general designation for the race," (Jeffries 2002, 64) and that it also redefine the black experience in America. Newton specifically followed the thought of Malcolm X on Black Nationalism, saying, "We believe that the Black Panther Party exists in the spirit of Malcolm ... the Party is a living testament to his life and work." (Newton 2002, 11)

Paul Alkebulan believes that Malcolm X contributed to four ideas with Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party: "(1) that African Americans can use arms to achieve political aims; (2) that individuals could achieve spiritual and mental rejuvenation through participation in the movement; (3) that blacks should open to alliances with other ethnic groups, but only on a basis of mutual self-respect; and (4) that the Civil Rights Movement was a part of an international

struggle against racism and Westernized capitalism.” (Alkebulan 2009, 9) Newton also learned from Malcolm X, that white people were “devils” and that America was not the “promised land” for black people.

After leaving college, Huey Newton was attracted towards creating a separate state, in which black people were in control of all social, economic and political processes. He said, “We [the Black Panther Party] realized the contradictions in society, some oppressed people in the past had solved some of their problems by forming into nations.” (Jeffries 2002, 65) He maintained that if blacks wanted to protect and preserve their own subculture, indeed to be masters of their own fate, the answer was to demand a separate nation within the continental United States. (Jeffries 2002, 65) He understood, soon after, that the United States would not relinquish a number of states to black people, comparing it to imperialism, saying, “If imperialism has prevented those countries from being free 15,000 miles away, it is unlikely that it would allow a group of people right here in North America to separate.” (Jeffries 2002, 65) Huey Newton, later the next year, believed that even if black people would form their own nation that it would lead to the “extinction of black people.” (Jeffries 2002, 65) He believed this “extinction” would occur because if African Americans separated from the United States, they would still possess the American capitalist mentality. This ideology, Newton believed would lead to a Black America that eventually would still be dominated by the superior world power, America. He also believed that there was no possibility of a racially equal society between blacks and whites because it would “be economically, politically and socially inimical to white interests.” (Jeffries 2002, 65)

Newton understood that black people were not a nation, which he defined as, “a group of people who have in common, their own land or territory, economic system, culture and language.” (Jeffries 2002, 68) Instead, he stated, “Black People are a set of communities.” (Jeffries 2002,

174) Newton understood that even within the black community, middle class and lower class blacks have different lived experiences. Thus, the likelihood of all African Americans coming together to upset the American structure was minimal, and from these revelations he reformed his theory.

*exodus:*  
Revolutionary Socialism

“What’s apparent might not actually be a fact. What appears to be a contradiction may be only a paradox.” (Newton 1973, 166)

In 1969, Huey Newton and The Black Panther Party for Self Defense changed their viewpoint on the progression of African Americans from predominately race to both race and class. (Jeffries 2002, 69) Newton’s political approach switched from the American capitalist to the revolutionary socialist approach, which in turn helped in the foundation of the 10 Point Program this was clearest in point III (Jeffries 2002, 69-70) “*We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our black Community.*” (blackpantherparty.org)

This redevelopment transformed the party’s past mindset from demonizing white people to criticizing all oppression and capitalism. Huey Newton says, “I agreed that some white people could act like devils, but we could not blind ourselves to a common humanity. More important was how to control the situation to our advantage. These questions would not be answered overnight, or in a decade, and time and again the students and I went for hours, getting nowhere. We talked right past each other. The racism that dominated their lives had come between us, and rational analysis was the victim.” (Newton 2002, 75) The approach not only challenged oppression by white Americans, but also it called to action the black middle class men who did not support the Black Panther Party revolutionary community programs or the lower class black community as a whole. (Jeffries 2002, 70)

In *Huey Newton's Reader* (2002), Huey Newton outlines his way of promoting his definition of socialism in a capitalist society. Huey Newton believed the only way to end black inequality was a breakdown of the capitalist economic system. He thought that the efforts of those who fought for equality during the civil rights movement were diluted because they focused primarily on race, ignoring the class issues, still a struggle amongst black people.(Jeffries 2002, 70) Huey Newton said that “black capitalism would replace one devil with another.” (Jeffries 2002, 71) Thus, Huey Newton in 1970 called for “a more equal distribution of income, goods and services.” (Jeffries 2002, 71) These ideas were also part of the 10 point program.

***leviticus:***  
Internationalism

“There is no reason for the establishment to fear me, but it has every right to fear the people collectively – I am one of the people.” (Huey Newton)

In 1970, Huey Newton reformed his ideas from just studying America, to looking at Black American interaction with the global stage. He dubbed this transition as internationalism. “Internationalism represents a struggle to expand democracy and end national and colonial oppression of blacks throughout the world.” (Jeffries 2002, 74) Huey Newton was interested in how the allies of African Americans across the world could help contribute to the progression and equality of black people in America. “The Panthers saw their struggle in the United States as not only necessary for the liberation of blacks and other oppressed people in America but as a struggle whose success was critical for the liberation of exploited nations worldwide, especially developing nations.” (Jeffries 2002, 74) Huey Newton wanted to link the oppressed people across the world so that when united with the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, they would “crush” the “ruling circle”. (Jeffries 2002, 75) Huey stated, “We join the struggle of any and all oppressed people all

over the world, as well as in this country, regardless of color, who are attempting to gain freedom and dignity,” (Jeffries 2002, 75)

The Black Panther Party and Huey Newton supported all revolutions of oppressed peoples, as long as they were international in their intentions. Newton followed Marx’s ideas of believing that, “people of the same social class from different countries actually had more in common with each other than people of different classes within the same country.” (Jeffries 2002, 77) From this time, the Black Panthers developed their slogan, “All Power to the People.” (Jeffries 2002, 77) In creating a movement that encouraged power to all races, Newton wanted people to understand, “that the oppressor is most vulnerable when the oppressed of all races move in solidarity into the arena of mass struggle.” (Jeffries 2002, 77)

After a series of international travels, and while studying in China, Newton discovered that as, “Internationalists we had to be also Nationalists, or at least acknowledge nationhood. Internationalism, if I understand the word, means the interrelationship among a group of nations. But since no nation exists, and since the United States is in fact an empire, it is impossible for us to be Internationalists.” (Newton 2002, 170)

#### ***numbers:***

#### **Revolutionary Intercommunalism**

“The first lesson a revolutionary must learn is that he is a doomed man. Unless he understands this, he does not grasp the essential meaning of his life.” (Huey Newton)

Newton rejected the ideas of America being a nation because, it did not meet the definition of his word nation, which is, “a society with economic independence, cultural determination, control of the political institutions, territorial integrity, and safety.” (Newton 2002, 169) Thus, his transition from internationalism to revolutionary Intercommunalism began in his understanding that states were not nations, but rather a set of communities.

“The evidence shows very clearly that the United States is not a nation for its power transcends geographical boundaries and extends into every territory of the world. Through modern technology the United States can control the institutions of other countries. Hence, so long as it can control the political forces, the cultural institutions, the economy, the resources and the military of other territories at will and for the narrow interests of a small clique then we cannot say that America is a nation any longer— it is an empire.” (Jeffries 2002, 79)

Using this reasoning, he considered the international stage a set of communities. (Jeffries 2002, 79) He defined a community as, “a small unit with a set of institutions that exists to serve a certain group of people.” (Jeffries 2002, 79) Newton argued, that the biggest fight for African Americans and other minority communities across the globe would only be solved if everyone developed the ideology of Revolutionary Intercommunalism.

Huey Newton’s Revolutionary Intercommunalism theory is thought to be his “biggest theoretical contribution” to the Black Liberation Ideology. (Jeffries 2002, 78) It was known as his most revolutionary idea, and was heavily influenced by Lenin and Marx. (Jeffries 2002, 78) He says, “The Black Panther Party is a Marxist-Leninist party because we follow the dialectical method and we also integrate theory with practice.

Intercommunalism pushes for egalitarianism and argues for the abolition of divisive class distinctions. (Jeffries 2002, 80) In transforming the power structure of money and goods within the various communities, to the people, Huey Newton predicted that there would be an equality of people within those communities unlike what has been seen in America. Newton defined these communities as, “a comprehensive collection of institutions that serve the people who live there.” (Newton 2002, 171) When these communities reallocate the wealth to all peoples, Newton believes



that power will be placed back to the people, which would destabilize the centralized power of the rich across the world.

*on your marx... gat ready.. fire!*  
blackness, violence & power

“...Huey understood that the brothers had no guidelines about how to deal with the pigs. So Huey went off in the area of law and he found out the brothers respected law. Huey knew something about law, and he could use it to make it serve him. That’s all he was doing, he was bringing them basic things in everyday life about law. That’s what Huey dug; he understood that shit. Huey would take those thirteen basic points and try to show a dude where he was fucked up in in the ghetto. That’s very important in understanding how the Party first began to function.” (Seale 1969, 86)

In order to develop their political framework around violence and power, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale used past political philosophers to assist in positioning themselves in their stance of contemporary thought. The two read Mao, Fanon, Guevara and other revolutionaries in history to help to understand how their lived experiences could aid the state of Black inequality in America. This is where Newton and Seale discovered the only way to meet oppression is through force and self-defense. (Newton 1973, 117) Furthermore, it was during this time that Robert Williams influenced the decision of using guns as primary defense for the party. (Newton 1973, 117)

In 1967, Huey Newton presented a two-part series of speeches entitled, “In Defense of Self-Defense.” In these speeches Newton presents the necessity of intentional organization and mobility in creating sustainable social reform. First, Newton recognizes the importance of resistance in supporting a system where laws are only beneficiary to the oppressive group. He gives an example of the American Revolution to illustrate the possibility of recreating a system that positions the oppressed in a situation of power. Newton says,

Men were not created in order to obey laws. Laws are created to obey men. They are established by men and should serve men. The laws and rules which officials inflict upon poor people prevent them from functioning harmoniously in society. There is no disagreement about this function of law in any circle--the disagreement arises from the question of which men laws are to serve. Such lawmakers ignore the fact that it is the duty of the poor and unrepresented to construct rules and laws that serve their interests better. Rewriting unjust laws is a basic human right and fundamental obligation. (Newton 1973, 134)

In order to demand power, Huey Newton believes it is first imperative that black people unite under a common identity. He says, “When Black people really unite and rise up in all their splendid millions, they will have the strength to smash injustice. We do not understand the power in our numbers. We are millions and millions of Black people scattered across the continent and throughout the Western Hemisphere.” (Newton 1973, 135) After he forwards this necessity, he argues that the black masses must each acquire their own weapons as a means of protecting themselves. Simultaneously, he believes that black people must oppose the oppressive system by any means necessary, which he ultimately feels will result in a war between the “imperialist American regime and the black masses internationally (and other oppressed groups)”.

In the second portion of the “In Defense of Self Defense” series of Huey Newton’s collection of speeches, he introduces the claim that, “Historically the power structure has demanded black people cater to their desires and to the ends of the imperialistic racism of the oppressor. The power structure has endorsed those Black leaders who have reduced themselves to nothing more than apologizing parrots.” (Newton 1973, 138) In this speech, Newton focuses more on the leadership – which he refers to as the vanguard party – and the consciousness of black people when looking at violence in a revolution. I will first identify what Huey Newton believes should be demanded of the black community by means of violence, consciousness and revolution, and then follow that by Newton’s beliefs on the vanguard party, and how African Americans might

be able to holistically change the thought of the black community to follow the new approach that Newton lays out earlier in the speech.

Newton posits that historically black people, in order to receive marginalized power by “the man,” must have to satisfy the authority of the system and never disrupt or overstep their position. Thus, Newton also argues, “the oppressor has no rights that the oppressed is bound to respect.” (ibid) This means that, those who advocate for non-violent means in a social change process are bound to fail in their efforts, because the oppressor/ system do not owe the oppressed anything. Non-violent activists, Newton maintains, are kept close to white leaders and become the spokespersons for the oppressors’ theoretical principles. In order to defeat the system, Newton states that non-violent acts of social change do not satisfy the overall objective of repositioning America’s political system to favor black people. Instead, Newton states that the black masses must follow Malcolm X’s destiny for the black community, and achieve liberty “by any means necessary.” (ibid)

Huey Newton does not believe that irrational violence is the objective in sustaining a revolution, though. In his speech, “The Correct Handling of a Revolution,” which was delivered later that month, he lays out the necessity of black people to approach violence with intention, or else the damage/ casualties caused from the actions are in vain. He states,

The Black masses are handling the resistance incorrectly. When the brothers in East Oakland, having learned their resistance fighting from Watts, amassed the people in the streets, threw bricks and Molotov cocktails to destroy property and create disruption, they were herded into a small area by the gestapo police and immediately contained by the brutal violence of the oppressor's storm troops. Although this manner of resistance is sporadic, short-lived, and costly, it has been transmitted across the country to all the ghettos of the Black nation. (Newton 1973, 142)

After the effort to present their ideology and platform, the party took further steps in practicing their ideas in the black community. They began by using Huey’s knowledge of

California Gun Laws and started ‘patrolling police’ in the Oakland region. ‘Patrolling police’ involved following police in the Oakland community who were on-duty, to protect the community from police brutality. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense had strong views against the way police in Oakland followed their oath of responsibility to protect their community. Newton felt the only way to place pressure on the cops was to carry guns out in the open – which was legal by California Law. (Seale 1969, 88) With a combination of guns and common sense in how to approach the police, Huey Newton and the other members of the party attempted to provide protection against police and other oppressive forces in the Oakland area.

The biggest highlight of the Black Panthers carrying weapons occurred on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1967, when the Black Panthers took to the California State Capitol in Sacramento to deliver Mandate One. (Seale 1969, 153) On this day, the Panthers used the media, as well as the state representatives to give their first proclamation to the California Community. Mandate One is attached as Appendix II. Newton writes, In Mandate One,

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense calls upon the American people in general and the black people in particular to take care not of the racist California legislature which is now considering legislation aimed at keeping the black people disarmed and powerless at the very same time that racist police agencies throughout the country are intensifying the terror, brutality, murder, and repression of black people. (Seale 1969, 60-61)

The Mandate includes a proclamation to the black community warning them against the Mulford Act – which was proposed to limit individual’s gun rights in California. This act was proposed in reaction to the Black Panthers increasing number of weapons being carried in public. The Mandate also includes statements about past injustices America has led, including Native American camps, slavery, and Vietnam. The speech was broadcasted across the state and guaranteed a movement across California that attempted to stop the Mulford Act from being voted into legislation. The biggest problem that arose from Mandate One was the emphasis placed on the Black Panthers

carrying guns, rather than their actual speech. The distraction of news sources placing emphasis on guns rather than the message diluted Newton's overall message, and helped him to understand that the best approach for black progression would be grassroots.

***Blk & eve:***  
Blackness, sexuality & power

“Friends are allowed to make mistakes. The enemy is not allowed to make mistakes because his whole existence is a mistake, and we suffer from it. But the women's liberation front and gay liberation front are our friends, they are potential allies and we need as many allies as possible.” (Newton 1973, 160)

There are two opposing arguments on how Huey Newton approached how he felt masculinity and femininity contributed to power within the black community. On one hand, there are a multitude of witnesses and texts that suggest that Newton was misogynist and cared more about black men and their liberation than the struggle for gender inequality. On the other hand, Newton has speeches and texts that suggest that he was also interested in gender equality, and felt that women's liberation efforts were just as important as black liberation efforts. In this section I will delve into the complicated nuances of Huey Newton's approach towards sexuality, the contradictions between his theoretical principles and his actions, and how what influenced how his approach affected traditional black radical theory.

I will first use Huey Newton's speech, “The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements,” to examine how Newton connected the oppression of black people with the oppression of the LGBTQ+ community and women. He begins this speech by critiquing the homophobic and misogynist nature of the black community. He then critiques a new approach that the black male community must follow in order to successfully make revolutionary change. Newton states:

We say that we recognize the women's right to be free. We have not said much about the homosexual at all, but we must relate to the homosexual movement because it is a real

thing. And I know through reading, and through my life experience and observations, that homosexuals are not given freedom and liberty by anyone in the society. They might be the most oppressed people in the society. (Newton 1973, 158)

Newton states that it is more important, when these oppressed groups come together, to analyze how each group approaches their behaviors and attitudes towards the revolution, as opposed to the actions and private behaviors of each social group. Newton states,

If they do things that are unrevolutionary or counterrevolutionary, then criticize that action. If we feel that the group in spirit means to be revolutionary in practice, but they make mistakes in interpretation of the revolutionary philosophy, or they do not understand the dialectics of the social forces in operation, we the respect women's liberation and gay liberation movements should criticize that and not criticize them because they are women trying to be free. And the same is true for homosexuals. We should never say a whole movement is dishonest when in fact they are trying to be honest. They are just making honest mistakes. Friends are allowed to make mistakes. (ibid)

In order for this coalition to work, Newton believed it was important to discuss the miscommunication and confusion between the various lived experiences. Primarily in relation to homosexuality and homophobia, Newton sought to make sure that the “fear” of a loss of manhood was non-existent in the progress of creating revolutionary change. After this dialoging happened, Newton believed that the primary issue was to erase vocabulary that further oppressed each social group. These words included, but were not limited to, “bitch”, “faggot” and “punk.” Once these words were eradicated, and a pure coalition that was rooted in breaking down the system of oppression was formed, Newton held that real change was possible.

What makes this speech very fascinating, is that to some extent it does not match the actions of Huey Newton and other Black Panthers who fell under his theoretical framework. In the second portion of this section, I will focus on these actions, and also other speeches that expose Huey Newton’s complications with blending together all oppressed groups to generate a coalition that would holistically seek a revolutionary change.

Bobby Seale writes about women's roles in the Black Panther Party in a chapter of his book, *Seize of Time*. He states that men of the Black Panther Party had an issue with male chauvinism. Male chauvinism, is defined as, "male prejudice against women; the belief that men are superior in terms of ability, intelligence, etc." (Seale 1969, 153) Seale sees this ideology as an issue that plagues the entire black male community. He presents a multitude of examples on how male chauvinism has directly impeded on the mentality of black males in the Black Panther Party. The biggest issue, by my analysis, was by Seale in this chapter is analysis of black ranking officials and using their officer positions to sexually use females in the organization.

Bobby Seale states that, "Originally, we had established rank in the Black Panther Party, according to the political work and political duties of each member. A captain was generally a coordinator of events. That was his political duty. We judged a person on whether or not he took responsibility, because one of the Party's principles is that you can delegate authority but you cannot delegate responsibility." (Seale 1969, 155) Although many times, women were not positioned into places of power based upon their skill set, men took their power further and coerced females into sexual relations by using their ranks as a means of exploitation. (Seale 1969, 156) Seale says, "We broke this stuff up right away, and placed it forth that brothers who were captains or any other rank couldn't be using their rank just to go to bed with a sister. At the same time, it didn't go just one way. A few of the sisters had a tendency to go along with this. (ibid) The two felt it important that they eradicated the actions of these Black Panther males, before moving forwards in any other counter-revolutionary strategies.

Huey and Seale feel that this corruption is based upon the ideology that all men have face a pimp complex in their interactions with women. I do believe that "pimp" in its connotation today,

might not fit the etymology the Huey and Seale followed in their ideology, but the backing they give fit the way that they spoke on pimp at the time. Newton

The two leaders believed that overall, black women in the party, and essentially in the country operated best when women have the same set of rights as men. This ideology Newton saw the most in the members of the Black Panthers Party. Seale speaks for Newton and says, “We’ve found that the sisters work better in the Party when they're treated in this way. If a sister's in charge and taking responsibility to do something, the brothers follow her orders. They don't say, "I ain't going to listen to no woman." (Seale 1969, 157) Essentially, in ideology, the two placed heavy emphasis on the belief that sexual orientation and gender equality were important in fighting against oppression. This ideological belief never fully reached its potential in the Black Panther Party or in the black community, but they did criticize black chauvinism have been worked towards been eliminated.

***sableXpress:***

blackness, artistic responsibility, & power

After searching a multitude of databases, and examining many speeches of Huey Newton, I can conclude that there is no statement for or against artistic responsibility in Huey Newton’s theoretical framework. That being said, I assume that because Newton followed very closely the blueprint of Malcolm X and his political ideas on the black community, he felt artistic responsibility had a place in the realm of social change . Malcolm X accepted that artistic expression is a necessary outlet in social change, and that artists must be an aesthetic representation for the struggle, and ultimately liberation. Beyond this assumption, there is nothing to suggest that artistic responsibility was a significant issue for Newton, more.

***once you go blk...***

Conclusion:



In conclusion, although Huey Newton progressed the most theoretically in traditional radical black political theory, some of his political theories have crossed into Contemporary Black Political Thought. These thoughts and actions include 1) the viewpoint on the police/ the usage of the word “pig” to signify the presence of police, 2) the patriarchal household beliefs/ necessity of “manhood” and “household definitions” in the black community, and 3) the legacy of Black Nationalism and its importance on – especially in viewpoints of the Black Panther Party.

### **Chapter III: “*i, too, am womanist*”**

#### **A Survey of Patricia Hill Collin’s Contemporary Black Political Thought**

Despite long standing claims by elites that Blacks, women, Latinos, and other similarly derogated groups in the United States still remain incapable of producing the type of interpretive, analytical thought that is labeled theory in the West, powerful knowledge’s of resistance that toppled former social structures of social inequality repudiate this view. Members of these groups do in fact theorize, and our critical social theory has been central to our political empowerment and search for justice (Patricia Hill Collins)

In this chapter I will discuss the ways Patricia Hill Collins sees intersectionality between blackness and womanism. I will spend a large amount of the introduction presenting Patricia Hill Collin’s framework of intersectionality between black identity and womanhood, and then explore how she feels these ideas are relevant to the structure of America. From there, I will examine her ideas of blackness, violence and power; blackness, sexuality and power; and blackness, artistic responsibility and power. From this research, I will be able to determine how traditional radical theory has evolved into Patricia Hill Collin’s Contemporary Black Political Thought.

Patricia Hill Collins varies from the other theorists in this study for two reasons. The first, Patricia Hill Collins’ educated background. Collins received her undergraduate degree from Brandeis and later received her Master of Arts in Teaching Social Education from Harvard University. Because of her education, and her position of research in Contemporary Black Political Thought, Collins is not seen as an “activist” in the definition offered by the introduction. Instead, she primarily focuses on education as a means of generating social change, and uses intersectionality as a lens of focus on helping progress the young mind in African American culture. Collins has written three books towards this aim, and has also served at many universities as the head of the Africana Studies Department, and the president of the National Sociology Association. Thus, her studies are important and have made a significant contribution to black studies in America.

*aye, guhl'*

A brief background of Patricia Hill Collin's theoretical development

Patricia Hill Collins is principally concerned with the relationships among empowerment, self-definition, and knowledge; and she is obviously concerned with black women: it is the oppression with which she is most intimately familiar. But Collins is also one of the few social thinkers who are able to rise above their own experiences; to challenge us with a significant view of oppression and identity politics that not only has the possibility of changing the world but also of opening up the prospect of continuous change. (Patricia Hill Collins)

Patricia Hill Collin's uses Kimberle Crenshaw's definition of intersectionality as a foundation to her political thought. Crenshaw defines intersectionality as, "the study of intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination or discrimination." (Crenshaw, 112, 1991) Intersectionality hones in specifically on social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, caste, and other forms of identity. Intersectionality's main objective is to decentralize the oppressions of various identity based constructs. When I say this I mean intersectionality's main role in theory is to understand that there are varying levels of oppression experienced within these socially identifiable groups, and that individuals represented in these groups experience oppression in varying manners.

The best way to analyze this individual social oppression is by categorizing their "multidimensional conceptualizations." This aspect of intersectionality theory posits that you cannot position someone in society based solely upon one identity trait. Thus, in order to know at how each individual is attracted by oppressive power relations, you must also recognize their race/ethnicity, their sexuality, their social class standing and their religion. Through all of these identities, Patricia Hill Collins argues you will understand where the individual falls on the societal structure of power.

Collins has discerned ways that intersectionality plays a role in the lived experiences of black women daily. Since women are oppressed and black people are also oppressed, Collins

believes that black women have the least amount of power in terms of identity in America. This marginalizes black women's lives by silencing their experiences and dialogues from the mainstream culture.

***“whatchu’ know ‘bout me?”***  
Black Feminist Epistemology

Collins, in her research, has also coined the term, black feminist or alternative epistemology. The goal of this term is to question epistemology or knowledge that has been dominated our political consciousness by Eurocentric Positivists. Collins believes it is necessary to question the way that we look at knowledge, and not stay locked into the current formation of knowledge on race and gender in America. She argues that this current construct is positioned towards a white misogynistic and heterogeneous consciousness. Thus, Collins' black Feminist Epistemology follows four tenets. These four tenets are: “1) alternative epistemologies are built upon lived experience not upon an objectified position; 2) the use of dialog rather than adversarial debate; 3) centering lived experiences and the use of dialog imply that knowledge is built around ethics of caring and 4) black feminist epistemology requires personal accountability. (Collins 154, 2002) Of these four, Patricia Hill Collins finds the fourth point as most important in the cause of women generating their own identity. Collins sees this critical viewpoint of black feminist epistemology as a necessity in understanding black feminist thought.

In addressing Black Feminist Thought, or what black women have considered Womanist Thought, Collins looks towards how black women have been compartmentalized into a box of the same lived experience. Black women, as stated earlier face the oppression of both race and gender. Thus many times black women have been are birthed into a state of survival and existence in relation to their identity. Collins, argues that the central task of black feminist thought is to delineate the experiences of black women, even within the ideas of intersectionality. To subset

black women, discounts the diversity that exists in the black female community, and silences many of the more oppressed groups within that identity. Similarly, Collins finds it important to distinguish black women as a community who share an overarching lived experience because of their immutable identities. Collins asserts, “There are core themes or issues that come from living as a black woman such that “a Black women’s collective standpoint does exist, one characterized by the tensions that accrue to different responses to common challenges.” (Collins 155, 2002) Collins adds that there is a “tension” between the collective conscious of black women, and the individuality of each woman’s experience.

Collins believes the only way to understand black political thought is to understand how black women share their identity amongst one another. Collins finds that black women share their black women epistemology. Collins terms these environments as “safe spaces”. She argues that there are three safe spaces for black women. They are, “1) black women’s relationships with one another; 2) the other two safe spaces are cultural and are constituted by the black women’s blues tradition and the voices of black women authors.” (Collins 157, 2002) These safe spaces allow for the opportunity for what Patricia Hill Collins finds to be the most important facet of black feminist thought. This tenet is self- definition.

Collins affirms that self-definition is the first step towards empowerment. (Collins 158, 2002) Without the ability to craft your own identity your distinctiveness is silenced by oppressive groups. What creates struggle in this self-definition is the ongoing struggle between “tension” and “dialog”. The tension of a self-definition maintains that there is struggle “between common challenges and diverse responses.” (Collins, 159, 2002) The dialog that builds self-definition is, “between a common group standpoint and diverse experiences.” (ibid) Collins wants for more of a theoretical position towards dialog –or discussion around identity - and one less reliant on

tension. She believes that once this happens, there will be a direction where political thought directly impacts conscious acts and therefore readjusts thought processes. Collins calls this process “rearticulation”.

“Rearticulation” by Collins definition is, “a vehicle for re-expressing a consciousness that quite often already exists in the public sphere.” (Collins 161, 2002) What “rearticulation” does is fuse the systemic racial and gender oppressions with everyday experiences and knowledge that black women possess. When brought back to the position of a national perspective, Collins finds it important that black women see consciousness as not an entity that is stagnant. Rather, she views consciousness as ideas brought forth by dialog that come together in the discourse of black women and are constantly evolving as the lived experience of black women evolve. Through this “rearticulation,” Collins believes that black women may find self-definition, and not be marginalized in contemporary American political thought.

***“on your marx...gat ready...fire”***  
blackness, violence, and power

Neither race- nor gender-only approaches adequately explain African-American women’s experiences with violence, because African-American women’s experiences with violence cannot be recast within the guiding assumptions of either approach. (Patricia Hill Collins 218, 2010)

Like much of her other research, Collins’ studies of violence in the black community also reflect intersectionality of blackness and womanhood. In her article, “The tie that binds: race, gender and US violence,” Collins discusses how hierarchal power structures dictate the definition of how violence is interpolated and within the American community. Because of this societal value of power in violence, black women have the lowest socio-political representation amongst constructed social groups, and subsequently, violence used against black women, or done by black women is not considered legitimate to the greater American community. This section will dive

into how Collins builds blackness, violence, womanhood, and power, and how she feels this construction affects black women in America. I will do this through three arguments. They are: “(1) social constructions of violence; (2) how violence operates to link power relations of race and gender; and (3) potential contributions of transversal politics in anti-violence work.” (Collins 917, 2010)

Patricia Hill Collins makes claims that America has been “plagued” by violence. She states that, “Because violence permeates all segments of American society, it routinely supports hierarchies of race, gender, class, age, ethnicity, nation and sexuality.” (Hill, *The Tie that Binds: Race Gender and US violence*, 718) Thus, African American women, who sociologically have been deemed to hold the least of amount of socio-political power in the United States, are subjugated to oppressive and neglected experiences, in terms of violence in America. This means that black women when facing issues of, “Wife battering, sexual extortion in the workplace, the pervasive porno-graphic portrayal of women in the media and rape” are delegitimized and are exhorted to simply “experience” violence, instead of work against violence perpetuated against the group. (ibid) This idea of silencing black women began during slavery.

Patricia Hill Collins believes that black women have been marginalized by their involvements with violence during slavery. Arguably, many times issues of “physical violence” have been associated with men. These types of violence include, whipping, fist fights, and lynching. Females, though, have been primarily reduced to “sexual violence” – most specifically, rape. This means that women who face physical violence are silenced, and in many cases their stories are diminished to casualty or scrutinized as the woman’s fault. This foundation of violence against black women has served as a nexus into contemporary black womanist thought. Collins argues that today the issue revolves around the hierarchical structure of defining violence.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines violence as, “the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, persons or property; action or conduct characterized by this; treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom.” (Oxford English Dictionary, p. 654, 1989) Collins asserts that this definition, as well as the societal definition of violence is carried by those who hold power in America (ie. Upper-Class Heterosexual White Men). Although most people consider this definition a normative, the application of this definition tend to lean in favor of Upper-Class Heterosexual White Men and gradually becomes less reliant the further away from that identity an individual is. Those who do not fall under this construct are subject to relying on the dominant definition to support their personal beliefs of violence. This means that the subtle nuances of violence perpetuated against minority groups – especially black women – are swept under the rug. Many times, this protection, built under the power of white privilege, is the causal factor for many race and gender based hate crimes acquitted every year.

Further, Collins argues that when these incidences of violence are addressed, they usually are done by black acts of violence. When this happens, the individual represents the collective and the entire race or gender must face the consequences of the singular. This, Collins believes is a way of fixating oppressive forms of fixated racial structures. Collins cites Harris saying:

When one black individual dared to violate the restrictions, he or she was used as an example to reiterate to the entire race that the group would continually be held responsible for the actions of the individual. Thus an accusation of rape could lead not only to the accused black man being lynched and burned, but to the burning of black homes and the whipping or lynching of other black individuals as well. (Harris 1984, p. 19).

These silences of black female violence have continued, by Collin’s position, into contemporary American culture. African Americans, men and women, still are fixated into oppressive practices of violence recognition, and ultimately unjust societal representation in dealings of violent



exchanges. Collins believes that the only way to satisfy the issue of our current marginalized and oppressive “violence definition,” is delineating how violence affects each sub group, and then understanding how intersectionality plays a part in how the definition of violence should be re-evaluated moving forward.

In order to redefine how “violence” is portrayed and accepted in America, it is important to classify the issues of today’s current definition in regards to violence. As stated before, the current module of violence is dictated around power structures. White men receive the most power in this system, and black women face the most oppression as defined by Patricia Hill Collins. Collins also believes that the perpetrator and the victim play a role in our viewpoint of violence.

Thus, Collins posits that American citizens challenge the current definition and validation of the word “violence” and its usage in the United States. She feels it is necessary to classify violence in a way that does not encourage racial hierarchy, or even allow for the acts of one individual in a constructed group to affect others. Instead, Collins feels it is important to address the race and gender of the victim in the crime. For example, Collins states, “African-American men have been killed by police with few sanctions Mumia Abu-Jamal, an African-American journalist convicted in 1981 of murdering a white police officer, received the death penalty. Abu-Jamal’s political beliefs (he was a member of the Philadelphia branch of the Black Panther Party), made him especially threatening to the police.” (Collins, 2010, 923) These individuals have faced very different outcomes with their experiences of violence.

The second flaw Patricia Hill Collins finds in approach of violence is words vs. actions. Hill believes that many times Americans dichotomize the actions of violence from the language of violence. What Collins wants the American society to consider is, “in a climate where African-American women and other similar groups are remain outside the definition of violence? The

words, ideas and images conveyed through the media, curricula and everyday social practices create an interpretive climate for systemic violence.” (ibid) Inducing a normative of practicing the actual definition of violence, Patricia Hill Collins believes that the definition of violence will become more holistic and inclusive to all power structures.

Collins reformed definition requires that violence be adjudicated to include both intersectionality and transversal politics. Transversal politics holds that individuals must not be classified by only race and gender. Rather, it is just as important to include the identities of sexuality, class, religion, ability, and age/ stage in life cycle as components in the overall structure of understanding powers of privilege and even further violence. Transversal politics also holds, within this framework of thinking, individuals who maintain the same identity – ie: middle class 22 year old bisexual abilist Christian black women – still may position themselves differently in regards to their political outlook. For instance, a black woman following this identity might be a black nationalist which furthers oppression of a representation in her definition of violence. In order for there to be equality of representation for all acts of violence, perpetuated against the black community and within the black community, Collins feels this idea of transversal politics is necessary in the establishment of what we consider violence. It is after this, that she feels the three issues of violence today will be solved.

***Blk & eve:***  
blackness, sexuality and power

In the current context of commodified Black popular Culture, the value attached to physical strength, sexuality, and violence, becomes reconfigured in the context of new racism. In some cases, the physical strength, aggressiveness, and sexuality thought in black men’s bodies generate admiration, these qualities garner fear. (Collins, 2010, 153)

Much of this entire chapter revolves around how black womanhood is constructed, and how this treatment affects how black women are placed in society. In this section, I plan to deviate

from the focus of “feminine” construction and narratives shared by black women, and explore how Patricia Hill Collins believes that masculinity is constructed. I will primarily use the chapter, “Booty Call: Sex, Violence, and Images of Black Masculinity” in her book *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and New Racism* to give a fundamental basis to this theory. From this, I will be able to more holistically discuss how gender plays role in the evolution of black political thought.

Many times, black masculinity has been theorized to being “practiced.” This enacted manhood stems from either a desire to be labeled as “real” or “man” in a community that always defines black men as “fake” or “boy”. Collins posits this societally accepted black masculine identity as “respectability politics.” Black masculine respectability politics holds that African American men, in order to be accepted by the structures of power within the American community – ie: white middle class heterosexual Christian men – must form themselves into “innocent” and “harmless” in order to be deemed as not dangerous to society.

Collins critiques this understanding of male black masculinity by offering how black men have been compartmentalized by three distinct propositions. These three boxes are: 1) physical strength, 2) sexuality, and 3) violence. Earlier in this chapter, I present Patricia Hill Collins’s argument on the potential experiences that black men face while living in America. I also position her issues that women face when facing issues of violence. I would like to extend previous constructs into this section with constructs of masculinity. I also think that it is important to focus on how the black male body, and most specifically how black men are characterized into images of athlete and sexual predator. In understanding these terms, Patricia Hill Collins understands the ways that sexual oppression of females is also structured around the power structures of white ruling elite, and their definitions of black men.

The black male athlete has been a figurehead for aspiring young black males. Black athletes, especially men, are romanticized across television ads, magazines, and clothing brands. Black men who are athletes are also “showcased” or exploited for their athleticism, and face large subjugation in their identity often being characterized as a “beast”. In the section, “Athletes and Criminals: Images of Working Class Black Men” in the Chapter “Booty Call”, Collins states that there have been many contradictions in western posited definitions of black men. To her, black men face the definition of “physicality over intellectual ability, a lack of restraint associated with incomplete socialization, and a predilection towards violence.” (Collins, 2010, 152) This definition comes from the historical “placement” of black men into categories of being brute and dominated by natural instincts. It was not uncommon for black men to be seen as rapists, wild and ignorant, because black men were assumed the position of being violent and promiscuous. (ibid) In understanding the black male, it is necessary to evaluate these historical definitions of a black men, which will help understand black men’s position in areas such as athleticism.

Today, black male athletic identity treads between the proxies of fear and admiration. On the one hand, black men are looked as powerful, and crafted in an aesthetically pleasing way. On the other hand, these same features are seen as threatening and dangerous if not contained. This image is further perpetuated by the “bad boy” black male athlete who treads between these two placements and must be contained in a way that forms around slave based constructions around the question, “What body looks best and can be best served in physical work?” Collins believes that today’s formation of black aesthetic masculinity is built on the moral principles of training and taming bodies for “practical use.” (Collins, 2010, 154) This “appealing body” is what many black men feel will push them out of poverty, and allow them to thrive in America.

In many cases, issues around black male athlete identity has gotten much push back by these male athletes. This pushback has come from the inception of hip-hop into black male athletic culture. In her writing, Collins speaks primarily about male basketball players stating that the marriage of basketball and hip hop culture resulted in never, “selling out and forgetting where you come from.” (Collins, 2010, 154) Which in turn means, holding onto the black identity that you were born into, even though black acceptance.

There has also been push back through means of sexuality. Black men are seen as sexually deviant or more promiscuous than white men. (Collins 2010, 161) Sexuality is one of the main components of how black masculinity is constructed in America. Most specifically, the objectification of black males’ bodies by Collins is seen as the most oppressive force against black masculinity. Black men have been reduced to “big penis” and “perfect muscles.” (Collins 2010, 162) The identity of the black male phallus is central in the construction of how black men see themselves sexually and how others see them. If black men do not live up to the expectation of an extended penis, they are subject to humiliation. If they do live up to this standard, they are admired and feared. (ibid)

This objectification has created an alternate dynamic between black men and women in many heterosexual relationships. Some black men are taught that they must uphold the identity of a “hustler.” Hustlers, by Collins definition can be simply stated as just “players.” Players use sexual exploitation and other exploitation as a means of generating money. This process of moving through society suggests the stereotype that black men are lazy, and refuse to use anything but their objectification as a means of gaining capital.

Further, black men, because of their objectified bodies, are seen as innately promiscuous. This positioning happened because black men have been constructed as sexual beings since

slavery. One portion of this sexualization deals with the black male penis. The other is implanted in the body build of black men. These two aesthetic characteristics blended with the innate construction of young black men believing that their masculinity is encompassed in their lost sexual deeds, push ideological development of black men towards promiscuity. (ibid) Men in the LGBTQ+ face different issues.

Many times, black heterosexual men also face issues of discriminate not only through their inadvertent misogynistic ways, but also through their heteronormative ways of treating the LGBTQ+ community with lesser respect than they treat straight men. Members of the LGBTQ+ community fall under two issues in terms of power. First, they do not stereotypically box themselves into the hegemonic masculinity – or the idea that black men all work towards the same standard of masculinity. Second, they face issues of sexuality and masculinity and race in a society that does not encourage any differences from the primary white heterosexual male role. Thus these men feel their voices are silenced, also. (Collins, 2010, 163)

The overarching argument for the redefinition of black men is primarily rooted in the new demand for “respect.” Respect, in this form, is a proclamation that African American men are not boys, nor servants. Black men want the opportunity to not be marginalized or constructed into either the “Uncle Tom” – submissive – or “Savage” – beast – identity. In order for this to happen, Collins believes that it is important for black men to help black women and reach solidarity, while progressively working against the definitions that power structures have placed on both groups. (ibid)

*sableXpress:*  
blackness, artistic responsibility and power

Traditionally, when taken together, Black women’s relationships with one another, the Black women’s blues traditions, and the work of black women writers, provided the context for crafting alternatives to prevailing images of Black womanhood. (Collins, 2010, 111)

In “The Black Women’s Blues Tradition”, chapter of *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins discusses the intersectionality of black feminist theory and artistic responsibility. She focuses primarily on Blues, although she also attentions the importance of oral tradition in black culture. Collins quotes Angela Davis, “Art is special because of its ability to influence feelings as well as knowledge.” (Collins 2010, 105) Collins argues that various black music genres are rooted in the black aesthetic ideology, which was coined during the Black Power movement and asserted that art can be created for “resistance”, and that art and music should be a platform with a political message. (Collins, 2011, 107) Collins points out a multitude of female artists who agree with this ideology.

Mahalia Jackson once said, “A song must do something for me as well as the people that hear it. I can’t sing a song that doesn’t have a message. If it doesn’t have strength, it can’t lift you.” (ibid) Alberta Hunter says, “To me, the blues almost religious... almost sacred – when we sing the blues, we’re singing out our own hearts ... our feelings.” (ibid) Finally Shirley Anne Williams states, “The blues records of each decade explain something about the philosophical basis of our lives as black people. If we don’t understand that as so-called black intellectuals, then we really don’t understand anything about ourselves.” (Collins, 2011, 108)

Collins states that Blues Music caters to the redefinition of black women, by allowing women to portray themselves through their own lenses. This redefinition is important in working against the white powers objectification of black women. Music, during the early 70’s and 80’s was used as a process of liberation against the identity placed on black women, and acted as a sound bite to an otherwise silenced group of individuals. Thus, music has found ways to encourage discussion in safe spaces of black women communities.

Collins asserts that blues music is a means to encourage dialogue amongst black women in safe spaces. Songs that discuss sexuality, and women empowerment are critical to the dialogue of black women working towards producing their own political identity. Collins has found blues culture as a means of power, and further a means of liberation for black women oppression. There has been a strong shift in messages in black women music recently, though.

Patricia Hill Collins critiques contemporary music culture while addressing the power of artistic responsibility. Collins feels that contemporary hip hop and R&B has been commoditized, and that the responsibility of artistic messages has been threatened by economic gain. Thus, Collins feels that contemporary mainstream music – that has evolved from the blues tradition – has completely strayed away from oral culture. This means that the thought, feeling, and intentionality of blues culture – by Collins views – is lost in the position of creating “progressive art”. Collins does not know what contemporary black females will do in terms of carrying out the safe spaces of past political thinkers, but she feels that this move is necessary in order to move black women in the direction of self-definition.

***...and that's what matters***  
Conclusion

Overall, Patricia Hill Collins has primarily contributed to the realm of Contemporary Black Political Thought by adopting the ideology of intersectionality, created by Kimberle Crenshaw, and further by adopting new understandings of how intersectionality – primarily between gender and blackness – affect the social culture of United States. Her studies of intersectionality have helped raise consciousness around how black female violence has been marginalized and silenced in American culture. Her biggest contribution that can work towards fixing this silence and helping to understand the black female identity in a more holistic way has been her ideas of re-articulation. Both in music, and in sexuality studies, Patricia Hill Collins believes that redefinition is the best



way for the black community, especially black women to reposition themselves in relation to power in the United States. This is what Patricia Hill Collins considers as the most important ideological reform to Contemporary Black Political Thought.

Chapter IV: *“the rose that grew from concrete”*  
A Survey of Tupac Shakur’s Contemporary Black Political Theory

“I think all the real shit is gonna stay. It's gonna go through some changes. It's going through a metamorphosis so it will blow up sometimes and get real nasty and gritty, then the leeches will fall off and Hip Hop will be fit and healthy. Hip Hop has to go through all of that, but no one can make judgments until it's over.” (Tupac, <http://www.daveyd.com/interview2pacrare.html>)

This chapter will analyze notable Hip-Hop artist, actor and activist, Tupac Shakur. Many individuals within the black community consider Tupac as one of the greatest artists in the history of Hip-Hop. He has not only been celebrated for his artistic craft, but also his dedication to the black American community. Thus, this chapter will focus on the message of Tupac within the musical/poetry realm and also his political message spread outside of his art. I will begin by providing a theoretical background of Tupac Shakur, including the theorists he claims have influenced his ideologies. I will then lay out how these messages contribute to Tupac Shakur’s ideas of blackness, violence and power; blackness, sexuality and power; and blackness, artistic responsibility and power. It is through these lenses, and mechanisms of understanding, which I hope to help structure how Tupac Shakur has gathered knowledge from traditional black radical theory. I will further offer how his contributions, and those that he has gained from traditional black radical theory, contribute to the realm of Contemporary Black Political Thought.

Tupac Shakur is unique to this Independent Study. In previous chapters I have studied political theorists, scholars, and activists and their contributions to black political theory. In this chapter, although Tupac does fall under the preceding three categorized traits, he also is a recording artist. Tupac and his music have reached black people in a way that none of the previous individuals in this Independent Study have in America. Thus, I believe his theoretical perspective is essential to the overall understanding of the evolution of traditional black radical theories in contemporary black political thought. I will primarily use Tupac’s body of work and interviews as

primary sources for this chapter, because much of Tupac's beliefs have been manipulated since his death. I will also work to use secondary texts, though – which I will use as closed reading to song lyrics and poems – to support my claims.

As a point of reference, this chapter will not be a complete biography of Tupac through a musical lens. It will also not be a synopsis of each of his recorded album from his lifetime. Instead, my aim is to present Tupac's ideological position on the previously stated topics, and further examine how Tupac's ideologies have evolved from his first studio album, *2Pacocalypse Now*, to his final studio album, *The Don Killuminati: The Seven Day Theory*. This focus will help answer the overall research question, while also limiting the scope of research done within this chapter.

**Section One: “*all eyez on me...all hand on deck*”**  
A Survey of Tupac's Political Ideologies

“Thug Life” (Tupac)

It is essential to initiate this section with a historical background of Tupac's family and god-family. Tupac was born in the early 1970's to a predominately Black Panther Party household in New York City. With this upbringing, Tupac was raised by the principles of Black Nationalism, and even in his youth became attached to the Young Communist Party in Baltimore, where the family moved after his second year of high school. As much as Tupac was surrounded by political principles, he also was raised on artistic values. Tupac studied Shakespeare and featured in plays such as “A Raisin in the Sun” at a young age, which contributed to his overall beliefs of art in his older years. These foundations influenced Tupac's music and politics. In this first section, through Tupac's albums, and interviews, I plan to write on Tupac's political foundations throughout his music career.

**stone slab**  
Tupac's political foundations

Hard like an erection... Young black male!  
Hard like an erection...  
Ain't shit to fool with...  
Hard like an erection... Young black male!  
Ain't shit to fool with... Young black male!

Yes niggas... yes niggas... yes niggas

(Young Black Male, Tupac, 1991)

*2Pacalypse Now*, Tupac Shakur's first studio album, is his most overtly political piece of work. The album, which was released in 1991, is filled with gritty lyricism, raw content, and underground/ grudge styled instrumentals. In an interview with Davey D, Tupac outlines where he stood in creating *2Pacalypse Now*, and overall theoretically at the time. His main message within the album and focus at this time was the young black male. Most specifically, Tupac said that his main interests in this album were, "Police brutality, poverty, unemployment, insufficient education, disunity and violence, black on black crime, teenage pregnancy, and crack addiction." (<http://www.daveyd.com/interview2pacrare.html>) These themes, Tupac felt, were the most relevant to the black community at the time.

Shakur used alternative perspectives in this collection of music by mingling in his angle of potential he saw within the inner-city black community. Shakur says, "In some situations I show us having the power and in some situations I show how it's more apt to happen with the police or power structure having the ultimate power. I show both ways. I show how it really happens and I show how I wish it would happen." (<http://www.daveyd.com/interview2pacrare.html>) This is most shown in the song, "Words of Wisdom". In this song, he confronts "AMERI-K-K-Ka" – or the American government - and charges the institution with crimes of "rape, murder, and assault." (<http://genius.com/2pac-words-of-wisdom-lyrics>) He sets the song in the form of a court case, and maneuvers through the song with setting up how America is guilty with these crimes. The

conclusion of this song is Tupac giving how he is going to destroy this system, and how he is “America’s worst enemy.” (<http://genius.com/2pac-words-of-wisdom-lyrics>)

**Movin’ On:**  
1993 & Jail Release

Let me say for the record, I am not a gangster and never have been. I’m not the thief who grabs your purse. I’m not the guy who jacks your car. I’m not down with people who steal and hurt others. I’m just a brother who fights back. I’m not some violent closet psycho. I’ve got a job. I’m an artist.”

(Tupac, Los Angeles Times, 1995)

By 1993, Tupac had experienced a conviction of a crime involving sexual assault. While serving his jail sentence, Tupac faced a political evolution throughout this process. He spent a lot of time, within his jail cell reading various theorists such as Machiavelli, and internalizing their ideologies focusing on trust and loyalty. Not much is known about Tupac’s jail experience, except the humiliation that he felt watching his image transition from being Tupac, to a monster by various newscasters such as Jay Leno and Rush Limbaugh. (Tupac, Los Angeles Times, 1995) Tupac’s identity and perception of how his identity was constructed altered after he was released from prison.

It was at this time that Tupac became accepting of who he was – or who he was perceived to be in American pop culture, and he began to identify with the “thug life” identity. Tupac would say, “My choices have already been made, even if I want to change it. What I learned in jail is that I can’t change. I can’t live a different lifestyle. This is it. This is the life they gave me, this is the life I made.” (Tupac, Los Angeles Times, 1995) Tupac’s music, after being released from jail, reflected his statement. His messages became more explicit in supporting violence and objectifying women. Audiences went from appreciating Tupac’s music, which traditionally spoke against oppressive institutions and the issues within the black community, to idolizing the “thug life” lifestyle that Tupac portrayed in his music.

Tupac began to write mostly on struggles within the black community from a personal point of view. Tupac began to “idolize” the “thug” experience, including writing songs from the perspective of shooters, looters, and womanizers. Tupac would respond to those who actively spoke against this new persona by saying:

Everything in life is not all beautiful, not all fun. There is lots of killing and drugs. To me, a perfect album talks about the hard stuff and the fun and caring stuff. What I want to know, though, is why all of a sudden is everybody acting like gangs are some new phenomenon in this country? Almost everyone in America is affiliated with some kind of gang. We got the FBI, the ATF, the police departments, the religious groups, the Democrats and the Republicans. Everybody’s got their own little clique and they’re all out there gangbanging in their own little way.

The thing that bothers me is that seems like all the sensitive stuff I write just goes unnoticed... the media doesn’t get who I am at all. Or maybe they just can’t accept it. It doesn’t fit into those negative stories they like to write. I’m the kind of guy who is moved by a song like Don McLean’s, “Vincent,” that one about Van Gogh. The lyric on that song is so touching. That’s how I want to make my songs feel. Take “Dear Mama” – I aimed that one straight for my homies’ heartstrings.

(Ibid)

Thus, from this era in Tupac’s life and forward, Shakur made intentional strides to declare his music as timeless and focused on making the music match his motivation of making change within the black community. This is when Tupac transforms from his original stage name of ‘Tupac’ to the moniker ‘Makiavelli’.

### ***Makiavelli:***

On Tupac’s Final Album and Legacy

Who, knows what tomorrow brings  
In this world where everyone lies  
Where to go  
No matter how far I find  
To let you know  
That you're not alone

(Tupac, *The Don Killuminati: The Seven Day Theory*, 1996)

In Tupac’s final studio album, *The Don Killuminati: The Seven Day Theory*, Tupac drops his previously acclaimed moniker and transitions to the stage name Makiavelli, which he credits

after the theorist Machiavelli. This album was recorded, mixed and mastered within seven days, and was released after Tupac was assassinated. In this album, Tupac spoke less from a celebration of life tone and instead gave a realistic perspective of the black community at the time. In this section, I will first give an example of this realistic perspective by examining the song, “In the White Mans’ World”, and then I will illustrate how this message, along with other political messages, differ-from earlier messages in Shakur’s music. Finally, I will discuss Tupac’s legacy music wise, and how his assassination and this album’s theoretical perspective altered social consciousness in the black community at the time.

In “The White Man’s World” Shakur calls out the black community that is ashamed of their race, and addresses the racial issues within the black community. He opens the song with the statement, “You done busting your fist against a stone wall//you’re not using your brain//That’s what the white man wants you to do//Look at cha//What makes you ashamed of being black? ///Even I know how hard it is//Being a woman//A black woman at that//Shit//It’s white man’s world.” (Tupac, *The White Mans’ World* 1996) Throughout the rest of the song, he critiques the black community and the system that continue to oppress the black community, most notably the white community in his lyrics. Within this song he addresses prison relations with external family and friends, issues within the constitution, and reparations. He also raps about “activists” who have not used their blackness as a means of social change. This music magnifies the lens that there was a dis-connect in making social change during the 90’s that was only magnified by this music.

Throughout the rest of the album, Tupac expresses these same messages in various ways. For example in ‘Krazy’, Tupac makes a multitude of allusions to Malcolm X and his usage of lye or, perm products, but further links his lived experience with Malcolm X’s by talking about ways to make social change. In the song’s lyrics, he says, “1, 2, 3, 4// I see bloods and Crips running up

the hill// Lookin for a better way// My brothas and sistas it's time to bail//Cause even thug niggas pray//Hoping God forgive me//I entered the game, look how much I changed.” (Tupac, *Don Killuminati: The Seven Day Theory*, 1996) This simple 4 bar frame hosts ideologies of Black Nationalism, “my brothas and sistas it’s time to bail//black religion: cause even thug niggas pray//Hoping God forgive me; and intercommunity changes//I see bloods and Crips running up the hill// lookin’ for a better way.” (ibid) I believe that Tupac wanted the audience of this album to not seem him as purely an entertainer. He desired that people learn from his music as stated in his interview post jail release. Although Tupac did not live to see his final album released, his legacy (whether through music or culturally) accounts for the relevance Tupac had on the black community even beyond the grave.

***On your marx... gat ready... fire!***  
Blackness, violence & power

“This time the truth's gettin’ told, heard enough lies  
I told ‘em fight back, attack on society  
if this is violence, then violent's what I gotta be”  
(Tupac, *Strictly 4 my N.I.G.G.A.Z*, 1993)

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, Tupac Shakur was born into a Black Nationalist household. Many of his family members, including his mother, were very loyal and high ranking officers in the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. Thus, Tupac was raised on the consciousness of the oppressed. His understanding of the United States, from the womb, was the belief that the country did not serve his interests. Even at a young age, Shakur showed interest in making what would be seen today as radical change. Thus, Shakur’s music, even at the inception of his sound in Hip Hop culture, reflected a self-defense and strike back approach to violence that Tupac believed would contribute towards solving America’s racial problem.



To fully comprehend Tupac's approach of violence, one must dive into the content that his music covers. In the first section, I go through each album and provide a landscape of Tupac's albums between the years of 1991 and 1996. In this section, I will focus on one primary song from three of Tupac's many albums, and cover themes of violence from Shakur's entire collection of music. I believe it is most important from an analytical standpoint regarding these songs, to cover the chorus and a few quotes that are explicit in their message on violence, especially within the black community. I will do this in hopes of understanding how Tupac identifies with violence, and how these identifiers are linked to past principles in traditional black radical thought.

In *2Pacalypse Now*, Tupac's song "Violent" is a critique of the greater American community bashing Tupac for his radical beliefs in how to make social change in America. In the chorus, Shakur writes, "They claim that I'm violent//Just 'cause I refuse to be silent//these hypocrites are havin fits//'Cause I'm not buyin' it, defyin' it" (Tupac *2Pacalypse Now*, 1993) His lyrics support the theme that "violence" is something that mainstream America has projected onto radical thinkers like Shakur. The latter portion of the song is a story based on police brutality. In the first lines of the second verse, Tupac raps:

The cops can't stand me, but they can't touch me  
Call me a dope man, cause I rock dope beats  
Jacked by the police, didn't have my ID  
I said, "Excuse me, why you trying to rob me?"  
He had the nerve to, say that I had a curfew  
(Do you know what time it is?  
Get out the fucking car, or I'll hurt you!)  
"Get out the car... or I'll hurt you"  
So here I go, I better make my mind up  
Pick my nine up, or hit the line-up  
I chose B, stepped into the streets  
The first cop grabbed me, the other ripped my seat  
They grabbed my homie and they threw him to the concrete  
(Ay man.. aiyyo.. ay man just c'mon ?)  
("What you doin man?") They tried to frame me

In this section, Shakur maneuvers between two story plots that both deal with police interaction. The first interaction is focused on the principles of resistance against police brutality when African Americans protest. The second plot identifies the “problem” identity that African American men assume when walking in the hood. This identity is factored by mostly skin color and environment. In this song, Tupac covers a wide array of approaches of violence on and within the black community. This theme reappears frequently in his later music.

In Tupac’s second album, *Strictly 4 my N.I.G.G.A.Z*, Tupac releases a song called, “Souljah’s Revenge”. In this song, Tupac typifies himself as “Souljah” and presents personal experiences around his “violent identity”. This is one of the few songs where Tupac explicitly states things that his mother taught him in relation to violence and the Black Panther Party. He writes, “Momma told me, "Don't let em fade me..// .. nigga don't let ‘em make you crazy!"// Game is what she gave me” (Tupac 1993 *Strictly 4 my N.I.G.G.A.Z*). This quote, although not overt, is a subtle message of “by any means” in making power. Thus, Tupac at this time was more willing to and capable of, and adamant to about making social change via his music.

In Tupac’s third studio album, *Me against the World*, Tupac’s messages change, and also his perception of violence. In past albums, many of the lyrics spoke about how violence is placed onto the black community. In this album, Tupac took a different approach and spoke rawer on the issues within impoverished communities. In his song, “if I die 2nite”, Tupac says in his chorus, “If I die tonight//If I die tonight//If I die tonight//Tonight's the night I get in some shit”. Tupac talks about intimate issues he has faced around violence within this song. Within these lyrics he says:

Polishing pistols prepare for battle pass the pump  
When I get to popping niggas is dropping then they done  
Calling the coroner come collect the fucking corpse  
He got it by killer, preoccupied with being boss  
Revenge is the method, whenever stepping keep a weapon close  
Adversaries are overdosed over deadly notes

Jealous niggas and broke bitches equal packed jails  
Hit the block and fill your pockets making crack sales  
Picture perfection pursuing paper with a passion  
Visions of prisons for all the pussies that I blasted  
Running with criminals individuals with no remorse  
Try to stop me my pistol posse's using deadly force  
In my brain all I can think about is fame  
The police know my name, a different game, ain't a thing changed  
I'm seeing cemetery photos of my peers  
Conversatin' like they still here, if I die tonight"

There are a multitude of references to Tupac's viewpoints during this time within this verse. The biggest reference I believe Shakur makes in this record – especially as he awaits his acquittal – is the last four lines. Tupac speaks on the psychological state that he faces: both wanting to be, but also facing issues around conflicts with the police and his friends dying. In this portion of this song, the audience is forced to understand the mental tear that Tupac faces in his lived experience of the inner city community.

The aim of the last paragraph of this section is to give an understanding of what Tupac believed to be violence. Tupac considered violence to being a plague within the black community. There are many songs that explain how Tupac believed violence affected the black community, but the quote that stands out the most is, "I'm don't advocate senseless violence on any human being. I've been beat down, but I won't become victim again." These two sentences sum up the "self-defense" position that Tupac has taken on violence, and that I believe represents Tupac's overall definition of how violence should be viewed when re-imagining the Black Community.

**blk & eve:**  
blackness, sexuality, & power

Mama catch me, put a whooping to my backside  
And even as a crack fiend, mama  
You always was a black queen, mama  
I finally understand  
For a woman it ain't easy trying to raise a man  
(Tupac Dear Mama, 1995)

In this section, I will examine Tupac's ideological beliefs in relation to sexuality. Tupac has never explicitly been an advocate for changing manhood/masculinity within the black community, but within his music, there is a stream of consciousness – that evolves throughout his musical career – of how a man should act, particularly in urban settings. This consciousness involves: 1) participating in crimes (as discussed within the first section); 2) the relationship, most specifically loyalty, which you carry with your friends/ and intimate partners; and 3) the image he maintained of himself within the black community. These three elements, and particularly the last two, will be what I focus on within this section. The last focus I will write towards is Tupac's relationship with women, most specifically his mother. Tupac considered his mother as one of the most influential people in his life. Thus, in order to understand what Tupac believed a woman could be, I think it is important to study the woman he revered the most in his life. I will alternatively give an example of a son in which Tupac talks about intimate relationships with women and discusses how he wants women to be in relationships. Hopefully, these songs and this information will help others understand Tupac's theoretical beliefs of sexuality in the black community.

Since I wrote on the first of the three points Tupac posits in the first section of this chapter and the magnitude of criminality in black communities, I will move forward to the second point, or Tupac's relationships, most specifically loyalty, which you carry with your friends/ and intimate partners within the black community. Tupac had a very contradictory view of friendships that he had. Many times, he would forward songs that were for "his niggas" and "his homies" and also within those same songs talk about "snakes" and "phonies" who actually didn't "have his back," or were not loyal or committed to maintaining a connection with Shakur. In this section, I will

examine the dichotomy Tupac had with his interpersonal relationships in order to clarify how he thought about masculinity and friendship.

When writing on betrayal in friendship and trust, I believe Shakur's dialogue around the issues of interpersonal relationships is best illustrated by Tupac's, "Strictly 4 my N.I.G.G.A.Z". In this song, Tupac talks about both benefits when "kicking it" with his friends, and the problems of friendship when being a celebrity. In the second verse of his song, he says:

Reflected and disrespected, plus I'm rejected  
You're just another rapper, who swears he's makin' records  
That's what they said, whenever I would walk by  
I never tripped though always kept my head up high  
Eventually, I knew that I would find my way  
After the darkest night, always comes a brighter day  
And some would say, that turned away is all you'll get  
I just said, "Bet," and never let 'em see me sweat  
'Cause in the end, I knew that I would have it all  
While non-believers, were prayin' for my downfall  
And some would call and tell me that they wish me well  
But in my heart, I'm knowin' that they wish me hell  
Yo get a real job, rappin' doesn't pay the rent  
I hate the studio 'cause that's where all my money went  
Never surrender, it's all about the faith you've got  
Don't ever stop, just push it 'til you hit the top  
And if you drop, at least you know you gave your all  
Be true to you and that way you can never fall  
But beware, these back stabbers ain't no joke  
Just like a rope, they hang on you until you're broke  
And when you're broke, they move onto the next dope  
And there you are, can't even pay your car, nope  
And when you reminisce, thinkin' how you got dissed  
Remember how it felt and then remember this  
Be true to you, believe that there's no one bigger  
'Cause they can all suck dick it's strictly 4 my N.I.G.G.A.Z

(Tupac, Strictly 4 my N.I.G.G.A.Z 1993)

What stands out above all in this verse is the, "And some would call and tell me that they wish me well//But in my heart, I'm knowin' that they wish me hell//Yo get a real job, rappin' doesn't pay the rent//I hate the studio 'cause that's where all my money went." (ibid) These four bars

represent not what is actually happening between Tupac and his friendship with others, but rather his subconscious inability to trust friends beyond aesthetic value of “homieship”.

This inability to trust his “friends” is also showcased in other songs, but it is particularly interesting that Tupac is able to not only have issues of trusting friends, but also have the contradiction of really having his friends’ back. In the song, “If my Homies Call”, Tupac says:

Well it's ninety-one and I'm living kinda swell now  
But I hear that you're going through some hell pal  
But life making records ain't easy  
It ain't what I expected it's hectic it's sleazy  
But I guess that the streets is harder  
Trying to survive in the life of a young godfather  
My homies is making it elsewhere  
Striving, working nine to five with no health care  
We both had dreams of being great  
But his deferred, and blurred and changed in shaped  
It's fate, it wasn't my choice to make  
To be great, I'm giving it all it takes  
Trying to shake, the crates and fakes and snakes  
I gotta take, my place or fall from grace  
The foolish way, the pace is quick and great  
Smiling face, to hide the trace of hate  
But my homie would never do me wrong  
That's why I wrote this song, if you ever need me it's on  
No matter who the foe they must fall  
Us against them all I'm down to brawl if my homies call

(Tupac, If My Homies Call, 1991)

In this song Tupac talks about his marginalization from many of his friends – the most specific friend being a drug dealer who he was closest to growing up. Tupac would write many times about how he became distanced from friends as time went forward, but that he had their back. In this song, he says “My homie would never do me wrong” and “If you ever need me it’s on”. He says earlier in the song, “sayin’ that we was cousins, knowing we wasn’t”. His friendships seemed authentic and less like the Tupac that we see in the previous song.

Thus, the product of Shakur's relationship problems was the necessity to re-position himself within his community. The third point that I offer in the beginning of this section will be illustrated in this portion of the chapter. Tupac often talks about how a man must carry himself in order to "survive" in the hood. There are many songs that are examples of this in Tupac's collection of music. I believe the song that speaks most on how Tupac considers how he is supposed to interact with society is "Only God can Judge Me." In this song Tupac says, "

Perhaps I was blind to the facts, stabbed in the back  
I couldn't trust my own homies just a bunch of dirty rats  
Will I, succeed, paranoid from the weed  
And hocus pocus I try to focus but I can't see  
And in my mind I'm a blind man doin' time  
Look to my future cause my past, is all behind me  
Is it a crime, to fight, for what is mine?  
Everybody's dyin' tell me what's the use of tryin'  
I've been trapped since birth, cautious, cause I'm cursed  
And fantasies of my family, in a hearse  
And they say it's the white man I should fear  
But, it's my own kind doin' all the killin' here  
I can't lie, ain't no love for the other side  
Jealousy inside, make'em wish I died  
Oh my Lord, tell me what I'm livin' for  
Everybody's droppin' got me knockin' on heaven's door  
And all my memories, of seein' brothers bleed  
And everybody grieves, but still nobody sees  
Recollect your thoughts don't get caught up in the mix  
Cause the media is full of dirty tricks  
Only God can judge me

(Tupac, *Only God Can Judge Me*, 1992)

In this song, Tupac places a heavy emphasis on survival. I believe Tupac felt that is where the black community was at the time –in a constant struggle for survival. There are so many references within this song that allude to Tupac struggles to survive, but the most important reference to me is, "I've been trapped since birth, cautious, cause I'm cursed, and fantasies of my family, in a hearse." In this portion of this verse, Tupac talks about the legacy or curse that he's been born into, which makes him tread cautiously, and in turn how that curse is passed onto his children,

whom he sees in “fantasies” in a hearse. Thus, this precarious fear that Tupac struggles under makes him more callous to the community around him, which in turn gives him the view that “Only God can Judge me”.

### **On Women:**

The last portion of this section will focus primarily on Tupac’s ideals of women. Tupac, in many ways has spoken on his relationship dynamic with women, but most notably he writes on his relationship with his mother. Thus, I will first write Tupac’s perception of his mother, and then will write about how Tupac addresses women in his music and interviews, I will conclude this section with Tupac’s perception of his mother. From writing about Tupac’s mother, I believe individuals will gain a better perception of how Tupac perceived how women, most specifically black women, should be positioned the black community.

Tupac’s relationship to his mother, as discussed earlier, was turbulent. Many times the pair would work well together, and Tupac would be his mother’s “biggest fan”. At other times, though, Tupac and his mother would not see eye-to-eye. Thus their relationship, like many others, faced its peaks and valleys – or moments of close intimacy and moments of clear isolation. It is through this relationship that we can understand Tupac’s relationships and coalitions with other women.

In Tupac’s music, Tupac often refers to women as “bitches” and “hos”. He also will refer to them as “queens” and “lovers” in other songs. In the interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Tupac provides one of his clearest responses to critics of how he addresses women in his music. Tupac says:

What If all the guys started complaining when women call them dogs? In real life, just like in *Macbeth*, all women are not just pure and true. Just because I write some songs about bad women, though, that doesn’t mean I hate women. I’ve written songs that show great love and respect for women too. Songs that talk about strong, upstanding women and their pain.



Look around you in this studio right now. I have women working on my music. They understand where I'm coming from. So does my mama. I always play my music for her before it comes out. Why do you think I wrote "Dear Mama"? I wrote it for my mama because I love her and felt I owed her something deep. (Tupac, Los Angeles Times, 1995)

Tupac always felt that in his music he must portray people as they are in that society. Thus, in talking about the community, women are no different. Tupac understood the best way to showcase individuals is to do so authentically, which helps the audience to understand where Tupac came from a majority of the time when formulating his ideas of masculinity and femininity in the black community.

*sableXpress:*

blackness, artistic responsibility & power

I really like stuff like "Les Miserables" and "Gospel at Colonus." And I love Shakespeare. He wrote some of the rawest stories, man. I mean look at Romeo and Juliet. That's some serious ghetto [expletive]. You got this guy Romeo from the Bloods who falls for Juliet, a female from the Crips, and everybody in both gangs are against them. So they have to sneak out and they end up dead for nothing. Real tragic stuff.

And look how Shakespeare bursts it up with Macbeth. He creates a tale about this king's wife who convinces a happy man to chase after her and kill her husband so he can take over the country. After he commits the murder, the dude starts having delusions just like in a Scarface song. I mean the king's wife just screws this guy's whole life up for nothing. Now that's what I call a bitch.

(Tupac, Los Angeles Times, 1995)

Tupac's artistic expression can be broken into three components. These components are his music, his poetry, and his acting. These three components, combined, are all essential in understanding Tupac and his approach to artistic responsibility. In this chapter, I will discuss, primarily using secondary texts, these three components, and also elaborate on the ideas that Tupac lives by to help understand the Tupac's beliefs on how art can influence social culture. This discussion should contribute towards understanding the legacy of traditional black radical artistic theory and how art was used as a means of social change in black history.

The first of the three forms of artistic expression, I explain in the first section of this chapter. Tupac's mother enrolled Shakur in a theatre school, and he stayed the course of theatre through his high school career. In theatre school, Tupac was introduced to past thespians and past writers like Shakespeare who had significant impacts on Tupac and his storytelling in music. It was also through Tupac's time in theatre that Tupac gained the skills to become a professional actor later in his career with movies such as *Juice* and *Poetic Justice*. These movies were social critiques of how black men related to each other – trust wise especially – in the black community, and further how black men and black women shared intimate partnerships with both partners being prideful. These roles made Tupac more accessible to the Hip Hop community by inculcating him into pop culture.

Tupac, while growing up used also poetry as an outlet of self-expression. Although Tupac never formally published any of his pieces, his mother released an anthology of his poetry after his assassination. *The Rose that Grew from Concrete* includes 77 poems divided into three different sections that were written over the span of Tupac's time on Earth. These sections include, "The Rose that Grew from Concrete," which is more of an autobiographical representation of Tupac's life; "Nothing can come between us," which is a presentation of Tupac's relationships with close friends and intimate partners and is the most vulnerable section of the collection; "Just a Breath of Freedom," which is a collection of poems that discuss Tupac's political beliefs as well as give a viewpoint of his intimate relationships with traditional black radical theorists; and "Liberty Need's Glasses," which is a social critique of the United States, and also a sort of eulogy of himself.

These poems showcase a different perspective of Tupac that cannot be reached through his music or acting careers. This perspective is clearer because it exposes Tupac in raw form. For example, in "Nothing can come between us", Tupac writes about a multitude of relationships. The

first poem in the collection is specifically about a close friend, John. In this piece, Tupac says, “4 a moment let’s just revel// in our eternal comradery// in my Heart I know // there will never be a day // that I won’t remember // the times we shared // u were a friend...” (Tupac, *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*, 1997) In this poem, Tupac is writing to a friend that he hasn’t spoken with for an extended time period. The message, though, that he is still friends with this individual, and the love that he expresses to his friend is of a different tone than lyrics in songs such as, “Strictly for my N.I.G.G.A.Z”. This poem, as well as a majority of the poems included in this collection, Tupac sent to individuals. This is why his private poems expose a more vulnerable Tupac than his public songs. The poems were collected and published by Shakur’s mother only after his death.

Tupac’s poetry led Shakur to his Hip Hop career. Tupac was born in the heart of Hip Hop history and raised around Hip Hop culture. These influencers and Tupac’s accessibility to urban dialect that was popular amongst the African American impoverished community helped Tupac in his first album *2Pacalypse Now*. 2Pac felt that it was essential for rappers to start speaking on real issues that the black community faced, in order to change the social culture of black people in the hood and to reclaim power in black communities.

Many times Tupac has been dubbed as one of the originators of “gangsta rap.” “Gangsta rap” or what is modernly known as “trap music” is defined by Merriam Webster’s Dictionary as, “rap music with lyrics explicitly portraying the violence and drug use of urban gang life and typically expressing hostility toward whites, women, and civil authority” (Merriam Webster Dictionary 2012) Earlier in this chapter I cited an interview entitled, “I’m not a Gangsta”. Tupac never considered himself to be a “gangster rapper”. Instead, Tupac believed that his presentation of rap was merely just a modern, account of social change. In an interview with Morpreme, who is a radio personality, says that:

My raps are filled with rage. You have to be logical, ya' know. If I know this hotel room, they have food every day, and I knock on the door every day to eat, and they open the door, and you see the party, and you see them throwing salami all over.. I mean it's like throwing food around, but they tell me it's no food in here. You know what I'm sayin'... Every day I'm standing outside trying to sing my way in...

(sings)

*We hungry please let us in*

*We hungry please let us in*

*We hungry please let us in*

After about a week that songs gonna change to...

*We hungry. We need some food*

After two or three more weeks, it's like, you know

*Give me that food or I'm breaking down that door*

After years, its you know what I'm sayin'

*I'm pickin' the lock*

*Comin' through the door blastin'*

It's like you hungry, you've reached ya' last level. You tired of askin'. It's like we asked with the Black Panthers Party... We asked with the Civil Rights Movement... askin'... Now those people who were askin' are either in dead or in jail... So, now, what do you think we're gonna do?

(Morepreme, 1995)

Thus, Tupac's "gangsta" rap is actually an account of the impoverished communities from a perspective of a member within that community. Tupac never believed his music was "trash" and not political in intent. What he believed, with all of his art forms is that the audience must step up and listen to the messages that he and other politically motivated artists such as N.W.A were saying in order to really understand the statements they were making. In his interview with Morepreme, Tupac says, "You gotta listen to the messages. People get caught up in the beat or a catchy hook, but don't listen to what the artist is saying, which most of the time ain't shit... You gotta' listen to the message." (Morepreme, 1995)

### ***A Ghetto of Roses***

Conclusion:

“I set goals, take control, drink out my own bottle//I make mistakes but learn from everyone//and when it's said and done//I bet this brother be a better one//If I upset you don't stress//Never forget, that God isn't finished with me yet”

(Tupac, A Rose that Grew from Concrete, 1997)

It is important to note two things about how Tupac has contributed to Contemporary Black Political Thought from Traditional Black Radical Theory. The first is that Tupac was one of the most well rounded theorists within this Independent Study, who spoke to a majority of the topics covered in ways that others have not been able. Tupac, given his background, was able to communicate his ideas on self-defense, masculinity, and artistic responsibility to not only the impoverished communities he wanted to serve, but also to white communities and the greater American nation, because of how pivotal his music was to the Hip Hop community. This leads me to my second point.

Tupac is an example of how Traditional Radical Theory has crossed into Contemporary Black Political Thought. Many of Tupac's ideals were given to him by his Traditional Black Radical family, and he internalized their theories and applied them to Contemporary pop culture. Tupac clearly illustrates Black Nationalist principles in many of his songs, and especially within his poetry collection. Through Tupac's form of lyricism and artistic expression, there is a direct bridge formed between radical thought and contemporary theory for black people. Although Tupac has adapted his presentation of these traditional ideologies, by creating the genre of “gangsta rap”, his music is just a re-articulation of past theorist, making his music a new form of spreading Black Nationalist messages.

### **Conclusion:**

In this conclusion, I will argue that based on Tupac and Patricia Hill's presentation of Contemporary Black Political Thought, African American's have developed some ideologies of traditional black radical theorists, Malcolm X and Huey Newton. Although many of the "revolutionary" principles have not evolved, aesthetic and simple sociopolitical principles have held strong in contemporary theory. Conversely, modern theorists have been able to alter certain traditional radical theories to fit contemporary social culture, and also have developed their own ideologies that work towards equality within the African American community. Thus, I do believe that contemporary black political thought has taken advantage of the theoretical philosophies of traditional black theory. Although certain theories are not relevant status-quo, I believe they may contribute to current action of social change in regards to African American equality in the United States.

In order to lay out this argument, I will begin with broad traditional radical theories that are recognizable in contemporary black political thought, and how they affect how black people interact within the black community, and amongst the greater American community on a day-to-day basis. From there, I will draw out specific examples within each of the three focal points of this study to help understand how these theorists have gained/ or could gain from the traditional radical theorists. Afterwards, I will present a short agenda that will give a platform for black activists, most specifically, to use in generating social change from a political position. Finally, I will offer my artistic and theoretical contribution to this Independent Study on how traditional black radical theory has evolved into contemporary black political thought by showcasing my poetry collection, "\*\*\*\*BlkSavage".

*The proof is in the 'chocolate puddin''*

## Background

Throughout this study I have presented four theorists and their theories/ ideologies in relation to “blackness, violence and power”, “blackness, sexuality, and power”, and “blackness, artistic responsibility and power”. In the first section of my conclusion, which follows the structural base of the previous chapters, I will show the intersectionality that theorists have with one another in relation to these three mechanisms of thought. Although I understand this conclusion cannot summarize the entire experience of these three theorists in relation to these components, my aim is to provide a basis of understanding on how theories have transcended traditional black radical theory, and how these theories help understand where black culture is at normatively in contemporary black political thought.

*on your marx...gat ready..fire:*  
blackness, violence & power

In this section of my conclusion, I will speak on Malcolm X and Huey Newton’s approach to self Defense, and how elements of this form of violence have transcended into contemporary black political thought most specifically within Tupac’s lyrics. In Chapter One of this Independent Study, I wrote of how Malcolm X addresses non-violence, and also how he believed the most non-violent forms of political protest are inadequate in generating social change. In the same chapter, specifically in the section, “On your marx...gat ready...fire!” I wrote on Malcom X’s specific approach to “by any means necessary” and his critiques of non-violent forms of protest. Although many people have slated Malcolm X as a violent radical, Shabazz was more or less a forward thinker in analyzing altering positions of approaching violence to make change in the black community.

These means were adopted by later theorist, Huey Newton, who embraced Malcolm X’s ideologies on violence and used them to help pilot the Black Panther Party for Self Defense 10

Point program. Further, Malcolm X's "by any means strategy" can be analyzed through Huey Newton's black men with guns movement. Huey Newton – and Malcolm X – believed that the most dangerous insurgency to the American imperialist system was the black consciousness of violence and the effect of violence on making systemic change. As stated in the Malcolm X and Huey Newton chapters, both theorists/ activists posited that it was imperative for black people in the United States – and eventually everyone in the African diaspora – to join together under a common identity, and then resist oppressive fronts.

These are tenets of Tupac's ideologies provided within the lyrics of his music. In the song "Violent" which is offered in Tupac's, "blackness, violence and power" section, Shakur alludes how violence is perceived, in relation to social change, in America. His lyrics suggest the importance of resistance in an oppressed country and not being silent, regardless of what the social stigma of handling repression might be. In later songs, and in his practical efforts, Tupac speaks of the importance of unity when dealing with issues of social change, because he understood – as most other theorists – how essential it was to cooperate and build a community before breaking a system that justifies destroying communities.

Further, Tupac, as well as many other artists and black Americans have gained terminology of black violence from traditional black radical theorists. These terms include "pigs", and "black power", as well as a multitude of other slang terms and political jargon. These terms help us understand the power of spoken word and words in general in the black community. The word "*Nommo*" is Swahili for, "bringing power through spoken word". (Newton 1973, 173) Today, in the black community, it is most common to see *Nommo* brought about because words from traditional black radical theory have crossed into the modern Black Everyday Talk.

***blk & eve:***  
blackness, sexuality, & power



In this section, I will write on how identities of masculinity, and most specifically trust within black man has been passed from traditional black radical theory to contemporary black political thought. From there, I will elaborate on how Patricia Hill Collin's ideas of black masculinity help black men understand their position today in society, and can contribute towards an overall evolution of how black men archetype themselves in the future.

In the first chapter of this Independent Study, I speak on Malcolm X's fundamental issue of being able to trust anyone. Malcolm X's trust issues carried him through society very defensively, and it was not until after his trip to Mecca did he become more open to individuals – whether black, white, female, male or under any other identity. Contrariwise, Tupac Shakur in his interviews and in his music stated the same issues persisted within himself. Although it is a stretch to say that there is direct correlation between Tupac's trust issues – and how that furthered his identity into hegemonic masculinity – and Malcolm X's trust issues, there has to be a link between the two in this identity in masculinity. Issues of trust normatively still persist in African American communities, whether it be self-pride based, or rooted in upraising, African Americans and specifically within this study African American men struggle with issues of trust – which in turn creates issues with interpersonal relationships.

Within the Patricia Hill Collins chapter I write on how masculinity construction, by both Eurocentric guidelines, and oppressive definitions of what “masculinity” is might contribute to this cycle of trust problems. I used Patricia Hill's three components of what masculinity is built under - 1) physical strength, 2) sexuality, and 3) violence – to help understand how black men are characterized into either the hyper masculine athlete or the sexual predator. These two identities are not direct indicators of how an individual might be coerced into trust issues, but they can help understand why black men fall under the issue of dependence.

*sableXpress:*  
blackness, artistic responsibility, & power

In this last section, I will base a majority of the transition from traditional black radical theory to contemporary black political thought, on measuring how Tupac intentionally used his lyrics to juxtapose Black Panther messages to a predominately urban and non-conscious group of people. Although I do understand there are traditional black radical theories surrounded around artistic responsibility, most notably the black aesthetic ideology, it is impossible to introduce a new theorist and his theories, while maintaining the question at hand. Thus, I will write on how Tupac borrowed the messages of Huey Newton, and subsequently Malcolm X. This section, although the most limited because of the position of art, today and its change from traditional black radical theory, will help understand how artistic expression is an ever evolving form – although messages within the art are very consistent.

In Shakur's chapter, I write on how Tupac directly offers his messages from the Black Panther Party of Self Defense. Not only are there a multitude of examples of this within his poetry collection, "The Rose that Grew from Concrete", that are direct odes to Tupac's affiliation to the Black Panther Party, there are also examples streaming throughout Tupac's music. Tupac understood from a young age the magnitude of Nommo in art. He took this understanding, and not only annotated the relatability of past artists like Shakespeare, but also found ways to incorporate political messages in his music around resistance and every day struggles of black people in inner city communities.

### **A Nu Black Agenda:**

The following pages will contain what I will call a “Nu Black Agenda”, which will first layout current working ideologies that have developed from Tupac Shakur and Patricia Hill Collin’s collection of theories in Contemporary Black Political Thought. Then I will provide a skeleton of what might help the black community further the efforts of social equality by using traditional radical theories. My aim is to provide a basic understanding of a plausible goal that the black community could work towards in generating this social change.

#### **First Group: New Contributions**

In this first group I will speak on the two contemporary black theorists that have contributed to my studies of understanding how traditional black radical theory has evolved into today’s black political thought. Tupac and Patricia Hill Collins, as stated earlier in my conclusion, have adapted many ideologies from traditional black radical theorists, yet these theorists/ artists have crafted their own ways to contribute to the socio-political and economic equality of black people in America. Thus, this section will speak on those contributions.

Tupac Shakur spoke on how “Gangster Rap” is a form of reclaiming the black experience – particularly in black communities – and how this music was a new form of “asking” the oppressor for changes to happen in America in regards to inequality. With this alteration of music, many artists post Tupac have modeled themselves after Shakur – particularly his vulgar language and suggestive messages that are wrapped in misogyny, violence, and capitalist intent – yet have unintentionally kept the political messages within their music. Michael Eric Dyson, in his Michael Eric Dyson Reader elaborates on this thought, saying:

We should understand that gangsta rap often reaches higher than its ugliest, lowest common denominator. Misogyny, violence, materialism, and sexual transgression are not its exclusive domain. At its best, this music draws attention to complex dimensions of

ghetto life ignored by many Americans. Of all the genres of hip-hop – from socially conscious rap to Black Nationalist expressions, from pop to hardcore – gangsta rap has most aggressively narrated the pains and possibilities, the fantasies and fears, of poor black urban youth. Gangsta rap is situated in the violent climes of postindustrial Los Angeles and its bordering cities. It draws its metaphoric capital in part from the mix of myth and murder that gave the Western frontier a dangerous appeal a century ago.

(Dyson 2004, 416)

Thus, although not proactive nor intentional by a multitude of artists, including Young Thug who states, “He leaves that political talk to the politicians”, hip hop artists and rappers today have adapted new forms of asking the oppressor to make change by de marginalizing their experience to the American pop culture community. (Young Thug, Awards, 2014)

In conceptualizing intersectionality and its magnitude on the black community, it is important to address how intersectionality could have helped past theorist, Huey Newton, and his struggle with linking together the black community with women and the LGBTQ+ communities. Intersectionality, although coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, has helped Collins and other black women thinkers understand how to mold themselves into breaking down co-opting oppressive fronts. Newton, if living in contemporary black political thought, would understand how to approach individuals through not only epistemology – or fitting individuals into groups because of identity- but also the importance of delineating each individual, within their groups, in aims of holistically understanding how their identity is only one fashion of the makeup in diversity that that person possesses. Thus, in contemporary black political thought, I believe it has become easier to understand the black community because womanists such as Patricia Hill Collins have broken the mold of not only formulating the ideas of how blackness relates to other forms of identity, but further finding ways – such as “rearticulation” – to dismantle these issues, from a non-elitist perspective, and even further a “non-radical perspective” – because people do not usually place Collins in a school of radical thought.

## **Second Group: NU Normativity**

In my Junior Independent Study conclusion, I presented my safe zones ideology and posited that in order for African Americans to reach their potential, they must step out of the Reactionary Suicide mentality offered by Huey Newton. In that conclusion, I stated:

Huey Newton states that, “to understand Revolutionary Suicide, it is first necessary to have an understanding of Reactionary Suicide.” (Newton 1973, 2) In Chapter one, I lay out a basic definition of Revolutionary Suicide in presenting how this ideology influenced Newton’s beliefs of Intercommunalism. In this conclusion, I will offer Newton’s definitions of both Revolutionary Suicide and Reactionary Suicide, and how our generation suffers from “safe zone” mentality, because we stay in the position of Reactionary Suicide. I do understand that the terms, ‘Revolutionary Suicide’ and ‘Reactionary Suicide’ are not appealing, given the denotation of the word ‘Suicide’ within these expressions, but I believe that the ideology beyond the word ‘Suicide’ is relevant and necessary in pushing African Americans from the “safe zones” of Contemporary Black Political Thought.

Reactionary Suicide, by Dr. Hendin’s definition is, “the reaction of a man who takes his own life in response to social conditions that overwhelm him and condemn him to helplessness.” (Newton 1973, 5) He calls this form of suicide, ‘reactionary’, because the individual dies in the circumstances given to them. These people allow systems of oppression to control their destinies. Thus, Newton calls these people, ‘reactionary’, because they do not proactively assert ideas to progress the equality of African Americans. Huey Newton sees this death as a spiritual death. He says, “death is found everywhere today in the Black community. Its victims have ceased to fight the forms of oppression that drink their blood. The common attitude has long been: What’s the use? If a man rises up against a power as great as the United States, he will not survive.” (Newton 1973, 6) It is important to note, Reactionary Suicide and Revolutionary are not forms of self-mortality, but they are an understanding of individuals’ approach to death, which ultimately presents the individuals’ attitude towards life.

If Newton were still alive, I believe he would argue that a large majority of Black Americans are stuck in the Reactionary Suicide mentality. I believe there is a strong tendency for African Americans today to worry primarily about their economic survival and status in America.

Many passions are sought from a capitalist point of view, or the belief of, “what can I do that makes the most money”. With worries of status, money and ultimately pressures of conforming to social norms in the “safe zones” of the Black Counterpublic, I argue African Americans hold themselves back from developing ideas that could progress equality in the United States. I agree with Newton that equality cannot be assumed by individuals who adopt the approach of Reactionary Suicide. Thus, it is important for African Americans to reform their mentality to that of Revolutionary Suicide. In order to make this evolution of thought, I believe it is essential to first, step out of the traditional Black Political Thought that has plagued the African American community for generations, and second, lead

America closer to realizing the steps that must be taken to accomplish racial equality in the United States.

I do understand that this transition cannot be accomplished through using the terms, ‘Revolutionary Suicide’ or ‘Reactionary Suicide’, but the ideas these expressions hold, can be exchanged throughout the Black Counterpublic without overtly labeling the ideologies. I believe this exchange of thought can happen, because within the Black Counterpublic, I do not think theories are always labeled as they are exchanged. When discussing Black Nationalism theoretical principles, Black Nationalists are not validating their theoretical position within the Black Counterpublic. I believe the ideology of ‘Revolutionary Suicide’ can be inculcated into Contemporary Black Political Thought by covertly teaching its ideas in Everyday Talk. In doing so, reforming the stagnant beliefs of Reactionary Suicide in Black Common Sense, will evolve.

Huey Newton defines Revolutionary Suicide as, “not a death wish. It is a strong desire to live with hope and human dignity that existence without them is impossible.” (Newton 1973, 7) Those who step into this mentality understand the value of self-sacrifice, and that living within the mentality of Revolutionary Suicide is a “miracle.” (Newton 1973, 7) He believes that people who do not position themselves to understand the dangerousness of living as a sacrifice, do not fully understand the basis of living. (Newton 1973, 8) Those who live with the Revolutionary Suicide attitude step out of the position of reactionary comfort, and into one of progressive action. They understand that in loving something unconditionally, they may have to sacrifice for that idea. This sense of altruism, although is not popular, is necessary in pushing forward theoretical beliefs in the black community. In transitioning, African Americans will eliminate fear of their personal lives, and worry about the progression of their racial equality.

(Kusch 2014, 44)

In understanding the necessity of switching from ‘Reactionary Suicide’ to ‘Revolutionary Suicide’ it is important for current hip-hop artists to not only “de-marginalize their stories”, as Dyson would say, but encourage dialogue around generating social change within telling stories. As an artist, it is necessary to not only push your craft to the next level – which requires a perspective of understanding art is not solely created from capitalist gain – but it is also imperative that an artist use his/ her story to push forward social action in their communities. This means, that although rappers may tell their stories of everyday life in urban communities, a critique of a system should come with the dialog of “hood experiences”. This will require a conscious change of rappers, yet in provoking interchange amongst pop culture artists about how social structures continue the legacy of predominately black ghettos, and their marginalized experiences from other elites – or

even middle class Americans- there can be more of a push for creating reform in the system that continues to subjugate blacks to specific areas within cities.

Further, in grappling with modes of intersectionality, it is necessary for black people to move beyond understanding variant levels of oppression within the black communities, and work just as hard to dismantle ideologies of misogyny and cloaking within black women's experiences. In doing so, "rearticulation" – which is defined in Patricia Hill Collin's chapter – will become not only more plausible to the black community but more sustainable in efforts of making holistic change that disrupts the entire system of tyranny built in America's – black and white – fabric.

Overall, I believe this transition may happen if black people first, begin to understand the elements of thought that have been borrowed by past theorists, and begin discussing how these beliefs on generating equality in America, and practices that may be done to achieve the same goals of past theorists, today. Further, if African Americans alter our ideas of Black Common Sense from a Reactionary Suicide standpoint towards a Revolutionary Suicide mentality standpoint, and formulate intersectionality between mechanisms of black studies (ie: violence, sexuality, and artistic responsibility) then more inclusivity will become available in re-thinking approaches to generating social change towards equality. Although this transition will require that individuals begin to instill "Revolutionary Suicide" beliefs into the black community, which is not an easy feat, I believe borrowing Huey Newton's ideology, and continuing the efforts of modern black theorists, who evolve the theories, is a necessary evolution of thought, to eliminate racism in America and further to redevelop African Americans position in American society.

\*\*\**BlkSavage*: The Blueprint



### **Background:**

In 2014...in Saint Louis... in “*Post-Racial America*”... in my mother’s kitchen... in the courtroom...in our own minds... black “*boys*” are being silenced. We are told that what we have to say is, “disrespectful”, “inconsiderate” and “not thought out.” In the process of this silence, these spaces have become “*safe*”, or free from altering ideologies. As a reaction to this change throughout history, black male identity has become abbreviated – hence the word “black” becoming ‘\*\*\*blk’ within this study. This chapter is closest to me, in my work of political theory. The following pages contain my poetry collection: “\*\*\*BlkSavage,” which I have written during this Independent Study process. When constructing this collection, my goal was to explain how black male identity has been fabricated in America. The poems follow the same structure as the preceding chapters, with the variant of an altered introduction.

I believed these poems are essential to this Independent Study for two reasons. The first is constructed around my research question. In this Independent Study I am looking at how traditional black radical theory has evolved into Contemporary Black Political Thought through three lenses. The third of these lenses, artistic responsibility, is how “\*\*\*\*BlkSavage” became an idea. The second reason, which turned this idea into reality, was the College of Wooster slogan, “Independent Minds, Working Together.” When devising plans of what I wanted my I.S to look like, I sought to use all of what this college has given me to in turn give back to the scholarly community. Thus, “\*\*\*BlkSavage” is a reflection of this internalization. I could not write this Independent Study, about black people and inequality, about myself, without speaking – through creative writing – for myself.

Another essential portion of this collection are the newspaper clippings and political cartoons that I use to highlight and illustrate certain poems. These articles are not fictitious, and

are ways that black boys/men have been showcased, figured, and manipulated into American journalism.

When reading this collection, I want the audience to think of the following things: How does this relate to me? How are these messages connected to my lived experience in America? What can I do to bring these pages into dialogue, and how can I bring these dialogues into strategized change? I do not expect each poem to resonate to each reader, but I do want each reader to walk away understanding the issues of how black male identity has been built into American society. This poetry collection, along with the chapters that came before it, will all help me answer the overall research question of this Independent Study.

**\*\*\*BlkSavage:**

**1. this little light o' mine:**

- 1.1. it was sunrise & 1619
- 1.2. take off your burdens
- 1.3. you realized you was a blk man when you(r): (check all that apply)

**2. on your marx... gat ready.. fire:**

- 2.1. (13)hirteen coils: how to tie a noose
- 2.2. the last thing I want to remember
- 2.3. turn 'round
- 2.4. 1968 & N. 19 St.
- 2.5. the gun told the blk boy wassup
- 2.6. all i need is my whip & my chains
- 2.7. # \_\_\_\_\_ [insertnamehere] \_\_\_\_\_

**3. blk & eve:**

- 3.1. cradle my circumcised chestnut
- 3.2. magnolias and sweet tea
- 3.3. blk leather don't stain
- 3.4. Where's Spalding?
- 3.5. i proclaim myself man

**4. sableXpress:**

- 4.1. one drop solutions
- 4.2. michael's omen
- 4.3. midnight palms: an eulogy to the white-boy in his bi-racial body

**this little light o' mine:**

maybe mountains move  
with moon eclipse & tiderise  
when it's blk enough

it was sunrise & 1619.

america has begun  
to hand out labels

they call me midnight...*nigger*..  
...*blk*

& move away from  
my skin. scared & howling at  
the moons for light  
white people  
dress like sheep  
& *farm mentality*

the shepherds

only taught me how  
to run  
like mississippi river currents  
& blk daddies  
crisped pink palms & packed duffel bag

*“you gotta’ go!”*

i stand still  
like the moons  
& cousin star  
and day dream about  
wearing wool one day  
even if it was too hot, because

nobody give’s a fuck mid  
night.

& when the sun rises...

take off your burdens.

stereotype on  
stereotype  
blk by blk

peel away all the pain  
constructed onto your melanin

hold onto those  
flakes of identity, though.

remind your self  
each day  
there is blk skin  
in the swirls of your palms  
&the shadows under your tongue  
&insulate that beauty  
mark that stretches from  
the crown of your flesh to  
the burn marks of your sable spirit

&Loveyourself

when they  
cramped your individuality  
into rusted iron cuffs &torn rags  
&told you  
you ain't pretty  
enough to  
be free  
or human

you accepted them

but it is a new day  
fashion them a blk casket  
lock each white soul inside  
&allow them to feel smothered &muffled  
or mid  
night

then, poke holes into the roof  
sprinkle your flakes of identity  
into the coffin

let them carry your ancestors  
on their chests

isn't it heavy?

you realized you were a blk male when you(r)...

(check all that apply)

- ☐ was born
- ☐ hugged your mother at your second birthday party
- ☐ sat at the thanksgiving dinner table and your aunt smiled, pinched your cheeks & called you a "cute lil' nigga"
- ☐ didn't see anyone who looked like you on Barney
- ☐ didn't know your father beyond age four
- ☐ mother hated your father for not knowing you beyond the age of four
- ☐ friends called you "different"
- ☐ friends played in your hair because it was "different"
- ☐ lost your first white friend because they called you "blk"
- ☐ got your first lap dance at the 5<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school fall get together
- ☐ fought in the bathroom during lunch-time
- ☐ played truth or dare with a white girl & she ran away when you pulled out your dick
- ☐ jacked-off to "ebony porn"
- ☐ friends said you looked good with an afro
- ☐ became "ethnic"
- ☐ said nigga
- ☐ johnsonmoor became your identity
- ☐ GPA was exploited because it exceeded 3.0
- ☐ applied to college
- ☐ graduated from high school
- ☐ got into college
- ☐ was the only blk male in your classroom
- ☐ spoke for all blk males across America
- ☐ was chased by the police at 10pm for looking suspicious
- ☐ kissed your girlfriend and laid with her for what felt like eternity
- ☐ smoked weed and drunk with your homies for their birthday until the sun rose
- ☐ got your first job
- ☐ son smiled at you for the first time in the hospital
- ☐ cried over your gunned-down best-friend's casket
- ☐ bought your first house
- ☐ was evicted from your first house
- ☐ taught your child how to act around the police
- ☐ made a white woman clutch her purse to her side
- ☐ made your wife cry
- ☐ went to jail
- ☐ held your first gun
- ☐ was shot/stabbed/or beaten by anyone
- ☐ died
- ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ all of the above



*on your marx...gat ready..fire!*

*why i'm so angry?!*  
my mind nine millimeter  
begging death at dawn

(13)hirteen coils: (*how to tie a noose*)  
dedicated to Lennon Lacy..

(1)*ne*:  
secure a 3-foot rope  
durable enough to  
display blk bodies  
from a mississippi oak tree

(2)*wo*:  
form a 'c'  
like *caucasian* culture  
&*christian* crossbars  
*cede*  
&grip tightly

(3)*hree*:  
trace the 's'  
in the palm of your hands  
let one end of the rope  
slither to the ground  
so that its tongue grazes the grass blades

(4)*our*:  
compress  
&pinch the 's' together  
prepare as a bowtie

(5)*ive*:  
share your secrets  
with your first born son  
pray that he carry the legacy.

(6)*ix*:  
wrap white *culture* around  
the pinched 's'  
from right to left  
&leave 3 inches  
hung like a blk snake  
flaccid &unwrapped  
on one end  
there will be  
two loops dangling  
like burnt blk legacies  
from either side

(7)*even:*

take pride in your heritage  
take pain in the noose

take pleasure in you

(8)*ight:*

shove the tail  
rope back through the  
crown of the loop  
beside the 's'

(9)*ine:*

use your thumb  
hold onto  
mid-night.  
pinch the loops, tightly.

(10)*en:*

fasten a smile around your face  
big enough to wrap around  
a swarm of men  
colorless &posed  
pull it tight &into locked position

(11)*even*

adjust.  
adjust, again.

(12)*elve:*

picnic &  
search the nature of God.

(13)*irteen:*

watch the unlucky

nigger hang.

the last thing i want to remember:

*is freedom..*

the first thing i want to forget:

all these chains...  
pinching at my cephalic

white people are always trying to  
connect me to my great-great-grandfather  
his daddy, too..

*it'll keep those savages  
the animals we know  
they are!*  
says the NYPD police commissioner

*when did you fall in love with the revolution?*  
spits from the mouth of a tallahatchie news reporter

...

maybe when i saw my mother's shadow  
washed onto *Uncle Ricks Candy Shop*

or when my baby brother became  
some white-boy's saturday night adventure

it was probably my first-birthed son  
the light-skin, thin lipped  
smooth palmed, &hazel eyed boy  
magnified more than consent  
on my wife's pussy

could be this bruise that is  
grappling up the side of my back  
from police baton  
&the first time i felt my blood become a testament  
or sacrifice to my skin-line

but i remember it vaguely  
...in the backseat of a mississippi police car  
at midnight  
feeling rage  
a bitter taste of white blood across my lower lip

they don't speak of consequences  
in the murmur of armageddon's attic

a life-sentence:

when you commit revolutionary suicide  
do it in love

make sure you carry an atomic bomb

its heaviness will remind you of your mother's tears

wait until your eyes are shot with fireball

it will command your enemies

*...those white men....*

we are nothing but dyingtogether

turn 'round

*[groove on']*

theres' a new jive  
playd' to on  
brass and percussion  
by dangerous negroes  
who just don' give a funk

they call it  
'da turn 'round'  
nu school blk bangin' blues

thes' earworms  
were birthed in the mangers of  
revolutionary minds  
den' breast fed on  
solitude and firewatah'

oOoh do ya' hear it?  
those vibrations  
rides yuh' ears to glorah'  
it makes you go sable

*[catch up]*

coo' souls thro' their shells 'round  
their skele-tons rattlin'  
to booms and dooms  
when 'dey do da' grave dance  
dark bodies grip their hips  
'nd shout rebellious thangs

*[catch on]*

"boa"  
you too cool,  
to hang stereotypes  
on ya' shoulders  
'nd walk 'n stupidity  
turn 'round

turn 'round  
this' a royal thang  
we are so more than moonlight

*shadows shackled to  
ankles of giants*

*we are nephilim  
God rushing through  
our blood*

*we are abel  
sacrificed to cain  
blk as night  
big as heaven  
bad as hell”*

*[groove too]*

when we all get da’ movement  
there will be a’ ‘ruption of cloud’  
heaven will loose  
‘nd blessings of consciousness  
will po’ all o’er our souls

you will see us.  
blk.

we will be caught up  
groovin’ to da’ gifts of tongues  
skatting out of lips  
will be puissant utterances  
and beatific ‘xpressions  
will coat our faces

*[hol’ it]*

this will be da’ blk folk’ rapture  
ebony kinfolk shouting liberation  
to those who thought we couldn’ speak  
we will spill libations over America’s grave  
‘nd take over our own thangs’

turn ‘round  
gyrate those fists to the skies  
‘nd boogie to a rhythm  
to a song played on the dark side’  
our side  
our side

do the turn 'round.



1968 &N 19th st.

trap house be hot  
smell like liquor malt forties  
dust of flamin' hot cheetos  
middle east skunk trees  
mississippi grown grease pits  
&beat open pussy

twelve walls  
four rooms  
choked by smoke  
&red light shadows  
crown molding  
blk  
laced with  
powdered cocaine  
white  
nostril tips

trap music  
static heart beats  
staccato  
BLK BLK    BLK    BLK BLK

&someone tells you to  
lean back  
shutter your eyelids  
be high five happy  
&palm euphoria  
bare as your red blood

now breathe  
&let clouds coat  
your chest cavity

there is buzzing in the air  
...veins bulging

thank God for this sanctuary  
your walls hold heaven

outside  
two blk boys are yelling  
BANG BANG BANG  
punch bagging their lungs

into their tonsils

dogs chains jerk  
there is barking

one baby is wailing  
police sirens  
desperate for attention

cuffs click  
a door slams shut

three little girls  
double dutch in an alley  
where midnight bums all day  
their jingling beads echoing  
through the bricks  
their laughter is  
almost innocent

a blk man is dead  
a blk man been dead  
nobody heard a thing

heaven sees it all.  
says nothing

who killed me?

the gun told the blk boy wassup

the boy would not get enough  
of the pigs in day  
the enemies lay  
and he got the respect because...

the gun told the blk boy whats good  
a killer should kill if he should  
the bullets did spray  
the bodies decay  
rule one: do not kill in your hood

the gun told the blk boy let go  
blk boy shot in in ego  
now he be victim  
or unjust system  
statistic numbers him as foe

the gun told the grave he be blessed  
convinced gone blk boy he's in rest  
and lay that he did  
he another kid

barbaric &savage &dead

all i need is my whip &my chains.  
**(in dedication to chuc- e locc &o'shai)**

my boys &on corners we hang  
out laws like bane  
my niggas insane  
fuck 'round with us  
we drain out your veins  
brains spread on the concrete as paint  
you ask whats a sinner to saints?  
i shatter halos no fuckin' restraint  
then conquer your hos' no fuckin' complaint  
cain don't make me pull out my nine  
blood stained on my palms like that wine  
it got me so drunk  
i'm feeling so high  
fuck with my squad  
&you'll touch the sky  
i only kill when it's midnight  
out of sight  
&we don't touch light  
come with the gas  
you'll leave with the bite  
come with that ass  
&smite you, i might  
aaight, please don't confuse me with them  
no fuck boys will make it within  
heavens' a win  
if we get in with sin  
my brother's i keep

R.I.P to my kin

# [insertnamehere]\_\_\_\_\_

#RoshadMcIntosh  
#SergioRamos  
#QuseanWhitten  
#JeffreyHolden  
#JordanBaker  
#EricGarner  
#CareySmith-Viramontes  
#LeviWeaver  
#DillonMcGee  
#MiguelBenton  
#JohnCrawfordIII  
#TyreeWoodson  
#MichaelBrown  
#LaquanMcDonald  
#VonDerritMyersJr  
#EzellFord  
#DanteParker  
#VictorWhiteIII  
#CameronTillman  
#AkaiGurley  
#TamirRice  
#RumainBrisbon  
#CedricBartee  
#TravisFaison  
#BrandonTateBrown  
#AntonioMartin  
#...

hope i don't become a hashtag...

cries the blk boy

**Blk &eve:**

tell me what came first:  
the kingdom or it's orphans,  
blk male or manhood.

cradle my circumcised chestnut.

*i want to see your palms  
tremble as you feel  
my veins pump blood*

*fill with blood my veins  
&i become your blkpriapus  
a demi-god  
or at least kubwa  
erect with a phallus that stretches  
as far as the question mark  
hanging between my thighs*

twilight, while  
the sun slept  
you wandered into  
my sleeping quarters  
&wondered how long  
could you hold onto darkness

white girls love big blk dick  
or at least  
*the sensation of being overwhelmed*

johnsonmoor  
has never fucked  
so much admiration  
yet, she still doesn't look me in the flesh  
or the eyes..

*..but we will still meet again tomorrow.*

the white woman's proverb:  
a blk man owns nothing, except  
a throbbing crotch  
a guaranteed orgasm  
a messydarktaboodexperience

&mid-night.

magnolias & sweet tea.

sizzling summer afternoon  
oakwood stained front porch  
rocking chair  
back 'n' forth  
sweat droplets  
beautifulblk

niggers  
jigaboos  
blkies

be built like bulls  
heavy in the face  
cut down the spine  
rough  
ground 'n' pound

i drink from my scotch glass  
peek  
perspiration  
in the crevices of it's pubic mound  
there is a chestnut

wet.  
i am..

meeting johnson *moor*.

coffee brewed  
& forearm

spread in me like cotton seed  
packed into my womb like  
magician rabbit tricks

remember how  
my magnolia flower  
opened her petals to darkness

my palms were smooth  
made broken  
by nail tracks  
bite marks  
blk skin



this wasn't sex  
fuck  
this was sin  
warm rushing waters  
lust  
i loved.

cream splattered  
my clitoris  
johnson*moor* never pulled out  
i never want it to

it hated me

what i wanted  
hold on  
autumn leave  
winter chill  
spring shower  
fresh gashed crossed scratch

time.

sweet tea & stretch marks  
oakwood stained front porch  
rocking chair  
back 'n' forth  
sweat droplets  
beautiful blk

baby  
rugrat  
bastard

two blkbabes  
shaded under the oak tree  
one i owned  
given to midnight

it was a 'she'  
i wanted  
cord cut  
no room  
not human

the house white  
couldn't hold moor

the porch creeks  
sweet tea tastes bitter  
in our garden  
dead magnolias

it is smiling.  
its cheekbones are  
my mothers

i dream  
her mouth is on my nipple  
she is sucking

it knows home.

blk leather don't stain

she doesn't break either  
except when bullets  
shells gaze at the cowhide of  
cointelpro & blk baby boys

then it yank its zipper at my seams

my fabric is worn  
told she is not resilient enough  
to bounce back  
like his skin

cackling  
i raise my fist  
& display the stretch marks  
beneath my right armpit

say  
these etchings  
are wisdom stripes

a count of  
how many times  
God has turned woman into testimony

tell them

i am...

elastic enough to break  
two systems simultaneously

goddess enough to  
pop right back  
& become mother, sister, & friend

how can these coats not  
consume breasts and round hips?

i am a travelling political statement

woman blk & inferno

my stiches are

scorned permed edges

you blk man  
seized my power  
baptized yourself chivalrous  
& stole my tongue  
told me it belonged in the shadows  
with the rest of  
those things that needed protection

i do not need to be sheltered  
i am Corinthian  
leather & life  
time guaranteed

*...you haven't asked me how my day was....*  
*...its been three days since you asked me how my day was....*  
*...why can't i have an input in today's plan of action?*  
*...you think im crazy don't you?*  
*...is this just your revolution?*  
*...so this cannot be my revolution?*  
*...so is this what you consider love?*

no.  
no. this is not love.

i'll show you love

toss me  
over your shoulders  
let my skin drape itself over your wounds  
home your arms  
in my sleeves  
embrace me  
with your midnight kisses  
and validate my visions  
of changing the world together

never take me off.  
i'll hold you open palm  
& ready  
to bear fruit  
of lifetimes worth of inequality  
i am forever  
an eternity of

yours.

where's spalding?

he's probably cracking  
ankles on the wood  
in a pick-up of twenty-one ball  
with the boys

momma advises me

*go outside  
get your palms dirty, sweat a lil'  
play some ball, boy  
it'll take you places*

i scamper out begrudgingly

my homies chose me because  
i got a shot  
pull up is impeccable

handles weak  
i blame it on the  
midnight-sized cracks on our court

blast to the sidewalk & chat with some girls

*bitch nigga  
bring yo' ass back over here!*

you can't be blk boy & not basketball

we were little blk boys  
we'd talk about growing up  
& being "like mike"

getting drafted into the NBA  
or at least reaching the rim

ain't nothing like dunking a ball  
except beating pops 1on1  
& a championship ring

i just hope i can dribble the ball up the court  
without tripping over fake friends  
& white girls

such a hoop dream

i proclaim myself *man*

she *king*  
we are twelve  
&some months  
closer to thirteen  
wavering against  
what we call  
*that unlucky age*  
when we become  
pimples, pubic  
hairs &prey

i tell *mami'*  
*i am savage*  
broaden my shoulders, cock  
my fingers, grimace, bare my teeth  
palm my balls  
&order  
*she call me real nigga*

*blk boys* only evolve into  
*real niggas*  
sixteen &independent  
*real niggas*  
polo horses, galloping  
bloody red Jordans  
&*real nigga*

*pops* scolds  
*your pants are cupping*  
*at the bottom of your ass, again, son!*

i tell him  
*that's just what we do*

we salute our boxers to moon  
walk wide enough to hold  
our belts at our thighs  
so to only expose johnsoon*moor*  
we're told it makes you  
look like a *man*  
a *man* makes you a *real nigga*  
&every *blk boy* wants to be a *real nigga*

-its a rite of passage-

to be eighteen  
&taking care of my *bitch*

she bad as hell  
ass on *beyonce*  
face on fleek

my *boys* tell me  
*don't love these hoes*

i don't listen  
trust they're jealous  
don't know what we got  
&want it

my *girl* been  
*my ride or die*  
since she fell from her mother  
she's my *cinnamon toast crunch*  
*red bone &main squeeze*

*real niggas* know that  
don't have any problems with it either

gave my virginity to her, too  
in the jungle  
when midnight shines through the windowpanes  
we tumble in the canopy of her vagina  
&she spreads vines up my back

calls me *daddy*

only when i give it to her good  
she calls me *daddy*

my unborn children believe otherwise  
they've said my semen  
is omen to the curse of  
cain skin  
told me  
"i don't want to be  
a *real nigga, daddy*"

... i don't have an answer  
does that not mark me a *man*?

am i not a *real nigga*?

twenty first  
&this is what you've made of me

*big blk dick, borrowed  
masculinity, boy infinity, unknown  
father, unknown grandfather,  
two homegrown weapons  
two more pistols – just in case  
pull out game - weak, runaway  
daddy, bitch, bitch boy, bitch nigga, bitch ass  
nigga, stupid, stupid ass, stupid ass boy, stupid  
ass nigga, ratchet, lazy, hip-hop  
king of the projects  
savage*

there may be truth in every stereotype

yet, i am ripped definition  
merriam: *blk man*

i am the overture  
of *blk boys* becoming *blk men*  
and *real nigga*

a proclamation of redefinition  
founded on two principles

one:  
pull out every spirit of *man*  
that has potted itself  
in your belly

two:  
you address me by my name  
or, i order  
you proclaim

*me blk savage*



**sableXpress**

rappers full of shit  
lifestyles & similes stank  
i am minty fresh

one drop solutions

when one discards a drop of oil into water  
the oil settles on top  
never mixing

when i was born  
God's palms  
trickled oil into the water  
constructing a solution  
of polar  
& nonpolar  
chemical compounds

"like dissolves like"  
solutes do not dissolve into solvents  
oil is hydrophobic

"water fearing"

this poem isn't rocket science

what happens when you drop oil into water  
and shake the solution?

elements  
biologically  
creating racial hierarchy

blk & white

i am the oppressor  
and the oppressed  
in the same body

spinning on and off of racial paradoxes  
i can't be  
100% blk  
100% white  
and secure in my identity  
because solvents and solutes  
never mix fully  
blks & whites  
never mix fully

racial frames are more convoluted than

these 46 chromosomes  
more benighted  
than light skinned hyperboles  
of loose curls and sundry features  
200 years of romanticized ideologies

mutilated perceptions of wholeness

“deny half of yourself”

american media once told me

“you are blk  
different, but blk”

“are you sure you are not adopted?”

“you definitely look latino”

“ it does not matter because  
we live in a post racial society.”

“ join the movement  
blk power.”

these are introspections i have  
at mid-night when covered in darkness  
i believed them

so i share this with you  
this poem is for the muddled souls  
social constructs still checking  
“choose one only” lifestyles  
for “house niggas” and colorism  
for the one drop rule  
the tragic mulatto  
for the frederick douglass’  
the barack obama’s  
that don’t know that being biracial

is perfect &awkward  
it is complicated &overrated

blk &white  
both &neither

compounds not defined

biracial people will always be enigmatic  
yet when God trickled oil into the water  
God formed new nephilim  
bridged culture  
gaps between  
loose curls & blk power  
solvents and solutes

when you drop water into oil  
and shake the solution  
you make revolutions  
of self enlightenment

one drop never mattered so much

michael's omen

ferguson  
missouri  
august 9  
quik trip  
swisher sweet  
pigs in blank  
assassinated hands  
up  
bullet in  
head  
bullet in  
chest  
bullet in chest  
bullet in arm  
booM booM booM booM  
three hours ticking  
three times dead  
bloody  
red

dead &blk &boy

trinity

somewhere in america  
plowed six feet under  
iron fisted judicial systems  
capital ass oppressive communities  
&200 year old  
maple tree roots  
rests thousands of blk boys

our graves are  
reincarnated omens  
charcoaled with  
1882 white man handled  
noose loops  
&marked by  
pseudo empathetic  
racial sympathizers  
&r.i.p screen tee-shirts

who knows a dead blk man?

i was born in a stainless steel casket  
raised by mississippi arch currents  
&dred scott decisions  
if i ran away  
i would be a blk boy with ragtime blues

a subconscious cooped  
in savagery, darwinistic survival,  
&stoic patriarchy

conservative news sources  
box us blk boys  
like hands up hashtag movements  
&throw labels  
into nine millimeter chambers  
ready, aim, shoot  
CRIMINAL, SAMBO, BEAST, HULK, DEMON, PROBLEM  
at our heads  
&pray that we die  
in our stereotypes  
so they may masquerade  
systematic genocide  
with "blk male  
acts of undomesticated savagery"

who cries uncivilized when we create 17 holes into blk mens bodies?

michael brown  
was no exception  
no casualty  
he was alarms  
bellowing for existence  
in his deathbed  
he was cleansed by the government  
bleached  
ferguson police department  
&city officials

he was me  
a blk boy living in  
north county saint louis  
walking down chambers road questioning  
if police think his stride looks more animal than human  
questioning if his stride looks animal enough  
to survive saint. Louis midnight excursions  
reminiscing on how many times his high school

has clarified his character  
& faith that he and his friends would never become  
a trespassing bullet  
to an unwarranted crime

who will clean up my memories as they ooze onto concrete from the back of my skull?

we are all marked at birth  
corralled into our social constructs  
of race, gender and class  
upon first breath  
blk boys  
are placed on death row

born with triggers  
engraved into our chest cavities  
birthed with brown eyes permeated  
to ground level  
palms strapped to our new  
jim crow crown molded bed frames  
born feeble  
& poised  
to die

while bound to my deathbed  
fastened into the double helix  
of my mother and grandfathers oppression  
there is an earthquake  
a gathering of a legion of dead blk men  
buried under the freedom ring of  
crispus attacks adams apple

the men blare:  
"blk men matter"  
& echoes of validation surge  
through my skin cells

in the plate movement, there is a seventeen year old blk boy, pleading to live again...

america

*you will stop killing me*

midnight palms: an eulogy to the white-boy in his bi-racial body

it is custom for a blk man  
to write his poems on his knees

*&let it be so.*

mounted for benediction  
*i speak...*

it is custom for bi-racial boys  
to kiss the skin of a crimson carnation  
before he beckons God into his funeral

in sacrifice with  
my body swinging from father's family tree  
i offer my last breath

a procession begins..

*forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change the body of our low estate that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.*

the altar carries an ivory casket  
within it lies a baby boy, weeping  
the altar asks:  
how much weight must it bear?

the congregation wells in silence  
except two seraphim who wail  
*lord....hath....mercy*  
in the shadows of the narthex

i sit in the oak coated  
blood satin stained  
upholstered chancel

my fingers are twisted into fist  
swathed around a dead carnation  
my lips are moist with crimson  
a drop of sweat burrows itself into my blk neck tie

it is time...



i look into my family

my blk mom &white dad  
refuse to acknowledge at each-other

they do not see me, either  
probably distracted by the nearly-dead white embryo  
wrestling for his life on the altar  
i rise  
blk savage &tuxedo

& speak...

today, &wherefore the days that follow  
i...jestin bra'ejon kusch  
do hereby commit my whiteness to the grave

within these hallowed halls has  
thousands of spirits gathered to wage war  
against the iniquities of oppression &privilege  
built into my descent

&i no longer want to manifest in the lineage of my white ancestors

my once father stares  
bewildered at his blk son  
he believes this funeral is a mockery  
i see it in his pupils  
they have become...distant

i figure a smile towards his pale skin  
pronounce a wave as an offering of grace  
then gesture God into my palms

midnight is as dense as burning flesh on the mississippi

who knows how to get rid of my last name?  
i ask

the baby takes his final breath

i fall onto my knees  
&begin to pray

everything becomes black

amen.

## **Appendix I:**

### **Program of the Organization of Afro-American Unity Malcolm X, et al. (taken from [the Malcolm X Museum](#))**

*note - this was originally supposed to be presented on Feb. 15, but since Malcolm's home was fire-bombed, this was delayed for a week -- Feb. 21, to be exact -- the day he was assassinated... also, the addresses at the end are probably no longer functional (to my knowledge, the OAAU no longer exists), so please don't bother sending cheques or money orders to the OAAU*

*Pledging unity...*

*Promoting justice...*

*Transcending compromise...*

We, Afro-Americans, people who originated in Africa and now reside in America, speak out against the slavery and oppression inflicted upon us by this racist power structure. We offer to downtrodden Afro-American people courses of action that will conquer oppression, relieve suffering, and convert meaningless struggle into meaningful action.

Confident that our purpose will be achieved, we Afro-Americans from all walks of life make the following known:

### **ESTABLISHMENT**

Having stated our determination, confidence, and resolve, the Organization of Afro-American Unity is hereby established on the 15th day of February, 1965, in the city of New York.

Upon this establishment, the Afro-American people will launch a cultural revolution which will provide the means for restoring our identity that we might rejoin our brothers and sisters on the African continent, culturally, psychologically, economically, and share with them the sweet fruits of freedom from oppression and independence of racist governments.

1. The Organization of Afro-American Unity welcomes all persons of African origin to come together and dedicate their ideas, skills, and lives to free our people from oppression.
2. Branches of the Organization of Afro-American Unity may be established by people of African descent wherever they may be and whatever their ideology -- as long as they be descendants of Africa and dedicated to our one goal: freedom from oppression.
3. The basic program of the Organization of Afro-American Unity which is now being presented can and will be modified by the membership, taking into consideration national, regional, and local conditions that require flexible treatment.
4. The Organization of Afro-American Unity encourages active participation of each member since we feel that each and every Afro-American has something to contribute to our freedom. Thus each member will be encouraged to participate in the committee of his or her choice.

5. Understanding the differences that have been created amongst us by our oppressors in order to keep us divided, the Organization of Afro-American Unity strives to ignore or submerge these artificial divisions by focusing our activities and our loyalties upon our one goal: freedom from oppression.

## **BASIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Self-determination**

We assert that we Afro-Americans have the right to direct and control our lives, our history, and our future rather than to have our destinies determined by American racists, we are determined to rediscover our true African culture, which was crushed and hidden for over four hundred years in order to enslave us and keep us enslaved up to today...

We, Afro-Americans -- enslaved, oppressed, and denied by a society that proclaims itself the citadel of democracy, are determined to rediscover our history, promote the talents that are suppressed by our racist enslavers, renew the culture that was crushed by a slave government and thereby -- to again become a free people.

### **National unity**

Sincerely believing that the future of Afro-Americans is dependent upon our ability to unite our ideas, skills, organizations, and institutions...

We, the Organization of Afro-American Unity pledge to join hands and hearts with all people of African origin in a grand alliance by forgetting all the differences that the power structure has created to keep us divided and enslaved. We further pledge to strengthen our common bond and strive toward one goal: freedom from oppression.

## **THE BASIC UNITY PROGRAM**

The program of the Organization of Afro-American Unity shall evolve from five strategic points which are deemed basic and fundamental to our grand alliance. Through our committees we shall proceed in the following general areas.

### **I. Restoration**

In order to enslave the African it was necessary for our enslavers to completely sever our communications with the African continent and the Africans that remained there. In order to free ourselves from the oppression of our enslavers then, it is absolutely necessary for the Afro-American to restore communications with Africa.

The Organization of Afro-American Unity will accomplish this goal by means of independent national and international newspapers, publishing ventures, personal contacts, and other available communications media.

We, Afro-Americans, must also communicate to one another the truths about American slavery and the terrible effects it has upon our people. We must study the modern system of slavery in order to free ourselves from it. We must search out all the bare and ugly facts without shame for

we are still victims, still slaves -- still oppressed. Our only shame is believing falsehood and not seeking the truth.

We must learn all that we can about ourselves. We will have to know the whole story of how we were kidnapped from Africa; how our ancestors were brutalized, dehumanized, and murdered; and how we are continually kept in a state of slavery for the profit of a system conceived in slavery, built by slaves and dedicated to keeping us enslaved in order to maintain itself.

We must begin to reeducate ourselves and become alert listeners in order to learn as much as we can about the progress of our motherland -- Africa. We must correct in our minds the distorted image that our enslaver has portrayed to us of Africa that he might discourage us from reestablishing communications with her and thus obtain freedom from oppression.

## **II. Reorientation**

In order to keep the Afro-American enslaved, it was necessary to limit our thinking to the shores of America -- to prevent us from identifying our problems with the problems of other peoples of African origin. This made us consider ourselves an isolated minority without allies anywhere.

The Organization of Afro-American Unity will develop in the Afro-American people a keen awareness of our relationship with the world at large and clarify our roles, rights, and responsibilities as human beings. We can accomplish this goal by becoming well-informed concerning world affairs and understanding that our struggle is part of a larger world struggle of oppressed peoples against all forms of oppression. We must change the thinking of the Afro-American by liberating our minds through the study of philosophies and psychologies, cultures and languages that did not come from our racist oppressors. Provisions are being made for the study of languages such as Swahili, Hausa, and Arabic. These studies will give our people access to ideas and history of mankind at large and thus increase our mental scope.

We can learn much about Africa by reading informative books and by listening to the experiences of those who have traveled there, but many of us can travel to the land of our choice and experience for ourselves. The Organization of Afro-American Unity will encourage the Afro-American to travel to Africa, the Caribbean, and to other places where our culture has not been completely crushed by brutality and ruthlessness.

## **III. Education**

After enslaving us, the slave masters developed a racist educational system which justified to its posterity the evil deeds that had been committed against the African people and their descendants. Too often the slave himself participates so completely in this system that he justifies having been enslaved and oppressed.

The Organization of Afro-American Unity will devise original educational methods and procedures which will liberate the minds of our children from the vicious lies and distortions that are fed to us from the cradle to keep us mentally enslaved. We encourage Afro-Americans themselves to establish experimental institutes and educational workshops, liberation schools, and child-care centers in the Afro-American communities.

We will influence the choice of textbooks and equipment used by our children in the public schools while at the same time encouraging qualified Afro-Americans to write and publish the text books needed to liberate our minds. Until we completely control our own educational institutions, we must supplement the formal training of our children by educating them at home.

#### **IV. Economic security**

After the Emancipation Proclamation, when the system of slavery changed from chattel slavery to wage slavery, it was realized that the Afro-American constituted the largest homogeneous ethnic group with a common origin and common group experience in the United States and, if allowed to exercise economic or political freedom, would in a short period of time own this country. Therefore racists in this government developed techniques that would keep the Afro-American people economically dependent upon the slave masters -- economically slaves -- twentieth-century slaves.

The Organization of Afro-American Unity will take measures to free our people from economic slavery. One way of accomplishing this will be to maintain a technician pool: that is, a bank of technicians. In the same manner that blood banks have been established to furnish blood to those who need it at the time it is needed, we must establish a technician bank. We must do this so that the newly independent nations of Africa can turn to us who are their Afro-American brothers for the technicians they will need now and in the future. Thereby we will be developing an open market for the many skills we possess and at the same time we will be supplying Africa with the skills she can best use. This project will therefore be one of mutual cooperation and mutual benefit.

#### **V. Self-defense**

In order to enslave a people and keep them subjugated, their right to self-defense must be denied. They must be constantly terrorized, brutalized, and murdered. These tactics of suppression have been developed to a new high by vicious racists whom the United States government seems unwilling or incapable of dealing with in terms of the law of this land. Before the emancipation it was the Black man who suffered humiliation, torture, castration, and murder. Recently our women and children, more and more, are becoming the victims of savage racists whose appetite for blood increases daily and whose deeds of depravity seem to be openly encouraged by all law enforcement agencies. Over five thousand Afro-Americans have been lynched since the Emancipation Proclamation and not one murderer has been brought to justice!

The Organization of Afro-American Unity, being aware of the increased violence being visited upon the Afro-American and of the open sanction of this violence and murder by the police departments throughout this country and the federal agencies -- do affirm our right and obligation to defend ourselves in order to survive as a people.

We encourage the Afro-Americans to defend themselves against the wanton attacks of racist aggressors whose sole aim is to deny us the guarantees of the United Nations Charter of Human Rights and of the Constitution of the United States.

The Organization of Afro-American Unity will take those private steps that are necessary to insure the survival of the Afro-American people in the face of racist aggression and the defense of our women and children. We are within our rights to see to it that the Afro-American people who fulfill their obligations to the United States government (we pay taxes and serve in the armed forces of this country like American citizens do) also exact from this government the obligations that it owes us as a people, or exact these obligations ourselves. Needless to say, among this number we include protection of certain inalienable rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

In areas where the United States government has shown itself unable and/or unwilling to bring to justice the racist oppressors, murderers, who kill innocent children and adults, the Organization of Afro-American Unity advocates that the Afro-American people insure ourselves that justice is done -- whatever the price and by any means necessary.

## **NATIONAL CONCERNS**

### **General terminologies:**

We Afro-Americans feel receptive toward all peoples of goodwill. We are not opposed to multiethnic associations in any walk of life. In fact, we have had experiences which enable us to understand how unfortunate it is that human beings have been set apart or aside from each other because of characteristics known as "racial" characteristics.

However Afro-Americans did not create the prejudiced background and atmosphere in which we live. And we must face the facts. A "racial" society does exist in stark reality, and not with equality for Black people; so we who are nonwhite must meet the problems inherited from centuries of inequalities and deal with the present situations as rationally as we are able.

The exclusive ethnic quality of our unity is necessary for self-preservation. We say this because our experiences backed up by history show that African culture and Afro-American culture not be accurately recognized and reported and cannot be respectably expressed nor be secure in its survival if we remain the divided, and therefore the helpless, victims of an oppressive society.

We appreciate the fact that when the people involved have real equality and justice, ethnic intermingling can be beneficial to all. We must denounce, however, all people who are oppressive through their policies or actions and who are lacking in justice in their dealings with other people, whether the injustices proceed from power, class, or "race." We must be unified in order to be protected from abuse or misuse.

We consider the word "integration" a misleading, false term. It carries with it certain implications to which Afro-Americans cannot subscribe. This terminology has been applied to the current regulation projects which are supposed] y "acceptable" to some classes of society. This very "acceptable" implies some inherent superiority or inferiority instead of acknowledging the true source of the inequalities involved.

We have observed that the usage of the term "integration" was designated and promoted by those persons who expect to continue a (nicer) type of ethnic discrimination and who intend to

maintain social and economic control of all human contacts by means of imagery, classifications, quotas, and manipulations based on color, national origin, or "racial" background and characteristics.

Careful evaluation of recent experiences shows that "integration" actually describes the process by which a white society is (remains) set in a position to use, whenever it chooses to use and however it chooses to use, the best talents of nonwhite people. This power-web continues to build a society wherein the best contributions of Afro-Americans, in fact of all nonwhite people, would continue to be absorbed without note or exploited to benefit a fortunate few while the masses of both white and nonwhite people would remain unequal and unbenefited.

We are aware that many of us lack sufficient training and are deprived and unprepared as a result of oppression, discrimination, and the resulting discouragement, despair, and resignation. But when we are not qualified, and where we are unprepared, we must help each other and work out plans for bettering our own conditions as Afro-Americans. Then our assertions toward full opportunity can be made on the basis of equality as opposed to the calculated tokens of "integration." Therefore, we must reject this term as one used by all persons who intend to mislead Afro-Americans.

Another term, "negro," is erroneously used and is degrading in the eyes of informed and self-respecting persons of African heritage. It denotes stereotyped and debased traits of character and classifies a whole segment of humanity on the basis of false information. From all intelligent viewpoints, it is a badge of slavery and helps to prolong and perpetuate oppression and discrimination.

Persons who recognize the emotional thrust and plain show of disrespect in the Southerner's use of "nigra" and the general use of "nigger" must also realize that all three words are essentially the same. The other two, "nigra" and "nigger" are blunt and unreceptive. The one representing respectability, "negro," is merely the same substance in a polished package and spelled with a capital letter. This refinement is added so that a degrading terminology can be legitimately used in general literature and "polite" conversation without embarrassment.

The term "negro" developed from a word in the Spanish language which is actually an adjective (describing word) meaning "black," that is, the color black. In plain English, if someone said or was called a "black" or a "dark," even a young child would very naturally question: "a black what?" or "a dark what?" because adjectives do not name, they describe. Please take note that in order to make use of this mechanism, a word was transferred from another language and deceptively changed in function from an adjective to a noun, which is a naming word. Its application in the nominative (naming) sense was intentionally used to portray persons in a position of objects or "things." It stamps the article as being "all alike and all the same." It denotes: a "darkie," a slave, a subhuman, an ex-slave, a "negro."

Afro-Americans must re-analyze and particularly question our own use of this term, keeping in mind all the facts. In light of the historical meanings and current implications, all intelligent and informed Afro-Americans and Africans continue to reject its use in the noun form as well as a

proper adjective. Its usage shall continue to be considered as unenlightened and objectionable or deliberately offensive whether in speech or writing.

We accept the use of Afro-American, African, and Black man in reference to persons of African heritage. To every other part of mankind goes this measure of just respect. We do not desire more nor shall we accept less.

### **General considerations:**

Afro-Americans, like all other people, have human rights which are inalienable. This is, these human rights cannot be legally or justly transferred to another. Our human rights belong to us, as to all people, through God, not through the wishes nor according to the whims of other men.

We must consider that fact and other reasons why a proclamation of "Emancipation" should not be revered as a document of liberation. Any previous acceptance of and faith in such a document was based on sentiment, not on reality. This is a serious matter which we Afro-Americans must continue to reevaluate.

The original root-meaning of the word emancipation is: "To deliver up or make over as property by means of a formal act from a purchaser." We must take note and remember that human beings cannot be justly bought or sold nor can their human rights be legally or justly taken away.

Slavery was, and still is, a criminal institution, that is: crime en masse. No matter what form it takes. Subtle rules and policies, apartheid, etc., slavery and oppression of human rights stand as major crimes against God and humanity. Therefore, to relegate or change the state of such criminal deeds by means of vague legislation and noble euphemisms gives an honor to horrible commitments that is totally inappropriate.

Full implications and concomitant harvests were generally misunderstood by our fore parents and are still misunderstood or avoided by some Afro-Americans today. However, the facts remain; and we, as enlightened Afro-Americans, will not praise and encourage any belief in emancipation. Afro-Americans everywhere must realize that to retain faith in such an idea means acceptance of being property and, therefore, less than a human being. This matter is a crucial one that Afro-Americans must continue to reexamine.

### **WORLDWIDE CONCERNS**

The time is past due for us to internationalize the problems of Afro-Americans. We have been too slow in recognizing the link in the fate of Africans with the fate of Afro-Americans. We have been too unknowing to understand and too misdirected to ask our African brothers and sisters to help us mend the chain of our heritage.

Our African relatives who are in a majority in their own country have found it very difficult to gain independence from a minority. It is that much more difficult for Afro-Americans who are a minority away from the motherland and still oppressed by those who encourage the crushing of our African identity.



We can appreciate the material progress and recognize the opportunities available in the highly industrialized and affluent American society. Yet, we who are nonwhite face daily miseries resulting directly or indirectly from a systematic discrimination against us because of our God-given colors. These factors cause us to remember that our being born in America was an act of fate stemming from the separation of our fore parents from Africa; not by choice, but by force.

We have for many years been divided among ourselves through deceptions and misunderstandings created by our enslavers, but we do here and now express our desires and intent to draw closer and be restored in knowledge and spirit through renewed relations and kinships with the African peoples. We further realize that our human rights, so long suppressed, are the rights of all mankind everywhere.

In light of all of our experiences and knowledge of the past, we, as Afro-Americans, declare recognition, sympathy, and admiration for all peoples and nations who are striving, as we are, toward self-realization and complete freedom from oppression.

The civil rights bill is a similarly misleading, misinterpreted document of legislation. The premise of its design and application is not respectable in the eyes of men who recognize what personal freedom involves and entails. Afro-Americans must answer this question for themselves: What makes this special bill necessary?

The only document that is in order and deserved with regard to the acts perpetuated through slavery and oppression prolonged to this day is a Declaration of condemnation. And the only legislation worthy of consideration or endorsement by Afro-Americans, the victims of these tragic institutions, is a Proclamation of Restitution. We Afro-Americans must keep these facts ever in mind.

We must continue to internationalize our philosophies and contacts toward assuming full human rights which include all the civil rights appertaining thereto. With complete understanding of our heritage as Afro-Americans, we must not do less.

#### **Committees of the Organization of Afro-American Unity:**

The Cultural Committee

The Economic Committee

The Educational Committee

The Political Committee

The Publications Committee

The Social Committee

The Self-Defense Committee

The Youth Committee

Staff committees: Finance, Fund-raising, Legal, Membership

For further information on the Organization of Afro-American Unity, write:

Organization of Afro-American Unity,  
2090 Seventh Ave.,  
Suite 128  
New York 27, N.Y.

For speedier responses, address correspondence to a particular committee. For example, if you are interested in joining or establishing a chapter:

Membership Committee,  
Organization of Afro-American Unity,  
2090 Seventh Ave.,  
Suite 128,  
New York 27, NY.

We welcome your contributions in the form of checks or money orders.

## Appendix II:

### THE TEN POINT PROGRAM

#### WHAT WE WANT WHAT WE BELIEVE

**“1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.**

We believe that Black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

**2. We want full employment for our people.**

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

**3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalist of our Black community.**

We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of millions of Black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

**4. We want decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings.**

We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our Black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

**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. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

**6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.**

We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

**7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.**

We believe we can end police brutality in our Black community by organizing Black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all Black people should arm themselves for self-defense.

**8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county, and city prisons and jails.**

We believe that all Black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

**9. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by (I jury of their peer group or people from their Black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.**

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that Black people will receive fair trials. The Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical, and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the Black community from which the Black defendant came. We have been and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the Black community.

**10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace.**

And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the Black colony in which only Black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of Black people as to their national destiny. When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to separation. “  
(blackpantherparty.org)

### **Appendix III:**

“Executive Mandate No. 1  
Statement by the Minister of Defense  
Delivered May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1967, at Sacramento,  
California, State Capitol Building

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense calls upon the American people in general and the black people in particular to take careful note of the racist California legislature which is now considering legislation aimed at keeping the black people disarmed and powerless at the very same time that racist police agencies throughout the country are intensifying the terror, brutality, murder, and repression of black people.

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. Since America has historically reserved its most barbaric treatment for nonwhite 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. 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.

Black people have begged, prayed, petitioned and demonstrated, among other things, to get the racist power structure of America to right the wrongs which have historically been perpetrated against Black people. All of these efforts have been answered by more repression, deceit, and hypocrisy. 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. Vicious police dogs, cattle prods, and increased patrols have become familiar sights in Black communities. City Hall turns a deaf ear to the pleas of Black people for relief from this increasing terror.

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense believes that the time has come for Black people to arm themselves against this terror before it is too late. The pending Mulford Act brings the hour of doom one step nearer. A people who have suffered so much for so long at the hands of a racist society must draw the line somewhere. We believe that the Black communities of America must rise up as one man to halt the progression of a trend that leads inevitably to their total destruction.”

(Seale 1969, 161-162)

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